

Cambodian refugees condemn attack on Khieu Samphan

SITE 8 REFUGEE CAMP (Thailand), Nov 29: Thousand of Cambodian refugees staged a rally in this Khmer Rouge-controlled camp today to condemn the attack which forced faction leaders Khieu Samphan and Son Sen to flee Phnom Penh for their lives, reports AFP.

The rally was apparently stage-managed, but Khmer Rouge leaders of the camp on Thailand's border with Cambodia would tell reporters only that they had given "permission" for the demonstration, during which Phnom Penh Prime Minister Hun Sen was burnt in effigy.

Pictures of a bloodied Khieu Samphan were also displayed by the crowd of some 3,000 as they shouted: "Justice for our leader. We'll fight for peace in Cambodia."

Khieu Samphan was slightly wounded in the head Wednesday when his residence was attacked by a lynch mob in

Phnom Penh in retaliation for the bloody 1975-79 Khmer Rouge rule over Cambodia during which more than one million people died in extermination campaigns.

Following the attack, in which Phnom Penh security forces finally pulled Khieu Samphan to safety as the crowd was preparing to lynch him and Aon Sen flew to Bangkok.

The two are Khmer Rouge representatives on the Supreme National Council (SNC), a reconciliation body of Cambodia's rival factions which last month signed a peace treaty to end their 13-year war.

Earlier report adds: "Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk said he would soon visit Vietnam, his erstwhile enemy, to help build a new relationship of friendship, an official Vietnamese newspaper reported today."

Palestinians will seek settlement freeze in Washington Israel tries to save face as US, Arabs go ahead

JERUSALEM, Nov 29: Israel has repeated its demand for delay in peace talks set for Washington but is trying to save face as the United States and the Arabs go ahead with plans to open negotiations on December 4, reports Reuters.

Palestinian negotiators said they would leave today for Amman and from there go to Washington for the resumed talks on Middle East peace. Jordan, Lebanon and Syria have also accepted the US invitation to attend the talks on Tuesday.

In light of the Arab acceptance, Washington has said it cannot change the date for resuming direct negotiations.

Israel, angry at failing to win US backing for its demand that the talks be held in the Middle East, said this week it would not be ready to reopen

negotiations until December 9. AP report adds: Palestinians will demand a permanent freeze on Jewish settlements in the occupied territories in the next round of Mideast peace talks, a spokesman for the negotiators said Thursday.

Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians have all agreed to attend the Washington talks starting on December 4, the date set by the United States. Israel has asked for the talks to convene December 9 so it has more time to prepare.

The talks would be the second phase of the peace process set in motion October 30 in Madrid.

Faisal Husseini, a pro-PLO leader of the advisory committee to the Palestinian negotiating team, said the settlements issue would be the Palestinians' priority in

Washington. The coming negotiation is the battle about settlements," Husseini told reporters at his east Jerusalem home. "We will demand not only a freeze in settlements but to stop them permanently."

Husseini did not rule out the possibility of agreeing to a postponement of the talks if Washington seeks one.

Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, however, said, "We are going there, we are not going to accept schedule, timing and place from Israel."

Ashrawi, a professor of English literature at Bir Zeit University, and two other advisers, Sari Nusseibeh and Zahirah Kamal, will accompany the 30 Palestinian delegates and support staff to Amman on Friday. From there, some of the delegates will fly to

Washington. Israel's building campaign in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip — captured in the 1967 Middle East War — has been a key irritant in peace efforts.

More than 130 Israeli towns have gone up in these areas, where 1.7 million Palestinians live. The settlements are home to about 100,000 Israelis.

Diplomatic sources said in Washington this week that the United States, in its invitations to resume the talks, had for the first time detailed ideas on how to begin resolving four decades of Arab-Israeli conflict.

These ideas included discussing with Syria on Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Off the Record



KARACHI: Sherry Rahman (R) editor of the monthly Herald magazine talks with her defence lawyers outside the court on Thursday. Rahman was granted bail after being served with subpoenas concerning the publication of a news report on a Pakistani intelligence agency that allegedly defamed a top official. —AFP/UNB photo

Spellbound by a belly dancer

BAGHDAD: An Iraqi spellbound by the sinuous movements of a belly dancer threw a million dinar cheque at her feet, reports Reuters.

The Al-Jumhuriya newspaper on Thursday quoted eyewitnesses as saying he paid the tribute at a Baghdad night club.

The generosity humbled that of many similarly lovestruck members of the audience, who threw her "thousands of 50-dinar notes," it said. Such gestures are traditional in many parts of the Arab world.

One million dinars is a fortune. It is worth 3.2 million dollars at the official exchange rate and about 100,000 dollars at the black market rate.

'It's better to make love dressed'

BOGOTA: A Catholic bishop accused the government Thursday of promoting adultery by sponsoring a shocking anti-AIDS television announcement that features a naked man, reports AP.

The Health Ministry spot, which has been aired on both of Colombia's television channels for about three weeks, tells viewers that "it's better to make love dressed, but the only clothing you need is a condom."

It shows a side view of a naked man lying on a bed. The spot has caused a stir in Colombia, one of Latin America's most traditional Roman Catholic countries. Abortion remains illegal and divorce was made lawful only last July.

Bishop Dario Castrillon called the spot "shameful and cynical," and told reporters that Health Minister Camilo Gonzalez was promoting adultery. He called on the minister to "respect Christian morality."

Health Minister Camilo Gonzalez said the television announcement is meant exclusively "to help prevent the spread of the HIV virus." He denied the campaign promoted promiscuity.

Loss of libido

LONDON: Thousands of women who have a hysterectomy — surgical removal of the womb — could lose their sex drive because they are not given Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), British doctors said on Thursday, reports Reuters Friday from London.

They told a news conference in London that failure to prescribe hormone replacement increased the risk of heart attack or the brittle bone disease osteoporosis.

Nick Siddle, a gynaecologist at London's University College Hospital, said a deficiency in oestrogen after hysterectomy caused hot flushes, headaches and loss of libido in the short term. In the long term it increased the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

"GPs (General Practitioners), gynaecologists and patients need to work together to ensure all women who become oestrogen deficient after hysterectomy get the HRT they need," Dr John Lockley said.

Doctors said only a small percentage of the 60,000 women who have a hysterectomy in Britain each year were given HRT.

Baby's mattress causes cot deaths

LONDON: British scientists said on Thursday they had new evidence suggesting that cot death, the biggest killer of babies in Britain, was caused by poisonous fumes from babies' mattresses, reports Reuters.

The theory put forward by Biochemist Barry Richardson and his team is that chemicals in mattresses react over time with a normally harmless household fungus to produce toxic gases.

The risk is higher if a baby is put face down on the mattress or over-wrapped, Richardson said in a report.

The medical establishment dismissed this theory two years ago. But Richardson said the new findings, which discovered a common link between more than 100 cases of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in England and Wales, could no longer be ignored.

Cot death killed 1,379 babies last year in Britain, which has the highest rate of cot deaths in western Europe.

"It must be concluded that the primary cause of SIDS is generation of phosphine, arsine, stibine and released toxic gases through bio-deterioration of mattress materials containing phosphorous, arsenic and antimony compounds," said Richardson, who works in the channel island of Guernsey.

Kurdish leader in Baghdad to revive stalled talks

NICOSIA, Nov 29: Kurdish rebel leader Massoud Barzani arrived in Baghdad on Thursday for the revival of deadlocked autonomy talks, apparently bowing to pressures by Saddam Hussein's government, reports AP.

A blockade by Iraqi troops of major Kurdish cities in northern Iraq is still in force, Kurdish spokesmen say. The troops had served notice to the Kurdish guerrillas to vacate the cities, and they did so last week in the hopes that the blockade would ease.

A spokesman for the

Kurdistan Democratic Party said Barzani, leader of the group, travelled from the troubled Kurdish enclave in northern Iraq to Baghdad "to continue the dialogue with the Iraqi government."

Speaking from London, the spokesman Sherwan Dizeye told the Associated Press: "This trip which takes place at a critical time is hoped to lift the tension and the economic blockade in Kurdistan and to reactivate the talks between the Kurdish Front and the Iraqi authorities."

China, Israel to set up ties

BEIJING, Nov 29: Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen told a delegation of American Jews on Thursday that China and Israel may soon establish full diplomatic relations, a member of the delegations said, reports Reuters.

Rabbi Marvin Hier quoted Qian as saying: "Israel and China are both on a gradual and progressive approach with the ultimate goal of preparing for normal relations. With concrete efforts from both sides, that can be achieved soon."

Hier said in a telephone interview that Qian's comments during the meeting "seemed to us to be making clear that it is full speed ahead."

The Chinese government has given to public indication of when it might normalise ties with Israel. The two countries have never had diplomatic relations.

Hier is dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles and is leading a dele-

gation that will open the first exhibition in China of the Holocaust the exhibition of documents and photographs opens in Shanghai on Tuesday.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wu Jianmin declined to comment when asked about Qian's reported comments at a regular weekly news briefing on Thursday.

Contacts between China and Israel are rapidly growing and the head of the first official Israeli trade delegation to China said last Friday he believed the two countries would establish relations within months.

Dan Gillerman also said direct economic, travel and communications links would come quickly.

Security sources in Israel say Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Arens secretly visited Beijing between November 4 and 8, just after the launching of Arab-Israeli peace talks in Madrid.



KIEV: A woman supporting Levko Lukyanenko for president in Ukraine's upcoming presidential elections in December, shouts and waves flyers at people gathered in Kiev's Independence square. —AFP/UNB photo

Gorbachev surprised over US move to recognise Ukraine

MOSCOW, Nov 29: President Mikhail S. Gorbachev on Thursday expressed surprise about reports that the United States may move toward diplomatic recognition of the Ukraine if voters there support independence in a referendum this weekend, reports AP.

Earlier Thursday, the Soviet Foreign Ministry played down comments by a senior US official in Washington, who said the United States was consulting with allies about the possibility of recognising the Soviet Union's second largest republic depending on the outcome of Sunday's vote.

Opinion polls indicate the independence referendum will be overwhelmingly approved and that Leonid Kravchuk, the former Communist Party leader turned nationalist, will be elected President.

A statement released by Gorbachev's office said Washington has said repeatedly it will not take any official position on the independence of various republics until their voters decide the issue for themselves.

This information is surprising, all the more so because it appeared immediately before the referendum," the state-

ment said. It referred to the comments made by the US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The United States already has reestablished diplomatic relations with the three newly independent Baltic states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which gained their long-sought independence in the wake of the failed August coup. Foreign Ministry spokesman Vitaly Churkin said the United States and other countries so far have taken a "very balanced and proper" approach to the rapid restructuring of the Soviet Union after the coup.

Tokyo stock scandal: former minister jailed

TOKYO, Nov 29: A former Japanese cabinet minister received a punitive prison term today for evading billions of yen (millions of dollars) in tax on stock speculation profits while in office, reports Reuters.

In a landmark case against Japan's tradition of money politics, Toshikuni Inamura, environment minister between 1986 and 1987, was sentenced to three years and four months with hard labour without possibility of remission.

Inamura was the first politician to receive such a prison term, seen as a warning to others, since former Prime Minister Kakue Tanaka was convicted in the 1976 Lockheed bribery scandal.

Sentences on tax evasion cases are usually suspended in Japan on pledges of future good conduct.

The defendant betrayed the people by evading his duty to pay taxes. Also, the sum was too large," said Judge Shigeru Matsura at the Tokyo District Court.

The defendant definitely

lacked responsibility as a

Member of Parliament who

should be an example to the

nation," he said.

Roh changes army chief, four others

SEOUL, Nov 29: President Roh Tae-woo changed the army chief of staff and four other military commanders Friday in a major military shakeup which traditionally precedes a year-end Cabinet reshuffle, reports AP.

Military officials declined to comment on the changes, but the moves were widely seen as an attempt to strengthen Roh's leadership as he faces nationwide elections next year.

Traditionally, changes in military leadership draw keen public attention in South Korea, where politics has been marred by sporadic coups and bloody civil uprisings.

Pro-apartheid candidate wins by-elections

JOHANNESBURG, Nov 29: A pro-apartheid candidate easily defeated his opponent from the governing National Party in a by-election Thursday that indicated white opposition to President F.W. de Klerk's reforms, reports AP.

Conservative Party candidate Kobus Beyers had said before the vote that people would support him because they "knew instinctively that de Klerk and the National Party are on the road to an unavoidable African National Congress government."

Voters in the parliamentary election in Virginia, a town in predominantly white, conservative Orange Free State, gave Beyers 7,980 votes and wide margin of victory over his opponent, Jac Kloppe, who received 4,814 votes.

The Senate resolution cited the United States and Canada, Haiti's two biggest trading partners, Venezuela and Mexico, its two main oil suppliers; and France, the European country that has given the strongest support to the OAS embargo.

Haiti to sue US, Canada, France for reparations

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Nov 29: In a sudden hardening of its position, the Haitian Senate voted on Thursday to sue the United States, Canada and other countries for the damages Haiti has suffered because of an international embargo, radio stations reported, reports Reuters.

In a resolution passed by 12 votes in favour, with three against and three abstentions, the Senate decided to sue countries belonging to the Organisation of American States for reparations at the International Court of Justice, the reports said.

One Senator who abstained, Jean-Robert Martinez, said the resolution was likely to obstruct negotiations with the

OAS on the reinstatement of deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

A western diplomat said the Senate seemed to have been emboldened by the military-backed provisional government's success earlier on Thursday in obtaining a shipment of petroleum products in defiance of an OAS embargo.

It was the first shipment to reach the oil-starved Caribbean nation since the OAS declared its embargo on October 8 to press for the reinstatement of Aristide, who was toppled in a military coup on September 30.

In a related move on Thursday, provisional Prime Minister Jean-Kjaoues Honorat described the em-

bargo as "racist" and announced plans to choose a successor to President Aristide in elections on January 5.

In an interview with state-run Radio Nationale, Honorat said the elections would be supervised, as required by the constitution, by an independent provisional electoral council which he hoped to set up by December 5.

Mirror gives Major 38 marks, 'must try harder'

LONDON, Nov 29: British Prime Minister John Major on Thursday listed the fight against inflation and the eviction of Iraqi troops from Kuwait as the main achievements in his first year in office, reports Reuters.

Major, the humble son of a circus performer who rose to the leadership of the ruling Conservative Party and replaced Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister, read his own

report card to Parliament. He also took pride in a British initiative to save Kurdish lives in northern Iraq and a massive debt relief package for Third World countries.

"We have made changes in both domestic and overseas policies that command the wide respect of people throughout this country," he said.

"We have cut inflation. We have cut interest rates. We

have given Britain the lowest corporate tax rates in Europe. We have successfully come through a war," he said.

But political opponents said those economic gains had been gained at the expense of a bitter year-long recession with almost 800,000 people joining Dole queues since Major took power.

One British newspaper, the left-leaning daily Mirror, was not so impressed. It gave

Major 38 marks out of 100 in a tongue-in-cheek report card, saying he "must try harder."

Message from Beijing adds: China objected to a meeting between Major and Tibet's Dalai Lama, and gave scant information on a list of political prisoners Major submitted in September, a British Minister said Friday.

Foreign Office Minister Lord Caithness told reporters his counterpart, Vice Foreign

Minister Tian Zengpei, expressed opposition to a meeting between Major and the exiled spiritual leader of Chinese-ruled Tibet due to take place on Monday.

Major did not receive the Dalai Lama in March during his last visit to Britain in order not to endanger delicate talks under way with China over the future of Hong Kong, which reverts to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

"It's now right for the Prime Minister to meet the Dalai Lama," Caithness said. "There's been a gradual move, that it is quite right and logical."

But the Chinese objected to the meeting, saying the Dalai Lama was a separatist. "They are concerned that the Prime Minister is to meet him," Caithness said. "In their view, the Dalai Lama is someone who wants to split China."

Nguza emphasised that his government was an interim administration that would "respect all civil, social and political components" of Zaire. He said it aimed to give food to the people, assure their security and pursue the democratisation of Zaire through a national conference.

There was no indication that his administration would unblock a week-long struggle by the original Sacred Union to force Mobutu to surrender his 26-year stranglehold on power.

India to host G-15 summit: India will host fourth summit of the group of 15 developing countries, reports PTI Friday from Caracas.

This decision was taken at an informal meeting of foreign ministers of the group, including Madhavsinh Solanki Thursday when the heads of states and governments were at a retreat in Gurl.

The decision will be formally ratified before the G-15 leaders finalise the declaration later Thursday evening.

The third summit will be held at Senegal next year.