



Thousands of protesters, led by Roman Catholic church leader Cardinal Jaime Sin, gather for a big prayer rally in the Philippine capital of Manila calling for the immediate resignation of Philippine President Joseph Estrada yesterday. --AFP photo

International

Filipinos demand Estrada's resignation

MANILA, Nov 4: Tens of thousands of people chanting "resign, resign" gathered at a church-sponsored rally in the Philippine capital Manila today to demand the removal of President Joseph Estrada over a gambling pay-offs scandal, reports Reuters.

As the rally began in a peaceful fiesta-like atmosphere, another senator announced his defection from the president's camp, leaving Estrada precariously placed in impeachment proceedings which are likely to be brought before the Senate later this month.

Senator Robert Jaworski, a former basketball star idolised in the sports-obsessed country, said he was withdrawing from the administration ranks and would vote as an independent.

The mass prayer rally called by Cardinal Jaime Sin, the influential Roman Catholic archbishop of Manila, was held in the same area of the city where millions came out in 1986 to force the ouster of then-president Ferdinand Marcos.

Many of the protesters were wearing white, which they said was intended to signify the surrender wanted from Estrada.

"Mr Estrada please give the Filipinos a merry Christmas, resign now," said one banner strung up at the site, a junction of two major roads where a shrine to the Virgin Mary has been built to signify the success of the 1986 "people power" revolution.

Church elders said they expected about 100,000 people to attend. Television said about 50,000 were present at the start, and more were streaming in.

"We are here today because we want him to

resign," said Sister Cynthia, a nun wearing a navy blue habit. "The people don't believe in him any more. It's difficult to regain their confidence."

There was no violence and police were seen only at the periphery of the crowd, many of whom had brought along umbrellas for protection from the midday sun and occasional drizzle.

Estrada, who was elected to a six-year term with a huge majority in mid-1998, has lost significant support since allegations emerged early last month that he received some \$8 million in bribes from illegal gambling syndicates.

The powerful church has demanded he resign and has been joined by Vice-President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo and Aquino. Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas resigned on Thursday.

On Friday, as a powerful typhoon lashed Manila, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate President announced they were abandoning Estrada. Some 45 other congressmen and two other senators joined them.

The defections caused Estrada to lose his majority in the House, where he will almost definitely be impeached on bribery charges before a trial in the Senate, or upper house.

For Estrada to be removed from office at least 15 members in the 22-seat Senate will have to vote in favour. Analysts say some 12 senators are now against the president, five remain committed to him while the others could go either way.

Estrada, who has refused to resign, has said he will fight the charges and that he would welcome the impeachment proceedings to clear his name.

US Presidential Election



Republican Presidential candidate Texas Governor George W. Bush waves as he exits his campaign airplane after landing in Freeland, Michigan, on Friday shortly before a speech at Saginaw Valley State University, Michigan. --AFP photo

Drunk driving arrest

Dirty political trick: Bush Gore campaign denies involvement

WASHINGTON, Nov 4: Republican George W. Bush, narrowly ahead in the polls, on Friday denounced the revelation of his 1976 drunk driving arrest as a dirty political trick by a Democrat, as the 2000 presidential race reached new heights of vitriol in its final four days, reports Reuters.

Bush, the governor of Texas, entered the final weekend of the campaign with a slim lead in national polls. But Vice President Gore continued to lead in several key states, making the election too close to call. Thursday's disclosure that Bush was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol in Maine 24 years ago, and a reporter's suggestion that he subsequently did not admit it, threw another unpredictable element into the volatile mix.

Interviewed by Fox News Channel, Bush did not directly link the Gore campaign to the disclosure but said it was clear a Democratic Party stalwart was behind it.

"I believe that most Americans are going to come to the conclusion that this is dirty politics, last-minute politics," he said.

"I don't know if my opponent's campaign was involved, but I do know that the person who admitted doing it at the last minute was a Democrat and a partisan in Maine," Bush said.

Tom Corrino, the 1998 Democratic nominee for governor in Maine, admitted releasing the 1976 arrest information as an "act of democracy" and said he had no links with the Gore campaign.

In the latest Reuters/MSNBC tracking poll, Bush led Gore by 46-42 per cent, a one-point increase for Bush over the past 24 hours. Other surveys were roughly in line with that finding. Green Party candidate Ralph Nader had 5 per cent and was hurting Gore in several states.

But the vice president was ahead in Florida, Michigan and Illinois, giving him hope of reaching

the 270 electoral votes needed to be elected president.

The race was extremely tight in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Tennessee and Missouri, meaning either man could still win.

In California, crucial to Gore's election strategy, Bush has pulled within two points, according to another Zogby poll released later Friday night.

The latest Reuters Electoral College count had Bush with 212 firm votes, Gore with 211 and 115 too close to call. However previous tight presidential elections have often swung decisively in the final weekend and the drunk driving incident could provide just the kind of lever to alter the picture.

Sensing the danger, Bush aides went on the counterattack.

"I think the American people are tired of this kind of 'gotcha politics,'" said Bush campaign spokeswoman Karen Hughes. She denied a recollection by Dallas Morning News reporter Wayne Slater that Bush told him in September 1998 that he had no other arrests except for a 1968 fraternity prank involving a stolen Christmas wreath.

The Morning News ran Slater's story in its Friday online edition.

The governor refutes" Slater's recollection, said Hughes.

The paper also reported that Bush did not mention the conviction on a 1996 jury duty questionnaire. A Bush spokesman said a staff member who did not know about the conviction filled out the form.

Gore campaign manager William Daley categorically denied any involvement.

"This charge is wrong. It is made without proof or evidence ... It is time for Governor Bush's campaign to stop hurling charges, and start accepting responsibility," he said.



Democratic presidential candidate and US Vice President Al Gore, his wife Tipper, and his daughter Kristin greet supporters upon their arrival at the airport in Des Moines, Iowa, on Friday. --AFP photo

Popular vote does not assure election

WASHINGTON, Nov 4: It has happened before -- a presidential candidate wins the popular vote but loses the White House -- and it could happen again this year, reports AFP.

The close race between Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore makes this possible because the popular vote is not the final word in selecting a US president.

Americans will vote November 7 in 50 separate state elections, along with one for the District of Columbia, to choose members of the Electoral College.

These electors will meet December 18 in each state and choose the president.

Each state sends a number of electors equal to its representation in Congress, along with three others for the District of Columbia. To win, a candidate must receive 270 votes.

Electors are not bound by federal law to vote for the candidate who wins the popular vote, although some states have imposed that requirement. Usually, the winner of each state's popular vote wins all that state's electoral votes.

Three times in history, the winner of the popular vote has failed to capture the White House. Most recently, in 1888, the Electoral College chose Republican Benjamin Harrison over Democratic incumbent Grover Cleveland, even though Cleveland had defeated Harrison in the popular vote.

It also happened in 1876, when the Republican Rutherford Hayes won the electoral vote over popular-vote winner Samuel Tilden, a Democrat.

And in 1824, John Quincy Adams was chosen president by the House of Representatives after none of four candidates gained a majority of electoral votes, even though Andrew Jackson had won the popular vote.

Harrison's victory in 1888 did not raise much protest, but should the same thing happen now, "there would be a flurry of propositions to amend the Constitution," said Walter Berns, a government professor at Georgetown University.

Not all experts agree. "There would be a lot of sounds and articles but nothing at the end," said Allan Lichtman, a presidential scholar at American University. "It is very difficult to change the constitution and the small states will never agree."

Still, should Bush win the popular vote but lose in the Electoral College, "we will fight. You can count on the media to fuel the thing big-time," a Bush aide told the New York Daily News.

White House still ultimate prize

WASHINGTON, Nov 4: No matter where it begins, every US presidential race ends in a stately mansion at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue known to every American and the outside world as the White House, reports AFP.

The building that celebrated its 200th anniversary this week combines a command centre from where the president manages the federal government, the living quarters for his family, a popular museum, and one of the most recognisable symbols of US sovereignty.

Its history, and the history of the nation's capital, began when President George Washington signed an Act of Congress in December of 1790 declaring that the federal government would reside in a district "not exceeding ten miles square ... on the river Potomac."

Together with city planner Pierre L'Enfant, Washington chose the site for his new residence, where construction began in October of 1792.

But the first president to actually live in the mansion was John Adams who moved in with his wife, Abigail, on November 1, 1800.

In 1814, the White House -- together with the Capitol -- was burned down by British troops. It took three years to restore it to its former splendour.

Thomas Jefferson opened the White House for public tours, and it has remained open, except during wartime, ever since.

BRIEFLY

Boat collision kills 11 in Mexico

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 4: Afghanistan's warring parties have agreed to a new UN-sponsored peace effort to end the protracted civil war in the central Asian nation, a UN official announced on Friday, reports Reuters.

In separate letters to the United Nations, the ruling Taliban militia and the opposition United Front consented to a "process of dialogue" aimed at "bringing about in the shortest possible time an end to the armed conflict in Afghanistan," said Francesc Vendrell, the chief UN envoy for Afghanistan.

The agreement says the combatants would stay with the peace process until the agenda was exhausted. Vendrell, a Spaniard and veteran UN official, said he expected

to shuttle between the two sides and then hoped for indirect talks in the same city between the two parties. Only if this went well would there be face-to-face negotiations.

Noting that "skepticism is warranted" because of the failure of previous peace talks, Vendrell said the "difference this time is there is a written agreement" as well as a commitment not to abandon the negotiations.

The last talks were in July 1999 in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and included an exchange of war prisoners and opening routes for humanitarian assistance. But fighting has escalated since then. Now millions of people are trapped in the worst drought in 30 years, with UN officials saying up to 1 million Afghans risked

starvation.

Afghanistan went through nine years of military conflict with the Soviet Union, ending in 1989, by a protracted civil war.

The Taliban, mainly of Pashtun ethnicity, captured Kabul in September 1996. They control most of the country except for a swath in the north under the United Front led by Gen Ahmad Shah Masood.

Asked about a ceasefire, Vendrell said it was probably too dangerous to begin talks on this crucial issue, as the negotiations would stop if one side or another began fighting.

It is even less helpful if we agree on a ceasefire without verification and then in the middle of the talks one party breaks it," he said.

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BANGLADESH SPACE RESEARCH AND REMOTE SENSING ORGANIZATION (SPARRSO)

Mohakash Bigyan Bhaban
Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh

Tender No. SPARRSO/24/2000

Dated: 26.10.2000

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from manufacturers/agents/suppliers for computerised intercom telephone system and generator (details shown in the schedule) for SPARRSO.

Tender schedule with terms and conditions etc. may be collected from the abovementioned address during office hours on or before 28.11.2000 against payment of Tk. 400/- (four hundred) only (non-refundable).

Tender will be dropped on or before 1.45 pm on 29.11.2000 and tender will be opened on the same day at 2.00 pm in presence of tenderers (if present).

The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender bids either partially or wholly without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Md. Amir Hossain

Store & Procurement Officer

Tel: 323953

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Bagerhat

Notice Inviting Tender

No. 11/2000-2001

1. Sealed tenders in BD Form No 2911 are hereby invited from the approved enlisted building contractor/firm of PWD according to their enlistment capacity for the undermentioned work and will be received by the Divisional Commissioner, Khulna & the undersigned as well as the Executive Engineers, PWD Division-I/II, Khulna & Satkhira up to 12-00 Noon of 22/11/2000 and will be opened on the same day at 12-15 PM in presence of the intending tenderer who may like to remain present. The tender form and tender documents may be seen and obtained from all the offices of the Executive Engineers under PWD Circle, Khulna up to 21/11/2000 during office hours on payment of usual charges.

2. Name of work : Constrn of 4 storied SM Barrack at Dist Qrt & Battalion Hd Qrt for Ansar & VDP (1st phase, constrn of 30 Nos Barrack up to 1st floor at 30 places) - one at Bagerhat. (SH: Constrn of Ansar & VDP Barrack (2 storied Bldg.)

3. Estimated cost : Tk 54,16,525/-
4. Earnest money : Tk 1,08,500/-

5. Time for completion of the work is 10 (Ten) months from the date of issue of work order.

Executive Engineer
PWD Division
Bagerhat.

DTP-26150-29/10
G-1941

New tests on breast cancer need to be assessed further

WASHINGTON, Nov 4: New tests are being developed that should eventually help doctors tailor treatment for breast cancer patients, but they are still too experimental to use on most patients, experts said on Friday, reports Reuters.

They said the tests, including genetic tests meant to show whether a tumour will be affected by a certain drug, need to be assessed further in clinical trials to make sure they will actually make a difference to women.

The experts, including top oncologists and researchers from around the country, spent three days debating the best breast cancer treatments at a National Institutes of Health "consensus conference."

"It is not to say that these (new tests) shouldn't be studied," Dr. Patricia Eifel, a professor at the M D Anderson cancer centre at the University of Texas and chair of the panel, told a news conference. "A lot of these are not sufficiently validated to use in determining therapy at this point."

Experts say most breast cancer cases are now caught early, and the standard treatment is to cut out either the tumour or the whole affected area. Radiation and chemotherapy add to the success of the operation, the idea being to catch any tiny little tumours too small to detect.

But there is no real consensus on which chemotherapy drugs are best to use, who should get them and when.