

## Iraqi oppositions reject plan to oust Saddam

DAMASCUS, Dec 29: Iraqi opposition movements meeting here this week rejected a plan to overthrow Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, sources close to the talks said Saturday, reports AP.

The President of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SAIRI), Ayatollah Bagir Al-Hakim, failed to convince his interlocutors, including Muslim fundamentalists, to rally to his call for a coup d'etat, they said.

Muslim, Kurdish and secular representatives who talked with Hakim during a week-long visit he made to the Syrian capital called for the plan to be redrafted "to ensure comprehensive acceptance", an opposition official who declined to be identified told AFP.

He said the absence of a delegation from the Kurdistan Front (KF) a coalition of eight Iraqi Kurdish opposition movements, which was expected to attend, had affected

the discussions since the Kurds who did show up were not in a position to commit Kurdish fighters.

Jalal Talbani, a leader of the Front, told AFP Friday that a delegation from the Kurdish coalition would soon visit Syria but declined to comment on reports about a project to overthrow the Iraqi leaders.

"Our delegation will review every project put forth by Ayatollah Hakim and other brethren," he said. In April, the KF held talks with Iraqi authorities on autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan, but the discussions have not yielded results so far.

The opposition official said Syria had shown little enthusiasm for the project, which he claimed was "formulated by Tehran and Riyadh and co-sponsored by the United States and Britain."

He said Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad had repeatedly said that Iraq's future should be left to its people, without recourse to foreign forces.

## Nagorny-Karabakh under fierce bombardment: 14 killed

MOSCOW, Dec 29: Fourteen people were killed and 42 injured on Saturday as the Nagorny-Karabakh capital Stepanakert came under fierce bombardment by Azeri forces during legislative elections, Radio Armenia reported, says AFP.

The heavy bombardment

came one day after the completion of the withdrawal of former Soviet Interior Ministry troops from Nagorny-Karabakh, an enclave of the republic of Azerbaijan which has a majority Armenian population.

The Soviet troops had been stationed in the disputed

region to try to keep the belligerents apart.

The Tass news agency said voting was delayed until today in some areas of the city because of heavy missile and artillery attacks.

According to the local Electoral Commission, about 60 per cent of the voters had cast

their ballots by mid-afternoon despite the shelling.

Armenian Radio said "Stepanakert came under massive artillery and missile fire... from the direction of the Azeri-inhabited district of Kirkidzhan and the Azeri village of Malibeyli."

It said 14 people were killed and 42 injured in the bombardment and that many residents were forced to take shelter in bunkers and cellars.

Azeris, who make up a minority of the population in Nagorny-Karabakh, are boycotting the election, which follows a December 10 referendum in which an overwhelming majority of the Armenian population voted for independence.

The Azeri Interior Minister, Major General Tokif Kerimov said that now that former Soviet troops have been left, "Azerbaijan itself is fully responsible for the situation in the region."

"Thus all the attributes of the state of emergency are being eliminated here," Kerimov said. "In essence it has now been lifted."

The General said that a Soviet army regiment remained at Khankendi but that "any attempt by it to take part in the conflict may be viewed as a violation of its status."



Voters asking the early result from the gate keeper of a local polling station after closing of the ballot in Rawalpindi. Municipal elections were held only in Punjab Province due to the fear of violence in the other three Pak provinces. — AFP photo.

## Yeltsin's move to end differences with Rutskoy

MOSCOW, Dec 29: Russian President Boris Yeltsin Saturday held talks with his Vice President, Alexander Rutskoy, in a bid to iron out differences between them which have led to bitter recrimination, Interfax news agency reported, says AFP.

The Moscow News alleged this week that Rutskoy had been holding secret meetings with former Communist leaders to work out an 'anti-crisis programme' that would include Yeltsin's resignation.

In an interview with US-based CNN television on Wednesday, Yeltsin suggested Rutskoy lacked political maturity.

Rutskoy, a former reformist Communist and Air Force Colonel, warned in a recent Pravda interview that Yeltsin's economic reforms could bring about dictatorship.

## PLO calls on ME peace sponsors to respect pledges

TUNIS, Dec 29: The PLO on Saturday called on the co-sponsors of the Middle East peace conference to assume their responsibility and respect their pledges to push it forward, reports AFP.

In a statement issued here by the Palestine Liberation Organisation Executive Committee, and cited by the Palestinian Wafa news agency, it underlined the need to face Israeli maneuvers aimed at blocking the negotiations and pursuing the settlements policy.

The peace conference which opened in plenary session on October 30 in Madrid is technically sponsored by the United States and the former Soviet Union.

## 12 killed in Pak election violence

ISLAMABAD, Dec 29: At least 12 people were killed and about 100 injured in sporadic incidents of violence Saturday during the local bodies elections in Pakistan's southeast province of Punjab, according to local press reports today, says Xinhua.

Serious incidents of violence were reported from Narowal, Multan, Sialkot, Sheikhupura, Gujranwala, Muridke and Rawalpindi districts.

Police brought the situation under control in most of the areas.

The local daily 'The Nation'

quoted unconfirmed reports as saying over 500 persons had been arrested throughout the province on charges of causing unrest at polling stations, rigging and harassing the supporters of rival candidates.

An official announcement Saturday night said Saturday's polling in Punjab was held peacefully.

According to unofficial results, the ruling party like-minded candidates have won the elections with an overwhelming majority throughout the province where there are 42,000 local bodies seats.

## Syria recognises 11 republics

DAMASCUS, Dec 29: Syria on Saturday recognised the 11 members of the Commonwealth of Independent States and stressed its wish to "maintain and develop" ties with the former Soviet republics, reports AP.

A Foreign Ministry statement said Damascus wanted to establish diplomatic ties with all "these independent states on the basis of mutual respect and common interest in a bid to bolster just and comprehensive peace in the world."

Syria considers that its Embassy in Moscow represents its interests in the Russian Federation and other Republics until the setting up of other missions.

## Turner: Time's man of the year

NEW YORK, Dec 29: American media mogul Ted Turner was named Time magazine's Man of the Year on Saturday by editors who cited the impact of his Cable News Network's live television coverage of events around the globe, reports AP.

Turner, 53 was hailed as a "visionary" whose network changed the definition of news "from something that has happened to something that is happening at the very moment you are hearing of it," the news magazine said.

"For influencing the dynamic of events and turning viewers in 150 countries into instant witnesses of history, Robert Edward Turner III is Time's Man of the Year for 1991," the magazine concluded.

Turner, whose Atlanta-based Turner Broadcasting System Inc. also operates Turner Network Television and the cable superstation WTBS, said he was "extremely honoured" by the award, but

credited his employees for his company's success.

"These dedicated individuals share a common goal of informing, entertaining and inspiring audiences around the world with quality programming," he said. "In accepting this honour, I salute their efforts."

CNN President Tom Johnson expressed delight with the award Saturday but said the selection came as somewhat of a surprise.

"I think many people expected it would have been (Russian President) Boris Yeltsin, but a number of Time reporters have been in Atlanta and in conversation with our various bureaus, so we knew they were working on a major piece," he said.

"I think it's a wonderful recognition of Ted and those who worked with him over the years in building CNN and his whole organization."

CNN has had "a wonderful year, certainly for those of us who love the news," Johnson

added.

Among the events carried live by CNN in 1991 were the Persian Gulf War, the Soviet coup and the emergence of Yeltsin, the rape trial and acquittal of William Kennedy Smith, and the confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

The honour caps a busy year for Turner. The television magnate's Atlanta Braves won the National League pennant before losing a dramatic seven-game World Series to the Minnesota Twins, and he married actress Jane Fonda earlier this month.

The award puts Turner, who also owns the Atlanta Hawks of the National Basketball Association, in a league with the leaders who frequently appear on his network. President Bush, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, ex-President Ronald Reagan and Polish leader Lech Walesa are past winners of Time's annual honour.

## Y'slav army missile Zagreb

ZAGREB, Dec 29: The Yugoslav army fired surface-to-surface missiles at Croatian troops just south-east of Zagreb on Saturday, the Croatian high command said, reports Reuters.

The detonation of the missiles explained six loud explosions heard in the capital earlier, causing the first general alarm in Zagreb since the start of the war six months ago.

A high command statement, read on Croatian radio, said: "The aggressor's army fired R-65 surface-to-surface rockets which are of Soviet origin in an area south of Zagreb."

The blasts caused a general alarm. Lights went out all over Zagreb and residents took to air raid shelters. The all-clear sounded after nearly an hour and normal life gradually resumed.

## BRIEFLY

**Italy recognises Ukraine:** Italy on Saturday recognised the independence of Ukraine and is planning to recognise all the other republics of the new Commonwealth of Independent States, reports AP.

The former Soviet republics would be recognised "as independent, sovereign states and full-fledged members of the international community as soon as they guarantee that they are prepared to meet the criteria set in a December 16 statement by the European Community," the government said in a statement.

Italy recognised the Russian Federation, the former Soviet Union's biggest republic, on December 25.

**Castro won't allow pluralism:** Cuban President Fidel Castro said he will never allow a multi-party system in his nation, and legislators vowed to fight other "counter-revolutionary" crimes at the close of the legislative session, reports AP from Mexico City.

On Saturday, Castro also warned Cuban exiles in Miami to forget any ideas they might have about attacking the island, the Mexican news agency Notimex reported from Havana.

Some anti-Castro exiles have continued weekly paramilitary drills, and there has been speculation that Cuba's severe economic crisis could prove tempting to those who dream of returning to oust Castro.

Castro vowed to keep a lid on internal dissent as well, saying direct election of legislators would not lead to legalisation of groups that oppose the official Communist Party.

**Israel detains 22 Palestinians:** Israeli soldiers detained 22 Palestinians Saturday in the occupied territories in a fresh effort to crush the four-year Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation, reports reaching in Cairo said, reports Xinhua.

The Israeli forces combed the West Bank towns of Nablus, Orlam and Ramallah in a sweep aimed at finding activists of the uprising which broke out in December 1987.

In a street near the Jabalya Refugee Camp in the Gaza city, an Israeli military patrol clashed with Palestinians who defended themselves by throwing stones and empty bottles.

Meanwhile, a group of Jewish settlers raided Palestinian village near Jerusalem, destroying Palestinian's plantations and fruit trees, Arab sources said.

**3 Honduran army officers killed:** Someone shot dead three Honduran military officers who survived a helicopter crash in territory where Salvadoran guerrillas and troops had been fighting, a doctor said, reports AP from Honduras.

Dennis Castro, chief of the medical-legal department for the Honduran Supreme Court of Justice, said Saturday an autopsy last week found bullet fragments from AK-47 rifles in the three bodies.

Soldiers of the rebel Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, fighting the Salvadoran government for 12 years, use the weapons.

A Honduran helicopter on a routine border patrol mission flew eight miles (13 kilometers) into Salvadoran airspace December 19 to avoid bad weather, official reports say. The aircraft flew into the northern Salvadoran province of Morazan, where Salvadoran rebels and government troops were fighting. Rebel forces shot it down, officials said.

**Mujahideen rockets kill 19:** Rebel rocket attacks have left 19 people dead and more than 50 injured in three Afghan cities over two days, the state-run Radio Kabul said Saturday, reports AP from Islamabad.

"A total of 41 rockets hit Afghanistan's second largest city, Jalalabad, near the Pakistan border, killing 14 people and injuring 25 since Friday, the radio said.

It added that one person died and several were injured in Kabul, which was struck by a barrage of 13 rockets Saturday, the fourth straight day of rocket attacks on the capital.

Four people were killed and 27 injured when more than 100 rockets hit Kabul and the western city of Herat on Friday, the 12th anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

## Many newspapers to disappear following Soviet collapse

MOSCOW, Dec 29: The collapse of the Soviet Union is likely to bring about the disappearance of many of its newspapers, especially those subsidised by the former Union Government, and unemployment for the journalists, reports AP.

Glasnost, Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of openness, brought with it an explosion in the number of publications in the late 1980s, but shortages of paper and ink, and spiralling production costs have thrown the industry into turmoil.

And following the banning of the Communist Party, in the wake of the attempted coup in August, a number of party papers, including Pravda, the former Communist organ, have lost both readers and financial backing.

Russia, which has taken over many of the former Union Government's duties, has neither the means nor political inclination to fund all former Soviet media.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin Friday nationalised the former Soviet state radio and television, Gosicleradio, now to be called Ostankino after the part of town where its

headquarters are located.

Its Director, Yegor Yakovlev, former Editor of the reformist weekly publication Moscow News, has been in charge of the services since the abortive conservative coup.

The new company will broadcast political, economic and cultural news from Russia and the new Commonwealth of Independent States, but while the Russian government has pledged temporarily to fund its production, some of its services could face privatisation.

Boris Nepomniashchy, Director General of televised news, told AFP that Ostankino might

be forced to look for shareholders, either from among the other 10 CIS republics or among businesses.

To help run Ostankino, Yakovlev is now assisted by a financial expert, Konstantin Borovoi, who heads the main 'stock exchange' in Moscow.

With rising production costs, newspapers are to cut back on staff and even then, not all will survive.

A senior Pravda Official recently revealed that income from circulation did not even cover distribution, and that the more papers were sold, the greater the cost.

While Russian newspapers, such as Rossiyskaya Gazeta, might count on government funding, several 'Soviet' newspapers, including Izvestia, the former Union government organ, are finding it hard to convince the news authorities of their merit.

Other radical newspapers are hearing a little better.

"We have done without subsidies and shall continue," Svetlana Zhukova, responsible for Nezavisimaya Gazeta said.

"We are already partially financed through advertising and we shall be increasing our rates," she added.

The price of the newspaper, which sells at its 270,000 copies, will also be increased from 60 to 80 or 85 Kopeks at the beginning of the year, at a time when Russia plans to free most other prices.

Tass, the former official news agency, is also in trouble, facing tough competition from smaller but more dynamic agencies, such as Interfax and the Russian RIA.

The Russian Parliament is shortly expected to look into its possible sale, but its 4,000 staff will certainly face cutbacks.

## Off the Record

### Anderson in, Trump out

PRINCETON: Businessman Donald Trump is out and former hostage Terry Anderson is in, according to the Gallup Poll's annual list of the 10 men Americans admire most, reports AP.

Anderson, who emerged December 4 from six and a half years of captivity in Lebanon, was second only to President Bush in this year's poll.

With his name dominating headlines during the December 5-8 survey period, Anderson, the chief Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press, got more mention in the telephone survey of 1,004 adults than General Norman Schwarzkopf and Mikhail Gorbachev, who ran third and fourth.

Barbara Bush topped the list of most admired women — marking only the eighth time in 45 years that the president and the first lady led the poll. Mother Teresa was second, followed by Margaret Thatcher and Nancy Reagan.

Magic Johnson, who retired from basketball because of the AIDS virus, joined the list of most admired men in fifth place.

Departures from the 1990 list were Trump, former President Carter and Polish leader Lech Walesa.

### Songwriting a lot like carpentry

NASHVILLE: Country singer Hal Ketchum says songwriting is a lot like carpentry — which he did for 20 years before breaking through as a performer, reports AP.

"I make the songwriter-carpentry analogy quite a bit now. Get your materials in order; get everything planned and square; get all your words in a pile and all your phrases in a pile; and then hopefully have the patience to build something that you can live with," he said.

Measure twice. Cut once," said Ketchum, 38.

Ketchum was quoted in an interview published Saturday in The Tennessean.

Radio and Records, a music trade magazine, has chosen his "Small Town Saturday Night" as the top country hit of 1991. His current hit is "I Know Where Love Lives."

### Miss Venezuela crowned Miss World

ATLANTA: Miss Venezuela Nineth Beatriz Leal Jimenez, a 20-year-old industrial engineering student, was crowned Miss World 1991 on Saturday night, reports AP.

Miss Jimenez competed against 78 other beauty queens from around the world.

"I thought I would be among the finalists, but winning is like a dream come true," said Miss Jimenez, who is from Maracaibo. "I feel very privileged to be Miss World and I wish everyone around the world peace and goodwill."

First runner-up was Miss Australia Leanne Buckle, 21; second runner-up was Miss South Africa Diana Tilden-Davis, 22. The other finalists were Miss Jamaica Sandra Foster, 21, and Miss Namibia Michelle McLean, 19.



MILAN: Italian hard-core porno star Moana Pozzi and the secretary of the newly founded "Partito dell'Amore" (Love Party), Riccardo Schicchi, Friday pose with the party emblem showing a heart with a picture of "Cicciolina" (Ilona Staller, the porno actress already being member of the Italian Parliament). — AFP photo.

## Big Five back Prince Sihanouk

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 29: The five permanent US Security Council members said Saturday they supported Prince Norodom Sihanouk's decision to call the first meeting of Cambodia's ruling council before year's end, reports AP.

The United States, France, Britain, China and Russia, which took over the Soviet seat, said in a statement they appreciated Prince Sihanouk's efforts as head of the Supreme National Council (SNC) to bring peace to Cambodia.

The meeting is set for next Monday with all the members of the group, including Khmer Rouge leaders Khieu Sampan and Son Sen who left Phnom Penh precipitously on November 27 after an angry mob nearly killed them.

In particular, the statement "took note with satisfaction that the SNC secretariat has become operational under the personal leadership" of Prince Sihanouk "and that the mixed military working group has begun to take shape."

The five permanent members called on "Cambodian parties to contribute to the development of the process of national reconciliation and the maintenance of peace, by strictly respecting all agreements, including those related to assuring all necessary conditions for the normal functioning of the SNC in Phnom Penh."

The five council members are backing a peace plan signed by the Cambodian factions last October in Paris to end the 13-year-old civil war.

The United Nations has sent a team into Cambodia to help oversee and arrange for elections.

In Washington on Friday, the State Department issued a travel advisory warning Americans to make only essential trips to Cambodia because of the possibility of anti-government rioting.

Travelers may inadvertently get caught up in a demonstration or riot," the department said in a statement.

The statement also said that the US embassy would be able to provide only emergency services to any US citizen who ran into problems.