

5 Gulf Arab states propose joint force

KUWAIT CITY, Nov 16: Defence ministers of five Gulf Arab states wrapped up their 11th regular meeting here yesterday with a communique highlighting their consideration over a number of issues regarding regional security, reports Xinhua.

A final communique issued at the end of the two-day meeting said the GCC defence ministers discussed in their closed sessions issues of security cooperation among the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the security situation in the region, particularly the problem of Abu Musa Island.

Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates sent their defence minister to attend the meeting, while the Qatar's was absent.

The communique stated that the defence ministers adopted recommendations on measures designed to enhance collective security and build up

a unified Gulf deterrent force. These recommendations would be submitted to the forthcoming 13th Gulf summit due to be held next month in Abu Dhabi, UAE's capital, it added.

The ministers have also decided to maintain the Peninsula shield, a 10,000 strong joint force that existed before Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, said the communique without mentioning an expected expansion of the force which was unable to prevent Iraq's invasion.

The communique said the ministers reiterated their support for UN Security Council Resolutions on the 1991 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and called for pressuring Iraq to release the several hundreds of Kuwaiti prisoners still held in Iraq.

The communique underlined that the ministers threw full weight behind the UAE in its dispute with Iran over the sovereignty of Abu Musa.

Benazir vows to lead marchers to Islamabad tomorrow

Hundreds of PDA activists held ahead of long march

ISLAMABAD, Nov 16: Hundreds of opposition workers have been nabbed in nationwide police raids ahead of former Premier Benazir Bhutto's long march to Islamabad, her four-party People's Democratic Alliance (PDA) said Sunday, reports AFP.

Bhutto has vowed to lead a crowd of hundreds of thousands of her supporters to Islamabad on Wednesday in her bid to force the two-year-old government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to quit.

The opposition leader hopes the 15 kilometre (nine mile) march from Rawalpindi to the capital will have the way for snap polls three years before Sharif's tenure expires.

But a party statement issued here said more than 100 workers were detained in

Rawalpindi and Islamabad in the past 24 hours, while similar arrests were made in other cities and towns.

Police also raided residences of important party leaders, the statement said, adding that netting hundreds of workers and supporters was a "criminal provocation."

If the authorities did not desist, the arrests could trigger violence and the government would be held responsible for the consequences, it said.

A government response to the PDA claim was not immediately available.

However, Commerce Minister Malik Mohammed Naem on Saturday had made assurances that the march would not be obstructed so long as it did not pose any law

and order problem.

The PDA has instructed its supporters throughout the country to converge on Rawalpindi, where Bhutto would begin to lead the protest march. The march was to end with a sit-in demonstration outside the parliament building for an unspecified duration.

Meanwhile, the authorities have closed down colleges and universities in the North-West Frontier province and students have been asked to vacate dormitories.

Opposition sources said roads leading to Islamabad were likely to be barricaded by the police and security forces to prevent the marches.

Several ruling party senators participating in a parliamentary debate on the issue Sunday attacked the PDA, saying that the march was dan-

gerous and could disrupt the country's nascent democratic process.

Another report says: Seven Christians were arrested here today following a demonstration against inclusion of a column in national identity cards giving the holder's religion, witnesses said.

Police sources said they were detained for causing damage to public property.

Christians and other non-Muslims minorities have been holding protests at different places in the country against a recent government decision requiring religions to be specified on identity cards.

They fear this would expose them to discrimination in public affairs in this predominantly Muslim country.

Off the Record

'Diana prettier than ever'

LILLE, France: The Princess of Wales closed her visit to France Sunday on a musical note and an encounter with her countryman, former Beatles star Paul McCartney, the finale of a three-day trip that has shown Diana as curious, caring and fun, reports AP.

A full house rose as the beaming princess, wrapped in a fur coat, entered Lille's Palace of Music for the French premier of McCartney's classical Liverpool Oratorio.

An ovation greeted the former Beatle, his wife Linda and their four children as they entered minutes earlier.

The hour and-a-half performance by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of Liverpool was part of Lille's annual arts festival, this year devoted to Britain and the Commonwealth.

The French visit managed to maintain its "private" billing, in contrast to the recent trip to South Korea by Diana and husband Prince Charles, dissected by the press for signs of marital troubles.

Charles celebrated his 44th birthday Saturday at home. Going solo, Diana appeared relaxed, smiling and caring during her two days in Paris and final day in this northern capital, on Saturday. French Culture Minister Jack Lang portrayed her as "prettier than ever, very intelligent and very good fun."

Diana, wearing a navy blue suit with fine white stripes, was greeted on her arrival by Lille Mayor and former Premier Pierre Mauroy, who presented her with the city medal and hosted a lunch with local dignitaries.

Father hangs truant son

BEIJING: A father tied his son up and hung him from the ceiling after discovering the boy had been truant from school, an official newspaper reported Monday, reports AP.

Eleven-year-old Xia Hui died the next day in the hospital, the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao) reported. It said the father, a factory worker, held the traditional belief that "children raised under the rod will be filial."

The father went to pick up Xia from school last Thursday and discovered he was absent. When he returned home, Xia admitted he had played hooky and gone to play at a nearby factory, where his school bag was confiscated by the factory's security guard.

The enraged father tied a rope around the boy's stomach and hung him from a beam in their home, then left to retrieve Xia's bag. When he returned a half-hour later, Xia's body was limp and his pupils dilated.

In an accompanying commentary, the paper noted "that Xia's case was similar to one five years ago in which a mother beat her son to death for getting poor grades."

Chinese culture has emphasized scholarly learning for thousands of years, and many parents place great pressure on their children to do well in school.

Monkey screams with an accent

SUWANEE, Ga: A little monkey named Profanity, not only knows how to scream, "Help, I'm being bitten!" — she can say it with an accent, reports AP.

Not in English, of course. But the two scientists who interpret her screams say Profanity and other pigtail macaque monkeys can tell each other specifics about danger and, through their accents, let them know which monkey is in trouble.

This complex speech could be key to understanding the birth of human language, another scientist says.

"A primary component of language is the ability to name things and how things function" said Sarah Gouzoules, a behavioral biologist at the Yerkes Primate Research Center north of Atlanta. "Monkeys have that ability."

BRIEFLY

Tanzania to set up open varsity: An open university of Tanzania has been proposed to provide distant education to anyone in the country longing for advanced learning, Xinhua from Dar es Salaam says.

A bill on setting up the university will be moved in the National Assembly when it resumes its session on December 1. The local Sunday News' said if the bill is passed, any worker or peasant will have an opportunity to study at home and eventually obtain a degree or diploma or any other qualifications to be offered by the university.

The bill says the open university shall be an autonomous institution and will be qualified to award degrees of bachelor, master and doctorate and other qualifications.

11 killed in German train mishap: At least 11 people were killed and 51 injured, several seriously, when a passenger train slammed into a freight carriage in Northern, central Germany, on Sunday, police said, reports AFP from Germany.

A German railway official described the accident as "one of the worst in Germany in the past 10 years."

Police said the toll could rise as some 400 rescue workers using searchlights continued to comb through the wreckage on Sunday evening in the hope of finding other survivors.

Work to clear the wreckage could last at least Monday, a railway spokesman said.

The exact cause of the accident had not yet been established Sunday.

Crackdown on Bangkok brothels: At least 200 young girls were rescued in a citywide crackdown against child prostitution launched by the Crime Suppression Division (CSD) late Sunday night, reports Xinhua from Bangkok.

Local press reported Monday that the 200 girls were rescued from three brothels in Bangkok by the CSD teams in an operation aimed at 32 suspected sex establishments in Bangkok and adjoining provinces.

Some 150 CSD officers were involved in the operation which was reportedly still going on at press time Sunday night.

Police said they also arrested six brothel owners and pimps during the raid on the three brothels.

Top Sikh militant shot dead: A top Sikh militant leader responsible for the killings of 600 people was shot to death by police in Punjab on Sunday, reports AP from Chandigarh.

Nishan Singh Makhu, deputy chief of the outlawed Khalistan Liberation Force, was killed along with another rebel, Major Singh, a police official said.

The guerrillas were shot dead when they refused to stop their car at a police check post and fired at policemen, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity in Chandigarh.

The incident occurred in Firozpur, a district bordering Pakistan, 125 miles (200 kilometers) west of Punjab's capital Chandigarh. Elsewhere in the state, troops killed 11 more Sikh rebels, news reports said.

Makhu was among the top three Sikh guerrilla leaders fighting for a theocratic state which they want to name Khalistan, or The Land of the Pure.

Cuban plane with 20 aboard crashes: A Cuban airliner with 20 people aboard crashed into a hill on Sunday evening during a rain storm near the Puerto Plata beachside resort, local television reported, says Reuter from Santo Domingo.

It was not immediately known if there were any survivors or what type of aircraft it was.

Quoting sources at Santo Domingo's international airport and a reporter in Puerto Plata, colour vision channel 9 said rescue workers had not yet reached the scene.

Puerto Plata is a popular international tourist resort on the northern coast of the Dominican Republic.

HK Governor visits Japan from Nov 25

TOKYO, Nov 16: Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten, under siege from China for his proposed democratic reforms, is to visit Japan next week as a guest of Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe, the Foreign Ministry said today, reports AFP.

The Ministry said Patten would be joined by members of the Hong Kong-Japan Business Cooperation Committee during the four-day visit from November 25.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Kotchi Kato told a news conference that Japan "supports prosperity and stability based on a free economy and democratisation" in Hong Kong after the British colony's return to China in 1997.

But "Japan is not in a position to comment" on Patten's controversial plans for democratic reforms, Kato said.

Thousands of Palestinians demonstrated Sunday to mark the fourth anniversary of their still-unrealized declaration of independence. Israeli troops fired rubber bullets to break up several protests.

No deaths or serious injuries were reported. In Jerusalem, several vehicles were burned, a firebomb was thrown at a bus and police patrols were stoned. Thirteen Palestinians were arrested, police said.

"After four years, we have not lost hope that a Palestinian state will be established one day," said Nidal Abu Ghariab, 23, who celebrated the anniversary by driving his car, horn blaring and decorated with ribbons and white plastic doves, down Jerusalem's main shopping street.

Four years ago, Yasser

Lithuanians vote to return ex-communists to power

VILNIUS, Nov 16: More than two years after it became the first republic to declare independence from the Soviet Union, Lithuania voted to return former Communists to power, preliminary election results showed Monday, reports AP.

Voters angered by factory closures, soaring prices and lack of hot water said as they left the polls Sunday that they were ready to give the former Communists a change to restore order.

Members of the former Lithuanian Communist Party, now called the Democratic Labour Party, celebrated through the night with vodka, bear hugs and harmonica music at their Vilnius headquarters.

A huge cheer went up at 2:10 am (0010 GMT) when early returns indicated they had clinched a majority of the 141 seats in parliament.

The former Communists

won 35 of the 61 seats contested in Sunday's run-off elections, said Vlovas Litvinas, chairman of the State Election Commission.

Added to the 44 seats they won in the first round of elections three weeks ago, that

New US admn hopes Libya

TRIPOLI, Nov 16: Libya is hoping to open a new chapter in its relations with the United States with the election of Democrat Bill Clinton to the US presidency, Libyan number two Major Abdessalam Jallud said Sunday, reports AFP.

In a speech to the Libyan People's Congress in Sirta, broadcast on television, he said the new US administration "should put an end to the state of hostility," between Washington and Tripoli.

gives the Democratic Labour Party a total of 79 seats, meaning they can form a government without needing coalition partners.

Sajudis, the anti-Communist party that lead Lithuania to independence, got just 18 seats in the first round of voting and 17 in Sunday's run-off, the election commission said. Sajudis won 97 seats in the last election in 1990.

Democratic Labour Party leader Algirdas Brazauskas told the Associated Press he would safeguard Lithuania's hard-won independence and continue to build a Western-style market economy.

He also promised to improve trade relations with Russia and change Lithuania's agricultural reform program, which has returned land to the descendants of people who owned it before the country was forcibly annexed by the Soviet Union in 1940.

Telegraph with black front page

LONDON, Nov 16: The Daily Telegraph arrived of doorsteps and newsstands Monday with a near-blank front page following a bomb threat at the newspaper's offices in east London's Canary Wharf office development, reports AP.

Security guards foiled a bombing when they questioned two men who had parked a van near Canada Tower Britain's tallest building. Police later safely defused the bomb. The two bombers escaped.

The Daily Telegraph offices in Canada Tower were evacuated and the print run was disrupted. The "emergency edition" front page carried four paragraphs giving the story of the foiled bombing followed by an apology to readers and advertisers.

Max Hastings, editor of The Daily Telegraph, said the paper was in abbreviated form, without the usual Monday second sports section.

Violence marks Palestinians' Independence Day

Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization declared an independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital. Israel opposes the creation of a Palestinian homeland.

A dispute over how much self-rule Palestinians should have in the Israeli-occupied territories is stalling peace talks in Washington. But in Cairo on Sunday, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and both said they expected the talks to move forward.

Israeli troops broke up at least three demonstrations in Jerusalem and one in the occupied Gaza Strip, police and Arab reports said.

In Gaza City, the army opened fire with rubber bullets to disperse about 200 Palestinians who marched with

portraits of Arafat, Palestinian flags and balloons in the flag's red, white, black and green colours.

In the West Bank, about 50 masked Palestinians paraded through the town of Tulikarem, putting up flags and posters of Arafat that Israeli troops later ordered removed.

In the town of Abu Dis, Israeli troops opened fire on two masked Palestinians, after they ignored orders to halt, the army said. One of the Arabs was injured slightly, it added.

The army said it had reports of 12 Palestinians injured in violence in the territories Sunday, most slightly.

In Jerusalem, police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to break up demonstrations in the old, walled city and elsewhere.



JERUSALEM: Palestinian celebrating, flashing V sign and shouting slogans in front of an Israeli border policeman in East Jerusalem November 15, on the fourth anniversary of their proclamation of "The state of Palestine".



Lille, France: The Princess of Wales closed her visit to France Sunday on a musical note and an encounter with her countryman, former Beatles star Paul McCartney, the finale of a three-day trip that has shown Diana as curious, caring and fun, reports AP.

Bush returns to White House

WASHINGTON, Nov 16: President Bush is back at work in the White House, rested and ready, his spokesman says, to begin handing over the levers of power, reports AP.

Bush returned to Washington on Sunday from five days of seclusion or Gasparilla Island in south Florida, where he fished, jogged, played golf and enjoyed a degree of privacy he rarely saw during his four years as president.

Marlin Fitzwater, the presidential press secretary, told reporters Sunday that Bush was now resigned to his political demise and ready for his first meeting with President-elect Clinton, who is to visit the White House on Wednesday.

"He wants a smooth transition," Fitzwater said. "He wants it to be dignified and cooperative. He has the highest respect for the democratic process."

Colombian troops kill 80 rebels in 36-hour

SANTAAE DE BOGOTA, Nov 16: Army troops killed 80 rebels in a 36-hour period in Colombia as part of the government's week-old offensive against rebels and drug traffickers, officials said Sunday, reports AP.

As part of a 90-day state of emergency announced last week by President Cesar Gaviria, the army dispatched troops into various parts of the country, especially mountainous rebel strongholds.

Authorities reported that army troops had killed 80 rebels over a 36-hour period but gave few details about the clashes.

Officials blamed the umbrella Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinator (CGSB) rebel group for killing a journalist, dynamiting two oil pipelines, attempting to takeover a village and kidnapping two police intelligence agents.

Caracol Radio in the capital reported rebels clashed with troops in the northern Santander Department where

rebels allegedly tried to takeover the village of Aratoca, while National Liberation Army (ELN) rebels burned two buses.

Suspected Popular Liberation Army (EPL) rebels were blamed for killing radio journalist Jose Cortes Soto and a friend while at Cortes Soto's farm in Cordoba department.

Also Sunday, rebels bombed the nation's main Cano Limon-covenas oil pipeline in two places and dynamited another pipeline, forcing the state oil company Ecopetrol to suspend service on both lines, officials said.

Suspected Revolutionary Colombian Armed Forces (FARC) members Sunday kidnapped three secret service agents in the southwestern Putumayo department that borders Ecuador, officials said.

On Saturday, authorities said three secret service police had been killed in north-east Colombia after being kidnapped.