

International

Congress begins debate over Estrada's impeachment

MANILA, Nov 6: The Philippine legislature began public hearings today on an opposition motion to impeach President Joseph Estrada for alleged corruption, reports AFP.

The hearings, aired on radio on television, seek to remove Estrada from office for alleged corruption, bribery, culpable violations of the constitution and betrayal of public trust.

House of Representatives minority leader Sergio Apostol told the House justice committee, scrutinising the impeachment motion filed on October 18, that at least one third of the 218-member House had endorsed the bid.

"We have already achieved the number of at least one third," he told the panel.

Another opposition legislator, Mike Defensor, urged the committee to hand over the case immediately to the whole House for a plenary debate.

But Estrada allies in the House argued the committee hearings should continue.

Under the constitution, at least one third of the House must endorse an impeachment case against the president to authorise the Senate to hold a tribunal to try him.

When the motion was filed on October 18, about 40 legislators backed it but more have thrown their weight behind it as public pressure mounts on Estrada to resign over allegations that he took eight million dollars in bribes from illegal gambling bosses.

If Estrada stands on trial in the Senate, at least 15 of the 22 senators



Joseph Estrada

must declare that there is a "preponderance of evidence" against him in order to kick him out of office.

Estrada has rejected the charges and vowed to fight the impeachment case against him. He still has three years and eight months to run of a six-year term.

Meanwhile, Estrada's aides are in talks with the opposition for a peaceful handover of power, officials said today.

"We are all looking for a very peaceful and graceful exit for the president. That's why I have been talking with (Finance Secretary Jose) 'Titoy' Pardo," former president Corazon Aquino told local radio. She did not disclose any details.

Legislators have warned he could face criminal prosecution if found guilty and removed from office.

Pardo confirmed Monday that he has offered himself as a go-between for Estrada and the opposition, which wants Estrada to resign immediately ahead of the impeachment process.

"I have offered myself as a channel for communication," said Pardo, who also clarified that he was not quitting the cabinet.

On Saturday 60,000 people gathered on the streets of the capital Manila to press for Estrada to quit.

But top presidential aide Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora insisted Monday Estrada was "determined to hold on to his position" and would not stand down.

Pakistan to set up nuclear regulatory authority

ISLAMABAD, Nov 6: Pakistan is expected soon to establish a Nuclear Regulatory Authority (NRA) to ensure and enforce safety procedures in the country's nuclear related activities, a newspaper report said yesterday, reports PTI.

The proposal for NRA will be discussed at the next cabinet meeting and the ordinance for establishing the NRA will be issued thereafter, The News reported quoting officials.

One of the elements of the new law regarding NRA would be the enforcement of strict nuclear export control, it said.

It said the NRA will deal with a number of issues, including safety of nuclear plants and nuclear material, disposal of nuclear wastes, environmental protection, other peaceful uses of nuclear technology and nuclear export control.

The Pakistan government recently enacted fresh laws to enforce nuclear export control.

Officials said the establishment of NRA had nothing to do with the international nuclear safeguards or non-proliferation regime.

Officials said the authority would be an independent body, though it would be assisted by a number of institutions. Its staff will be drawn mostly from the nuclear establishment of the country as well as from the foreign office.

Chairman of Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission Dr Ashfaq is likely to head the authority.

116 arrested in biggest anti-govt protest in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 6: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad accused opposition parties today of lawlessness after 116 people were arrested in Malaysia's biggest anti-government protest for months, but his opponents criticised police for using "Gestapo" tactics, reports AFP.

Police fired tear gas and chemically-laced water cannon Sunday to break up the protest by supporters of jailed ex-deputy premier Anwar Ibrahim.

Police were seen attacking some detainees and at least one officer was assaulted by protesters.

Mahathir, quoted by Bernama news agency, said the trend among the opposition was to break the law and invite action against them.

When this happened they would inform their friends overseas who would in turn condemn the government for the alleged absence of freedom, he said.

Several thousand protesters Sunday marched along a main highway after police declared their planned rally at a nearby site to be illegal and blocked access to the venue.

Mahathir said Anwar's trial lasted one year and he was defended by nine of the country's best lawyers. "And yet they (overseas critics) still say there is no due process."

"We are a free country ... our laws are clear and we fully abide by the law and still they say there is no due process," he said.

Mahathir also criticised the resolution by seven US congressmen calling for a new trial for Anwar.

Anwar was sacked by Mahathir on September 2, 1998 and arrested 18 days later following mass anti-government rallies.

In April 1999, he was jailed for six years for abuse of power and in August this year was imprisoned for nine years for sodomy. The sentences will run consecutively.

Anwar says Mahathir orchestrated a conspiracy to frame him on criminal charges because he was seen as a political threat. The government denies any plot and says courts are independent.

Opposition party leaders at the protest, including Anwar's wife Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, accused the police of over-reacting.

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Re-Tender Notice
Tender for Import of 1200 Pcs. of Fire Arms and 2,50,000 Pcs. of Cartridges.

Tender No: TCB/IMP-20/2000 Date: 06-11-2000

Trading Corporation of Bangladesh invites sealed tender in the prescribed form obtainable from Sonali Bank, Kawran Bazar Branch, TCB Bhaban, Dhaka on payment of Tk. 500/- (Taka five hundred) only per set (non-refundable) for import of 1200 Pcs. of Fire Arms and 2,50,000 Pcs. Cartridges (Europe/USA/South Africa/Australia/China/Singapore origin only) under cash. Offers are to be made on C&F(C) Chittagong Liner term basis showing FOB price and freight separately along with 1.00% (One per cent) Earnest Money. Shipment of entire quantity of Fire Arms and Cartridges is to be made by 31-01-2001. Other terms and conditions are available in the tender form.

Tenders to be dropped in the tender box kept in the Import Division of the Corporation at TCB Bhaban, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka upto 11-00 AM on 20-11-2000 and opened at 11-15 AM on the same day. Tenderers may remain present at the opening of the tender. The successful bidder is to submit 3% (Three per cent) Performance Guarantee in foreign currency before signing of contract with TCB.

The Corporation reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever and to purchase quantities more or less than those tendered for. No tender document will be sold on the day of opening of the tender.

Fakhruddin Ahmed
Senior Executive (Import-I)

GD-1020

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