

MODI'S OATH-TAKING

India prepares to greet Saarc leaders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Narendra Modi will be sworn in as India's 15th Prime Minister on Monday under an unprecedented three-tier security arrangement at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan perched on the Raisinha Hills in New Delhi.

An estimated 5,000 security personnel will be engaged to man various facets of the security architecture being built for the occasion where layers of protection would be tighter than at the annual Republic Day parade here, media reports said.

Sources say the Air Force and the Army will be "discreetly involved" but most of the arrangements are being overseen by the Delhi Police, along with paramilitary forces.

Anti-aircraft guns of the air force are being positioned in strategic areas.

Modi is one of the most highly-protected politicians in India and what has added to the worries of the security establishment is the possible presence of top Saarc leaders including Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Bangladesh Jatiya Sansad Speaker

Shirin Sharmin Chodhury who have confirmed their attendance.

A list of 3,000 guests, which will include former presidents and former prime ministers, has been prepared for the event when an Indian Prime Minister will be sworn in the Rashtrapati Bhavan forecourt only for the third time on Monday.

A high-security zone is likely to be put in place in and around Rashtrapati Bhavan estate to regulate the entry and exit of visiting heads of states or their representatives from Saarc countries. There will be regular anti-sabotage checks on all roads leading to Rashtrapati Bhavan which is already a high-security zone along with neighbouring buildings like the prime minister's office, North Block and South Block.

With multiple agencies being involved in making the preparations for the swearing-in ceremony, coordination meetings are being held everyday at the Rashtrapati Bhavan to ensure there are no hiccups.

A variety of refreshments are expected to be served to the VVIP dignitaries at the swearing-in venue including chicken tikka, sandwiches

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Police lock cars with chains for parking illegally in front of New Market in the capital yesterday. The motorists were fined Tk 1,200 but if they failed to pay up on the spot, they were fined Tk 1,400.

PHOTO: STAR

Speaker to meet Modi on May 27

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leaders to felicitate Modi on his remarkable parliamentary election victory and wrote a warm letter to Modi, pledging to work with his government to further strengthen bilateral ties and maintain the momentum in ties.

Other SAARC leaders who have confirmed their participation at the oath-taking of Modi are Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Nepal PM Sushil Koirala, Afghan President

Hamid Karzai, Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and Maldivian President Abdulla Yameen Abdul Gayoom.

Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam is also coming to attend the swearing in of Modi.

Replying to a question if the opposition leaders from SAARC countries were also invited, External Affairs Ministry spokesman Syed Akbaruddin said the invitations to the swearing in of Modi were sent only to heads of

state and government, and it is for the latter to bring anyone they would like to.

Leading daily Indian Express yesterday carried a report, saying invites could be sent to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia and Sri Lankan opposition leader Ranil Wickramasinghe to Modi's swearing in.

Modi is the third Indian PM to be sworn in at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan after Chandrashekhar and Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Govt to regularise

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based on their overall performance. This recommendation is sent to the law ministry. The procedure then is for the law ministry to send the recommendation to the prime minister's office which forwards it to the president for his approval.

Once the president confirms the services of judges, the law ministry issues a gazette notification to this effect.

After being regularised, the judges take oath from the chief justice, as per the constitution.

The Awami League-led grand alliance government has so far appointed 60 HC judges after assuming power in early 2009.

The number of HC judges at present stands at 90.

Rickshaw-van

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men gathered at the bazar yesterday afternoon. A chase and counter chase took place between the two groups, said Abdus Samad, officer-in-charge of Sonaimuri Police Station.

At one stage, both the groups started exchanging bullets. Zaber, who was passing the area with his rickshaw-van, received bullets and died on the spot. Eight people were also injured in the fight. Three of them were hit by bullets.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The injured were admitted to Noakhali Medical College Hospital and local clinics.

The body of Zaber was sent to the hospital morgue for an autopsy.

by ACAD director Professor Alan Cooper conducted in the 1990s, which had shown the closest living relatives of the kiwi were the Australian emu and cassowary.

The team were able to use the elephant bird DNA to estimate when the ratite species had separated from each other.

"The evidence suggests flying ratite ancestors dispersed around the world right after the dinosaurs went extinct, before the mammals dramatically increased in size and became the dominant group," says Professor Cooper.

"We think the ratites exploited that narrow window of opportunity to become large herbivores, but once mammals also got large, about 50 million years ago, no other bird could try that idea again unless they were on a mammal free island - like the Dodo".

and elephant birds of Madagascar.

The different species were long thought to have formed as the flightless birds were isolated by the separation of the southern continents over the last 130 million years.

However, ancient DNA extracted from bones of two elephant birds held by the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, has revealed a close genetic connection with the kiwi, despite the striking differences in geography, morphology and ecology between the two.

"This result was about as unexpected as you could get," says Kieren Mitchell from ACAD.

"New Zealand and Madagascar were only ever distantly physically joined via Antarctica and Australia, so this result shows the ratites must have dispersed around the world by flight".

The results correct previous work

Kiwi once flew

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not too long ago," says Flinders University's Dr Trevor Worthy. "The genetic results back up this interpretation, and confirm that kiwis were flying when they arrived in New Zealand. It also explains why the kiwi remained small. By the time it arrived in New Zealand, the large herbivore role was already taken by the moa, forcing the kiwi to stay small, and become insectivorous and nocturnal".

The new study by the University of Adelaide's Australian Centre for Ancient DNA (ACAD), has solved the mystery about the origins of the giant flightless ratite birds, such as the emu and ostrich, which are found across the southern continents.

This group contains some of the world's largest birds - such as the extinct giant moa of New Zealand

Cops curb driving

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from getting their tyres slashed.

Deputy Commissioner (media) Masudur Rahman of Dhaka Metropolitan Police told The Daily Star that the faulty spikes had been replaced and gave an assurance that a monitoring team would make sure that the spikes stay in order. "This is still a trial," he said.

The device, made of stainless steel, was provided by Sohail Metal and designed by Jahan Alam, an engineer, said police.

In a festive event yesterday, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker and DMP Commissioner Benazir Ahmed inaugurated the spike strips in the capital.

The IGP said, "We had hoped people would follow traffic rules. But since they don't, we installed the spikes to maintain traffic laws on the road."

The spike strips were the result of the police's effort to tackle motorists and influential people dangerously driving on the wrong side of city streets, dodging oncoming traffic.

In most cases of such violation of traffic rules, policemen remain silent spectators. Some traffic policemen have even been seen helping the rule violators, making way for the culprits holding up traffic at intersections.

Traffic policemen on the ground told The Daily Star that mostly flag-bearing vehicles of ministers, lawmakers and top government officials, motorbikes, and vehicles carrying media people flout the traffic rule when there is a gridlock.

Other vehicles usually follow the vehicle that violated the rule first.

"The tendency to travel on the wrong side of road is to be found predominantly among conscious and powerful sections of the society,"

observed a top traffic police official.

Wishing anonymity, the official said traffic constables and sergeants rarely dare to stop them and take legal action.

He appealed the top level of the government to issue a circular instructing the government officials and political leaders not to drive on the wrong side of streets.

The Daily Star correspondent around 4:00pm on a Wednesday saw a black sport utility vehicle travelling towards Bijoy Sarani intersection from Tongi Diversion Road on the wrong side of the road.

The vehicle, which had a sticker of a ministry, had a few near misses of head-on collisions before it stopped on the wrong side at the intersection and waited.

Traffic policemen on duty there saw the whole thing and did nothing. The vehicle eventually found a gap in the traffic flow and sped away.

Traffic flow on the legal side of the roads often halts due to vehicles travelling on the wrong side of the road. Even in the wee hours, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue grinds to a halt in front of Karwan Bazar because vehicles especially trucks and rickshaw van travel on the wrong side of the street.

Driving on the wrong side is very common near Sonargaon intersection, Rangs Bhaban, Aeroplane intersections on Bijoy Sarani, Jashimuddin Road at Uttara, Khamarbari Road at Farmgate, and Shishu Mela intersection in Shyamoli.

Joint Commissioner (traffic) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police Mir Rezaul Alam said in some cases traffic police do not stop vehicles and fine them because if they try to discipline them, traffic flow suffers.

Zyama Islam and Anisur Rahman contributed to this report.

Star-Bengal Arts Precinct opens

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"And we hope that it is the first of many such collaborations between different organisations," he said.

Arts enthusiasts, who kept the gallery abuzz throughout the programme, hailed the initiative.

"The involvement of a media house with an arts foundation would mean more publicity for artworks, which will help change the condition of artists," said Mohammad Iqbal, who himself is

an artist.

"More art galleries mean the viewers will get more exposure to art," said his wife Maqsuma Iqbal Nipa, also an artist.

The exhibition, which will remain open to all between 12noon and 8:00pm till July 13, showcases 33 paintings from the personal collection of Abul Khair, who was personally acquainted with Sultan.

The artworks depict rural life in its

crudest form. Farmers are shown tilling the land in one of the paintings, where the artist painstakingly reconstructed the earth down to its last clump, while ploughs draw the spectators into the vortex they created on the hard surface of the earth.

It features oil paintings created in the 80's and 90's showing scenes of the plights of villagers during the Liberation War. The use of golden husks of newly reaped grains enlivens

the season of harvest on his canvas.

Other paintings bring to life the beauty of Bangladesh during different parts of the day. Vibrant daylight comes alive through a schoolchild's palette of primary hues like cobalt and grassy greens, ochre and sienna. The serenity of transient dawns and dusks were delineated in pastel tints.

And the ink sketches display in a flurry of textures fishermen in a frantic battle to survive.

Thai army detains ex-PM

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In what appeared to be a coordinated operation to neutralise possible opposition to the coup, the military summoned the ousted Yingluck to a meeting and then banned her and 154 others, including politicians and activists, from leaving Thailand.

Yingluck is the sister of Thaksin Shinawatra, a billionaire telecommunications tycoon turned politician who won huge support among the poor but the loathing of the royalist establishment, largely over accusations of corruption and nepotism. He was ousted as premier in a 2006 military coup.

Responding to the summons, Yingluck arrived at an army facility at noon along with other politicians. An aide to a minister in the ousted government who declined to be identified said some people, including his minister, had been detained. A former aide to Yingluck said she been out of telephone contact for hours.

Yingluck was forced to step down as prime minister by a court on May

7 but her caretaker government, buffeted by more than six months of protests against it, had remained nominally in power, even after the army declared martial law on Tuesday.

The coup has drawn rebukes from Washington, Europe and UN chief Ban Ki-moon, who all called for civilian control to be restored.

Secretary of State John Kerry said there was "no justification" for a coup that would have "negative implications" for US relations, and demanded early elections. The Pentagon said it was reviewing military cooperation with America's oldest ally in Asia.

Southeast Asian neighbours urged caution, with Malaysia warning its nationals to defer non-essential travel to Thailand.

Japan, Thailand's biggest foreign investor, called for a "prompt restoration of a democratic political system".

The military briefed diplomats yesterday though some declined the invitation, apparently as a gesture of disapproval.

The military has censored the media, dispersed rival protesters and imposed a nationwide 10:00pm to 5:00am curfew.

The military suspended television and radio broadcasts on Thursday and made channels broadcast its material, but six free-to-air channels came back on the air late yesterday.

Several satellite channels including partisan ones on both sides, remained banned. International news channels were off the air and the military threatened to block provocative websites.

The armed forces have a long history of intervening in politics - there have been 18 previous successful or attempted coups since Thailand became a constitutional monarchy in 1932.

Bangkok was mostly calm and life appeared normal but there was some opposition to the takeover.

Several hundred people, including students, gathered in a central shopping district despite a ban on protests by five or more people to voice their opposition to military

rule. Some held signs saying "No coup" and "Get Out Dictators".

Prayuth is a member of the royalist establishment generally seen as hostile to the Shinawatras, although he tried for months to keep the army out of the strife and to appear even-handed.

The anti-Thaksin protesters had demanded electoral changes that would end the Shinawatras' success at the ballot box. Thaksin or his parties have won every election since 2001.

Thaksin's "red shirt" supporters were angry but said they had no immediate plans for protests, but many political analysts were predicting tension and violence.

Mass protests by Thaksin's well-organised loyalists would be a major test for the military.

In 2010, more than 90 people were killed in clashes, most when the army broke up protests against a pro-establishment government that had taken office after a pro-Thaksin administration was removed by the courts in 2008.