



Vote buying case

Court to order
on sentence
for Rao today

NEW DELHI, Oct 11: A special Indian court which convicted former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao in a vote buying case last month will deliver its sentence on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Rao, who started India's free market reform programme in 1991, could face up to seven years in prison after the court found him and a former cabinet colleague Buta Singh guilty of criminal conspiracy and abatement to bribery.

"The orders are reserved for tomorrow," special court judge Ajit Baraih said today after lawyers for Rao and Singh pleaded that the two men be let off with a light punishment.

Rao is the first Indian prime minister or former prime minister to ever face criminal charges.

The 79-year-old Rao, who has denied charges of wrongdoing, sat impassive in the packed courtroom.

The vote-buying case involved allegations that in 1993 Rao tried to influence parliamentary vote of no-confidence by bribing four lawmakers of a regional group.

Rao's minority government defeated the no-confidence motion by bribing four lawmakers of a regional group.

Lawmakers of the regional Jharkhand Mukti Morcha had alleged that they were paid about \$100,000 to vote against the no-confidence motion.

Gunfight leaves
30 dead in
Philippines

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Oct 11: At least 17 Muslim separatist guerrillas, eight Marines, and five government militiamen were killed in an intense gun battle in the southern Philippines, the military said today, reports AFP.

Fighting in the province of Lanao del Sur erupted after about 100 members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) simultaneously stormed two army detachments in the town of Balabagan on Tuesday, the military's southern command said here.

Government militiamen tried to fight off the rebels but were outnumbered, said local spokesman Major Henry Basane.

Reinforcements, backed by five armoured personnel carriers from the Marines, later engaged the rebels in two hours of running gun battles.

Fleeing MILF rebels also attacked a separate army unit outside the town, he said.

Many of the MILF rebels later escaped, but 17 MILF rebels were killed.

Eight Marines and five government militiamen were also killed in the fighting, Basane said.

The military's southern command said five soldiers and seven militiamen were wounded.

The attack came after MILF spokesman Eit Kabalu told AFP earlier this week the group would intensify guerrilla warfare following the fall of their main camp and 40 other territories across the south in July.

Kabalu said a "jihad" or holy war called by MILF leaders shortly after the defeat was still on, and the group "has to carry out offences and we are moving according to schedule."

"It is still all-out war here in Mindanao," he said.

The 15,000-strong MILF is the largest remaining Muslim rebel group fighting for an independent Islamic state in the main southern island. It pulled out of peace talks after the military routed its positions earlier this year, and after government slapped bounties on its leaders.

International

Lankan parties seek allies as hung parliament likely

COLOMBO, Oct 11: Sri Lankan parties were desperately seeking allies today as early counting trends in the country's election pointed to a hung parliament, reports AFP.

A spokesman for the main opposition United National Party (UNP) admitted that they were trying to woo small or regional parties, whose political importance has multiplied following Tuesday's vote.

"We are talking to smaller parties," the spokesman said.

Dharmalingam Sidharthan, a leader of the Democratic People's Liberation Front, a Tamil party with three seats in the outgoing parliament, said he was being approached by other parties for support.

The problem is that I don't think we will get a single seat," said Sidharthan, who helped President Chandrika Kumaratunga come to power

after the 1994 elections with outside support.

Political sources said Kumaratunga's People's Alliance (PA) party, which currently has a wafer-thin majority in parliament, had also begun moves to gain allies.

The political stakes were raised when the Sri Lankan Muslim Congress, previously a key ally of Kumaratunga, blasted her party for widespread rigging and violence in the central district of Kandy during Tuesday's polls and said it will conditionally support the UNP.

"We have decided that we will not support the government (of President Chandrika Kumaratunga) after the election," SLMC joint leader Rauf Hakeem said.

Tuesday's vote, in which about 75 per cent of the 12.07 million electorate took part, was marred by violence that left seven people

dead, rampant electoral fraud and intimidation.

A sombre note was added to the elections with the sudden death of Sri Lanka's political matriarch Sirima Bandaranaike, the world's first woman prime minister and mother of President Kumaratunga and opposition stalwart Anura Bandaranaike.

Sirima Bandaranaike died shortly after casting her vote.

Elections Commissioner Dayananda Dissanayake was due to announce the final results of the polls, covering 22 districts, late Wednesday.

Early trends pointed to a photo finish with Kumaratunga's People's Alliance holding on with reduced margins in its traditional strongholds while the UNP, led by former prime minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, showed gains in unexpected areas.

The Marxist JVP, or People's Liberation Front, was a distant

but significant third, with the potential to be kingmaker in the event of a fractured parliament.

However hardline Sinhalese groups, whose candidates included a notorious hijacker and a naval rating who had tried to assassinate former Indian prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, had been routed, according to preliminary trends.

The Sinhala Urumaya (SU) which had Vijithamuni Rohana de Silva, the man who hit Gandhi with a rifle butt here in July 1987, as a candidate was demolished.

The SU got less than one percent of the votes in most areas and in the northern peninsula of Jaffna, dominated by Tamils, the party received just one postal vote.

Before Tuesday's vote, the SU tried but failed to forge an alliance with another hard-line nationalistic group, the SMBP, or the Sons of the Soil Party.



Sri Lankan women pay their respects during a wake for the country's matriarch politician Sirima Bandaranaike at her residence in Colombo yesterday. Bandaranaike will be buried with full state honour in Horagolla on October 14. Bandaranaike, the world's first woman prime minister, died on Tuesday at the age of 84, shortly after casting her vote in parliamentary elections. —AFP photo

Diplomats step up efforts to restore ME peace

JERUSALEM, Oct 11: Diplomatic efforts to bring peace to the Middle East intensified today, with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook joining Kofi Annan, Igor Ivanov and Javier Solana in the region, while US President Bill Clinton burned up the phone wires, reports AFP.

In the Palestinian territories, meanwhile, incidents were few, after the Israeli army noted that it had witnessed a significant fall in violence across the West Bank for the first time since bloody Israeli-Palestinian clashes flared almost two weeks ago.

The report came after Israeli Prime Minister Barak's decision overnight to give Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat another

three to four days to try to quell the unrest that has claimed the lives of around 100 people, most of them Palestinians and Arab Israelis.

Both sides were apparently giving diplomacy a chance, with further meetings lined up by the various world officials with Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, as well as the leaders of Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan met Barak Wednesday for the second time in 24 hours on a peacemaking mission he had launched Monday in an effort to prevent a new confrontation in the Middle East.

Cook meanwhile was due in the region later Wednesday, with

meetings scheduled with both Barak and Arafat. He is also to go to Syria and possibly Jordan, his office said.

The European Union's foreign policy and security chief, Javier Solana, who met Barak and Arafat Tuesday, arrived in Egypt Wednesday on the next leg of his tour.

Clinton and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright meanwhile have been speaking exhaustively by telephone to leaders in the region.

However, the White House denied a report that Clinton would be convening a summit with Barak and Arafat in the Middle East in the coming days.

Nagahari hottest chilli in world

HYDERABAD, Oct 11: A variety of chilli known as "Nagahari" grown in Tezpur in North East India has earned the distinction of being the world's hottest, reports PTT.

The hot flavour of chillies is due to presence of a compound called capsaicin and chilli heat is measured in Scoville Heat Units (SHU). In this scale, common varieties like Jalapeno or the Italian Peperoncino generally lie below 5000 SHUs. The extremely fiery Thai chillies barely reach 100,000. The hottest chilli known today is 'Red Savina Habanero' that measures 577,000 SHUs.

The Tezpur chilli beat them all with the value of 855,000 SHUs, according to researchers at the Defence Research and Development Establishment in Gwalior.

Musharraf pushing Pakistan into deep crisis: Kulsoom

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Oct 11: The wife of jailed former prime minister Nawaz Sharif today bitterly attacked military ruler General Pervez Musharraf, accusing him of pushing Pakistan into a deep crisis, reports AFP.

Musharraf fired the salvo against Musharraf on the eve of the first anniversary of Musharraf's military coup, which Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) party has decided to observe as a "black day."

"Musharraf is leading the country toward destruction," she said, speaking at the Press Club in Peshawar.

The army should "quit and return to their barracks," she

demanded.

Kulsoom said the traditional respect for the army was on the decline because of one man who "trampled upon the constitution, overthrew the elected government and ushered in a dark era."

"Musharraf is responsible for this situation," she said, adding that the army "should read the writing on the wall and return to the defence of the frontiers."

But an influential section in the PML is opposed to any confrontation with the military regime, party sources said.

Serious cracks have appeared in the former ruling party over the issue of electing a new leader after an anti-terrorism court sentenced Sharif for life in April.

and he was further convicted for corruption in July by another court.

The party has called for demonstrations by its members on Thursday, despite a ban imposed by Musharraf in March on outdoor political activities.

In the southern port city of Karachi police have detained some 40 PML workers in a pre-emptive crackdown, said Ejaz Shahi, a central leader of the party. No official confirmation of the claim was available.

Musharraf said Tuesday he would organise national polls and return the country to civilian rule before October 12, 2002 — a deadline set by the country's Supreme Court.

US, DPRK seek to ease tensions

WASHINGTON, Oct 11: The United States and North Korea held their highest-level meeting ever on Tuesday, seeking to ease tensions a half century after they fought each other in the Korean War, reports Reuters.

President Bill Clinton met Jo Myong-rok, second-ranking official to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, for about 45 minutes in the White House Oval Office for talks that a US official described as "very positive, direct and warm."

Jo, vice chairman of North Korea's National Defence Commission, was the most senior official to visit Washington from the impoverished Stalinist state, which in recent years has sought as "very positive, direct and warm."

"This was an excellent start," Ambassador Wendy Sherman, coordinator of US policy toward North Korea, told reporters. She said both sides summarised their positions in a meeting that was more ceremonial than substantive.

US officials hope his three-day visit will promote reconciliation between Pyongyang and Seoul following the historic June summit.



US President Bill Clinton (R) greets North Korean Vice-Marshal Jo Myong-Rok at the Oval Office in The White House on Tuesday. Jo is the highest-ranking North Korean official to ever visit the US. The two met for 45 minutes. —AFP photo

Milosevic opponents threaten fresh mass uprising

BELGRADE, Oct 11: Supporters of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic threatened to renew mass protests today if allies of ousted leader Slobodan Milosevic block talks on a peaceful transition of power in the country, reports AFP.

"We have agreed on early elections and the dismissal of the (Serbian) parliament, and if they want to make progress toward persuading North Korea to rein in its nuclear and ballistic missile weapons programmes and to work its way off a US list of state sponsors of terrorism.

In a sea change from the hostility and suspicion that have marked relations since the 1950-53 Korean War, US officials described the Oval Office talks in upbeat terms and both sides stressed a desire for more substantive ties.

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issue on Tuesday, saying they

would only return to talks "after the end of riots, violence and lawlessness" in Serbia -- an apparent reference to widespread moves to remove Milosevic allies from key posts.

Another DOS leader, Zarko Korac, warned the Beta news agency, that Milosevic "has been politically active in recent days, continuously consulting the leaderships of former regime parties."

"They agreed to prevent the formation of the federal and republic government, as well as to block early elections," he said.

"The Serbian public is facing the danger of a violent coup and change of the electoral results, organised by the leadership of the SPŠ and JU," the Yugoslav Left party led by the fallen president's wife, he said.

Dhaka Electric Supply Authority

Corrigendum Notice Regarding Extension of Time

Amendments to the tenders invited from the office of the undersigned through Reference No EE/DL/8/245 dated 21/08/2000 and EE/DL/8/242 dated 21-8-2000 have been brought in the following way due to unavoidable circumstances.

The dates of selling and receiving of tender schedule have been extended till 23-10-2000 and 24-10-2000 instead of 2-10-2000 and 3-10-2000 and 4-10-2000 respectively.

Other terms and conditions as mentioned in the tender will remain unchanged.

Executive Engineer, Distribution Line Division Dhaka Electric Supply Authority

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

External Publicity Wing