

VIOLENCE-HIT MANIPUR

Minister's house attacked again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

A federal Indian minister's house in Manipur's capital Imphal was attacked today for the second time in two months as ethnic protests continue in the Indian state.

The attack took place when a women students' rally pelted stones at his house demanding that he speaks in parliament about the situation in the ethnic strife-affected state and restoration of internet.

However, no one was present at the house at the time of the attack on the residence of R K Ranjan Singh, junior minister for External Affairs, and not much harm was done to it, said a PTI report.

On June 15, a mob attacked the minister's house and tried to set it on fire.

Over 160 people have been killed and 50,000 rendered homeless since ethnic violence broke out in Manipur on May 3 when a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The Meiteis are a majority (53 per cent) of Manipur's 3.2 million population and tribal Kukis (40 per cent) are a minority.

US SUBMARINE IN SOUTH KOREA North Korea fires 2 ballistic missiles

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea fired two ballistic missiles into the sea off its east coast late yesterday, South Korea's military said, hours after a US nuclear-powered submarine arrived at a naval base in the South.

Japan's defence ministry also reported the launch of what it said could be a ballistic missile by North Korea. Japanese media said there may have been multiple missiles launched, citing a Japanese government source.

The reports come amid heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula as South Korea and the United States take steps to boost military readiness against North Korea's weapons programme with the deployment of US strategic military assets.

North Korea has reacted angrily, saying such deployment could meet the criteria for its use of nuclear weapons.

Earlier on Monday, a nuclear-powered US submarine entered a naval base on South Korea's southern island of Jeju, to load military supplies while on an unspecified operational mission, the South Korean navy said.

Over the weekend, the North fired a barrage of cruise missiles into the sea off its west coast.

Last week, North Korea conducted ballistic missile tests, that time after a nuclear-armed US submarine arrived at a South Korean port for the first time since the 1980s.



A burnt car sits in the foreground of a charred area after a fire near the village of Kiotari, on the Greek island of Rhodes, yesterday. Authorities evacuated nearly 2,500 people from the Greek island of Corfu yesterday as the prime minister warned that the heat-battered nation was "at war" with several wildfires.

PHOTO: STAR

Israel curbs SC powers

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel's parliament yesterday ratified the first bill of a judicial overhaul sought by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, after last gasp compromise efforts collapsed and failed to ease a constitutional crisis convulsing the country for months.

The amendment limiting the Supreme Court's powers to void some government decisions if it deemed them "unreasonable" passed by a 64-to 0 vote after opposition lawmakers abandoned the session in protest, some of them shouting: "For shame!"

It is part of plans the government announced in January, soon after it was sworn in, setting off months of unprecedented nationwide protests and stirring concern among allies abroad for Israel's

democratic health.

More deadlock loomed, however. Within minutes of the vote, a political watchdog group and the centrist opposition leader said they would appeal against the law at the Supreme Court.

Hoping to encourage a provisional deal between the religious nationalist coalition government and opposition parties, the Histadrut labour union threatened to declare a general strike if the government pursued what it called "unilateral" measures.

The crisis has caused a deep divide in Israeli society and has seeped into the military, with protest leaders saying thousands of volunteer reservists would not report for duty if the government continues with the plans and former top brass warning that Israel's war-readiness could be at risk.

Police used a water cannon to disperse demonstrators opposed to the judicial overhaul and officers dragged away protesters who had chained themselves to posts and blocked the road outside parliament. After the vote, police said they were dispersing crowds that marched along and blocked a Jerusalem area highway.

Netanyahu's coalition has been determined to push back against what it describes as overreach by a Supreme Court that it says has become too politically interventionist.

Critics say yesterday's amendment has been rushed through parliament and will open the door to abuses of power by removing one of the few effective checks on the executive's authority in a country without a formal written constitution.

15 killed as boat sinks in Indonesia

AFP, Kendari

At least 15 people were killed yesterday after a wooden boat sank off the coast of Indonesia's Sulawesi island, search and rescue officials said, adding that all missing passengers had been accounted for. The boat sank with 48 people onboard just after midnight (1700 GMT on Sunday), the local office of Indonesia's search and rescue agency said in a statement. Six people were rescued and taken to hospital for treatment, it added, and the cause of the sinking was being investigated.

11 killed after school gym roof collapses in northeastern China

AFP, Beijing

Eleven people died after the roof of a school gym collapsed in northeastern China, state media reported yesterday. The collapse in Qiqihar, Heilongjiang Province was caused by construction workers illegally placing perlite -- a form of volcanic glass -- on the building's roof, state news agency Xinhua said. Heavy rain then led the perlite to expand and increase in weight, causing the roof to collapse, it added. An in-depth investigation of the accident was in progress, state media CCTV has said, with those in charge of the construction company having been placed in police custody.

Thunberg fined for disobeying cops

AFP, Malmö

Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg was fined yesterday for disobeying police at a rally last month, but said she acted out of necessity due to the climate crisis. The 20-year-old appeared in court in the southern Swedish city of Malmö after 11:00am (0900 GMT) today. The activist "took part in a demonstration that disrupted traffic" and "refused to obey police orders to leave the site", according to the charge sheet seen by AFP. After a short trial, the court nonetheless found that she was still liable for her actions and sentenced her to pay a fine of 1,500 kronor (\$144) plus an additional 1,000 kronor to the Swedish fund for victims of crime.



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