

International

Australia threatens new sanctions against Fiji

Mahendra Chaudhury calls for referendum to end crisis

SUVA, July 23: Deposed prime minister Mahendra Chaudhury called Sunday for a UN-sponsored referendum in Fiji to gauge support for the return of his government, which was ousted by a nationalist coup, reports AP.

Chaudhury, who spent 56 days as a hostage of coup rebels, said a referendum would offer Fijians the choice of returning to democratic rule and ending the "absolute confusion and chaos" caused by the nine-week political crisis.

Fiji has been without an effective government since the military, which took control during the coup, handed power to president Ratu Josefa Iloilo under a deal with the rebels to secure the release of the last 18 political hostages on July 13.

The deal scraps Fiji's multi-racial constitution and promises that the large and economically powerful ethnic Indian minority will be stripped of political power.

Chaudhury did not give details of his referendum plan, nor did he say he would approach the United Nations about it.

But the plan is unlikely to be taken up by Iloilo, and was rejected outright by coup leader George Speight.

"The horse has already bolted," Speight told The Sunday Times newspaper.

Meetings between representatives of Iloilo, Speight's group and

top police officers continued during the weekend in an effort to decide a new Cabinet lineup.

Iloilo failed to swear in his Cabinet last week after warnings from Speight that his supporters would renew a campaign of civil unrest if the government was not stacked with his candidates.

Iloilo, a frail 80-year-old tribal chief with Parkinson's disease, has promised to appoint an indigenous Fijian as prime minister.

But the talks appear to be devolving into a power struggle between Fiji's tribal chiefs, with Speight choosing one candidate for prime minister then dumping him in favour of another.

Speight's lieutenant said his choice of prime minister was now Adi Samanuni Cakobau, Fiji's high commissioner to Malaysia and the granddaughter of one of Fiji's most powerful historical figures, Ratu Seru Cakobau, who was regarded as the king of all Fiji's tribes in the 19th century.

Cakobau has not spoken publicly about the coup, but is believed to support Fijian political supremacy.

Speight, a failed businessman, led an armed gang into Parliament on May 19 and took dozens of lawmakers hostage, including Chaudhury, in the name of ethnic Fijian rights.

Ethnic Indians make up 44 per cent of the 814,000 population but dominate the economy in the nations of 320 islands about

3,620 kilometers (2,250 miles) northeast of Sydney, Australia.

Promises of special treatment for ethnic Fijians and the destruction of democracy have led Australia, New Zealand, Britain, the United States and France to impose limited sanctions.

Civil disturbances, including the attempted takeover of a military checkpoint on Friday night, had abated by Sunday, normally a church day in the devoutly Christian nation.

But rebel supporters still have control of a military barracks and the country's main power station. The rebels say they won't surrender their weapons until the new government is announced, and approved by Speight.

A Reuters report from Sydney adds: Australia today threatened new sanctions against Fiji if nationalist rebels gain more control in a new government in the racially split South Pacific nation.

Rebels led by failed businessman George Speight have warned of fresh unrest unless Fiji's leaders quickly sack military-backed Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase and replace him with their candidate to end a nine-week political crisis.

"If Speight became a member of the new cabinet, I think frankly Australia, New Zealand, Britain, the United States, Japan and others would have to review the measures we've already taken

towards Fiji," Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said.

"Frankly it would be completely unacceptable for a terrorist to form part of a government. We couldn't have any part of dealing with a country that include terrorists in its government," he told Channel Nine television.

Australia, New Zealand and Britain have instituted sanctions covering diplomatic and defence ties, aid and sporting contacts, although have stopped short of wide-ranging trade sanctions after the crisis battered Fiji's tourism and sugar based economy.

But Downer warned that could change and harsher measures could be in store for Fiji, which was suspended from the Commonwealth grouping of mainly former British colonies for 10 years after two racially-charged coups in 1987.

"... If Fiji doesn't move back towards democracy within two years, then I think it's likely Fiji will be expelled altogether from the Commonwealth," Downer said.

"What is acceptable to us is that there be a democratically elected government in Fiji in the first place, and ... the last thing the authorities in Fiji ... should do is to concede to the demands of Speight," he said.

Indian law minister forced to resign

NEW DELHI, July 23: Indian Law Minister Ram Jethmalani has been forced to resign after a heated war of words with the Supreme Court over the prosecution of a right-wing Hindu leader on riot charges, reports AFP.

The law minister tendered his resignation on Saturday. It was accepted and passed on to the president for approval, a spokesman at Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's office said today.

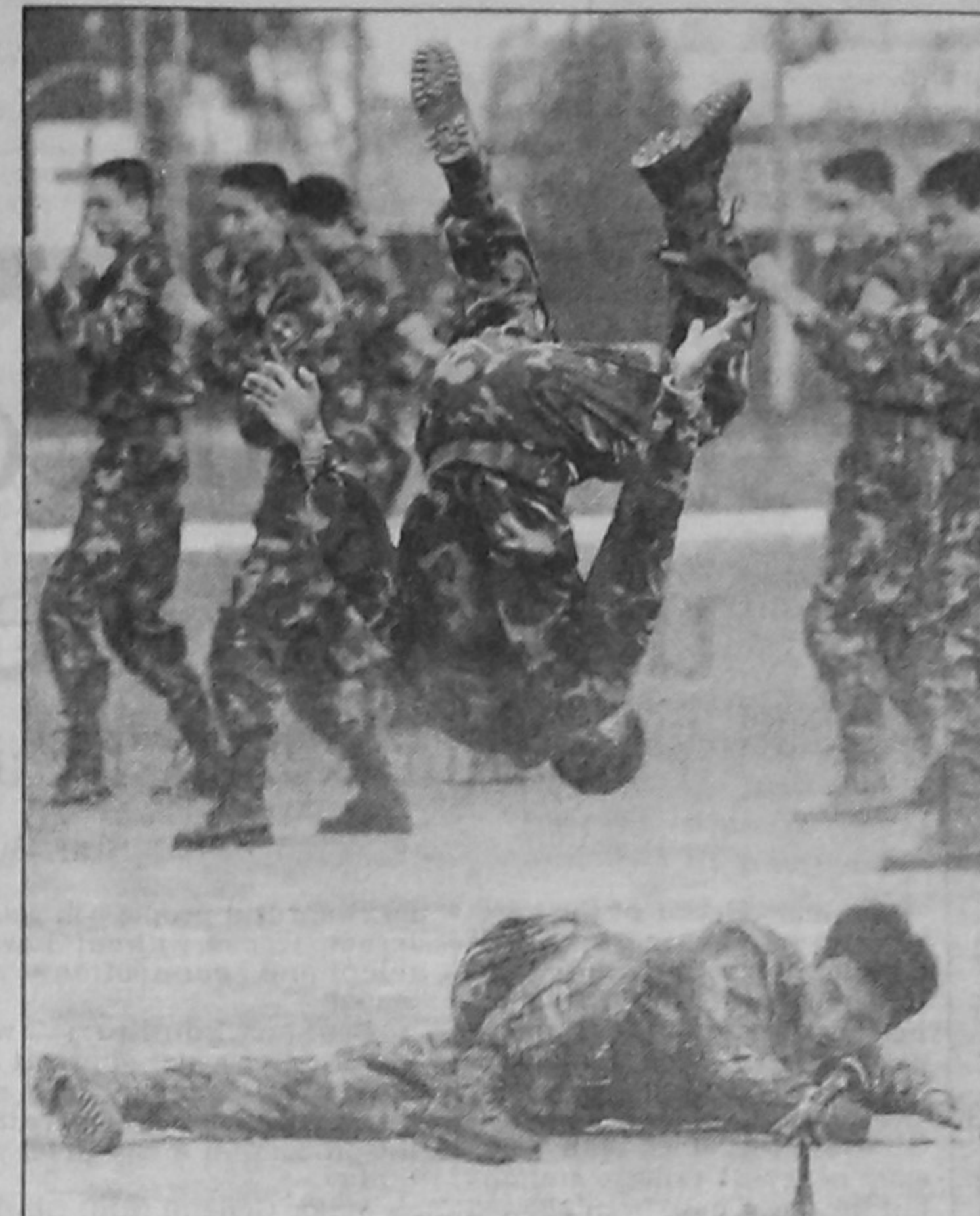
Press reports suggested that Vajpayee had called on Jethmalani to resign to avoid embroiling the government in a growing row between the minister and the Supreme Court over how to proceed with the possible prosecution of Bal Thackeray, fire-brand leader of the militant Hindu Shiv Sena party.

Thackeray faces charges of writing inflammatory editorials during 1992-93 Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay that left more than 1,000 dead.

While the government has stated it has no role to play in a prosecution process initiated by the western state of Maharashtra of which Bombay is the capital, Jethmalani has argued that New Delhi has the right to intervene.

The Supreme Court on Friday angrily criticised the government, causing Jethmalani to snap back that judges should beware making remarks about a minister "who knows his law as well as anyone else."

Fearing a damaging public slanging match, Vajpayee reportedly intervened and called on Jethmalani to resign.



Members of the elite Chinese Special Police Unit show off their skills in martial arts during a demonstration at the police training academy in Beijing, 19 July. The elite unit is specially trained to handle various situations from riot control to hostage taking and airlines hijacking. —AFP photo

India, China hope to open new chapter of ties

NEW DELHI, July 23: China and India appear to have finally buried the hatchet on India's nuclear tests, and now hope to open a new chapter on bilateral ties by accelerating efforts to resolve their touchy border dispute, reports AFP.

While no major initiative emerged from Chinese Foreign Ministry Tang Jiaxuan's one-day visit on Saturday, the tone was clearly one of moving along a relationship dogged by decades of mutual mistrust and cold war tensions.

Tang, the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit since India's May, 1998 nuclear tests, also took the opportunity to try and allay concerns over China's military cooperation with Pakistan.

"China stressed that the relationship with Pakistan was a normal, bilateral, sovereign relationship and not directed against any country, particularly India," Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh said after his talks with Tang.

China's transfer and sale of missile technology to Pakistan has long been a source of serious concern to New Delhi, as well as Washington.

Differences on this issue are high on the agenda of the joint security dialogue inaugurated in March at Beijing, as a result of their meeting, the two ministers agreed to upgrade the level of the dialogue.

The two sides also announced the resumption of high-level military exchanges, with reciprocal visits by military chiefs of staff in the pipeline.

Tang also met with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, before flying to Pakistan Saturday evening for talks with the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf.

On their long-running border issue, the two foreign ministers agreed to "increase the frequency" of meetings of the joint expert group charged with resolving the issue.

13 civilians killed in Philippines

CAGAYAN DE ORO, Philippines, July 23: About 20 heavily armed Muslim rebels ambushed a truck transporting civilians in the southern Philippines and killed 13 people, including three women and a 2-year-old boy, military officials said Sunday. Fourteen others were wounded, reports AP.

Most of those killed were Christians, army 4th infantry division spokesman Maj Johnny Macanas said.

The truck, owned by Maranao Planters Inc., was carrying company workers and their families when it was ambushed Saturday afternoon, Macanas said.

He said survivors identified the attackers as members of the rebel Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). The rebels apparently had escaped from recent government assaults on nearby MILF camps, including Camp Abubakar, the guerrilla headquarters, Macanas said.

Government troops have seized most of the MILF's camps since launching an offensive against the rebels in March.

MILF spokesman Eid Kabalu denied the rebels were responsible for Saturday's attack and called the accusation "black propaganda."

"The incident actually was perpetrated by people who had a grudge with the company's owners and a group of people in the area," he told ABS-CBN television.

The attack, in a remote village in Balabagan in Lanao del Sur province, was the second massacre in the province in a week blamed on the MILF.

Last Sunday, about 100 suspected MILF guerrillas killed 21 Christians, including a pregnant woman, inside a mosque in the remote farming village of Somogot in Bumbaran, also in Lanao del Sur.

The military operations have triggered the worst fighting in Mindanao since the height of the Muslim insurgency in the 1970s.

The MILF is the larger of two groups fighting for an independent Islamic state in the impoverished southern Philippines. The smaller and more extreme Abu Sayyaf is holding about 31 hostages, including about a dozen foreigners, on Jolo island at the country's southern tip.

'Pak-China ties not aimed at India'

NEW DELHI, July 23: China yesterday categorically assured India that its military ties with Pakistan were in no way aimed at New Delhi even as the two sides decided to expedite the process of delineation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the middle sector along the Sino-Indian border in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, reports PTI.

"It has been re-emphasised by the Chinese side that the relationship with Pakistan is normal, bilateral and sovereign one and not directed towards any country, specially India," External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh told reporters after wide-ranging discussions with his visit in Chinese counterpart Tang Jiaxuan.

Tang who also met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, said the momentum of negotiations with New Delhi on clarification on delineation of LAC had to be stepped and "a beginning made somewhere".

He said the two sides had agreed to intensify efforts on resolving the LAC issue in the middle sector.

Tang is the first high-ranking Chinese leader to visit India since relations between the two countries came under strain in the wake of May 1998 Pokharan nuclear test.

Later, briefing reporters on the Singh-Tang parleys, a foreign office spokesman said China endorsed India's suggestion for expediting the clarifications regarding LAC that could lead ultimately to the resolution of the vexed border issue.

The two sides also agreed to enhance confidence-building measures within the framework of the existing agreements and treaties of 1993 and 1996.

Army official shot dead in Colombia

BOGOTA, July 23: Colombian Army colonel Oscar Trujillo was shot dead at point-blank range Saturday in front of his wife and daughter, a top military official said, reports AFP.

Fourth Army Division commander General Carlos Ospina said Trujillo, who was in charge of the Velez battalion, was on vacation in Rivera, Huila province, with his family when two unidentified gunmen carried out the attack.

The murdered colonel and his wife were attending a social event where their daughter was participating in a children's beauty contest, according to the army chief.

Ospina said accounts by witnesses suggested the killers were members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the country's leading guerrilla group.

Two people approached him and shot him at point blank then, taking advantage of the confusion, got onto a motorbike and fled, Ospina said.

Syria calls for active UN role on Arab land claims

DAMASCUS, July 23: Syria asked the United Nations today to take a more active role in the Middle East to restore land occupied by Israel to Lebanon, Syria and the Palestinians, reports AFP.

"The United Nations must step up its role not only in Lebanon to put an end to Israeli incursions in the south, but also with regard to Syria and the Palestinian people in enforcing resolutions that forbid the acquisition of other people's territory by war," the government newspaper Tishrin said.



US President Bill Clinton (L), his daughter Chelsea (C) and Russian President Vladimir Putin (R) applaud after a concert at the Grand Castle hotel in Naha town, Okinawa, on Saturday. —AFP Photo.

New moon around Jupiter discovered

TUCSON, Arizona, July 23: Astronomers at the University of Arizona and their Massachusetts colleagues say they have found a 17 moon orbiting Jupiter, reports AP.

If confirmed, the 3-mile-diameter (4.8-kilometre-diameter) moon would be the smallest known satellite of a major planet and the first Jovian moon discovered in 21 years.

"It's exciting. When you realise that you were the first person to lay eyes on something that had not been seen before, that's kind of a good feeling," University of Arizona astronomer Jeff Larsen, who made the first observations of the moon in October, said in Saturday's Arizona Daily Star.

Larsen works with the university's Spacewatch project, which uses a 79-year-old Kitt Peak telescope to survey the solar system for comets and asteroids.

The group usually avoids the region around Jupiter because the solar system's largest planet is bright, and reflected light can swamp the telescope's sensitive electronic detectors. But last October, Spacewatch observer Jim Scotti started a search for undiscovered Jovian moons.

When Jupiter was less than 370 million miles (595 million kilometres) from Earth, about as close to our planet as it gets during its 12-year journey around the sun, the observers found what appeared to be a tiny moon.

The group contacted the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and scientists there analyzed the data and reached the same conclusion.

The search was spurred by the May 1999 discovery of an 18 moon circling Uranus. That find was made by another University of Arizona researcher, Erich Karkoschka, who reviewed 13-year-old pictures from the Voyager 2 spacecraft.

"That's what motivated Jim to say, hey, let's go back and look again," Larsen said from the Spacewatch telescope on Kitt Peak, 55 miles (88 kilometres) southwest of Tucson.

For now, the object is designated S/1999 J1. If follow-up observations confirm it is a moon, S/1999 J1 will get a name.

At 3 miles (4.8 kilometres) in diameter, it would be the smallest moon. Among Jupiter's 16 confirmed satellites, half are smaller

than 32 miles (50 kilometres) in diameter. Mars has the smallest confirmed moon, Deimos, which is about 7.5 miles (12 kilometres) in diameter. Earth's moon is 2,160 miles (3,475 kilometres) in diameter by comparison.

Jupiter and its moons are currently too close to the sun to allow follow-up observations immediately, but they should be accessible within the next couple months, said University of Arizona planetary scientist Robert S. McMillan, principal investigator of Spacewatch.

S/1999 J1 belongs to a subgroup of outer satellites that travel around Jupiter in irregular orbits, he said. Those outer moons believed to be captured asteroids or comets take about two years to complete an orbit, and they are an average distance of 15 million miles (24 million kilometres) from Jupiter.

The last outer moon of Jupiter was discovered by Charles Kowal in 1974 and named Leda. In 1979, the Voyager mission uncovered three new inner satellites of Jupiter, Adrastea, Metis and Thebe.

Israel, India talk selling Phalcon radar

TEL AVIV, July 23: Israel is in talks to sell two Phalcon radar systems worth \$500 million to India, although any deal will require US approval, an Israeli defence official said today, reports Reuters.

"We have been talking," the official said. "They want our product. But Prime Minister Ehud Barak is going to have to get some kind of okay from the US administration. India is another sensitive country."

The United States imposed economic sanctions on India after New Delhi carried out a series of nuclear tests in 1998. Its neighbour Pakistan followed with a nuclear device blast just weeks later.

Hamas founder offer Israel truce

GAZA, July 23: The founder of the militant Palestinian Hamas movement said today he would forge a truce with Israel if it withdrew completely from the Gaza Strip and West Bank, including Arab East Jerusalem, reports Reuters.

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin who made a similar offer three years ago laid out his terms amid reports from a US Middle East peace summit that Israel's Ehud Barak was willing to give Palestinians more than 90 per cent of the West Bank and consider sharing sovereignty in East Jerusalem areas.

"If the Israelis agree to have a truce in return for them ceding the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem we are ready to do it," he told Reuters when asked if he would consider a ceasefire.

But he imposed conditions Israel has so far rejected and insisted Hamas would never recognise Israel.

Yassin, whose movement has carried out suicide car bombings that have killed scores of Israelis, said any truce would be conditional on Israel's recognising the right of Palestinian refugees to return and the removal of Jewish settlements.

Pak cabinet may okay radical overhaul of political system

KARACHI, July 23: Pakistan's cabinet this week is expected to approve a radical overhaul of the political system designed to change centuries of feudal culture by empowering women and the down-trodden, reports AFP.

The plan, prepared by the military government's National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB), aims to devolve power from the central government to the village through district assemblies and community councils.

It is the showcase reform of military ruler General Pervez Musharraf, who seized power in a coup last October vowing to bring genuine, grassroots democracy to a country wracked by endemic political turmoil.

His plan, if successful, will give unprecedented power to women, who will have 33 per cent representation in the new district assemblies and 50 per cent in the union, or village, councils.

People who have traditionally lived under the patronage and manipulation of wealthy landholders will be given access to the decision-making process for the first time.

Independent analysts welcome the plan but say history is not on its side.

"The proposed plan is highly ambitious in a country where the political process has been halted after every two or three years," said senior Pakistani journalist M H Askari.

Since its violent split from India and the British empire in 1947,

Pakistan has been riddled with political assassinations, bitter dynastic feuds and no fewer than four military coups.

But in the countryside, where almost 70 per cent of Pakistan's wealth is produced, village life has stuck with its own systems of power and influence, apparently oblivious to the high-stakes politics of the provincial capitals.

Analyst said, "Musharraf is effectively trying to uproot deeply held social traditions, ranging from feudal power structures to tribal roles for women."

"I still have my doubts over the implementation of the plan but if what they are saying is done it will be a breakthrough," said Anis Haroon, leader of the Women's Foundation.

"The major problem will be how the women get representation in the areas where they are not even allowed to cast their votes."

NRB chairman General Tanweer Naqi last week told U National Security Council that non-party elections for district governments would be held in five phases starting from December and ending in July 2001.

There will be the first polls under the Musharraf regime, which has been under heavy pressure at home and abroad to lay out an electoral "roadmap" for the country's return to democracy, which it has promised by October 2002.

BRIEFLY

Rains kill 9 in South Korea:

At least nine people were killed and 20 others injured as torrential rains battered the central part of South Korea for two days, officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Seoul.

Quake rocks Sumatra Island:

A strong earthquake measuring magnitude 5.5 shook Indonesia's Sumatra island Sunday, news reports said, AFP reports from Jakarta.

Putin to visit France in Oct:

Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday he would visit France for the first time in October in an apparent move to improve relations strained by the war in Chechnya, AFP reports from Nago, Japan.

Siberian city mayor found dead:

The mayor of the Siberia city Yarovoye was found dead after being reported missing for four days, the Altai regional administration told the ITAR-TASS news agency Saturday, AFP reports from Moscow.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Sylhet PWD Division, Sylhet

PWD Notice Inviting Tender
Tender No: 04/2000-2001

Sealed tenders are hereby invited in BD Form No. 2911 for the undermentioned works as per terms & conditions stated below:

- Name of work: Vertical extension of Hostel Bldg of Deaf & Dump School & Constn of garage in the compound of Deaf & Dump School of Sheikhghat, Sylhet. (Sub-head: Constn of 2nd floor over the existing 1st floor of hostel bldg).
- Estimated cost: Tk 15,40,000/-
- Earnest money: Tk. 30,900/-
- Time allowed for completion of work: 180 (one hundred eighty) days from the date of issue of work order.
- Price of tender & schedule: Tk 750/- + 25/- = Tk 775/- (Taka seven hundred seventy five) only.
- Place of selling: Office of all the Executive Engineer, PWD Division under Chittagong Zone & Addl Chief Engineer, PWD Chittagong, Dhaka, Rajshahi & Khulna Zone & Sylhet Divisional Commissioner's office.
- Place of receiving tender: Office of the undersigned in/c all Executive Engineers under PWD Circle, Sylhet & also office of the Divisional Commissioner, Sylhet Division, Sylhet.
- Last date of selling tender: During office hours up to 30/7/2000.
- Eligibility of contractor/firm to compete in the tender: a) All classes of approved building contractor of PWD as per their financial limit. b) The intending tenderer must have VAT registration. c) Attested copy of VAT registration/TIN certificate & original money receipt for purchasing tender to enclose along with the tender.
- Date of receiving & opening tender: At 12:00 Noon on 31/7/2000 & will be opened on the same day at 12:15 PM.
- Lottery applicable: If more than one tenders are received having same rates stand lowest selection will be made by lottery to be held on 7/8/2000 at 12:00 Noon in the office of the Superintending Engineer, PWD Circle, Sylhet in presence of the tenderers who may like to remain present at the time of lottery.
- The undersigned reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason.

Mahmood Hasan Sirajee
Executive Engineer
Sylhet PWD Division, Sylhet
Phone No: 716231