

## International

Gorbachev a courageous leader : Reagan

LOS ANGELES, Dec 26 : Former US President Ronald Reagan, who once called the Soviet Union an "evil empire", said on Wednesday Mikhail Gorbachev was a courageous leader who would live forever in history, reports Reuter.

Reagan, 80, who moved to the Bel Air estate of Los Angeles after leaving the White House, issued a statement saying: "Mikhail Gorbachev will live forever in history. From our first summit meeting in Geneva and throughout all our subsequent meetings, I have found him to be a courageous leader."

"He has been willing to break down barriers that have divided our countries and enslaved its citizens. The people of the Soviet Union and all freedom-loving people around the world owe Mikhail Gorbachev a great debt of thanks."

Reagan lashed out at the Soviet Union as an "evil empire" in March 1983 as he urged opposition to a nuclear arms freeze. Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union in March 1985.

### Kurdish rebels kill 11 Turks

ISTANBUL, Dec 26 : Kurdish separatists killed 11 civilians in a petrol bomb attack on an Istanbul store on Wednesday, spelling their violent campaign into Turkey's commercial capital, reports Reuter Thursday from Istanbul.

Eye-witnesses said about 50 Kurdish guerrillas aged about 20 set fire to a department store owned by the brother of the emergency governor in the Southeast, main site of seven-year insurgency by the Kurdish Workers Party.

"There were about 50 of them. They came clapping and shouting 'Long Live Kurdistan'. Then they threw petrol bombs inside the shop," one eye-witness told Turkey's Star-1 private television.

Business district, killed a two-year-old girl, seven women, one of them pregnant and three men.

At least 20 people were injured, some trampled underfoot as people scrambled to get out.

# World leaders praise Gorbachev for joining West in search of peace

LONDON, Dec 26 : World leaders unanimously praised Mikhail Gorbachev who resigned as Soviet leader on Wednesday as his superpower empire collapsed, saying he had ended the cold war and allowed democracy to reach communist-led eastern Europe, reports Reuter.

In rare tributes to a former foe, western leaders catalogued political achievements of Gorbachev, who ruled the world's largest country for nearly seven years and oversaw the demise of communism in many parts of the world.

"I wish to express to him my personal gratitude for the work accomplished in the defense of peace and to assure him of my feelings of friendship and best wishes," French President Francois Mitterrand said in a statement.

"He was one of the men who most marked the history of this century by preparing and organising the advent of liberties in his country, the end of the cold war and disarmament," he said.

President Bush of the United States, long a super-power rival of the giant Soviet state, cut short his Christmas

holiday at his Camp David mountain retreat to make a nationally broadcast speech about the end of the Soviet Union and its effect on the United States.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Gorbachev called Bush on Wednesday morning shortly before he made his resignation address. "Bush praised President Gorbachev for the historic transformation of the Soviet Union and for his personal courage and leadership in reforming the country," he said.

Manfred Woerner, Secretary-General of the West's NATO alliance that opposed the old Soviet Bloc's Warsaw Pact, commented:

"Without the changes he introduced in the former Soviet Union the fundamental policy transformation there would have been unthinkable."

"It was in response to these reforms that NATO could extend the end of friendship to the countries of central and Eastern Europe," he added.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, Gorbachev's closest western ally, saluted the Kremlin chief for opening the

iron curtain to clear the way for German unification last year.

"We Germans-- and I personally-- owe him tremendous gratitude. The political achievements of Mikhail Gorbachev were correctly honoured by the bestowal of the Nobel Peace Prize," Kohl said, referring to Gorbachev's

## Gorbachev says he won't hide in woods

WASHINGTON, Dec 26 : Mikhail Gorbachev said Wednesday he intended to continue playing a role in public life despite his resignation as President of the now-defunct Soviet Union, reports AFP.

"I have no intention of hiding in the woods," a defiant Gorbachev said in an interview from Moscow with Cable News Network minutes after a terse resignation speech was broadcast live to the nation.

He said he had informed U.S. President George Bush by telephone earlier Wednesday that he intended to continue

1990 award.

The 12-nation European Community said it recognised Russia, led by Boris Yeltsin, in place of the defunct Soviet Union now that Gorbachev had resigned.

Russia and two other Slavic republics launched a commonwealth of independent states on December 8, which

was joined by eight other Soviet republics last week, to replace the collapsing 89-year-old Soviet state.

But the EC called on Gorbachev's successors to dissolve the union in a "peaceful, democratic and orderly way".

British Prime Minister John Major hailed Gorbachev, 60, as the man who had altered world history and helped make the world a safer place.

"It is given to very few people to change the course of history," Major told reporters. "But that is what Gorbachev has done. Whatever happens today his place in history is secure."

Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who first met Gorbachev in Britain shortly before he assumed power, said: "He did great things for the world and we are very grateful."

"It is a totally outstanding man in history that is now leaving the scene and we hope that his successors in the different republics will follow the same policy," Norway's Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg said.

## North Korea accepts nuclear inspections

SEOUL, Dec 26 : North Korea declared Thursday it will sign a treaty allowing international inspection of its nuclear facilities, South Korean officials said, reports AP.

North Korea also declared that it would not possess facilities for nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment, suggesting the hard-line Communist state would not attempt to manufacture nuclear weapons.

"It's a very positive development and brightened hope for an agreement [between the two Koreas]," said Lee Dong-Bok, a South Korean delegate to talks with North Korea on Thursday.

The surprise North Korean announcement came during talks on the nuclear dispute that threatens to scuttle a historic, two-week-old reconciliation agreement for the heavily armed peninsula.

Lee said the North Korean statement was contained in a "declaration of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula" proposed for adoption by both Koreas. The proposal strongly resembled one by the South, he said.

The North Korean draft calls for peaceful use of nuclear energy and would ban the production, introduction and stockpile of all nuclear weapons on the peninsula.

It also would ban nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities. Such facilities can produce plutonium, an essential material in nuclear weapons.

Lee said North Korean officials also declared that they now believe South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo's announcement last week that there are no nuclear weapons left in his country.

Sharif to visit France next month

ISLAMABAD, Dec 26 : Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will visit France next month to press for the delivery of a French nuclear power plant, promised more than a year ago, a government official said Thursday, reports AP.

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