

# Scam, not Kashmir, behind Sahara Cup pull-out

SHIVNATH JHA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 12. — Was the Kashmir issue the main reason for pulling out India from the five-match series of the Sahara Cup or was it the Union minister for sports, Mr SS Dhindsa's insistence on not allowing "tainted" players to participate in the series to be played in Toronto next month?

Senior officials of the Income Tax department said the decision was taken at a meeting held a week ago and attended by top officials of the CBI, the finance ministry, the sports ministry and the Income Tax department.

A senior Income Tax official said: "Initially, it was decided

to pull out the tainted players from the series. But since such selective action was not favoured by all, the sports minister decided India should not participate in the series".

The Kashmir blast on 10 August, Income Tax officials said, allowed the decision to be explained in a "less controversial manner".

The Director General (Investigation), Mr SC Parija, refused to comment on the government's decision to pull out of the Sahara Cup.

He, however, said the department is firm about completing the process of examination of documents seized during the nationwide searches on cricketers within a time-frame (60 days) in most cases before issu-

ing notice to the defaulters for filing block returns for 10 years.

"In respect of two or three cases, there may be some delay as the department is examining their connection with foreign banks and business connections," Mr Parija said.

"We have not estimated the unexplained properties. We are examining them to find out the extent of evasion of tax. Under the Act,



A foreigner, injured in a grenade blast in Srinagar, being taken to hospital on Saturday. — PTI

the defaulters will have to give year-wise income and expenditure accounts to the department after issuance of the notice," Mr Parija said. "If the department finds anything after the defaulters file returns, then under the Act, the department

is empowered to impose penalties to the tune of 150 to 300 per cent on the defaulters. In case of failure to file returns, they would be

sentenced to seven years."

Interestingly, the I-T department, which had conducted searches and raids under Section 132 of the Income Tax Act in Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Patiala and Chandigarh have not shown "seizure" at any of the bookies' places as they were ready to pay penalties for not disclosing their income and assets to the tax authorities after their assessment.

Mr Parija said: "Almost all bookies examined so far, are ready to pay proper tax returns and so the department has not shown seizure at their places. The department is least concerned about the source of their earnings. Our concern is

whether they have disclosed their earnings and assets in a proper form or not."

The department has prepared a list of bookies including Surinder Singh Malhotra, Hiren D Hathi, Shobhan Mehta, Rattan Mehta and Mona Mehta, Deepak Kumar, Yudhishtar Kumar and Jyoti Kumar, Hans Kumar Jain and Rajesh Kumar Jain, Mukesh Gupta, Karun Dubey, Tapati Ahuja, Anand Saxena, Manmohan Khattar, Prashant Kumar Dash, Praveen Kumar Gupta and Atul Gupta, M/s Kamla Radio, Deepak Kumar and others.

Nikhil Chopra is expected to arrive in Delhi by Monday while Ajay Sharma has assured the Income Tax officials that he would be here by 9 September.

THE STATESMAN

13 AUG 2000

# Musharraf call to India

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 13. The Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, urged India to reciprocate the offer of "meaningful dialogue". At the same time, he asserted that Pakistan would continue to provide "all moral, diplomatic and political" support to those engaged in fighting the Indian Government in Kashmir.

In a message on the eve of Pakistan's Independence Day, Gen. Musharraf maintained that peace in the region was not possible without resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Gen. Musharraf said, "I congratulate the people of India on

their Independence Day. I urge them and the Indian media to make their country's leadership shun obstinacy, stop the suppression in Indian-held Kashmir and show reciprocity to Pakistan's offer of meaningful dialogue. Let them come forward so that we can work together for peace in the region."

Pakistan was peace-loving and it desired a harmonious co-existence with all countries of the world, particularly neighbours. It was fully aware that South Asia was an "extremely volatile region". However, he blamed "intractability of India over Kashmir" as the cause for the tension in the region.

THE HINDU

14 AUG 2000

# Reciprocate our offer of talks, Musharraf to India

Islamabad, August 13

**A**RMY RULER Gen Pervez Musharraf today asked India to "show reciprocity" to Pakistan's offer of "meaningful" dialogue saying Islamabad desires tranquil and harmonious coexistence with all of its neighbours.

Accusing India of being obstinate on Pakistan's offer of holding talks, Gen Musharraf urged the people of India to impress upon their leadership to reciprocate to Islamabad's dialogue offer. He also congratulated India on the eve of its Independence Day.

"Let them (Indians) come forward so that we can work together for peace in the region, which is not possible without a resolution of the Kashmir dispute. This is essential for ensuring a bright and prosperous future for our peoples," the Pakistani ruler said in his message on the occasion of Pakistan's 53rd Independence Day today.

Assuring the international community that Pakistan is a peace-loving and responsible country, he said more than a country, Pakistan is an ideology of hope for the Muslims of South Asia, which has by no means ended.

Gen. Pervez Mushaf is expected to use Independence Day to unveil long-awaited details of his vision to slowly return Pakistan to a "real democracy", beginning with a transfer of powers setting up elect-

ed local councils by mid-2001.

But most of the country's political parties are expected to mark the day by clamouring again for early national elections, with any reforms to be left to future, civilian rulers, and demanding an end to restrictions on political activity.

## Quetta rocked

**THREE BOMBS** shook the southwestern Pakistani city of Quetta yesterday night, the latest in a spate of blasts in the impoverished province of Baluchistan, a report said.

The explosions, one of which appeared to have targeted a federal police station, occurred after 10 p.m. and caused damage, the official Associated Press of Pakistan reported. Police policer Athar Hussain Sial said "tight" security in the town following several explosions in recent weeks succeeded in confining yesterday's attacks to quiet areas where the damage would be minimal.

AFP, Islamabad

No quick solution to the impasse seems to be in sight.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar has vowed to get tough with Arab militants living in Pakistan since the Afghan war against the Soviets in the 1980s, a report said.

Pakistan has come under mounting pressure from its Middle Eastern allies to rein in the Arabs, who are suspected of plotting terrorist attacks against their homelands, the official Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

"We in Pakistan have declared our policy clearly that we will not allow the use of our soil for any activity against peace and integrity of Arab countries," Sattar said in an interview with a television station in Qatar.

"Such activities are not acceptable to us. We... Through our contacts with the Afghan Government have started trying to identify those individuals who are using Afghan territories for sabotage activities in their countries of origin.

He said 25,000 Arabs who came to fight the jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989 had not returned and many were now living in Pakistan.

Some of the so-called Afghan Arabs are believed to be working with Muslim extremist groups allegedly operating in Afghanistan, which is condemned internationally for harbouring suspected Saudi terrorist Osama Bin Laden.

Middle Eastern countries have made strong protests to Islamabad to clamp down on their networks in Pakistan, especially in the semi-autonomous North West Frontier Province bordering Afghanistan.

(Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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# Envoy to Pak. <sup>17/8</sup> presents credentials

By B. Muralidhar Reddy <sup>Indo Pak 40-12</sup> good relations in the interest of both the countries.

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 16. The new Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Vijay Nambiar, today presented his credentials to the Pakistani President, Mr. Rafiq Tarar, and is believed to have underscored the need to address the issue of 'violence'.

Mr. Nambiar, who till recently was the Indian Ambassador in Beijing, in the course of his brief interaction with Mr. Tarar is understood to have reiterated India's position on Kashmir and all other issues of bilateral concern to India and Pakistan.

The Pakistani President on his part told the High Commissioner that the relations between the two countries could improve only if the 'core issue' of Kashmir is resolved. Mr. Nambiar told the President that he looked forward to development of long term

In an informal chat with *The Hindu* after presenting his credentials, Mr. Nambiar said "I am looking forward to understanding the complex environment".

Mr. Nambiar said his priorities would be to push for 'people to people dynamics' and look forward from time to time to express the clear understanding of the mood of the Indian Government and its policy requirements that could help the process of dialogue.

"My priorities would be to maintain the safety and dignity of the Indian mission and personnel and maintain the dignity of the High Commission with Pakistan Foreign Office and other offices in the Government so that we prevent any downside in our relations", Mr. Nambiar said.

THE HINDU

17 AUG 2000

# India, Pak exchange prisoners

HT Correspondent  
Wagah, August 16

ALTOGETHER 11 INDIAN and Pakistani nationals were repatriated here today at this international border between India and Pakistan.

Among them eight were Pakistanis and three were Indians. They were lodged in jails for violating passport and visa rules. Some of them were caught allegedly spying. They had completed their jail term and were awaiting their deportation.

Initially 19 persons, 15 Pakistanis and 4 Indians, were to be repatriated, but owing to non-verification

by Pakistani authorities seven Pakistani nationals could not be handed over. Similarly Indian authorities were yet to identify one of their nationals.

All the Pakistani nationals were brought from Jammu Central Jail, where they were serving their jail term. Whereas Indian nationals were brought from Rawalpindi and other jails. Among the three Indians, two claimed that they were sent by the Indian intelligence agencies and were caught by Pakistani counter-intelligence. One, Rambilas, a Bihari, said he by mistake took the Samjhauta Express and was caught by authorities there. All the three had served

five-year terms in various Pakistani jails. Manzur Hussain, about 60, belonged to Poonch area of Jammu and was caught in Pakistan with a camera and some other material. He spoke about inhuman conditions in Pakistani jails. According to him at least 17 Indians were in Kotlakhpat alone. No medical facilities are being provided to Indian prisoners.

Bansal, of Gurdaspur was also arrested for spying activities in Pakistan. He said at Rawalpindi jail, a cell meant for 15 prisoners, had 53 inmates. Indian prisoners are targets of Pakistani authorities for beating and other inhuman treatment.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

57 AUG 2000

# IAF man held for church blasts, spying for Pakistan

HT Correspondent  
Bangalore, August 17

KARNATAKA POLICE today announced it had arrested a Junior Warrant Officer of the Indian Air Force in Gurgaon for his alleged involvement in bomb blasts that rocked churches of South India recently.

The JWO, Syed Hasan Ur Zama (50), has "admitted" to collecting and forwarding sensitive information about locations of various important defence establishments to contacts in Pakistan.

Police said Zama, a native of Karnataka, belonged to the Deendar Anjuman sect, whose members had allegedly spearheaded the blasts across Karnataka, Goa and AP from May to July. Zama was apparently present at several meetings where the above conspiracy was hatched.

Karnataka's State Corps of Detectives (CoD) arrested Zama, posted in Delhi. Zama was apprehended from Gurgaon. He was produced before a local magistrate in Delhi and is now in CoD

custody, Bangalore.

Senior IAF personnel in plain clothes were present at today's Press conference where the announcement was made. The arrest of Zama and 15 others has

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The JWO has "admitted" to collecting and forwarding sensitive information about locations of various important defence establishments to contacts in Pakistan

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more or less concluded investigations into the blasts.

Some of the arrested were also involved in desecrating statues of Dr Ambedkar in Maharashtra. There was a temple and mosque that were also targeted along with the blasts in the churches.

One of the accused who was to have triggered off a blast in a church in Solhapur panicked at the last minute and threw the bomb into a well. "We have recovered that", said Mr Bhaskar.

Except the timing device, which was sophisticated, the technology used in the bombs was outdated., Mr Dinakar said.

The conspiracy was apparently hatched last year in Hyderabad. At that time, the present "guru" of the group Zia Ul Hassan arrived in the city from Peshawar in Pakistan and called his "close" followers in the sect where he announced a "jihad" (holy war) against India. He urged the followers to aim at making India an Islamic country and for this, they should be prepared for any sacrifice.

The intention was to "create enmity among the various communities in India".

Syed Hasan Ur Zama (in custody) was made the coordinator for these activities. Several "conspiracy meetings" were held in various cities.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

18 AUG 2000

# India wants Pak out of pipeline deal with Iran

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 21. — India and Iran have begun talks on the possibility of a pipeline but the method of transferring Iranian gas to India is not certain.

The first meeting of the India-Iran joint committee was concluded yesterday in Tehran and while both countries want a tie-up, India has insisted it be a bilateral relationship, keeping Pakistan out.

If that is finally agreed upon, there is little chance of a pipeline being laid from Iran to India via Pakistan.

There can be two possibilities with off-shore pipelines. There could be one along the continental shelf, but this has technical and security problems.

The other possibility is feasible, but extremely ambitious and expensive: of laying a pipeline at the bottom of the Arabian Sea. Technology for such an option may exist, but it is believed to be very expensive.

The other option is the possibility of liquefying the natural gas and transferring it. This is a feasible option and is also being looked at, officials said. According to ministry of external affairs sources, the high-level joint committee is looking at different possibilities and "these include on-shore and off-shore pipelines as well as liq-

uefied natural gas".

Officials said security issues needed to be looked at very seriously to ensure the supply of gas to India was secured. This was the first meeting of the joint committee and the next meeting will be held here later.

Both countries have agreed that "in view of Iran's extensive gas reserves and India's increasing energy needs, long-term arrangements for cooperation between the two countries in the field of natural gas were highly desirable".

**Indo-Maldives defence co-operation:** Military co-operation between India and Maldives is continuing with a large number of personnel of the National Security Service of the Maldives being trained in India. About 500 have already been trained.

India is also supplying military equipment including ammunition, grenades, and the Coast Guard was involved in training and joint exercises with the Maldives. The exercises were called Dosti Seas. The Navy chief, Admiral Sushil Kumar, visited the Maldives recently.

The Maldives President, Mr MA Gayoom, is currently in India and the Maldives has appreciated India's stand on environmental issues as the threat of global warming is a threat to the existence of this island country.

THE STATESMAN

22 AUG 2000

# Pak. team coming for track-II diplomacy

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

27/8  
9:30 Pak HO-13  
ISLAMABAD, AUG. 21. A delegation of eminent citizens from Pakistan, representing the non-governmental organisations, would be in India on a week-long visit as part of what is known as 'track-II diplomacy,' in a bid to promote bilateral relations.

In international parlance, 'track-II diplomacy' consists of efforts made by institutions and individuals outside the governmental framework for the betterment of ties between two countries.

The seven-member Pakistani delegation, led by Brig. (Retd) Shaukat Qadir, president, Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IS-RI), would interact with academicians and intellectuals in various research institutes in New Delhi. These include the Delhi Policy Group led by Gen. (Retd.) V. R. Raghavan, the United Ser-

vices Institute (a body of retired officers of the Indian armed forces), Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies and Institute of Peace Initiatives.

The focus of interaction would be on "Nuclear Restraint and Risk Reduction; Measures in South Asia." The delegation members would speak in different forums on subjects like 'future of Indo-Pak. relations' and 'understanding Pakistan'.

In an informal chat with *The Hindu* Brig. Qadir said the delegation would extend an invitation to their counterparts in Delhi to visit Islamabad and continue the process of dialogue.

"It is a modest effort to start the dialogue at the academic level. We need not overemphasise the imperative of such an interaction, particularly when both the Governments have taken a rigid stand on differences between them."

THE HINDU

21 AUG 2000



# Pak bid to begin Track-II diplomacy

NIVEDITA MUKHERJEE  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug 23. — Diplomatic endeavours have begun to put back on track the fractured dialogue between India and Pakistan though there is nothing official about it. Even as former Pakistan foreign secretary, Mr Niaz A Naik gets set to travel to India in the first week of September to resume "Track-II" diplomacy between the two countries, a four-member Pakistani delegation has arrived in the capital to warm up the atmosphere.

The aim of this latest phase of the 9 year-long "non-official diplomacy" or Track-II diplomacy is to discuss nuclear restraint and risk reduction in South Asia. This initiative comes close on the heels of a discussion earlier this month on nuclear safety and security in South Asia in Thailand (11-12 August) where both Indian and Pakistani teams participated, and will be followed by a much procrastinated visit to Islamabad by an Indian team and another such forum at Honolulu in September.

The team will hold closed-door meetings with the Indian counterparts tomorrow on nuclear restraint issues and on the entire gamut of Indo-Pak

## '71 DEFEAT

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 23. — Pakistani surrender during the Bangladesh Liberation War had been ordered by the then Pakistani President, Yayha Khan, and army chief, General Hameed, commander of the troops of the defeated army said today.

In his first reaction over the publication of Hamoodur Rehman Commission report probing Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 war, Mr Ameer Abdullah Khan Niazi, who led Pakistani occupation troops in Bangladesh, denied being responsible for the surrender. — PTI

relations. They will also address audience at several fora for making people understand the urgency of taking the peace process ahead.

Speaking to **The Statesman**, Brigadier Shaukat Qadir (Retd), a founding member of the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, who is leading the team, brushed off any import to the timing of their visit with the Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting in USA next month caught in the "will they-won't they" debate.

Strongly believing that a meeting between Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and General

Musharraf was urgently necessary, Brigadier Qadir said it does not help matters when foreign ministers of the two countries travel on the same plane and refuse to look at each other. "Isn't this ridiculous? They don't even shake hands. Jaswant Singh enters the plane and refuses to look at Abdus Sattar who also returns the compliment."

Agreeing India has a legitimate cause in demanding an end to terrorism before talks, Brigadier Qadir said, "laying down conditions cannot help to put a stop to terrorism. "You feel you have a legitimate cause. Isn't that itself a reason enough to talk. I think it was Barak who said, "I don't need to talk to my friends. I need to talk to my enemy. If you start by saying that stop this before we do this, then you are tying your hands."

Nuclear restraint is utmost necessary, agrees the team, but the West's perception of South Asia as having reached a nuclear flashpoint are exaggerated.

"I think both (India and Pakistan) are pretty responsible and don't want to go to war. But I think the apprehension of war by accident or one which takes place because of misinterpretation is very real. The world has not seen such a paradigm of conflict before," said Brig Qadir.

THE STATESMAN

24 AUG 2000

# Pak attack on Doda post foiled

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE  
& AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, Aug. 24. — At least 10 Pakistani soldiers were killed and several wounded when the Army foiled a Pakistani bid to attack a forward Indian post on the LoC in Doda early this morning. The Indian side suffered one casualty while another was reported missing.

A defence spokesman said jawans saw about 30-40 Pakistani soldiers approaching the Indian post at 4 a.m. The troops fired heavily on the Pak soldiers. A heavy exchange of fire followed, forcing the Pakistanis to withdraw.

Enemy troops fled leaving behind the bodies of two of their colleagues, an Army spokesman said.

In a statement in Islamabad, Pakistan admitted that two of its soldiers were killed in the clash and two were missing.

**Landmine blast:** In the second such incident this week, an Army vehicle was blown up when militants detonated a powerful bomb at Puthkhai in Baramulla today.

Five security personnel in the vehicle received splinter injuries. The condition of some of them was stated to be critical.

Fifteen militants and a jawan were killed and missiles and rockets recovered in the state

in the past 24 hours.

Five militants and a jawan were killed in an encounter at Gosai in north Kashmir last evening during a search operation. Forces later recovered four AK rifles, 11 magazines, six remote control devices, one grenade launcher, seven grenades, two disposable rocket launchers, 10 anti-tank grenades, five rockets, 50 detonators and 10 gelatin sticks.

Two militants were gunned down at Sawjian and Saranchi in two separate encounters early this morning. Six militants were killed in another encounter in Poonch.

At least two jawans were injured when militants attacked their vehicle at Ahlan Gadol Kokernag.

**KLF arrests:** Delhi Police today said it neutralised a powerful module of the dreaded Khalistan Zinda-

bad Force in Nepal with the arrest of three persons, including the sister-in-law of the outfit's Lahore-based chief Ranjit Singh, on 14 August, from a gurdwara near Parliament House.

A 2.8-kg high-grade bomb fitted with a timer was seized from them. The duo confessed that they were planning to plant the bomb at a busy area in Delhi before the Independence Day function.

■ Another report on page 8

## EXPULSION

NEW DELHI, Aug. 24.

— The external affairs ministry today called in the Pakistan Deputy High Commissioner and informed him that a Pakistani staff member would have to leave India by 31 August. The staff member, Mr Malik Muhammed Rafique, "was found indulging in activities incompatible with his official status", said a release.

There has been no 'retaliation' from Pakistan so far. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2000

# Fijian Govt. questions Chaudhry's loyalty

19-12 By Amit Baruah

SINGAPORE, AUG. 24. The interim Fijian Government has launched a vicious attack on the ousted Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, for visiting India. "After talking of forgiveness and reconciliation in Fiji, Mr. Chaudhry has revealed the truth in India. He will not forget and he will not forgive," said a Government release. "In his fight, he is asking for the support of India against Fiji and its people — 1.2 billion against 0.8 of a million," the statement said. "He has told India and its political leaders that Fiji Indians see India as their mother country. So why is he trying to be Prime Minister when his real loyalty lies elsewhere," it said.

Interestingly, those Fiji Indians who wish to emigrate, queue in front of the High Commissions of Australia and New Zealand or at the entrance of the United States Embassy, and do not besiege the Indian High Commission. So much for mistaken loyalty. Mr. Chaudhry, given his rapturous welcome in Haryana, should leave Fiji alone and try his political fortunes in his motherland.", the statement added.

The interim Prime Minister, Mr. Laisenia Qarase, meanwhile, has said that Fijian Indians were not alone in their struggle for

equal recognition and acceptance. According to Mr. Qarase, the May 19 events, rightly or otherwise, were the culmination of Fijians' frustrations over what they perceived as the former Government's discriminatory policies against Fijian interests and insensitivity to Fijian institutions.

The Fijians, in his view, felt that they were being left behind as the country made progress and that their contribution in "sharing their land" and other resources was not being properly recognised. "Let me stress, however, that paying more attention to the indigenous Fijians and Rotuman communities does not in any way mean that we, as a Government, have forgotten the Indian community and indeed, all the other communities which make up 48 per cent of our population, and for whom also Fiji is the permanent home," Mr. Qarase stated.

"Let me assure our Indian brothers and sisters that the current political impasse was forced upon us. What has happened has happened. It is time we rallied round in support of one another," he said.

Meanwhile, Mr. George Speight, who faces treason charges along with 16 associates, has sought release from jail saying that he was unfairly incarcerated.

THE HINDU

25 AUG 2000

# Forces told to target Lashkar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE *pmk*

*gnd*  
NEW DELHI, Aug. 24. — Security forces are learnt to have received instructions to target the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba, which has emerged as the most dangerous militant outfit in Kashmir.

Given that the Lashkar is itching to take on the Hizbul Mujahideen to "avenge" the abortive ceasefire, the new strategy is expected to play a crucial role in putting Hizbul cadres at ease. "The message will be clear. Hizbul militants are our own people, members of other outfits are foreign mercenaries," an officer said.

Sources say the security forces have a fair knowledge of the areas where these groups operate and it's not difficult to focus on Lashkar. The forces are also banking on information from locals who had welcomed the peace initiative but were disappointed that it came to an abrupt end.

Lashkar today contested the police claim that six persons allegedly involved in the recent car bomb in Srinagar belonged to the outfit. "The claim is nothing but an eyewash," its spokesman said, adds PTI.

## PoK on peace move

The Pakistan-occupied Kashmir government has asked India to respond positively to the "peace efforts" of the Hizbul and said consultation with the people of Kashmir was essential for any durable solution to the Kashmir issue.

The PoK Cabinet yesterday said India had wasted a "golden opportunity" to settle the Kashmir issue in the wake of Hizbul's unilateral ceasefire offer and accused New Delhi of adopting "intransigent and hypocritical attitude" towards the problem.

"Instead of taking the benefit of the offer, the Indian government tried in vain to sow seeds of dissension between the Hizbul and the Hurriyat and other groups," the Cabinet said.

THE STATESMAN

25 AUG 2000

# India, Pak. reposition forces in Dras

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, AUG. 27. In repositioning their defences in the Dras sector, India and Pakistan appear to have violated a key confidence building measure without making any strategic headway around the Line of Control (LoC).

Highly placed sources in the Government said Pakistan has occupied Point 5353 in the Dras sector. Located at a height of 17561 feet, this feature is positioned right on the LoC - the agreed interim alignment which divides most of Kashmir.

This feature overlooks Marpo La, a key pass on the LoC which India dominates. It also supplements Pakistani observation of National Highway 1A in the Dras sector.

Pakistan had occupied Point 5353 during the Kargil war. Pakistan, according to reports, had held this feature at least as late as July 25, 1999, a day before the Army publicly declared that its intrusion in Kargil was over.

Islamabad's motive for occupying this peak is clear. According to one assessment, it was finding it difficult to keep a strict vigil on Marpo La without holding this peak.

The sources pointed out that a large tract south of Point 5353 is heavily glaciated. In-

hospitable terrain was, therefore, forcing Pakistan to build its defences five to six km in the rear, somewhere along the Shingo river on its side of the LoC, degrading its tactical profile in the area.

Incidentally, Pakistan has constructed the Palawar- Bunyal road which straddles the Shingo on its side of the LoC. Bulk supplies are off-loaded in the vicinity at supply hubs such as Gultari and Farnshat before being sent to frontline locations, including point 5353.

India, in order to neutralise the Pakistani edge in this area, has occupied Point 5070, a 16731 feet feature located on the slope between Marpo La and Point 5353. Indian supplies are pushed along a path straddling the Sando nullah. The rest of the area on the Indian side in this zone is also glaciated, including the frozen wastes of Pariyon Ka Talab (PKT).

Despite India's counter-move, the occupation of Point 5353 does give Islamabad some tactical advantage in the Dras sector. Pakistan, for instance, is now in better positioned to lean on the Indian forces around Marpo La. The occupation of this peak, however, does not significantly enhance Pakistan's capacity to observe the Srinagar-Leh highway

in the Dras area. Pakistan, it is understood, can better observe the highway from its posts at Point 5108, Twin Bumps and Taimur.

By restructuring their defences, India and Pakistan have failed to draw any major strategic advantage around the LoC. New Delhi, for instance, is not hampered to subject the Palawar- Bunyal road to artillery fire, as it occupies Point 5608 - a 18506 feet peak in the neighbouring Kaksar sector.

India also holds Point 5245, a useful observation platform in this area. By occupying Point 5353, Pakistan, on the contrary, also cannot materially alter the status quo along the LoC.

The fresh deployment of forces in Dras shows that both sides may have violated their agreement which was negotiated to terminate the Kargil war.

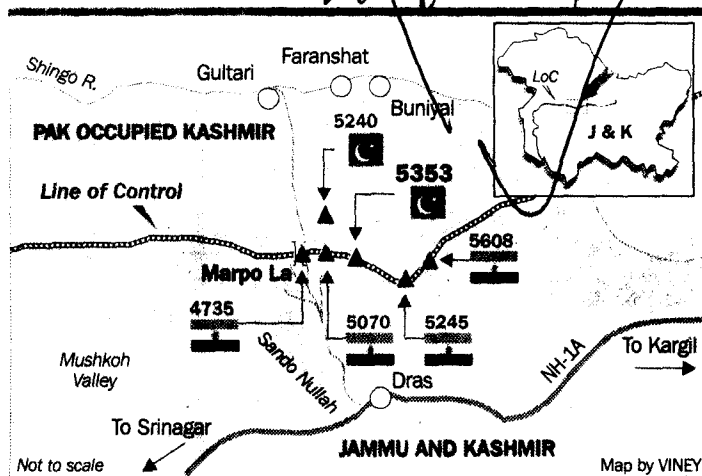
In one of the two meetings reportedly held in July at the Indo-Pak. border in Atari, the Director(s) General of Military Operations (DGMO) of India and Pakistan had agreed not to build any "fresh" defences in a one Km. zone on either side of the LoC.

This was stated by the DGMO, Lt. General N. C. Vij, at a press conference on July 26, 1999, amid skepticism that Pakistan could renege from this understanding in the future.

THE HINDU

28 AUG 2000

# Pakistan violated 'pact' by erecting defences at Pt 5353



Subsequent occupation of Point 5353 by the Pakistani forces left India little options but to erect defences at Point 5070, approximately three kilometers west of the 17,561-foot peak, in order to cushion its troops at the strategic 4735-meter Marpo La. The Indian Army also countered Pakistani moves in the area by deploying its troops at Point 5245, approximately five kilometres east of Point 5353.

Both Point 5070 and Point 5245 are on the LoC and provide good observation of the Pakistani supply route for Point 5353. The same can be said about Point 5353 as it is the highest peak in the Dras sector and provides Pakistani troops some view of the Indian supply route-along the tributaries of the Sando Nullah to

Marpo La and the two peaks.

But it is still not clear whether Point 5070 and Point 5245 offer the Indian Army better observation of Pakistani occupied territory as compared to Point 5353. This can, perhaps, only be decided by local army commanders in the Dras sector.

While the Indian Army has tried to downplay the importance of Point 5353, it is a fact that the peak is of considerable tactical importance in the Dras sector in terms of its proximity to Marpo La. The Pass, which is dominated by Indian forces, is snow-free between April-October and can be used as an ingress route into the Dras-Mushkoh sector from Gultari across the LoC.

The Indian Army's argument that Indian forces occupy the highest peak (Point 5608) to counter the adversary's position at Point 5353 is of little consequence as the former is some 15 kilometers away in the Thasgam-Karbu area in the Kaksar sub-sector. The fact is that Point 5353, located some 11.5 kilometers from the Dras-Kargil highway, provides some observation of the National Highway 1A.

This apparently was not the case prior to the Kargil war as at that time only the highway in the Kaksar sector could be targeted by Pakistani artillery through observation from Taimur, Point 5108 and the Twin Bumps posts. These posts are located in the Barbat-Buniyal area in the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

**Shishir Gupta**  
New Delhi, August 27

IN RE-DEPLOYING its forces post-Kargil in the Dras sector, Pakistan and consequently India have negated a key confidence building measure of not erecting fresh defences within a kilometre of either side of the Line of Control (LoC).

This measure, which was aimed at preventing undue escalation of military tensions along the LoC, was worked out in meetings between the Indian Director General Military Operations Lt-General N.C. Vij and his Pakistani counterpart Lt-Gen. Tauqir Zia in July, last year.

However, Pakistan apparently first violated this understanding by erecting new defences at Point 5353, a 17,561-foot high peak striding the LoC in the Dras sector. That the Pakistani forces did not control Point 5353 prior to the Kargil war is evident from the Indian Army's briefing of the media on July 25, 1999. The Army spokesman was quoted as having said that heavy fighting was on to capture Point 5353 and the tri-junction, both areas vital to gain dominance at the LoC.

A day later, Indian DGMO Gen. Vij said that Pakistan had not kept its word on the agreed CBM and was attempting to occupy three features very close to the LoC. This obviously means that Pakistan had breached the LoC CBM and used conflict in the Dras sector to gain dominance of the area.

## Behind the News

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 AUG 2000

# Pak intruders still on Kargil peaks, says MP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 30. — The controversy over Pt 5353 in the Kargil sector has snowballed into the political arena. Mr RK Anand, Rajya Sabha MP representing the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, today charged the Army with mounting a massive cover-up, and contended that there were a total of six peaks on the Indian side of the Line of Control currently occupied by Pakistani forces.

In addition to Pt 5353, Mr Anand told a press conference, the peaks illegally occupied by Pakistan were: Pt Aftab-I, Pt Saddle Ridge, Pt Bunker Ridge, Shangruti and Dhalunag. The defence minister had not been correct when he told Parliament earlier this month that all the areas occupied by Pakistan during the Kargil

War had been cleared.

Nor had the Director General of Military Operations been correct when declaring, on 26 July 1999, that "Indian territory is free from Pakistani presence". Mr Anand demanded the setting up of a parliamentary committee to visit the sector and verify the factual position.

Mr Anand said that the defence minister could not be directly blamed for the misleading statements — he was basing them on information furnished to him by the Army. While coming down heavily on the top brass of the Army, he also said that the government had not allowed the war to reach its desired conclusion because it was in a hurry to project a victory during the election campaign last year.

The well-known lawyer said his raising the issue today was

in no way connected with his representation in Delhi High Court of Col P Oberoi, who had been removed from the command of 16 Grenadiers deployed in the Dras sector last summer. The officer had been "side-stepped" during Operation Vijay.

During the monsoon session of the Rajya Sabha, he had given notice of four calling attention motions and one short duration discussion on the matter, and sought to make special mentions on the subject on no fewer than three occasions. Permission was not denied, but never granted to him, Mr Anand complained. His letter to Mr George Fernandes on the issue (dated 7 August) had received no reply.

The Army's contention that Pt 5353 was not on the Indian



Gen Malik Iyng

side of the LoC, and that it had never been held by Indian forces was not correct. The feature was 300-500 m on the Indian side. Neither side had held the peak when the LoC was finalised after the Simla Agreement, but subsequently

Pak troops had used it as an observation post, to direct artillery fire on the Zoji La-Leh highway.

According to Mr Anand, in the summers of 1992 and 1993, Indian forces had used helicopters to take possession of Pt 5353, which gave them a strategic advantage. Pakistan had protested, India said it had not established a base there (which would have violated the Simla Agreement) but asserted that it was entitled to patrol the peak since it was on the Indian side-of the LoC.

Even last year, on 18 and 19 May, Indian troops had tried to take control of the feature. Mr Anand released to the media what he said were copies of reports from Maj. Navneet Mehta who had been ordered to take Pt 5353. One was the plan for the attack, the other spoke

of the attack being called off because of bad weather, poor visibility, and having sustained 13 casualties.

The government had consistently said that Operation Vijay was conducted on the Indian side of the LoC, so the attempted attack on Pt 5353 established that it was on the Indian side, Mr Anand contended. The Army had recently been putting out misleading accounts of what was taking place, trying to create an impression that the peak was of only limited tactical advantage.

Contending that national security was being compromised, Mr Anand said that instead of punitive action against the Army officers responsible for the fiasco at Kargil, rewards and awards were being handed out. He

questioned the role of the Chief of Army Staff, the Commander of 15 Corps, and the Director General of Military Intelligence.

The two Lieutenant-Generals had since been given plum postings.

It was all too easy to blame the Intelligence agencies, Mr Anand asked what Military Intelligence was doing if it could not detect intrusions into Indian-held territory.

The DGMI had a budget of Rs 117 crore a year — which was more than the Research & Analyses Wing's allocation for gathering defence-related intelligence.

Asked what action he would consider desirable at this stage, Mr Anand replied: "Either throw them off those peaks, or stop claiming that you won the War."

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# Pak. expels Indian embassy staffer

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 26 In what is seen as a 'tit-for-tat action', Pakistan today ordered the expulsion of a staffer in the Indian High Commission on the ground that his activities are "incompatible with his official status".

The action came within 48 hours after India expelled a staffer in the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi on similar charges. The diplomatic expression 'activities incompatible with official status' is an euphemism for spying.

The Indian Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Sudhir Vyas, was summoned to the Foreign Office here this morning and told that the Indian High Commission staffer in the Visa section, Mr. P.C. Dey, should leave Pakistan by September 2. India had asked the Pakistani

embassy staffer, Mr. Malik Mohammad Rafiq, to leave the country by August 31.

Mr. Vyas reportedly told the Foreign Office that there was no substance in the charges against Mr. Dey and complained that the charges had been trumped up as a retaliation for the action against the staffer in Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi.

On Friday, Pakistan had accused India of expelling 16 officials of its High Commission in New Delhi in the last five years and said there have been over 80 incidents of harassment, beating and trespass of residence of officials serving in the High Commission in breach of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations of 1961 and the accord between the two countries in 1992.

Pakistan had summoned Mr. Vyas on Friday and lodged a strong protest against what it

termed as trespass into the residence of the Air Advisor in the High Commission by a group of persons claiming to be officials from the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

Reacting to the Pakistan statement, a senior Indian diplomat said here that if "we tabulate the number of cases of expulsion and harassment" in the Islamabad High Commission they would far exceed the number claimed by Pakistan.

## 'Unwarranted'

UNI reports from New Delhi:

India described as "unwarranted and unjustified" the expulsion by Pakistan of an Indian High Commission official in Islamabad.

An external affairs ministry spokesman said the expulsion was "clearly a retaliatory action and entirely unwarranted and unjustified."

THE HINDU

27 AUG 2001



## Other People's Peace

Good news at last from Sierra Leone: The Revolutionary United Front has released, much to the relief of their families and the entire country, the 21 Indian soldiers held hostage since May 2. The RUF continues to hold under siege two companies of Gorkhas on peacekeeping duties and it is sad that there's been very little public attention on these brave soldiers fighting someone else's war — or to be precise, enforcing someone else's peace. At least, India's quiet diplomacy — working with the UN secretary-general and African leaders — has helped free the 21 soldiers, and it is hoped our sensitive international statecraft will also help bring home the encircled Gorkha companies. The important question, however, is whether it is worth risking the safety of our men by sending them to serve in faraway lands, under the UN flag, wearing UN blue berets. The least that can be done is to give them the same importance as other men in uniform. Since the government of India is not known for its sense of history, it has not even published an official account of the Indian serviceman's role on UN peacekeeping missions. The Indian armed forces have been one of the earliest to go on such missions as far back as the Korean armistice. In fact, very few armies in the world can boast of such a long, rich, variegated experience of peacekeeping as the Indian army. Generals Thimmayya, Thorat, Rikye, Gyani, Premchand, Noronha, Nambiar and now General Jaitley have led many successful international peace keeping missions.

But it is politics and not military factors which are to blame for the difficulties faced by our men in Sierra Leone. They were sent on a peacekeeping mission on the assumption that both sides in the internal conflict in Sierra Leone had genuinely agreed to the ceasefire. This was a political misjudgment on the part of the UN and — to a much lesser extent — our own foreign office. There have been allegations that our forces were sent in without an adequate assessment of the risks involved. If they'd known that the war was still on, they would have equipped themselves differently and operational tactics would have been different. The conflict in Sierra Leone has been one of the most brutal, with allegations of untold atrocities on civilians, especially by the RUF. The conflict has involved a number of African countries and diamond companies, some of whom have been supporting the RUF against the elected democratic government. The main issue has been of control over the diamond-rich regions in and around Sierra Leone. It is, therefore, in essence, an African conflict and the Vajpayee government will have to explain why India agreed to send a sizable peacekeeping force there, and what kind of assessment it had. In any case, there should have been close consultations with Nigeria, which has played a key role in bringing about an agreement earlier between President Kabbah and the RUF. It is true that if Prime Minister Vajpayee wants India to play a larger global role we cannot shirk such responsibilities. But India must develop diplomatic skills and global assessment capabilities before our men are sent on such risky missions.

# Hostages' safety comes first, says Fiji military

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1/7  
SUA, JUNE 30. Fiji's military, which is preparing a no-go zone around the rebels who are holding 27 political hostages, said today it would prefer to let the crisis drag on rather than endanger the lives of hostages.

*I. Sireli & Co*  
"It is a crisis situation. If things go terribly wrong, people would expect the military to respond accordingly," the military spokesman, Lieutenant-Colonel Filipo Tarakinikini, said. "I would prefer to let the crisis drag on rather than endanger the lives of hostages," he said.

Rebels led by former businessman, Mr. George Speight, have held the deposed Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, and 26 others hostage since storming Suva's parliamentary complex in the name of indigenous Fijian rights on May 19.

Mr. Speight has said his supporters might harm the hostages if the military launched an assault.

Meanwhile, an Air New Zealand Boeing 767 aircraft from Fiji carrying Maori activists, who had sought to offer support to Mr. Speight's rebels, was forced to return to Nadi in New Zealand today after a bomb threat, airline officials said.

Leading Maori activist, Mr. Tame Iti, and nine colleagues were on board the flight and radio reports in Fiji and New Zealand linked the threat to the refusal to allow the Maori into Fiji.

"Because they were here on visitors visas and meddling into the politics of a foreign country, the visa permit was denied," Col. Tarakinikini told the radio station.

The rebels have kept Mr. Chaudhry isolated from view during the six-week siege, but today allowed a photograph of the Prime Minister to be



The former Fijian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, embraces fellow hostage, Mr. Isireli Vuibau, Minister for Fijian Affairs, (facing the camera) at the Parliamentary complex in Suva on Thursday. — AP

published in a local newspaper.

The photo, believed to have been taken on Thursday, showed a bearded Mr. Chaudhry looking frail but smiling as he hugged another hostage, a Fijian Minister in his multi-racial coalition.

But the State-owned television station TV One, which was allowed to film him on Friday, showed a thin, bearded Mr. Chaudhry walking with his son, Rajendra, a fellow hostage.

The deposed Prime Minister looked angry and dejected and did not look anyone in the eye. "He looked weak and he still looks angry at everything that has happened," said the cameraman who filmed Mr. Chaudhry. "His movements are really slow."

While residents began

moving out from homes near Suva's parliament compound, there was no immediate sign of the military enforcing its planned exclusion zone around the area.

The military announced its plans for an exclusion zone yesterday after rebels failed to release hostages on Wednesday.

Down the road workers boarded up a large house, while nearby diplomatic residences were on stand-by to evacuate. Military roadblocks have ringed the parliamentary compound since the rebels staged their attempted coup.

The military is also considering cutting electricity and other services to the compound where some 200 rebels and supporters are camped. — Reuters

# Fiji army for Indians in govt

AP & IANS

SUVA, July 2. — Defying Fiji's hostage-takers who are demanding that ethnic Indians be stripped of political power, the army said today it would appoint a temporary government this week that would include Indians.

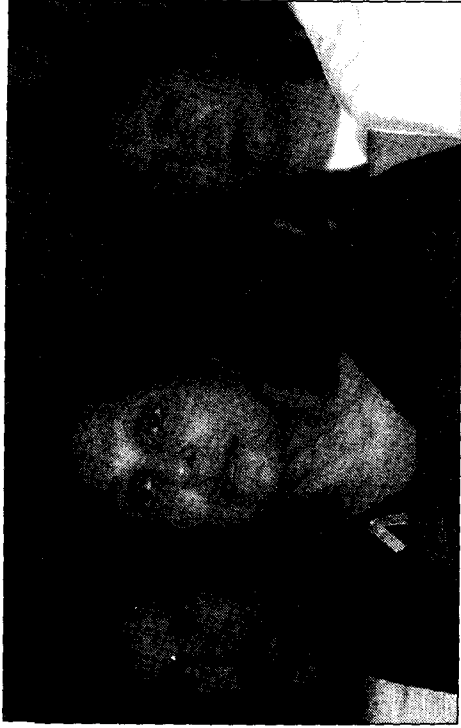
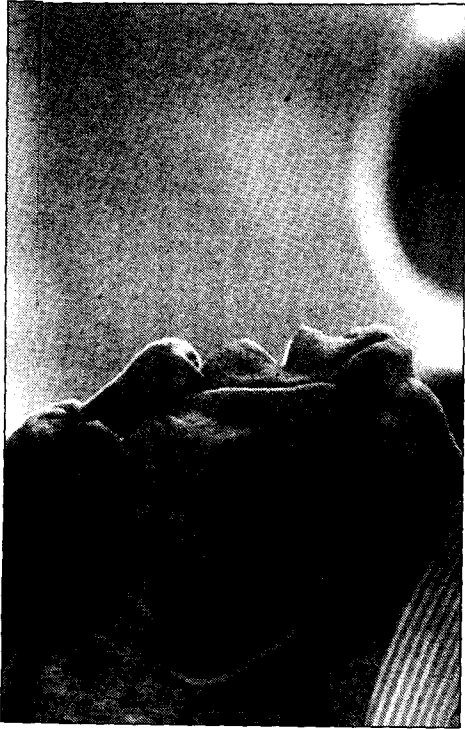
The announcement appeared to raise the stakes in a political standoff that has seen 27 members of Fiji's ousted Indian-led government held hostage for the past 43 days. "There will be ethnic Indo-Fijians in the interim government lineup, though percentages I cannot say at this point," Lt Col. Filipo tarakinikini said.

The military said last week that it would appoint an interim government without input from the hostage-takers, who had been demanding a role in naming such a government.

Last Thursday, Lt Col. Tarakinikini said the temporary government would take office only once the hostages were released. But today he said the army would not wait. "They will take office before the hostages are released," he said.

Responding to the military's latest statement, rebel spokesman Jo Nata said today "we hope they are prepared for the implications of their actions." He did not elaborate, but rebel leader George Speight has said in recent days that any mili-

Those who join will suffer Chaudhry's fate, warn Speight's followers



Former Special Air Services member, Mr Ilisoni Ligairi, the man many Fijians believe to be behind the coup, at a Sunday service in the parliament complex. (Left) The deposed Prime Minister's wife, Mrs Virmati Chaudhry, at a peace vigil at the Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral in Suva on Sunday. — AP/PTI

tary action perceived as anti-indigenous could result in violence by his supporters.

Today, Lt Col. Tarakinikini said the army which assumed power in the south Pacific nation 10 days after the Parliament raid was "determined to resolve the crisis in a peaceful manner". "We continue to maintain that the door for negotiations is still open," he said.

Most of the rebels' demands to disenfranchise Fiji's Indians have already been met, including the firing of Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, who is a

Supporters of George Speight have warned that Indians who choose to serve in the administration will suffer the same fate as members of the government of Mr Mahendra Chaudhry.

Army spokesman Mr Eroni Volavola confirmed that two ethnic Indians had been approached and declined the offer. They are Mr Iqbal Jannif, a businessman, and tobacco company executive Mr Thomas Raju.

There is also pressure from the Indian community on Indian leaders not to accept any appointment. "They will be only for window dressing and

serve as mere puppets of the regime," says National Federation Party spokesman, Mr Jagnath Sami.

Sources said the military may have no choice but to name an all-Fijian line-up. This is expected to happen as early as tomorrow.

**Military zone:** Fiji's army will within 24 hours declare an "exclusive military zone" sealing off the country's Parliament where the coup leaders are holding 27 hostages, including Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, AFP reports quoting military sources.

THE STATES

THE STATES

## Fiji military will perform executive functions

By P. S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE, JULY 3.** The Fiji military council will continue to perform all executive functions for the present and at least till the release of all political hostages. These would include, national security so defined as to cover the safety of the political hostages and their release unharmed. The civilian Cabinet would concentrate on rehabilitating the economy, shattered since Mr. George Speight's coup, besides drawing up programmes of affirmative social action for the native Fijians.

The military ruler, Cmdr. Bainimarama, today announced the formation of a civilian advisory council in the name and style of a Cabinet. He and other military officials took the line that two ethnic Indians, who were sounded for placements in the Cabinet, had declined to serve in the present circumstances of a certain polarisation in politics as between the indigenous people and the others.

As for constitution-making, Cmdr. Bainimarama said the terms of reference as might be drafted by the Cabinet as also the names of members of the Constitution Commission would be submitted to the Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), traditional repository of the interests and wisdom of the indigenous people. It would, thereafter, be the GCC's lookout to delineate a process of fashioning a new constitution and sketching out a road map for elections with adequate safeguards for the natives.

A signpost would be the Malay-

sian model of ensuring the primacy of the majority community, it was pointed out.

Somewhere along this proposed path, the Fijian military would set up an all-civilian administration even as the GCC might nominate a new Head of State or President. With the entire process calculated to last at least 18 months, the military would, however, continue to act as the country's conscience-keeper and custodian of security, it was indicated.

PTI reports from New Delhi: "We are waiting and watching" the situation there, a Foreign Office spokesperson told reporters in New Delhi adding "we are ascertaining the facts". Delhi has sought the release of Mr. Chaudhry and his Cabinet colleagues held hostage since May 19.

## Ship runs aground

By Our Special Correspondent

**MUMBAI, JULY 3.** A Liberian cargo ship ran aground offshore the Raj Bhavan here, but none of its seven-member Indian crew was hurt.

The 4500-tonne ship, *m.v. Ventura*, was being towed to Alang near Bhavnagar on the Saurashtra coast when the line got snapped, according to a Coast Guard source. The crew were shifted to the tug, Lauzurit.

An attempt was made today to pull out the ship with one more tug, but in vain. "Another attempt would be made tomorrow," the tug's crew told the pilot of a Coast Guard patrol helicopter.

4 JUL 2000

## Indians don't figure in new Fiji Cabinet

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, JULY 3. Fiji's military government today announced the formation of a civilian advisory council in the name and style of a



**Mr. Laisenia Qarase**

Cabinet without any place in it for the large minority of ethnic Indians. Yesterday, the military renewed its pledge to include ethnic Indians in such

a civilian set-up. Affirming the political paramountcy of the native Fijians, despite their narrow majority, the military ruler, Commodore J.V. (Frank) Bainimarama, said in the capital, Suva, today that the 1997 Constitution, under which an ethnic Indian had become Prime Minister, was not being resurrected. Instead, the new Cabinet, likely to be sworn in tomorrow to replace Cmdr. Bainimarama's military advisory council, would be mandated to draft the terms of reference for a proposed Constitution Commission.

Indicating this as also announcing that Mr. Laisenia Qarase, a non-political banker, would be the new Prime Minister, the military ruler said he would remain the Head of State, a post he assumed shortly after staging a counter-coup last May in a bid to checkmate the self-styled 'civil coup' leader, Mr. George Speight, who had seized the duly-elected Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendrapal Chaudhry, and others at gunpoint in the parliament complex.

See also Page 13

THE HINDU

# No Indians in interim Fiji Cabinet

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SYDNEY, July 3. — There were no ethnic Indians and no women in the interim civilian administration Fiji's military rulers named today to take over from the representative government.

But the new team still didn't find favour with George Speight, who warned the soldiers they would "have blood on their hands" for not picking his supporters.

The interim administration, headed by Mr Laisenia Qarase, a banker, and appointed by armed forces chief Commodore Frank Bainimarama, will be sworn in tomorrow and hold power until fresh elections are held in 18 months.

Mr Joe Nata, rebel spokesman, said choosing Mr Qarase would worsen the current stand-off between Commodore Bainimarama and Speight. "I fear it might even lead to a backlash and repercussions that may be beyond the control of both the military and our group. If there



Com Bainimarama

is bloodshed, it will be on their hands," Nata said.

The Australian foreign minister, Mr Alexander Downer, called the move a step forward but a second-best option to the restoration of the Chaudhry government.

"We condemn the overthrow of the democratically elected Chaudhry government and no

alternative but the return of the democratically elected government would be regarded by Australia as acceptable," he said.

Speight claims to speak for indigenous Fijians, who comprise 51 per cent of the population, claiming the multiracial government led by Mr Chaudhry, a member of the ethnic Indian minority, has eroded their rights.

Com Bainimarama invited two ethnic Indians to join Mr Qarase's 19-member team but they declined as their participation would signal support for the overthrow of the one-year-old Chaudhry government.

THE STATESMAN

4 JUL 2000

# Fiji junta takes on Speight's men

REUTERS, AP & DPA

SUVA, July 4. — Shooting broke out today between Fijian troops and rebels holding deposed Prime Minister Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, leaving at least four people wounded, possibly dead. Local radio also reported soldiers loyal to rebels had overrun a military base.

The 15-minute shoot-out occurred just hours after Fiji's new indigenous Prime Minister Mr Laisenia Qarase, was sworn in and promptly ruled out a return to multi-racial rule. "The interests of the Fijian community must not be subordinated to those of the other communities and hence the principle of the paramountcy of indigenous Fijian interests," said the new PM.

Both sides claimed the other started the shooting.

The military said no soldier was wounded. The rebels accused soldiers of shooting first, saying they merely returned fire. The rebel spokesman said: "They were warned that we didn't want the army around our perimeter."

The temporary Fijian government was sworn under new Prime Minister Mr Qarase, to



Commodore Frank Bainimarama arrives at military barracks to announce a new government, in Suva on Monday. — AP/PTI

the anger of the rebels, who had demanded a role in naming any new government.

**C'wealth move:** The Commonwealth has said an interim government couldn't replace Fiji's democratically-elected government and asked the new administration to secure immediate release of hostages and take urgent steps to restore democracy and constitutional rule in the Pacific islands, PTI adds from London.

On the installation of a civil-

ian government, Commonwealth secretary general Mr Don Mckinnon said: "I can appreciate the concern of Bainimarama to address his country's problems, ... (but) the Commonwealth still expects a government formed through the exercise of the democratic choice in accordance with their constitution."

Last night, Mr Mckinnon sought reduction of the period of 18 months announced for the interim administration.

THE STATESMAN

- 5 JUL 2000

## 157 Speightful Fiji *SWV*

In a new twist to the Fijian drama, the army has appointed Laisenia Qarase as interim prime minister. Mr Qarase who is CEO of the Merchant Bank of Fiji was also on rebel leader George Speight's shortlist for prime ministership. Yet, now that Qarase is PM — although he'd have to share power with his benefactor, military chief Commodore Frank Bainimarama — Speight has backtracked from his position and threatened a serious backlash. And Fijian Indians too seem wary of the new dispensation: Two Indians who'd been made part of the interim cabinet refused to join it. The military-backed cabinet will hold office for two years and draw up a new constitution. Assuming, of course, that the government lasts that long. Right now, its future is threatened by the shadow of George Speight. Speight has refused to release the 27 hostages that include the democratically elected prime minister, Mahendra Chaudhry. The question is, will the army declare the Parliament area as an exclusive military zone and apply adequate pressure on George Speight to release the hostages, as they had indicated earlier? Till now the rebels have been handled with kid gloves, and it is quite likely that Speight has some support in the army: Reports suggest that his team includes Fijian special forces men trained by the British Special Air Services (SAS). Apparently the Fijian military chief does not want the army to split, and Speight, knowing this, continues to aim for total power. He talks of a mandate from the people though he has never been tested in an election. The only institution to which Speight seems to show some deference is the Great Council of Chiefs and even that seems to be hopelessly divided at this stage.

But, Speight or no Speight, the international community is unlikely to view the installation of the interim government as a restoration of democracy, and the Commonwealth secretary-general, Mr Mckinnon, has made his position clear on this. Indeed, the democratic world should seriously consider applying more pressure in the form of economic sanctions to force George Speight's terroristic outfit to release the hostages. Such pressure might work as the 'coup' has had a bad effect on the Fijian economy in the past two months. Last time too it was economic pressure that compelled General Sitiveni Rabuka, who staged the first coup in 1987, to change his discriminatory constitution to one of equal opportunity. Ultimately, the state of the economy will be of prime concern for the Fijian chiefs and the indigenous Fijian businessmen, and they will have to discipline unruly elements like George Speight. In any case, there has been no real military coup in Fiji; it is more an act of terrorism committed by a few desperadoes with support from some army personnel. Therefore, if the present combined military and civilian ministry is to be steered towards restoration of democracy, the rest of the democratic world should give them the capability to resist George Speight. The Indian government, in turn, should coordinate closely with the governments of Australia and New Zealand to find effective ways and means of applying pressure on Fiji to obtain the release of hostages.

THE TIMES OF IN

5 JUL 2000



# Army, rebels clash soon after new Fiji govt. is sworn in

SUVA: Clashes broke out between Fiji's military and rebels soon after the swearing-in of the interim government headed by banker Laisenia Qarase on Tuesday. Five persons were injured. There were no immediate reports of deaths.



Laisenia Qarase

Rebel spokesman Jo Nata said the military had fired the first shot soon after a news conference by rebel leader George Speight to comment on the swearing-in of the all-Fijian temporary government. Nata also confirmed reports that Speight's supporters in the town of Labasa, on the island of Vanua Levu, had confiscated weapons from military barracks.

The rebels, in a coup on May 19, had taken hostage 27 members of the previous government, including former prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry. Addressing the media, Speight said he did not expect the new government to rule for long. Fiji Radio reported that gunfire was exchanged for ten-15 minutes. "There is blood all over the place," it said. According to rebel spokesman

Nata, the five injured people were being treated at a hospital.

Reports stated that after the gunfight, there were negotiations between Speight's supporters and the military. However, gunfire was heard once again later. Soon after the shootout, people living close to the parliament complex began evacuating the area.

Earlier in the day, Mr Qarase was sworn in as Prime Minister, provoking the anger of the rebels who had demanded a role in the naming of the new government. In his

speech after being sworn in, Mr Qarase said he had accepted the job as a "call for national unity". He urged the gunmen to release the hostages immediately so that the country could begin rebuilding its shattered economy. The new premier stated that although his government would give priority to protecting the rights of indigenous Fijians, no communities would, however, be excluded in the country's multiracial and multicultural society.

Dressed in traditional Sulu skirts, 19 indigenous Fijian men swore to

"be faithful and bear true allegiance to the Republic of the Fijian Islands" during a ceremony at the military headquarters in Suva. Two members of the Indian minority refused the cabinet posts offered to them by the military. The army said the interim government would rule for 18 months and set guidelines for a new constitution.

The new Prime Minister is known more for his banking talents than his political acumen, although he once served in the Congress. He has been the head of the

Merchant Bank Fiji and is a former director of the Fiji Development Bank.

Rebel leader Speight had warned on Monday that the army might have to pay a high price for "completely ignoring" him. "There's a very big possibility of making a lot of people really upset," he had said.

Meanwhile, India watched helplessly as Mr Qarase took charge as the new Prime Minister of Fiji even while Mr Chaudhry and his colleagues continued to be held inside the parliamentary complex by Speight's men. (Agencies)

## GEORGE'S SPITE

- Five people injured in gunfire
- Qarase urges rebels to release hostages
- Two Indians refuse cabinet posts

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 2000

## TIME TO END FIJI'S TRAUMA

THE TIME HAS arrived for effective international action to match the strong words of condemnation that followed the ethnic coup in Fiji. The United Nations' and the Commonwealth's confidence that the forces of moderation will prevail have apparently proved to be misplaced as is the hope that the weight of global opinion will ultimately work. A new civilian administrative set-up, controlled by the military, brings no cheer as the island nation continues to remain hostage to political thugs. It is obvious that in the absence of the release of the hostages and movement toward restoration of democracy there is no escape from the imposition of economic sanctions followed by a clearcut message that in this age of democratic plurality there is no going back to the stone age, that while the indigenous Fijians may legitimately claim special consideration for their socioeconomic uplift this cannot come at the expense of the equality and fundamental rights of the ethnic Indians who have helped build the nation. Australia and New Zealand had refrained from imposing sanctions on the ground that this would only add to the misery of the people. It is clear that continued inaction, with thuggery and looting remaining unpunished, can have a disastrous fallout.

All that the international community has seen in the last 45 days is that a multi-ethnic Constitution has been changed by a bunch of gunmen and a democratically-elected Prime Minister and his Cabinet have been beaten up and held at gunpoint. Besides, every passing day confirms that people of Indian origin, who constitute 44 per cent of Fiji's population, will remain second class citizens without political rights. The military which sounded reasonable in the days immediately following its seizure of power in that small South Pacific island has turned out to be unreliable or incapable. When it took power on May 29 in a bid to quell racially-

motivated violence 10 days after the so-called civil coup by Mr. George Speight and his men, it ruled out abrogation of the multi-ethnic Constitution which had allowed the election of Mr. Mahendra Pal Choudhry, an ethnic Indian leader, and insisted that the hostages be released before any talks could be held with the rebels. Through a series of concessions which ran contrary to its initial proclamations, the military began to yield to the dictates of Mr. Speight, conceding all his major demands: it agreed to the ouster of the well-respected President, Ratu Kamisese Mara, removal of the Constitution and grant of amnesty to the rebels for their treasonous actions. The latest twist has been provided by the banker who has become the "Prime Minister" in the military-appointed administration, Mr. Laisenia Qarase. He has declared that there can be no return to the multi-ethnic Constitution of 1997. Representatives of people of Indian origin have rightly opted to stay out of the advisory council, which will be subservient to the military. The council will help stitch together a Constitution that will give primacy to the natives, apparently on the Malaysian sons-of-the-soil model.

India has waited long enough for international diplomacy to intervene and must now get the Commonwealth and the United Nations to bring pressure, first for ensuring the safety and freedom of the hostages and secondly for reviving attempts to construct a multi-ethnic society. It should be possible to evolve acceptable constitutional arrangements that safeguard the rights of the minorities while providing for the unhindered progress of the majority in the particular demographic situation of Fiji. Solutions should be found within a democratic framework where no one is reduced to the status of second class citizens, where the rights of all Fijians are safeguarded regardless of the accident of their ethnic origins.

21 JUL 2000

25 JUL 2000

# Fiji military gives rebels 2-day ultimatum

Suva, July 5 (AP) — **F**JI'S MILITARY today announced a two-day ultimatum for rebels to leave parliament where they have been holding deposed Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and 26 other hostages since May 19.

The military said it was creating a no-go zone around the sprawling parliament complex and ordered the rebels and residents in the vicinity to leave the area in 48 hours.

"The decree will come into effect from midnight tonight. Everyone in the parliamentary complex will be given 48 hours to move out," military spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Filipo Tarakinikini told reporters.

"This can be seen as an amnesty period whereby they are allowed to make up their minds and move out," he said.

He did not say what action would be taken if the rebels, who have ignored similar offers during the six-week crisis, did not leave parliament.

The ultimatum and imposition of an exclusion zone around the parliament complex comes after a shootout between troops and rebels yesterday in which five people were wounded.

"This is not a first step towards a military option. It is just a step to resolve a situation that has gone on too long."

Meanwhile, the military said it quelled a mini-mutiny at an army base. Two or three soldiers who were sympathetic to rebel leader George Speight had confiscated arms and ammunition yesterday at Labasa

base, on the northern island of Vanua Levu. "All of the arms are back in the armoury and the soldiers have resumed normal duty," the Army spokesman said.

"But some of the chiefs in the area who apparently were behind this move are still holding on." He said the chiefs had not undertaken any specific action.

Speight had predicted yesterday the mutiny would spark a "domino effect" across the country, but there were no signs of other trouble.

Military was put on full alert today, a day after troops fought a fierce gun-battle outside parliament with supporters of George Speight. "We are on full alert," Tarakinikini said.

There had been no further reports of insubordination in army ranks, he added, despite Speight's prediction of massive defections by troops loyal to him.

Tarakinikini said the military intended to proceed later in the day with the issuing of a decree that would lead to the area around parliament being declared a military zone and completely sealed off.

"We will then give the people inside the complex 48 hours to move out before closing the entire area off," he said. The army said on Sunday that it would evacuate all residents within the zone and give Speight supporters within parliament 48 hours to move out before cutting off water and electricity to the complex.

The threat was not implemented after Speight warned that such steps could jeopardise the safety of the hostages, who include Mahendra Chaudhry, the deposed Prime Minister.

(Agencies)



Fijian soldiers patrol near the parliamentary compound in capital Suva on Wednesday. The army in Fiji has issued a decree declaring a military zone around parliament to seal off the area. Photo: AFP

# Civil unrest spreads, rebels cut off power supply to Suva

Suva, July 6

**H**UNDREDS OF protesters massed at the entrance to Fiji's main military base today, demanding the resignation of the civilian government named after gunmen took the country's leaders hostage in the Parliament.

The capital, Suva, was plunged into darkness by a power cut.

Fijian television reported that water to the main power station was cut by supporters of coup leader George Speight.

Civil unrest appeared to be spreading today, the day after Fiji's military leaders said they would isolate rebels who have been holding 27 hostages in the Parliament since May 19.

Incidents across the country underscored the sensitivities involved in resolving the crisis that has divided the South Pacific nation along ethnic lines.

Fifty-one per cent of the people are indigenous Fijians and many of them resent the economic and political clout of

ethnic Indians who account for 44 per cent of the population and dominated the government ousted in Speight's coup.

Early this evening, about 300 people, identifying themselves as indigenous

landowners and coup supporters, gathered outside the military's headquarters in Suva, demanding the removal of the new civilian government.

Members of the singing, chanting, mostly young crowd said they would reclaim the land on which the Queen Elizabeth barracks is built if the government



A Speight supporter patrols outside the Parliamentary complex where 27 former Cabinet members of the Fijian Government remain as hostages, in Suva on Thursday. Photo: AP

does not resign. They did not say how they planned to repossess the land.

"We are here to protest the new government," spokesman Jah Senikudra said. "We don't know these guys. We want a new government."

The crowd was still outside the barracks when a military curfew came into force.

Earlier, a sit-in by a couple of dozen villagers at the airport in Labasa, a town on the northern island of Vanua Levu that was

the site of a brief military mutiny on Tuesday, closed it down for two hours.

And about a dozen people briefly blocked a road off the main highway between Suva and Nadi, where the international airport is located.

In the Parliament, three rebels dressed in palm-branch skirts raised a handmade flag made of pounded bark in a show of defiance at the military's plan to restrict access to the compound while offering amnesty to those who walk out before midnight tomorrow.

There were some signs of movement in the seven-week standoff with rebels holding more than four hours of talks with a senior military official at the Parliament.

Neither side commented on the talks, which were the first between the two sides since June 25, when a tentative agreement between the rebels and the military rulers collapsed.

The protests followed the military's decision to stop people entering the Parliament complex from midnight yesterday. But enforcement of the "total exclusion zone" was lax.

(AP)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Speight wants tribal chiefs to rule

ASSOCIATED PRESS & REUTERS

SUVA, July 7. — Rebels holding 27 hostages in Fiji's parliament said today they would release the captives in return for the resignation of the new civilian government.

The rebels also demanded that the military hand over power to tribal chiefs — something the army has refused to do.

A planned meeting between rebel leader George Speight and military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama failed to take place, but lower-level delegations from both sides discussed the latest rebel demands.

There was no immediate word on the progress of the talks at the main military barracks outside the capital, Suva.

Till late last night, military leaders met with 12 influential tribal chiefs inside the base. The chiefs were expected to mediate in talks with Speight, but there was no announcement on how their meeting with the army had come off.

Meanwhile, nearly half the supporters with Speight and his gang in parliament left the compound today, ahead of the midnight deadline to clear the area and free the captives.

The military exclusion zone looked deserted, and only some 200 supporters were reported left in parliament with the gunmen and hostages.

The Fijian military has warned it might cut electricity and

other services to the compound, and said anyone left inside after the deadline would be charged once the crisis ends.

The military is standing behind Fiji's new indigenous Prime Minister, Mr Laisenia Qarase, appointed to rule for two years ahead of fresh polls, and has rejected the rebel demand that Ratu Josefa Iloilo, Deputy President before the attempted coup, be made President.

Suva remained quiet today, though rolling power outages and water shortages continued across Fiji's main island, Viti Levu, following yesterday's wave of civil unrest.

Militant landowners had yesterday taken hostage workers at the island's main hydroelectric power station, causing a countrywide blackout. The power workers were released this morning, Fiji television reported.

Telecommunications problems which began yesterday continued today with Fiji's cell-phone network patchy and Internet services disrupted. It was not clear if rebels were responsible for the disruptions.

Villagers staged a sit-in at the airport in Labasa on Fiji's second island, Vanua Levu, forcing its closure for two hours.

About a dozen people briefly blocked a side road off the main highway between Suva and Nata, where the international airport is located.

THE STATESMAN

8 JUL 2000

## SET TO CONFRONT

### Army breaks off talks with Speight

THE army could not conclude its negotiations with George Speight who continues to hold hostages, while Ilisoni Ligairi, the shadowy muscle behind Speight, says that any provocation by the military will lead to a bloodbath. One doesn't know at what point negotiations came unstuck, because Speight was raising the stakes one at a time, but if one gives credence to the junta's spokesman, it was probably on the question of naming the head of government and including Indians in the interim Cabinet. He also said that there was no coherence to the rebel propositions. Which means that Speight is speaking for some military men, businessmen and politicians who, apart from being ultra-nationalists, probably hadn't worked out what shape a future Fijian Constitution should take before their adventure. The idea was to install a civilian government packed with Speight's men and that was a proposition that the military wouldn't buy, because they saw themselves as the only force capable of preserving ethnic harmony.

This harmony is now in tatters. The junta did try to induct two Indians into its interim Cabinet. What the Indians will do next remains to be seen, but, under the circumstances, they will be right to conclude that they will never have a political voice in that country. No safety of life and property and no dignity. Those who can may be in the process of leaving the country. Speight and his group are not entirely out of the picture. The army has created a militarised zone around the Parliament building and there was some talk of cutting off water and electricity. Speight's supporters have seized a military base. The danger for the army is a split in its own ranks. Also, it remains to be seen whether Speight can mobilise his supporters outside and unleash violence. It is to be hoped for the sake of the country that the bankrupt adventurer can be stopped.

THE STATESMAN

# Fiji rebels to free hostages only after new Govt quits

Suva, July 7

**R**EBELS HOLDING 27 hostages in Fiji's Parliament said today they would release the captives in return for the resignation of the new civilian government. The rebels also demanded that the military hand over power to tribal chiefs - something the army has refused to do.

A meeting between rebel leader George Speight and military leader Commodore Frank Bainimarama failed to take place but lower-level delegations from both sides discussed the latest rebel demands.

There was no immediate word on the progress of the talks at the main military barracks outside capital Suva. Speight and his band of gunmen still hold 27 captives, including Fiji's first Indian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry.

Although the military has met most of Speight's demands to disenfranchise Fiji's ethnic Indian minority, including deposing Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, the first Fijian of Indian ancestry to lead the country, and scrapping the multiracial 1997 constitution, Speight is still refusing to release his hostages.

But a 48-hour deadline for Speight supporters to leave Parliament in return for amnesty was to expire at midnight and the military said anybody still in the

exclusion zone after midnight would face two years imprisonment or a fine of US \$ 1,000.

Meanwhile, influential tribal chiefs were called today to mediate in talks between the military and Speight ahead of a midnight deadline for coup plotters. Speight and Commodore Frank Bainimarama were expected to meet face-to-face this afternoon for the first time in two weeks.

Rolling power outages and water shortages continued across Fiji's main island, Viti Levu, following Thursday's wave of civil unrest, which included militant landowners taking hostage workers at the island's main hydroelectric power station. The power workers were released this morning, Fiji TV reported.

Telecommunications problems which began on Thursday also continued today with Fiji's cell phone network patchy and internet services disrupted. It was not clear if rebels were responsible for the disruptions.

Also on Thursday, hundreds of protesters massed at the entrance to Fiji's main military base, demanding the resignation of the new civilian government.

Military leaders met into the night inside the base with 12 chiefs representing the protesters. There was no immediate announcement on the outcome of the talks. New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff warned Fiji could be heading for a breakdown in civil authority and possibly civil war. (Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUL 2000

SF 12  
9/17

# Speight men take 30 more hostages

AP, DPA & REUTERS 9/17/77

SUVA, July 8. — Armed rebels claiming to support Fijian coup leader George Speight seized control of the police station in a town outside Suva today and took up to 30 hostages, demanding the resignation of the military head of state Commodore Frank Bainimarama.

A spokesman for the hostage takers, Iferemi Tiko, said he was a cousin of Speight and that the action was in support of Speight's aims to disenfranchise ethnic Indians.

The hostages included local soldiers, police and government officials. Nobody was reported injured and the rebels said they didn't want to see bloodshed.

The online news agency *Fijilive* said that as peace talks resume between the military and Speight's group, Commodore Bainimarama may step down as head of state and call tribal chiefs to appoint a civilian president if the deposed Prime Minister Mr Mahendra Chaudhry and his 26 colleagues are released and arms surrendered on the same day.

Television New Zealand said the military had already abandoned plans to impose a no-go zone around the Parliament. The so-called exclusive military zone was to have been activated at midnight yesterday, after which time troops were to arrest anyone entering or leaving it. The deadline was extended 24 hours and then postponed indefinitely following demands from Speight.

The US embassy in Suva said

today the ambassador Mr Osman Siddique was being recalled to the USA for consultations. "The USA continues to be deeply concerned about the current situation in Fiji," the embassy said in a press release.

About 100 rebels armed with tire irons, steel pipes and other weapons took over a military checkpoint in Korovou, about 60 km outside Suva, at 8.30 a.m. before confiscating six M-16 rifles and storming the town's small police station.

"We'll hold on here until he (Com Bainimarama) steps down. This takeover is from the people," Tiko told reporters.

The rebels also demanded that the interim civilian administration sworn in last week under Com Bainimarama's supervision be dissolved and replaced with a nationalist Fijian government.

The military said talks would resume on Saturday on its offer to give a greater role in resolving the crisis to the Great Council of Chiefs, in return for the hostages' freedom. The offer would allow the council to have a say in the election of the President, a key condition.

The army has given Speight and his supporters until midnight today to leave the area.

The rebels set up a roadblock outside town made up of a refrigerator, engine parts, a wheelbarrow and two trucks.

Also today, Speight's men closed the main road between Suva and Nadi, where the country's international airport is located. The army appealed for calm on national radio.

THE STATESMAN

9 JUL 2000



# Fiji Army, coup leader sign deal

Suva, July 9

COUP LEADER George Speight and military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama signed an agreement today to end Fiji's seven-week hostage crisis.

Under the deal, Speight's 27 hostages, including deposed Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, will be released on Thursday before a meeting of influential tribal chiefs. The rebels also will turn in their weapons.

The Great Council of Chiefs (GCC), made up of about 50 tribal leaders from across Fiji, will meet to select a new President, Vice President and a new interim civilian government to guide Fiji back to democracy. The GCC cannot meet before Thursday because some chiefs have to travel from remote islands.

Although the hostage release is days away and any deal could still unravel, there was a general hope that the agreement would hold.

Speight and his rebels have never before signed an agreement despite weeks of intense negotiations.

Seated at a small table in front of a large traditional painting on the rear lawn of the Vice President's official residence, Bainimarama signed first, followed by Speight.

The deal "is not the end, it is the beginning of a long journey," a sombre Bainimarama said. "We must be united."

Speight echoed his words, saying Fiji's future would not be easy. But he also sought to justify his actions. "I believe what I started reflects a deep desire in the hearts of all Fijians," he said.

Speight supporters crowded to watch the signing and those who couldn't fit on the rear lawn waited in front of the residence singing hymns, the sound of which drifted over the signing ceremony. As Speight left to return to Parliament, his supporters clapped and cheered.

The signing represented victory for Speight, who stormed Parliament with six other gunmen on May 19, saying he wanted more power for indigenous Fijians and to disenfranchise the country's ethnic Indian minority.

"We know we are on the verge of something



Fiji coup leader George Speight (right) and military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama (centre) place their hands on an agreement and pray as they agree to end the hostage crisis at Fiji's Parliament complex on Sunday. Photo: AFP

historic for our country," a triumphant Speight said before entering the Vice President's residence. Speight and about 500 supporters walked the one-kilometre distance from Parliament to the residence. His supporters chanted hymns and clapped rhythmically as they walked, some waved palm fronds.

The military will offer amnesty to all those involved in civil disturbances since Speight took the top government leaders hostage.

Although Speight was clearly delighted at the outcome, the agreement is likely to make Fiji an international pariah. Governments including the US and key trading partners Australia, New Zealand and the European Union have threat-

ened economic sanctions unless Fiji returns to full multi-racial democracy.

The deal represented a total cave in to Speight, who had long called for the GCC to be allowed to settle the crisis. Military negotiators already have agreed to most of Speight's demands, including deposing Mahendra Chaudhry, the first Fijian of Indian ancestry to lead the country, and scrapping the multi-racial 1997 Constitution.

Fifty-one per cent of the 812,000 population comprises indigenous Fijians and many resent the clout of ethnic Indians, who account for 44 per cent and dominated the ousted government. (AP)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 JUL 2000

## Speight of Trouble

Fiji's bullyman George Speight appears to have had his way with the military. He and his supporters were able to disrupt power supply in the island and take as hostage another 30 policemen. Now it has been agreed, as demanded by Speight, that the great council of chiefs would meet on Thursday and nominate a president and vice-president. The interim civil government to be formed will have Speight's nominees. The military has given up insisting that it will hold power till a new constitution is drafted. Speight agreed to release 27 hostages taken earlier, including Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, only after wresting the advantage from the military. The great council of chiefs is presided over by former Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, who, in 1987, seized power in a similar coup. The constitution he initially framed excluded the Fijian Indians from power, exactly in the manner demanded by Speight now. However, the move visited so much economic hardship on Fiji that he was forced to amend the constitution and throw open power to all. Rabuka knows full well the consequences of Fiji plunging again into economic decline if he succumbs to chauvinistic pressures from George Speight and his followers. Indeed, a lot depends on Rabuka, a former army chief who commands some respect in the rank and file of the army. It is also clear that the great council of the chiefs is not united on the issue; its earlier meetings did not produce fruitful results and leadership. Hopefully, Thursday's meeting, held in the context of Speight's terror tactics, will help the council of chiefs and the army reach an understanding on restraining Speight from causing further trouble. The effort should be to persuade him to abide by the agreement he has entered into.

In the light of these developments in Fiji, the visit of Australian Prime Minister John Howard to Delhi assumes a special significance. His visit perhaps aims primarily at repairing the damage done to Indo-Australian relations by the arbitrary and high-handed actions undertaken by Australia, following the Indian nuclear tests. Fortunately, Canberra now realises that India cannot be bullied by such tactics and is now coming to terms with the realities on the ground following President Clinton's visit to India. This is to be welcomed. Mr Howard is now in a position to demonstrate Australia's goodwill in making common cause with India on the issue of restoration of democracy in Fiji. George Speight's victory is a triumph of terrorism over democratic governance and should not be allowed to go unchallenged. Australia is very influential in South Pacific and its influence should be used to win over the great chiefs council of Fiji. The Commonwealth in which Australia and New Zealand pull a lot of weight on this issue should apply pressure at this stage and leave Suva in no doubt about the adverse consequences that will follow for Fiji in case there are attempts at abridging its democracy.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

11 JUL 2001

# Speight signs pact to free hostages

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ASSOCIATED PRESS

SUVA, July 9. — Fijian coup leader George Speight and military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama signed an agreement today to end Fiji's seven-week hostage crisis.

Under the deal, Speight's 27 hostages, including deposed Prime Minister Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, will be released on Thursday before a meeting of the influential tribal chiefs. The rebels will also turn in their weapons.

The fate of 28 other hostages, snatched yesterday, was unclear, but they may also be released if Speight gives the word. The new hostages were taken by Speight's supporters in the town of Korovou, about 60 km outside Suva.

The great council of chiefs, made up of about 50 tribal leaders, will meet to select a new President, Vice-President and a new interim civilian government to guide Fiji back to democracy.

The military installed an interim government just days ago, but Speight rejected it as he had no say in its formation.

Although the hostage release is days away and any deal could still unravel, there is a

general hope that the agreement will hold. This is the first time the military has been able to convince Speight and his rebels to sign an agreement.

Seated at a small table in front of a large traditional painting on the rear lawn of the Vice-President's official residence, Commodore Bainimarama signed first, followed by Speight.

Speight's supporters crowded to watch the signing and those who didn't get space in the lawn waited in front of the building singing hymns, the sound of which drifted over the solemn ceremony.

The deal "is not the end, it is the beginning of a long journey," a sombre Bainimarama said. "We must be united." Speight echoed his words, saying Fiji's future would not be easy.

But he also sought to justify his actions. "I believe what I started reflects a deep desire in the hearts of all Fijians," he said.

As Speight left to return to parliament, his supporters clapped and cheered.

The signing represented victory for Speight, who stormed parliament with six other gunmen 19 May, saying he wanted

more power for indigenous Fijians and to disenfranchise the country's ethnic Indian minority.

"We know we are on the verge of something historic for our country," a triumphant Speight said before entering the Vice-President's residence.

Speight and about 500 supporters walked the one kilometre distance from parliament to the residence. His supporters chanted hymns and clapped rhythmically as they walked, some waved palm fronds.

The military will offer amnesty to all those involved in civil disturbances since Speight took the government hostage.

But the agreement is likely to make Fiji an international pariah. Countries, including the USA and key trading partners Australia, New Zealand and the European Union have threatened economic sanctions unless Fiji returns to full multi-racial democracy.

The military seized control 10 days after Speight's coup and installed Commodore Bainimarama as head of state.

The deal represents a total cave in to Speight, who had long called for the chiefs to be allowed to settle the crisis.

Military negotiators already have agreed to most of his demands, including deposing Mr Mahendra Chaudhry and scrapping the multi-racial 1997 Constitution.

Today there were also reports that two police stations, in the towns of Savu and Eaqqa on the northern island of Vanua Levu, were occupied by Speight's supporters. No further details were immediately available.

The military returned to the negotiating table following a wave of civil unrest. Local landowners shut down the largest island's main hydro-electric power station and villagers blocked the main road linking the capital Suva with Nadi, where the international airport is located.

Fifty-one per cent of Fiji's 812,000 population are indigenous Fijians and many resent the clout of ethnic Indians, who account for 44 per cent and dominated the ousted government.

Tension between the two groups rose this year when Mr Chaudhry opposed plans to raise rents paid by Indian sugarcane farmers to indigenous Fijian landowners.

THE STATESMAN

10 JUL 2000

# Speight, military reach accord

**SUVA, JULY 9** The Fiji coup leader, Mr. George Speight, and military commander, Commodore Frank Bainimarama, signed an agreement today to end the seven-week hostage crisis. Under the deal, Mr. Speight's 27 hostages, including deposed Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, will be released on Thursday before a meeting of influential tribal chiefs. The rebels will also turn in their weapons.

The Great Council of Chiefs, of about 50 tribal leaders from across Fiji, will meet to select a new President, Vice-President and an interim civilian Government to guide Fiji back to democracy.

The military installed an interim Government just days ago, but Mr. Speight rejected it as he had no say in its formation. The Council cannot meet before Thursday because some chiefs have to travel from remote islands.

Although the hostage release is days away and any deal could still unravel, there is general hope that

the agreement would hold. Mr. Speight and his rebels have never before signed an agreement despite weeks of negotiations.

Seated at a small table in front of a large traditional painting on the rear lawn of the Vice-President's official residence, Cmdr.

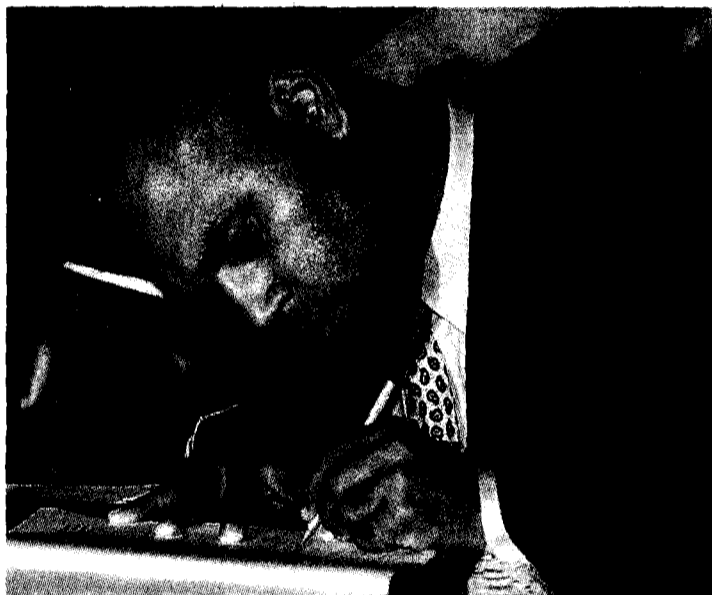
Bainimarama signed first, followed by Mr. Speight.

The deal "is not the end, it is the beginning of a long journey," a sombre Cmdr. Bainimarama said. "We must be united." Mr. Speight echoed his words, saying Fiji's future would not be easy. But he also sought to justify his actions: "I believe what I started reflects a deep desire in the hearts of all Fijians."

The signing represented victory for Mr. Speight, who stormed Parliament with six other gunmen on May 19, saying he wanted more power for indigenous Fijians and to disenfranchise the country's ethnic Indian minority.

"We know we are on the verge of something historic for our country," a triumphant Mr. Speight said before entering the Vice-President's residence, after with about 500 supporters he walked the one kilometer distance from Parliament to the residence.

— AP



The Fijian coup leader, Mr. George Speight, signing an agreement to end the 53-day hostage crisis in Suva on Sunday. — Reuters

Indian reaction: Page 13

THE HINDU

10 JUL 2000

# Speight wants to be PM

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51-9 12/2

REUTERS

SUVA, July 11. — George Speight today said the ideal outcome of Fiji's eight-week hostage crisis would be for him to be named Prime Minister by the country's traditional chiefs.

"Yes. I believe it would, because that is the overall desire and will of the people," Speight told reporters when asked if the best outcome would be for him to become Prime Minister. "I would be honoured to serve my country. That's huge, that's the ultimate."

Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs will meet on Thursday to decide on a new Prime Minister and President under an accord agreed on Sunday between Speight and Fiji's military.

Chairman of the chiefs' council, Mr Sitiveni Rabuka, a former Prime Minister, said today it was likely Speight would at least be included in the new Cabinet. "There is a chance — he has been given so much and I wouldn't be surprised if they include him on the list," said Mr Rabuka, who will convene the chiefs' meeting but will not



Speight: New ambition

take part in any vote.

Speight has said he would release the hostages this week as agreed in the accord but threw some doubt over the timing of their release, suggesting it might not be on Thursday as originally planned. He said the hostages would be released after dark to avoid publicity, but declined to say on what day.

"When it happens it will be very secret. They will be released in the evening," Speight told New Zealand's IRN radio network. "I won't tell

you which evening because we don't want you people (the media) around when it happens."

The military today called for calm as unrest flared following Sunday's agreement. "We would like everyone to remain calm and await the outcome of Thursday's events," the army spokesman, Major Howard Politini, said.

**AP adds:** Rebel supporters seized an upscale resort in Fiji today, the military regime said, worsening the Pacific island nation's 54-day government crisis with the first attack on a foreign-owned facility.

It was not immediately known how many tourists were at the 28-room Turtle Island resort or if they would be allowed to leave, a military spokesman said. About 40 guests were at the resort. The guests won't be allowed to leave, a rebel said.

The military spokesman said Turtle Island, off the north-west coast of Fiji's main island of Viti Levu, was attacked by an unknown number of supporters of George Speight.

THE STATESMAN

12 JUL 2000

## INCOMPLETE ACCORD IN FIJI

GOVERNMENT LEADERS IN the Pacific island nation of Fiji who were taken hostage by a gang of gunmen nearly two months ago are set to secure their freedom, but the fledgling multi-racial democracy which was hijacked and incarcerated with them, ironically in the Parliament complex, must wait. The agreement reached during the weekend which promises an end to the 50-day-long agony of the deposed Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues will be received with relief and disappointment. It will be welcomed on the sole ground that it ensures the safety and freedom of the hostages. When the dispute involves the lives of men, any agreement is better than no agreement. But the concerns of the international community, especially India, remain. The accord that the military administration has signed with the rebel leader, Mr. George Speight, is nothing short of abject surrender to the guntoting thugs. Most glaring is the failure to guarantee a return to the multi-ethnic Constitution of 1997 that brought justice to native Fijians and the large minority of Indo-Fijians or Fijians of Indian origin. Mr. Speight, who led a civil coup on May 19 and whose storm troopers held the Government leaders at gunpoint, demanded a say in the formation of the next Government and won. All it needed for the military's bluff to be called was for a small gang of Speight supporters to strike on the outskirts of the capital.

The hostages, including Mr. Mahendra Pal Choudhry, the ousted Prime Minister of Indian origin and the prime target, are to be released on Thursday, to give time for the Great Council of Chiefs, grouping tribal leaders, to gather from the remote islands. A new President is to be chosen in place of Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who has resigned in disgust and fled the scene, and a civilian Government will be put in place. The rebels will apparently gain a stranglehold on the administration and will begin to dictate terms. Mr. Speight has vowed to disenfranchise

Fijians of Indian origin and keep them from the top posts in Government. The developments are a re-run of the coups staged a decade and a half ago by Col. Sitiveni Rabuka, now heading the chiefs' council as an elder statesman. There were suggestions at that time which disputed the notion that the civil disorders had an ethnic origin or that the conflict was between indigenous Fijians and Indo-Fijians. Caught in the struggle for ascendancy among the native Fijian groups, Indo-Fijians became an easy and convenient scapegoat. The race card, it was stated, was misleading. The events of the past month and a half lend credence to this opinion, confirmed by the abdication of Ratu Mara, the most respected of the three native Prime Ministers who went on to become President. Ratu Mara's ouster, coinciding with the hijacking of the Choudhry Government that he fully endorsed, perhaps reflects the rivalries among the indigenous groups. There were enough manifestations of the differences and lack of mutual trust among the eastern and western regions of Fiji during the current crisis. Western provinces have declared that if Mr. Speight succeeds they will secede to form an independent nation.

If the Speight thuggery is not to succeed, the international community must send the right warnings. New Delhi will gain some valuable insight from the Australian Prime Minister during his talks. As Fiji's leading trading partners, Australia and New Zealand have the leverage to put sense into the gunmen in Suva. There are other ways in which such desperadoes can be brought to book. The Indian Government has reacted with understandable caution to the developments in Fiji and, once the hostages have gained their freedom, must pursue its quiet diplomacy in the Commonwealth and the United Nations to ensure that the Rabukas and the Speights are not allowed to go unpunished and the multi-ethnic character of Fijian society is restored and protected.

THE HINDU

12 JUL 2000

# Rebels release 9 hostages, retain Chaudhry

9/11/77

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AP & DPA

SUVA, July 12. — Fiji rebels today freed nine captives but retained the deposed Prime Minister Mr Mahendra Chaudhry and his son. Besides the Chaudhrys, all the remaining 18 hostages are ethnic Fijian legislators.

The release was followed by widespread civil disobedience by ethnic Fijians which included occupation of a luxury island tourist resort and a domestic airport near Suva. A police station at Lambasa on Vanua Levu island was taken over by Speight's supporters and the army was reported to have abandoned its military headquarters in the town.

The released hostages were turned over to the Red Cross. "They looked happy to get out of that (Parliament) complex," Dr Bhagat Ram of the Red Cross said. "They conversed very well and they have gone to their homes."

The release comes three days after the rebels, led by former

businessman George Speight, signed an agreement with Fiji's military government to end the hostage crisis. Under the agreement, Speight was supposed to release all his hostages tomorrow.

Speight's spokesman, Jo Nata, said the hostages were released because "apart from being a gesture of goodwill — it's a consideration of security. If we released them all at once it could cause a stampede outside Parliament."

"They also had asked us if and when they were released if we could do it at night to avoid the humiliation of being liberated in front of our supporters." Meanwhile, about 200 district chiefs met with Speight at the Parliament this afternoon to discuss nominations for the posts of President, Vice-President and an interim government to be appointed tomorrow by the Great Council of Chiefs.

**Resort guests released:** A rebel group, which seized a beach resort over a land dis-

pute yesterday, has released the 40 guests held up by them. The guests, including 15 Americans, were released today from the posh resort on Turtle Island where the movie *The Blue Lagoon* was filmed.

They were placed on a cruise ship to Fiji's main island, Viti Levu. The resorts's owner, Mr Richard Evanson, an American, was still being held in a hotel room. "We're going to keep an eye on him for a while," said Mavi Ratulevu, the rebel group's spokesman.

He said the group might be occupying the resort for a week, unless a satisfactory resolution could be reached. The attack on the resort was the first on a foreign-owned facility during the ongoing crisis.

**Americans warned:** The USA has warned its citizens to avoid travelling to Fiji, AFP reports from Washington. The state department urged Americans yesterday "to defer travel to Fiji because of continued uncertainty and instability resulting from the ongoing crisis."

THE STATE JOURNAL

13 JUL 2000

# Hostages freed, Speight man is President

**SUVA, JULY 13.** Fiji's deposed Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, and 17 other hostages were freed today after 55 days in captivity, following which a supporter of the coup leader, Mr. George Speight, was appointed the new President of the island nation.

The hostages, captured on May 19 when Mr. Speight raided Parliament in the name of indigenous Fijians, left the complex in Red Cross trucks.

Independent radio FM-96 reported an emotional scene as the hostages were released, with Mr. Speight handing Mr. Chaudhry a bowl of 'kava', a mild narcotic drink, in a traditional forgiveness ceremony. "All the hostages have left the complex. They all looked very relieved. Tears have been flowing," it reported.

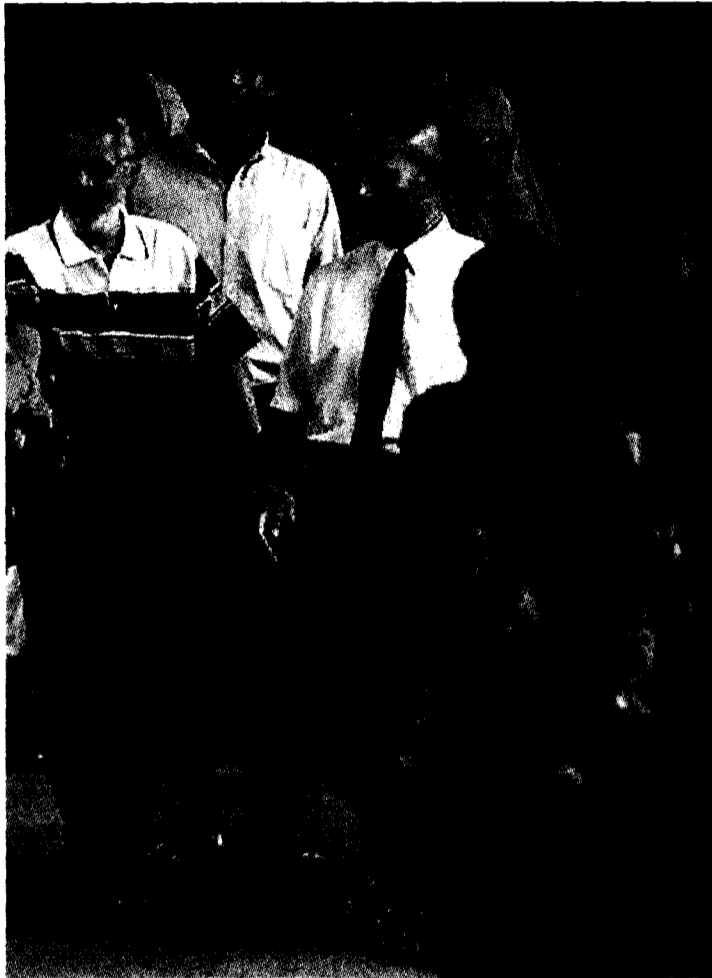
Soon after their release, Fiji's Great Council of Chiefs appointed Ratu Josefa Iloilo, a supporter of Mr. Speight, as the new president. The chiefs earlier warned Mr. Speight they would delay naming a President if the captives were not freed.

Ratu Iloilo announced that he will, later this week, name a government. Mr. Speight has said he would be "honoured" to be Prime Minister.

Mr. Chaudhry, Fiji's first ethnic Indian premier, emerged from his ordeal battered but unbowed, insisting his priority was to get the country back on its feet. Asked if he still considered himself Prime Minister, he said, "I don't know. It is up to what the people think."

The martial law spokesman, Col. Filipo Tarakinikini, said, "Once executive authority is handed over to the new President, the military will revert to its normal role." But he added the Army would help police in "mopping up" operations.

The release of the hostages



**The deposed Prime Minister of Fiji, Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, walking towards a Red Cross truck in Suva on Thursday after his release. To his left is the coup leader, Mr. George Speight. —AP**

came as indigenous people seized a tourist resort, Fiji Forbes on Laucala island. Laucala is owned by the American, Mr. Steven Forbes, whose father, publishing millionaire, Malcolm Forbes, bought it in 1972. The island could not be contacted from Suva.

## **One dead in prison riot**

One person was killed and 11

injured after a shoot out during a prison riot outside Suva today, local radio reported.

Prisoners at Naboro prison have for the last two days held at least 10 warders hostage. The report said the military took action after an attempted mass escape. — Reuters, AFP

**Chaudhry unbowed: Page 14**

THE HINDU

2 OCT



100-12

## A FLAWED SOLUTION

15/7/90 m. fidi

A SLOW MARCH towards possible isolation was the price that the military authorities of Fiji decided to risk by allowing the 'civil coup' leader, Mr. George Speight, to dictate the terms of a settlement. Albeit, it was a deal that also induced him to set free the tiny South Pacific nation's Prime Minister of minority ethnic-Indian descent, Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, on July 13 after he had endured a 55-day ordeal as a political hostage. A patently undemocratic bargain was struck by Mr. Speight, a singularly unrepentant extortionist with a racist agenda, and Commodore J.V. (Frank) Bainimarama, the man who not only staged a military counter-coup on May 29 in a bid to stop Mr. Speight in his tracks but also sought to advance the political paramountcy of the majority indigenous population by other, somewhat less abrasive, means. In the event, Cmdr. Bainimarama ceased to be the head of the 'Interim Military Government' at midnight of July 13/14, while Mr. Speight got what he wanted as the first substantive personal gain — the right, in a totally unrepresentative milieu, to steer Fiji through its present turbulent times by back-seat driving. It was a perverse reward he was looking for after sparking the present crisis by taking a duly-elected Prime Minister and his associates hostage at gunpoint at the Parliament complex in the capital, Suva, on May 19. So, it may simply be a matter of time before Mr. Speight actually grabs absolute power, despite his frequent demurrals about his real political ambitions, unless those being catapulted now to new titular positions with his blessings manage to muster courage and common sense to prevent that from happening.

The new executive line-up in Fiji is a blot on the democratic process while the circumstances of its creation have already unfolded a pathetic tale of political skulduggery. The new civilian President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, is a nominee expressly recommended by Mr. Speight himself, while the Vice-President, Ratu Jope Se-

niloli, has been a comrade of the chief hostage-taker. These two men have been formally chosen by the Great Council of Chiefs — Fiji's highest repository of moral authority and political persuasion, despite being a powerhouse of only the native population which narrowly outnumbered the ethnic Indians, whose presence in that country dates back to the manner in which their forefathers were transplanted there by the British imperial rulers over a century ago. For the present, though, the leader of the traditional chiefs, Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka, is adamant that they have not just dotted the i's and crossed the t's in a list of new rulers as prepared by Mr. Speight, even if he wants to celebrate a 'victory'. However, the claim by Mr. Rabuka, the military-spawned architect of essentially anti-minority coups in the 1980s, is plainly shallow.

The consternation of the international community over this charade in Suva must be translated into punitive action, but only in a manner that would not penalise the ethnic Indians, who command a strategic presence in the Fijian economy, for a crime they are not responsible for. Mr. Chaudhry certainly is known for pugnacious politics, and his first comment on being released is no less indicative of a mood to sustain his political spirit and unite Fijians of all races. But the political cause of the ethnic Indians, which can be divorced from the past high-handedness of Mr. Chaudhry as alleged by Mr. Speight and his misguided legion, needs to be kept in focus by Australia and New Zealand besides the Commonwealth as also India. Now that Fiji's 1997 multi-racial Constitution has been buried fathoms deep by the military at the behest of Mr. Speight, a consortium of Commonwealth countries, with a stake in that troubled chain of isles, must strive to prevent an ethnic cleansing of the people of Indian stock there and punish only the usurpers of power in Suva. A miscarriage of sanctions should be guarded against.

15/7/90

# Speight gives up arms, not 'cause'

**SUVA, JULY 14.** Fiji's coup plotters who laid siege to Parliament and held several lawmakers hostage for nearly two months, surrendered weapons today, vowing to halt civil unrest if indigenous Fijians dominate a new Government. Some 200 traditional chiefs filled the Parliament chambers to witness the return of the arms, most of them stolen from Fiji's military forces.

The arms were stacked in a room next to where the hostages were held until Thursday. An AFP estimate showed there were 76 weapons including M-60 machine guns, M-16 and Uzi assault rifles and handguns. There were also boxes of ammunition, Claymore mines, tear-gas canisters and grenades.

With the handover of weapons, the coup plotters will receive immunity from treason charges and other political offences as out-



**The Fiji rebel leader, Mr. George Speight, bows his head during the traditional Ceremony of Forgiveness in the country's parliament in Suva on Friday. — AP**

lined in the Muanikau Accord.

"This is not the end. This is the beginning. There is much work to be done in this country... My ob-

jective was not to come and take power. My objective was to restore power into the hands of indigenous Fijians," said Mr.

Speight. Hundreds of his supporters celebrated with songs and picnics inside the Parliament complex. "There will never ever be a Government led by an Indian, ever in Fiji," he had said yesterday.

After the Great Council of Chiefs appointed a rebel-backed nominee, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, as the new President yesterday, another rebel supporter, Ratu Jope Seniloli, was appointed Vice-President today. The chiefs today endorsed a military-appointed civilian Government headed by Mr. Laisenia Qarase, but Mr. Speight has in the past rejected Mr. Qarase and his interim administration.

Mr. Speight said again today he did not wish to be included in the new Government, but preferred his nominee, Ratu Epeli Kanaimawai, as the next Prime Minister. — AFP, Reuters

**Sanctions threat: Page 13**

15 JUL 2000

15 JUL 2000

## Seeds of more Speights

WITH THE abject surrender of the Fijian military and the Great Council of Chiefs before George Speight, the mysterious circumstances of the May 19 coup have now been fully unravelled in soap opera style. A group of armed thugs seized the Parliament complex taking a democratically elected Prime Minister and his ministerial colleagues hostage. From then on, it was coup leader Speight calling the shots. When the President resisted his move, the former was shunted out. When the army appointed an interim government, Speight rejected the choice. When the army leader seemed to assert his authority, the coup leader refused to heed his deadline to end the siege. Meanwhile, Speight supporters went on a rampage against the Indo-Fijian community. Even the military of banana republics wouldn't have tolerated such defiance by a self-appointed leader. It is therefore quite apparent that the coup drama was stage-managed and a part of a well-planned conspiracy to reduce sizeable sections of the population to the status of second-class citizens. With Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka — who staged a coup in 1987 — heading the Great Council of Chiefs, the outcome could not have been any different. The terms of the deal have dealt a serious blow to Fiji's multi-racial democracy. Three constitutions and as many coups in three decades of independence have made a mockery of democracy.

The release of deposed Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and 17 others may have ended their 56-day ordeal, but the palpable fear for the 44 per cent of the Indo-Fijian population has now only begun. The failure of the international community to exert sufficient pressure on marauders of democracy has been startling. Also, the amnesty granted to coup leaders will embolden other renegades to do a George Speight to the next Prime Minister. It is a fact that ethnic Fijians and Indo-Fijians do not share a common identity. But that is no justification for imposing apartheid in the country.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

# India keen to see non-racial Govt in Fiji

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 14

A DAY after the release of deposed Fijian Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and other hostages, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh today said that India was interested in seeing a return to non-racial government in the Pacific island nation under the terms of the 1997 Constitution.

This is consistent with the position taken by the Government throughout the 55-day hostage crisis that began on May 19 when George Speight and his supporters took the Indian-origin Prime Minister and his Cabinet hostage.

India today joined Australia in condemning the "criminal act" which led to the deposition of the elected Chaudhry Government. Mr Singh said: "Our concern so long had been the safety of the hostages but now that they have been freed, it is in our interest to see Fiji return to democracy."

After a meeting of Opposition leaders convened by the Prime Minister to discuss the Fiji and Sierra Leone crises, Mr Singh told reporters in South Block that the United Nations had to find a solution to end the problem in Kallahum where 234 UNAMSIL peacekeepers, 221 of them Indians, are surrounded by the Revolutionary United Front.

"We are heartened by the resolution passed by the Organisation of African Unity and it is our considered view that the mandate of the UNAMSIL on peacekeeping is adequate", Mr Singh said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JUL 1997

# Australia, NZ threaten sanctions

## Fiji rebels hand over weapons

Suva, July 14

FIJI FACED sanctions and slashed aid today as executive power was handed to allies of coup leader George Speight.

The rebel nationalists, who held the country to ransom for 55 days, made a bold attempt to show the world a peaceful face by handing in their weapons, most of them stolen from Fiji's military forces.

But as President Ratu Josefa Iloilo and his Deputy Ratu Jope Seniloli took over from martial law authorities, Australia and New Zealand threatened sanctions.

There was little sign the return of civilian rule in a government reserved for ethnic Fijians would quell the rampant lawlessness in the once idyllic south Pacific island nation.

Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer warned Canberra would not recognise a government which included Speight or his close supporters, while Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon asked Fijians "to show a renewed commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law."

New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff said Wellington was ready to halve its \$5-million annual aid budget to Fiji if the multi-racial constitution was not



FAREWELL TO ARMS: Rebel leader George Speight stands in front of some of the many weapons used during the 56-day coup in Suva on Friday. Photo: AP

restored.

The cabinet would also consider an end to military cooperation with Fiji and the extension of a visa-ban on Fijian sports teams, he said.

McKinnon appealed to the new leadership to "work within the framework of the 1997 constitution to resolve Fiji's current political difficulties, with a view to the speediest possible return to

democracy and the rule of law."

The great council of chiefs, a non-elected indigenous body, appointed Iloilo and Seniloli as executive heads, but Chairman Sitiveni Rabuka denied the chiefs had capitulated to Speight.

At a traditional forgiveness ceremony inside the parliamentary compound, Speight handed over some 60 automatic weapons, 14

handguns and landmines.

"My objective was not to come and take power. My objective was to restore power into the hands of indigenous Fijians," said Speight.

Several police stations remained occupied, tourist resorts stayed in the hands of groups claiming land rights, Speight supporters continued to man roadblocks around the country. (Agencies)

15 JUL 2000

## VICTORY FOR RACISM

1977 Fiji Indians on the way out *gjk*

**D**EPOSED Fijian prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry and the other 18 political hostages have finally been freed after 55 days in captivity, but their release has not stopped the slide into lawlessness. George Speight has won and the only reason can be that the interim civilian government installed by the junta did not find the kind of support among ordinary Fijians that would have helped it gain legitimacy against the 19 May coup leader. There were protests and some violence immediately after interim prime minister Laisenia Qarase took the oath and some of that was targeted directly at the military, with the result that Commodore Voreque Bainimarama, the junta head, had to go into a huddle with a dozen tribal chiefs after his government was officially sworn in. Strongarm tactics around the Parliament building did not have the desired effect either. Roughly half the people inside did respond to the military's ultimatum and evacuate, but this might have been part of the Speight gameplan to send his supporters out and create civil disturbances. What he seems to have sparked off is some kind of native Fijian revivalism with one tribe taking over a hydro-electric station built on their land and another turning up to reclaim the one on which the Queen Elizabeth Barracks, the military's own headquarters, is built. This might have unnerved Bainimarama sufficiently to want to conclude a deal with Speight and ward off the spectre of a potentially bloody confrontation.

The new deal gives Speight what he wanted — the government of Fiji. The Great Council of Chiefs, many of whom openly sympathised with Speight during his face-off with the Army and whom Speight has been appeasing on a number of points, elected Ratu Josefa Iloilo, a Speight supporter as the country's next president. There couldn't be worse news for Fiji's Indians, because the GCC is dominated by people who think that Indians are at their pleasure. They denied Mahendra Chaudhry the honour, traditionally accorded to Fiji's prime ministers, to address one of their sessions, on the ground that he was not native Fijian. They also want the land leased to Indian sugarcane farmers back, whether they can farm it on their own is another matter. This may give the signal for an Indian exodus and what that would do to Fiji's commercial infrastructure is hard to imagine. The situation may resemble the one that prevailed in Kuwait after the Gulf War where the sheikhs sat around in their overrun gardens, without water and electricity, because all immigrant workers had left. It will be interesting to see how the international community, what is the European Union, the United States and Australia, Fiji's main trading partners, react. The reaction may be nasty. Also, all this tribalism stirred up by Speight may prove counter-productive in the long run, with the chiefs at loggerheads over the traditional rights and privileges of their respective tribes. Fiji's future is bleak.

THE STATESMAN

7 3 1 1 1 1

# Fiji pact may create anarchy

By Harvey Stockwin  
The Times of India News Service

HONG KONG: No influential indigenous Fijian personality has come out strongly in favour of either sustaining the legitimate and elected government or of preserving Fiji as a multi-racial democracy in the face of George Speight's hijacking of the Mahendra Chaudhry government.



George Speight

The Fijian military, too, proved singularly inept in dealing with the crisis. Instead of taking harsh steps which would have forced compliance with law and order, the military appeared to have succumbed to the coup leader's harsh words and criminal actions.

Amidst all the turmoil, the website [www.fijilive.com](http://www.fijilive.com) kept going, providing the world with the basic information it needed. Since there are only an estimated 9,000 Fijians who can surf the net, there was no real money to be made as the number of hits per day soared from 5,000 to over 50,000.

Most of those working for [fijilive](http://www.fijilive.com) were Fijian Indians who were naturally worried over their safety. Yet they kept going, against the odds, keeping the world informed, believing their moment had arrived. As the owner of [fijilive](http://www.fijilive.com), Yashwant Gaunder, put it, "A chance like this comes once in a lifetime, when we can tell the whole world about the coup in Fiji—we'll be a part of history."

Go to the [www.fijilive.com](http://www.fijilive.com) website today, click on a bar at the top of the front page labelled the Muaninkau Accord and you can have the full text of the agreement. The full text of the accord tells much—but the world's press virtually ignored it.

It is only when one reads the full text of the 2,740-word accord—signed by Commander Josiah Bainimarama, the head of the Fijian armed forces and head of the interim military government of Fiji and George Speight on July 9—that he realises how much the military government had yielded to Mr Speight.

One also learns that has, or recently had, adopted a purely Fijian name, Ilikini Naitini. Another interesting fact is that he had signed the accord on behalf of the Taukei Civilian Takeover Group, a movement which has always been associated with extreme Fijian nationalism and opposition to a multiracial polity. Whether George Speight has joined the movement now to give himself a label, or whether he has actually long been a Taukei member, is yet to be revealed.

The overall accord had two parts—the draft of immunity decree 2000, which was finally gazetted on July 14, after the hostages were released, granting Mr Speight and his associates immunity from criminal prosecution for "their attempted illegal takeover of the government" and the accord itself on the release of the hostages.

In the decree, Commander Bainimarama justified immunity as "the best practical and lawful means available to me of averting a potentially catastrophic political situation". Immunity for Mr Speight is further justified on the grounds of "preserving and maintaining law and order and returning our beloved country to normalcy".

The second part of the document, which is the accord itself, treats Mr Speight as a credible political force within the overall crisis, rather than its creator in the first place. It cites his opposition to a number of issues considered repugnant to the preservation and protection of the rights and interests of the indigenous Fijians like the Chaudhry government's policies, various issues inconsistent with the aspirations of the indigenous Fijians, and the 1997 constitution.

There is not a word justifying the Chaudhry government's policies. Neither is there any indication that Mr Speight was pursuing his aims by criminal means. There is also no mention of Mr Speight being currently before a high court hearing charged with embezzlement. Not a word about him being fired from his government job for inefficiency prior to his hostage-taking.

Instead, in return for releasing the hostages, Speight's demands were all met. An interim president and an interim vice-president, both Mr Speight's nominees, will be appointed, the military martial law government will step down, the 1997 constitution will remain abrogated, an interim civilian government to be appointed to last two years while a constitutional review commission drafts a new constitution, under which Fijian Indians will lose their political rights.

One is surprised at the scope of this surrender to criminality. A potentially catastrophic political situation still threatens Fiji for giving in to those who behave like terrorists. Simply because the martial law administration failed to deal sternly with Mr Speight—even at the risk of the loss of some hostage lives—several Fijian tourist resorts are now being subjected to land-grabs by indigenous Fijians, prisoners in jail are trying to stage a breakout, various other anarchic episodes threaten, and Fiji's basic law and order is threatened.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 JUL 2000

# Chaudhry wants power restored

Suva, July 15

FIJI'S DEPOSED Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, who was held hostage by nationalist rebels for 56 days, called today for the reinstatement of his multi-racial coalition Government.

His stand risks provoking the rebels who have threatened further violence and unrest if the country's military does not stick to a deal for political dominance by indigenous Fijians.

But Mr Chaudhry, Fiji's first ethnic-Indian Prime Minister, was unbowed, saying the country could not give in to such threats but must uphold democracy, the Constitution, and the rule of law.

"Our commitment to these principles requires the reinstatement of the legitimate, democratically elected people's coalition Government," he told a news conference at his Suva home two days after being released from captivity.

"The opposite of that would be to condone an act of anarchy and unlawful seizure of a Government elected by the people," he said. "We don't have much of a choice." The former trade union leader, who has now

survived two coups in the name of indigenous Fijian rights, ruled out seeking exile from Fiji. Mr Chaudhry was Finance Minister when the military backed a 1987 coup against an Indian-dominated Government.

"I have never run away from a problem in all my life," he said, flanked in the garden of his home by his wife Virmati and coalition members, some of whom had also been hostages.



Mr Chaudhry said it was too early to reveal how he hoped to regain power, with meetings to be held next week with coalition partners to consider possibilities. He is expecting strong support from the international community, particularly Australia, New Zealand, the United States and United Kingdom, which have also called for his reinstatement. "I think they have made their position clear...They will

not sit back and let this incident here just go by," he said, adding their action could be to isolate Fiji and impose sanctions. "I did not appoint myself Prime Minister, I was elected by the people of this country," he said. He admitted to fearing for his life while being held hostage, but said his country had gone through a greater trauma. (Reuters)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 JUL 2000



## Violence rages in Spice Islands

JAKARTA, JULY 16. At least 21 people died in fighting between Christians and Muslims in Indonesia's ravaged Spice Islands as the latest bloodshed entered its fourth day, with at least 14 deaths reported yesterday alone.

Residents said gunshots and explosions echoed across the once-picturesque harbourside city of Ambon today and thick piles of smoke choked the air as mobs rampaged and torched buildings.

"A church was burned down yesterday and the Muslims are still on the rampage attacking Christian villages," said Sammy Waileruny, a lawyer for the Communion of Churches in the Moluccas, adding eight Christians were killed on Saturday.

A Muslim leader said at least six Muslims died. "The Christians are attacking a Muslim village, they also threw bombs into a boarding house of Muslim police," said Mr. Malik Selang, chief of the Indonesian Ulemas Council, in the Moluccas.

The latest killings bring the death toll from the four days of fighting in the main city of the Moluccas to at least 21.

The thousands of police and soldiers in the area have been unable to end the unrest.

Both sides accuse the police and the army of incompetence and joining the fighting in the islands, about 2,300 km east of Jakarta.

### 'Rogue army officers'

In an interview published yesterday, the Defence Minister, Mr. Juwono Sudarsono, blamed rogue army officers for inflaming the religious war and urged their sacking.

"There are some, or even many, members of the army, according to information gathered from both of the warring camps, who have become a major cause of the clashes," the *Jakarta Post* quoted Mr. Sudarsono saying.

He said some soldiers had been 'uncontrollable factors' in the bloodshed from the time it erupted in January 1999 after a dispute between a Christian bus driver and a Muslim passenger.

Thousands have since been slaughtered, many unarmed men, women and children, and tens of thousands have fled the once idyllic Moluccas for squalid refugee camps in neighbouring provinces.

Last month, almost 500 Christian refugees fleeing the northern Moluccas died when their overcrowded ferry sank in rough seas just kilometres away from the safety of neighbouring Sulawesi. — Reuters

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

17 JUL 2000

# Fiji rebels warn of further unrest

<sup>10-13</sup>  
<sup>1779</sup>  
<sup>So far - Fiji</sup>  
SUA, JULY 16. Indigenous Fijian rebels, who held the deposed Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry, hostage for two months, today warned of further unrest, if their choices were not met for a new Government expected to be announced this week.

Rebel spokesman, Mr. Jo Nata, said nationalist supporters could "escalate" previous protest action by occupying key infrastructure operations and blocking major roads if their demands were not met.

"We are serious about what we did (the coup)," Mr. Nata told reporters.

"We have come too far to compromise, so much so that we may not be able to control our people if the wrong people are put in Government," he said.

After weeks of tense wrangling, last week the military struck a deal with the rebels, led by businessman Mr. George Speight, which saw Chaudhry and 17 other hostages released after 56 days in captivity.

The military gave in to almost all of the rebels' demands which are aimed at enshrining indigenous Fijian power and stripping

ethnic-Indians of a political role.

Mr. Chaudhry on Saturday called for reinstatement of his coalition Government, saying otherwise Fiji would be bowing to an act of anarchy.

However, Mr. Nata said it would be impossible, as the multi-racial Constitution, which had enabled Mr. Chaudhry's election, had now been abrogated.

The U.S. said today that it would look to Australia to take the lead in action against Fiji.

"We will look to Australia for leadership in terms of what action or reaction should be taken," the U.S. Defence Secretary, Mr. William Cohen, told Channel Nine's Sunday programme.

"We will cooperate very much in coordinating the kind of response which will be important in restoring democracy to Fiji."

## Chaudhry's advice

Meanwhile, Mr. Chaudhry, the first ethnic Indian to lead Fiji, says he would not try to dissuade the ethnic Indian minorities from leaving the south Pacific nation as it moves to turn them into second-class citizens.

"I am hardly in a position to advise them otherwise," said Mr. Chaudhry.

"Any community that has gone through this twice, it's a natural thing for them to want to find a safe home," Mr. Chaudhry said on Saturday, referring to earlier coups in 1987.

He said the decision to disenfranchise the Indian minority and guarantee the superiority of indigenous Fijians had "torn the very fabric of society." — Reuters, AP

## Four killed in ammunition depot 'accident'

CHANDIGARH, JULY 16. Four people, including a Junior Commissioned Officer and a Jawan, were killed in an "accident" in the ammunition depot in Bathinda today, a Defence spokesman said here.

The other two victims were civilian labourers, he said. The accident occurred at 1015 hrs when unserviceable ammunition was being destroyed, the spokesman said. — PTI

THE HINDU

17 JUL 2000

## Speight warns new Govt. of backlash

**SUVA, JULY 18.** The civil coup leader, Mr. George Speight, today raised the spectre of fresh turmoil in the Pacific nation after he was sidelined from a new Government appointed to end two months of political unrest.

The new administration contained one active supporter of Mr. Speight's May 19 coup against the country's first ethnic Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Mahendra Chaudhry.

It also contains a member of the large Indian minority, Mr. George Shiu Raj, and is headed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Laisenia Qarase, whom Mr. Speight had bitterly opposed when he was appointed Interim Premier earlier.

Ratu Josefa Iloilo, sworn in as the President, ruled out the reinstatement of Mr. Chaudhry but said he had named a team to reflect Fiji's multi-ethnic make-up.



**Fiji's rebel leader, Mr. George Speight (Right), greets the country's new President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, after he was sworn in during a ceremony in Suva on Tuesday. — Reuters**

Within hours of the new Government being announced, Mr. Speight attacked its composition as a betrayal of what the coup was supposed to achieve — exclusion of Indians from power — and an attempt to sideline him.

"They are treading on some dangerous ground," he warned. "It will result in a backlash. I think some of the people are trying to do me in and they are going to meet with some very strong resistance." The potential for further unrest was underlined by reports that 100 Indian families had fled from an area north of Suva where Mr. Speight has strong support. *The Fiji Times* said Indians in the Dawasamu area of Tavalevu had their properties torched, cars stolen, and cattle slaughtered. Australia today followed New Zealand's lead by slashing its aid to Fiji and curtailing military cooperation. — AFP

REUTERS

1990

# India steadfast over Fiji stand

Udayan Namboodiri  
New Delhi, July 18

THE NEWS of the appointment of a "moderate" interim cabinet in Fiji has not caused much cheer here as India continues to maintain that nothing short of total return to the 1997 Constitution that assured democratic rights to Indian-origin Fijians would satisfy New Delhi. However, for the time being, India is withholding its comment on the development.

A senior External Affairs Ministry official said the Australian and New Zealand response in announcing trade and non-humanitarian sanctions against Fiji had been done in consultation with India. Fearing a backlash against the 43.6 per cent Indian-origin Fijians, India has desisted from playing a role that may be viewed as offensive by the Melanesians who now control the country with the aid of the Army.

"We don't want to make it appear

like an Indo-Fiji standoff. The Commonwealth countries having a leverage on Fiji are doing that in consultation with India," the official said. This has been the more-or-less consistent Indian position since the second week of the hostage crisis that began on May 19 with the attack on Parliament by Speight and his supporters.

In fact, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh has objected the nomenclature "ethnic Indians" attached to the minorities of Indian origin. He has structured a response to the growing question about New Delhi's responsibility based on the premise that the descendants of Indian settlers on the island are no longer Indian but Fijian citizens with a right to as much democratic and political rights as the Melanesians.

Pursuing this lead, India wants pluralism in Fiji upheld by its new rulers. New Delhi is not recognising the regime under new President Josefa Iloilo and main-

tains that the deposed Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry should be reinstated.

"India is in touch with moderate and liberal politicians in Fiji, beyond this we cannot do much. Hitting back with trade sanctions in our view is counter-productive as it would hurt Indian origin Fijians. Of particular concern to India is the continued exchange of visits of ordinary people between the two countries which should not be obstructed by the military regime," the official said.

India also agrees with the Australian explanation that a 30 per cent aid cut combined with trade, defense and sporting sanctions would be enough for the time being. Last month, the Secretary (Economic Relations) in the MEA visited Canberra and was briefed by his counterparts in the Foreign Ministry there that impoverishing Fiji would serve no purpose but on the other hand would strengthen the position of the military.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 3 1997

# New government named in Fiji, no ethnic Indians in the cabinet

SUVA: Fiji took another major step on Tuesday toward stripping its ethnic Indian minority of power and still nationalist coup leader George Speight was not satisfied. Mr Speight predicted more civil unrest after he objected to 20-member cabinet installed by the country's newly appointed president that included at least two of his supporters and no ethnic Indians.

"It will result in a backlash," he said. "They are treading on some dangerous ground. I think they are going to meet some stiff resistance." Asked if Fiji could expect a return to unrest, Mr Speight said, "I am predicting it. The fun is just beginning."

There were no immediate reports of unrest following Mr Speight's comments and it remains to be seen how much support he still commands since virtually all of his demands have been met. Mr Speight said enough of his supporters weren't in the cabinet and he objected to not having been adequately consulted in the process of formulating the lineup. According to a statement released by President Ratu Josef Iloilo's office, members of Fiji's ethnic Indian minority initially accepted cabinet posts but later withdrew "due to con-

cern for the safety of their families". The only Indian involved in the new administration will be George Shiu Raj, who was appointed one of two assistant ministers for multiethnic affairs—a non-cabinet post.

One foreign diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the lineup as "largely nationalist but not radically so". The absence of ethnic Indians and presence of Speight supporters in the cabinet is likely to prompt more nations to follow New Zealand's lead and slap sanctions on Fiji to press for a return to multiracial democracy.

Meanwhile, Australia announced it would slash non-humanitarian aid to Fiji, cut most military ties, impose travel bans on students and athletes, and recall its most senior diplomat for consultations. Prime minister Laisenia Qarase stayed in the post he was appointed to just last week, heading an unelected interim government that has a mandate to guide Fiji to elections in about 18 months. Qarase has released a blueprint for Fiji's future guaranteeing political superiority and affirmative action for indigenous Fijians and promising redistribution of resources to benefit them. (AP)

# Speight pressure holds up new govt swearing-in

REUTERS

SUVA, July 19. — Fiji's new Prime Minister said today that the swearing-in of his government had been postponed because the President was ill. But nationalist rebels threatening new unrest declared they had forced the delay.

The rebels, who held Fiji's first ethnic Indian Prime Minister Mr Mahendra Chaudhry hostage at gunpoint for 56 days to win more rights for indigenous Fijians, say they were promised a larger role in the government but were double-crossed. The ceremony had been cancelled because they were unhappy with the list of new ministers, they added.

"This thing is in its last days. All we want is for them to talk to us before they do anything with the new cabinet," rebel spokesman Joe Nata said.

"We are prepared to do something dramatic again. Don't forget, we took over parliament and held hostages for what we believed in," he said.

Rebel leader George Speight said he was disappointed he was not consulted before the



George Speight

government was announced yesterday and would meet military-backed Prime Minister Mr Laisenia Qarase and ailing President Mr Ratu Josefa Iloilo later today. "We're looking for a solution that's good for Fiji but more particularly that's good for our people," Speight told Sky TV in Australia.

## UK, Australia sanctions

Britain recalled its high commissioner in Fiji yesterday in protest against the new civilian government in Suva that

includes sympathisers of the coup attempt by George Speight, The Times, London adds from Sydney.

Mr John Battle, the foreign office minister, announced in London that Mr Michael Dibben, the British ambassador, would return amid concern that the resolution of Fiji's hostage crisis had distorted the democratic process in the South Pacific island.

Australia also announced sanctions against Fiji. Anxious to take a stand but reluctant to cause serious damage to Fiji's ailing economy, Canberra opted for token measures that will affect defence ties, bilateral aid programmes and sporting links. Australia will urge Britain not to let Fiji play in the Rugby League World Cup, but there will be no ban on Fiji's participation in the Olympic Games in Sydney later this year.

Speight accused Canberra of being hypocritical with its sanctions, which will also target the rebel leader's own business interests and forbid him from re-entering Australia where he has two children.

THE STATESMAN

# Fiji Govt aborted after rebels' civil war threat

Suva, July 19

**F**IJI WAS plunged back into turmoil today after nationalist rebels forced the swearing-in of a new government to be postponed with a warning that the country was "verging on civil war". President Josefa Iloilo was to have sworn in 20 new ministers and 12 assistant ministers including acting Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase at a ceremony.

The ceremony was supposed to end the country's political crisis which erupted after years of simmering ethnic tensions between indigenous Fijians and ethnic Indians who make up 44 per cent of the population.

But the President failed to show up, leaving Qarase to announce that he was "indisposed", and that the swearing-in was being put off to an unspecified date.

The dramatic no-show followed a warning from George Speight, the leader of the rebels who overthrew the country's previous government and held it hostage in parliament for nearly two months, that the composition of the new government was unacceptable to him and his supporters.

The new administration contained one close ally of Speight

Speight told Fiji Broadcasting Commission that the new government had to include "our people to champion our cause."

Speight and his supporters today moved out of parliament to a village just outside Suva, allowing the military to resume control of the complex.

Witnesses said several cars were torched as Speight, a bankrupt businessman, left the complex.

Right uptil 11 am, it appeared the administration believed the ceremony was still going ahead at Borron House, a state owned property.

As the planned new ministers gathered in a tent, minus nine of them who had not shown up, Qarase announced: "Ladies and gentlemen... Regretably His Excellency President Ratu Josefa Iloilo is indisposed this morning. He is resting at home. So regrettably, the swearing in ceremony is deferred until further notice."

He said cabinet tomorrow morning was also postponed. He gave no new swearing in time.

Iloilo, 79, suffers from Parkinsons disease.

His deputy, Joeli Semiloli, is a hardline Speight supporter.

(AFP)



A Fijian soldier walks past a burning car at the parliamentary parking lot in Suva on Wednesday. The rebels and their supporters set fire to several vehicles before leaving the compound. Photo: AFP

and a number of sympathisers but warned before the ceremony was due to take place that there would be trouble if the new government was appointed.

Speight's spokesman Joe Nata was appointed.

THE HINDUSTAN

# Speight seeks India's help

New Delhi, July 20 (Reuters) - Fiji nationalist rebel leader George Speight said today he was looking to India for help in promoting indigenous Fijians at the expense of a large ethnic Indian minority.

Speight, who stormed parliament on May 19 in the name of Fijian rights taking ethnic Indian prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry hostage, appeared to be looking at India's affirmative action programme to aid its poor and low castes as inspiration.

"I want people who could give the interest of Fiji paramount importance, including economic and political policies," he told India's Star News television channel.

"In fact we will be asking India for some assistance in relation to how we implement those policies on behalf of Fijians, because it happens there in India," he said.

"We will be looking at economic assistance, assistance to do with the formulation of laws and policies and social ideas that promote the ethnic interest of indigenous people...because I am sure that is what happens in India."

He did not elaborate.

Speight released his hostages, Chaudhry and most of his cabinet, last week after Fiji's traditional Great Council of Chiefs met his demands to end ethnic Indian political influence and installed an in-

igenous president.

Speight accused Chaudhry, whose ancestors belong to the Haryana state bordering Delhi, of destroying the ethnic Fijian culture and trying to impose Indian supremacy. The rebels wanted ethnic Indians who make up 44 per cent of the population stripped of all political power.

Fiji's political crisis showed no signs of easing this after new Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase was reported in a local newspaper as having refused to meet Speight.

## Chaudhry plea

Mahendra Chaudhry said today he had sought international help to restore his multi-racial coalition and spoke of options such as a government-in-exile.

"We are the legitimately-elected government and what we are seeking is our restoration," Chaudhry told Reuters in an interview after holding a meeting of his deposed cabinet in this coastal town on the west coast of Fiji's main island Viti Levu.

He said he had been in contact with the Commonwealth, Australia, New Zealand and the US seeking help in restoring democracy to the racially-divided South Pacific nation. Chaudhry said he was considering options such as creating a separate government or even a government-in-exile.

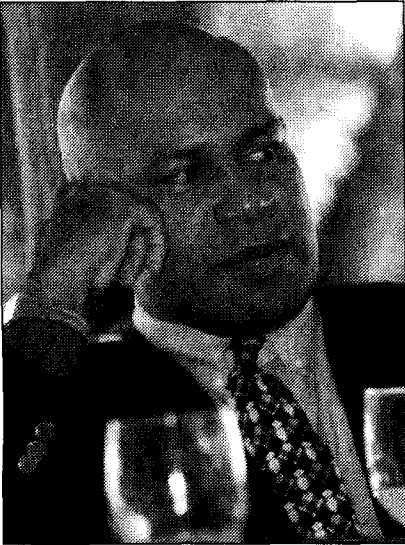
THE TELEGRAPH

21 JUL 2000



# Satan in paradise

Fiji, says SAM RAJAPPA, is headed for disintegration



It is rather symbolic the two-month long hostage crisis in Fiji, described in tourist brochures as "paradise on earth", ended with the funeral of Kolimio Tabua, a Fijian army deserter who was caught in the cross-fire when the military tried to evict rebels from the Parliament complex in Suva. In any civilised democracy, Tabua would have been court-martialled and convicted for high treason.

His burial at the entrance to Parliament House with full state honours at the instance of George Speight, who led the coup against the one-year-old popularly elected People's Coalition government of Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, turning the seat of government into a cemetery, signifies the death of democracy and a return to the pre-colonial style of rule by the tribal chiefs in Fiji.

For a proper appreciation of the current political turmoil in Fiji, it is necessary to understand the chief system which has survived nearly two centuries of Western colonial rule. When European adventurers reached the South Pacific, the Malanesian and Polynesian people scattered over the islands which constitute today's Fiji were divided into separate states, each ruled by a high chief. Ratu (chief) Seru Cakobau of Ba, who embraced Christianity in 1854, had emerged as the most powerful of the high chiefs and he proclaimed himself as Tui Viti (King of Fiji). The entire population of Fiji followed the lead of Ratu Cakobau and accepted Christianity as their religion.

In 1874, Cakobau, in consultation with the other chiefs, ceded the islands to Queen Victoria of England, acknowledging her as the Supreme Chief. It was a rare case of colonisation by invitation and not by conquest. The British found it expedient to let the chiefs retain the power they traditionally exercised and formed the Great Council of Chiefs. The first constitution of independent Fiji, adopted in 1970, gave a special role to the Great Council of Chiefs in safeguarding the interests of indigenous Fijians and in preserving their political hegemony.

It is to this Great Council of Chiefs that Speight entrusted the task of legitimising the overthrow of Chaudhry from the office of Prime Minister in the name of "restoring" the country to ethnic Fijians. But



Speight is the least qualified to play the indigenous card. He is not a thoroughbred ethnic Fijian. His grandfather was a white New Zealander and his wife an Australian. His children reside in Australia and hold citizenship of that country. To promote his image as a full-blooded native, he has given himself the Fijian name Ilikini Naitini, but people prefer to call him George Speight. He had become notorious for swindling millions of dollars of the nation. He wants Fiji declared a Christian nation in which Hindus and Muslims will have no political role to play.

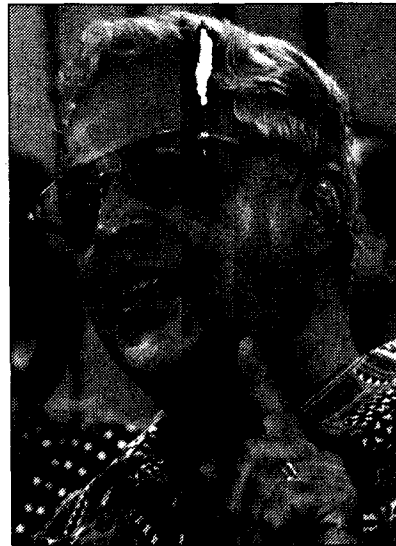
The Taukei Civilian Takeover Group under whose banner Speight and his gunmen took 31 hostages, including Chaudhry, was the brainchild of Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka who staged Fiji's first military coup in 1987, promoted himself to the rank of Major-General and held the reins of power for 12 years until his party, the Seqosoqo Vakavulewa Taukei, was defeated in the 1999 election by the People's Coalition of Mahendra Chaudhry. The Fiji Labour Party, leader of the coalition, is a multi-racial organisation whereas the Fijian Association Party and the Party of National Unity, constituents of the three-party coalition, are parties of ethnic Fijians. Surprisingly, the National Federation Party of Fijians of Indian origin, was routed at the polls. Ethnic Fijians are sensitive to being ruled by Indo-Fijians who already dominate the country's economy trade and the professions.

Rabuka learnt the art of staging

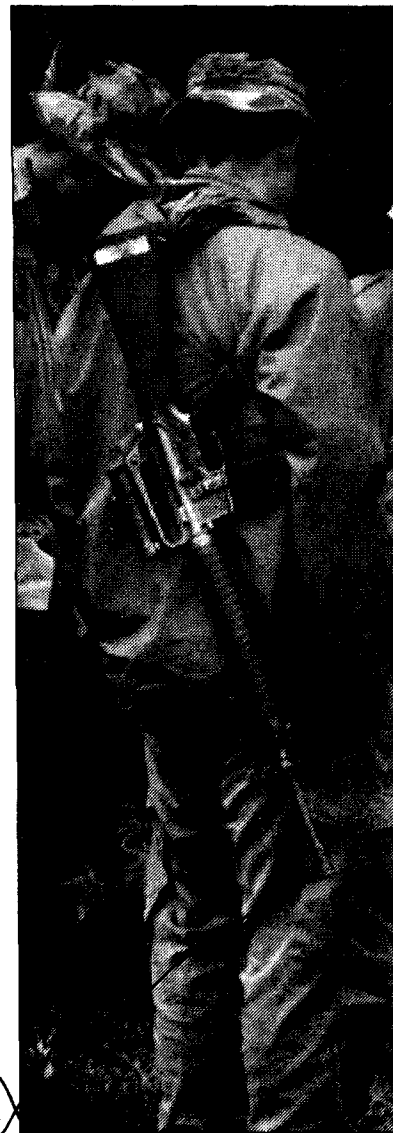
coups at the Defence Services Staff College in Coonoor which admitted him under the foreign military officers' exchange programme in 1977-78. He made use of the opportunity to obtain a masters degree in Defence and Strategic Studies from Madras University. The topic of his dissertation was "How to stage a successful coup". On returning to Fiji, he tried his hand at putting into practice what he learnt in India by staging a coup against the duly elected Labour Party government of the late Timoci Bavandara in 1987 and became Prime Minister in 1990 under a racist constitution which replaced the 1970 constitution.

Bavandara had made the fatal mistake of declaring Fiji a nuclear-free zone. It was the time New Zealand and the smaller South Pacific island states had also declared themselves nuclear-free zones, thus denying the USA the use of their ports. The USA found in Rabuka a kindred soul. Fiji became the recipient of the highest per capita foreign aid in the world. But only a fraction of this money was spent on development work. The Rabuka regime excelled in crony capitalism and corruption and the ordinary ethnic Fijians, whose cause his Soqosoqo Vakavulewa Taukei (SVT) espoused, became more impoverished than ever before.

George Speight, whose father was a minister in the SVT government, was made chairman of a couple of lucrative government corporations whose coffers he had emptied and was facing legal proceedings. Chaudhry relieved Speight of his posts. The 19 May coup was an attempt by the SVT to capture power that it had lost by the ballot with the help of the bullet.



THE FIJI CONUNDRUM: (Clockwise) Coup leader George Speight, always trying to promote his image as a full-blooded native; recently inducted members of the interim Cabinet, comprising mainly ethnic Fijians; ousted Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry; troops destroy a pornography video outside the Parliament complex in Suva after the hostage crisis changed the political scenario and Sitiveni Rabuka, who staged the first successful coup in the Pacific Island nation.



Chaudhry, soon after assuming power, declared his government's intention of ordering an inquiry into the missing millions in foreign aid. Preliminary investigations revealed that much of the money had gone to line the pockets of Rabuka who, while in power, also managed to get himself installed as chairman of the Great Council of Chiefs, though he is not a Ratu himself. Rabuka had recruited Speight, a fugitive from justice, as the hatchet man to stage the coup, and Speight, in turn, had left all major decisions to the Great Council of Chiefs.

The gunmen who accompanied Speight to the Parliament complex on 19 May to hijack the government belonged to the elite Counter Revolutionary Warfare Unit of Fiji's armed forces. They had free access to the military armoury, thanks to the Rabuka connection. The Great Council of Chiefs, which included Fiji's first Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, who was the country's President at the time of the coup, yielded to every demand by Speight. Not one of the chiefs condemned Speight for his terrorist activities. The military also went along with the rebels. There was none to speak for the Indo-Fijians in the confabulations that followed and in the formation of the interim government.

At the time of the first coup in 1987, Indo-Fijians outnumbered indigenous Fijians. There was an exodus of Indo-Fijians which reduced their strength to 44 per cent of the population. More Indo-Fijians are planning to migrate, which would further alter the demographic profile in favour of ethnic Fijians, just what the coup leaders

want.

Indo-Fijians feel let down by New Delhi's silence and inaction.

Apart from Rabuka's fear of being exposed in the foreign aid scandal and Speight's fear of being brought to book for misappropriating state corporation funds, ethnic Fijians feared that the Chaudhry government, if allowed to continue, would bring forward land reforms legislation. Eighty-six per cent of land in Fiji is indigenously owned. The ownership is not by individuals but by mataqali (clans). It is their obligation to ensure the land, which a clan owns, is passed on to the next generation. Indo-Fijians grow sugarcane on land leased from the clans. If the landowners refuse to renew the lease, the tenants are expected to go elsewhere. Not a very happy position to be in.

One of the important elements in the policy platform of the People's Coalition was the establishment of a Land Use Commission so that the land could be put to optimum use to benefit both the owners and the tenants. In fact, Chaudhry had sent a representative group of chiefs to observe the land ownership pattern in Sarawak, Malaysia. The more orthodox among the chiefs thought it was an attempt to hoodwink the indigenous landowners and divide them. The Native Land Trust Board wanted the Land Use Commission first mooted by the Fiji Labour Party government of Bavandra, wound up.

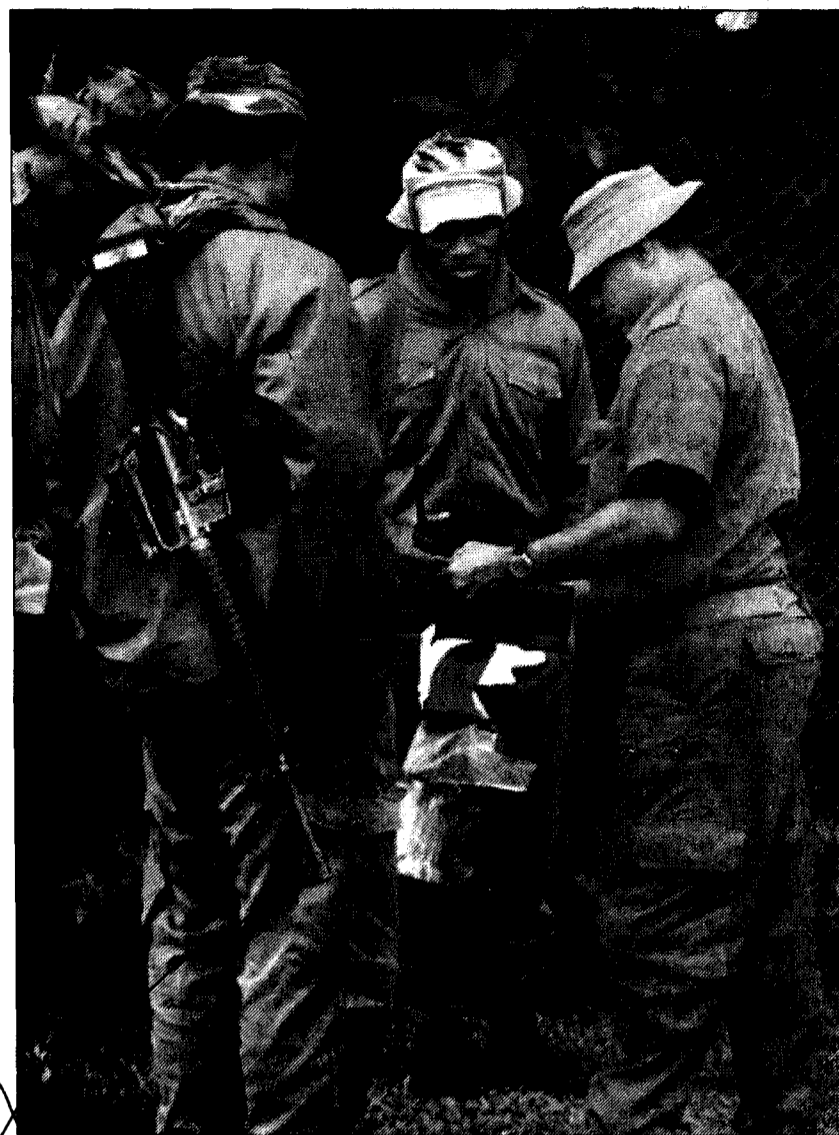
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# Satan in paradise

Fiji, says SAM RAJAPPA, is headed for disintegration



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Chaudhry had expressed concern at the damage caused to government institutions by the Taukei Civilian Takeover Group, and wanted his duly elected government reinstated. Police stations and military bases across the country had been taken over by

armed civilian groups supporting Speight. A spate of hostage-taking incidents had erupted in several places. The security forces were being fractured by political and racial divisions. The integrity and professionalism of the judiciary and other services had been seriously compromised.

Lawlessness had extended to the sabotage of public utilities like electricity, water supply, public roads and airports. The unlawful and violent takeover of tourist resorts and other private business had also taken place, leading to lawlessness and chaos.

The coup had caused irreparable damage to Fiji's economy and set the clock back by decades. The confidence of investors, both foreign and domestic, had been shattered. Despite the havoc, destruction and anarchy sweeping Fiji, Chaudhry enjoys the support of large sections of the people of all races who are peace-loving and law-abiding. The international community also supports Chaudhry. This was evident from the swearing-in ceremony of the interim government and the Speight-nominated President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo. The entire diplomatic corps in Suva boycotted the functions.

But a vocal and violent minority has been holding the country to ransom. Chaudhry and his supporters, who include a number of chiefs, are planning to form a separate government in the western region of Fiji, which could well lead to the disintegration of the country.

(The author, a retired Statesman journalist, is a Fiji-watcher.)

# 49-16 2877 Spite reigns in Fiji

THE FIRST sign of an emerging variant of the famous formula connoting 'one-state-two-systems' came into focus in the tiny South Pacific chain of Fiji Isles on July 20. It was certainly not a decisive portent for the traditionally unified entity of Fiji which, in any case, was also not politically or socially attuned to the concept popularised by China in the case of Hong Kong. Yet, the threat of a 'civil war' as hurled by Fiji's mercurial coup leader, Mr. George Speight, has raised the stakes for new ways of keeping the nation united.

Mr. Mahendra Pal Chaudhry, Fiji's freed but dispossessed Prime Minister, gathered his resources at a conclave held in the western part of the country's main island on that day. The agenda was to devise an alternative to the new system of 'government' being evolved in Suva, Fiji's capital in the eastern half of the prime island, under the menacing gaze of Mr. Speight himself.

For Mr. Chaudhry, Fiji's first Prime Minister from the minority community of ethnic Indians, the preservation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity was obviously a prime consideration. This was affirmed by him and his followers, who as before included a large number of those belonging to the majority group of indigenous people, even as they asserted his right to be reinstated as Prime Minister in the present circumstances as well. Yet, they faced a dilemma.

Only a day earlier, the President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, had ruled out the restoration of Mr. Chaudhry's coalition government, which was duly elected in Fiji's first pluralist polls held in 1999 under the 1997 multi-racial Constitution. With this statute having been scrapped by the 'Interim Military Government' of Commodore J.V. (Frank) Bainimarama in the wake of Mr. Speight taking Mr. Chaudhry and his associates hostage on May 19 this year, Ratu Iloilo was correct in interpreting the 'law' in force at present. In fact, as Mr. Speight and his armed minions freed Mr. Chaudhry and his dwindled number of steadfast associates on July 13 after they had endured an illegal captivity for over 55 days, the coup leader took abundant care to lay down the new constitutional 'law' of the land. In essence, it forbade the exercise of substantive political authority by anyone of ethnic

*The threat of a civil war hurled by the mercurial coup leader, Mr. George Speight, in Fiji, torn asunder by ethnic hatred, has raised the stakes for new ways of keeping the island-nation united, writes P. S. SURYANARAYANA.*

Indian stock in the foreseeable future.

Ever eager to play Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in respect of the relative rights of native Fijians and ethnic Indians, Mr. Speight, a part-European himself, extracted concessions from the indigenous leaders while allowing Mr. Chaudhry to go free, albeit as only a second-

class citizen. Cmdr.

Bainimarama, who staged a counter-coup to checkmate Mr. Speight, found himself with no option but to decree the military government out of existence. More importantly, Mr. Speight made it clear that he should be regarded as the man of Fiji's destiny. And he wanted the Great Council of Chiefs, the

highest traditional institution of the native Fijians, to act as his hand-maiden.

It was in those circumstances that the Council not only nominated a new President and Vice-President, both variously acceptable to Mr. Speight, but also a Prime Minister. Mr. Speight did not demur when the new President re-appointed Mr. Laisenia Qarase, who was originally made a civilian Prime Minister under the now-defunct military government. Mr. Qarase's earlier call for a racist polity seemed to have pleased Mr. Speight.

But, as the day approached for the latest Cabinet to be sworn in, Mr. Speight would have none of it. He was furious over the exclusion of his cronies from the new coterie — the Council led by Mr. Sitiveni Rabuka, already known for masterminding racist politics, besides Ratu Iloilo, Mr. Qarase and Cmdr. Bainimarama. The old guard of native Fijian politics made light of Mr. Speight's present options, if only because he had not insisted on being made the Prime Minister in the place of Mr. Chaudhry.

Not surprisingly, the old guard met in Suva on July 20 to consider ways of preventing Mr. Speight from causing further havoc like the proverbial bull in a chinashop. The coterie's worry was the international reaction to the charade that followed Mr. Chaudhry's release. Australia and New Zealand recalled their envoys for consultations and ordered a suspension of military cooperation as also Government-to-Government economic contacts with Fiji — an aspect of 'smart sanctions' designed to cushion the blow against the commercial interests of ethnic Indians there.

It was in this context that Mr. Chaudhry mobilised his followers to explore how far he could hope to revive multi-racial politics in at least those pockets of Fiji that might be hospitable to an idea remotely resembling two systems within one State. While this could bring the coterie in Suva under moral pressure, Mr. Chaudhry himself did not speak of a duality of systems within one State or opt for the orthodox notion of a multi-racial Fijian 'government-in-exile' as the only solution in the present circumstances. A more immediate question is whether the Fijian military, already bracing for a possible new crisis at home, can prevent Mr. Speight from 'internationalising' his racist agenda.



# Chaudhry calls for UN referendum

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SUVA, July 23. — Fiji's deposed ethnic Indian Prime Minister Mr Mahendra Chaudhry today called for a UN-sponsored referendum in Fiji to gauge support for the return of his government, which was ousted by a coup.

Mr Chaudhry, who spent 56 days as a hostage of coup rebels, said a referendum would offer Fijians the choice of returning to democratic rule and ending the "absolute confusion and chaos" caused by the nine-week political crisis.

Fiji has been without an effective government since the military, which took control during the coup, handed power to President Ratu Josefa Iloilo under a deal with the rebels to secure the release of the last 18 political hostages on 13 July.

The deal scraps Fiji's multiracial constitution and promises that the economically powerful ethnic Indian minority will be stripped of political power.

Mr Chaudhry did not give details of his referendum plan, nor did he say if he would



Mr Mahendra Chaudhry

approach the UN about it.

But Mr Chaudhry's plan is unlikely to be taken up by Mr Iloilo, and was rejected outright by coup leader George Speight. "The horse has already bolted," Speight told the *Sunday Times* newspaper.

Meetings between representatives of Mr Iloilo, Speight's group and top police officers continued during the weekend in an effort to decide a new Cabinet lineup.

Mr Iloilo failed to swear in his Cabinet last week after warnings from Speight that his sup-

porters would renew a campaign of civil unrest if the government was not stacked with his candidates.

Mr Iloilo, a frail 80-year-old tribal chief with Parkinson's Disease, has promised to appoint an indigenous Fijian as Prime Minister. But the talks appear to be devolving into a power struggle between Fiji's tribal chiefs, with Speight choosing one candidate for Prime Minister and then dumping him in favour of another.

Speight's men said his choice of Prime Minister was now Adi Samanunu Cakobau, Fiji's high commissioner to Malaysia and granddaughter of one of Fiji's most powerful historical figures, Ratu Seru Cakobau, regarded as the king of all Fiji's tribes in the 19th century.

Cakobau has not spoken publicly about the coup, but is believed to support Fijian political supremacy.

Promises of special treatment for ethnic Fijians and destruction of democracy have led Australia, New Zealand, Britain, USA and France to impose sanctions on the island nation.

THE STATESMAN

# Fiji rebels are restive, peace talks on hold

2677  
9/11/87 - AA-5

Suva, July 25: Fiji remained in political limbo on Tuesday as talks between military leaders and nationalist rebels stalled over the make-up of a new administration. Rebel leader George Speight said he is growing increasingly frustrated by the apparent refusal of the military and caretaker Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase to accept his candidates for a new government to lead Fiji for the next two years.

Speight, a former insurance salesman, hinted more civil unrest was likely in the racially split South Pacific nation if he did not get his way. "The ball game is not over yet, it is just starting," Speight told Reuters. "Don't underestimate the needs and the power of the people."

Speight plunged Fiji into a political crisis when he stormed Parliament with armed

rebels on May 19 in the name of indigenous Fijian rights.

The group held Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, Fiji's first ethnic Indian Prime Minister, and most of his multi-racial Cabinet hostage for 56 days before releasing them on July 13. The hostage drama at Suva's Parliament complex sparked waves of support among Fijian nationalists for Speight, who wants to limit the political and economic power of Fiji's Indians. Indians comprise 44 per cent of Fiji's 800,000 population and dominate the key tourism and sugar industries, which have been battered by the political crisis. Speight said he had held informal discussions with ailing new President Ratu Josefa Iloilo on Tuesday to press his demand that clan leader Adi Samanunu Cakobau be appointed Prime Minister. Those talks were incon-

clusive and a wider meeting involving Speight's group, military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama and representatives of the military-backed Mr Qarase was postponed.

Formal discussions between the three sides in the dispute would now be held on Wednesday, although a time and venue had not been agreed on, military sources in Suva said.

The military sources said Wednesday's meeting would be mediated by Mr Ratu Inoke Takiveikata, a representative of Fiji's influential Great Council of Chiefs and high chief of the Naitasiri clan on the main island of Viti Levu. Sources from Mr Iloilo's office said a delegation from the President would meet

Mr Qarase at the Reserve Bank of Fiji in central Suva later on Tuesday to dis-

cuss developments.

Speight's group won many of their demands for indigenous Fijian political domination, including the scrapping of the 1997 multi-racial Constitution, before freeing their hostages.

A new indigenous government under Mr Qarase was named but Speight has rejected it because it includes none of his supporters in key Cabinet positions.

He now wants Mr Cokaobau, a diplomat from a clan regarded in Fiji as close to royalty, to replace Mr Qarase and has threatened renewed unrest if he does not get his way. Australia, which along with New Zealand, Britain and the United States has already imposed aid, diplomatic and sporting sanctions, on Sunday threatened new sanctions if Speight or his group won places in the new government. (Reuters)

## CRISIS IN PACIFIC

THE ASIAN AGE

26 JUL 2000

# FRAGMENTED LAND

## Fiji Reaps Bitter Fruit Of Divide And Rule

By MAN MOHINI KAUL

THE current political crisis in Fiji has brought to the fore the precarious position of the Indian community in their country of adoption. The struggle for sharing power between the Fijians and the Indo-Fijians has existed since Fiji's independence in 1970, and it seems naive now to have expected the Fijians to willingly hand over the political power which had been their preserve for so long. The central crisis in Fiji today is essentially of an assertion of identity by the indigenous Fijians and the unwillingness of the Indo-Fijians to accept a subservient role. It is the story of a post-colonial society deeply divided between two ethnic groups, attempting to make the transition from tradition to modernity, snowballing into a crisis caused by the head-on collision of the two competing nationalisms. That the crisis was created to shelter the corrupt leaders of Fiji is merely incidental to this one central dichotomy.

The return to democracy with the general election of May 1999, under the new constitution of 1997, has proved to be a short-lived victory for the Fijian Labour Party (FLP). For the first time an Indo-Fijian, Mahendra Chaudhry, became the Prime Minister of Fiji, with his party winning 37 of the 71 seats in parliament, of which 31 were Indians.

### CONFLICT

Though there was euphoria in the Indian community, many political observers forecasted a backlash from the Fijians. Former Prime Minister Rabuka, who had been responsible for two military coups in May and September 1987, warned the Indian community soon after the election results were announced. He said, "to the members of the Indian community, we the indigenous Fijians have given so much in agreeing to review the 1990 constitution. Your vote is your democratic right but judging from the way you have bloc voted turning inward to your own communal interests, I appeal to you all to show greater responsibility to our wider common interests as a nation". These words, are all the more significant for being uttered by a man whose coups according to a leading scholar on Fiji, Robert Norton, "more than any other event in Fiji's history aggravated conflict between indigenous Fijians and Indians".

Of the total Fijian population of 773,000, Indians form a substantial 44 percent. The majority of Indians are sugarcane farmers working on land owned by indigenous farmers leased to them under Agricultural Landlord and Tenants Act (ALTA). Most of these leases are going to expire shortly and unless they are renewed the consequences are going to be damaging to both Indo-Fijians and the indigenous Fijians; the former will find themselves displaced, while the

latter will suffer from grave economic problems, which are likely to lead to chaos and political uncertainty. From 1987 to the elections in May 1999, violence against the Indian community and their property was encouraged and in every aspect they were marginalised. This resulted in the migration of skilled Indo-Fijians to the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, bringing down the Indian community's population from 50 percent at independence down

the Constitution adopted at independence in 1970. Major fears arose from the increased birth rate of the Indians whose 50 percent to the Fijian 46 percent had reduced the latter to a minority community in their own country. As long as political power remained with the Fijians relations between the two communities remained somewhat harmonious. In spite of international protests that it was racially biased, a new Constitution, which further entrenched the political domination of the indigenous Fijians was adopted on July 25, 1990.

Australia and New Zealand, the two most important neighbours of Fiji continued to put pressure on Rabuka to consider constitutional reforms. Within the Fijian community too Rabuka was losing popularity, with most holding the view that his government was mismanaging the affairs of the country. In order to buy time and to gain approval from the international community Rabuka decided to have the Constitution reviewed. From the hearings of the Constitutional Review Committee (CRC) two main opposing viewpoints emerged which reflect the dilemma facing Fiji's divided society. The Indian submissions generally stressed equality and "a non-discriminatory political system".

### RECONCILIATION

Indigenous Fijians, on the other hand, insisted on special privileges as they believed that "God made Fiji for the Fijians, just as he had allocated other lands to other races". They emphasised that the relationship between indigenous Fijians and Indians was based on the traditional Fijians viewpoint of *tauvei* (host) and *vulagi* (guest). The CRC recommended power sharing between the two groups, as it felt that keeping a "predominantly Fijian government in office in perpetuity may not be the best way of securing the paramountcy of Fijian interests". As a result, a new Constitution was adopted in July 1997. Rabuka assuaged the feelings of fellow Fijians by emphasising that constitutional reforms were necessary for strengthening the economy and attracting foreign investment.

The result of the May 1999 general elections according to one analyst was due to "fragmentation of Fijian political leadership, driven partly by popular distrust of the constitutional reform". The division between the two communities raises difficult questions for those who would like to see ethnic reconciliation in Fiji. The society has to overcome these differences and negotiate a political accommodation, otherwise it will lead to major problems affecting both the communities. The Fijian army, which declared martial law in the wake of George Speight's coup against the legitimate civilian government, has to be pressurised by outside powers like Australia and New Zealand to restore democracy in Fiji. India too can find ways of influencing the Fijian elite by using the good offices of a third country.



to 44 percent in 1996. However, for the majority of Indian plantation workers, there is no option but to stay.

To go to the root of this problem is not difficult — one is quite familiar with the policy of "divide et imperium", and also the consequences of translocating foreign indentured labourers. The fact was there was a division in which an aggrieved native population perceived a tremendous insecurity. In Fiji, the Indians were brought by the British in 1879 as indentured labourers to work on plantations. Sir Arthur Gordon, the first Governor of Fiji felt that by getting Indian labour, the Fijian way of life would continue undisturbed.

### SUSPICION

According to an analyst it was a short-sighted policy, and had the Fijians been allowed to work on their plantations they would have been able to emerge from a "traditional society and enter the modern world of economic competition". Once indentured labour was abolished in January 1920, the majority of Indians chose Fiji as their new home even though it meant living under insecure conditions. The British made no effort at reconciling the two groups, and in fact evolved separate local administrations for the Indians and the indigenous Fijians.

The vulnerability of their situation made Indians look to alternative means of livelihood and work hard at ensuring a better future for their children by educating them. With education came prosperity, and the Indians achieved dominance in commerce, trade and took over all the white collar jobs. On the other hand, the traditional way of life encouraged by the British hampered the Fijians developing into a viable economic group. As the Indians prospered, the suspicion of Fijians towards them increased. Each community maintaining their separate identity "singularly lacking in intimacy" further encouraged the ethnic rift.

The fears and suspicions of the Fijians vis-a-vis the Indians were incorporated in

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## Fiji army arrests Speight, aides

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SUVA, July 26. — George Speight, two of his advisors and a body guard were arrested today by the Fiji military forces following allegations that Speight's men had threatened Fiji's president, a military spokesman said.

"There are a number of allegations brought to us about the carriage of arms in and around Suva by George Speight and his body guards and also threats to the head of state," Lt. Col. Filipino Tarakinikini said.

He did not say who made the claims.

There was no confirmation on whether Speight would be charged.

There was no immediate reaction from Speight's supporters.

Earlier, an official had said Speight was arrested on suspicion of a curfew violation.

Shots were fired before the arrests at a military checkpoint close to Speight's camp, but there were no immediate reports of any injuries.

One local radio station cited eyewitnesses who said one of Speight's men was beaten as he was arrested.

Lt Col Tarakinikini said that amnesty was conditional on rebels turning in all their arms — something they have not done.

(Another report on page 5)

THE STATESMAN

27 JUL 2000

Speight supporters arrested in junta raid ✓

# Fiji rebels take 50 Indians hostage

9.7.77

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

SUVA, July 27. — Fiji's military today arrested hundreds of supporters of coup leader George Speight, sparking an immediate backlash that raised fears the country could be on the brink of a civil war.

Within hours of the arrests, nationalist rebels in the northern town of Labasa had rounded up about 50 members of the country's large ethnic Indian minority and taken them hostage in the town's barracks, which has been in rebel hands for several weeks.

The military, which arrested Speight late yesterday, raided a school where his supporters have been camping for the last week just after dawn.

One person was killed in the operation, another 40 injured and 369 people arrested, army

spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Filipo Tarakinikini said.

Col Tarakinikini said the dead man, who was 50, had died of suffocation from the effects of tear gas used in the raid. None of the injured had been shot.

Following the raid, the military also seized Ilisoni Ligairi, a former member of Britain's special air service, and 12 special forces troops. Ligairi is Speight's main military ally and orchestrated the rebels' seizure of parliament in May.

The military spokesman said Speight and his co-conspirators would be held indefinitely in the guard house at military headquarters, the Queen Elizabeth Barracks.

Speight could face a charge of treason following a threat to the life of President Mr Josefa Iloilo yesterday, he added.

Treason carries the death penalty in Fiji.

"We cannot allow people of a criminal tendency to use the cause of the indigenous Fijians for their own selfish ends. We will ensure the country's return to normalcy is as quick as possible," he said.

Fiji has been in a state of turmoil since Speight and Ligairi stormed parliament on 19 May and took Fiji's first ethnic Indian Prime Minister, Mr Mahendra Chaudhry, and his government hostage. They released them after 56 days after winning assurances a new government made up mainly of indigenous Fijians would be named and that all those involved in the coup would be granted an amnesty.

A government nominated last week by Mr Iloilo, however, contained only a handful of

Speight allies and was rejected by the rebels, prolonging a crisis which has left Fiji facing economic ruin and international isolation.

The seizure of Indians was one of a series of incidents across the country in the aftermath of the military crackdown.

An Air Fiji jet was seized at Savusavu, north of Suva, and the two New Zealand pilots were taken hostage. A police post at Seaqaqa was seized.

Mr Phil Goff, the foreign minister of neighbouring New Zealand, urged the military to quickly bring the situation under control, warning the alternative was civil war. Australia warned its citizens to leave Fiji immediately.

Mr Iloilo was expected to name a new government on Friday and have it sworn in immediately afterwards.

THE STATESMAN

28 JUL 2000



## Mr Speight restrained

FIJI COUP leader George Speight seems to have been caught in a web of his own making. As a small-time businessman — and a failed one at that — Mr Speight had grown too big for his boots. By arresting him and his closest aides, the discredited military has sought to establish a semblance of law and order in the South Pacific nation. Mr Speight may have taken a leaf or two from Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka's book when he carried out a soap opera coup in May, holding Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and his ministerial colleagues hostages, but the way he took potshots against the army, the former President and even the Great Council of Chiefs left him without any friends. He got former President Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara shunted out when he refused to accept his command. He later managed to get the doddering Mr Iloilo appointed as the new President. And yet, when the President was about to swear in the new Government, he was prevented from doing the same. In effect, what Mr Speight wanted was that everyone falls in line without any protest.

In the end, it was all too obvious that Mr Speight wanted the Prime Ministership for himself. He had even threatened that there would be nationwide unrest if his candidate for Prime Minister, Adi Samanunu Cakobau, was not accepted. At some stage, his bluff had to be called. The army has done just that but Mr Speight's men are capable of creating more trouble.

A few years ago the economic collapse and international isolation forced Lt. Col. Sitiveni Rabuka to restore the multi-racial Constitution and hold fresh elections. Mr Chaudhry was the beneficiary of Lt. Col. Rabuka's change of heart. Australia and New Zealand have lately been strident about economic sanctions against Fiji. What may have queered the pitch was Mr Speight's threat to disrupt the forthcoming Sydney Olympics. Mr Chaudhry has done well to carry on his own campaign for the restoration of the civilian Government and his demand for a referendum has further shored up his democratic credentials. The situation in Fiji is still fluid. It is not clear who is acting on whose behalf. Mr Speight may still manage to have the cake and eat it too.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JUL 2000

# New Fiji government shuts out rebel leader's backers

It is composed almost exclusively of ethnic Fijians, it capitulates to Speight's demands

Suva, July 28: Fiji appointed a new interim government on Friday without any rebel backers of jailed coup leader George Speight, who caretaker Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase said was no longer a threat. Speight, arrested by the military on Wednesday and facing possible treason charges, had threatened further civil unrest unless his supporters dominated the new government.

Fiji was plunged into political crisis when Speight stormed Parliament in May in the name of indigenous Fijian rights, taking hostages and demanding an end to Indian political power.

Fiji President Ratu Josefa Iloilo defied Speight and dropped all four of his nationalist supporters from an earlier line-up, reappointed Mr Qarase and named Ratu Epeli Nailatikau deputy Prime Minister. Speight had publicly opposed both Mr Qarase and Mr Nailatikau. After being sworn in, Mr Qarase, who said earlier the interim government would rule for three years before new elections, called on all Fijians to end widespread lawlessness.

"The lawlessness that has swept the country must stop," Mr Qarase said. Asked by reporters if Speight could cause more unrest, Mr Qarase said Speight was "no more a threat." "We must promote national reconciliation and healing not only between the Fijians and Indo-Fijians, but also between the Fijians themselves," Mr Qarase said.

The ousted People's Coalition government of Mr Mahendra Chaudhry rejected the new administration and expressed its grave concern. Mr Chaudhry was

held hostage for 56 days, along with most of his multi-racial Cabinet, when Speight took over Parliament.

Mr Iloilo named a 20-member all indigenous Fijian Cabinet with one ethnic Indian among eight assistant ministers. Mr Chaudhry's coalition released a statement saying it wants a "government of national unity" made of pre-coup elected MPs put in its place.

"The composition of the interim government is discriminatory," former deputy Prime Minister Tupeni Baba said. "It effectively disenfranchises the Indo-Fijian community." "As an administration made up almost exclusively of ethnic Fijians, it represents a disturbing capitulation to one of the key demands of the terrorist group led by George Speight."

Mr Chaudhry and most of his coalition remain holed up in the rich sugar belt on the west of the main island of Viti Levu.

Mr Qarase said he had approached prominent members of the Indian community to serve in his government but had been turned down because they feared for their safety. He also warned Mr Chaudhry not to try to take back power. "If they persist with it, they will be dealt with according to law." Fiji remained on alert after a military crackdown on nationalist rebels in the past two days sparked sporadic unrest. Roadblocks dot Suva, while ethnic Indians in some towns remained indoors fearing rebel reprisals. "There's no soldiers, no law at all here," said Shalim Kumar, an Indian shopkeeper in Labasa where 50 gunmen roamed the streets on Thursday and rebels have taken over the military barracks. (Reuters)



SAY CHEESE: Fiji's new Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase (centre, front row) sits with members of his mostly indigenous Cabinet during a photograph session after they were sworn in at Boron House in Suva on Friday. Fiji appointed a new interim government on Friday without any rebel backers of jailed coup leader George Speight, who Mr Laisenia Qarase said was no longer a threat. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

THE ASIAN AC

29 JUL 2000

# Jaswant non-committal on sanctions against Fiji

By Amit Baruah

**BANGKOK, JULY 28.** The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, today left open the question of sanctions against Fiji. "Let us see," was his response to a question about New Delhi's course of action on the crisis in Fiji.

Asked what "more" India could do, Mr. Singh said he wanted to "disabuse" reporters of the notion that "less" was being done by New Delhi. Referring to the swearing-in of an interim Government in Fiji today, the Minister stressed the need for racial harmony in the 800,000-strong nation.

Mr. Singh, who met informally with the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Strobe Talbott, yesterday, did not give any details of the meeting. The dialogue was not restricted to bilateral issues, but dealt with global matters as well. He is scheduled to meet the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, tomorrow.

On Fiji, the Minister claimed India was engaged in the issue through Australia, New Zealand, the Commonwealth and also "directly", but did not give details of the engagement process.

Mr. Singh, who met his counterparts from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam, which form part of the Mekong sub-region, announced a joint "Ganga-Mekong Swanapoumi Project". These countries and India would cooperate in the areas of culture, tourism and education as part of the project.

The first meeting of officials dealing with this project would be held in Laos on the occasion of their "Festival of Lights", which coincides with Diwali. "It's a coming together of nations bound together by a common

culture..." Mr. Singh told Indian reporters. The External Affairs Minister, who also had separate meetings with his Australian and Japanese counterparts — Mr. Alexander Downer and Mr. Yoehi Kono — announced that the Japanese Prime Minister would tour India from August 21 to 24.

India and Australia had agreed to resume defence ties, which had been snapped by Canberra following New Delhi's nuclear tests of May 1998. (Australia, it may be recalled, had expelled the Indian defence adviser). It was also agreed that exchanges between military training institutions would resume. An annual exchange between Australia and India at the level of Foreign Ministers was also agreed upon.

In his statement at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference today, Mr. Singh said the South must be given its "fair and proportional share of representation in important bodies such as the U.N. Security Council".

"As the U.N. organ with the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, the Council's decisions must be viewed as serving the collective interest of all U.N. members. Hence, its membership must be enlarged to include more key global players and developing countries. Its working methods must be reformed so that the Council's decision-making process becomes more transparent and democratic. We hope that the General Assembly working group can soon recommend viable measures to reform the Council."

Welcoming the U.N. "millennium summit", the Minister said the summit should be goal-oriented. "Globalisation with equity, a nuclear-free world, eradication of poverty, disease, ignorance and unemployment; multilateral de-

velopment cooperation... combating terrorism and drug trafficking — are some of the issues on which a consensus may be arrived at."

On the Mekong sub-region project, he said India would like to participate in the "development and execution of projects relating to fisheries, water management and resources development, reservoir sedimentation and oceanographic studies, environment impact assessment, bio-diversity enumeration, soil resources study, medicinal plants and aromatics and rice-based agriculture."

## SC upholds Kalkat's appointment

**NEW DELHI, JULY 28.** The Supreme Court today set aside the order of the Delhi High Court, quashing the appointment of Lt. Gen. H. R. S. Kalkat as the General-Officer-Commanding(GOC)-in-Chief of Eastern Command.

Upholding his and the Government's appeal against the December 16, 1998, order of the High Court, a three-judge Bench headed by the Chief Justice, Dr. A. S. Anand, said, "we think there is no justification for the High Court to have interfered with the order (of appointment) made by the Government."

The Supreme Court said, "judicial review is permissible only to the extent of finding whether process in reaching decision has been observed correctly and not the decision as such." It also observed that the standard adopted for selecting officers to such posts should be of "highest order so as to avoid an impression among the officer that he did not get the best of the deal at the hands of the Government." — PTI

# Fiji rebels shut out of new race-based Govt

## Only one Indian finds place in Qarase Cabinet

Suva, July 28

**F**IJI APPOINTED a new interim government today without any rebel backers of jailed coup leader George Speight, who caretaker Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase said was no longer a threat.

Speight, arrested by the military on Wednesday and facing possible treason charges, had threatened further civil unrest unless his supporters dominated the new government.

But Fiji President Ratu Josefa Iloilo defied Speight and dropped all four of his backers from an earlier administration, reappointed Qarase and named Ratu (chief) Epeli Nailatikau the deputy prime minister. Speight had publicly opposed both Qarase and Nailatikau.

After being sworn in, Qarase called on all Fijians to end widespread lawlessness in the racially split nation. "We must promote national reconciliation and healing not only between the Fijians and Indo-Fijians, but also between the Fijians themselves," Qarase said.

Indians make up 44 per cent of Fiji's 800,000 population and dominate the economy, which has been battered in the turmoil.

Iloilo named a 20-member all indigenous Fijian Cabinet and eight assistant ministers, one of whom was an ethnic Indian.

"I had tried my best to bring in representatives of the Indian community, but fear for the safety of their families has been a real inhibiting factor," Qarase said.

Qarase warned Chaudhry, who wants his government reinstated, not to try to take back power. "If they persist with it, they will be dealt with according to law," he said.

(Reuters)

## Slap sanctions on Fiji, India urges Asean meet

Bangkok, July 28

**I**NDIA TODAY used an annual ministerial meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to call for economic sanctions on Fiji, where an elected Cabinet deemed favourable to ethnic Indians was recently overthrown.

"We are of the view that pressure of full scope trade and economic sanctions is required to quickly reverse the damage which has occurred in Fiji by the unlawful abrogation of the Constitution and the dismissal of legitimately-elected government," said External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh in his address to the Asean post-ministerial conference in Bangkok.

Citing the Fiji situation as a threat to democracy and stability in the region, Mr Singh called on Asean countries and its main dialogue partners, which include the United States and the European Union, to enforce economic sanctions on Fiji to restore democracy and a non-racist constitution to the island-state.

"Our assessment is that moderate and more rational elements, who constitute the majority of Fiji, may be prepared to accept sacrifices in the short-term in exchange for a secure, non-discriminatory democratic government based on the rule of law," Mr Singh told the conference.

On Wednesday, New Zealand and Australia called on the world community to join them in slapping "smart sanctions" on the band of Fiji "terrorists" who are sacrificing their island-country's future for their own ends, but stopped short of calling for full economic sanctions.

"Smart sanctions applied widely in the region would be desirable. Australia, New Zealand and the US are doing that already," said New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff.

(DPA)

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