

Benazir vows to topple Sharif

PAKPATTAN, Pakistan, Dec 5: Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto vowed on Friday to carry on her campaign to topple Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government, reports Reuters.

"Give another push to the crumbling walls," she told thousands of cheering supporters at this Punjab province town, the latest stage of her "long march" aimed at massing popular support for her drive.

A crowd of about 10,000

Bombings in Manchester: IRA claims responsibility

MANCHESTER, Dec 4: The IRA claimed responsibility Friday for two bombings in Manchester which injured 64 people and for depositing a van load of explosives found in London. It warned that the attacks will continue, reports AP.

"Active service units of the IRA carried out this week's military operations aimed at government and commercial targets in London's West End and Manchester," said a statement issued in Dublin by the Irish Republican Publicity Bureau. British police reiterated warnings to the public to be especially vigilant in the weeks before Christmas.

"Everyone who is right-minded realises that this is an attempt to intimidate people going about their business and thinking about Christmas shopping," said Cmdr David Tucker, the London-based national police anti-terrorist co-ordinator.

The IRA said in the statement sent to British news media that it gave "adequate and clear warnings" in both Manchester and London.

chanted repeatedly as she prayed at the shrine of a revered Muslim saint. "My struggle will continue until the end of the present government," Bhutto told the crowd.

Earlier smaller groups turned out along the route of the long march which began at the ancient Punjab town of Multan on Thursday.

Members of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) said police had barricaded roads leading to the march route preventing public transport from carrying any opposition followers to rallies.

Earlier about 4,000 people crowded the narrow streets of Arifwala town shouting "Long live Benazir Bhutto" and showered rose petals as the former prime minister arrived.

"Your enthusiasm shows the people of Pakistan have rejected Nawaz Sharif," she told the crowd.

Bhutto joined the march more than a day later after the state airline on Thursday stopped her flight from Karachi to Multan, cotton capital in central Punjab.

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) said the flight was delayed six hours because of bad weather and a bomb threat. But Bhutto said authorities deliberately stalled the flight so she could not lead the march, which is set to end on Sunday in the Punjab capital of Lahore.

Bhutto ruled out talks with Sharif, whom she accuses of corruption and suppressing opposition. She wants him ousted before fresh elections under a neutral interim administration.

"I can only talk if you create a democratic environment," she shouted to the crowd after driving to Arifwala from Multan.

People lined her route waving red, green and black flags of Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP).



WASHINGTON: US President George Bush (L) talks with Sen Bob Dole R Kan, December 04 during a bipartisan meeting on the situation in Somalia. A United Nations resolution, which passed December 03, authorized a 28,000 member American force to lead the world's biggest armed humanitarian rescue mission. White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said the US force's mission was to establish a secure environment and then pull out, if possible, before Bush leaves office January 20. — AFP/UNB photo

ME peace talks end with a glimmer of optimism

LONDON, Dec 5: Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, ending multilateral peace talks in London Friday, said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's more conciliatory tone has fostered optimism, reports AP.

At Beit Meri in Lebanon, foreign ministers of the Arab states engaged in peace negotiations with Israel overcame Palestinian objections and decided unanimously to attend the next round of the talks in Washington. But they expressed "sorrow over the lack of any essential progress" because of Israel's intransigence.

In London, however, the Israeli negotiator predicted a possible peace agreement within months.

"I believe that we are on the verge of peace in the Middle East," Israeli deputy foreign minister Yossi Beilin said at the end of the two-day meeting.

"Provided we do the utmost to compromise, then it (an agreement) may be a matter not of years, but of months," he said.

His Palestinian counterpart Muhammad Hallaj said at a separate London news conference, "There is reason for optimism."

"We live in a world where obviously great change unexpectedly happens so you can't rule out anything," he said. "There have been some achievements, as I said, everybody agrees the tone is better."

The cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators also gave a US official hope that the next full round of peace talks, beginning Monday in Washington, would go well.

"This effort to reach out to one another is precisely the kind of approach... required to bridge the gaps and resolve difficulties," Assistant Secretary of State Edward P. Djerjian told reporters covering Friday's talks in London.

At Beit Meri, a communique issued after a five-hour conference of the foreign ministers of the Arab states engaged in the negotiations with Israel said Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian and the Palestinian delegations would be in

Koirala to lead Nepalese SAARC team

KATHMANDU, Dec 5: Nepalese Prime Minister Girtja Prasad Koirala will lead a Nepalese delegation to attend the seventh summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Foreign Ministry has announced, reports Xinhua.

In consideration of their concern for the poor and the magnitude of the problem, the SAARC Heads of State or Government have accorded highest priority to the alleviation of poverty.

At the summit to be held in Dhaka on December 12 and 13, they are expected to put in place an action plan based on the recommendations made by the Independent South Asian Commission on poverty alleviation in its report.

Off the Record

He stole their kiss

PARIS: Forty-two years after Robert Doisneau immortalized youthful love with the click of a camera, the celebrated photographer is being taken to court by an aging couple claiming he stole their kiss, reports AP.

Denise and Jean-Louis Laverne insist they are the lovers in the famous 1950 photo, "Le Baiser de l'Hotel de Ville" (The Kiss at City Hall) even though Doisneau's entourage says he used actors.

Like the thrill of young love tarnished by a quarrel, the Laverne says Doisneau has ruined the symbol of love they claim to represent by refusing to credit them.

The photograph has been transformed into posters popular the world over, printed on T-shirts and studied as an example of the photographer's art.

"They say there is magic in that photo..." said Mrs. Laverne, 64, in a telephone interview Friday. "That photo is a testament to our youth and we regret that we're not being recognized. It's Mr. Doisneau who is ruining things, not us."

The photograph captures a handsome couple in a spontaneous kiss amid a crowd of strollers outside the Paris City Hall. It conveys the innocence of the amorous in a split-second of their lives.

Nelson's love letters will go under the hammer

LONDON: Love letters by British 19th century war heroes Admiral Horatio Nelson and the Duke of Wellington are expected to fetch up to 25,000 pounds (\$39,500 US dollar) when they are auctioned later this month, Sotheby's said on Friday, reports Reuters.

Nelson's first letter to his lover, Emma Hamilton, the wife of a British diplomat, and another written by Wellington the day after he defeated French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 will go under the hammer on December 14, the auction house added.

"As soon as I have fought the French fleet, I shall do myself the honour of paying my respects to your ladyship at Naples," Nelson, who vanquished the French at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, wrote.

NY School Chancellor used heroin as dropout

NEW YORK: The head of the nation's largest school system snorted and injected heroin as a teen-age dropout in Harlem, often passing out from overdoses, according to a soon-to-be-published autobiography quoted in Saturday's editions of The New York Times, reports AP.

In the book, Schools Chancellor Joseph Fernandez offers his troubled youth as a lesson in how education — in his case, Air Force math classes — can save youngsters from the streets.

In one passage from a proof sent to reviewers, the Chancellor details a particular night when he and a friend "were at somebody's house and got stoned on some really potent heroin."

"By the time we got downstairs to the streets, we were both reeling. I can barely remember my friends walking us up and down the sidewalk, trying to keep us from fading out. They probably saved our lives."

Fernandez also talks of his difficulties dealing with New York City's Board of Education, saying that on occasion he has threatened to quit. Speculation has been growing about whether he will stay on once his contract expires June 30. "This is not the same board that hired me," he writes. "It may well be the one that fires me."

More copies of 'Sex' to be distributed

PARIS: A Fontainebleau court threw out charges Friday by a Roman Catholic cultural group and ruled that Madonna's French publisher could distribute 75,000 new copies of her controversial book "Sex," reports AP.

The book by the steamy songstress sold out within hours after going on sale in France in October. The 75,000 copies are expected to reach book-stores in mid-December.

The non-profit group "Avenir de la Culture" (The Future of Culture) had filed a suit against the editors, Vade Retro, demanding the destruction of existing copies.

The group had argued that the book, which shows Madonna nude and in various provocative poses, corrupted the morals of French youth.

'Ram Temple will definitely be built'

AYODHYA, Dec 5: Thousands of Hindu zealots poured into this holy town Saturday to build a temple on the site of a mosque, ignoring a court ban and opposition from the federal government, which fears it could spark Hindu-Muslim clashes, reports AP.

Leaders of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or World Hindu Council, began a meeting to decide whether to destroy the 430-year-old mosque Sunday and build a temple for Hindu warrior-god, Rama.

"The temple will definitely be built regardless of what is decided today," said Ashok Singhal, general-secretary of the council, which claims to represent India's 717 million Hindus.

More than 4,000 steel-helmeted policemen fanned out across the town, 500 kilometers (300 miles) east of New Delhi. Reinforcements of federal paramilitary troops began arriving in the morning.

Police said more than 300,000 Hindus have gathered in the pilgrim town, which has 9,000 Hindu temples and 250 mosques.

Several rounds of talks between the government and religious leaders broke down in October and the Hindu body vowed to build the temple at any cost.

The government fears the construction programme will lead to clashes.

In 1990, about 1,000 people were killed in riots after a leader of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party led a procession across the country in support of the construction programme.

At the brick-and-mortar structure, worshipped by both Hindus and Muslims, policemen frisked thousands of devotees streaming in like a column of ants.

Many of them waved saffron banners and chanted "We will give our blood, our lives to build the temple."

Muslims in Ayodhya said they were not stepping out of their houses for fear of getting lynched. Many of them had left the town, said Mohammed Ibrahim, a shop owner.

"No God will ever accept a shrine built with blood-soaked bricks," he said.

Many Hindus believe that the mosque was built by Muslim invaders after raising a Hindu temple. Archaeologists are divided on the issue.

BRIEFLY

Perot spends over \$56m for polls:

Texas billionaire Ross Perot spent more than \$56 US dollar million of his own money running for the US Presidency, according to documents released on Friday by the Federal Election Commission, Reuters reports from Washington.

Perot garnered 19 per cent of the popular vote in the November 3 Presidential election but did not win a single state.

His net worth is estimated at about 3.5 billion US dollar.

32 Chinese sent to labour camps:

Thirty-two Chinese who tried to sail to the United States or Taiwan illegally have been sent to Chinese labour camps, an official newspaper reported Saturday, says AP from Beijing.

The would-be emigrants apparently were stopped within Chinese waters. The China Daily newspaper said police in the coastal province of Fujian, which faces Taiwan across about 180 kilometres (110 miles) of water, sent the 32 boat people to education-through-labour camps for up to one and a half years.

Police are authorized to send people to these camps for up to four years without any formal charges or trial. The China Daily said the case was being publicised in hopes of checking the rise in illegal emigration. Japan this week deported about 440 Chinese who had emigrated illegally, including 141 boat people from Fujian.

4 cops killed in Philippines:

Four policemen were killed and a militaryman was wounded in an ambush by suspected Communist guerrillas in the central Philippines police said on Sunday, reports Reuters from Philippines.

The policemen were on patrol on Masbate island 400 km (250 miles) southeast of Manila when the rebels opened fire on Friday afternoon, they said.

There were no reports of guerrilla casualties. Police reinforcements were sent to the area.

The government has opened preliminary talks to end the 23-year Communist insurgency aimed at establishing a Marxist state in the Philippines.

7 beheaded in S Arabia:

Seven convicted criminals, including a Nigerian and a Filipino, were beheaded in Saudi Arabia on Friday, reports Reuters from Manama.

An Interior Ministry statement said a Saudi national of Sudanese origin and another citizen were beheaded in the holy Muslim city Mecca for killing the first man's half sister after raping her.

The statement, carried by Bahrain's Gulf News Agency, said three men convicted of murder were beheaded in the capital Riyadh.

More Pak troops for Somalia:

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has told US President George Bush that Islamabad is willing to send more troops to Somalia to help protect UN relief supplies, the government said on Friday, reports Reuters from Islamabad.

A government statement said Bush telephoned Sharif on Thursday to discuss the Security Council's authorisation of deployment of a US-led force in Somalia so aid can reach the starving.

The statement said Bush asked for more forces from Pakistan which has already sent 500 troops to Somalia for the United Nations. Sharif replied that Pakistan would be glad to contribute an additional contingent.

Sikh militant shot dead

NEW DELHI, Dec 5: A top Sikh militant suspected of involvement in a string of killings was shot dead by police in a fierce gun battle early today in the northern state of Haryana, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

Harmitt Singh Tochi, who carried a prize of one million rupees (\$3,333 dollars) on his head, and three of his associates were gunned down in the Yamunanagar district of Haryana, PTI said.

US troops could be in Somalia well into next year

WASHINGTON, Dec 5: US troops heading for Somalia may begin handing control to UN teams in early January, but most of the 28,000-strong American force will be there until March or beyond, senior military officers say, reports AP.

Thousands of US-based Marines and Army soldiers were packing their gear Saturday and getting ready for a holiday season deployment, which officials said would not start before Monday. Supply ships were loading at US ports this weekend.

Some 1,800 Marines,

meanwhile, remained aboard ships offshore from the East African nation.

President Bush on Friday ordered the launching of "Operation Restore Hope," a sea, land and air operation to pacify marauding gangs of bandits that have paralyzed international humanitarian efforts to feed hundreds of thousands of starving Somalis.

"America must act," Bush said in a nationally broadcast address from the Oval office. He said as many as 1.5 million Somalis are in imminent danger of starvation.

Bush ordered the deployment

ment just 47 days before he will leave office and hand the problem over to President-elect Clinton.

Clinton endorsed Bush's action, saying in a statement in Little Rock, Ark, "I share his determination to ensure the success of this important mission."

Aides to Bush had said earlier they hoped the US troops could withdraw from Somalia by inauguration day, Jan 20. But Pentagon officials made it clear Friday it would be longer-term project.

"I am feeling more and more comfortable that there

will be adequate forces available to pick up this peacekeeping mission, and we can see our way clear of this operation in a few months," said Gen Colin Powell, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Powell said US troops, working with smaller contingents from other countries, would be the "peacekeepers," and that UN forces then would become the "peacekeepers."

Belgium said it would commit 550 paratroopers for a year. France reportedly was sending 2,000 soldiers and Canada 900. Britain said it did

not plan to send troops but offered four transport planes.

Nigeria, Egypt and Turkey were considering deployments and Italy said it would send troops by the end of the month.

Powell said that even after the bulk of the force had returned to the United States, a group of Marines would remain off Somalia's shores in case the UN peacekeeping force needs protection. He didn't say how many Marines that would entail or how long they would stay.

Powell said it was possible

some US troops could start leaving Somalia in early January.

"I would not be surprised to see that in early January as we are reaching our peak strength, the peacekeeping forces already starting to arrive (are) ready to take over certain sections from us and we can start to withdraw," Powell said at a news conference with Defence Secretary Dick Cheney.

"But it is very important not to tie us to a specific calendar date," for withdrawing, he added.

British govt searches Clinton's file

WASHINGTON, Dec 5: British government officials searched confidential files to determine whether President-elect Clinton sought British citizenship as a student to avoid being drafted during the Vietnam War, according to a published report, says AP.

The search by Britain's Home Office, which is responsible for immigration matters, occurred in early October at about the same time US State Department officials searched Clinton's passport files, the Washington Post reported in Saturday's editions.