

Pak SC puts off hearing on petition challenging military coup

ISLAMABAD, Jan 31: Pakistan's Supreme Court today put off for a month a hearing on a petition challenging the military coup that ousted elected prime minister Nawaz Sharif, court officials said, reports AFP.

A seven-member panel of judges presided over by the newly appointed Chief Justice, Irfan Hasan Khan, adjourned the case until March 1 on the request of the petitioners.

Lawyers for Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League party and other individual petitioners said they wanted time to prepare a rejoinder to a written document submitted to the court by the military-led government last week.

The lengthy document traces the events leading to the October 12 military takeover, blaming Sharif for misrule, authoritarianism and plundering na-

tional resources.

Irfan Hasan Khan was appointed Chief Justice last week after his predecessor, Saeed uz Zaman, and other senior judges refused to take an oath of allegiance to General Pervez Musharraf's regime.

The move has been slammed as a step towards dictatorship.

The regime has responded by claiming that the independence of the judiciary remains intact.

Two days after seizing power in the October 12 coup, Musharraf suspended the constitution and passed an order, Provisional Constitution Order Number one, preventing the courts from challenging his rule.

Sharif is currently on trial at an anti-terrorist court in Karachi on charges of kidnapping, attempted murder, hijacking and terrorism arising from events on the night of the coup.

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BRIFFLY

9 killed as buses collide in S Africa:

Nine people were killed and 33 injured yesterday in an accident involving two passenger buses outside the town of Beaufort West in South Africa's Western Cape province, police said, AFP reports from Cape Town.

Around 25 adults and eight children were taken to hospital, police told public SABC radio. The injured were reported to be in a stable condition.

Rebels free 3 in Philippines:

Suspected Muslim rebels have freed a bus driver and two other employees who were taken hostage after their vehicle was robbed and burned last week, officials said Monday, AP reports from Zamboanga.

The driver, his assistant and ticket collector were released unharmed on Sunday in a remote village, military spokesman Maj. Salih Indanan said.

Barak leaves Cairo:

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak left Cairo for home yesterday after a four-hour visit to discuss progress in Middle East peace negotiations with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, airport sources said, Reuters reports from Cairo.

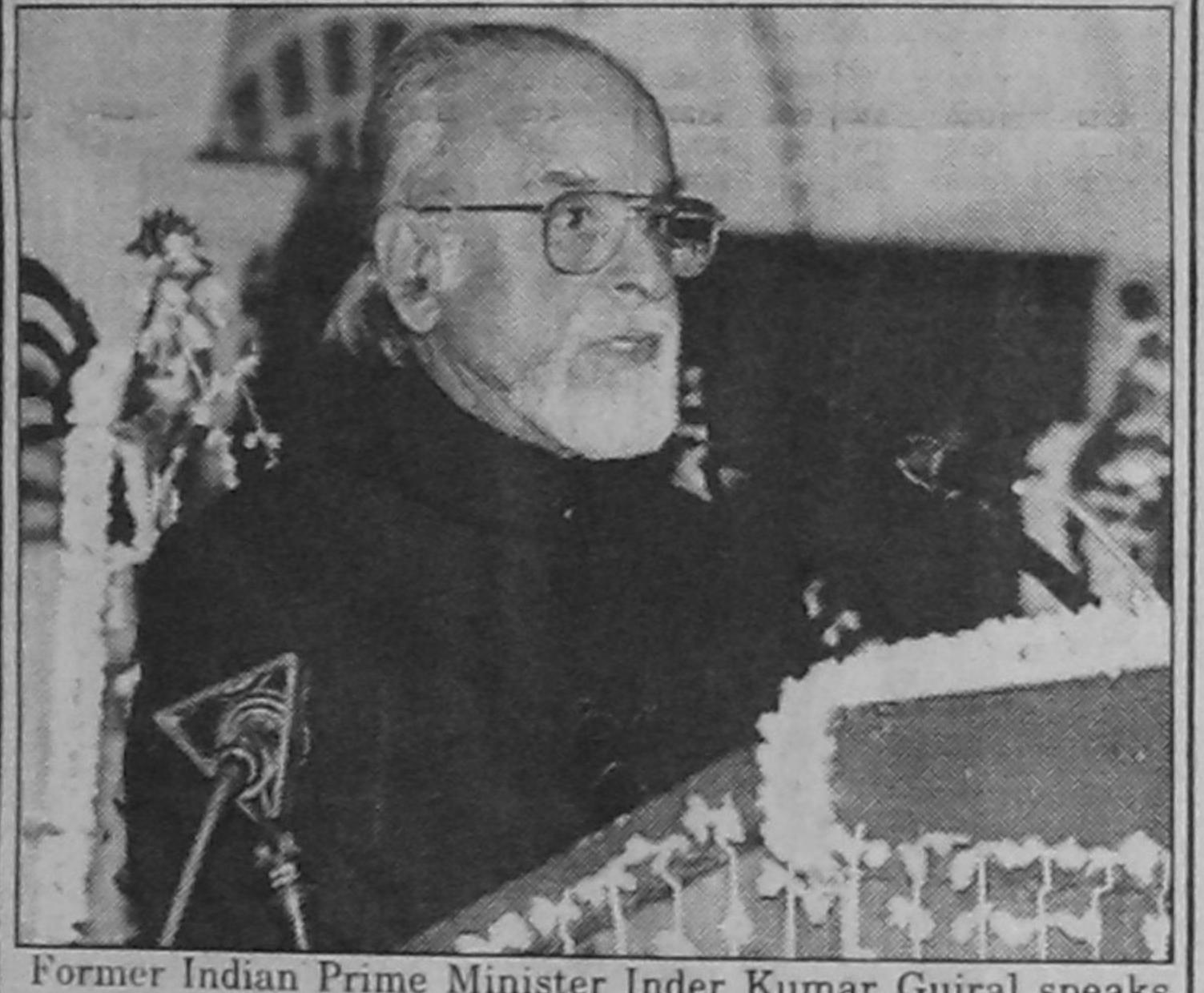
Barak said at a joint news conference earlier with Mubarak that there should be no preconditions to further Israeli-Syrian peace talks, which began in December after a four-year gap.

ROK official to visit China:

A high-ranking South Korean diplomat will visit China this week for a review of relations between the two countries, Seoul's Foreign Ministry said Monday, AP reports from Seoul.

During a three-day visit starting on Wednesday, Assistant Foreign Minister Chang Jai-ryong will meet his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, it said.

The visit comes amid a diplomatic row between the two countries over China's recent deportation of seven North Koreans who UN officials said could face severe reprisals in their own country.



Former Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral speaks Sunday at a meeting in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo to mark the 55th birthday of moderate Tamil legislator Neelan Thiruchelvam, who was assassinated in a suicide bomb attack on July 29, 1999. Gujral called for greater cooperation among South Asian nations to end mistrust for mutual benefit in the region.

— AFP photo

Employment Notice

Appointments in the undermentioned posts will be made in the Greater Dhaka Transport Planning and Co-ordination Board (GDTPCB) on purely temporary basis. Applications are invited from interested Bangladeshi citizens for appointment.

Sl No	Name of post	Number of posts	Educational and other qualifications	Age	Gross salary and allowances as per PCP (From Sl No 1 to 3)
1.	Chartered Accountant	1	CA passed and should have 5 years practical experience. It is essential to be aware of the rules and regulations of accounts of World Bank aided development project. Practical experience of computerised accounts in preparing statement is desirable.	Maximum 40 years	30,000/- (contract basis)
2.	Operation Officer (Finance and Accounts)	1	M Com (Accounts) and CA Intermediate three years practical experience or MBA with five years experience. Should have practical experience of computerised accounts and preparing statement. Male/female candidates with practical experience of work in any World Bank financial project will be given preference.	Maximum 35 years	15,000/- (contract basis)
3.	Operation Officer (Computer)	1	M Com (Accounting)/MBA, five years practical experience. Candidates must have efficiency in preparing computerised accounts. Male/female candidates with diploma in computer and with experience of work in any World Bank aided project will be given preference.	Maximum 35 years	15,000/- (contract basis)
4.	Assistant Engineer/Sub-Divisional Engineer	3	At least 2nd class in Civil/Mechanical Engineering degree. Should have at least 3 years practical experience as an Assistant Engineer for the post of Sub-Divisional Engineer.	Maximum 30 years	National Pay Scale and gross salary (Sl No 4 to 7) Asst Engr 6435/- (4300-7740) Sub-Division Engr 10,640/- (7200-10,840)
5.	Estimator/Sub-Divisional Engineer	1	Should have at least 2nd class diploma from any Polytechnic Institute in Civil Engineering.	Maximum 30 years	5300/- (3400-6625)
6.	Stenographer	5	At least two years experience as Stenographer with HSC passed, at least in 2nd division. Preference will be given to candidates with knowledge of MS Word in computer. Female can also apply.	Maximum 30 years	3575/- (2250-4735)
7.	Computer Operator	16	At least two years practical experience in computer work with HSC at least 2nd division. Female can also apply.	Maximum 30 years	3350/- (2100-4315)

Candidates will have to reach the application by 10.02.2000 to the Executive Director, GDTPCB, Nagar Bhaban, 13th floor, Dhaka by mentioning the name of the candidate, father's/husband's name, age, permanent address, present address, attested copies of all educational qualifications and attested photocopies of citizenship, character certificates and experience certificate two copies of attested recent passport size photographs.

Executive Director
GDTPCB

Nagar Bhaban, 13th floor, Dhaka

DFP-1742-26/1

G-173



Firemen carry a crash survivor from a boat early yesterday in Abidjan after a Kenya Airlines plane carrying some 170 passengers crashed off Cote d'Ivoire late Sunday, minutes after taking off from Abidjan's airport. At least 10 survivors were found according to the search and rescue team.

— AFP photo

Basu flays centre for bid to amend constitution

CALCUTTA, Jan 31: West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu yesterday strongly criticised the BJP-led NDA government at centre for its effort to amend the constitution, saying it would result in a division in society along religious lines, reports BSS.

While stating that there were 'some laws' in the constitution, Basu said, 'their aim is to change the basic ideals like secularism enshrined in the constitution. If they succeed, society would be divided along religious lines.'

The veteran Marxist leader said the NDA government's policies had given rise to 'minority communalism' and fundamentalist organisations were now trying to foment trouble in the country.

'Jerusalem could be shared with Palestinians'

JERUSALEM, Jan 31: A top Israeli government official suggested Sunday that Jerusalem could be shared with the Palestinians, the first time Israel has indicated willingness to compromise on one of the thorniest issues keeping the sides from concluding a permanent peace agreement, reports AP.

Deputy Defence Minister Ephraim Sneh, who often speaks for Prime Minister Ehud Barak, said Jerusalem's municipal boundaries could be expanded to accommodate Palestinian aspirations for a presence in the city.

Palestinians and Israelis have committed to a final peace agreement before year's end and launched marathon talks Sunday to meet a February 13 deadline for an outline of the agreement.

dominated areas.

Israeli officials have recently suggested that the Palestinians could establish a capital in three Arab suburbs east of Jerusalem, but this was the first time a senior government official offered to include the suburbs in an expanded 'shared' Jerusalem.

That could allow the Palestinians to administer parts of the city where Arabs still predominate. The Palestinian Authority has built a large building in one of the West Bank suburbs of the city, Abu Dis, which could function as a parliament in a Palestinian capital.

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Albright in Moscow to size up Putin govt

MOSCOW, Jan 31: Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said that Russia's acting president is 'riding a tiger' by pushing a military offensive against rebels in Chechnya, reports AP.

'There is no question the war is popular,' Albright told reporters as she flew to Moscow on Sunday to size up Vladimir Putin and push arms control.

But Albright noted that casualties are mounting and said Russia faces more isolation in the international arena as the war drags on.

'They have to hear over and over again that this is not working for them,' Albright said.

She said she was 'hoping to have a meaty session' with Putin when they get together this week.

Persistent US appeals to Russian leaders to end the conflict and negotiate with the Chechnya separatists have failed. Albright did not predict success this time, either, and she ruled out US economic sanctions if persuasion does not work.

In what could turn out to be a tradeoff, Albright was ready to discuss sharp cuts in US and Russian long-range nuclear arsenals while urging Putin to approve 'modest adjustments' in

a ban on missile defences.

Just before landing in Moscow, she said talk of such a tradeoff is 'hypothetical.'

A deal would make it easier for the Clinton administration to go forward with a 6.6-billion-dollar plan for a defence against missiles fired from Iran, North Korea or other countries in the United States.

Before taking off, Albright warned in a speech to the World Economic Forum that 'economic anxieties' in countries with democratically elected governments were prompting the people to turn to authoritarianism and other failed remedies.

She said life in parts of the former Soviet Union often is tougher for ordinary people than when Communists ruled.

A majority of citizens in these countries have come to equate democracy with inequality, insecurity and the unraveling of the social fabric,' she said. 'We are concerned that in many countries, the arrival of electoral democracy has been accompanied by economic expectations that are, as yet, unfulfilled.'

Her scheduled meeting with Putin will be the first by a top-ranked US official since Boris Yeltsin quit as president New

Year's Eve and named the former KGB domestic intelligence chief as his successor. Elections are due in three months.

Albright 'wants to get a firsthand assessment of how he intends to operate now that he's the acting president, which brings additional responsibilities,' the State Department spokesman James P. Rubin said.

Albright has described him as a leading reformer, but also said the administration was not 'starry-eyed' about Russia's future.

Russia has registered its opposition to missile defense systems as potentially fueling a race to develop more powerful nuclear weapons to overcome them.

A 1972 US-Russia treaty bans missile defenses, but the Clinton administration wants to make changes in it to go ahead with its programme.

At the same time, Russia wants to go further than the United States has proposed in cutting nuclear missile stockpiles.

Albright intends to renew a US pitch that the Russian parliament ratify the 1993 START II treaty, which calls for reducing the US and Russian arsenals of long-range nuclear warheads to 3,000 to 3,500 apiece.

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Circumcision may protect men from AIDS virus

SAN FRANCISCO, Jan 31: Circumcision may somehow protect men from sexual transmission of the AIDS virus, researchers said on Sunday, but they admitted they do not have a clue why, reports Reuters.

A study in Uganda aimed at examining how couples infect one another found two things seemed to protect people — being older and being circumcised.

'Acquisition of HIV did not occur in any of the circumcised men,' Dr Thomas Quinn of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, who led the study, told the 7th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, a meeting of AIDS researchers.

'Age, independent of viral load, appeared to have a protective effect,' Quinn added. The

highest transmission rate was in people 15 to 29 years old.

Quinn's team, working with 15,000 people in the Rakai district of Uganda, also found that people did not pass on the virus to their partners if they had a naturally low level of HIV in the blood — in this case, 1,500 copies according to standard measures.

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The protesters claimed the film 'tarnished' Hindu traditions and depicted a torrid inter-caste love affair, the Times of India said.

'Water' is the final part of Mehta's film trilogy about India, which has been dogged by controversy from the start.

The first film in the series, 'Fire,' attracted attacks on movie theatres by right-wing Hindus outraged by the film's portrayal of a lesbian relationship.

Describing the latest protests as 'heart breaking,' and angry Mehta slammed the Information and Broadcasting Ministry, saying it was changing tack after initially clearing her script without any deletions.

Although the script of 'water' is a closely guarded secret,

Briton, 5 Latvians convicted in Purulia arms drop case

CALCUTTA, Jan 31: A British arms dealer and five Latvians were convicted today in an arms smuggling case and face a possible death penalty. reports AP.

Judge PK Biswas said he would announce the sentences on February 2 after hearing arguments from both sides.

He convicted the six on charges of waging war against India through procuring and bringing arms into the country as part of an international conspiracy.

'We are going to appeal against the judgment,' said Peter Bleach, the arms dealer, outside the court room.

His Latvian co-defendant Igor Timmerman said: 'We are dis-

appointed.'

Biswas acquitted the seventh defendant, Vinay Singh, an Indian. He said the prosecution had failed to prove conspiracy charges against him.

The six already have spent four years in jail since they were arrested after allegedly parachuting crates of weapons from a cargo plane onto a field in eastern India.

The prosecution claimed the assault rifles, rocket launchers, grenades and missiles were intended for an anti-communist religious group in West Bengal, a state with a communist government.

Indian air force jets intercepted the cargo plane in De-

ember 1995, a week after the weapons were dropped, when the plane made its return to Europe. The man who allegedly organised the delivery escaped.

Blach and the Latvian crew, Alexandre Klinchine, Oleg Gaidach, Igor Timmerman, Eugueni Antimko and Igor Noskovitkin, heard the judge pronounce them guilty after a trial lasting nearly three years.

Some reports have said that the group, known as Ananda Marg, may have been a conduit to rebels in neighbouring Myanmar. The Ananda Marg had denied it was the intended recipient. The Indian acquitted by the court belonged to the