

PML's anti-Sharif faction invades party office

Police seal off entrance

ISLAMABAD, Nov 20 : Pakistani security officers sealed the main office of ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) today ahead of a crucial central committee meeting, party leaders said, reports AFP.

More than 100 people claiming to be party workers opposed to a planned alliance between the PML and an opposition coalition invaded the office and shouted anti-Sharif slogans, witnesses said.

"PML House in Islamabad has been taken over by plainclothes intelligence people and they're not allowing anyone to enter," key PML leader Raja Zafarul Haq told AFP.

Syed Zafar Ali Shah, another senior PML leader and former senator, said numbers of uniformed police were at the office but did not intervene as the mob, many of whom were armed with sticks, rampaged through the premises.

"They are plainclothes policemen (acting as anti-Sharif party members). We condemn this brutal action and the physical takeover of the office by police," he said.

"No one is being allowed to enter the office. We don't want to create a law and order situation so we have decided to change the venue of the meeting."

He said the meeting, expected to vote on whether the PML should join the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) of opposition parties,

had been moved to the house of Sharif's wife in Islamabad.

"The police are not allowing our supporters to attend but they are allowing other people," Sharif's wife, Kulsoom Nawaz, told AFP in the eastern city of Lahore Sunday night.

The opposition alliance, headed by former prime minister Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), last week decided to accept the PML in what would be a major challenge to the military regime of General Pervez Musharraf.

Musharraf ousted Sharif in a coup last October, vowing to stamp out corruption, revive the economy and return the country to "genuine democracy" by October 2002.

Sharif and Benazir are both two-time prime ministers who dominated Pakistani politics in the 1990s and remain bitter rivals.

They still lead their parties although Sharif is serving lengthy jail terms for hijacking and corruption and Benazir, who is also facing corruption charges here, lives in London.

Police at the PML office denied organising the mob, most of whom arrived in buses from Lahore.

"We have disarmed them but we will not take any action until they are peaceful," Superintendent of Police Munnir Sheikh said at the scene.

"This is the PML's problem and we are not

interfering," said another police officer.

Some members of the mob were shouting "Long live the Islamabad police," "Friends of the PPP are traitors of the nation" and "Down with Nawaz Sharif."

"We won't let any Nawaz Sharif supporters in," said one.

The office doors had been locked and a main road blocked to prevent the meeting taking place, witnesses said.

PML leaders in the southern port city of Karachi told AFP they had been stopped as they tried to board a plane to Islamabad to attend the meeting.

Ejaz Shaif, a senior party member, said: "Haleem Siddiqui, Khwaja Qutoobuddin and myself were stopped by the police and paramilitary Rangers and were told that we cannot go without any reason."

"I believe there is panic in the government over reports of a possible alliance between the PML and the PPP," Siddiqui said.

The PML is believed to be split between the pro-Sharif camp which advocates joining the GDA and opponents who refuse to unite in any way with the PPP.

Saad Rafiq, a former PML member of parliament and an opponent of the GDA, was at the office as the mob took over.

"We're not doing anything. We're trying to calm the situation. We are against alliances with our enemies," he said.



Workers of Pakistan Muslim League (PML), armed with sticks, chanting slogans against the deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif, and protest after invading the PML party office in Islamabad yesterday. Workers destroyed office furniture and removed all of Sharif's pictures from the walls. More than 100 hundred people claiming to be party workers were opposing a planned alliance between the PML and an opposition coalition. —AFP photo

Floods render 100,000 Lankans homeless

COLOMBO, Nov 20 : More than 100,000 people have been left homeless by floods triggered by heavy monsoon rains, social service officials said today as police reported two flood-related deaths, reports AFP.

Large areas in Sri Lanka's eastern province were underwater with some 94,000 people homeless in the district of Ampara alone, officials said.

Neighbouring Batticaloa and Polonnaruwa districts were also badly affected, but officials were unable to confirm the number of victims in the more remote areas.

It was estimated that over 100,000 people had been driven out of their homes due to the floods, officials said.

State govt calls meet to plan Veerappan's capture

BANGALORE, India, Nov 20 : The government of India's Karnataka state called a meeting with opposition leaders today, to work out a strategy for catching the bandit who held film icon Rajkumar captive for 108 days, reports AFP.

A state government official said Karnataka chief minister S.M. Krishna would meet opposition parties in the early evening before issuing a statement on his administration's plans.

Rajkumar and three others were kidnapped by the bandit, Veerappan, in neighbouring Tamil Nadu state on July 30. The 72-year-old actor was released on November 15.

Karnataka Home Minister Mallikarjun Kharge indicated Sunday that a special unit charged with apprehending Veerappan would resume its operations immediately.

Chechnya's future status 'not that important': Putin

MOSCOW, Nov 20 : Russian President Vladimir Putin said today that the status of separatist Chechnya was "not that important today" while conceding that federal forces had lost some 2,600 men in the 13-month campaign, reports AFP.

However he vowed to fight the "anti-terrorist" operation, which featured prominently in his successful presidential election campaign, until they end.

"We do not need a victory at any cost," said Putin, in remarks that contrasted sharply with his previous tough talk on Chechnya.

Today, Chechnya's formal status is not that important," Interfax quoted Putin as saying in a speech before top military officials in Moscow.

He said that the future status of Chechnya would only be resolved "through political means" and stressed that Russian generals had to make sure that federal casualties were limited in the future.

European troika presses Pakistan on democracy

ISLAMABAD, Nov 20 : A high-level European Union (EU) mission started two days of wide-ranging talks with Pakistani officials today, focusing on the military government's plans to restore democracy, officials said, reports AFP.

Diplomats said the troika mission representing France, Sweden and the European Commission (EC) arrived early in the morning and were due to meet Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar and military ruler General Pervez Musharraf later in the day.

They were also scheduled to meet senior political figures from the parliament which was suspended when Musharraf toppled prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup in October last year.

"The EU is of the opinion that Pakistan should not be isolated," said EC councillor in Pakistan Pedro Martinez.

It is extremely keen to see a restoration of democracy as soon as possible and this visit is in that spirit."

The mission will be led by Dominique Girard, assistant secretary for Asia and Oceania at the French foreign ministry, on behalf of the French presidency of the European Union.

Other delegates include Oliver Chambard, the French deputy assistant secretary for South Asia, Anna Linstedt, Sweden's deputy assistant secretary for South Asia, as well as EC representatives Jonathan Scheele and Heino Marlu.

The European grouping expressed alarm at the military takeover a year ago but has not sanctioned Pakistan and is determined to pursue normal economic and diplomatic relations with the Musharraf regime.

But it has repeatedly asked the general to make firm commitments to elections and a return to civilian rule.

Musharraf has vowed to stamp out corruption and revive the economy within three years, before stepping aside for a new elected prime minister.

India's Ramadan truce offer a fraud: Militants

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, Nov 20 : Muslim militant groups today dismissed India's offer of a ceasefire during the holy month of Ramadan as a fraud and vowed to continue their operations, reports AFP.

Lashkar-i-Toiba spokesman Yahya Mujahid said "we totally reject" Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's offer.

In a statement the group said the offer was a part of "Indian politics based on fraud and deception."

"If India is sincere in a ceasefire it should withdraw its forces from Kashmir and end all military activities there," said the group, based in the Pakistani zone of the divided Himalayan state.

Vajpayee on Sunday said his government had instructed Indian security forces "not to initiate combat operations against the militants in Kashmir during this most pious month in the Islamic calendar," starting later this month.

"I hope that our gesture will be fully appreciated and all violence in the state and infiltration across the Line of Control (the unofficial border) ... will cease and peace will prevail," Vajpayee said.

The Lashkar-i-Toiba statement said the offer was a sign of low morale among India's security forces.

"The Vajpayee government is staging the ceasefire drama amid an expected increase in the Mujahideen activities during the holy month while the morale of Indian forces is low," it said.

Meanwhile, the people of Kashmir were waiting Monday for a response by the region's main militant group, Hizbul Mujahideen, to the government's offer of a ceasefire during the holy Muslim month of Ramadan.

Some Muslim rebel groups have already rejected Sunday's offer by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, but others were clearly waiting to see how the Hizbul would move.

Peruvian Cabinet resigns

Fujimori era ends, he's to stay in Japan a 'little bit longer'

LIMA, Nov 20 : News that Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori intends to resign prompted his entire 14-member Cabinet to offer their own resignations Sunday, rocketing up levels of political uncertainty in the Andean nation, reports AFP.

The ministers said they resigned to protest the president's surprise decision.

"We have to express our indignation over such a surprise move," they said in a joint statement.

Fujimori was expected to attend the Ibero-American summit in Panama City when he made what began as a brief stop-over in Tokyo.

Prime Minister Federico Salas told a local radio station that Fujimori had told him by telephone from Tokyo earlier Sunday of his intentions to resign within 48 hours.

Salas would not comment on whether Fujimori would return to Lima to formally present his resignation.

ern Hemispheric Affairs, Peter Romero, and Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs, Anthony Wayne, was expected in Peru Monday to discuss the situation in the country, according to the US Embassy here.

Opposition leader Alejandro Toledo said in a radio interview from Paris that Fujimori's planned resignation was "a significant victory for a lot of people."

Toledo also said that preparations for general elections scheduled for April 8, 2001, would continue.

Fujimori had been due to end his third presidential term in July, after a constitutional amendment was overwhelmingly ratified by the Peruvian legislature to shorten presidential terms from five years to one.

Salas said in a radio interview that the president "does not want to obstruct in any way the process of democratisation, and wants the upcoming elections to be absolutely clear for all the Peruvian people."

Meanwhile, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, who has announced he plans to resign, may stay in Japan "a little bit longer" a Japanese official said Monday.

The chief of the foreign ministry's central and south american bureau heard that Fujimori's stay could be prolonged "a little bit longer," said Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Yutaka Kawashima at a press conference here Monday.



Alberto Fujimori

PA denies link with bomb blast

'Israel army must respond to attack'

GAZA CITY, Nov 20 : The Palestinian Authority today denied any connection with a bomb blast in the Gaza Strip that killed two Israelis and said it would open an investigation into the attack, reports AFP.

"The Palestinian Authority has no relationship to the explosion that took place in the Kissufim area in the Gaza Strip, in an area not under the Palestinian National Authority's control," said a senior Palestinian official who asked not to be named.

Two Israelis were killed Monday when a bomb exploded in the path of an Israeli school bus in the Gaza Strip, adding to the bloodshed in the Palestinian territories and dealing a new setback to peace efforts.

The bomb blast near the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom injured some 10 others, among them five children, the army said. Two of the wounded were said to be critical.

He said Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has called an immediate meeting of the Palestinian Security Council and that an investigation into the explosion has been ordered.

"The Palestinian Authority condemns all acts of violence, whoever carries them out," the official added.

Arafat on Friday confirmed that the Palestinian security council had issued a "clear order" for Palestinians to stop shooting at Israelis from within areas controlled by the self-rule authority.

The Israeli army, however, was unsatisfied with the order, saying it opened the door for attacks against Israelis from Arab areas still under Israeli jurisdiction.

Monday's bomb blast occurred near the Jewish settlement of Kfar Darom in the central part of the Gaza Strip and injured nine others, among them five children, the Israeli army said.

Pak tribesman kills daughters, wife for honour

KARACHI, Nov 20 : A Pakistani tribesman has slaughtered his wife and two daughters in the name of "honour," senior police said today, reports AFP.

Mohammad Umar Magsi, from southwestern Baluchistan province, axed his wife Shehr Banu, 44, and daughters Farzana Magsi, 11, and Sabra Magsi, nine, in his house in this southern port city on Sunday night, police said.

"I have no regrets because it was a question of my honour," Umar told reporters after he surrendered to police.

Karachi police chief Tariq Jamil said Umar suspected Farzana of "having an affair with someone" and described the killings as part of tribal "tradition."

He said Umar's rage became a slaughter when his wife and other daughter tried to intervene.

Hundreds of people, the majority women, are killed every year in Pakistan in the name of honour.

Human rights groups claim the practice is increasing but authorities often turn a blind eye.

"If 300 were killed in 1999, around 350 were killed from January to June 2000 in Sindh province alone," Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) representative Moazzam Ali said.

Kfar Darom is near the Kissufim crossing point between Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, saying he was profoundly shocked by the incident, called an emergency meeting of his security cabinet to decide Israel's response.

The army said it held Arafat's authority responsible because it had released Islamic militants in October in response to Israeli rocket attacks against Palestinian-run cities.

Meanwhile, the head of Prime Minister Ehud Barak's parliamentary Labour Party called today for the Israeli Army to respond to the bomb attack that killed two Israelis in the Gaza Strip.

"It is an exceptionally grave attack, which demands a response from the army because we have warned (Palestinian leader) Yasser Arafat about such attacks," Ophir Pines told Israeli television.

UN signs MOU with China to expand talks on HR

BEIJING, Nov 20 : UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson continued to voice concern over China's dismal human rights record, but praised an agreement today by Beijing to expand dialogue with the UN as "a very significant move," reports AFP.

Following talks with China's Vice Foreign Minister Wang Guangya, Robinson signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on technical cooperation designed to help China comply with two international human rights covenants that Beijing has signed but not ratified.

"This is a very significant move and I would like to acknowledge it as such, it is a very positive step and I believe we can build on this cooperation to encourage ratification on the two covenants," she said.

China has signed the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Covenant on Political and Civil Rights, but has yet to ratify them.

President Jiang Zemin earlier this year vowed the former covenant would be ratified by the year's end.

Robinson was slated to meet with Vice Premier Qian Qichen later Monday and with Jiang on Tuesday when they would hold the first seminar under the MOU.

Over the last few years, Robinson said, China had made no progress in the areas of freedom of expression, association and religious belief and cited rights concerns voiced by members of the Falungong spiritual group which China banned in July 1999.

"Last March, I noted progress in certain areas and I identified three areas where there was in my view no progress and indeed potentially stepping back; in freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religious belief," she told journalists.

"These remain areas of concern and I hope to discuss them further with the vice minister," she said.

Although, the MOU had four areas of focus including, human rights education, punishment for minor crimes, training of police and economic and cultural rights, Robinson said she would continue to press the Chinese government on overall rights issues.

Estrada summoned to answer charges

Impeachment tribunal launched

MANILA, Nov 20 : Philippine Senators ordered President Joseph Estrada today to answer charges of corruption and bribery after taking oaths as jurors in his unprecedented impeachment trial, reports AFP.

The Senators, clad in black togas as members of an impeachment court, passed a resolution ordering the 63-year-old former movie star to "answer the impeachment charges within a non-extendable period of 10 days."

Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide, sitting as chairman of the tribunal of 22 senators, ordered the senate sergeant at arms to "immediately" serve the summons to Estrada.

The House of Representatives impeached Estrada last week for alleged bribery, corruption, betrayal of public trust and culpable violation of the constitution.

At least 16 senators find him guilty on any of the charges, he automatically loses his post and Vice President Gloria Arroyo will replace him. The verdict cannot be appealed.

The trial is set to start on December 7.

Estrada, who has served less than three years of a six-year mandate, said earlier Monday

that he is not a crook but would "accept the verdict of the senate" even if it meant his removal from office.

He also urged his foes to accept the result if it went in his favour.

Arroyo, who has urged Estrada to resign, had earlier said that the president had lost the moral ground on which to govern, regardless of the verdict.

Estrada also said Monday that he was "ready to take the witness stand if necessary," while

expressing fear that prosecutors would call his mistresses to the stand "to humiliate me."

House minority leader Feliciano Belmonte told reporters he and his fellow prosecutors "want him (Estrada) to take the stand because we need his testimony."

He added: "We are very confident we can win."

Estrada said his lawyers had studied the charges and concluded that "there is no evidence to convict me."



Supreme Court Chief Justice Hilario Davide (L) administering the juror's oath to Senator Francisco Tatak (C) while Senate President Aquilino Pimentel stands as witness at the Philippine Senate on Monday. —AFP photo

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Corrigendum
 Date: 16 Nov 2000
 ADB Loan No.: 1538 BAN (SF)

A notice inviting tender dated 15 Nov. 2000 was published in different national dailies for supply of Mosquito Control Logistics under the following packages:
 PIU-200013; Package # 1 - Fogger Machine for Mosquito Control, Portable ULV (Ultra Low Volume) machine for Mosquito Control, Wheel Mounted Sprayers for Mosquito Control
 PIU-200014; Package # 2 - Insecticide (Adulticide for fogger machine) for Mosquito Control
 PIU-200015; Package # 3 - Insecticide (Larvicide) for Mosquito Control

In reference to the above notice the project authority hereby confirms the following:
 1. The last date of bidding document purchase: up to 29 Nov. 2000 in place of 30 Nov. 2000
 2. The bid opening date: on 30 Nov. 2000 in place of 03 Dec. 2000.
 3. The bid document purchasing fee for the local applicant (from Bangladesh) is Tk. 2000/- (Taka two thousand only) instead of Tk. 700/- (Taka seven hundred only) per package.
 4. The bid schedule will be sold and received by the office of the Chief Health Officer, Dhaka City Corporation, Room #223, Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka and office of the Project Director, Urban Primary Health Care Project, Room # 620, Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka.

Other terms and conditions will remain unchanged.

DCC/PRD/205/00-01
 GD-1068
 Project Director-UPHCP

Bangladesh Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (BCSIR)
 সূত্র নং Seett/Lib/314/198-19/95 তারিখ: 09-11-2000

Tender Notice

Sealed tenders are hereby invited from bonafide Journals suppliers for supply of foreign Scientific and Technological Journals (January to December 2001) for BCSIR Library in foreign/local currency allocation. The tender papers may be obtained from the cashier of BCSIR on payment of Tk 750/- (Seven hundred fifty) (non-refundable) and the same may be dropped in the tender box kept in the office of the Library building by 12.30 PM within 29-11-2000. An earnest money in the form of pay-order/bank draft of Tk 20,000/- (Twenty thousands) must be submitted along with tender in favour of BCSIR. Tenders will be opened on the same date at 2.00 PM in presence of tenders or their representative (if any). Tender documents may be purchased up to 28-11-2000 during office hours.

Authority reserves the right to accept or reject any tender without assigning any reason thereof.
 DFP-27787-15/11
 G-2029
 Dr Mirza Mohd Rezaul Islam
 Principal Librarian

Tender Notice

Sub: Tender Notice for Appointed of Clearing Agent

Sealed quotations are invited by M/s. Peoples Jute Mills Ltd, Town Khalishpur, Khulna for appointment of C&F Agent for clearance of imported consignments from Zia International Air Port Customs, Mongla Port, Benapole & Chittagong Customs. Tender opening date 20-12-2000 at 12.30 pm. Tender schedule with full details of requirements, specifications and terms and conditions can be obtained (excepting opening date) from (1) The Controller (A&F), BJMC, Adamjee Court, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka. (2) The Coordinator/Liaison Officer, BJMC, Satter Chamber, 99, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong. (3) The Coordinator/Liaison Officer, BJMC(KZ), Hafizuddin Road, Khulna. (4) The Dy. General Manager (A&F), Peoples Jute Mills Ltd., Town Khalishpur, Khulna on payment of Tk. 75.00 (seventy-five) per set (non-refundable).

BJMC: 703 dt. 13-11-2000
 DFP-27721-15/11
 G-2030