

Kurds seek fresh UN intervention

ANKARA, Dec 10 : Iraqi Kurdish leaders called Monday for renewed UN intervention and heightened military restrictions on Baghdad to halt recent fighting that has driven tens of thousands of Kurds from their homes, reports AP.

The appeal came as Kurdish leaders reported more demonstrations and hunger strikes to protest a five-week-old economic blockade by Saddam Hussein's government on Kurdish northern Iraq.

A Kurdistan Front communiqué sent to The Associated Press called for the urgent dispatch of international relief supplies to northern Iraq. The Front includes eight major Kurdish parties.

The communiqué said 200,000 Kurds had been driven from their towns since early October because of Iraqi shelling. The United Nations recently reported the same figure.

The Front said as a result of the attacks and the government's economic blockade, "an estimated total of 800,000 refugees are faced with desti-

tute horror from the encroaching bitter winter."

The Kurdish statement called for an extension of prohibitions barring Iraq from using aircraft north of the 36th parallel. The Front said the area should stretch over the area north of the 35th parallel, a much larger area.

"This will help restrain Iraqi military activities in the provinces of Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk, which have been the scene of recent Iraqi attacks against civilian centres," the communiqué said.

There was no immediate response to the appeal from the international community.

Iraqi Kurds said the government attacks continued through Sunday, with the village of Noutjul coming under artillery fire.

The Kurds also called on the United Nations to force the Iraqi army to leave the northern city of Kirkuk, a major oil center. Kurds have charged that the troops are preventing former residents from returning to the contested city.

US, UK threaten sanctions against Libya

OIC condemns bombing of Pan Am airliner

DAKAR, Dec 10 : The Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) has condemned the terrorists who killed 270 by bombing a Pan Am airliner over Scotland in 1988, Senegalese Foreign Minister Ajibo Ka said yesterday, reports Xinhua.

He told a press conference after a preparatory meeting of OIC foreign ministers that the participants condemned this act of terrorism although no resolution was adopted.

The OIC condemnation came after the United States and Britain charged Libya with the bombing and the latter denied the charges.

The United States and Britain warned that unless Libya surrendered the two agents involved in the bombing, it would face economic sanctions or even a military option.

But Libya proposed instead to hold neutral investigations by either a Libyan or an Arab court.

The Senegalese Foreign Minister said that Libya has now agreed to cooperate with the Organization of Islamic Conference to settle the issue.

On the function of OIC, the Foreign Minister expected an important role to play in establishing a new world economic order.

The combined population and resources of the OIC states amount to one-fifth and one-half of the world's total, he said.

The preparatory meeting, among others, has accepted Soviet republic of Azerbaijan as a member state and Albania as an observer country, according to the same source.

PLO leader Yasser Arafat and King Hussein of Jordan

were two of the very few front-rank Arab leaders in Dakar. Delegates said they were hoping to start repairing relations with pro-Kuwait countries.

But the absence of Gulf leaders, led by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, as well as senior presidents like Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and Hafez al-Assad of Syria, underscored the persistent enmities caused by the Gulf crisis.

The resulting irony was that African presidents, some heading mainly-Christian countries, were in a majority at this Islamic gathering.

Senegalese President Abdou Diouf said he was "very hurt" by the Arab absentees.

"We respect the Arabs more than they respect us. The sixth OIC summit is an illustration of this," Diouf told the French newspaper Le Monde.

As some consolation for

wounded African pride, rich members promised to write off or reschedule loans to poor countries.

The OIC membership list ranges from the fabulously wealthy Gulf states to countries like Mali, where annual per capita income is about 300 dollars.

Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi also failed to turn up in Dakar. Delegates and diplomats speculated that he was wary of leaving Tripoli in the middle of a tense conflict with western nations over Libya's alleged role in the bombings of American and French airliners in 1988 and 1989 in which 440 people died.

A carefully balanced summit resolution condemned terrorism but opposed any economic or military reprisals against Libya.

Security forces comb Tibetans' camps in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Dec 10: India today prepared a red carpet welcome and tightened security for Prime Minister Li Peng, the first Chinese Prime Minister to visit New Delhi since the 1962 Sino-Nepal war, reports AP.

Security forces combed refugee camps in the capital for Tibetans who have threatened to protest the visit, as the government prepared a full ceremonial reception for Li when he arrives at the presidential palace Wednesday.

The Tibetan protest plans have threatened to overshadow the six-day visit, during which the two countries will sign three new agreements on cooperation in outer space, border trade and the opening of

consulates in Bombay and Shanghai.

Officials said it will hold two rounds of talks with 70-year-old Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, with whom Chinese diplomats say he hopes to establish areas of common ground after the rapid global upheavals and realignments of the past year, especially the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Li has already made it clear, they say, that he hopes to keep the war and the still smouldering and unresolved border dispute that triggered it behind the scenes during the talks, and focus on improving bilateral ties.



OSLO : Michael Aris (c) husband of this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, is pictured with his sons Kim (L), 14 and Alexander, 18, during a press conference Monday.

Burmese junta out to crush opposition : AI

BANGKOK, Dec 10 : Amnesty International says it has the names of 200 people arbitrarily arrested by Burma's junta in the first seven months of this year as part of a concerted campaign to destroy opposition, reports Reuter.

The London-based human rights group said it had a list of 1,500 people arrested for political reasons since the junta seized power in 1988.

The organisation believes this may be only a proportion of the total number of political prisoners detained, Amnesty said in a report released today.

The Nobel Peace prize will be awarded in Oslo today to Burma's most prominent political detainee, Aung San Suu Kyi. The husband and sons of the detained opposition leader will accept it on her behalf.

Aung San Suu Kyi has been under house arrest since July 1989 for outspoken attacks on military rule.

Her National League for Democracy went on to win the May 1990 general election by a landslide but the generals refused to hand over power and arrested most of the rest of its leaders.

The ruling military council continues to step up its efforts to crush the non-violent opposition, passing new laws aimed at eliminating from political life people who won seats in last year's democratic elections, the Amnesty report said.

The report said almost 40 of those detained this year were sentenced to 25 years in prison, "often on charges of high treason, after trials that Amnesty International suspects were blatantly unfair."

"The vague and sweeping provisions of the military's de-

India firm to strengthen ties with China

BEIJING, Dec 10 : The Indian government is committed to the further improvement of relations with China and to strengthen dialogue, cooperation and understanding between the two countries in all fields, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao has said in an interview, reports PTI.

Chinese Premier Li Peng's visit to India beginning tomorrow will be an important milestone in the relations between the two countries Rao said in the interview the report of which was carried by the official Xinhua News Agency this morning.

Health workers shot dead in Burma

BANGKOK, Dec 10 : A US physicians group says Burmese troops have shot dead health workers caring for wounded pro-democracy demonstrators, blocked ambulances and obstructed emergency treatment of civilians, reports AP.

The Burmese military junta has displayed a "callous disregard for the Red Cross, both as an organization and an emblem," said a statement received Tuesday from the Boston-based Physicians for Human Rights.

It and other Western groups have joined in Highlighting Burma's plight to coincide with the awarding of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, Norway on Tuesday to Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Her husband and sons are accepting the honour in place of Suu Kyi, who is under house arrest.

Barbara voices sympathy for Gorbachev

WASHINGTON, Dec 10 : First lady Barbara Bush on Monday voiced sympathy for Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and said that the political changes that have swept the world would not have happened without him, reports Reuter.

"I feel sorry for anybody who has problems," Mrs Bush told reporters during a tour of Christmas decorations at the White House.

"I hope people remember that without Gorbachev a lot of the good that happened in the world would not have happened," she said.

BRIEFLY

UN food aid for Angola, Lanka : The UN World Food Programme announced Monday it will provide over 13 million dollars worth of food for demobilised troops in Angola and displaced persons in northeastern Sri Lanka, reports AP from Rome.

The Rome-based programme said that it would contribute over 11 million dollars worth of food to Angola in order to help implement a peace accord signed in May by the left-wing government and the US-backed rebel movement UNITA.

The programme will send maize, pulses, a corn and soya blend, vegetable oil and sugar over six months to help over 250,000 demobilised military personnel and their families, a statement said.

The organisation will also send about 2 million dollars worth of rice, pulses and sugar to 75,000 displaced people at 174 welfare centers in strife-ridden Sri Lanka.

CNN wins award for Gulf War : The Cable News Network has won the cable industry's highest honour, the Golden ACE, for a second time for its coverage of the Gulf War, industry officials said Monday, reports AP from New York.

In 1989, CNN won for its coverage of the student uprising in Beijing.

CNN's Gulf coverage already has received a George Foster Peabody Award and a National Headliner Award.

The latest award will be presented by the National Academy of Cable Programming at the 13th annual ACE ceremonies January 12.

Fire kills mother, 7 children : Fire in a four-story apartment building killed seven children and their mother on Monday, officials said, reports AP from Germany.

The children, ranging in age from 2-year-old twins to 20, all died of smoke inhalation, and their mother died later in hospital of burns, fire officials said. The officials said the blaze was started by someone smoking in bed.

Iraq destroys giant cannon : Iraq has destroyed the components of a giant cannon, one metre in diameter, and has now eliminated all its declared ballistic weapons of mass destruction, the head of a UN inspection team reported in Baghdad Monday, reports AP.

"The destruction of everything the Iraqis had identified as part of their ballistic capacity has been verified," Partice Palanque of France told reporters.

Palanque headed a United Nations mission that left Monday after confirming the destruction of 32 fixed missile sites in western Iraq as well as 288 launch platforms since its arrival December 2.

The visit was in accordance with UN resolutions approved after the Gulf War aimed at securing Iraq's partial disarmament.

Before leaving, Palanque said his inspectors had enjoyed "good cooperation with the Iraqis."

Clash claims 17 in Algeria : Algerian security forces killed 13 Muslim fundamentalists in a clash in eastern Algeria on Monday in which four soldiers also died, the Defence Ministry said, reports Reuter.

It said in a statement issued late on Monday by the Algerian news agency APS that two insurgents and two members of the security forces were also wounded in the clash near the eastern town of Biskra.

The security forces were chasing a group of 34 fundamentalist militants the government blamed for the killing of the soldiers during an attack against a border post in south east Algeria on November 29.

The Defence Ministry statement said stolen weapons were recovered.

Rebels kill 10 troops in Manipur : Suspected separatist guerrillas killed 10 paramilitary soldiers on a payroll delivery in the northeastern state of Manipur and robbed them of 7.3 million rupees (286,000 dollars) a news report said Tuesday, says AP from Delhi.

The assailants were believed to be from the outlawed National Socialist Council of Nagaland, a small but fierce group of former tribesmen who have been fighting for independence for decades, United News of India said.

United News said 12 soldiers were wounded. Among the dead was a junior police officer.

The incident occurred on a road about 85 kilometres (50 miles) from Imphal, the capital of Manipur, the agency said. Imphal is 1,675 kilometres (1,040 miles) east of New Delhi.

Clan-based clashes kill 3,000 in Somalia

NAIROBI, Dec 10: Shelling intensified at the port in Somalia's war-ravaged capital Tuesday, preventing a Red Cross relief ship from docking, reports AP.

Aid workers estimate that more than 3,000 people have been killed and 7,000 wounded in clan-based fighting that erupted in the Somali capital of Mogadishu on November 17. The fighting involves rival factions of the ruling United Somali Congress.

Most of the casualties have been women and children.

Gregoire Tavernier, an offi-

Slavs have no right to decide fate of whole nation : Gorbachev

MOSCOW, Dec 10 : Mikhail Gorbachev, whose political death has been reported many times, attempted another rebirth Monday by declaring Boris Yeltsin and the leaders of two other Slavic republics did not have the right to decide the fate of the entire nation, reports AP.

Gorbachev called for convocation of the Congress of People's Deputies and possibly a national referendum, hoping that widespread fear of chaos and hunger would fuel a popular movement to preserve the Soviet Union.

The Soviet leader was taken by surprise Sunday when the leaders of Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia pronounced the Soviet Union dead and formed a commonwealth of independent states in its wake.

But Gorbachev bounced back Monday, meeting with Yeltsin and the leaders of other republics to try to preserve his central government and his political future.

and dangerous, it can only aggravate chaos and anarchy in the society."

The events of Sunday and Monday marked a rift in the alliance forged between Gorbachev and Yeltsin last March and cemented by resistance to the failed coup by Communist Party hard-liners last August.

In a statement read on central television, and clearly aimed at Yeltsin's detractors among Russians and the Muslim republics of Asia, Gorbachev appealed for reason and the rule of law.

"Indisputably, any republic has a right to secede from the Union, but the fate of the multinational state can't be decided by the will of the leaders of three republics," Gorbachev said.

"This question must be solved only on a constitutional



Gorbachev said the "Declaration that the union laws no longer exists is... illegal

Off the Record



NEW YORK : Participants in the 1991 Miss World pageant pose Monday for a group photo as they visit New York. The pageant will be held December 28 in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP/UNB photo

Party with a difference

LONDON : The 200 children at a weekend party near Cambridge in England had something special to share, reports Reuter.

All began life as embryos frozen at minus 200 degrees centigrade.

The party which brought together youngsters from as far away as the United States and Iceland was held at Bourn Hall, a test tube baby clinic which introduced its frozen embryo replacement programme in 1983.

"No other fertility treatment centre in the world has achieved anywhere near this number of 'deep freeze children,'" said its Scientific Director, Dr Michael MacNamee.

Party goers included Keith and Stobhan Gower with their son Thomas, the centre's 200th frozen embryo baby who was born earlier this year.

Monkeys care little about office decorum

NEW DELHI : Monkeys attacked an Indian government office on Monday and shredded files while police looked on helplessly, the Press Trust of India news agency said, reports Reuter.

It said the monkeys drove officials out of the public works department office in Tezpur town in northeastern Assam state and spent 25 minutes destroying official documents. Police were summoned but made no attempt to intervene.

Monkeys are regarded as sacred animals by many among India's Hindu majority and roam freely in many towns.

Solzhenitsyn keeps mum

CAVENDISH : Alexander Solzhenitsyn apparently is seeing his dream of a pan-Slavic Russia come to life, but true to the exiled Nobel laureate's style, he had no comment Sunday on the creation of a Slavic commonwealth, reports AP.

In September 1990, Soviet media published an article written by Solzhenitsyn at his home here, in which he called for a populist revival of democracy and spirituality in Russia without Western cultural "garbage," capitalist exploitation or communism.

He suggested a union of Russia, Byelorussia and the Ukraine.

On Sunday, a commonwealth of these republics was announced by Russian Federation President Boris Yeltsin, newly elected Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and Byelorussian Leader Stanislav Shushkevich.

Guest heard no scream at Kennedy estate

WEST PALM BEACH : A man who was a guest at the Kennedy estate on the night the 31-year-old nephew of Sen. Edward Kennedy allegedly raped a woman on the lawn said he heard no noises, reports AP.

Stephen Barry, a New York prosecutor, took the stand for the defence late Sunday. Earlier, two other defence witnesses acknowledged under questioning from the prosecution that their findings couldn't rule out that a rape had occurred.

Barry, an assistant district attorney in Manhattan, said he and his wife slept with their windows open and heard nothing in the early morning hours of March 30. Smith's accuser testified last week she had screamed for help.

Vietnamese boat people forced back home

HONG KONG, Dec 10 : Hong Kong security officials forced 28 subdued and withdrawn Vietnamese boat people onto a Hanoi transport plane Tuesday in the second forcible repatriation in a month, reports AP.

Meanwhile, about 4,500 Vietnamese in Hong Kong's largest detention center demonstrated against plans to forcibly repatriate thousands of boat people.

The Vietnamese- 12 men, six women, seven boys and three girls showed little emotion and did not resist the efforts of Royal Hong Kong Police officers who forced them onto the Hercules C-130 plane.

Most of the boat people bowed their heads and clutched brown plastic bags filled with parting gifts from the British colonial government. Some of them cried.

Earlier, the Vietnamese had been taken by ferry from an island detention centre to Hong Kong's international airport.

The low-key operation stood in marked contrast to the November 9 forced repatriation when Royal Hong Kong police carried 59 screaming Vietnamese men and women onto a plane in a similar operation.

But the colony's government still faces the problem of repatriating thousands of boat people from Hong Kong's 11 camps.

On Tuesday, about 4,500 Vietnamese took part in two one-hour rallies at Hong Kong's largest camp, the Whitehead detention centre. A government spokesman said the Vietnamese marched, shouted anti-Communist slogans and denounced forced repatriation.

No violence was reported at the camp, which is closed to the media.

Canada welcomes Slavic C'wealth

OTTAWA, Dec 10 : Canadian Minister for External Affairs Barbara McDougall Monday welcomed the announcement by Russia, Ukraine and Belarus that they were forming a commonwealth of independent states, reports AP.

"We think this is a very positive development," McDougall said.

"There is an effort to coordinate on the side of the republics their approach to nuclear weapons, debt and finance, as well as human rights and the rights of minorities," she said.

The Commonwealth accord announced Sunday by the leaders of the three most powerful Soviet republics marks "another step in an evolution among the republics," she said.

Probe into alleged assault on Benazir's friend ordered

ISLAMABAD, Dec 10: The government has ordered a judicial inquiry into the alleged gang rape of a friend of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, an attack the victim claims was politically motivated, reports AP.

Officials said Jam Sadiq Ali, Chief Minister of southern Sindh province, has decided to appoint a high-powered tribunal to probe the alleged sexual assault Farahna Hayat Nicknamed Veena.