

International

Islamabad committed to regional non-proliferation

Pakistan stands by its N-policy

ISLAMABAD, Dec 8: The Pakistani Government, rebutting allegations that it is softening its nuclear policy, said Tuesday it was standing by its nuclear programme, reports AFP.

"There is no question of Pakistan rolling back the programme," Foreign Minister Asf Ali Khan Zardari said at the wind-up of an unprecedented National Assembly debate on nuclear policy.

He said no government in Pakistan could "dare" change its nuclear policy in the face of a "proliferation policy" in India, a nuclear power with which Pakistan has gone to war three times.

All reiterated Islamabad's commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and underscored the need for a South Asian solution to the nuclear issue.

While Pakistan has the capability to make nuclear weapons, it has decided not to

do so and to use the technology for peaceful ends instead, the Foreign Minister said.

"We will not make atomic weapons," he stated.

The one-day debate followed allegations from the opposition Pakistan Muslim League (PML) that Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto intended to roll back the nuclear programme in order to woo more western aid.

"Benazir is moving toward a roll-back of the programme to destroy it completely," opposition leader Nawaz Sharif said, opening the debate in the 217-member National Assembly.

The debate, billed by several independent figures including former Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Munir Ahmed as a reckless exercise over a highly sensitive issue, led to a heated exchange of accusations.

Government members said the PML was trying to exploit a

vital national issue for political mileage, while the opposition threatened to launch a public agitation campaign if the programme was damaged.

Benazir, speaking to reporters outside the House, dismissed Sharif's allegations, ruling out a roll-back of the nuclear programme and reiterating Pakistan's commitment to regional non-proliferation.

"So long as there is a threat to our security, the country's peaceful nuclear programme will continue," Benazir said.

Benazir, who leaves Wednesday for Iran and Turkey, said Pakistan had been isolated internationally during the two-and-a-half years that Sharif was Prime Minister. He resigned in July in the wake of a political crisis.

She said her government was talking with the United States to overcome strains in their relations, which soured after Washington suspended

economic and military assistance to Pakistan in 1990.

"We want to take Pakistan out of isolation without compromising the country's nuclear policy," she said.

The US aid freeze had come under the anti-proliferation Pressler amendment, which is expected to be replaced by new foreign aid criteria.

Sharif told the House that the nuclear programme had been frozen by Benazir's first government, which ruled in 1988-90, and he demanded "solid guarantees" on the nuclear issue.

"We shall not allow any bargaining on the nuclear programme," he said.

Sharif aide Mohammad Ejaz-ul-Haq, son of late military ruler Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, said the PML would organise a nationwide protest march if the nuclear programme was harmed.

Delhi summit on 'Education for All' downgraded

NEW DELHI, Dec 8: Most of the presidents and prime ministers invited to a summit on education can't attend, so it will be downgraded to a meeting of government ministers, reports AP.

The Education For All summit, scheduled for December 16, was an effort to get nine countries that contain 70 per cent of the world's illiterates to give education overriding priority.

The summit, hosted by India, was being sponsored by three United Nations bodies — UNESCO, UNICEF and UNFPA, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

At a news conference Wednesday, UN officials said that only two of the nine countries' leaders were likely to make it to New Delhi. The others will only send government ministers.

"This is a summit-level consultation without summit level presence," said Razia Ismail, a spokesperson of the United

Nations Children's Education Fund.

This is the second proposed summit in the Indian capital that has had to be called off in two days.

On Tuesday, the government postponed a December 13-15 summit of 15 developing countries to discuss world trade. Only five of the countries said they could send leaders to the Group of 15 summit: India, Indonesia, Mexico, Zimbabwe and Malaysia.

Besides India, only two of the nine nations invited to the education summit agreed to send leaders: Indonesia and Mexico.

UN experts and India still hope that education ministers will have a full debate and release a declaration.

The conference is being billed as a demonstration of political will at the highest level for giving priority to education in some of the most populous nations.

Mao was a master diplomat: Li

HONG KONG, Dec 8: Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng said Tuesday the late Chairman Mao Zedong was a master diplomatic strategist who was led by the belief that all countries, big or small, are equal, Beijing's official Xinhua news agency said, reports AFP.

Speaking at the opening of a seminar on Mao's thinking on foreign affairs, Li said the leader had, during his time, displayed a great deal of originality in launching China's new diplomacy. Xinhua said in dispatches monitored here.

Mao, whose birth 100 years ago will be marked on December 26, led China from the communist victory over nationalist forces in 1949 until his death in 1976.

Li said China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, inheriting and developing Mao's thought, had advanced a set of theories

about building socialism with Chinese characteristics, including principles for foreign affairs, according to Xinhua.

In keeping with much of Mao's thought, Deng's strategies were based on a number of principles, including the equality of all countries, that peace and development were the two main themes of the world today, and opening China to the outside world, it said.

Li called the thinking on foreign affairs by Mao and Deng a complete scientific system worthy of serious study by Chinese diplomats.

"We are confident that, led by the party's central committee... we will seize the rare favourable opportunities arising from the international and domestic situation and achieve greater victories in domestic and foreign affairs," Li was quoted as saying.



Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (L) is welcomed by Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (C) upon her arrival in Tehran for a two-day official visit. —AFP photo

Benazir arrives in Iran

NICOSIA, Dec 8: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto arrived in Iran on Wednesday on her first trip to the Islamic republic since her election earlier this year, reports AP.

The state-run Islamic Republic News Agency, monitored in Cyprus, said Benazir was met at the Tehran Airport by President Hashemi Rafsanjani.

Iran and neighbouring Pakistan have close commercial and diplomatic ties, and Benazir's three-day visit was expected to strengthen them further.

Rafsanjani himself visited Pakistan in September 1992.

There has been speculation that the Iranians could be looking to Islamabad for help on a clandestine nuclear weapons programme believed by Western analysts to be in the research stage.

Pakistan has admitted to having a nuclear weapons capability, which it acquired with help from China.



Julie Clements from Sotheby's London displays a pair of diamond spectacles and tortoiseshell gem-set Napoleon walking cane in London Tuesday, part of the 'Elton John Jewellery Collection' which is to be auctioned by Sotheby's on December 14. —AFP photo

... to meet western demands

MOSCOW: Russian museums are being pillaged by criminals to meet Western demands for art and antiques and police can't cope with the growing problem, a newspaper reported Wednesday, says AP.

The value of art and antiques stolen during the first half of this year jumped 20 times in comparison with the same period in 1992, Vladimir Mefti, head of the police art department, was quoted as saying by Trud.

"Reacting to the Western market's demands, Russian art brokers now are mainly trying to obtain the most precious and rare museum exhibits," Mefti said. "The police were able to solve only 38.1 per cent of cases."

Police are understaffed and short of funds, making it hard to fight the problem.

Most museums lack catalogues of their contents, making it difficult to track valuables taken overseas, Mefti said.

BRIEFLY

Belfast catholic shot dead: A Protestant extremist gunman shot dead a Belfast Catholic on the doorstep of his home on Tuesday night in what could signal a new wave of sectarian slaughter in Northern Ireland, Reuters reports from Belfast.

The 38-year-old victim, who was not named, was shot several times in the chest at close range after opening his door to a lone gunman whose face was hidden by a red scarf, police said.

The outlawed Protestant extremist group the Ulster Freedom Fighters claimed responsibility for the attack, its second this week.

Rebels kill 10 in Bogota: Two Marxist guerrilla groups killed a total of 10 people and wounded 11 in separate attacks in the Uraba Banana-growing region by the Caribbean coast early Tuesday, police said, Reuters reports from Bogota.

Police said members of the guerrilla group Popular Liberation Army attacked a Uraba plantation with grenades and machine gunfire killing five workers and wounding 11 more.

22 Palestinians held: The Israeli Army has arrested 22 suspected members of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian sources said Tuesday, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The arrests took place overnight Monday in Ramallah, El-Bireh, Bethlehem, Nablus and Hebron.

The suspects included Ali Jaradat, a researcher at Bir Zeit University on the West Bank, Ghassan Jarrar, a Ramallah resident released from jail three months ago, and Andrihbi Katamehs, lawyer from El-Bireh.

Gunmen kill 5 in New York: A gunman opened fire on a commuter train during the evening rush hour, killing five people and wounding 12 others before passengers subdued him, police said, AP reports from Garden City, New York.

The man, a passenger on the Tuesday evening train, started shooting as it was entering a Long Island Rail Road station in Garden City outside New York City, said police officer Andrew DeSimone. Four of the wounded were critically hurt, DeSimone said.

Cop shot dead in Cairo: Gunmen shot dead a policeman Tuesday in the Nag Hammadi area of Southern Egypt, and elsewhere more than 200 suspected fundamentalists were arrested, police said, AFP reports from Cairo.

Mohammed Mahmud Abul Ela was killed on his way to work in Nag Hammadi, 580 kilometres (360 miles) South of Cairo, by suspected Muslim militants who managed to flee the scene.

His death brought to 78 the number of policemen killed since Muslim militants stepped up their attacks in March 1992 aimed at toppling the secular government of President Hosni Mubarak.

Nagas kill 5 border guards

NEW DELHI, Dec 8: Tribal guerrillas fighting for an independent homeland in the far-eastern Indian state of Nagaland killed five border guards in an ambush today, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

Members of the left-wing National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) opened fire on a convoy of paramilitary border guards in the state's Zumbheto district, killing five and seriously injuring seven, the news agency said.

The NSCN has been waging a four-decade-long bush war for an independent tribal state carved out of Nagaland

DPR fears falsification in Russian election results

MOSCOW, Dec 8: The president of a centrist opposition party fired a broadside at Russian President Boris Yeltsin Tuesday, accusing his supporters of planning to falsify results in upcoming elections, reports AFP.

Nikolai Travkin, head of the Democratic Party of Russia (DPR), said he was worried about the elections being honest because the communists were specialists in falsification.

Travkin said he considered the president, widely seen as a reformist, to be a communist.

He said the constitution to be submitted to the electorate on December 12, on the same

day as the parliamentary elections, is a secretary-general's constitutions — a reference to the post of secretary-general of the Soviet Communist Party, formerly the top job in the country, because of the powers it gave to the president.

At a breakfast with journalists, he predicted that the constitution would be approved, but it won't work.

Travkin's party claims 60,000 members and expects to receive between eight and 12 per cent of the vote, he said.

He said its priorities were forming a new government, passing new laws on crime,

social benefits, production and art and stopping the land reform initiated by Yeltsin.

Speaking at the same breakfast, the film director Stanislav Govorukhin, a DPR candidate whose attack last month on the constitution brought a strong rebuke from Yeltsin, returned to the offensive.

He accused Yeltsin of running an authoritarian and semi-dictatorial regime and said the DPR's mission was to bring back democracy.

The country is becoming a state without spirituality, amorality, without structure or culture, he said.



US writer Toni Morrison holds her acceptance speech for her Nobel Literature award 1993 at the Swedish Nobel Academy in Stockholm on Tuesday. Morrison will receive the award on Friday. —AFP photo

US conducts 1030 N-tests since '40

WASHINGTON, Dec 8: The United States has conducted a total of 1,030 nuclear weapons tests since the 1940s, instead of the originally announced 826, according to energy department secret documents declassified yesterday, reports Xinhua.

The energy department, which is responsible for the country's nuclear weapons development and manufacturing, said the newly disclosed 204 tests were conducted at the Nevada test site and never publicised for fear of disclosing information to the Soviet Union, Washington's cold war enemy.

Campbell to resign as party chief

OTTAWA, Dec 8: Former Prime Minister Kim Campbell will step down as leader of Canada's Conservative Party within days, several senior party officials told the Canadian Press news agency Tuesday, reports AP.

Campbell, who saw her party lose its rule and end up with just two seats in parliament after the October 25 election, may announce her resignation as soon as Friday, said the officials, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Some Conservatives who remain loyal to Campbell denied she was resigning. They included Ross Reid, a former member of parliament, and Michael Ferabee, Campbell's chief of staff for a time when she was justice minister.

But three senior party sources said she will leave, the news agency said. One former adviser, who still calls himself a Campbell loyalist, said the resignation might not come until next week.

Crazy about milk

PINNAWELA, Sri Lanka: Five year-old Sinhabahu guzzles a big bottle of milk in 12 seconds flat, sucking noisily through a rubber nozzle. Some of the milk dribbles down his hairy chin and his eyes glaze over, reports Reuters.

"He drinks it faster than I drink beer," a German tourist said admiringly.

Seven bottles leaves Sinhabahu still wanting more. Each time a feeder goes by to another baby elephant, Sinhabahu unfurls his small trunk and tries to grab a bottle.

Cameras click and videos hum but all the babies want is their milk, and they all want it at the same time. Impatient trunks grab at cameras and snake into pockets. Feeders are kept busy refilling empty bottles from buckets of milk as their charges clamour for more.

The process is repeated five times a day. The animals are also given a leisurely bath at a nearby river where they frolic in the water, squirting each other and grappling together.

Today there are 55 animals at the orphanage, ranging in age from three and a half months to 50 years. Some were born there and know nothing of life in the wild.

"Some elephants fall into pits or quarries, others are swept away by river currents, some are wounded or orphaned when the mother dies and then abandoned by the herd," said director W M Bandara.

"Sometimes when the animals are brought to us they are injured or diseased. So we call a vet in," he said.

Sri Lanka's large elephant population has dwindled to about 3,000 and conservationists believe they are in serious danger of becoming extinct.

Best-kept vacation secret

TINOS, Greece: OK, vacation time. It has to be an island, a Greek island where the fried squid are so fresh they disco on the dish without the usual crowds or the high prices of Mykonos, reports AP.

"Have you ever heard of Tinos?" asked Hara Lambrinidou, an Athens travel agent enamored of the island since childhood.

Few non-Greeks have heard of Tinos, home of a miracle shrine the Greek Orthodox compare with Lourdes. For the traveller in search of the real thing, Tinos could be Greece's best-kept vacation secret.

What else is so special about Tinos? Cost, for one thing. A double room in the July-August high-season costs 65 dollars to 120 dollars a day. But in May or June, and again come September bargains overlooking the ocean are available at 45 dollars to 65 dollars.

The dramatic changes experienced by more touristic Greek islands have not reached Tinos, third in size in the Cyclades archipelago after Naxos and Andros.

"Tinos is Greece," said Lambrinidou, who owns the Tinos travel agency Blue Margarita and commutes every summer weekend from Athens. "It's filled with picturesque villages and real people."

How true.

A wandering tourist gets to know the island milkman on his motor scooter, a farmer who makes sausage-potato omelettes in his hut by the sea in case someone drops in — even the local donkeys, tied serenely to the same trees day after day.

Church figure challenges Charles' succession to throne

LONDON, Dec 8: A senior Church of England figure today challenged both the suitability of the Prince of Wales to succeed Queen Elizabeth II and his right to become head of the established church, because of an alleged affair, reports AFP.

Both the positions of King and supreme governor of the Church of England are held by the monarch.

In an article in the Times newspaper, the Archbishop of York, the venerable George Austin, said that if reports of an affair with Camilla Parker Bowles were true, the Prince had started to break his marriage soon after his wedding to Princess Diana in 1981.

Referring to the vows Prince Charles will make at his coronation, the Archbishop wrote: "If his attitude to his vows of matrimony was so cavalier as he has the right to be trusted in this second solemnity?"

"It may be that Prince Charles has gone too far for the same (public) trust to be restored."

"Even if the church were to change its fairly rigid attitude to remarriage after divorce, it would not be likely to give blanket approval," Austin went on.

Austin, who made similar comments to BBC radio Tuesday, was originally responding to an article in the Sun claiming that the archbishop of Canter-

bury, Dr George Carey, had suggested that the prince might have to "consider his position".

The claims were quickly denounced by Carey's office as "pure fabrication", but Austin's comments have sparked a national debate on the future of the monarchy.

At least one senior bishop supported the Archbishop, and others have privately expressed their reservations about the prince's fitness to succeed.

The Bishop of Sodor and Man, the Rt. Rev. Noel Jones, said the breaking of marriage vows was "an indication of a moral flaw which would be worrying".

Likewise, the bishop of

Willesden; the Rt. Rev. Graham Dow, told the Sun that while he believed the prince should become king, there was doubt about his position as head of the church if he divorced.

"I do believe that divorce is necessary but it would be inappropriate for a divorcee to be head of our church. I would be happy for Prince Charles to become monarch but unfortunately I realise these two positions are tied together."

But leading constitutional expert Lord St John on Fawsley said: "I am afraid heirs to the throne, throughout the ages, have had affairs. One may pass moral judgments one way or the other if one wishes, but this has

nothing to do with the constitution, nothing to do with the rights of succession."

The press continued the speculation today.

The centre-right Times condemned Austin's comments, writing, "This so-called 'moral argument', whatever the nature of the prince's behaviour in marriage, is mischievous, fallacious, aggressive in language and wholly regrettable."

"For many, this debate over the monarch's role as supreme governor of the church will strengthen the case for disestablishment," the paper said in an editorial.

The independent said: "When the time comes for corona-

tion, Prince Charles may prove an unsuitable figurehead for the church. But that alone will not prevent him from ascending the throne."

The guardian argued that the real public issue was whether the monarch should any longer pretend to be Defender of the Faith — ironically a title first bestowed on Henry VIII by the Pope — in a society which no longer has a unitary faith which needs defending.

To persist in the illusion that it still makes sense is to threaten "even more than the union of church and state," the paper warned.

Briton shot dead in Algeria

ALGERIA, Dec 8: A British man working with the state-owned petroleum firm Sonatrach was shot and killed Tuesday night, diplomatic sources said Wednesday, reports AP.

The unidentified man was killed the same day a retired Frenchman was discovered murdered in a village just south of Algiers. He too had been shot.

Four foreigners including also a Spanish businessman and a Russian housewife have been killed since December 1 by pistol-wielding gunmen who attacked apparently without provocation.