

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 elections," 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 per cent 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 nationalist group, the SMBP, or the Sons of the Soil Party.

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 PTI.

The hot flavour of chillies is due to presence of a compound called capsaicin and chilli hotness is measured in Scoville Heat Units (SHU). In this scale, common varieties like the 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.



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 peacekeeping mission he had launched Monday in an effort to prevent a new conflagration 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.

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.

Kulsoom Nawaz 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

demanding.

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.

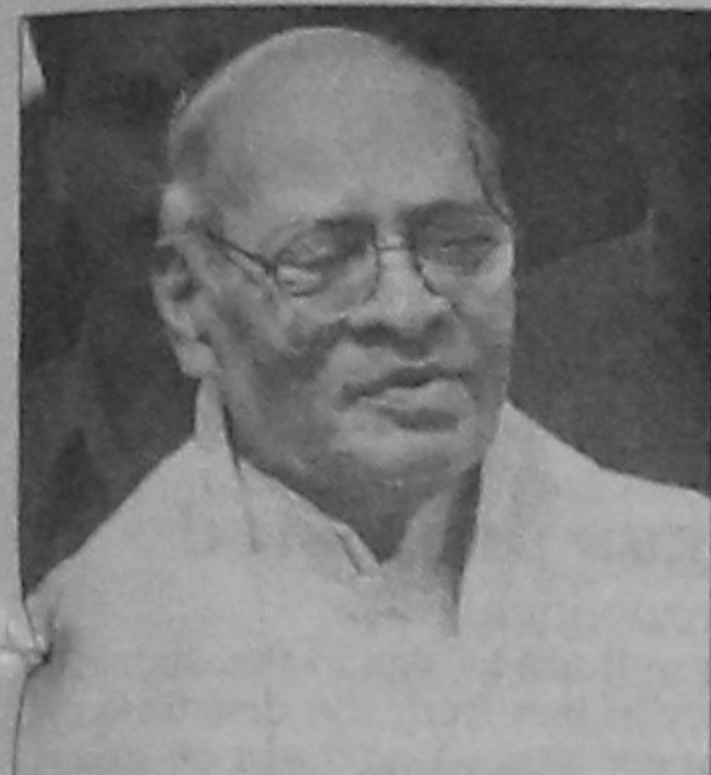
Serious cracks have appeared in the former ruling party over the issue of electing a new leader after an anti-terrorism court sentenced Sharif for life in April,

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 Shaif, 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.



Vote buying case

Court to order on sentence for Rao today

NEW DELHI, Oct 11: A special Indian court which convicted former Prime Minister P.V. 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 abetment to bribery.

"The orders are reserved for tomorrow," special court judge Ajit Banthoke 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 a 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 Eid Kabalu told AFP earlier this week the group would intensify guerrilla warfare following the fall of their main camp and 46 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.

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 in the 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 to end its diplomatic isolation.

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

mit between North Korea's Kim and South Korean President Kim Dae-jung.

Washington also hopes 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 constructive ties.

"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 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

US blocks Sudan's election to UN Security Council

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 11: The United States blocked the election of Sudan to the prestigious UN Security Council on Tuesday helping Mauritius to win a two-year term instead along with Colombia, Ireland, Norway and Singapore, reports Reuters.

Sudan was the candidate of the African group for an African seat on the 15-nation UN body responsible for international peace and security, beginning Jan 1, 2001.

But it was strongly opposed by Washington in a lobbying campaign that cited Khartoum's alleged involvement in terrorism and poor human rights record. Mauritius challenged Sudan and won the seat.

Italy fell by the wayside in a three-cornered race involving also Ireland and Norway for two seats reserved for countries belonging to the group called

West European and Others.

Sudan has been under UN diplomatic sanctions since 1996 for failing to hand over three men wanted for a 1995 assassination attempt in Addis Ababa against Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. But there are good prospects that the sanctions might be lifted later this year.

Mauritius beat out Sudan by a vote of 113 to 55 on the fourth ballot, when a two-thirds majority of at least 112 was required.

On the first round Mauritius obtained 95 votes to Sudan's 69. On the second round the tally was 102 to 65; and the result of the third ballot was Mauritius 110 and Sudan 58 still short of the needed two-thirds majority.

Colombia and Singapore, which each received 168 votes on the first ballot, were the unopposed candidates, respectively, of the Latin American and Asian

groups.

Ireland, campaigning on the theme that as a small, formerly colonised country, it understood the problems confronting most UN members obtained 130 votes on the first ballot, with 114 for Norway and 94 for Italy.

Ireland has previously held a Security Council seat only in 1962 and in 1981-82.

On the fourth ballot, Norway obtained 115 votes to 57 for Italy, which was last on the council in 1995-96. Norway just secured the two-thirds majority of at least 115 votes needed for election on that round.

Norway, which last held a council seat in 1979-80, has been a stalwart of UN development aid and peacekeeping. Italy cited its status as the fifth largest contributor to the UN regular budget, ahead of Britain, and the sixth, behind Britain, to the peacekeeping budget.

Fiji coup leader, 15 others charged with treason

SUVA, Oct 11: Fiji coup leader George Speight and 15 others were formally charged with treason in court here today for the May 19 plot against then prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry, reports AFP.

Nine soldiers who had also been accused of treason were freed, but they were immediately taken into military custody to face court martial on other charges including mutiny and desertion.

Speight's group was not asked to plead to the charge of treason and they were remanded in custody by Chief Magistrate Saleisi Timo until their next court appearance on October 25.

The defendants then moved to the High Court for what was expected to be a four-day hearing on an application to be released, but they sensationally abandoned their bid for freedom, accepting they had no chance of winning that action.

Justice Daniel Fatiaki sent them back to their prison island near here where they will now await what is expected to be a drawn-out treason trial.

Speight and the others were to have argued they could not be charged with treason related to the May 19 coup as they were covered by an immunity decree.

But an Australian lawyer brought in by Speight, Marc Michel Gumbert, told the court they now accepted that the immunity issue could be raised as a defence in the treason trial.

Fatiaki dismissed the case and added that for what it was worth he too believed the immunity issue should have been raised in another court.

Speight and his men were immediately taken back to Nukunono prison island.

They had been shipped to court from the island before dawn amid tight security which brought central Suva to a standstill.

Impeachment move against Estrada postponed

MANILA, Oct 11: Opposition legislators today postponed filing an impeachment complaint against Philippine President Joseph Estrada over a gambling scandal, saying they needed more time to consolidate evidence, reports AFP.

"It has been moved to Friday, the documents submitted to us were very thick and lawyers are poring over them to make a consolidated complaint," said a spokesman for Heherson Alvarez, an opposition member of the House of Representatives who is leading the challenge to Estrada.

"They met earlier but could not come up with an airtight complaint that would stand scrutiny at the moment," the spokesman said.

The impeachment bid stems from accusations by estranged Estrada ally Luis Sison that the president received about 12 million dollars in bribes from operators of an illegal numbers


game over two years.

Sison, who is also a governor of a northern province, said he had delivered the money to Estrada monthly, either personally at the presidential palace or by depositing it in bank accounts controlled by the president.

Alvarez's office said apart from Sison's charges, the impeachment complaint would incorporate corruption complaints against the government by other sectors, including church-based groups and women's non-governmental organisations.

Lawyers "were overwhelmed with the volume of documents and new evidence submitted ... so there is a need to re-draft a united complaint covering a broader scope of charges against the president."

Sison, who has so far offered scant evidence to prove his claim, was to appear before a Senate inquiry later today, where he has promised to release documents and other evidence.



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 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

DFP-24189-5/10
G-1773

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

External Publicity Wing

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka

No: 1(6)/2000-2001-EP/ Date: October 4, 2000

Tender Invitation for Printing and Binding Work

Tenders in sealed envelopes are invited from the front ranking printing/binding establishments for printing/binding of Bangladesh Diary for the year 2001 and desk calendars to be published by the External Publicity Wing. The establishment participating in the tender should have experience of printing/binding work of international standard alongwith at least one double-demy bi-colour offset printing machine and other related equipment.

Schedule for diary and calendar can be purchased separately on payment of Taka 700/- (seven hundred) in cash (non-refundable) till the day before submitting tender from the office of the undersigned during office hours.

Interested tenderers can deposit their rate offer in the tender box kept at the main gate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 19th October, 2000 till 2:00 PM. Security money at the rate of 5.00 per cent of the quoted rate in the forms of Bank Draft/Pay-Order to the Assistant Director (Publications), External Publicity Wing, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dhaka will have to be deposited with the rate offer.

The authority reserves the power to accept any tender or reject all tenders without assigning any reason.

ATM Momenul Haque
Assistant Director (Publication)
Phone: 9554881

DFP-24255-5/10
G-1774



Auction Tender Notice

Dhaka WASA

(পানির অপচয় রোধে কাজ শেষে কলের মুখ বন্ধ করুন)

Tenders are invited from class I, II and III enlisted contractors of Dhaka WASA and government, semi-government and autonomous establishments/bonafide supplier contractors and interested purchasers for selling in auction the houses on the alignment of Kallayanpur Section "Gha" canal (3rd Call). Tenders will be received on 23-10-2000 till 12:00 Noon and will be opened the same day at 2:00 PM before tenderers or their representative (if anyone remains present).

Schedule of tender will be available in the office of the Chief Accounts Officer of Dhaka WASA, WASA Bhaban, 98, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka and all MODS Zone offices of Dhaka WASA. Other details will be available in the office of the undersigned.

Address: 'WASA Bhaban'
98, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka
WASA, P-315/2000
DFP-24070-4/10
G-1773

Zahidul Arif
Executive Engineer
Procurement Division
Dhaka WASA



6 held in Japan over N-disaster:

Japanese police Wednesday arrested six plant officials for negligence in Japan's worst nuclear disaster, a company spokesman said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

They became the first officials to be arrested over the accident in September last year, the world's worst since Chernobyl, at the Tokaimura uranium processing plant run by JCO Co. Ltd. Former plant manager Kenzo Koshijima, 54, and five other JCO officials were arrested. "The six were arrested this afternoon," said the JCO spokesman.

Gaddafi arrives in S Arabia:

Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has arrived in Saudi Arabia on his first visit to the oil-rich kingdom for talks on Palestinian-Israeli violence and a planned Arab summit, Saudi newspapers reported yesterday, Reuters reports from Dubai.

They said the Libyan leader drove to northern Saudi Arabia through Jordan from Syria on Tuesday. He is due to arrive in the capital Riyadh later today after spending the night in the north of the Kingdom. Gaddafi, whose tour of Arab nations has already taken him to Egypt, Jordan and Syria, will meet Saudi King Fahd and Crown Prince Abdullah for discussions on the violence between Palestinians and Israeli forces.