

FOCUS-Queen's India visit hit by row over protocol.By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

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NEW DELHI, Oct 15 (Reuters) - Queen Elizabeth's visit to India was hit by fresh controversy on Wednesday after an apparent misunderstanding over the protocol of her giving a speech in a provincial capital.

British officials told reporters the Indian government had cancelled the speech the queen was to have delivered in the city of Madras on Thursday night because protocol demanded that banquet speeches on state visits be restricted to a single main event, which had already been held.

But Indian officials said they could not have cancelled the speech because it had never been scheduled.

"The question of cancelling a banquet speech that had never been included in the official programme at any stage just does not arise," an Indian Foreign Ministry statement said.

The queen's state visit to India and Pakistan, marking their 50 years of independence from Britain, has already been hit by an exchange over Kashmir between London and New Delhi.

A spokesman for India's foreign ministry told Reuters that New Delhi was upset about the latest fracas.

"The Indian protocol is that the only banquet speech on a state visit is at one central event. No other banquet speeches are provided for in state capitals or other cities," he said.

"At no stage did we receive any suggestion from any side that the queen deliver a banquet speech at any other event than the one hosted by the president," the spokesman said.

The queen delivered a banquet speech in New Delhi on Monday night at a banquet hosted by President K.R. Narayanan.

British officials said the queen was to speak at a banquet given in her honour on Thursday by the governor of the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, Fatima Beevi.

A spokeswoman for Britain's High Commission (embassy) told Reuters: "(Buckingham) Palace was informed at the beginning of the week that there would not be an exchange of toasts in Madras. There appears to have been a slight misunderstanding.

"If the Indian preference is not to have this exchange of toasts then we have no problem at all with that. It is just not an issue," the spokeswoman added.

On Wednesday the queen opened a large Indo-British trade exhibition in Delhi, during which British firms expect to sign a string of deals.

She then visited the Delhi Brotherhood, a monastic order that provides vocational training for young Indians.

She watched beauticians painting the hands and feet of young brides with intricate traditional henna patterns and met young lepers engaged in handloom weaving.

"The queen is not upset or unhappy with the welcome she has received, nor in any way feels a snub," a senior palace official said. He said the idea of the Madras speech had come from the local Tamil Nadu state government.

But an Indian official blamed the British side. "Some bureaucrats handling the queen's visit persuaded themselves that they could put pressure on a state government to work out an exception to protocol, in favour of the queen," he said.

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, who was travelling with the queen, has been attacked by the press for setting off a row with India over the disputed territory of Kashmir.



Cook has denied he had offered British mediation over Kashmir, and India denied that Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral had responded by calling Britain a meddling "third-rate power".

But the damage was done. British newspapers criticised Cook, saying he had embarrassed the queen with his blunder and had underestimated Indian sensitivities.

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A group in Kashmir on Tuesday said an exhumed body was that of the missing British diplomat Sir Robert Cook, one of four missing Western hostages in the region.

The chief of police in India's Jammu and Kashmir state said forensic experts had reached no conclusions on the identity of the body.

"There is nothing so far from the facts," Police Director General Gurbachan Jagot told Reuters by telephone from Srinagar, the state's summer capital.

Officials have not ruled out the possibility of the body being of one of the Western hostages.

Indian-based guerrilla group Indian authorities believe it linked to the group, said in Srinagar that the exhumed body was of a Marxist commander, Zia-ud-Din.

The exhumation of the body shows the frustration of the Indian security forces. Such acts of the Indian security forces boost the morale of the militants. India is under tremendous pressure from the Western world to trace the whereabouts of the hostages and is now trying to mislead the world through such acts," the statement said.

Indian authorities believe the Marxist group is allied with madhawi Al-Farooq guerrillas who kidnapped the Western tourists in July 1993. Marxist denies any ties with Al-Farooq.

Marxist is one of several dozen militant Marxist groups fighting for Kashmir's independence of merger with neighbouring Pakistan.

Asked how long it might take for forensic experts to reach a conclusion, Jagot said "About another week." He added that the experts, who examined the body in Srinagar on Monday, might take DNA samples to the eastern city of Calcutta for more tests.

DNA stands for deoxy ribonucleic acid, which is present in the chromosomes of all plant and animal cells and carries instructions for the passing on of hereditary characteristics.

Police exhumed the body last Thursday from a grave in Akangan village in Kashmir's Anantnag valley.

A captured militant said during an interrogation that it was the body of one of the hostages kidnapped in the area in July 1993.

But residents of Akangan told journalists the body was that of Zia-ud-Din, a militant who died in a gun battle with Indian navy military troops 21 months ago.

On July 4, 1993, American Donald Rottkamp and John Chiles and Britons Paul Wells and Keith Hamman were kidnapped by Al-Farooq guerrillas while trekking to the Himalayan town Anantnag, which is about 50 km (31 miles) south of Srinagar.

Four days later, Chiles escaped. On the same day, the captors abducted German Dirk Hagerl and Norwegian Hans Christian Ostrom. Ostrom was found released in August 1993.

Several captured militants have told interrogators that they believe the hostages were already dead and buried in a secret Kashmiri forest.

Indian officials and experts from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and Southern Yard have secured the area but have come up with no clues.

"We don't know if the hostages are dead or alive," a U.S. diplomat said on Monday. "We retain the hope that

