

Kabul yet to decide Rabbani's successor

KABUL, Oct 27: Afghanistan's leadership council appealed on Monday for aid from the United Nations and Islamic States to organise a nationwide meeting that will choose a permanent Islamic government, reports Reuter.

The council, an uneasy alliance of disparate Mujahideen parties, is trying to arrange the meeting of representatives from across the war-ravaged country in the next few weeks.

Interim President Burhanuddin Rabbani is to step down on Wednesday at the end of his four-month term, leaving a virtual vacuum until the conference meets to decide of the first permanent government since the end of the 14-year civil war.

The council appealed to the UN and members of the Organisation of Islamic Conference to send financial assistance for the complicated procedure of selecting representatives to the conference, a spokesman said.

It also asked for aid to help Afghanistan survive its first winter since the fall of the former Soviet-backed government, which collapsed last April allowing the Mujahideen to take power.

However, the council did not discuss the question of who would replace Rabbani when he steps down.

Renegade Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar launched a deadly rocket assault on Kabul in August demanding removal of ex-communist militia many Mujahideen sources said the bombardment was intended to ensure Rabbani's stepdown on time.

Voters reject proposals to keep Quebec in Canada

OTTAWA, Oct 27: Canadian voters on Monday rejected reform proposals aimed at keeping French-speaking Quebec in Canada in a stinging repudiation of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and other politicians who negotiated the deal, reports Reuter.

Early returns from a nationwide referendum showed the national unity accord go-

Canada's two main television networks proclaimed the deal effectively dead. The reforms needed approval in all 10 provinces in the yes-or-no vote to survive.

Quebec separatists immediately claimed the result boosted their cause for independence. They said defeat of the deal across the country showed Quebec could not re-

Bouchard told a victory rally in Montreal.

Bouchard said the vote was a "massive rejection" of Canada's political establishment in Ottawa.

Mulroney, who put his political career on the line in calling the referendum, said last week he would decide his future after the vote.

The CTV network said

ments aimed at keeping Quebec in Canada's 125-year confederation offered the province guarantees for the survival of its language, culture and share of political power.

It also proposed reforming Canada's appointed senate to give western provinces more clout in Ottawa and granted native Indians and Eskimos the right to self-rule.

The delicate compromise took a year to negotiate and is Mulroney's second attempt to resolve the nagging Quebec dispute since taking office in 1984.

A severe recession that caused the highest unemployment in eight years has undermined the popularity of Mulroney and other politicians who negotiated the reforms, prompting voter revolt against a deal that looked sure to pass two months ago.

The leader of the anti-establishment reform party of western Canada, Preston Manning, said he hoped the deal would be soundly defeated so it would send a strong signal to the national leadership.

"I've always said the best outcome would be a decisive 'no', Manning, who led opposition to the deal outside Quebec, told CBC television.

Crowds booted Ontario Premier Bob Rae when he attended a victory rally on Monday for the world series baseball champions, the Toronto Blue Jays, at the Skydome stadium.

Cypriot leader refuses to talk with Ghali

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 27: Turkish Cypriot Leader Rauf Denktaş refused to attend a meeting with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on Monday because he was not listed by the United Nations on an equal level with Cypriot President George Bassilios, a Turkish Cypriot spokesman said, reports Reuter.

Denktaş was to have held a meeting with Boutros-Ghali, who earlier in the day conferred separately with Bassilios.

The two Cypriot leaders were then to have resumed face-to-face negotiations on solving the Cyprus problem that were adjourned in August.

But about 10 minutes after Denktaş had been due at UN headquarters, the Turkish Cypriot UN representative, Osman Ertug, told reporters

"President Rauf Denktaş will not be coming to the 4 o'clock meeting, the appointment with the Secretary-General, because the principle of equality, which is vital for the negotiating process and a future solution, has not been respected.

"In the list of (the secretary-general's) appointments which was issued this morning, one community leader was referred to as 'President Vassiliou' and our president was referred to as 'his excellency, Rauf Denktaş'.

"Therefore our president will not be attending the meeting this afternoon."

Ertug said he was bringing a letter from Boutros-Ghali explaining Denktaş's position.

Denktaş also scheduled a press conference.



Prime Minister Brian Mulroney leaving with his wife after a press conference in Ottawa yesterday.

ing down to defeat in Quebec as well as in Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and running at a dead heat in Ontario, the most populous province.

solve its destiny by remaining in Canada.

"The solution for Quebec does not seem to be possible within Canadian federalism," separatist leader Lucien

Quebeckers had rejected the reforms by 55.8 to 42.1 per cent. The deal was dead-even at 49.8 per cent for each side in Ontario, the network said. The package of amend-

BRIEFLY

Chile's workers threaten strike: Labour leaders on Monday threatened to call a national strike of copper workers unless the state copper company CODELCO stops what they see as "measures that hide a plan to privatize" the industry, AP reports from Santiago.

"If we don't get a clear signal from the government within a week I'm going to call a national strike at the big mines," Darwin Bustamante, President of the Copper Workers Federation, said.

In a letter to President Patricio Aylwin the Federation asked "the immediate cancellation" of the changes they see as part of a plan to privatize Chile's biggest hard currency earning industry.

They also asked to government to set a commission with representatives from the unions to discuss the future of the industry.

Turkish troops kill 20 Kurds: Turkish troops killed more than 20 Kurdish rebels inside Iraq on Monday as Turkey sent reinforcements to press an offensive against the guerrillas, the semi-official Anatolia news agency said, AP reports from Ankara.

Three soldiers died Monday, Anatolia said.

Helicopters, halted by rain and heavy winds over the weekend resumed bringing food and ammunition to the Turkish troops, Anatolia said.

The bodies of at least 20 women rebels were found, Anatolia said.

Saddam visits Shi'ite holy site: President Saddam Hussein visited the Shi'ite Muslim holy site of Samara, 100 kilometres (60 miles) north of Baghdad, Iraqi television reported Monday, AFP says from Baghdad.

Saddam was given a "warm welcome" on his Sunday visit, it said, and paid homage at the tomb of Imam Ali Al-Hadi.

The president has already this month visited two other Shi'ite holy sites, Bala in the north and Najaf in the south, inside the western-imposed air-exclusion zone.

Khmers won't honour polls: The Khmer Rouge says it will not honour the results of any election held under the current political circumstances in Cambodia, AP reports from Phnom Penh.

The Khmer Rouge signed a peace agreement a year ago to end a war against the Vietnamese-installed government. The accord authorized UN peacekeepers to stabilize the country for elections by May 1993.

A senior Khmer Rouge official said Monday night that the UN peacekeepers, backed by Western countries, instead have been trying to prop up the Vietnamese-installed government so it will win the election and the Khmer Rouge will be destroyed.

The Khmer Rouge, official Mak Ben said, will not participate in or honour the results of a poll held under the current circumstances. The group has made similar statements before.

Violent crimes up in US: The crime rate in the United States varied little in 1991 from the previous year, a Justice Department report said Monday, AP reports from Washington.

But the report by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) said violent crimes jumped around 7 per cent, mainly because of a sharp rise in simple assaults — a category that includes minor offences.

Serious violent crimes — rape, robbery and aggravated assaults were essentially unchanged in 1991 from 1990, the bureau said. The new report estimates crime rates based on interviews with some 83,000 people in 42,000 households.

It follows by one day the latest FBI statistics that showed the amount of crime reported to police declined 2 per cent in the first half of 1992, compared with the same period the previous year.

French govt survives censure: The French Socialist government Monday survived a motion of censure with only 261 deputies voting against as the communists abstained, AFP reports from Paris.

A total of 286 votes would have been needed to topple the government of Prime Minister Pierre Bérégovoy.

The opposition's move to censure the government was the second since Bérégovoy became Prime Minister in April, and came just five months before legislative elections that the socialists are expected to lose.

The communists had voted against the government on the first censure motion filed against the Bérégovoy government, in June, in connection with the reform of the European Community's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

Typhoon kills 47 in Hanoi

HANOI, Oct 27: Typhoon Angela and flash floods killed 47 people and brought destruction to eight coastal provinces of central Vietnam last week, official newspapers said today, reports Reuter.

Eighteen people were injured and seven are missing.

Angela, the worst typhoon to hit Vietnam this year, also destroyed thousands of hectares (acres) of crops and many homes.

It washed away hundreds of fishing boats and tens of thousands of domestic animals, the newspapers said.

Miles of road and rail links between north and south Vietnam were broken, irrigation projects smashed and bridges damaged, the newspapers added.

Homosexuals in Japan plan to set up gay community

TOKYO, Oct 27: After centuries of silence, Japan's homosexuals are coming out of the closet, reports Reuter.

Inspired by their American brothers and sisters, they are arguing their case in the media, plan to hold a gay parade, and to set up a gay community in a suburb of Tokyo and win a seat in the local assembly.

"Japan may be still in a situation where it would be better for us to keep quiet," said Hiroshi Nimi, member of the homosexual activist group Occur, "but we will speak our minds as homosexuals and this will change Japanese society."

The group, named Occur because it aims to make things happen, was set up in 1986 and now has a membership of about 300 gay men and women.

It has no estimate of the

total number of homosexuals in Japan's population of 122 million, but reckons the figure could be five per cent of the total.

The activities of Occur mark a milestone in the social history of Japan, where homosexuality has been regarded as deviant and a sickness.

When Japan opened its door to the world in 1868, the government condemned homosexuality as a barbarian habit, a bias reinforced by foreign books on the subject translated into Japanese in the early 20th century.

In its first legal challenge to the government, Occur last December sued the Tokyo city government for discrimination, charging that its members were refused use of a public facility because they were homosexual.

The Tokyo court is expected to deliver its verdict next year.

"Even if we lose the case, it is still significant in showing that there is discrimination and in making us more visible in society," said Nimi.

Gay report, a book issued by Occur and based on a study of over 300 Japanese homosexuals, says almost half the sample alleged they had experienced harassment because of their homosexuality, mostly during school days.

Up to now, discrimination in employment has been almost unheard of, simply because gays hid their homosexuality.

But in the past 18 months, 30 Occur members have come out of the closet, and some have swiftly run into discrimination.

"One got a job with an apparel company and told the company he was gay," said group member Tadashi Furuno.

"He was moved to an internal section with no contact with clients 'in order not to hurt company's image'," he said.

The group wants to create a gay community in the Tokyo suburb of Nakanoh where its office is located and 20 of its members live, and to win a seat on the local city council.

"There is a gay community in San Francisco and we are trying to make Nakanoh city a model case," said Furuno. "We also want to elect a city assembly member, which is possible if we collect 1,500 votes."

Another gay group -- the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) -- plans to hold a gay parade, the first of

its kind in Japan, partly to raise the profile of homosexuals.

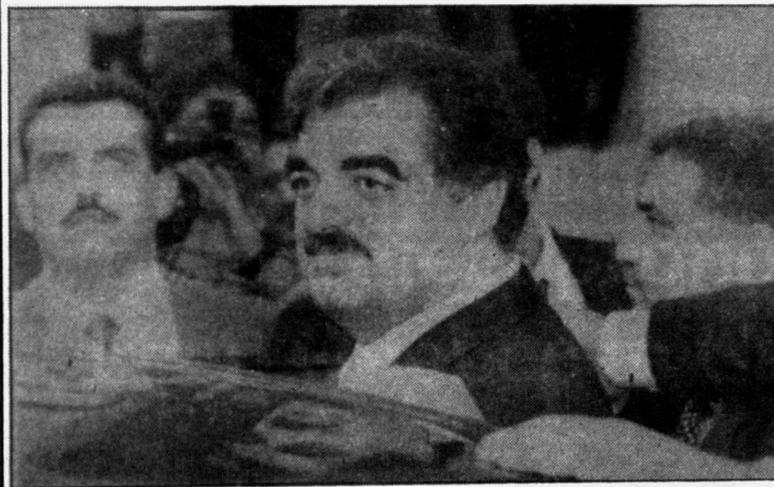
"We have decided to have a gay parade in Tokyo next March and expect about 100 participants," said ILGA member Hiroshi Isogai.

Partly thanks to the efforts of activists, homosexuals are receiving more media attention.

Aoyama book centre in Roppongi, a fashionable district of central Tokyo with discos, bars and restaurants, is holding a fair of gay books.

Mitsutoshi Kimura, who organised it, said books related to homosexuals had sold well in recent years and many magazines carried articles on homosexuals.

In Shinjuku, another entertainment district, there are about 300 bars used by gays as



BEIRUT: New Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri (C) talks with journalists as he leaves the parliament under the protection of his security staff on Monday, after the end of the first day of the parliamentary consultation to form the new Lebanese cabinet. — AFP/UNB photo

Truce violated in Mozambique

MAPUTO, Mozambique, Oct 27: Despite a new ceasefire aimed at ending Mozambique's 16 year war, government troops and rebels are still exchanging gunfire and millions of people many risking starvation, are in the crossfire, reports AP.

From barefoot peasants in the drought-scorched countryside to diplomats in the whitewashed villas of tropical Maputo, people are skeptical of the October 4 truce which ends the war between the leftist government and right-wing rebels that claimed up to 1 million lives.

"There are no rules to this war," said Felice Dindo, head of the International Red Cross in Mozambique. "The ceasefire is only a technicality, nothing has really been settled. No one seems to be in control here."

When asked about peace prospects, United Nations special representative Aldo Ajello smiles wryly and says:

The fighting seems to be going very well. We clearly need to start working on the peace process immediately."

He organized a meeting Monday between government and rebel leaders in Maputo to set up monitoring groups called for in the ceasefire agreement, signed in Rome after two years of negotiations.

Southern Africa is also suffering its worst drought this century — more than 3 million Mozambicans are totally dependent on food aid in a humanitarian crisis probably the most serious in the world after Somalia.

The rebels of RENAMO, the Portuguese acronym for the Mozambique National Resistance, have captured at least five areas since the cease-fire took effect. President Joaquim Chissano's government called the attacks "a deliberate strategy of conquering territory and strategic positions."

South Korean gets life term for advocating socialism

SEOUL, Oct 27: The top leader of the banned Socialist Workers' League was sentenced to life imprisonment by a Seoul criminal court today for advocating violent socialist revolution in South Korea, reports AFP.

Senior Court Judge Kim Myong-Kil ruled that Paek Tae-Woong, the league's central committee chairman, must be "severely punished for advocating the overthrow of democracy through violent Socialist revolution."

Kim convicted Paek, 29, of sedition under the anti-communist national security law banning the establishment of "anti-state groups."

Paek, who was once the top student leader at Seoul National University, a hotbed of the anti-government movement, publicly announced the formation of the league at a rally at the university campus three years ago.

\$810m Japanese loan to clean up Jamuna

NEW DELHI, Oct 27: Japan signed an agreement Tuesday to give India 810 million dollar in long-term loans to clean up a major river and modernize three power plants, reports AP.

The loans are 5 per cent more than what Japan gave India last year, said a Japanese Embassy statement. Japan is the largest contributor of development aid to India.

Part of the loan, at 26 per cent annual interest, will be used to build sewage treatment plants. Public toilets and electric crematorium along the Jamuna River, which flows across northern India and through the capital city.

The agreement was signed by the Japanese ambassador in India, Shunji Kobayashi and Economic Affairs Secretary Monwetk Singh in New Delhi.

Off the Record

Wrestle with wolf

BEIJING: A Chinese peasant woman snatched her two young daughters from the jaws of a wolf and wrestled with the animal until rescuers came, an official news report said Tuesday, reports AP.

The Xinhua News Agency said the woman, Wu Jing, and the daughters, aged 3 and 6, were hospitalised with serious wounds.

It said Wu was working in a bean field in Fuixian near Shenyang city, about 610 kilometres (380 miles) northeast of Beijing, when the wolf sprang on her 3-year-old daughter and began dragging her off.

When Wu slashed the animal with a sickle, it dropped the girl and grabbed her sister. The mother kept wrestling with the wolf until a herdsman arrived and drove it away.

Wolves are a regular threat to farmers and herders in less populated parts of China, and many rural residents own rifles for protection.

It makes little difference

BAGHDAD: President Saddam Hussein's newspaper publisher son Uday told readers on Monday it would make little difference who won the US presidential election, reports Reuter.

"The way the candidates are unanimous on the subject of leader Saddam Hussein... means all concerned parties have realised and are convinced that the existence of leader Saddam Hussein is unwanted from their viewpoint," he said.

"They understand that leader President Saddam Hussein represents the national vanguard in Iraq."

Uday's newspaper Babel published his comments and those of other prominent Iraqi journalists and intellectuals on Monday in a three-page symposium on next week's US election.

Most other participants were less impartial, hoping to see Saddam's Gulf war antagonist President George Bush beaten by Democratic Party candidate Bill Clinton.

"The defeat of Bush will be psychologically beneficial for our people," said Adnan al-Jubouri, director-general of the official Iraqi News Agency.

Gaddafi's decree on marriage

TRIPOLI: Libyans who drink alcohol, play cards or are married to foreigners cannot become ambassadors, or assume other positions of responsibility, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Speaking to an assembly of committees overseeing the country's new "commune" system of local government, the maverick leader said drinking and playing cards were distractions from work and could not be tolerated in public offices.

Alcohol was banned in Libya shortly after Gaddafi came to power in 1969.

No Libyan who married a foreigner, including other Arab nationalities, could be put forward for public office, he said.

'This was great injustice'

KUALA PILAH, Malaysia: Shortly after British forces surrendered in Malaya, a young boy watched as invading Japanese troops carried out one of the more horrific civilian massacres of World War Two, reports Reuter.

Residents of this town in the southwestern state of Negri Sembilan were first gathered together to look on as a feast of pork, mutton and chicken they had prepared was eaten by a group of soldiers, said Soon Kian Seng.

When the meal was over, he troops bayoneted and shot dead up to several hundred townsfolk in what Soon said was a little-known incident for which Japan must now pay compensation.

That episode on March 15, 1942, has remained etched in the memory of Soon, who is waging a crusade for compensation, saying Tokyo must bear full moral and financial responsibility for its actions in Malaya during the three-year Japanese occupation.

"Nine of my family members were among the hundreds killed in the massacre," said Soon, 57, as he gazed at a stream which runs past the site of the killings.

"This was a great injustice," said Soon, who escaped the slaughter by hiding with his grandmother in nearby jungle for two days without food.



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Iran to release 200 Iraqi POWs this week

TEHRAN, Oct 27: Iran will "unilaterally" release 200 Iraqi Prisoners of War later this week, the Commission for Prisoners of War announced here yesterday, reports Xinhua.

A spokesman for the commission said the Iraqis had been taken captive in recent years "following their invasion of Iranian borders". He did not give further details of the captives.

The spokesman expressed hope that this "Unilateral Act" would pave the way for the release of those Iranians still held in Iraqi prisons.

Iranian officials say Iraq is still holding about 5,000 Iranian POWs while the Iraqi authorities claim that there are about 20,000 Iraqi captives in the hands of Iranians.