



Clinton rules out bid as NY mayor

WASHINGTON, Dec 3: Mayor Bill Clinton? The New York Times said it put that question to the outgoing two-term US president in an interview in the Oval Office this week, amid rumours Clinton was considering running for mayor of New York after leaving the White House on January 20, reports Reuters.

"Not any time soon," Clinton told the newspaper in response.

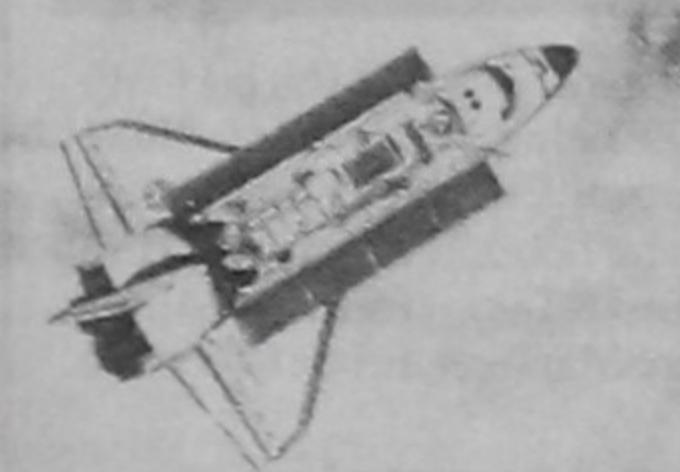
Clinton has said little about his post-white House plans, fueling wild speculation in the press about his future.

A British newspaper reported earlier this year that the president was eager to settle near Oxford University prompting former White House press secretary Joe Lockhart to joke that Clinton would go "only after he finishes his term as president of the Intergalactic Federation from his home base on Mars."

Pressed by reporters in September about his plans, Clinton dismissed suggestions that he would spend his time writing a book about the impeachment scandal. "I've thought about it enough already," he said.

Rumours spread this week that Clinton would follow in the footsteps of first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who last month won a US Senate seat from New York by launching a mayoral bid.

Pressed for comment, White House spokesman Jake Siewert quipped that the president "already has the second-toughest job in American politics. Why would he want the toughest?"



A view of the space shuttle Endeavour from the International Space Station.

## Endeavour docks with Int'l Space Station

HOUSTON, Texas, Dec 3: The space shuttle Endeavour docked Saturday with the International Space Station (ISS) on which astronauts will install two giant power-generating solar panels, NASA said, reports AFP.

Endeavour commander Brent Jett and co-pilot Michael Bloomfield positioned the craft below the space station then slowly ascended into docking position on the station's Unity module.

"Houston: capture confirmed," Johnson space centre mission control announced, signalling the successful completion of the manoeuvre.

The two vessels were slowly orbiting above Kazakhstan.

It is the first mission to the station since American William Shepherd and Russians Yury Gidzenko and Sergei Krikalyov took up residence there.

The Endeavour carefully approached the station under the watchful eyes of US and Russian mission controllers and the space station's "Expedition One" crew.

To clear the way for Endeavour's docking mechanism, the Russian Progress unit split off from the station Friday. Parked some 2,500 km away, the unit will eventually rejoin the ISS after the completion of Endeavour's 11-day mission.

And Russian mission controllers were charged with protecting the two smaller solar panels currently powering the Zvezda and Zarya modules from any damage by moving them out of Endeavour's docking path.

## Philippine storm death toll 25

MANILA, Dec 3: The death toll from tropical storm Rumbia rose to 25 as it moved away from the Philippines, local reports said today, reports AFP.

The storm, which hit the central and southern Philippines last week, left 25 dead, most of them victims of drowning or landslides in the south, newspapers said, quoting relief officials.

The official National Disaster Coordinating Council however said it had only listed 12 dead and seven missing so far.

The council placed property damage at 71.3 million pesos (1.4 million dollars).

More than 3,000 people remain in evacuation centers due to flooding, the council added.

By early Saturday, the storm, which had weakened to a tropical depression, was located about 460 kilometers west of Palawan island, moving west at 19 kilometers per hour into the South China Sea.

These lower temperatures, especially in winter, cause stratospheric

## International

# India wary of Pakistan's 'maximum restraint'

NEW DELHI, Dec 3: Pakistan's surprise offer of "maximum restraint" on the disputed Kashmir border is at best a small step forward, and more likely aimed at deflecting global criticism of its alleged support of cross-border terrorism, Indian analysts said today, reports AFP.

Experts reacted cautiously to Islamabad's offer on Saturday to de-escalate tension in Kashmir and hold a "meaningful dialogue" with India and separatists, saying New Delhi needed proof of Pakistan's sincerity.

"Deeds must follow rhetoric," said Kalim Bahadur, a Pakistan expert at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University.

He charged that Pakistan's support of cross-border terrorism in the Indian zone of divided Kashmir was well-known. Islamabad denies the allegations, but offers open moral support to militant groups.

Bahadur said the Pakistani offer came with "too many strings attached" to be palatable to India, including a suggestion of talks with the Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference, the main Kashmiri separatist alliance based in Srinagar.

"It could be a ploy to wash their hands off the (Pakistan-based) militant groups," he said.

Pakistan's hand in cross-border terrorism is well-known around the world and there has been a lot of pressure on them to stop all that," he said.

Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Inamul Haq announced in Islamabad on Saturday that "with immediate effect, the Pakistan armed forces deployed along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir will observe

maximum restraint."

The initiative followed an Indian ceasefire offer for the holy month of Ramadan in Kashmir, which went into effect midnight Monday.

"The Indian government will firm up its stand in consultation with the external affairs ministry," Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani told reporters in New Delhi in response to Islamabad's offer.

Advani said India was "really concerned" over Pakistan-backed infiltration of Islamic militants across the border into Kashmir and the supply of weapons to the separatists in the disputed frontier state.

Pakistan Foreign Secretary Haq said Islamabad "does not exercise any control" on militant groups fighting against Indian rule in Kashmir.

He said Islamabad was willing to enter into "meaningful dialogue" with India and proposed that the Hurriyat Conference, hold talks with Pakistan and India separately to pave the way for three-way talks.

Defence experts said the Pakistani initiative lacks meaning as troops on both sides are forced to de-escalate their deployments with the onset of winter in the Himalayan state.

Commodore C. Uday Bhaskar, deputy director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, told AFP that the Pakistani offer "appeared to be linked to the 596-million-dollar IMF aid package cleared recently."

"It is my belief that it would not have been cleared without some Pakistani assurances to the global community."

Bhaskar said New Delhi had no option but to respond cautiously, citing an Indian-sponsored peace initiative last year which was followed by Pakistani incursions in Kashmir that led to a border conflict.



Normal life continues in Srinagar yesterday, the sixth day of Ramadan ceasefire in Kashmir. Security forces continue maintaining a vigil but keep their guns silent. There has been no retaliation in spite of scattered attacks on security positions across the valley.

-AFP photo

## Police step up crackdown on Irian Jaya separatists

JAYAPURA, Indonesia, Dec 3: Police in Indonesia's Irian Jaya province stepped up their crackdown on separatism today, raiding a pro-independence headquarters and arresting 47 more activists, reports AFP.

More than 200 armed, anti-riot police took over the Irian Jaya Arts and Cultural Centre in the capital city of Jayapura at 3:30 am (0030 BST), provincial police chief, Brigadier General Sylvanus Wena, told AFP.

The seizure of the building, which has served as a headquarters for the Papua Taskforce, a pro-independence civilian guard, for the past six months, came almost 24 hours after a deadline to vacate the building ran out.

"We had an agreement with independence leaders that they would vacate the building by December 2 but they were still occupying it, so we seized it," Wena said.

It also came a day after seven people were killed, six shot by Indonesian troops, in the town of Merauke, 600 km south of here, after separatists replaced the national flags with the pro-independence 'Morning Star.'



Some 49 independence supporters sit on the ground shortly after they were arrested by Indonesian police in Jayapura yesterday. Indonesian police took over the Irian Jaya art and culture centre building which have been used as the headquarters of the pro-independence Papua taskforce.

-- AFP photo

anymore...because they violated the agreement," Wena said Sunday.

He said rioters in Merauke had attacked security personnel and settlers, killing one Javanese man, and had pulled down and burned Indonesia's red-and-white flag.

On November 9, police secured an agreement with the chief pro-independence body, the Papua President, that the separatist flag would be lowered from all but five places across Irian Jaya - Merauke, Jayapura, Jayawijaya, Serui and Manokwari.

Lieutenant Colonel Daud Siham, chief of Jayapura police, said 47 people were arrested following the arts centre raid, including the head of the Papua Taskforce, Boy Eluay.

Those who have not violated the law will be released," Siham said.

He said Eluay had been arrested at the police station shortly after the raid.

Boy Eluay came to the police station at about 6:00 am to check on the taskforce when he heard about the raid, and we arrested him on the spot, but on a separate case - an old case of extortion," Siham said.

A total of 61 people have been arrested here since Wednesday. Four have been since released, Siham said.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest since September 22, when she and other NLD leaders attempted to board a train in Mandalay, in the country's north.

Tensions between the Nobel laureate and the junta remained high due to an ongoing property suit filed by her brother and due to her hearing Monday.

Aung San Suu Kyi's brother Aung San Oo has filed the suit to obtain full ownership of her Yangon home, which belonged to their late mother Khin Kyi.

## Suu Kyi under house arrest

YANGON, Dec 3: Tight security ringed Aung San Suu Kyi's house Sunday following the release of several of her lieutenants and ahead of a key hearing of a property suit the opposition leader faces, reports AFP.

A police cordon surrounded her residence and there were no signs that she would be allowed freedom, despite the junta's decision Friday to release six members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) from house arrest, observers said.

A Myanmar government spokesman had said Friday that "the temporary restrictions on the six NLD CEC [central executive committee members] has been lifted ... and they are resuming their normal activities..."

"U Aung Shwe, U Tin Oo and Daw Suu Kyi are requested to continue their stay in the present position for the time being," the spokesman had said.

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## Florida lawmakers to call special session Wednesday

Move to solidify Bush's claim on presidency

TALLAHASSEE, Dec 3: Moving to solidify George W. Bush's claim on the presidency, the Republican-controlled state Legislature will hold a special session Wednesday to try to enforce Bush's certified victory in Florida by naming the state's 25 electors, reports AFP.

Senate President John McKay and House Speaker Tom Feeney, both Republicans, will issue a proclamation to begin the historic session Wednesday. House Majority Leader Mike Fasano said Saturday.

The Republican-controlled Legislature is considering appointing the 25 electors through a resolution that would spare Gov. Jeb Bush from having to sign legislation helping his brother.

The Legislature's lawyers have recommended naming electors through the resolution, rather than passing a law that would require the governor's signature and could be reviewed by the courts.

Republican lawmakers argued the Constitution makes the legislature responsible for naming electors, and requires them to do so if there's a chance the state's vote might not be counted because of a controversy. Democrats disagree.

"I'm not surprised," House Democratic leader Lois Frankel said. "We have our own constitutional obligation to be there... We are going to be there to be voices of reason."

Jeb Bush was in New York on personal business and unavailable for comment Saturday, but he previously has said he would sign legislation to help his brother become president.

Despite legislative contortions to spare him from signing over the state's 25 electoral votes to his brother, Jeb Bush's signature is required on the official certificate sending the slate of electors to the National Archives, constitutional experts said Saturday.

The Florida governor has already signed a certified slate of Republican electors. If the courts invalidate that slate, the Republican-controlled Florida Legislature is prepared to override with a Bush slate.

If Congress gets competing slates and the two chambers disagree on which to accept, a real possibility the slate signed by Florida's governor then will prevail, said Florida State University law professor Nat Stern.

## Iran bans student demonstration

TEHRAN, Dec 3: Iran's interior ministry has forbidden a student demonstration planned to take place in Tehran on December 6 to mark the annual "Students Day," press reports said here today, reports AFP.

The interior ministry, charged with giving permits for all kinds of rallies, notably those of a political nature, rejected the student request, papers said, adding that the police had also issued a ban on "all gatherings."

The student gathering had been called for by the Tabarazi Group, a banned student organisation headed by a leading pro-reform student leader, Heshmatollah Tabarazi.

This year, moderate President Mohammad Khatami is expected to address students and hold a question-and-answer session on Wednesday.

The Students Day was established in the late 1960s after riots broke out between police and students who were opposing a scheduled visit by then US president Richard Nixon. Several students were killed in the clashes.

During the past two years, student rallies have been on the rise, with students increasingly expressing their unhappiness with the massive crackdown on the press by the conservative-led courts here and the jailing of numerous prominent journalists.

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প্রাথমিক শিক্ষাকে বাধাত্মক করা হচ্ছে। কৃষি জ্ঞানকে সমর্পণ করতে পিতৃর কুসুম অরহান

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