

International

US should change its N-stance: DPRK

TOKYO, Dec 17: In its most direct recent comment on the status of negotiations over its secretive nuclear programme, North Korea said Friday that it was up to the United States to change its stance, reports AP.

The United States and the United Nations have been pressing North Korea to open all its nuclear sites to international inspections. Communist North Korea's refusal to do so has sharpened suspicions that it may be building nuclear weapons.

North Korea offered earlier this month to let inspectors change batteries and film in monitoring cameras at two of its nuclear sites — a proposal US officials rejected as inadequate.

At a meeting December 10, they proposed inspections of all nuclear sites and the resumption of dialogue between North Korea and its rival, South Korea.

North Korea's Foreign Min-

istry on Friday accused the US negotiators of using delaying tactics and "laying artificial obstacles" to resolving the nuclear dispute.

"Clear is our position," it said in an official Korean Central News Agency report monitored in Tokyo. "It entirely depends on the US attitude whether the third round of talks are held and the nuclear problem is solved, or not, in the future."

North Korea has insisted on discussing the nuclear issue only with the United States, apparently in a bid to gain a degree of recognition from Washington, which has no diplomatic relations with the North.

In case the last opportunity of a negotiated settlement of the nuclear issue should be lost because of this unreasonable act of the United States threatening our existence as today, it would be the United States that would regret this," it said.

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Bosnian Muslims, Croats agree on Christmas ceasefire

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Dec 17: A Christmas and New Year's cease-fire announced Friday between Muslim-led government troops and Croat forces could bring respite from bitter fighting for thousands of civilians in central Bosnia, reports AP.

Agreement on the cease-fire coincided with fresh talks to try to end Bosnia's devastating war.

A day after Serb and Muslim leaders talked at Sarajevo airport Thursday, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic were to meet in Vienna, Austria with international mediators.

Rasim Delic, commander of Bosnia's government forces, and Ante Roso, commander of rival Bosnian Croat troops, agreed to cease fire from midnight (2300 GMT) December 23 until midnight January 3, Croatian TV reported Friday.

The agreement was reached in five hours of talks mediated by UN commander Gen Francis Briquemont Thursday in the central Bosnian town of Visoko, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of Sarajevo. Central Bosnia has seen some of the most bitter fighting of the 20-month war since a Muslim-Croat alliance fell apart last spring.

The Vienna talks, announced by Australian Foreign Minister Alois Mock, bring the Bosnian leaders together with mediators Lord Owen of the European Community and UN special envoy Thorvald Stoltenberg.

Diplomats characterised the talks as part of ongoing effort to get Bosnia's three warring sides to compromise on peace.

A new round of Bosnian peace talks is due in Geneva on December 21, with participants travelling a day later to the EC

would not yield more land in eastern or western Bosnia. Tanjug said differences also remained over Sarajevo, which the Serbs want divided and the Bosnian government has agreed to put under UN jurisdiction.

In Sarajevo Thursday, Silajdzic met at the airport with Bosnian Serb assembly speaker Momiclo Krajisnik. As they talked, Sarajevo was under heavy shelling for a second day.

Each side blamed the other for the fighting, but they also discussed peace, the official Yugoslav news agency Tanjug said.

The Muslim attitude was that if their demand for more territory was fulfilled, they might be ready to sign a peace agreement," Tanjug quoted Krajisnik's office as saying. "That brought a certain optimism into the talks."

But the Serbs said they

would not yield more land in eastern or western Bosnia.

Off the Record

"Final betrayal of motherhood"

BOISE, Idaho: Robin Row was sentenced to death for killing her husband and two children by setting their home on fire. She becomes the only woman on Idaho's death row, reports AP.

Judge Alan Schwartzman on Thursday called her crime "the final betrayal of motherhood" and "a descent into the blackened heart of darkness."

Row, 37, was convicted of murder for setting the 1992 fire that killed her husband, Randy, 34, and their children, ages 8 and 10, as they slept.

Two months ago, during a hearing, Row admitted setting the fire but said she did it only to damage the house and convince authorities that she and the children should leave her husband, whom she had accused of abusing her.

Schwartzman called Row a liar, pointing to 276,000 dollar in insurance policies she had taken out on her family and a love letter she had had.

Twenty-one men await execution in Idaho.

Because he wouldn't stop talking

TORONTO: A 64-year-old Toronto woman repeatedly stabbed her husband with a butcher knife because he wouldn't stop talking while she was watching a television programme, Toronto police said Thursday, reports Reuter.

Margaret Armstrong repeatedly warned her husband George, 60, to stop talking while she was watching television Wednesday. When he persisted, she went to the kitchen, picked up a butcher knife and attacked her husband, police said.

"She wanted to watch television and he wouldn't stop talking so she took a knife to him," said detective sergeant Derrick Sykes. "She slashed him about six times."

Sykes said Armstrong suffered wounds to his arms, chest and face but said the injuries aren't life-threatening.

His wife of 25 years has been charged with two counts of aggravated assault and one count of possessing a dangerous weapon in an attack.

Man dies after eating entire pig by himself

LA PLATA, Argentina: A 300-kilo (660 pound) Argentine man died Thursday of complications from eating an entire roast sucking pig, reports AFP.

Alfredo Rosales, 32, died in a hospital where he had undergone treatment since ingesting the 12-kilo (26-pound) pig by himself about a week ago, authorities said.

Doctors tried in vain to treat Rosales' serious heart and breathing problems stemming from his overeating.

It took eight firemen to get Rosales from his house into a truck and to hospital, where he lay in a reinforced bed.

Rosales, who worked at a tannery, apparently suffered from nervous problems.

Gaddafi calls Arabs to withdraw from UN

TRIPOLI, Dec 16: Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi called late Wednesday for Arab and other states to withdraw from the United Nations, which he accused of being in the service of "imperialist countries," reported AFP.

He told the opening of a "forum of Arab revolutionary and democratic forces" that "instead of helping to solve the world's problems the United Nations has become a sword suspended above people's heads."

"Since we don't encourage our people to join NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation), all we can do is withdraw from the UN," he said.

He also criticised Arab countries applying UN sanctions against Libya that were imposed to force Tripoli to hand over for trial in Britain or the United States two Libyans alleged to have taken part in the bombing of a US airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland in 1988.

BBC programme on Mao's personal life Monday

LONDON, Dec 17: Mao Tse-Tung's flamboyant sex life threatens to widen the gulf between Britain and China at a time of icy relations over the future of Hong Kong, the Times newspaper reported Friday, says AFP.

Beijing has asked the British foreign office to try to censor a BBC television broadcast to be screened on Monday, which details the chairman's taste for group sex with young girls, the paper said.

Dr Li, Mao's personal physician, and other former Chinese officials tell the programme that China's greatest hero behaved more like a tyrannical, sex-crazed emperor than a simple-living father to the masses.

A British embassy official in Beijing has been called to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and the foreign office in London has been asked to "make representations to the BBC about the content of the programme," a government spokesman said.

Castro to use capitalist techniques

PARIS, Dec 17: Cuban President Fidel Castro says his country, devastated by the collapse of the Soviet Union, will use some capitalist techniques to help its communist system, reports Reuter.

"We are like other countries, like China which tries to open up and manage quite well by using some capitalist mechanisms," he said in an interview published on Thursday by the French weekly Paris Match.

Castro said Cuba looked to China as an example of a communist country using capitalism to improve its technology and economic management.

Cuba's economy has been hit hard by the loss of financial support from the former Soviet Union.



The Princess of Wales carries a bouquet of flowers as she leaves the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London Thursday where she fulfilled her final official engagement at the annual meeting of the homeless charity Centrepoint.

Russia must provoke wars: Zhirinovsky

MOSCOW, Dec 17: Right-wing Vladimir Zhirinovsky was quoted on Thursday as saying "we must provoke wars" between neighboring peoples and make them beg to be let into Russia as provinces, reports Reuter.

"And then they — or rather, those who are still alive — will come rushing to ask Russia to accept them as Volosts (rural districts) or provinces," the leader of the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) added.

Zhirinovsky said Russia should be "thinking about colonies" instead for "rubbish cotton" from Uzbekistan. He did not elaborate on the "colonies" remark.

Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party stunned opponents with a strong showing in parliamentary elections.

France awards Toni Morrison

PARIS, Dec 17: France on Thursday gave American author Toni Morrison, winner of this year's Nobel literature prize, one of its most prestigious awards for excellence in the arts, reports AFP.

Culture Minister Jacques Toubon also awarded the Commander of Arts and Letters insignia to American geneticist Yoshua Lederberg, the 1958 Nobel laureate in medicine, and his wife Marguerite, a French psychiatrist.

The ceremony was held in the gilded salons of the Culture Ministry and coincided with the opening of a two-day forum on the politics of humanitarian intervention.

SA parliament begins debate on non-racial constitution

CAPE TOWN, South Africa, Dec 17: Parliament started debating constitution Friday that guarantees equal rights for blacks and whites and which will end white-minority rule, reports AP.

"This is an exceptional day for all of us," said Constitutional Minister Roelf Meyer, introducing the constitution that will be voted on next week in the last major action by South Africa's all-white parliament chamber.

"If ever, in the eventful history of our beloved land, there was a day that dawned with great promise, it is this day."

The constitution is the product of two years of negotiation by the government, the African

for the policy of apartheid, or racial separation.

"We, who were responsible for apartheid, are now saying that we want to leave that wrong behind. We are saying we are sorry. But we are also saying that we are now determined to rectify what went wrong," he said.

The African National Congress, which is expected to win the April 27 election, sent a delegation headed by its general secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa, to watch the debate.

"I'm feeling quite elated," he said. "It's a culmination of what our people have struggled for for many years. It leads us into a transition that will finally lead to democracy."

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Women were the first to look to their sisters with hope... above all because of their especially hard-fates today," the former Communist newspaper Pravda surmised in a front-page article Thursday.

Women have been particularly hard-hit by market reforms - they make up 70 per cent of Russia's unemployed and earn about 40 per cent of what men do - but others say Russian women have always been worse

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Ranariddh cancels peace talks with Khmer Rouge

PHNOM PENH, Dec 17: Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh on Friday cancelled peace talks with the Khmer Rouge guerrilla group because he said it failed to address him as head of the government, reportedly.

Ranariddh said Thursday that he had accepted a written request for talks from Khmer Rouge President Khieu Samphan.

But apparently Ranariddh later read Khieu Samphan's letter again. Sources close to Ranariddh said the letter addressed him as head of his political party.

Women can be key political players in Russian parliament

MOSCOW, Dec 17: Pollsters are stumped, and newspapers can't make sense of it: Women? In Russian politics? The astonishing success of extreme nationalists in the parliamentary elections Sunday has overshadowed another upset: the obscure Women of Russia movement defied all predictions to finish fifth among 13 parties, reports AP.

Women suddenly could be key political players in Russia - where since Catherine the Great's death in the 18th century they have entered the halls of power mainly as cleaning ladies.

Incomplete results give

come home to carry the full burden of shopping, cooking, cleaning and child care. Divorce and single motherhood are rising, and abortion remains a common means of birth control.

Although the Communist regime boasted about opening all spheres to women, they had only a token presence in government. Little changed under the reformers, Yeltsin's Cabinet has one woman, the social welfare minister.

Feminism as a social or political movement has not found a foothold in Russia, and Women of Russia does not claim that mantle.

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