

International

No change in Israeli attitude in US talks: Palestinians

Clinton again set to intervene in ME peace talks

GAZA CITY, Dec 23: The Palestinian leadership has said it has seen "no change" in Israel's attitude in peace talks being held this week, and it called on the Israeli government to end "aggression" and engage in serious negotiations, reports AFP.

A statement issued following the weekly meeting of the Palestinian cabinet late Friday said "no change has been perceived in the Israeli attitude on the occasion of the resumption of negotiations under the aegis of the United States."

Top Israeli negotiators have been meeting behind closed doors with US administration officials at Bolling Air Force base, near Washington, since Tuesday.

The two sides have also met with US President Bill Clinton and with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"The Israeli government prides itself on wanting to seek peace through negotiations, but at the same time it pursues its policy of aggression, of closing borders and of collective punishment of the Palestinians" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the statement said.

"The Israeli government is called upon to abandon its policy of aggression and to engage seriously in the negotiations, if it wants to reach a peace accord."

The statement reaffirmed Palestinian demands that a peace deal must entail Israel withdrawing to the territories it controlled before the outbreak of the June 1967 Middle East war and the right of return to the estimated 3.7 million Palestinians, and their descendants, who fled the new Jewish state when it was created in 1948.

Palestinian officials Friday described the talks as in crisis, in stark contrast to Israeli press reports that spoke of significant new offers being made by the Israeli side.

Israeli newspapers reported that the Jewish state has agreed to negotiate on the basis of the June 1967 borders, a consistent Palestinian demand.

In 1967, Israel captured the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and other territories, including the eastern sector of Jerusalem.

Speaking in Gaza, an advisor to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, Nabil Abu Rudeina, said reports of progress were incorrect.

"It is not accurate what has been said about progress," he told AFP. "There was not serious progress up until this point. It is still too early to talk about progress."

Top Israeli and Palestinian negotiators are scheduled to meet US President Bill Clinton early Saturday, in a fifth day of talks, despite doubts over whether negotiations here have yielded progress.

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met with both sides Friday and was to attend a 9:15 am (20:15 BST) Saturday White House gathering with Clinton, Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben Ami, and top Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat.

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"We hope that the parties redouble their efforts and do everything they can to help find a way to end the violence and to narrow their differences," said White House spokesman Jake Siewert.

Ex-ISI chief's entry to Britain banned

KARACHI, Dec 23: The former chief of the Pakistan military's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) said today Britain had banned his entry to the country because of his support for Jihad (holy war) in Kashmir, reports AFP.

"My entry into Britain has been banned by the British government since last month," retired general Hameed Gul told AFP.

"The British Home Office has informed me through a letter in November that I should not enter UK as my activities were found to be against their national interest."

Serial killer held in India for beheading 15

LUCKNOW, India, Dec 23: A suspected serial killer accused of beheading 15 people, mutilating their bodies and keeping their skulls as souvenirs was arrested today in northern India.

Police Superintendent P.K. Tiwari told AFP Raja Kalandar, in his mid-30s, was detained at his home in the Indian city of Allahabad, 200 km east of Uttar Pradesh's state capital Lucknow.

Tiwari said police had been investigating the death of Dharendra Kumar, a journalist with the Aaj newspaper whose head was found in a pond near Allahabad, when they arrested Kalandhar.

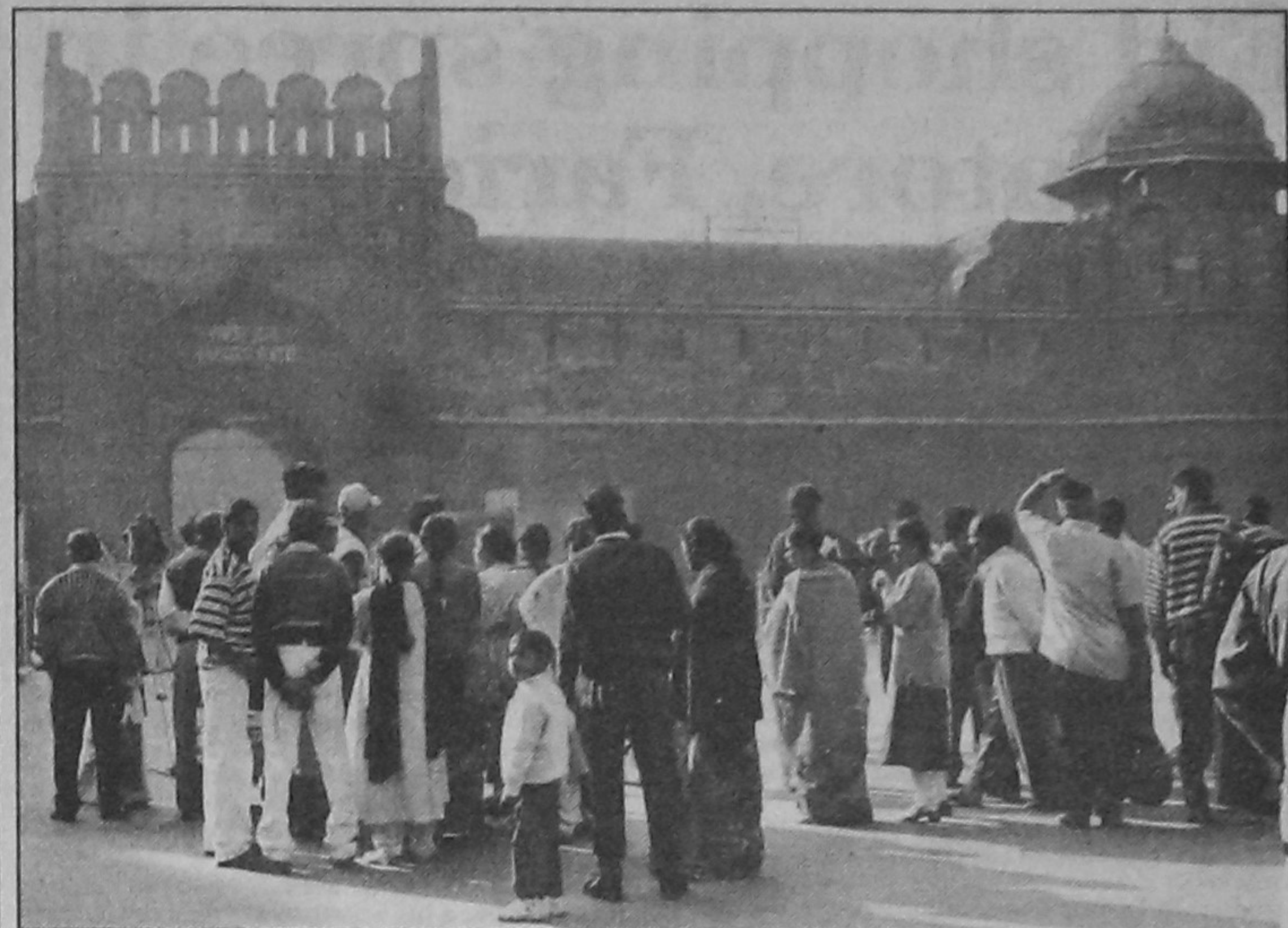
Now women can complain against discrimination to UN

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 23: In a milestone on the road toward gender equality, women can now submit sex discrimination, sexual harassment and other complaints to the United Nations, reports AP.

The rule, which is a new addition to the 1979 UN convention barring abuse against women, came into effect Friday.

It says a woman whose complaints are not addressed in her home country can submit them to UN officials. It also sets up a committee that will be able to investigate allegations that a country has violated the provisions of the 1979 UN convention.

This is a historic step forward in giving women the right of redress ... at the international level," said Assistant Secretary-General Angela King, special adviser on gender issues to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.



Tourists stand outside the entrance of New Delhi's historic Red Fort yesterday as Indian soldiers cordoned off the area to launch a major search operation to look for suspected Muslim militants. Indian troops were searching for militants who are thought to be behind a shock attack at the capital's Red Fort that killed a soldier, an army barber and a civilian employee late Friday. --AFP photo

Militants attack Red Fort in Delhi: 3 killed

Troops search for attackers, Lashker-i-Taiba claims responsibility

NEW DELHI, Dec 23: Indian troops today combed New Delhi for Muslim militants who gunned down three people overnight in a shock attack on the capital's historic Red Fort, reports AFP.

Additional Commissioner of Police Ajay Chaddha said two gunmen killed a soldier, an army barber and a civilian employee in the attack, which occurred around 9:30pm (22:00 BST) on Friday.

"The army has cordoned off the Red Fort area. The Delhi police and army have launched a joint combing operation within and around the Red Fort to look for clues," Chaddha said.

He said 1,100 policemen, soldiers and military intelligence officials had fanned out across a two-km radius from the fort.

"The sprawling Red Fort complex including the army barracks have been turned inside out. We are also carrying out house-to-house searches in the neighbourhood," said Chaddha.

Chaddha added the identity of the attackers could not be confirmed.

But the headline Pakistan-based Lashker-i-Taiba outfit, a powerful pan-Islamic militant group operating in Indian-administered Kashmir, said it carried out the attack.

The police have recovered 40 AK-47 and AK-57 shells. No one has been arrested and no weapon recovered so far.

Chaddha described the attack as "a serious security lapse," adding an investigation had been ordered into how the gunmen managed to gain entry through a gate barred to civilians and guarded around the clock.

He also said admitted the two attackers and "possibly a back-up team" might have made good their escape.

"But a red alert has been sounded. Armed guards stationed at all 18 entry points to Delhi are checking cars and commercial vehicles," said Chaddha.

"Security at all vital installations in Delhi has been beefed up because we cannot rule out the possibility of similar attacks today in the capital."

The militants opened fire with automatic rifles from three points inside the fort as families of army personnel held a party.

On Saturday, Lashkar-i-Taiba claimed its men killed six people.

Spokesman Yahya Mujahid told AFP the deaths raised to 30 the number of Indian soldiers or military-related personnel the group had killed since New Delhi announced a ceasefire in Kashmir last month.

Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Saeed told India to expect more attacks.

"We take full responsibility for the attack and there will be more on soldiers, army installations but not civilians," Saeed said.

Kashmir's Islamic militants have rejected a unilateral ceasefire by Indian troops in Kashmir, announced for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and extended for four weeks on Wednesday, as a propaganda ploy.

Serbia set to wash its hands of Milosevic in polls

Kosovo Serbs brave cold to vote

BELGRADE, Dec 23: Voters in Serbia were casting ballots today in elections that are expected to hand victory to democratic reformers and sweep out the last remnants of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, reports AFP.

Supporters of Yugoslav President Vojislav Kostunica see the vote in the final defeat for Milosevic, whose allies still hold positions of power in Serbia, particularly in the police force.

Turnout was light at polling stations in Belgrade, possibly due to the cold weather, shortly after polls opened at 7:00 am (12:00 BST).

But Milosevic and his wife Mira Markovic, who heads her own neo-communist party the Yugoslav Left (JUL), braved the early morning chill to cast their ballots in the posh Belgrade district of Dedinje, surrounded by bodyguards.

More than 6.5 million eligible voters will choose 250 deputies for the republic's assembly from candidates representing eight parties and coalitions, but the main contestants are the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) and the Socialists, still headed by Milosevic.

Public opinion polls taken in the run-up to the elections showed a massive lead for the DOS, which was projected to win 61 and 80 percent of the votes.

Milosevic's Socialists can expect between 11 percent and 18 percent, the surveys showed.

Analysts believe the elections will mark the final defeat for Milosevic, whose allies still hold positions of power in Serbia, particularly in the police force.

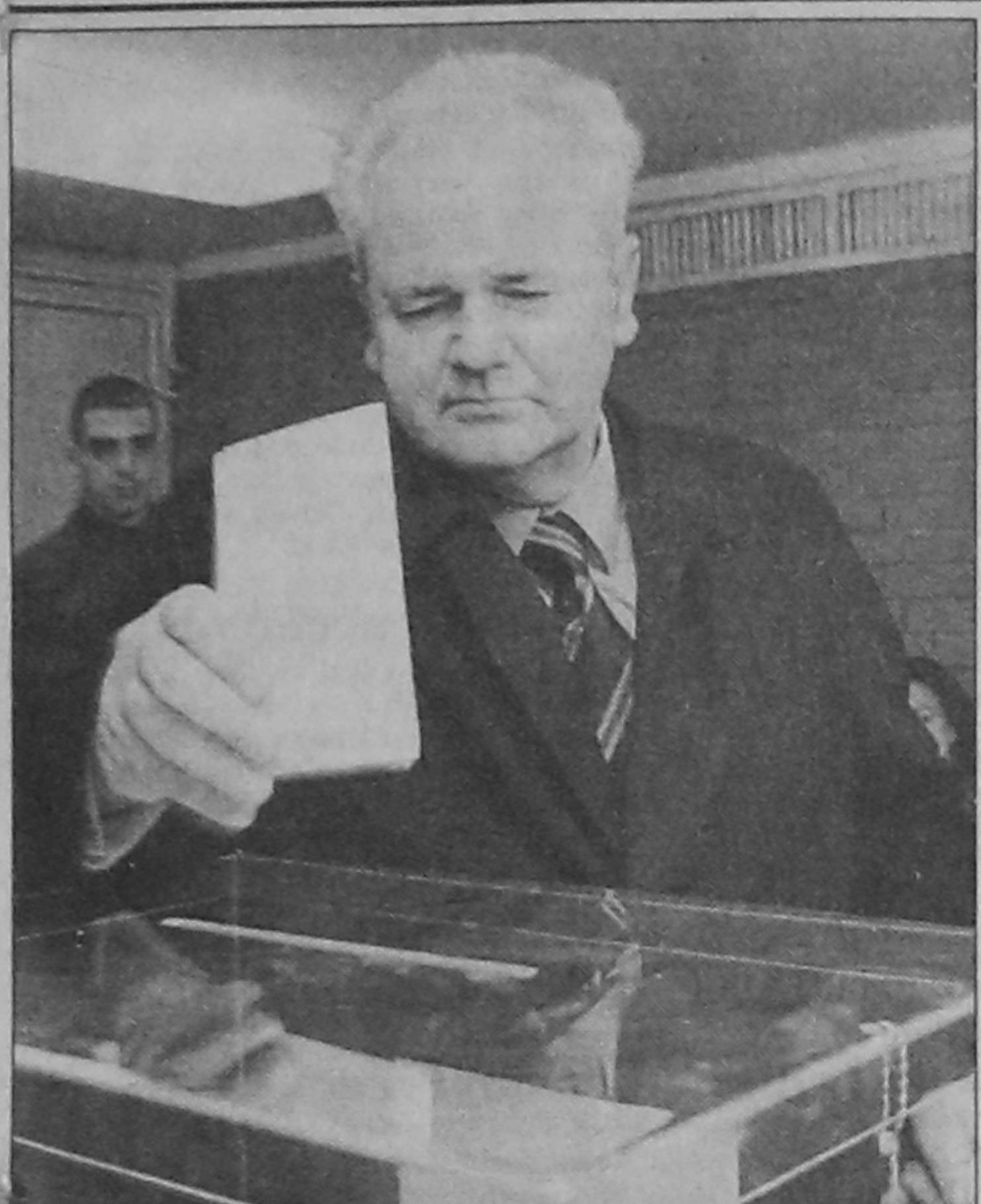
Campaigns have been low-key compared with the make-or-break polls in September, with many Serbs believing a DOS victory to be a foregone conclusion.

Meanwhile, Kosovo's Serb minority came out to vote Saturday in the first Serbian legislative election since their province came under international control.

Voting began slowly at polling stations in this northern Kosovo town, and in Serb enclaves in central Kosovo near the provincial capital Pristina.

The election was taking place in freezing temperatures and amid power outages.

Electoral officials reported none of the fraud and violence which marred September's federal elections.



In a rare appearance since being ousted as president, Slobodan Milosevic casts his ballot paper in a transparent box as he votes in the Serbian parliamentary elections in Belgrade early yesterday. Voters are expected to hand victory to advocates of democratic reforms and sweep out the remnants of the regime of Milosevic who held power for thirteen years. --AFP photo

Troops kill 17 Tigers in fresh fighting

COLOMBO, Dec 23: Sri Lankan troops shot dead another 17 Tamil Tiger guerrillas in a confrontation today in the Jaffna Peninsula where 76 combatants were killed in overnight fighting, officials said, reports AFP.

Soldiers attacked a group of fighters of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at Navatkuli on Saturday afternoon, killing 17 of them, defence ministry spokesman Samath Karunaratne said.

"There was a piece of land where we had not moved to after yesterday's operation," Karunaratne said. "The terrorists had come there and we were able to engage them."

The confrontation came as hundreds of troops were clearing mines a day after capturing a large area from Tamil Tiger rebels following a heavy land, sea and air attack that killed 76 on both sides on Friday.

Government forces uncovered eight anti-tank mines, automatic assault rifles and ammunition left behind by the LTTE, military spokesman Karunaratne said.

"The soldiers are conducting clearing operations in the area today," Karunaratne said.

Heavily armed soldiers backed by tanks, aircraft and gunboats mounted the onslaught Friday and captured about 35 square km from Tiger rebels on the Jaffna Peninsula, the defence ministry said.

Karunaratne said troops recovered the bodies of 51 rebels killed in ferocious fighting around a vital highway that links Jaffna town with nearby Chavakachcheri.

Some 24 government soldiers and one officer were killed and another 47 wounded in the fighting which came hours after the LTTE's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire from Christmas Eve.

"We have now almost opened the entire A-9 highway between Chavakachcheri and Jaffna town with only two more km to be opened," Karunaratne said.

"Isolated pockets of terrorists fighting for their lives were annihilated and their weapons recovered."

Madonna deprived media of her glittering wedding story

LONDON, Dec 23: Britain's newspapers expressed their displeasure today after an unusually publicity-shy Madonna deprived them of the glittering wedding story they had been craving, reports AFP.

The tabloid Daily Star led the indignation by calling the pop diva a "stuck-up primadonna" for failing to make an appearance in front of the massed ranks of reporters and photographers.

Madonna had "put two fingers up to all her fans," said the Star. "They don't matter to her."

The media could only speculate about whether Madonna and film director Guy Ritchie had tied the knot as by the early hours of Saturday no information had leaked out from the Scottish castle where the couple were holed up.

"The Ritchies kindly invite you to... keep your distance," was how the upmarket Independent inter-

preted the press blackout at Skibo Castle, in north-east Scotland.

"Madonna the secret bride," was the Daily Mail's headline over a scant story on the wedding celebrations.

"The whole world watched when Princess Diana was married, same thing when the Queen wed for that matter," complained the Star.

"But Madonna obviously thinks she's much grander than royalty. It was all done in total secrecy, behind closed doors."

Newspapers had to satisfy themselves with snaps of celebrity guests like singer Sting, his wife Trudi Styler and fashion designer Donatella Versace arriving for the big day.

The hundreds of pressmen who had descended on the sleepy town of Dornoch, nearest settlement to Skibo Castle, were left twiddling their thumbs.

Iranian FM calls for change in US policies

TEHRAN, Dec 23: Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi has called on the new administration of President-elect George W. Bush to change US policies towards Iran, the governmental Iran Daily newspaper said today, reports AFP.

"The time is ripe for the new US government to revise its policies towards Iran," Kharazi said in a reaction to the election victory of Bush following weeks of controversial debate over vote counts.

"We still have to wait and see what policies and strategies the new administration tends to adopt," towards Iran, Kharazi said.

In recent days several Iranian officials have called on the new administration to ride the tide of change in Washington and improve relations with Tehran.

Relations between Washington and Tehran have been broken since the 1979 Islamic Revolution that toppled the shah in favour of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

US missile system aimed at world domination, not rogue states: Moscow

MOSCOW, Dec 23: The only reason the United States is seeking to deploy a National Missile Defence System (NMD) is the country's desire to strategically dominate the world, Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeev said today, reports AFP.

The perceived threat to the United States of a missile attack from a "rogue" nation like Iran or North Korea was not realistic, Sergeev said in an interview published in the Russian daily Krasnaya Zvezda (Red Star).

The deployment of the NMD would be "directed against Russia," he told the newspaper.

"Our position remains unchanged. Russia will not accept an alteration to the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty, which would mean the treaty's destruction," Sergeev insisted.

Deployment of the NMD would involve modifying the ABM Treaty signed between Moscow and Washington in 1972.

Colin Powell, expected to be the

new US Secretary of State under president elect George Bush, has said he favours deploying the NMD, but Moscow has repeatedly threatened that it will withdraw disarmament agreements if that happens.

Sergeev also said that Russian relations with NATO were marked by "a great lack of trust", and repeated his opposition to NATO enlargement to include former Soviet states.

Such a move would be "a grave political error," he said.

Russia has adopted a more positive attitude to its relations with NATO since May.

Prior to that relations had been frozen following NATO's bombardment of Yugoslavia, which began in March 1999.

"Russia and NATO are major players," both in Europe and in the world as a whole, Sergeev said.

"They cannot ignore their respective interests."

Estrada seeks swift trial

MANILA, Dec 23: Philippine President Joseph Estrada studiously ignored today potentially damning evidence he held a secret 10-million-dollar bank account under a false name, reports AFP.

Instead the embattled leader merely expressed the hope his corruption trial in the country's Senate would be over soon and reiterated his willingness to testify -- but only if his lawyers told him to do so.

Speaking on his weekly radio show, Estrada said his Christmas wish for the nation was for a swift trial "so that we can go back immediately to work."

"Let them finish, whatever the charges are. We will accept them," Estrada said.

However he said he would not comment on the deeply damaging new revelations at his Senate trial, saying "anything I say might be prejudicial."

"I won't talk about it until the time that I testify," Estrada said, repeating he was willing to appear at the trial at which he is accused of corruption, receiving huge pay-offs from illegal gambling bosses and skimming off government funds.



Japanese Emperor Akihito (L) and Empress Michiko (R) stroll around the main entrance of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on November 21. Akihito celebrated his 67th birthday yesterday. --AFP photo

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Supply and Inspection
Invitation of Tender

The following tenders invited by the Department of Supply and Inspection. All the registered firms of this Department in the relevant group and other well established firm subject to submission of application well in advance and it considered fit by the authority.

Sl No.	Tender No & Nature	Short description of stores	Value of tender set (Non-refundable)	Last date & time for submission of tender
1.	S-13/Std. & Paper/Local/32/2000-01 dt. 12-12-2000	Tracing Paper.	Tk. 450/-.	03-01-2001 at 11-00 AM.
2.	S-13/Std. & Paper/Local/87/2000-01 dt. 13-12-2000.	Type Writer Carbon Paper.	Tk. 4,600/-.	04-01-2001 at 11-00 AM.
3.	S-13/Std. & Paper/Local/91/2000-2001 dt. 14-12-2000.	White Typing Paper.	Tk. 850/-.	07-01-2001 at 11-00 AM.
4.	S-5/Chem-2/Local/92/2000-2001 dt. 14-12-2000.	Punch Machine, Paper Cutter, Paper Clip.	Tk. 450/-.	03-01-2001 at 11-00 AM.

N.B. No tender will be sold on the date of submission of tender. Tenders obtainable from:

- Department of Supply & Inspection, 48, Motijheel C/A (4th Floor), Dhaka.
- Department of Supply & Inspection (Shipping), C.G.O. Building, Agrabad, Chittagong.
- Department of Supply & Inspection (Shipping), 51, Farazipara Road, Khulna.
- Place for submission of tender: Department of Supply & Inspection (4th Floor), 48, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.

DDP-30893-20/12
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Asstt. Director (CDN).

টেন্ডার নোটিশ
 ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় : নিম্নে বর্ণিত কাজটির জন্য ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের তালিকাভুক্ত (সিভিল) ঠিকাদারদের নিকট হইতে সীলমোহরকৃত টেন্ডার আহ্বান করা যাইতেছে। ঠিকাদারগণকে বামের উপর কাজের নাম ও তাহাদের ফর্মের নাম স্পষ্টাক্ষরে লিখিতে হইবে। কর্তৃপক্ষের রায়ই চূড়ান্ত বলিয়া বিবেচিত হইবে। কাজের পূর্ণ বিবরণ নিম্নে দেওয়া হইলঃ

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 নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী
 ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

জিডি-১১৮৫