

International

Many aspects of '71 tragedy still haunt conscience of Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD, Jan 25: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's declaration to punish those responsible for the 1971 fall of Dhaka is seen as a major change in the government's attitude and its readiness to face facts pushed under the carpet for so long, reports IANS.

There are many aspects of the 1971 tragedy which still haunts the collective conscience of Pakistanis, especially those who had a direct contact with Bengalis or were present in East Pakistan at the time before the province's bloody separation.

Most obscure and least probed is the killing of civilians after the break-out of organised violence there in 1971.

Referring to his Dhaka visit last week, the prime minister said he felt sorry that he had to call Bangladesh "only a friendly country" after having been one country for so long.

"The people who conspired to dismember Pakistan are still enjoying the status of respectable citizens of the country. We have four years to go in the office and the elements that had worked against the solidarity and integrity of the country in the past, and who are still making similar efforts, will be brought to trial," the prime minister pledged.

Drawing linkages between the situation in Karachi for the last few years and the scenario in the then East Pakistan, he said, "The mandate of the peo-

ple was not honoured in 1971. Had power been transferred to the majority party of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the tragic, heart-burning history could have taken a different course."

"The East Pakistan tragedy in 1971 is the least discussed part of the country's history—a blind spot—the causes, the events and the aftermath of the dismemberment of Pakistan have never been allowed to be independently ascertained and disseminated," said Salman Rizvi of a human rights group.

He however finds some basis for hope in the latest pledges made by Sharif, mainly focusing on punishing the culprits whose identification varies depending on which side of the political divide you are.

"The vows of bringing to book those responsible for the secession of East Pakistan may only be political rhetoric to identify himself with the Mohair community of Karachi. All whom the Pakistan Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif blames for the bifurcation of the country are dead," Rizvi says.

Though the reflections on the part of an elected prime minister may not redress the wounds unhealed by time, it may be an indication that he wants to keep at bay such fateful eventualities in future, says a Muslim League. But Sharif's opponents in the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) whom the League blames for the country's division term these as a "cheap

publicity stunt."

"Whom will he punish," asks Riaz Pirzada, a former PPP minister. According to Pirzada, the PML had put blame on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Indira Gandhi in 1971. "Now he is trying to put all on Bhutto just to hit the headlines," says Pirzada.

A few days ago Sharif told MQM workers in Karachi that, like Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League, the mandate given to them by the people of Karachi has also been violated for the past three years.

According to political observers, Pakistan may not be ready as yet to fully face the past and other bitter truths about its past, but the present direction of the political process is qualitatively positive. For example, in his Karachi visit before leaving for Umra, the prime minister was surrounded by sobbing women at the MQM headquarters whose relatives had disappeared during an operation clean-up in Karachi.

He said he was "deeply moved" by the woes of the grieving families. Sharif also pledged to make efforts for the recovery of the men who did not return after disappearing in the operation.

For a change, say analysts, a prime minister is talking straight. What he can actually do to change the complexion of the strife-struck city of Karachi is yet to be seen.

Fate of Bangladeshi children stranded in India hangs in balance

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: The fate of ten Bangladeshi children presently in India is still unknown even after a court ordered their repatriation, reports IANS.

These children were rescued by the police on their way to Gulf countries allegedly for use as camel jockeys.

A Delhi court recently permitted the Indian government to let the Bangladesh government take the children back. The officials of the Bangladesh High Commission in India, however, do not know how many months it will take them to repatriate the children. "It (their repatriation) will take some time, and I have no idea about the duration," said Minister in the Consular Wing, Mohammed Rafiq Alam Khan. The children have already spent more than four months in an alien country.

However, the children, averaging five years of age, do not seem to be bothered about their future. With Indian flags in their hand, they were chanting slogans along with their Indian counterparts in Prayas, an observation home for neglected juveniles here. They have been in the home for the last four months as per court directions.

In September last year, Delhi Police rescued 16 Bangladeshi children from a small room in southern Delhi. They were reportedly en route to Gulf countries to take part in camel races.

After interviewing the children in December, the Bangladesh High Commission had requested that the Indian government repatriate them. The High Commission has in all sought permission for the repatriation of some 100 Bangladeshis, including 50 children, who they say are in different parts of India.

"All the children will be taken in batches as per diplomatic norms and convenience," Khan told IANS.

"India acts as a transit point for their (the children being taken to Gulf nations) destination," Prayas Observation Home manager Ajay Singh said.

According to Singh, hundreds of Bangladeshi children are taken every year to the Gulf countries. "These 10 children are just the tip of an iceberg," he said. The police had worked on a tip-off, rounding up the children and 12 adults (booked under the Foreigners Act for not possessing valid travel documents), who claimed guardianship of one child or another.

After being produced before a Delhi court, they were remanded to the Tihar prison here. Moved by the plight of these children a human rights group called the People's Rights Organisation (PRO) filed a public interest petition. PRO pleaded that these children not be kept in a jail.

US trying to divert attention : Iraq Clinton's aides likely to call for military strike on Iraq

WASHINGTON, Jan 25: US President Bill Clinton's senior national security advisers edged closer Saturday to recommending a military strike against Iraq unless President Saddam Hussein somehow reverses his interference with UN weapons inspectors, well-placed US officials said, reports AP.

The 90-minute meeting at the White House was attended by Secretary of State Madeline Albright, Defence Secretary William Cohen, UN Ambassador Bill Richardson and Sandy Berger, the president's national security adviser. After a brief break, they then huddled with Clinton on Iraq and on preparation for Tuesday's State of the Union address.

Albright, especially, has stressed publicly that further interference by the Iraqi president with the UN weapons inspection commission was unacceptable, and that the allies would be consulted on what to do next.

"We've said again and again we prefer diplomacy, but diplomacy isn't working," one official told The Associated Press. "So at the meeting, all options were put on the table. No decision was taken to do anything at any particular time."

But the officials, who in-

sisted on anonymity, said the administration was edging closer to a military action to force Iraq's compliance. One senior administration official said allies will be consulted about the high likelihood of military action against Iraq in the next few weeks unless Saddam allows full inspections soon.

Richard Butler, who heads the inspection commission, told the UN Security Council in a report Friday that Iraq's insistence on limiting access to suspected sites could prevent completion of the search for hidden Iraqi programmes.

Iraq, Butler said, had engaged in a campaign of "abuse and denigration" of the commission.

Albright, at a news conference Friday, said of the impasse, "This is not something that can last much longer."

Consultation with the allies could be critical to what kind of action against Iraq is taken, since, except for Britain, they have wavered going beyond diplomacy.

Russia, France and China have backed the US in insisting that Iraq permit unfettered inspection but have prevented the adoption of tougher resolutions. The administration, meanwhile, is striving to main-

tain a united front on any moves against Saddam Hussein, diplomatic or military.

If Clinton decides on military action, one of his tasks will be to persuade other leaders that it is based on Saddam Hussein's defiance of the United Nations and what hiding weapons could mean to international stability—and not motivated in any way to distract from the spreading scandal over allegations he had an affair with a former White House intern.

Another report from Baghdad says: The United States may launch an attack against Iraq to divert attention from a sex scandal involving President Bill Clinton, but such a strike is likely to fail, an Iraqi newspaper said Saturday.

Iraqi newspapers carried reports of the affair on the front page, and Babil, a daily newspaper owned by Saddam Hussein's son, Qadafi, devoted an entire issue to the scandal.

To keep the media busy with something other than his sex scandal, the American president may start a foolish military action by attacking Iraq even though the odds are stacked against him if he ever decided to take such a step, the newspaper said.

BRIEFLY

8 civilians, 2 rebels killed in Rwanda:

Eight civilians and two rebels were killed Saturday in an attack carried out by some 300 rebels in Kinigi, near Ruhengeri in the north of Rwanda, the Rwandan news agency ARI said. AFP reports from Kigali.

Citing military sources, it said the rebels were armed with rifles and machetes, some also carried gasoline cans to be used to burn down the local town office.

111 illegal immigrants held in Turkey:

Turkish authorities Saturday were holding 111 illegal immigrants taken into custody overnight in Istanbul after saying they were heading for an unspecified European country via Greece, the Anatolia agency said. AFP reports from Ankara.

Their nationalities were not given some 1,200 illegal immigrants, mostly Iraqi and Turkish Kurds, have arrived in Italy by boat over the past three weeks and Istanbul, Turkey's largest city with 12 million people, is their preferred transit point.

Taxi driver shot dead in Belfast:

A taxi driver has been shot dead in Belfast, witnesses said Saturday. AFP reports from Belfast.

The body of the man was found on a country road in west Belfast. A man whose car was flagged down said that a person present at the scene told him the victim "had been shot five times in the back of the head."

Snow disrupts city life in China:

Unusually heavy snows along sections of the railroad between Beijing and the southern city of Guangzhou have left some 200,000 travellers stranded just as the lunar new year's rush reaches its peak, an official report said Sunday. AP reports from Beijing.

The Railway Ministry deployed an extra 20 trains to help carry passengers stranded at Guangzhou station due to delays caused by snow further north in central Hunan province, the Xinhua News Agency said. The snow forced trains to travel at only 20 kilometres (12 miles) an hour rather than the usual 100 kilometres (62 miles per hour). Some travellers were choosing to travel by train rather than bus due to the weather further straining the railroad's capacity.

Poland-Vatican sign treaty:

President Aleksander Kwasniewski on Saturday signed Poland's long-awaited treaty with the Vatican, blocked by leftists for nearly five years. AP reports from Warsaw.

Sealing of the treaty, or concordat, came as Pope John II—credited with helping bring down Poland's communist rule with visits in 1979 and in the 1980s—visited the still-communist nation of Cuba.

12 killed in Indonesia sea mishap:

A ship overturned in East Kalimantan, killing 12 people, Indonesian newspaper Kompas said Sunday. Two people were still missing, AP reports from Jakarta.

The Rahmat Sejati ship was carrying 53 passengers and three crewmen in a regular trip from Tanah Grogot to Sungai Kandilo, Tanjungbaru, both in the same province, it said.



Iraqi women pray Saturday at the Um al-Toubol Mosque in Baghdad, Iraq. The prayers, organised by the General Federation of Iraqi Women, called for an end to the American threats against their country. — AP/UNB photo

Diana's secy plans to publish book

LONDON, Jan 25: The man who was Princess Diana's private secretary for eight years in planning to publish a book about that eventful time, over the opposition of Queen Elizabeth II, a tabloid reported on Sunday, reports AP.

The newspaper, The Mail on Sunday, said Patrick Jephson had "an astonishing eyewitness account to tell of the making and breaking of the Princess of Wales."

"Unlike her other biographers, who have had to rely almost solely on Diana's version of events, Jephson was there,"

Clinton's latest sex scandal mounts global concern

UNDATED, Jan 25: From despair in Cairo to bafflement in Havana, the latest sex scandal tormenting US President Bill Clinton generated mounting global concern Saturday, reports AP.

A crippled peace initiative, a weakened dollar, even a military strike against Iraq—news media around the world cited them all as potential outcomes of the furor over allegations that Clinton had a sexual relationship with a White House intern and later encouraged her to lie about it.

In Arab capitals, the scandal triggered gloom over its possible meaning for peace in the Middle East. In Cuba, Fidel Castro seemed shocked.

News of the alleged affair with 24-year-old Monica Lewinsky led reports Saturday by the British Broadcasting Corporation, French, Italian

and Japanese newspapers put the story on their front pages.

An editorial in the Palestinian daily Al-Quds lamented the potential impact on Clinton's efforts to coax Israel into withdrawing its troops from a substantial portion of the West Bank. The controversy could give Israel's hard-line government "a new escape hatch," undercutting Clinton's effort to pressure Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, it said.

In Norway, where Israeli and Palestinian leaders signed the 1993 Oslo accords that began the now-stalled drive for peace, the Norwegian news agency NTB said Clinton's presidential duties, "Are completely in the shadow of titillating rumours."

Lebanon's leading newspaper, An-Nahar, said that Clinton's sex scandals have "paralysed and handcuffed him."

Egypt's Al-Ahram newspaper

hinted pro-Israeli plotters were scheming to undermine the president.

Israeli newspapers weren't published Saturday morning due to the Jewish Sabbath, but an editorial in Friday's Jerusalem Post said the domestic scandal would likely have repercussions in distant Jewish settlements in the West Bank—in a case of "the global village gone mad."

During a meeting Friday with US lawmakers visiting Havana, President Fidel Castro sharply criticised the American news media for their treatment of American officials, said US Representative Richard Neal.

"He was absolutely astounded," Neal said Saturday.

In Iraq, where President Saddam Hussein has refused to let UN weapons inspectors enter sensitive sites, a newspaper suggested that Clinton might

launch a military strike to deflect attention from the scandal.

"To keep the media busy with something other than his sex scandal, the American president may start a foolish military action by attacking Iraq," according to an editorial in Babil, a daily newspaper owned by Hussein's son, Qadafi.

Asked Friday whether the United States might be more likely to use force against Iraq as a result of the scandal, US Ambassador Bill Richardson replied bluntly: "I won't even dignify a response to that."

Newspapers in Italy raised the possibility that the scandal—given the moniker "Sexygate" by Turin daily La Stampa—could ultimately drive Clinton from office.

The French press trumpeted the scandal across front pages on Friday. Some editorials were

cynical of American attitudes.

"There are some days when it feels very good to be French," said Sud-Ouest, a leading regional newspaper, noting what it called a "tyranny of the Puritans that sometimes makes the beautiful American democracy resemble a police state."

Japanese media gave page-one play to the controversy, with Nihon Keizai, Japan's largest business daily, blaming it for Friday's drop in the value of the dollar to a two-month low against the yen.

A political cartoon in the Asahi Newspaper portrayed both Clinton and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto engulfed in flames. The fireball consuming Clinton was labeled "scandal" while the flames around Hashimoto read "political reform"—a reference to the Japanese leader's failure to enact promised reforms,



Astronaut David Wolf, centre, greets crew members after opening the hatches between the space shuttle Endeavour and the Russian Space station Mir Saturday, in this image from television. Astronaut Andrew Thomas will replace astronaut David Wolf aboard the space station Mir and is expected to stay there for 4.5 months. Also in picture astronauts Bonnie Dunbar, from left, Mir commander Anatoly Soloviyev, and shuttle commander Terrence Wilcutt, right. — AP/UNB photo

Monica's story — From a life of privilege to a household name

BEVERLY HILLS, California, Jan 25: She enjoyed a life of privilege, growing up in one of America's wealthiest communities as the daughter of a doctor-businessman and a mother with a taste for high living, reports AP.

Monica Lewinsky, 24, now finds herself at the centre of a sex scandal that has rocked the presidency.

"She was a nice young lady," said Rich Makoff, headmaster of a 12,000 dollar-a-year prep school from which Lewinsky graduated in 1991.

Friends and family have closed ranks around the young woman whose name has suddenly become a household word. Her best friend in high school, Natalie Ungvari, was in seclusion.

Lewinsky's parent divorced when she was 14. Her mother, Marcia Lewis, is an author who wrote an unauthorised tell-all book, "The Private Lives of the Three Tenors," about the alleged sex lives of Luciano Pavarotti, Jose Carreras and Placido Domingo. Her father, Dr Bernard Lewinsky, is a Beverly Hills radiologist.

The divorce was nasty, centering on the division of the family's 1.6 million-dollar home and Lewinsky's interest in his three medical clinics.

There also was the custody of Monica and her brother, Michael, four years younger, and unproved allegations of abuse.

Monica Lewinsky attended Beverly Hills High School, a socially and academically competitive campus. She appeared



in school musicals and was named "most likely to get her name in lights" in the Beverly Hills High yearbook.

Makoff would not say why Lewinsky left Beverly Hills High for tiny Pacific Hills School, then called Bel-Air Prep, where she sang in the cho-

rus. After graduation, she briefly attended the two-year Santa Monica College before transferring in 1993 to Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, where she made the dean's list.

She earned a degree in psychology in May 1995 and moved to Washington, where her mother was living in the Watergate complex overlooking the Potomac River.

Democratic Party donor Walter Kaye got her the White House job after first trying to set her up at the Democratic National Committee, where there were no openings. The New York Times reported Friday, Kaye, a retired New York insurance executive who also has given money to defence funds for Clinton and for the president's former business partner, Susan McDougal, was a friend of Lewinsky's mother, the Times said.

When Lewinsky was questioned by FBI agents at a hotel near the Pentagon on January 16, she summoned her mother in New York for help.

For now, Lewinsky remains secluded in the family's apartment at the Watergate, the luxury hotel and apartment building that was the scene of the break-in that eventually ended Richard Nixon's presidency.

8 killed in bomb attack on Lanka's holiest temple

COLOMBO, Jan 25: Separatist suicide bombers crashed through the gate of Sri Lanka's holiest Buddhist temple Sunday, setting off a truck bomb that killed eight people, the military and police said, reports AP.

No one claimed responsibility for the bombing in Kandy, 135 kilometres west of Colombo. A Ministry of Defence spokesman blamed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the main group fighting to carve an ethnic Tamil homeland out of this Indian Ocean island. Suicide truck bombings are a Tiger hallmark.

Vitana, the defence spokesman, said the bombers fired at troops manning road blocks as they approached the temple in a truck. The truck crashed through the temple's gate and exploded at 6:10 am, he said. Witnesses heard two blasts.

The rebels were among the eight dead, police said.

At least 20 other people, including a Buddhist monk and three police women, were injured, hospital officials said on

condition of anonymity. There were fears ethnic clashes would be sparked by the attack on the Temple of the Tooth, which houses what Buddhists believe in a tooth of Buddha. The militants among Sri Lanka's ethnic Tamils accuse the majority Sinhalese, who are predominately Buddhist, of sometimes brutal discrimination against the Tamil minority, who are Hindus.

The military deployed extra troops in Colombo, and Minister of Cultural Affairs Lakshman Jayakody appeared live on state television to appeal for calm.

"There is no need to get upset since the tooth has not been harmed," Jayakody said within hours of the blast.

The temple's roof was damaged, defence spokesman Col RP Vitana said, but the blast did not damage the inner shrine where the tooth is kept.

Hours after the blast, thousands of angry Sinhalese gathered outside the temple, shouting anti-Tamil slogans.

Indian Muslims won't face danger under BJP govt

NEW DELHI, Jan 25: Hindu nationalists making their strongest bid for power in India, hit back today over charges by the rival Congress Party that they were pursuing a "fascist" agenda, reports AP.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) denied that it admired Hitler and claimed that the Muslims, the country's largest minority, would face no danger under a BJP government.

"The Congress has lost its bearings," said BJP Vice-President Krishan Lal Sharma, "they are speaking in complete frustration."

"On Saturday the once-dominant Congress branded the Hindu nationalist BJP, its main rival in coming national elections, as 'fascist' and compared it with Hitler's Nazis."

In its election manifesto, the Congress said the "ugly fascist face" of the nationalists and their backers had not been "adequately appreciated and exposed."

It said the BJP—one of India's best-organised parties—was behaving like Germany's Nazi Party in the 1920s and 1930s by "manipulating democracy to subvert it finally."

The BJP's Sharma said the Congress accusations betrayed its own fascist streak. "In a democratic country, when the voters have voted a party as the

largest single party, to call such a party Nazis and fascists only shows the fascist mentality of the Congress."

"We are going to crush this mentality in this election," the Congress on Saturday also apologised for failing to prevent the destruction of a 16th-century mosque in the northern Indian town of Ayodhya in December 1992 by hordes of Hindus allied to the BJP.

The incident sparked nationwide violence which claimed some 2,000 lives.

The BJP, however, said today that Muslims would not be swayed by the Congress apology, and claimed that the community was for the first time "looking towards the BJP in the coming election."

Lymaraina new Miss India

MUMBAI, Jan 25: Nineteen-year-old Lymaraina won the coveted Miss India-Universe crown at the Femina Miss India Contest held here Saturday night, reports PTI.

Twenty-two-year-old Annie won the Miss India-World and 21-year-old Vitika won the Miss India-Asia-Pacific at a glittering contest.



Former Miss India Manpreet Brar, left, laughs as American supermodel Cindy Crawford tackles a question on her personal life during a press conference in Bombay Saturday. The supermodel is in Bombay to promote Omega watches — AP/UNB photo