

Pakistan flexible on Kashmir talks, welcomes Indian move

ISLAMABAD, Dec 8: Pakistan today welcomed India's offer to consider allowing Kashmiri leaders to visit Islamabad but warned a militant ceasefire depended on New Delhi ending its "repression," reports AFP.

Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar also said Islamabad was prepared to be flexible on the "details" of its proposal for a three-way dialogue between the Kashmiri leaders, India and Pakistan.

But he said New Delhi could not expect Muslim "freedom fighters" in Indian-controlled Kashmir to end their struggle on the basis of India's one-month suspension of military operations.

"I think the Kashmiri freedom struggle is at this time expecting forward movement and if there is some visible movement (from India) then you can expect a response," he told AFP.

"Once confidence is established that India is prepared to enter into a purposeful process for the settlement of the Kashmir question then I think it would be reasonable to expect a positive response from the Kashmiri freedom struggle."

He welcomed Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's comments Thursday that his government was ready to consider a request from the main alliance of Kashmiri leaders to visit Pakistan for talks.

In response to India's one-month suspension of operations against militant groups in Kashmir last week, Pakistan has promised to use

"maximum restraint" along the Kashmiri border.

It has also proposed that the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), the main separatist political alliance based in the Indian zone of Kashmir, hold separate talks in Islamabad and New Delhi to facilitate tripartite talks.

Indian officials have rejected any possibility of "so-called tripartite talks" but Vajpayee's comments indicate an informal, indirect dialogue between the three parties may be considered.

"If India has any suggestions in regards to the details of the process we will have an open mind," Sattar said.

"Tripartite, three-way, triangular -- what do these words mean? The focus should be on how to involve the Kashmiris because it is their future that is at stake. Once you sit at the table you can see the shape of the table."

But he said India had to permanently end its military operations in Kashmir and commit itself to dialogue to convince all parties of its sincerity.

"If there are some points of detail about how the dialogue should proceed or how the Kashmiris should be involved these can be discussed. Pakistan's proposal should not be seen as rigid in this sense," he said.



Philippines prosecutor Sergio Apostol (C) holds an envelope of documents during the second day of the impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada, in Manila yesterday. The prosecutors cross examined two witnesses in the historic corruption trial of the Philippine leader before the Senate tribunal. Apostol is flanked by two other prosecutors, Salacmb Bateria (L) and Antonio Nachura (R). --AFP photo

Ex-police chief testifies against Estrada

MANILA, Dec 8: A former Philippines police chief was ordered by President Joseph Estrada to assist a friend involved in illegal gambling, he testified Friday at the embattled leader's corruption trial, reports AFP.

Ex-police chief Roberto Lastimoso told the Senate tribunal Estrada summoned him to the presidential palace in 1998.

Lastimoso had previously submitted to Estrada a written report about a police crackdown on the popular illegal lottery game "jueteng."

"This letter was ahead of the meeting that took place" at Malacanang palace, Lastimoso said.

Lastimoso told the tribunal that Estrada introduced him at the meeting to his friend, provincial governor Luis Singson, describing him as "the operator of jueteng" throughout the main Philippine island of Luzon.

"You help him," Lastimoso quoted the president as telling him. "You two coordinate."

Singson turned against Estrada in October and accused him of creating a nationwide system for "jueteng" operators to funnel pay-offs to the president.

Singson, who was to be called to the stand later, has charged he delivered 414 million pesos (8.3 million dollars) from the "jueteng" operators to Estrada in the latter's first two years in office.

The House of Representatives last month impeached Estrada on charges of bribery, corruption, betrayal of public trust and culpable violation of the constitution. He will be removed from office if found guilty on any of the charges at the Senate trial, which began on Thursday.

Mock Japanese war crimes trial opens

TOKYO, Dec 8: A mock war crimes tribunal putting Japan in the dock for the Imperial Army's treatment of wartime sex slaves opened in Tokyo today, reports AFP.

Around 80 former comfort women from China, East Timor, Indonesia, the Netherlands, North and South Korea and Taiwan, are due to testify at the five-day hearing, organised by an alliance of women's groups and lawyers.

The tribunal is based on an indictment against Japan's wartime government, former Emperor Hirohito and senior military officers, for setting up and operating military brothels as part of the war effort.

Uproar in Indian parliament amid calls for PM to resign

NEW DELHI, Dec 8: The Indian parliament was paralysed for a fifth consecutive day today as opposition MPs demanded the resignation of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, reports AFP.

The resignation calls came amid a growing row over various statements by Vajpayee regarding the 1992 destruction of a mosque in the northern town of Ayodhya and plans by Hindu right-wingers to build a Hindu temple in its place.

On the eighth anniversary of the mosque's destruction Wednesday, Vajpayee had said the highly controversial temple construction drive was an "unfinished" national task.

The remark provoked an outcry from opposition parties, as well as the coalition partners of Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist BJP party.

Vajpayee rejected calls for a retraction, and on Thursday stressed that he had been espousing the policy of the BJP, rather than the coalition.

In a meeting with coalition leaders the same day, he also clarified that the "unfinished task" he referred to was that of resolving the dispute over the Ayodhya site, rather than the building of the temple.

While his political allies were partly mollified, opposition parties -- sending an issue that could seriously damage Vajpayee's moderate credentials -- have refused to let the matter drop.

On Friday, MPs stormed the well of the lower house of parliament, shouting "prime minister resign" and ignoring the speaker's appeals for order.

As on the previous four days, the speaker then adjourned the house for the day.

The same scene was repeated in the upper house.

The razing of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya eight years ago triggered some of post-independence India's worst Hindu-Muslim violence which left thousands dead.

Lanka's shaky coalition warns errant MP's

COLOMBO, Dec 8: Sri Lanka's ruling coalition has warned its legislators to be present in parliament for two crucial votes today or face disciplinary action, a state-run daily reported, says AFP.

The warning was issued ahead of Friday's vote on extending a state of emergency by a further month as well as the interim budget for next year.

The Daily News said that the ruling People's Alliance (PA) which has a slender three-seat majority in the 225-member assembly found that its members were "avoiding parliamentary proceedings."

"The MP's have gone to the extent of playing truant in respect of consultative committee meetings, group meetings and other traditional functions of the House," the Daily News said.

The paper quoted chief government whip Reggie Ranatunga as saying that the PA decided Thursday to take disciplinary action against its "errant" members for not attending parliament.

Ruling party MP's were also told that they must return home immediately after completing official functions abroad.

Israel, Palestinians reject British-French proposal

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 8: Israel and the Palestinians have rejected a British-French proposal aimed at curbing the recent Middle East violence, leaving the Palestinians to decide whether to push for an immediate Security Council vote on deploying a UN observer force, reports AP.

The Palestinians have been pressing for a vote by Friday on the resolution to put 2,000 unarmed UN observers in the West Bank and Gaza even though it stands virtually no chance of getting Security Council approval because of Israel's strong opposition.

The Palestinians and their council supporters from the Non-Aligned Movement of developing countries met late Thursday with British and French diplomats and were scheduled to meet again Friday afternoon. Council president Sergey Lavrov of Russia said members would also hold closed consultations Friday.

With defeat for the Palestinian-backed resolution virtually certain, Britain and France circulated a draft resolution that would authorise military and police observers to go to the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem but hold up on sending them until Secretary-General Kofi Annan consulted both parties on how to establish, deploy and operate the mission.

UN Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs Kieran Prendergast relayed a message from Annan to council members Thursday morning that any arrangements must be acceptable to both parties, UN officials said.

Fujimori to stay in Japan to escape 'persecution'

TOKYO, Dec 8: Ousted Peruvian president Alberto Fujimori said today he expected to exercise Japanese nationality to escape "persecution" by political opponents at home.

"It's not confirmed but I expect I can use Japanese nationality potentially" to stay in Japan, he told AFP in a telephone interview after being slapped with a subpoena from Peru's congress.

Asked if that implied a permanent stay in Japan, Fujimori said: "The answer to that question in reality is no. It means a temporary stay in Japan."

'US faces biggest threat since World War II'

LOS ANGELES, Dec 8: The "wild card" of technology from nuclear proliferation to the information revolution has left US interests more susceptible to terrorist attack than at any time since the end of World War Two, CIA Director George Tenet said on Thursday, reports AFP.

Tenet said America's technical superiority in intelligence gathering was under threat from such rapid advances, while the "evil mix of fanaticism and flexibility" behind the October attack on the USS Cole made the next strike "not a question of if, but of when and where."

Tenet, addressing a Los Angeles luncheon in a rare public speech, declined to talk in detail about the Oct. 12 apparent suicide bombing of the Cole in Yemen.

But he said the attack was a grim reminder of the "terrorist foe without heart or pity" that threatened US interests around the world on a daily basis.

"We are in an environment where we are literally inundated with threats and warnings all the time,"

Tenet said in response to a question about the Cole.

"Making sense of disparate threats is sometimes very difficult to do in the time available. We have deterred a great number of terrorist events. But you will not bat 100 (per cent) with these people."

US officials have said Saudi Arabian exile Osama bin Laden who has been accused of masterminding the 1998 bombings of two US embassies in Africa, is considered a prime suspect in the planning of the Cole attack but they have not established a definitive link.

Seventeen American sailors were killed when a small boat filled with explosives blew up alongside the USS Cole in the port of Aden in Yemen.

Tenet said the destabilising effects of ethnic conflicts, easy access to information such as satellite imagery, and the proliferation of nuclear weapon technology made for a world without front lines.

ROK proposes resumption of four-way peace talks

SEOUL, Dec 8: South Korea has proposed to the communist North that they resume stalled talks on a peace treaty to replace a decades-old armistice, officials said here today, reports AFP.

The proposal was made immediately after President Kim Dae-Jung secured backing from US President Bill Clinton and Chinese Prime Minister Zhu Rongji during discussions in Singapore last month.

North Korea is in a position that it will consider resuming the talks, Minister for Foreign Affairs Lee Jung-Binn said in an interview with Donga daily, a Seoul newspaper.

The four-way talks, which involved participants in the 1950-53 Korean War including

the two Koreas, the United States and China, came to a standstill in August last year.

North Korea at that time called for the withdrawal of 37,000 US troops stationed in South Korea, insisting the US, not South Korea, sign any new peace treaty with the North.

The 1953 armistice was signed by the US-led United Nations Command on one side and North Korea and the Chinese "Volunteers' Army" on the other.

Despite the historic inter-Korean leaders' summit in June aimed at promoting reconciliation and eventual reunification on the peninsula, the two Koreas are still technically at war as the armistice has yet to be replaced by a permanent peace treaty.

Corruption probe against 10,000 Chinese officials

BEIJING, Dec 8: The leaders of the scandal-plagued Chinese province of Fujian have vowed to expand to their huge corruption investigation and are now probing 10,000 government officials, state media reported today, reports AFP.

Provincial leaders insist the booming region on China's southeastern coast has recovered from the unmasking of the smuggling racket centred on the port of Xiamen which showed local government was rotten to the core.

But they have promised no let-up in the fight against systematic graft, no matter how senior the officials involved.

"As instructed by President Jiang Zemin, the smuggling investigation will be expanded, ferreting out whomever is entangled," said Fujian Communist Party Secretary Chen Mingyi, quoted by the China Daily.

He said that following the first round of trials linked to the Xiamen scam, 10,000 county-level officials were being investigated.

In particular investigators are looking for illegal stock options, Hongbao (bribes given in red envelopes), as well as free use of cars, phones and computers.

A total of 14 people, including senior provincial customs and police officers, were sentenced to death last month for their role in the Xiamen smuggling racket which was run by the Yuanhua Group.

Another 70 were given stiff jail terms of up to life.

Clinton would have liked a third term

WASHINGTON, Dec 8: President Bill Clinton told a US magazine that he would have liked to serve a third term -- and that he thinks he would have won -- if the US Constitution did not impose an eight-year ceiling on presidential terms, reports AFP.

"I probably would have run again," he confessed in an interview in the latest issue of Rolling Stone, a pop-culture magazine.

"I have an extra amount of energy, and I love this job, and I love the nature of this work," Clinton said.

Kim goes to Oslo to receive Nobel Prize

SEOUL, Nov 8: President Kim Dae-Jung today left for Oslo to receive this year's Nobel Peace Prize, hoping the award would help boost South Korea's international image and credibility, reports AFP.

"I would like to share this honour with all the people who have been persistently taking part in efforts to open a new era distinguished by democracy, human rights and inter-Korean reconciliation," Kim said.

"The awarding ceremony... will be a rare chance to improve the image and international credibility of South Korea," he said in a statement.

Kim has come under pressure to reshuffle the cabinet and his Millennium Democratic Party after criticism his reform drive was losing momentum in the face of resistance from workers and the establishment.

"I will continue taking care of state affairs on my trip and after returning home, I will carry out the reshuffle which is desired by the people," he said in the statement.

Colombia plans tougher steps against crime

BOGOTA, Dec 8: Colombian President Andres Pastrana announced late Thursday plans to amend the Constitution to punish crimes against humanity with life imprisonment and restate crime enforcement measures abolished since 1990, reports AFP.

"I will promote constitutional reform to impose a life sentence for crimes against humanity and to give the military forces the operational tools they need to efficiently fight against terrorism and kidnapping," Pastrana announced.

Outlining measures curtailed by a 1990 constitutional amendment, Pastrana said the armed forces would "in exceptional circumstances and with due judicial control, be able to make arrests, carry out searches and telephone tapping."

He also said he would send "an urgent message" to Congress, asking for a bill to toughen penalties for blackmail, illegal enrichment and money laundering, and cut the time it takes to try such crimes by half.

Mission marriage

HRITHIK set to tie the knot

BOMBAY, Dec 8: Indian cinema's hottest property, Hrithik Roshan, is set to marry long-time girlfriend Suzanne Khan, his family said today, reports AFP.

"The marriage will be either on any day between December 15 and 18 or between January 10 and 12," Hrithik's father, film director Rakesh Roshan told AFP.

The father said neither the dates nor the venue of the marriage had been finalised as his son was finding it difficult to take time off from his busy movie shooting schedules.

"Hrithik is shooting for four films now. His schedule is very, very tight. We are trying to squeeze out some time, which is why the dates of the marriage are uncertain."

"We do not have the time to organise a big event. So the only way out is to get them married with only close family members around."

Hrithik, 26, and a Hindu, and Suzanne, 24, and a Muslim, have been dating for about five years.

Roshan's father said the couple had not decided on whether to have a religious or civil marriage.

She is the daughter of well-known Bollywood producer-director Sanjay Khan.

Hrithik, whose chiselled features have won him a massive female following, shot to fame with his first Hindi language film Kaho Na Pyar Hai (Say you love me) which was Indian cinema's biggest blockbuster in 1999.

The film was directed by his father who is himself a former actor. Hrithik is the younger of two children.



US, Russia propose arms embargo against Taliban

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 8: Frustrated by the Taliban's refusal to hand over suspected terrorist Osama Bin Laden, the United States and Russia proposed today, expanded UN sanctions against Afghanistan's ruling militia, reports AP.

A draft resolution introduced Thursday orders the Taliban to stop harbouring accused terrorists and to shut down terrorist training camps within 30 days or face an arms embargo, among other sanctions. Russia believes the camps serve as training grounds for Muslim rebels waging war against its troops in Tajikistan and Chechnya.

The new resolution expands on sanctions adopted last year by the Security Council, which froze the Taliban's assets and imposed an air embargo on its Ariana Afghan airline to pressure the militia into handing bin Laden over for prosecution.

The millionaire Saudi, the suspected mastermind of the August 1998 bombings of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people, is in exile in Afghanistan. The Taliban refuse to hand him over, saying the United States has failed to prove he was behind the dual attack.

The Security Council warned in April that it would take further action if the Taliban failed to comply with last year's resolution. After two years of persistent but "cordial" talks, the Taliban have not budged, a US State Department official said Thursday.

"We believe that the international community needs to act because this does pose a threat to international peace and security," the official said on condition of anonymity.

The Taliban, which impose a harsh brand of Islamic law over 95 per cent of Afghanistan, responded Thursday by saying the sanctions would only hurt ordinary Afghans. More than two decades of civil war between the Taliban and Afghanistan's northern-based opposition has killed at least 50,000 people, displaced tens of thousands of others and left the capital, Kabul, in ruins.

Bosnia to restore diplomatic ties with Yugoslavia

SARAJEVO, Dec 8: Bosnia's collective presidency announced Thursday it would shortly restore diplomatic ties with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the official Bosnian news agency BH-Press reported, says AFP.

The normalisation would put an end to 10 years of difficult relations following the breaking up of the old Yugoslav Federation in 1991, including the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict during which the Muslim community accused Belgrade of giving military support to the Bosnian Serbs.

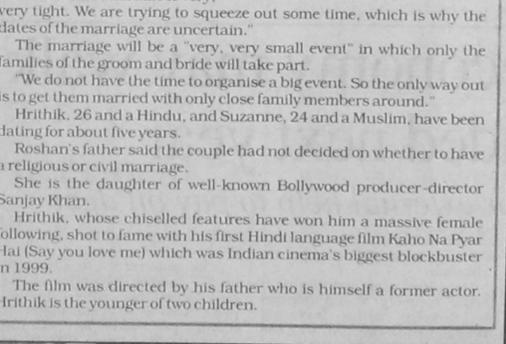
The tri-partite presidency, which includes the Serb Zivko Radisic, the Croat Arife Jelavic and the Muslim Halid Genjic, did not set a date for restoring links, but they did agree on a text which they will sign on the issue.

Release of jailed trio hailed in Malaysia

KAJANG, Malaysia, Dec 8: Thousands of people shouting anti-government and anti-Israel slogans massed outside a Malaysian prison today to mark the release of three opposition activists after a month-long jail term, reports AFP.

Supporters of the Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS) and other opposition parties gathered near Kajang prison just south of Kuala Lumpur at 8 am to welcome PAS youth wing leader Mahfuz Omar and two other activists.

Prison authorities had actually freed the trio at 3 am some miles away in an apparent attempt to take the heat out of the protest.



Undated file picture of The Beatles at a recording session in London. (L-R) Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Ringo Starr and John Lennon, who was murdered outside his home in New York in December 1980. The 20th anniversary of John Lennon's death was being commemorated yesterday with a blue plaque unveiled at his suburban childhood home. --AFP photo

মাতৃভাষা বিকাশের জন্য বই
৭ম ঢাকা বইমেলা
স্থান: ৪ শারীরিক শিক্ষা কলেজ মাঠ, মোহাম্মদপুর
(সাত মসজিদ রোড)
বইমেলা ১৭ ডিসেম্বর ২০০০ পর্যন্ত চলবে
প্রতিদিন বেলা ১১টা থেকে রাত ৯টা
দেশী-বিদেশী বিপুল বইয়ের সমাহার থেকে আপনার পছন্দের
বই সংগ্রহ করুন।
জাতীয় গ্রন্থকেন্দ্র GD-1131

Headquarters
Bangladesh Rifles
Administrative Directorate
Cue & Ord Section
Peelkhana, Dhaka.
Reauction Notice
Number 401/13-A/IX/Cue Date: 15 Agrahayan, 1407/November 29, 2000.
1. This is for information for all contractors enlisted/unenlisted with this section and bonafide bidder establishments/firm/contractors that various condemned ordnance goods kept at the central store of this section will be sold in an open auction on the 20th December, 2000 at 1000 hours. Interested firm/contractor/bidder can take part in this auction activities. The goods to be auction can be inspected till 19th December 2000 everyday from 0830 hours to 1300 hours on any day (excepting government holidays) in the central stores section. The undersigned may be contacted, if necessary, for detailed information.
2) Each of the participant in the auction will have enlist their names in bidder list after depositing Taka 10,000.00 (Ten thousand) in cash as the security money to the chairman of the auction committee before starting of the auction activities. The said deposited money is refundable in case of the unsuccessful bidders only.
3) 25% of bid money will have to be paid by the highest bidder the same day on completion of auction activities to the chairman of the auction committee and rest of the 75% money will have to be paid within 07 (seven) days and all goods will have to be taken. Otherwise, 25% money deposited will be regarded as forfeited.
4) The authority reserves the absolute power to reject or accept any bid (including the bid of the highest bidder) without assigning any reason.
D/P-29423-4/12 DAQMG
G-2151 On behalf of the Director General