

International

Benazir wants session to be held in camera

Pak parliament debates N-programme today

Japan urges Pindi to sign NPT

TOKYO, Nov 27: Japan has urged Pakistan to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and dispel suspicion that it might be developing nuclear weapons, officials said Friday, reports AFP.

The request was made at a meeting of Japanese and Pakistani government officials here Friday, the sources said. Japan also asked Pakistan to accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and obligations.

The Pakistani delegation chief, Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan, was quoted as saying that his country did not have any nuclear arms and would join the NPT and accept IAEA safeguards if India did the same.

The Japanese delegation to the meeting was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Hiroshi Fukuda.

ISLAMABAD, Nov 27: Pakistan's parliament is to hold its first debate on Islamabad's sensitive nuclear programme on Sunday in a session that Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto wants in camera to protect the top-secret operation, reports Reuter.

The special session follows a week of highly publicised charges and counter-charges between Bhutto and her predecessor, Nawaz Sharif over which of the two was the first to freeze the nuclear programme.

Deputies are expected to make fiery speeches reflecting the bitter divide between Bhutto and the opposition on which has done more to push Pakistan toward becoming a nuclear power — a highly emotive issue that evokes fiercely patriotic sentiments.

"The question of a rollback of a peaceful nuclear programme can be expected from a weak government only," Bhutto said on Thursday insisting her government would not pull back the programme.

"Controversial statement by the Prime Minister have been creating confusion" said Sartaj Azz, Secretary General of the opposition Pakistani Muslim League that requisitioned the session. "We want to clarify this."

He declined to say what he expected the debate to achieve. Bhutto's officials have said the session should be held in camera to protect national security.

The debate comes amid indications from the United States that the Clinton administration

is ready to lift sanctions on military and new economic aid pegged to Islamabad's nuclear programme.

"A change appears to have become just a matter of time," said one senior western diplomat.

The US State Department seemed to have come to believe that the denial of conventional weapons to Pakistan had only prompted it to rely more on a nuclear option, he added.

"Sanctions do not advance the non-proliferation objectives of the United States in South Asia," acting Foreign Secretary Zahid Saied said in a statement late on Friday.

"We would welcome their repeal because these are counterproductive, they have a reverse effect," he said.

The sanctions came into force in 1990 after then-President George Bush failed to certify to Congress that Pakistan did not have a nuclear device.

They have prevented the delivery of 60 F-16 fighters for which Islamabad is still making payment and forced the closure of most US-funded aid projects in Pakistan.

Bhutto last week blamed former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for freezing the costly nuclear programme in July 1990 — and the next day changed her statement to push the date forward to later that year.

She herself was Prime Minister in July 1990. Bhutto was sacked the following

month, to be succeeded by Sharif as Prime Minister after elections that October. Then-army chief General Mirza Aslam Beg stepped into the fray later in the week revealing that the ruling trioka of army chief president and prime minister took a collective decision to cap the programme in July 1990.

Sharif had maintained that status quo during his term in office from October 1990 to last July, Beg said. "I did not cap the nuclear programme," Sharif said in an interview last week.

Islamabad has conceded it has a nuclear capability but has insisted it will not make nuclear weapons and is developing nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

Pakistan says it cannot sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty unless India also does so because it would upset the equilibrium in the region: India exploded a nuclear device in 1974.

Washington believes Pakistan renewed its effort to enrich uranium to levels needed to make weapons in early 1990, when tension roared with India over a revolt in India-ruled Kashmir.

Pakistan and India have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir, two thirds of which is controlled by Delhi and the rest by Islamabad.

Washington has been demanding Pakistan stop its uranium enrichment programme and destroy key component before it will resume aid.

India's serial killer escapes from custody

BANGALORE, Nov 27: A serial killer who murdered 24 women, most of whom were prostitutes, escaped from police custody in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, police said here Friday, reports AFP.

Nagaraj, 26, escaped late Thursday from a hotel in the town of Krishnagiri after telling guards that he wanted to relieve himself in a nearby field, officials said.

He was wanted for 24 murders in Tamil Nadu and adjoining Karnataka state, of which Bangalore is capital.

"It is a big setback for us because the trial was almost complete," said Bangalore police superintendent T. Jayaprakash.

The murderer raped young women to parks, raped them and strangled the victims with saris and was caught in February.

Haitian PM to step down Dec 15

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Nov 27: The head of the transitional government agreed to step down December 15 following the failure of a UN plan to return elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power, a Cabinet minister said, reports AP.

The announcement by Premier Robert Malval came in a cabinet meeting at his heavily guarded home Friday, said Louis Dejoie II, the Commerce and Industry Minister. Another government source confirmed the announcement.

The departure of the pro-Aristide businessman would hurt the international effort to return Aristide, who was overthrown in a military coup in 1991. Some conservative US politicians have questioned the democratic credentials of Aristide, but Malval, hailed as a 'good citizen' by President Clinton, has not been criticised.

"Malval said that he would resign on the 15th. The government will continue to negotiate with the army in the hopes that a solution will be found and that the dreadful embargo will be lifted," Dejoie told The Associated Press late Friday.

He was referring to UN sanctions on fuel and weapons deliveries to Haiti until the military, the real power in Haiti, yields control. That appears

unlikely anytime soon, and Washington has resisted lobbying by Aristide for a stronger embargo.

Malval had taken the job on condition he would stay on only until December 15. He threatened in October to quit, but later said he would remain in office as long as Aristide wanted him in the post. He has scheduled to meet with Aristide in Washington next week.

Dejoie indicated that political forces in Haiti were moving toward declaring Aristide temporarily incapacitated, allowing for another government, perhaps one more amenable to the army.

"We hope that the international community will understand that the application of Article 148 (the temporary incapacitation constitutional clause) is a Haitian solution," Dejoie said. He hoped world nations "will react favourably to it when and if it occurs."

The army on Friday morning declared that Aristide officials had discussed the possibility of armed struggle to regain power.

Later Friday, Aristide told the Voice of America's Creole-language service that there were no plans for armed struggle, only "family discussions" on the topic.



The wife (L) of the Indian captain of the vessel Jalavijaya grieves over the body of her husband (closest to her) who died after inhaling soyabean seed fumes as they were preparing to pick up some samples from the ship's hold. Bodies (L to R) are Captain Paul Soumito, ship's official Gupta Mainsa and sailor Mitna Blikunathu. — AFP photo

Yeltsin summons party leaders to Kremlin

MOSCOW Nov 27: President Boris Yeltsin told leaders of parties campaigning for next month's election to stop attacking his draft constitution on television on pain of losing their right to free broadcast, reports Reuter.

Summoning the 13 party leaders to the Kremlin, Yeltsin told them to stick in their election addresses to what they planned for Russia if elected on December 12, the day voters will also give their verdict on the constitution.

"I warn you that your free television time will be taken away if you deviate from the theme," he said.

"Your theme is your programme. We will fight for the constitution and I ask you not to touch upon the constitution."

The first five days of television campaigning have been dull and amateurish by western standards.

But some candidates have enlivened things by attacking each other by name, denouncing the constitution, and reliving the sending of tanks against rebels in parliament last month.

An election court fired a shot across the bows of three candidates on Friday, warning that if they broke electoral rules again they could be stripped of their seat, if elected.

The court of arbitration cited rightwing Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and centrist Nikolai Travkin for insulting each other by name, and nationalist film-maker

Stanislav Govorukhin for abusing the constitution and economist Yegor Gaidar.

Gaidar, the government's economic reform chief and leader of the pro-government Russia's choice party, flew to Vorkuta in the far north on Friday to head off a threatened strike by miners.

Vorkuta miners have threatened to strike from December 1, an action certain to damage the electoral chances of Russia's choice, unless demands for overdue pay and compensation are met.

Gaidar told reporters on arrival he had concrete proposals for the miners, traditionally strong supporters of Yeltsin's reforms, but could not predict the outcome of the talks.

Oleg Soskovets, like Gaidar a first deputy prime minister, announced on Friday that the government has found 77 billion roubles (63 million dollar) to pay the miners' salaries.

The government is heavily involved in the elections as a dozen ministers are standing for three competing parties.

Some senior candidates including the hitherto liberal Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, have been upsetting Russia's neighbours with campaign pledges to protect the rights of Russian living there.

The campaign is something of a novelty for Russians, as it is the first parliamentary election since the Communist Party lost its monopoly on power.

Off the Record

Diana wants reconciliation

LONDON: Prince Charles has promised to marry his old flame Camilla Parker Bowles but his wife Diana wants to patch up their rift and is refusing to get a divorce, Britain's best-known gossip columnist said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Society Chronicler Nigel Dempster revived the flagging Charles and Diana saga by saying the wife of the heir to the throne was having second thoughts about splitting up and wanted the marriage to survive as a working partnership.

Speaking on a television show business programme, Dempster even suggested that the royal couple could rescind their formal separation announced a year ago and Diana might get her long-cherished wish for a third child within her marriage.

"I can exclusively reveal that Charles has promised Camilla Parker Bowles his long-time confidante, that he will eventually marry her, but Diana is refusing to get a divorce," Dempster said, opening what promises to be a season of royal commentary leading up to the December 9 anniversary of the separation.

Prince Charles, 45, was said to be wavering between loyalty to Camilla and Diana's idea of reaching a long-term accommodation for the sake of their sons, with the possibility of a full-blooded reconciliation over time.

Parker Bowles, a brigadier's wife, was the middle-aged woman at the centre of the Camillagate love tapes controversy 11 months ago when lusty late-night comments alleged to have been from Prince Charles were printed in the popular press.

At the time of the separation, Princess Diana envisaged an eventual divorce and wanted to find happiness with a second husband and more children, Dempster says in the Who's Who programme produced for a London independent channel.

But she's changed her mind, she now says she wants a reconciliation. She doesn't want a divorce, he said in a transcript of the programme to be broadcast on Saturday.

Queen Elizabeth has invited Princess Diana, 32, and her two sons William and Harry to join Charles and family for Christmas at the Sandringham royal estate in the hope of getting the couple back together, Dempster said.

"If she accepts... we can almost guarantee that a reconciliation is on the cards and, who knows, the talks about separation and divorce will vanish in 1994."



BRIEFLY

Stampede claims 3 in Puri: Three persons including two women were killed and ten others injured in a stampede inside the Jagannath temple on Friday, PTI reports from Puri, India.

According to sources, the accident occurred when thousands of devotees struggled to have a glimpse of the deity on the occasion of 'Nagarjuna besas' a ritual being celebrated after a gap of 26 years.

Hospital sources said two persons were brought dead while another succumbed to injuries there. Of the injured, the condition of seven persons, was stated to be serious.

10 Britons held in Turkey: Ten British trade unionists — most of them women — have been detained by authorities in southeastern Turkey, the Foreign Office said early Saturday, AFP reports from London.

A spokesman said few additional were available. The British embassy in Ankara has been asked to investigate. The Foreign Office has advised travellers to avoid southeastern Turkey because of conflict there between the Turkish authorities and Kurdish rebels.

3 killed in Filipino jail riot: Manila's deputy jail warden and two inmates were killed and 11 other people were injured during a clash in Manila City Jail, police said Saturday, AP reports from Manila.

The two inmates seized Maj Edgardo Calderon and a one-year old baby during a Friday-night party in the prison compound, police officer Jolly Bustamante said Saturday. The party was a celebration of all the prisoner's birthdays, and family members were invited.

Taiwan goes to polls: Taiwanese voters went to the polls yesterday to elect leaders of local governments in the closest-ever race between the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) and opposition parties, AFP reports from Taipei. President Lee Teng-Hui concurrent KMT chairman, urged the public to accept election results in a democratic manner and take legal action against any doubtful results rather than resorting to violence.

Some 10.8 million eligible voters are to elect five city mayors and 16 county magistrates on the island of Taiwan, and two magistrates on offshore islets.

Attempt to smuggle fossils: Indonesian customs officials have foiled an attempt to smuggle fossils overseas by post, the official Antara news agency said yesterday, Reuter reports from Jakarta.

Some of the six parcels containing the fossils were bound for Washington, customs officials said. "The contents are still being examined. We became suspicious because the parcels were very heavy," said one official who alleged that the sender had tried to forge documents on the contents.

French policeman killed: French policeman was killed and two more injured overnight in southern French port city when a car they wanted to stop deliberately rammed their own vehicle, officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Marseilles.

The wanted driver escaped, but police said he was identified and several members of his family — all Gypsies — were arrested.

Friday a gun battle near here between police and Gypsies left one Gypsy dead and one injured. One policeman was also wounded.

Iraqis celebrate arrival of a foreign ship

BAGHDAD, Nov 27: Fireworks and gunfire erupted over Baghdad in celebration on Friday night after the first foreign ship in years arrived at the Iraqi port of Um Qasr, reports Reuter.

The capital was lit up with fireworks and shots were fired into the air just before midnight after state-run media announced that a Cypriot-flagged cargo ship loaded with sugar had docked at the southern port.

The official news agency INA said the ship's arrival marked the resumption of normal op-

eration at Um Qasr heavily damaged in two Gulf Wars. One with Iran and the other with a US led coalition over Kuwait.

The freighter Tephy had been intercepted by the US navy which has searched Iraq-bound cargo since Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The ship was freed after it was found to be carrying only sugar.

Iraq this year finished clearing the Shatt Al-Arab waterway of sunken ships and other debris from the 1980 to 1988 Iran-Iraq war allowing the port to resume operation for the first time in years.

Most of Iraq's sugar supplies are now shipped to the Jordanian port of Aqaba on the Red Sea and then sent by road to Baghdad.

Using Um Qasr would allow Baghdad more direct access to Asian market for food import and eventually oil export, when UN trade sanctions are lifted.

Iraq formally agreed on Friday to long-term monitoring of its arms potential and said the Security Council should immediately lift sanctions which for three years have barred the sale of its oil.

No progress in talks on HK

BEIJING, Nov 27: Sino-British talks on the political future of Hong Kong appeared on the verge of collapse Saturday as negotiators emerged from the 17th round without setting dates for another meeting, reports AP.

"I have to say, we haven't got to an agreement on first-stage issues," British negotiator Christopher Hum told reporters after Saturday's morning session.

He was referring to the strategy adopted in recent rounds to

reach agreement on the least contentious issues surrounding Hong Kong's 1994-1995 local election, the last before the British colony reverts to Chinese rule in 1997.

However, there appeared to be even less progress than before. Departing from past practice, the two sides did not agree on when to meet again.

"We have proposed a further round of talks and we will be discussing in due course with the Chinese side the dates for those," Hum said. He declined

to say how his Chinese counterparts responded to the proposal.

Hong Kong newspapers on Saturday said the British side would either propose a date for the next round or propose a 15-day cooling off period before setting a date.

Hum said he would return to London on Sunday to discuss with government ministers the next step to take. Hum said after Friday's talks that "there is still a wide gap between the two sides."

Pretoria fears civil war

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 27: South African army chief cancelled weekend leave for some units after a right-wing extremist leader told followers to prepare for civil war, reports Reuter.

Army spokesman Colonel John Rolt said the decision was taken in response to a volatile situation triggered by "aggressive statements" from a number of different quarters, which it was feared could disrupt law and order.

Neo-Nazi leader Eugene Terre Blanche warning supporters of civil war, urged them on Thursday night to steal guns and arm their women.

African National Congress (ANC) Nelson Mandela predicted in response that thousands of innocent whites would be killed if the white right ignited civil war.

"The precautionary measure is being taken to ensure sufficient troops are available should they be required to support the police," Rolt said in a statement on Friday night.

He said "some" units were affected by cancellation of weekend leave. He declined to give numbers or details but said it was on a "vastly" lower scale than might be expected under a general mobilisation.

Police spokesman said today preliminary reports showed no serious incident, or township unrest during the night.

Hosokawa govt still popular

TOKYO, Nov 27: The government of Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa remains popular with voters, the Jiji press reported today, says AFP.

The news agency said public support for the Hosokawa cabinet stood at 66.1 per cent in November after a slight fall in October while 13.3 per cent of respondents disapproved of Hosokawa's performance.

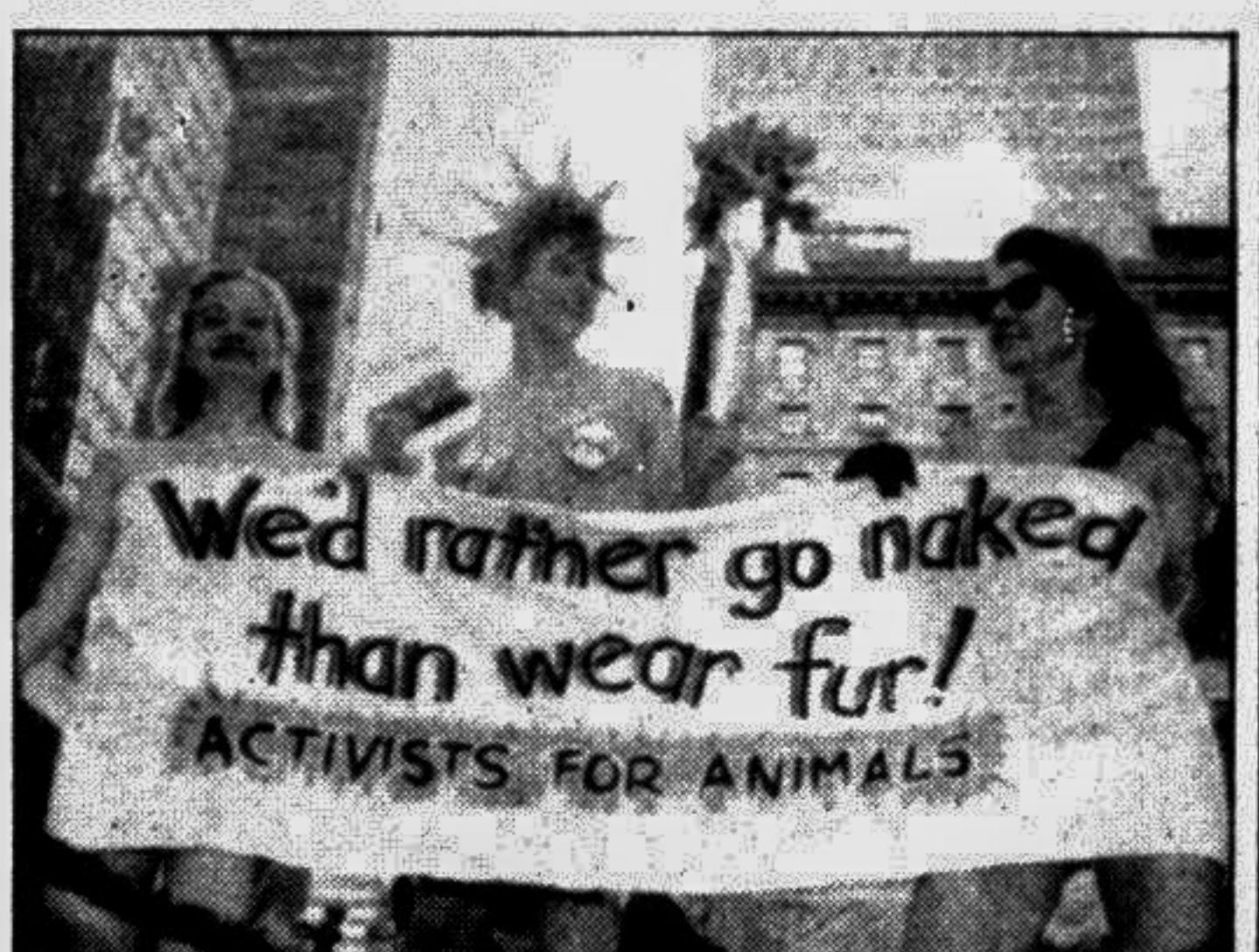
Jiji conducted the nationwide poll of 2,000 eligible voters from November 11 through 14.

It said the high approval rate was based on Hosokawa's positive attitude to political reform bills and successful international diplomacy.

Hosokawa succeeded in passing the crucial bills through the lower house last week. He has visited South Korea and the United States this month.



Young Russian Madonna look-alikes strike a pose late Thursday during a singing competition organised by a European radio station. The American superstar is much admired by many female Muscovites following the opening of the country to western tastes. — AFP photo



Animal rights activists ride a float through downtown Manhattan, New York on Friday as part of a parade sponsored by the animal rights group People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA). Hundreds of protesters against the killing of animals for their valuable pelts marched through New York's fur district enroute to a noontime rally. — AFP photo.

666 associated with satan

MANILA: A Roman Catholic priest has been fined for refusing to use a car plate with the numbers 666, saying they were associated with satan, reports Reuter.

Father John Rona, a parish priest in the central province of Cebu, was asked to pay 1,000 pesos (35) for refusing to use the licence plate, Manila newspapers said Saturday.

Rona cited a verse in the Bible which mention 666 as "the number of the beast that has come out of the earth," and allusion to the devil, they said.

Leave youngest killers alone

PRESTON, England: The judge who sentenced two 11-year-old boys to life imprisonment for murdering toddler James Bulger in a case which shocked the world ruled on Friday that the media must leave Britain's youngest killers alone, reports Reuter.

Judge Michael Morland told the court in Preston, northern England, that media intrusion could adversely affect their rehabilitation and their places of detention should stay secret.

He also barred newspapers from printing any photographs taken of the boys, Robert Thomson and Jon Venables, since they were convicted and sentenced on Wednesday.

Morland in a lengthy statement to the court, also repeated his belief that violent videos may have influenced the two boys, who beat and tortured two-year-old Bulger before leaving his body on a railway line.

"The home background, upbringing, family circumstances, parental behaviour and relationships were needed in the public domain so that informed and worthwhile debate can take place for the public good in the case of grave crimes by young children," he said.

The judge sparked a fiery debate in Britain about the influence on children of video nasties by saying on Wednesday that videos could have contributed to the crime. He said on Friday that one video film, child's play 3, had "some striking similarities to the manner of the attack on James Bulger."