



# Pakistan shuts border to Afghan refugees

ISLAMABAD, Nov 10: Left largely alone to clothe and feed one of the world's largest refugee populations, Pakistan today said "no more" and close its borders with neighbouring Afghanistan, reports AP.

The decision came after a monthlong deluge that saw 30,000 new refugees cross into Pakistan, swelling the Afghan refugee population here to more than 2.1 million.

The latest refugee exodus is being blamed on a devastating three-year drought and a bitter and protracted civil war that pits Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, who control 95 per cent of the country, against a northern-based opposition, which rules the remaining 5 per cent.

Tens of thousands more refugees were expected to try to cross into Pakistan during the bitter winter months ahead, said Hasim Utkan, Pakistani representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, or UNHCR.

Pakistani officials say they simply could not handle the influx. "We have no choice," said Abdullah Jan, an official in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, which borders Afghanistan. "Our economic situa-

tion is bad and we are trying improve the conditions of our own people. We just can't handle any more refugees. We don't have the money or the resources."

Pakistan a country of 140 million, mostly poor, people has been single-handedly housing and feeding the 2.1 million Afghan refugees living here since 1995, when the UN stopped its food and housing aid.

Some of the refugees date back to the 1980s invasion by the former Soviet Union, when an estimated 5 million refugees fled to Pakistan. Other refugees came after the 1992 takeover of Afghanistan by Western-backed Islamic groups, who immediately turned their guns on each other, killing an estimated 50,000 people and destroying much of the Afghan capital, Kabul.

Peace came to Kabul and much of Afghanistan in 1996 when the hard-line Taliban took power. Since then, fighting has been largely restricted to pockets of northern Afghanistan.

Last month, the UNHCR received an emergency \$960,000 to house the latest influx, but when it runs out, Pakistan will again be left alone to find food for the refugees, Utkan said.

# Cohen to visit Middle East

WASHINGTON, Nov 10: US Defence Secretary William Cohen will visit nine Gulf and Middle East states beginning next week, his first trip to the area since the suspected suicide bombing of a US warship in Yemen, the Pentagon said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

Cohen is scheduled to depart on Tuesday on the 10-day trip to Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Egypt and Israel, the Defence Department said.

No details of the trip were provided immediately, but there was no indication that Cohen would go to Yemen. The brief announcement said he would consult with defence counterparts and other senior government officials in the nine countries and would visit US troops in the area.

US forces in the Gulf have been on high alert since a small boat laden with explosives blew up next to the American guided missile destroyer USS Cole in Aden harbour on Oct 12, ripping a large hole in the vessel and killing 17 sailors.

No charges have been filed in connection with the blast, which is being investigated by Yemeni and US officials. Cohen said on Wednesday that investigators were looking at anti-Western guerrilla groups, including exiled Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden, but that no blame had yet been established for the blast.

Reports from Aden have said Yemeni authorities have arrested a number of persons for questioning. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation has been negotiating with Yemen for a closer role in questioning of those arrested, according to US officials.

# Five killed in Kashmir

JAMMU, Nov 10: Five militants belonging to Lashkar-e-Toiba outfit were killed by army troops in Surankote area of Poonch district yesterday, defence sources said last night, reports PTI.

On specific information about the presence of large number of militants in the area, troops of Rashtriya Rifles cordoned off the area and launched a search operation, they said.

On Wednesday, eight militants were among nine people killed in three incidents in the Kashmir valley, an official source said.

# More corruption allegations against Estrada

MANILA, Nov 10: Philippine President Joseph Estrada today faced new corruption allegations that he received 20 million dollar kickback from the sale of the country's largest telephone company and pocketed more than 16 million dollar from a controversial stock sale, reports AP.

The Bankers Association of the Philippines, meanwhile, joined more than a dozen other business groups in calling for a speedy resolution of a political crisis triggered by earlier allegations by a provincial governor that Estrada received more than \$11 million from illegal gambling payoffs and tobacco taxes.

Deogracias Vistan, a former president of the bankers' group, said a prolonged crisis would further weaken confidence in the country's already shaky economy.

The peso fell to record low of 51.95 pesos per dollar last week as confidence in Estrada's leadership deteriorated and calls for his resignation escalated. Stocks are trading near two-year lows.

In the new allegations against the president, the former head of the government's Securities and Exchange Commission accused Estrada of having received a 1 billion peso (20 million dollar) kickback from the sale of a controlling stake in Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. to Hong Kong's Metro Pacific Corp.

Former SEC Chairman Perfecto Yasay also said Estrada personally made more than 800 million pesos (16 million dollar) from the sale of shares in BW Resources, a gambling company at the centre of a stock manipulation scandal.

Estrada pressured Yasay to resign after he accused the presi-

dent of attempting to influence an SEC investigation of a presidential friend at the center of the trading scandal, which rocked Manila's stock market.

There was no immediate comment from Estrada on Yasay's allegations.

Estrada responded to the earlier allegations for the first time Thursday, acknowledging that he had been offered 4 million dollar bribe by the provincial governor who has accused him of receiving the gambling payoffs and tobacco money. But Estrada insisted he had rejected the money.

# 21 rebels killed in Philippines

MANILA, Nov 10: Government forces killed 21 Muslim guerrillas and detained four others on the southern Philippines island of Jolo in continuing operations to rescue an American and a Filipino hostage, military sources said today, reports AFP.

Soldiers recovered the bodies of at least 21 Abu Sayyaf gunmen after a clash in the village of Mababay, near the town of Talipao on Thursday, said the sources, who asked to remain anonymous.

They said troops also arrested four suspected Abu Sayyaf guerrillas in a raid in the provincial capital on Thursday night.

The self-styled Muslim separatist group still holds US hostage Jeffrey Schilling and a Filipino divanest, Roland Ullah, two months into a massive military rescue operation ordered by President Joseph Estrada.



Former US First Lady Byrd Johnson; US President Bill Clinton, First Lady and Senator-elect Hillary Rodham Clinton, former President Gerald Ford, his wife Betty Ford; former President Jimmy Carter, and his wife Rosalynn Carter; and former President George Bush and his wife Barbara Bush walk into the East Room of the White House on Thursday for the 200th Anniversary White House Dinner. --AFP photo

# 200th anniversary of White House celebrated

WASHINGTON, Nov 10: President Bill Clinton and three of his predecessors on Thursday paid homage to the White House, which has sheltered American presidents for two centuries, as the contest to determine its next tenant remained unresolved, reports Reuters.

With the US presidential election still not decided two days after the vote, Clinton and three former presidents attended a banquet in the East Room to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the executive mansion.

Among the guests were former President George Bush and his wife Barbara. Their son, Texas Gov. George W. Bush, is locked in the tightest contest for president in decades with Vice President Al Gore.

"In the entire 200 years of White House history never before has this many former presidents, first ladies, gathered in this great room," Clinton said at the start of the dinner.

"In ways both large and small, each and every one of you has cast your light upon this house," he said. "I salute you and all those yet to grace these halls."

While the guests dined on seared striped bass and smoked loin of lamb, the next president rested on a vote recount in Florida that showed a

razor-thin margin between Republican Bush and Democrat Gore.

The senior Bush said his son was doing the "right thing and doing it with dignity."

"I'm a father, a very proud father, proud of the way my son has conducted himself and is conducting himself," Bush said before the dinner.

First lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who made history this week as the only president's wife to be elected to the Senate, switched to her White House role for the formal dinner.

The Clintons were each separated from the Bushes by a person at the head table, where former Presidents Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, their wives, and former first lady Lady Bird Johnson were also seated.

Ford once called the White House the "best public housing" in the world and former President Harry Truman called it a "glamorous prison."

The first president to move into the White House was John Adams, who arrived on Nov. 1, 1800, with the building still not finished, the surrounding area mainly undeveloped and the Capitol only half built.

The guest list was heavy on historians and members of Clinton's Cabinet, and light on members of Congress.

# 55 pc women vote for Gore: Exit poll

LOS ANGELES, Nov 10: The much talked-about gender gap is still a reality in US politics, according to an exit poll released Thursday, reports AFP.

Women preferred Vice President Al Gore by a margin of 55 per cent to 43 per cent, while men opted for Republican George W Bush by 54 per cent to 43 per cent, according to the national poll by the Los Angeles Times.

The gap among single women was even larger, at 66 per cent for the Democrat to 30 per cent for Bush. However, married women were equally divided, splitting at 49 per cent, the poll found.

Single men also preferred Gore by 48 per cent to 45 per cent, while married men supported Bush by 58 to 40 per cent.

The entire poll had a three per cent margin of error, though subgroups might have a "somewhat higher" margin of error, the newspaper said.

In other findings, African Americans traditionally strong Democrats voted overwhelmingly for the vice president, giving him 90 per cent of their votes.

Nine per cent of black voters who are nine per cent of the entire electorate supported Bush, the poll said.

Latinos seven per cent of all voters backed Gore over Bush by 61 per cent to 38 per cent, and Asian Americans (two per cent of voters) voted 62 to 37 per cent in favour of the vice president.

Whites, who are 80 per cent of all voters, favoured Bush 54 to 43 per cent.

Voters under 30 supported Gore by 54 to 41 per cent, while those 65 or older split the other way, 52 to 46 per cent for Bush, despite the vice president's attack on Republican plans for social security.

# Taiwan lifts ban on Chinese journalists

TAIPEI, Nov 10: Taiwan today lifted a half-century ban on the Chinese media, allowing mainland reporters entry to the island on a monthly rotation basis, government officials here said, reports AFP.

Chinese journalists could be posted to Taiwan on a case-by-case approval basis, said Lee Cher-jean, deputy director of the Government Information Office.

Taiwan and China, split in 1949 at the end of a civil war, are still technically at war despite the commencement of civil contact in late 1987.

Beijing has permitted Taiwanese reporters to work on the mainland for a few months at a time, while Taipei has granted coverage by Chinese journalists of selected events.

The relaxation is one step forward toward the goal of allowing long-term stationing by reporters in each other's place, said Chen Ming-tung, vice chairman of the cabinet-level Mainland Affairs Council which charts Taiwan's mainland policies.

"By staying longer in Taiwan, mainland reporters will have more contacts and deeper observation of the society here and conduct in-depth and objective coverage which will help better understanding about Taiwan," Lee said.

Three reporters and officials from the Hong Kong and Macau bureaus of China's Xinhua news agency would be the first Chinese journalists to be stationed in Taiwan, the China Times Express here said.

More than 6,236 mainland media personnel have visited the island in the last ten years, but only some 300 were permitted to work as reporters.

# Clinton, Barak to discuss UN peace force: Arafat

Fatah movement leader killed

WASHINGTON, Nov 10: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said on Thursday that US President Bill Clinton would bring up a proposal to deploy a UN force on the West Bank when he meets on Sunday with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, reports Reuters.

He said he will discuss it with the other party, Arafat told the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington after talks with Clinton and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

Clinton said on Monday that the idea of a UN peace force was not feasible because of Israeli opposition. White House spokesman PJ Crowley said on Thursday that Washington had not changed its view that the proposal was not viable.

But the United States, in the face of Palestinian insistence and Arab support, has not refused to talk about the idea as a way of ending six weeks of Israeli-Palestinian violence in which at least 190 people have been killed.

And State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said on Thursday that it was unlikely

that the plan would be implemented in the near future. "We don't believe this is the time for new UN initiatives. We don't think that's where the solution lies," he said.

Crowley, of the National Security Council, added: "To spend too much time on it right now simply diverts us then from bringing the violence under control and resuming a political process. It can't be done unless both parties want it done."

The proposal will come up at the UN Security Council in New York on Friday, when Arafat is expected to appeal for UN protection for the Palestinians.

The Palestinians are asking for a 2,000-strong UN force as a buffer between Israeli forces and the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Clinton and Arafat met at the White House under the shadow of an Israeli attack on a leading member of Arafat's Fatah movement, Hussein Abayat, whom Israeli linked to several shooting incidents in which Israelis have been killed.

An Israeli helicopter on Thursday attacked the vehicle in which Abayat was traveling, killing him and two women bystanders near the West Bank city of Bethlehem.

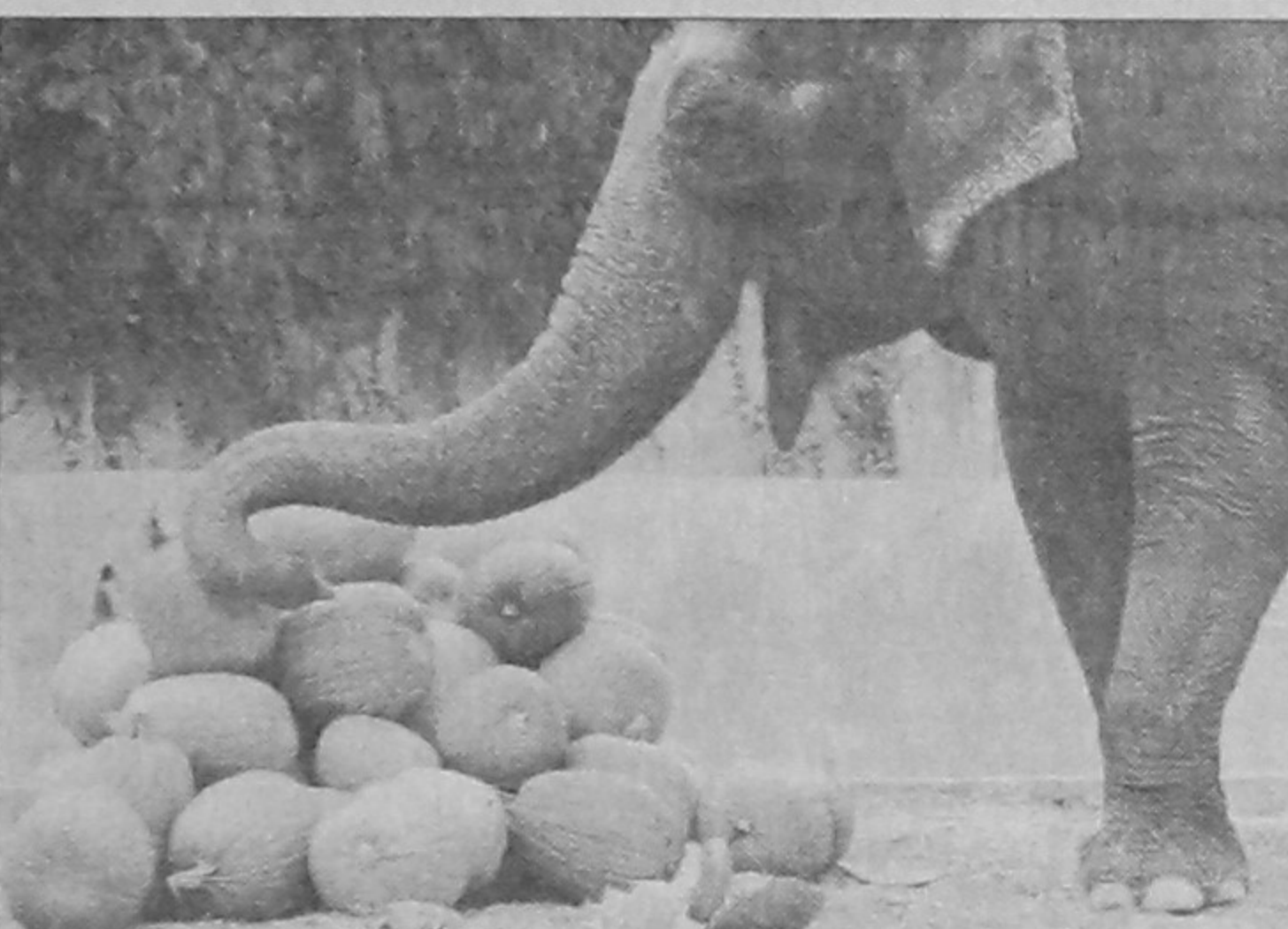
The United States declined to condemn the attacks but said the incident did raise "serious issues."

Arafat said the killing, described by Fatah as an assassination, was a "dangerous development" which Israeli chief of staff Shaul Mofaz had presaged in recent threats.

LT-Gen. Mofaz said on Sunday that the Israeli army should "move to a level where our operations are more initiated and less retaliatory."

The United States invited Arafat and Barak to Washington after they failed to carry out all the commitments they made at a summit with President Clinton at the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh on Oct 17.

The United States says the best way to end the violence is to implement those commitments, which include appeals for calm and troop redeployments.



National Zoo elephant Ambika feasts on pumpkins on Thursday during the annual pumpkin stomp at the National Zoo in Washington, DC. Gorillas and orangutans at the National Zoo are also expected to receive pumpkins. --AFP photo

# BRIEFLY

## 11 schoolchildren buried alive:

At least 11 schoolchildren were believed to have been buried alive in a landslide in the mountainous northern Philippines, police and the civil defence office said Friday, reports AFP.

Erosion from two mountains in remote Cabugao-Apayao town in Kalinga-Apayao province resulted in the landslide that destroyed a number of houses on Wednesday, leaving at least 11 schoolchildren buried alive and three injured. Police said provincial officials and local residents had launched a rescue operation for those missing.

## Three killed in Assam:

Two hardcore militants of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland and a woman were killed in separate incidents in Assam on Thursday, official sources said, PTI reports from Tezpur.

A group of suspected Bodo militants attacked the house of a hardcore NDFB militant at Gorokhul village in Sonitpur district Wednesday night while they were sleeping. The militant and his wife were shot dead while the Ultras fled under the cover of darkness to the nearby jungles, the sources said. In another incident, a hardcore NDFB militant was killed in an encounter with security forces in Nalbari district.

### Dhaka WASA Tender Notice

পানির অপচয় রোধে কাজ শেষে কলের মুখ বন্ধ করুন

Tenders are invited from class I, II, and III civil contractors enlisted with Dhaka WASA for repairing work of TB Gate Mohakhali Laboratory, DOHS-1 and DOHS No-2 pump house. The amount of the estimated money for the work is Taka 1,32,611/-. Tenders will be received on 27/11/2000 till 12:00 noon and will be opened the same day at 2:00 pm before the tenderers or their representatives (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**  
Mohakhali TB Gate  
Dhaka  
WASA-Pi-359/2000  
DFP-26937-6/11  
G-1987

**Md Abdul Quadir**  
Executive Engineer  
MODS Zone-5  
Dhaka WASA

# Marriage brings hopes of solidarity for Kashmiri separatists

SRINAGAR, India, Nov 10: Separatist groups in Kashmir are hoping a wedding between the children of two secessionist leaders from the Indian and Pakistan zones of the divided region will help unify their fractured movement, reports AFP.

The marriage has also resulted in accusations of rights violations against the Indian government which is refusing to provide travel documents to separatist leaders - including the groom's father - wanting to attend the November 19 ceremony in Rawalpindi.

The arranged match is between Sajjad Lone - son of veteran Kashmiri separatist leader Abdul Gani Lone - and Asma Kahn, daughter of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chairman in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, Amanullah Khan.

"I have petitioned the National Human Rights Commission to take up my case," Abdul Gani

Lone told AFP in New Delhi, where he and four other leaders of Indian Kashmir's main separatist alliance - the All Party Hurriyat Conference - had been waiting in vain this week for approval of their passport applications.

"He is my youngest son, and has been away from the family for 10 years. It is criminal to prevent me attending the wedding," he said.

While denying that the marriage represented a political alliance, Lone agreed that it carried a certain symbolic weight. "In one way it represents the longing of Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC to be together," he said.

The LoC, or Line of Control, is the de facto border dividing the Indian-controlled southern two-thirds of Kashmir from Pakistan's northern one third.

India and Pakistan have fought two full-scale wars over the Hima-

layan region, as well as a bitter border conflict last year.

Nearly all the pro-independence, pro-Pakistan and pro-India leaders in Indian Kashmir have been invited to the wedding, including Kashmiri Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

The bride and groom were both educated in London.

"Every Kashmiri living outside Kashmir wants to see his daughter marry a Kashmiri, and I feel this marriage may also help strengthen the unity between different groups," said Javed Mir, a senior JKLF leader in Indian Kashmir.

The JKLF split in 1994 when the faction headed by Yaseen Malik in Indian Kashmir broke away and renounced the use of the gun.

"The marriage of separatist families will lead to unity... that is the need of the hour," said

Shaid-ul-Islam, youth leader of the Awami Action Committee, a constituent of the Hurriyat Conference.

But others are unconvinced that a simple wedding will have any effect on the separatist movement.

"You can't really expect a marriage to bring peace to Kashmir or even to iron out differences between the various leaders here," said political analyst Murfat Qadri.

Abdul Ghani Lone said he had not spoken to Amanullah Khan for seven years when he picked up the phone to suggest the match between their children.

"He asked for two days to think about it, and then he called back to agree to the marriage," Lone said.

"He was of the opinion that his daughter should marry a Kashmiri-speaking boy if at all possible."

### BCIC International Tender Notice

বিসিআইসি'র পণ্য শিফারনে জাতীয় অস্বাভাবিক হ্রাসক

Sr General Manager (Purchase), BCIC, BCIC Bhaban (12th Floor), 30-31, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka invites sealed quotations against Tender Enquiry No PUR-3.1614/2000-2001 dated 1-11-2000 for Import of 30,000 MT ±10% Rockphosphate (65.5% BPL Min) on C&F(C) Chittagong on liner term basis under cash foreign exchange. Offer shall be received up to 11:00 AM on 6-12-2000 and be opened immediately thereafter. Tender documents with detailed terms and conditions will be available on payment of Tk 7,500.00 per set (non-refundable) from (i) Controller of Accounts, BCIC, BCIC Bhaban (2nd floor), Dhaka and (ii) Sr General Manager, BCIC Branch Office, 6, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong.

Earnest money is 1% (one per cent) of the total quoted C&F(C) value. No tender documents shall be sold on the date of opening and no late offer shall be accepted. The buyer reserves the right to accept or to reject any or all the bids without assigning any reason thereof.

**KH Rashid**  
General Manager (Purchase)  
for Sr General Manager (Purchase)

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