

US election drama ends Saturday

Americans deserve a fair count of their votes: Clinton

TALLAHASSEE, Florida, Nov 16 : Florida's top election official has set a Saturday deadline to declare a winner in the US presidential election, turning down vote recounts, as the two candidates failed to agree on ways to resolve the dispute, reports AFP.

I expect that, after receipt, tabulation and certification of the overseas absentee ballots by the counties, the state elections canvassing commission will finally certify the presidential election in Florida on Saturday," Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris said late Wednesday.

Harris, a staunch supporter of Republican candidate George W. Bush, pointed out, however, that the certification remained subject to pending court rulings.

She also said that under Florida law, she decided to "exercise my discretion" in denying requests by four Florida counties to file hand-counted returns after Tuesday's legal deadline.

All 67 counties in Florida filed their certified results on Tuesday to meet a state-imposed time limit for final results from the November 7 presidential election.

But officials in Palm Beach, where the recount had been blocked pending court action, said in their request that a sample of one percent of ballots cast in the county resulted in a net gain of 19 votes for Gore.

Two other counties requested permission to file amended returns without conducting a recount. Collier County said it inadvertently omitted 24 ballots from the returns sent in Tuesday, while Miami-Dade County wanted to add six votes for Gore.

William Daley, campaign chairman for Democratic candidate Al Gore, slammed Harris' decision as "really unfortunate" and said the

Gore camp would take legal action to reverse it.

The Gore campaign had insisted on manual recounts in several heavily Democratic Florida counties in the hope they would improve the electoral chances of the vice president, who is trailing his Bush, by 300 votes in the partial official tally unveiled Tuesday.

Meanwhile, Texas Governor Bush Wednesday spurned proposals by Gore for a Florida-wide manual vote recount and a face-to-face meeting as both sides pursued legal action.

Gore said earlier that he would accept the final vote count in Florida if it included manual recounts in Palm Beach, Miami-Dade and Broward counties, or a statewide manual recount should Bush, insist on it.

Bush also refused to meet Gore during the current standoff. "Once this election is over," Bush said, "I will be glad to meet with Vice President Gore and I join him in pledging that regardless of who wins after this weekend's final count, we will work together to unite our great country."

A short time later, Gore's running mate, Senator Joseph Lieberman, said in a statement that he and Gore were "deeply disappointed" by Bush's remarks.

The Florida Supreme Court earlier Wednesday turned down a petition by Harris to bloc manual recounts and consolidate the blizzard of lawsuits stemming from contested tallies throughout the state.

The court's decision did not address the merits of whether hand counting should be allowed, but refused to act on Harris request to block counts at this time.

With both Gore and Bush filing new lawsuits in the state Supreme

Court and Bush pressing an appeal in federal court, there appeared to be no end in sight to the legal wrangling that entered its second week after the election.

The Florida Supreme Court, whose seven justices were all appointed by Democratic governors, has had a history of contentious relations with the administration of Republican Governor Jeb Bush.

The two branches of government have feuded for years over issues ranging from sentencing guidelines to abortion, according to local media reports, but legal experts insisted that was not likely to affect the court's ruling.

"These people are not political hacks," said former Justice Gerald Kogan. "They're highly intelligent and they know what's at stake here."

Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton on Thursday gingerly passed judgement on the tangled US election, saying the American people deserved a full and fair count of their votes.

Clinton spoke to reporters in Brunei before meeting Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, hours after the top election official in Florida rejected requests for vote recounts and pledged to certify final results on Saturday.

Clearly trying to remain above the fray, Clinton said: "I'm over here, so I'm not sure what it means... I don't think I should get involved in that."

But he added: "The American people deserve a full and fair count. And I hope the process will produce it, and they're over there debating it in the appropriate way."

Clinton has used the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit here to reassure regional leaders that uncertainty over the result of the election will have little impact on US foreign policy.



Leah Rabin's daughter Dalia Rabin-Filisof (L) grieves at her mother's wreath-covered grave as other family members approach to lay flowers at the funeral of Leah Rabin on Wednesday in Jerusalem's Mount Herzl cemetery. Leah Rabin, 72, died of lung cancer on November 12 and was buried next to her husband, assassinated Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. — AFP photo

European troika mission to visit Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Nov 16 : A European delegation made up of officials from France, Sweden and the European Union (EU) will visit Pakistan this weekend for wide-ranging talks with top officials, sources said today, reports AFP.

The troika mission, due to arrive on Sunday, will hold formal discussions with military ruler General Pervez Musharraf and Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar among others, foreign ministry officials said.

The ambassadors of France, Sweden and the EU will lead the respective teams in their discussions, which are expected to focus on economic ties as well as the restoration of democracy following last year's military coup.

A phased programme of dis-

tribut level elections is due to begin next month under the Musharraf regime's ambitious devolution plan, designed to return the country to "genuine democracy" by October 12, 2002.

Musharraf raised international alarm when he toppled prime minister Nawaz Sharif and suspended the constitution in a bloodless coup last year, although the military takeover was welcomed by most Pakistanis. He has vowed to stamp out corruption and revive the economy within three years, before stepping aside for a new elected prime minister.

Sharif has been sentenced to lengthy jail terms and barred from politics for hijacking, corruption and tax evasion.

Estrada may be asked to testify against himself

Impeachment trial to start Dec 7

MANILA, Nov 16 : President Joseph Estrada's landmark impeachment trial is to start on December 7, during which prosecutors could seek to use the Philippine leader as a "hostile" witness, officials said today, reports AFP.

All 22 sitting senators are to take their oath before Supreme Court chief justice Hilario Davide on Monday to serve as jurors at the trial, senate president Aquilino Pimentel told reporters.

The trial could lead to Estrada's removal from office. A writ will also be served on Estrada on the same day, giving the embattled president 10 days to reply to formal charges of corruption, bribery, betrayal of public trust and culpable violation of the constitution.

An 11-member prosecuting panel from the House of Representatives would then have five days to comment on the reply before Davide opens the trial on December 7, Pimentel added.

A two-thirds vote is needed to convict former movie star Estrada, 63, and remove him from office. It would call for Vice President Gloria Arroyo, who has called for Estrada's resignation, to serve the remainder of his six-year term to June 2004.

Jurors cannot abstain and

neither Estrada nor the prosecutors can appeal the verdict, which some senators said could be ready by January.

"He (Estrada) may be called as a hostile witness," said House of Representatives member Eduardo Nachura, one of the prosecutors. "It can be done."

But Estrada's spokesman Ricardo Puno said the president could not be compelled to testify because Congress and the executive were co-equal branches of government.

"But if he volunteers and he agrees and his lawyers feel that the rules at the hearing would be enough to guarantee his rights then the president may agree to testify," he said.

Pimentel meanwhile said Estrada "may not be required to appear personally. He can submit his reply in writing (through) his defense lawyers."

Estrada was due to return home later Thursday after an overnight visit to Brunei where he attended an Asia-Pacific economic summit.

He is due to fly to Singapore late next week to attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Singapore on November 24-25, Foreign Secretary Domingo Siason said.

Clinton in Vietnam to seal historic rapprochement

No plan to apologise for war

HANOI, Nov 16 : US President Bill Clinton arrives in Communist Vietnam today determined to put his name in the history books by finally burying the hatchet on a war that threatened to tear America apart, reports AFP.

In what he hopes will be the grand finale of his presidency, Clinton will seek to expunge forever the humiliating image of America's embassy-roof exodus from Vietnam during the 1975 fall of Saigon, taking up the old mantra that Vietnam is "a country, not a war."

The size of Clinton's delegation, which is expected to number some 2,000 including the accompanying press, is an indication of how historic the moment is regarded in Washington.

But Vietnam's cautious communist authorities have done their utmost to play the visit down, even denying the US president the front-page photographs in official newspapers normally accorded to visiting heads of state.

And when First Lady Hillary Clinton led the presidential cavalcade into the communist capital in the early afternoon, a solitary Stars and Stripes was visible at the airport alongside nine red and yellow star flags of communist Vietnam.

A single banner draped over the runway side of the main arrivals terminal "warmly welcomes H.E. Mr. William Jefferson Clinton, president of the United States of America and spouse on an official visit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam," Clinton

was due to arrive late evening. A full quarter of a century after the conflict ended, most of Vietnam's young population now has no memory of the war.

But even in a country that has no democracy, the millions who were maimed or bereaved are still a constituency whose views the government is forced to take into account.

Vietnamese officials well understand the domestic constraints which make any explicit talk of reparations politically unthinkable for Washington.

AP adds: US President Bill Clinton has no intention of apologising in Vietnam for the war he bitterly opposed, with his ambassador to Hanoi saying the United States has already transformed relations with its onetime enemy "from pretty awful to pretty good."

"I don't necessarily think anyone is looking for an apology," Ambassador Pete Peterson said on the eve of Clinton's visit Thursday to Vietnam, the first by a US president since the fall of Saigon and the communist takeover in 1975.

Before setting out, Clinton met Thursday with Pacific Rim leaders on the final day of a 21-nation summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum. It was an early start for the president, who played golf until 2 am at a lighted course. He also was talking separately with Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori and Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

Suicide mission in space

EVRY, France, Nov 16 : A powerful Ariane-5 rocket lifted off from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana late Wednesday, taking aloft four satellites, two of which will be sent on a one-year suicide mission to measure the destructive forces of radiation in space, officials said, reports AFP.

The 6.3-tonne payload was the fourth commercial flight for the Ariane 5, a 754-tonne heavy lifter launched for the first time on December 10 last year.

Arianespace, the marketing arm of the European Space Agency (ESA), said the liftoff was at 7:07 BST Thursday.

The rocket's passengers included the world's biggest amateur radio satellite, AMSAT-P-3D, 630 kilos (1,386 pounds), which will shuttle transmissions between Europe, North America and the Middle East.

Another big satellite was PAS-1R, 4.7 tonnes, built for the US firm PanAmSat to replace the satellite PAS-1 to provide high volume telecommunications between Europe, Africa and the Americas.

The other payload was two microsatellites built by Britain's Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA), a defence minis-

try unit tasked with testing new technologies and military materiel.

The satellites, weighing just 100 kilos (220 pounds) each, will be sent on a highly elliptical orbit, in which they will zoom, four times a day, out into geosynchronous orbit 39,000 km (24,500 miles) up and swoop back to skim the Earth's atmosphere, at a height of just 600 km (375 miles).

The two satellites, Space Technology Research Vehicles (STRV) 1c and 1d, will be exposed to brutally harsh conditions, especially their passage through the van Allen radiation belts girding the globe.

Over their one-year lifetime, the STRV satellites will receive radiation doses normally experienced over eight to 10 years by spacecraft in low Earth and geosynchronous orbit," DERA said in a statement.

They include the survivability of electronics in the van Allen belts, measurement of cosmic rays and dust, which can cripple spacecraft, and demonstration of Internet-based communications that could be used for future space missions, such as a planned Mars orbiter and lander.

PNG hit by tidal wave after massive quake

PORT MORESBY, Nov 16 : A tsunami crashed ashore at Rabaul and Kokopo in Papua New Guinea's East New Britain Province today, damaging a supermarket and other buildings after an earthquake measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale hit the region, reports AFP.

There were no immediate reports of injuries, but communications with both Rabaul and nearby Kokopo town were out.

A supervisor with Lihir gold mine, about 150 km to the north in New Ireland province, told Australian Associated Press he felt the quake at about 1500 local time (11:00 BST) and that at 1700 (13:00 BST) aftershocks were still being felt.

"I have no confirmation, but it registered about 6.0 on the Richter scale here on Lihir and I understand it was seven or eight (on the Richter scale) at Rabaul and Kokopo," said the mining supervisor, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"There is no damage on Lihir and I don't think there's big damage at Rabaul. I was able to speak to someone there before the phones went."

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ADMISSION ANNOUNCEMENT

Applications are invited for admission into the MBA Program (session 2000-2001) for full-time (day) and part-time (evening) sections.

QUALIFICATIONS: The minimum qualifying points for applying to the MBA program is 7 (seven), with no more than one third division in any public examination, calculated on the following basis :

Certificate/Degree	Division/Class		
	1st	2nd	3rd
SSC or equivalent	3	2	1
HSC or equivalent	3	2	1
Bachelor Degree (Pass)	4	3	2
Bachelor Degree (Hons) and Bachelor of Engineering, Medicine & Agriculture	5	4	2
Master Degree	1	1	1

For applicants with 4 years' bachelor degree with CGPA, points will be calculated as shown in table A. Candidates who have passed at least 5 papers in G.C.E. "O" Level and two papers of "A" level with a bachelor degree may also apply. For such candidates to be eligible to apply the minimum qualifying Grade Point Average (GPA) in "O" & "A" levels are 2.5 and 2.0 respectively. GPAs for "O" level and "A" level are calculated on a 4-point scale (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1) as shown in table B.

Table A		Table B	
CGPA	Point	O Level GPA	A Level GPA
3.5 & above	5	3.0 & above	3
3.0 to <3.5	4	2.0 to <3.0	2
2.5 to <3.0	3	1.0 to <2.0	1

For all other foreign certificates, the Institute will determine equivalence. Candidates with foreign degrees who have a score of at least 500 in GMAT with minimum 30 percentile in verbal and 50 percentile in quantitative may not take the MBA admission test (written) administered by the Institute. However, they will be required to appear at an interview.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE: The application form along with MBA Brochure can be collected from Agrani Bank, Curzon Hall Branch, Dhaka University on payment of Tk. 300.00 (non-refundable) from Sunday, November 19, 2000. Application form may also be obtained by mail from the MBA program office by sending a Bank Draft of Tk. 300/- drawn in favour of **MBA Admission, IBA** along with a self addressed envelope (10" X 8") with a postage stamp of Tk. 35.00.

The filled-in application form should be submitted to MBA Program Office between 9:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays from November 19, 2000 to December 17, 2000. For further information, please contact MBA Program Office, Telephone No. 9661900-59 extn: 4755

WRITTEN TEST: The Written test for admission will be held at 10:00 a.m. on **Friday, December 22, 2000.**

Director

I B A

Russia can't guarantee Mir's safe de-orbiting

MOSCOW, Nov 16 : It is impossible to guarantee that Russia's Mir space station will sink in the Pacific Ocean rather than hitting the land, a Russian space official said Wednesday as quoted by the RIA-Novosti news agency, reports AFP.

It was impossible to accurately predict how the 130-tonne station and its many components would fall after they pass through the atmosphere, because the lower space and atmosphere conditions shift daily, director of

Khrunchev space research center Anatoly Kiselyov said.

"It depends on numerous factors such as solar flares, relative positions of the planets and variations of atmospheric density," Kiselyov was quoted as saying.

Some parts of the ageing station's component modules would not burn up in the atmosphere and would fall to earth, over a swath some 8,000 km long and 200 km wide, he said.

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