

Strong army needed for peace: Modi

PTI, Srinagar

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he has accorded highest priority to the modernization of defence forces as strong security was necessary for an atmosphere of peace, amity and harmony in the country. He was addressing a "Sainik Sammelan" in Badami Bagh Army headquarters here on a day's visit to Jammu & Kashmir. Praising the valour and courage of the soldiers, the Prime Minister asserted that self-reliance in defence offset manufacturing was essential for the security of the nation. Strong armed forces are necessary for an atmosphere of peace, amity, harmony and brotherhood in the country, and that is the foundation on which India would achieve new heights of development, Modi said. He said today the world was looking at India with hope and we can interact on equal terms with all developed countries.

The spirit of sacrifice and selflessness of the defence forces was an inspiration for all Indians and this spirit would ensure their victory at all times, the Prime Minister said. He said the people of India trusted them and believed that no power on earth could defeat them.

The Prime Minister reiterated his government's commitment to building a national war memorial in memory of soldiers who had laid down their lives for the motherland.

He said the welfare of the army men and their families was the concern and collective responsibility of all Indians and his government would take all good decisions in the interest of the jawans. Earlier, the Prime Minister paid homage at the martyrs' memorial at Badami Bagh Cantonment.

He also wrote in the visitors' book at the memorial and visited the nearby 1,200-year-old Shiva Temple.

BP faces Deepwater Horizon lawsuit

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Pension funds from London borough councils and even Shell are among a new group of shareholders suing BP in Texas over the Deepwater Horizon accident.

The lawsuit, which could potentially be extremely costly for the oil group, follows recent US court rulings opening the way to challenges from those who bought financial stakes in BP outside the country.

The US courts are famously generous in their financial awards compared with their British counterparts. In the past only investors who bought their BP stakes on the New York stock exchange or other US markets could file for compensation payments.

Weakened tropical storm Arthur heads to Canada

AFP, Miami

Tropical Storm Arthur rapidly lost strength yesterday as it headed off the far north-eastern US coast towards Canada, causing little damage in its wake.

Arthur, downgraded from a category one hurricane at 0900 GMT, lashed New England and the Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia and Quebec as it headed in a north-easterly direction off the coast of Massachusetts.

Arthur made landfall on the coast of North Carolina late Thursday as a category two hurricane, on a scale in which five is the highest.

Forecasters had feared that the storm could trigger serious flooding and disrupt the Independence Day weekend along the heavily populated US east coast.

The storm's path followed a course of July fireworks displays to be postponed and some vacationers to abandon beaches, but in the end the fast-moving system caused minimal damage.

On the forecasted track, Arthur, or the remains of the storm, will strike near western Nova Scotia and head over the Gulf of St. Lawrence by late yesterday, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center reported.

Maximum sustained winds have decreased to near 70 miles (110 kilometres) per hour. Some additional weakening is forecast, and Arthur is expected to become a post-tropical depression later (yesterday), the NHC said.

The storm, which was moving at near 22 miles (35 kilometres) per hour, is expected to continue with a decrease in forward speed during the next day or so, the NHC bulletin read.

North Carolina's Governor Pat McCrory reported Friday that other than some flooding, beach erosion and power outages, his state had been spared the storm's worst possible effects.

"North Carolina beaches are open for business," McCrory said, beckoning visitors who might have scuttled travel plans during the holiday weekend -- the most lucrative for his state's flourishing tourism industry.

The Atlantic hurricane season began June 1 and runs through November 30.

The NHC said the first hurricane of the season carried damaging waves and powerful tidal surges, and left behind up to a half-foot (15 centimetres) in rainfall.

Higuain fires

FROM PAGE 1

claiming a second goal, first seeing a shot deflected wide by Daniel Van Buyten and then neatly nutmegging Kompany, only for his shot to clip the bar.

Wilmots reacted by introducing Romelu Lukaku and Dries Mertens, before hooking the ineffective Hazard.

Belgium began to apply pressure, with Fellaini heading a Vertonghen cross over the bar and De Bruyne having a shot deflected wide.

Messi should have made it 2-0 on the counter-attack in stoppage time, only for Thibaut Courtois to rush out and save, but Argentina held on nonetheless to join Germany and eternal rivals Brazil in the last four.

TEAMS
ARGENTINA: Sergio Romero; Pablo Zabaleta, Martin Demichelis, Ezequiel Garay, Jose Maria Basanta; Lucas Biglia, Javier Mascherano, Angel Di Maria; Gonzalo Higuain, Lionel Messi (capt), Ezequiel Lavezzi

BELGIUM: Thibaut Courtois; Toby Alderweireld, Daniel Van Buyten, Vincent Kompany (capt), Jan Vertonghen; Axel Witsel, Marouane Fellaini; Kevin Mirallas, Kevin De Bruyne, Eden Hazard; Divock Origi.

BNP preparing for movement, polls

Says Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP is organising itself for a 'tougher' movement after Eid and also preparing for a fresh election, Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir said yesterday.

"Movement, election and reorganising the party -- we are working on all three," the BNP acting secretary general told reporters while visiting the party chief's ailing media wing staff Shamsuddin Didar at a city hospital.

"After Eid, new programmes will be announced to wage tougher movements," Fakhru said, adding that BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia was also reorganising the party for tougher agitation after Eid.

Although Fakhru claims that the

BNP is carrying on with its movement at present, the party's activities, however, are seen to be limited to indoor meetings and discussions mostly at the Jatiya Press Club.

Talking to reporters Fakhru further said the process to reorganise the party and its front organisations was a part of preparing the party for a fresh national election.

Claiming that the government was forcibly staying in power, Fakhru said the oppressor administration, as he put it, would be ousted through street movement after Eid.

On July 3, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government would not tolerate any violence in the name of movement.

East Jerusalem youth was burned alive

Palestinian official quoted as saying

REUTERS, Ramallah

Initial autopsy findings from the body of an East Jerusalem youth who Palestinians believe was kidnapped and killed by far-right Jews showed that he was burned alive, the Palestinian attorney-general is reported as saying.

"The direct cause of death was burns as a result of fire and its complications," Mohammed Al-Awewy was quoted as saying by Palestinian official news agency Wafa late on Friday.

Israeli-Palestinian tensions have risen sharply after three Israeli teens were kidnapped on June 12 and later found dead in the occupied West Bank.

This was followed on Wednesday by the kidnapping of Mohammed Abu Khudair, 16, in his neighbourhood in Arab East Jerusalem. His charred body was found hours later in a forest on the edge of the city.

Saber Al-Aloul, the director of the Palestinian forensic institute, attended the autopsy which was carried out by Israeli doctors in Tel Aviv.

Al-Awewy said Al-Aloul had reported fire dust material was found in Khudair's respiratory canal which meant "the boy had inhaled this material while he was burnt alive."

Burns covered 90 percent of the surface of the body. The head suffered a cut. Samples like liquids and tissues were taken for more lab examinations to complete the legal medical report.

At Khudair's funeral on Friday, furious Palestinians chanted "Intifa-

da! Intifada", calling for a new uprising against Israel. Stones thrown at Israeli police were met by teargas, stun grenades and rubber bullets in one of the most highly charged displays of enmity in Jerusalem in years.

Clashes continued across the occupied West Bank overnight with at least one Palestinian hurt in the city of Nablus, medical staff said. Clashes also erupted in Israeli-Arab towns, a police spokeswoman said.

Palestinian officials trying to calm tensions have said they would prevent any intifada, or uprising, and seek a solution to the crisis that began when the three Israeli teens were kidnapped.

The discovery of the young Israelis' bodies on Monday prompted an outpouring of national grief in Israel.

Many Palestinians, including President Mahmoud Abbas, assert that Khudair was the victim of far-right Jews incensed at the Israeli deaths.

With Israel having mobilised ground forces outside Gaza on Thursday in a threat to invade, Egypt tried to mediate a truce. Israel and the Islamist Palestinian Hamas movement each said the other had to back down first.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called Abu Khudair's killing, a day after the three Jewish seminary students were buried, "loathsome" and ordered a swift police investigation.

Israeli authorities said they did not yet know whether Abu Khudair was indeed the victim of a hate crime.

Jihadists destroy mosques, shrines in Iraq

AFP, Baghdad

Jihadists who overran Mosul last month have demolished ancient shrines and mosques in and around the historic northern Iraqi city, residents and social media posts said yesterday.

At least four shrines to Sunni Arab or Sufi figures have been demolished, while six Shiite mosques, or Husseiniyahs, have also been destroyed, across militant-held parts of northern Nineveh province, of which Mosul is the capital.

Pictures posted on the Internet by the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group showed the Sunni and Sufi shrines were demolished by bulldozers, while the Shiite mosques and shrines were all destroyed by explosives.

The photographs were part of an online statement titled "Demolishing shrines and idols in the state of Nineveh."

Local residents confirmed that the buildings had been destroyed and that militants had occupied two cathedrals as well.

"We feel very sad for the demolition of these shrines, which we inherited from our fathers and grandfathers," said Ahmed, a 51-year-old resident of Mosul. "They are landmarks in the city."

An employee at Mosul's Chaldean cathedral said militants had occupied both it and the Syrian Orthodox cathedral in the city after finding them empty.

They removed the crosses at the front of the buildings and replaced them with the Islamic State's black flag, the employee said.

IS-led militants overran Mosul last month and swiftly took control of much of the rest of Nineveh, as well as parts of four other provinces north and west of Baghdad, in an offensive that has displaced hundreds of thousands and alarmed the international community.

The city, home to two million residents before the offensive, was a Middle East trading hub for centuries, its name translating loosely as "the junction."

Though more recently populated mostly by Sunni Arabs, Mosul and Nineveh were also home to many Shiite Arabs as well as ethnic and religious minorities such as Kurds, Turks, Yazidis and other sects.

6.0-magnitude quake strikes western Indonesia: USGS

AFP, Jakarta

A strong 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck western Indonesia yesterday, US seismologists said, but no tsunami warning was issued and there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage.

The quake struck at 4:39 pm (0939 GMT) at a depth of 30 kilometres (19 miles), 88 kilometres southeast of Sinabang, on the small island of Simeulue, the US Geological Survey said.

Diana Rahyu, an official from Indonesia's meteorology, climatology and geophysics agency, said the quake was felt in parts of Sumatra, a huge island to the west of Simeulue.

But she added: "There is no threat of a tsunami... Until now, there are no reports of casualties or damage."

Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire" where continental plates collide, causing frequent seismic and volcanic activity.

Tibetans inherited

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Now scientists think they discovered exactly how the Tibetans cope, tracing a specialized gene found in modern-day inhabitants of the region back to one of humanity's extinct ancestors -- a ancient species known as the Denisovans.

The gene is called EPAS1 and it helps regulate the body's responses to low-oxygen atmosphere. When most humans are exposed to these conditions their bodies start producing extra red blood cells to circulate more oxygen around the body. However, this creates thicker blood that's harder to pump, exacerbating a range of problems from hypertension to the risk of strokes.

EPAS1 stops this 'overreaction', leading some scientists to refer to it as 'the athlete gene'. Humans that do have it tend to perform better at certain aerobic-intensive sports but for Tibetans it's just part an ordinary part of their genetic makeup.

So where did EPAS1 come from? A new study from the University of Berkeley published in the journal Nature this Wednesday suggests it comes from the Denisovans -- an early human ancestor that was only discovered four years ago when scientists sequenced the DNA from a finger bone found in a Siberian cave.

Denisovans are thought to have been knocking around on the earth for tens of thousands of years longer than modern humans. When the two species bred together some of our ancestors inherited the EPAS1 gene and were able to thrive in the Tibetan plateau -- a much faster method of adapting to the high altitude environment than waiting around for evolution to kick in.

The researchers also compared the Tibetan genome with that of the neighbouring Han Chinese, and found that only 1 in 20 of the Han possessed EPAS1. "They are extremely differentiated from each other, which is something you only see with very strong or very recent selection," Rasmus Nielsen, an author of the study, told the LA Times.

The discovery confirms that contrary to past theories that our ancestor simply out-survived and out-lived more 'archaic' humans such as Neanderthals and Denisovans, the interbreeding of the different species helped modern humans to survive and adapt in different environments around the world.

Brazil numbed

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"It's not serious in the sense that it doesn't need surgery, but he'll need to immobilise it to recover," Lasmar said after the player was taken straight to hospital from the stadium in Fortaleza.

Neymar, Brazil's poster boy and one of the world's most marketable players, has been driving his country's bid for a sixth world title with his goals and creative talent.

He went down after a challenge by Colombia's Juan Zuniga in the 88th minute and looked to be in considerable pain after what turned out to be a cracked third vertebra.

Neymar's injury had a profound impact on the general mood in football-crazy Brazil -- from the president down to football legends and fans in canary-yellow jerseys, Brazilians were heartbroken, some in tears.

"Your painful expression yesterday on the pitch at the Castaleo (stadium) wounded my heart, along with that of all Brazilians," President Dilma Rousseff wrote in a personal message to the 22-year-old star on Saturday.

"But what we saw was the extraordinary force of a great warrior who, even injured, will not allow himself to be disheartened," Rousseff said.

Brazil football legend Pele voiced hope that the team would overcome the loss and win the trophy, just as his teammates had when they lifted the cup in 1962 despite his own tournament-ending injury.

"It hurts our hearts to know that he can no longer defend Brazil in the World Cup," Pele wrote on Twitter.

He has also become an icon on and off the field, turning into a fashion icon with his blond-dyed fauxhawk and model girlfriend. Like a rock star, he has groupies known as "Neymarzettes".

Joao Batista Schaffer, a 78-year-old taking a stroll in Rio de Janeiro's Flamengo Park, teared up as he talked about the young player's injury.

"We love Neymar. This is very tough. I'm very, very sad. I've been crying since yesterday," said the shopkeeper.

"Neymar is not big. Anybody can take him down. It was horrible to see this strong player hit him in the back. It was cowardly," he said.

"We share Neymar's pain. I felt what he felt. I wanted to cry with

him. I'm a wreck," said Erika Nunes, a 40-year-old nurse, as she returned home from a night shift in Rio.

Ademir Costa Chaga, 53, talked about the injury as he coached a dozen children from a favela during one of the free football classes that he gives on weekends.

"Neymar is not only Brazil's craque (whizz). He is the world's craque. He is the best player of the cup," said Costa Chaga, who played for Rio club Fluminense until losing an eye in a game. "The whole country is sad."

Brazilian newspapers urged the Selecao to seize on the injury as an extra motivation to triumph against Germany. "Play For Him," read Lance, a sports daily.

Brazil striker Fred sent an emotional message to his teammate, calling him "the soul" of the Selecao.

"We have an extra motive to play with heart in this cup," he said. "Neymar, be sure that our group loves you and will give their all to win the title for you."

Zuniga insisted that he had not sought to hurt Neymar, but even Brazil great Ronaldo did not believe him.

"I believe there was an intention to hurt by the player. I believe it was very aggressive and very violent," Ronaldo said.

"It's a normal action, I tried to shadow him," defender Zuniga told reporters. "I was not thinking of hurting him. I was defending my country's colours."

"On the pitch I'm defending my shirt, my country, but I didn't expect him to fracture a vertebra. He is a great talent for Brazil and for the world," Zuniga said.

Brazil captain Thiago Silva, who will also miss the semifinal after being booked on Friday, refused to blame Zuniga for the injury.

"Zuniga is not a bad guy. But at that moment he wasn't very prudent, he could have held up a bit, fouled in a different way."

He said now was the time for Brazil players to come closer together and show even more solidarity on the pitch.

"In those times it is when the team shows its strength," he said.

"Neymar is a very important guy for our group, we depend a lot on him. But potentially, this situation can mark a revolution for us, like 'let's win the Cup for Neymar'. This could help bring together the team even more," he said.

BASIC chairman bows out

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One of the best-run banks until 2009, BASIC Bank has been mired in financial irregularities since Bacchu assumed office in 2009.

During his tenure, the bank's indicators -- from capital adequacy ratio to nonperforming loans and credit rating -- went on a free fall. Curiously, despite this dismal performance, Bacchu was offered a second term in office in 2012.

It was in his new term that the magnitude of irregularities committed by the BASIC Bank board spearheaded by Bacchu grew larger. The irregularities amounted to upwards of Tk 4,500 crore, according to Bangladesh Bank (BB).

Said to be very close to the inner circles of the ruling Awami League, he single-handedly controlled the bank and granted loans in defiance of the recommendations of the bank's credit committee.

In other words, loans were extended to defaulters, and there were instances where loans were issued even before clients opened their bank accounts. Mortgage prices were shown at inflated prices to allow clients appropriately more money from the state-run bank.

Now, the whole board will be reconstituted, and a new chairman, who has experience of performing the role of managing director in different banks, will be appointed today, as part of the central bank and the government's efforts to resuscitate the specialised bank.

BB last month ordered BASIC Bank to stop loan activities at its Dilkusha, Shantinagar and Gulshan branches, where most of the anomalies took place. Earlier in May, it fired Kazi Faqurul Islam, BASIC Bank's managing director, for his failure to arrest the irregularities.

Muhith said the new chairman could form a committee or commission to get a clear picture of the irregularities and the individuals involved.

In response to a query on how to check irregularities in the banking system, the minister said there was a method to arrest

the anomalies.

"But it can't be successfully applied all the time," he said, adding that the answer to the problem lay in ensuring that no troublemaker was appointed a board member.

Muhith said the government selected certain members of state-run banks' boards, which also consist of bankers and bureaucrats, on political considerations. "People selected on political considerations are more humane and can take new initiatives."

The finance minister acknowledged that the government would have to shoulder some of the blame for the irregularities committed by the boards of state banks as it hand-picks the members.

"In such cases, the government is forced to admit liability -- the government has to pay the price for a mistake in the selection process."

Meanwhile, Salehuddin Ahmed, a former governor of BB, said the government should take action against those who have damaged the state-owned specialised bank -- and that the chairman cannot go scot-free.

"Immediate and visible action should be taken against him. Otherwise the banking sector, which is in trouble, would be affected further."

Khondker Ibrahim Khaled, a former deputy governor of the central bank, said it was not proper to allow the BASIC Bank chairman to resign.

"He should have been sacked. Allowing him to resign may create a perception in the public mind that he enjoyed support at the high levels of the government."

Khaled said the central bank now needed to form an investigation team comprising of highly honest and efficient officials. The team will conduct a thorough enquiry and send the report to the ACC on the irregularities detected and the individuals found responsible.

The former BB deputy governor also said the new chairman's immediate task would be to identify those who committed the irregularities in collusion with the bank chairman and expel them.

BISHOP KILLING

Argentine 'Dirty War' officers get life term

AFP, Buenos Aires

Two retired military officers were sentenced to life in prison Friday for the murder of a Catholic bishop during Argentina's 1976-1983 dictatorship.

Documents in the trial included two letters from the Vatican archives provided by Argentine-born Pope Francis. The slain cleric had written the letters and sent them to Rome just before his death denouncing the military regime's abuses.

Ex-general Luciano Menendez, 87, was found guilty of ordering the murder of Enrique Angelelli, bishop of the northwestern province of La Rioja, in August 1976. Retired commodore Luis Estrella was also found guilty in the case.

The convictions marked the first time that junta-era officials are found guilty in the killing of a high-ranking church cleric.

Guillermo Diaz Martinez, an attorney for a human rights group which was among plaintiffs in the case, declared the day "historic" because of the favorable verdict.

The military regime had claimed that Angelelli, then 53, was killed in a car accident.

Also traveling in the car was the bishop's aide, a priest named Esteban Pinto, who survived the accident and subsequently filed the lawsuit.

In one of the letters read in court, Angelelli wrote that the regime was creating "permanent obstacles" to their religious work.

Angelelli complained that he, priests and nuns "are humiliated, seized and frisked by police on orders from the army," the bishop wrote.

Life choked

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from Bakshibazar in Old Dhaka to the Jail Directorate office on Nazimuddin Road.

Jail guard Zakaria Masud could not get out of his barracks since morning to visit a patient at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

"I couldn't even hire a rickshaw as only a few of them were plying the alleys," he noted, adding that people came out of their houses only to finish urgent assignments.

Urban expert Prof Nazrul Islam said water-logging had become a common occurrence after every downpour in the city as the drainage system here is not functioning properly.

Once there were 60 canals in the city, but now the number has come down to only 10 to 12 due to unplanned urbanisation, he added.

The existing canals, mentioned Prof Nazrul, have turned into narrow drains

and lost their water carrying capacity due to dumping of solid waste. Besides, many flood flow zones, which contained rain water, have disappeared due to unplanned urbanisation.

He suggested implementing urbanisation based on Rajuk's Detailed Area Plan.

The natural monsoon caused yesterday's downpour, which has been influenced by a low formed in the northwestern part of the Bay of Bengal, Md Shah Alam, director of Bangladesh Meteorological Department, told The Daily Star.

The rain will continue through the night and might be over by tomorrow morning, he added.

The Met office on Wednesday issued a notice asking the maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Mongla to hoist local cautionary signal number three due to the depression in the Bay.