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NEWS BRIEFS

BNPPP discusses Local Govt Bill

A meeting of the BNPPP Parliamentary Party was held at the conference room of Treasury Bench at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban yesterday evening with Prime Minister and BNPPP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia in the chair, reports BSS.

Briefing newsmen LGRD and Cooperatives Minister and Secretary General of BNPPP Abdus Salam Talukdar said the meeting discussed local government bill relating to Union Parishad, Zila Parishad and city corporations.

Coldwave claims 4

LALMONIRHAT, Jan 3: Coldwave claimed four lives in two thanas of the district in the last three days. The dead were identified as Pearul Munshi (65) of Fulpur village and Momtaj Ali (50) of Khalitola village in Patgram thana and Joyanti Bala (60) of Chardhubni in Hatibandha thana. The other, found dead at the railway platform, could not be identified, reports UNB.

Fog delays landing of int'l flights

By Staff Correspondent
 Fourteen incoming international flights were delayed in Dhaka Sunday because of dense fog, according to an official source. Because of the mist, none of the said flights could land at the Zia International Airport (ZIA), Dhaka from 10 pm, Saturday to 11 am Sunday, the official said.

Obaidul Huq operated upon

Eminent journalist Obaidul Huq was admitted to Holy Family Hospital on Thursday. He was operated upon on Friday, reports BSS.

6 killed, 200 hurt: Mob, Navy men clash in Ctg

CHITTAGONG, Jan 3: At least six people were reported killed and nearly 200 injured as angry mob, protesting alleged violation of two girls, clashed with Navy personnel in Bandartila area of the port city since Saturday evening, reports UNB.

Police confirmed one death in the widespread violence in which some 500 shop and houses were also damaged or torched.

Witnesses said six people were killed as troops came out of the local naval barracks and went on a rampage firing indiscriminately.

The local people identified the dead as Nurul Afsar (35), a bus driver, Mohammad Azam (25), a day labourer, Hasan (28), a worker of Eastern Refinery, Abdur Rahman, Mofizur Rahman. A woman, aged about 35, who was among the victims could not be identified.

Forest and Environment Minister Abdullah Al-Noman and City Mayor Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin, along with local political leaders, went to the scene this morning to hold a peace meeting which could not take place because of

indiscriminate firing by some unruly Navy men.

The Minister told a press conference later in the afternoon that the incident would be probed and legal action taken against those who will be found guilty.

The authorities clamped section 144 on Bandar thana area for an indefinite period from 10:30 am today to ward off further violence, officials said.

Local people alleged they had caught two inmates of the Navy hostel at Bandartila while they were violating two young

women in a local club Saturday evening. The two men were assaulted by the angry people.

On receipt of the information, other Navy men rushed to the spot and rescued their colleagues and allegedly ploughed a truck through the mob and opened fire, injuring some local people.

The local residents in their hundreds poured to the streets this morning in protest.

The Environment Minister and City Mayor rushed to the area and addressed them at Katakhal Primary School

premises. But the meeting was disrupted when some armed Navy personnel again started firing.

Local people alleged that rampaging Navy men resorted to brush-fires and set fire to nearby residences and shops. Police and BDR personnel were seen helpless during the action of the Navy men, they said.

At least 200 people were injured in the clashes, many of whom were admitted to various hospitals and clinics in the port city.

Press Note: Probe ordered

The government has directed a judicial enquiry into the unpleasant incidents at Bandar Tila area of Halthahar, Chittagong, Saturday and Sunday in which one person was killed and several others were injured, a press note issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs said last night, reports BSS.

Long-marchers assemble in Jessore

From Our Correspondent
 JESSORE, Jan 3: Hundreds of Muslim devotees from different parts of the country have started to assemble at local City College ground today to participate in tomorrow's long march from here.

They plan to cross Jessore-Benapole border and march towards Ayodhya to press reconstruction of Babri Mosque at its original site and stop persecution on Muslims in India.

A spokesman of the Long March said last night, reports BSS.



President Abdur Rahman Biswas addressing the winter session of the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday. — PID photo

President addresses JS session Join new struggle to make democracy meaningful

President Abdur Rahman Biswas yesterday called for forging unity of all irrespective of political opinion in the new struggle for achieving national development, progress and prosperity, reports BSS.

The President was delivering his address at the new year's inaugural session of the fifth Jatiya Sangsad here in the morning.

The President said the new struggle aimed at making democracy and freedom meaningful to the countless

millions and eliminating poverty, stagnation, illiteracy, afflictions, unfairness, injustice, corruption and all ills and evils. "In matters of ideology our opinion may differ, but national issues spare no chance for difference of opinion," he stressed.

The President expressed the hope that the members of the Jatiya Sangsad would give leadership to the new struggle we have started.

Describing President Ziaur Rahman as the central figure of

our independence and successful architect of our sense of nationalism, President Biswas said President Zia in the sixth session of the second Jatiya Sangsad had emphatically appealed to all saying, "Let our narrow party interest not over-weighs the national interest."

In his about an hour-long address, the President gave a brief resume of progress, achieved under the present government in different socio-

AL joins JS session Jan 17

By Staff Correspondent
 The Awami League joins Parliament session January 17 when it resumes after a 13-day adjournment, Opposition Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim told reporters Sunday.

Boycott of the President's address was a symbolic protest and will fight for people's demand in the Parliament as well as on the street," Nasim said at a closed-door party meeting.

The AL and other opposition parties except the Jamaat-e-Islami have boycotted Parliament since late October when the Anti-terrorism Bill was introduced in the House.

Nasim said that the President had not only proposed

Boycott, walkout, sit-in mark JS session opening

By Staff Correspondent
 Parliament went into its eighth session yesterday morning with President Abdur Rahman Biswas' addressing the House and the Awami League-led Opposition and the Jatiya Party's boycotting the address.

The Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh, the National Democratic Party (NDP) IOJ, and the ruling BNP listened to the President while the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), though present at the inaugural session, went out of the House moments before the President arrived.

The AL, the JP, the Ganatantri Party (GP), the National Awami Party (NAP) and the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) boycotted the presidential speech to register their protest against "the President's frequent promulgation of undemocratic ordinances."

Workers Party leader Rashid Khan Menon MP is outside the country for treatment following an attempt on his life September 17.

The JP MPs staged a sit-in demonstration protesting the sealing their office and arrest of party Secretary General last month.

Meanwhile, four ordinances promulgated during last 57 days Parliament was not in

session were laid before the House by the Law Minister Mirza Golam Haftz at the opening session yesterday.

The ordinances laid in the House included, the Bangladesh Shilpa Rin Sangstha (Amendment) Ordinance, 1992, Rangamati Hill District Local Government Council (second amendment) Ordinance, 1992, Khagrachhari Hill District Local Government Council (second amendment) Ordinance, 1992 and the Bandarban Hill District Local Government Council (second amendment) Ordinance, 1992.

Besides, the House adopted five separate condolence resolutions on the deaths of Alhaj Harun Rashid Mollah, MP, former State Minister Syed Altaf Hossain, former Provincial Minister Nasir Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury, former Provincial Assembly Member Mohammad Abdul Haf and eminent journalist Alhaj Shamsul Huda.

A member panel of chairmen was also announced from the Chair to preside over the House in absence of the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker.

The House entered into an unscheduled debate yesterday following the Jamaat leader

Police asked to halt marchers at Dhopakhola

JESSORE, Jan 3: The authorities tonight decided that Ayodhya Long March tomorrow (Monday) will not be allowed to proceed beyond Dhopakhola, 5 km west of Jessore town, reports UNB.

The decision was taken at a meeting presided over by Social Welfare Minister Tariqul Islam. It was attended by State Minister for Religious Affairs MA Mannan, local leaders and senior civil and police officials.

Meeting sources told UNB that police was directed to put up a strong barricade at Dhopakhola so that the caravan cannot advance further. Dhopakhola is 27 km east of Benapole border.

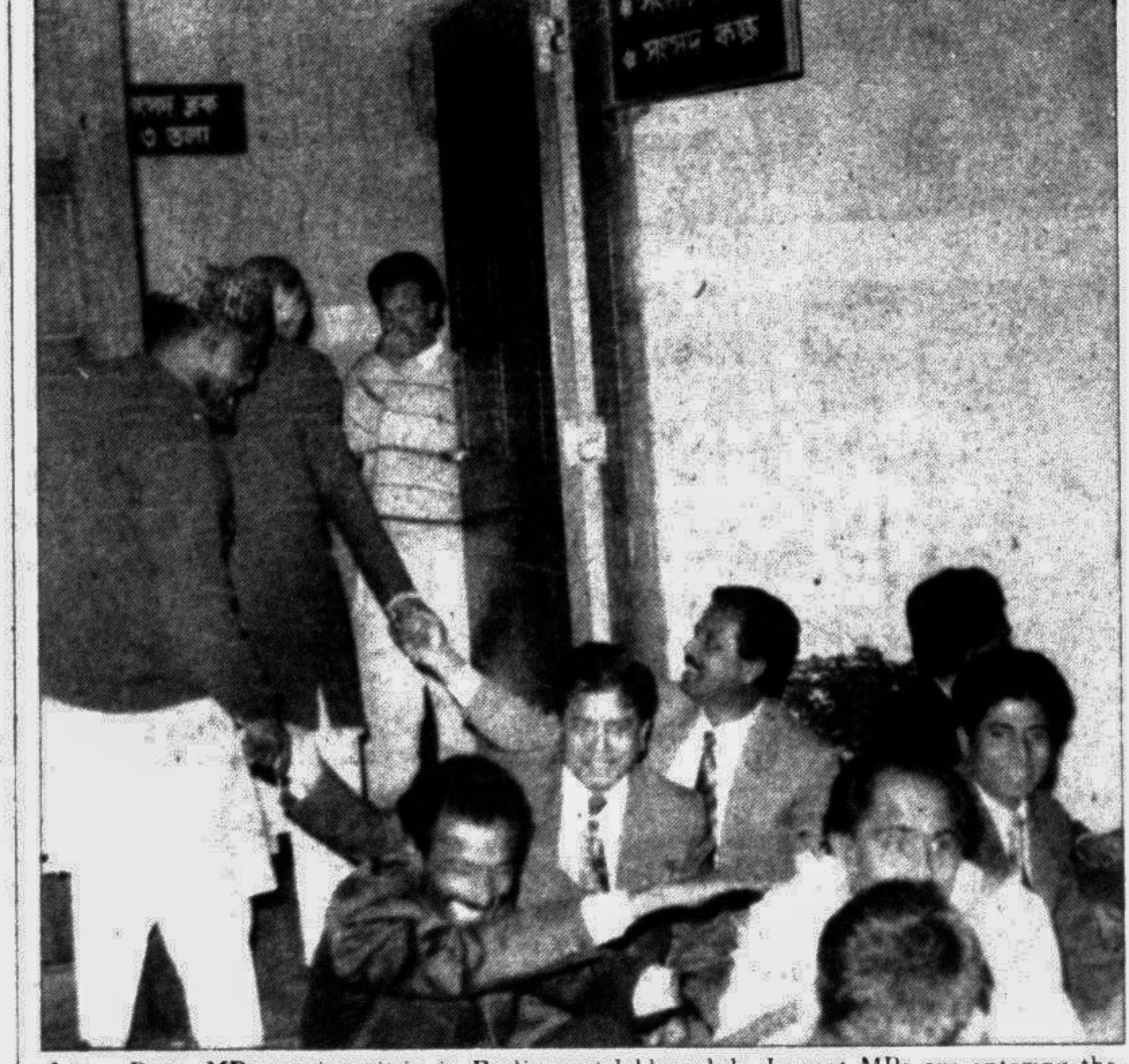
BSF on alert

CALCUTTA, Jan 3: India will not allow the thousands of Bangladeshi Muslims seeking to rebuild the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya to cross the international border, officials said here today, reports AFP.

Manish Gupta, Home Secretary of India's West Bengal state bordering Bangladesh, said authorities would take "necessary steps" if the nearly 10,000 marchers tried to enter India.

The paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF) said it was on full alert along the winding India-Bangladesh frontier.

"We are aware of the march and we are taking all precautionary measures," BSF Inspector General Balkar Singh said, adding that his men would foil any attempt by the Bangladeshis to violate the border.



Jatiya Party MPs staging sit-in in Parliament lobby while Jamaat MPs are entering the House yesterday. — Star photo

JP stages sit-in in JS lobby

By Staff Correspondent
 The Jatiya Party members of the Parliament Sunday staged a sit-in in the lobby of the House protesting the recent 'harassment' on their party workers by the ruling party.

The first ever protest in Bangladesh's parliamentary history was led by JP's Acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury and acting Parliamentary Party Chief Moudud Ahmed. A total of 21 JP MPs out of 35 attended took part in the sit-in.

They sat on the floor beside the entrance of Lobby No-2 at around 10 am. Some of them waived hands at the Jamaat members who were then entering into the House.

"Our Party office has been closed, our Secretary General has been arrested in a humiliating way and a large number of party workers have been detained on false charges," the former Prime Minister Chowdhury told reporters.

He said that the sit-in was a peaceful and constitutional way of protest against the government action.

"We are political opponents of the ruling party but the government considers us as enemies," Chowdhury said adding that "We want to make

Promotion of sub-judges Hearing adjourned until Feb 2

By S. Y. Bakht
 Hearing of the Writ petition challenging the government decision on the promotion of sub-judges was again adjourned yesterday until February 2 after Attorney General Aminul Haq assured that a "solution may be arrived at" and sought one month's time.

At the outset of the day's hearing the Attorney General wanted more time saying that there was "a likelihood that consultation would take place between the President and the Chief Justice."

The Writ was moved on behalf of 12 members of the Bar from around the country, in the Division Bench of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court comprising Justice Anwarul Haque Coudhury and Justice KM Hasan, by Barrister Amir-ul-Islam November 29.

"We may arrive at a solution, so we would like a month's time," the Attorney General told the Court.

After the Attorney General insisted on one month's time following a suggestion of only two weeks, the Court granted the adjournment motion for one month.

"On the prayer of the learned Attorney General that something is in the offing, let this (the hearing) stand for one month," the Court ruled.

Barrister Islam argued that it was not only a question of promotion of one or two sub-judges, but it was a question of the entire environment in which the subordinate judges were working throughout the country.

While the government was taking time one after the other on the plea of effective consultations but none of which was in sight, he said, and on the other hand there was a continued steady deterioration in the judicial environment.

"Things have come to such a pass that the subordinate judges of the Dhaka apex court were made to attend the private birthday party of the Law Minister which was held yesterday," Barrister Islam claimed.

Referring to a book, on the condition of the subordinate judiciary of the country, written by a German author, he submitted that the deterioration

Prayers at makeshift temple on

AYODHYA (India), Jan 3: Hundreds of Hindus braved biting cold and offered prayers for the second straight day today at a makeshift temple built on the rubble of the razed Babri Mosque here, reports AFP.

More than 500 men and women, including dozens of holy men, filed past the hastily constructed temple to the God Rama in small groups in the first hour after authorities opened it for prayers at 10:00 am (0430 GMT).

All visitors were frisked by federal paramilitary forces before being allowed to proceed towards the shrine through heavily barricaded winding path that leads to a rostrum of sandbags where prayers are offered.

Hundreds more were waiting in a queue for their turn.

Rao arrives Jan 12

NEW DELHI, Jan 3: The Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao, will visit Dhaka from January 12 to 15 to attend the seventh SAARC summit, official sources said yesterday, reports BSS.

The summit, postponed by a month at India's request following Ayodhya developments, will now be held on January 13 and 14.

The annual meeting of seven heads of state and government is considered significant as the seven-year old SAARC has undertaken the task of forging economic cooperation as a regional grouping.

The preparatory work for the SAARC summit at the Foreign Secretary and Foreign Ministerial level was completed last month in Dhaka.

The SAARC comprises India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives.

START-II Treaty signed, Yeltsin proposes summit with Clinton

MOSCOW, Jan 3: President Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin on Sunday signed a historic nuclear missile-reduction treaty that crowned Bush's four years of high-stakes diplomacy, reports AP.

Yeltsin proposed an early summit with President-elect Clinton.

In a glittering Kremlin ceremony, the two leaders effectively passed on humanity's hopes for a safer world to Clinton. "I hope he will take over the baton that was given him with such grace by President Bush," Yeltsin said.

Bush, effectively ending his

four-year turn on the world stage, said Russia's first democratically elected leader would enjoy working with the new US president. Bush leaves office in 17 days.

"It means a future far more free from fear," Bush said after signing the START II treaty.

The far-reaching accord, after US Senate and Russian parliamentary ratification, would radically reduce US and Russian nuclear stockpiles and wipe out dreaded multi-warhead missiles that can hit several cities in one launch.

Yeltsin, pushing his commitment to burying Cold War

animosities, declared, "We will be able to hand over to our children, the children of the 21st century, a more secure world."

The Russian leader said he wrote Clinton two days ago proposing they meet in a third country. "There should be no lull in our relations with the new administration," he said, "because any lull in the bilateral relations between the superpowers would give cause for concern."

Bush and Yeltsin met in a two-hour fireside summit that touched also on the conflict in shattered Yugoslavia and

Yeltsin's troubled campaign to rescue Russia's faltering economy.

Before returning to Washington, Bush flew to Paris for a final meeting with French President Francois Mitterrand, hoping to improve prospects for adoption of a new UN Security Council resolution to keep Serbian planes out of the skies over embattled Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Bush told reporters he did not want to "quantify" differences in the US and Russian positions on Yugoslavia. He said their positions "are very close."

Yeltsin agreed, but stressed

the need for pursuing a diplomatic solution to the fighting in Bosnia that has claimed more than 17,000 lives and left hundreds of thousands homeless.

It was Bush's third major arms control treaty. The first, in 1990, reduced tanks and other non-nuclear forces in Europe. The second, last year, will cut about one-third off the US and Russian strategic nuclear missile totals.

And now the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, by 2003 or even earlier, will eliminate all land-based long-range missiles with multiple

warheads and impose a cap of 3,000 to 3,500 apiece on US and Russian warheads.

"It vindicates our insistence that we must do more than simply freeze the arms race in place," Bush said.

Outside on Red Square, about 100 hard-liners rallied to protest the START II accord. They chanted "Yeltsin sold his soul to Bush," and held signs saying "Bush is Satan! Get out of Russia!"

The demonstrators did not have permission to rally outside the Kremlin, but police did not attempt to break up the jeering crowd.