

US for military no-fly zone over Bosnia

GENEVA, Dec 17: The United States Wednesday called for a military no-fly zone to be enforced over Bosnia-Herzegovina and named Serb leaders who faced "another Nuremberg" if their forces continued atrocities in Bosnia, reports AFP.

US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, in a virulent attack on Serbian leaders at a ministerial meeting here, warned Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and other Serbs that they faced trial if their forces continued to besiege Bosnian cities and carried on with the odious practice of "ethnic cleansing".

Addressing a session of the international conference in the former Yugoslavia, Eagleburger said the United States was "now recommending that the United Nations Security Council authorize enforcement of the no-fly zone in Bosnia," approved October 9 which has been repeatedly violated by Serb forces since then — notably in helicopter operations.

He added that Washington was also prepared to see the UN security council "re-examine the arms embargo as it applies to the government of Bosnia-Herzegovina."

Islamic countries grouped in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference have appealed for the embargo against former Yugoslavia to be lifted in Bosnia to allow the Muslim population to defend itself against the powerfully-armed Serbs.

Israel orders expulsion of 418 Palestinians

JERUSALEM, Dec 17: In an unprecedented retaliation for the slayings of Israeli security officers, the government has ordered the deportation of 418 Islamic fundamentalists from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, reports AP.

The Supreme Court temporarily stayed the orders and convened a pre-dawn session Thursday to hear an appeal by Israeli human rights activists seeking to block the expulsions.

As the high court debated, a convoy of 30 buses carrying the Palestinians slated for deportation waited at the Israeli-Lebanese border. The Palestinians had their eyes covered with woolen hats or white blindfolds.

Ilanan Ashrawi, spokeswoman of the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace talks, told CNN that the expulsions "will be death blow to the peace talks." She warned that the Palestinians would not show up for Thursday's sessions if the orders were carried out. The United States in the past has condemned deportations of Palestinians from the occupied lands as a violation of human rights.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin pledged a merciless war against Hamas after the group kidnapped and killed an Israeli policeman earlier this week. He was the fifth trooper to be slain by Hamas in a two-week long campaign of shooting attacks.

At least 1,300 Hamas activists were rounded up this week.

A government statement said the deportations were a response to "the murderous acts of terrorism whose purpose is to attack residents of the state of Israel and sabotage the peace process."

The statement said the expulsions were limited to a period of two years and targeted activists who either carried out attacks against Israelis or incited to such violence. In the Supreme Court hearing, Attorney General Yosef Harish asked for the order to be upheld. He said the Cabinet had backed the order almost unanimously and buses carrying the deportees were already set to move.

"If we return the buses, the government and the law will become a laughing stock," Harish told the court.

But civil rights lawyer Leah Tzemel accused the government of "acting like thieves in the night" for making the orders public at the last minute.

"This was a deceitful operation. Only by chance did I hear a rumour (about the deportations) and as a result I came to court," Ms Tzemel told reporters outside the hearing.

In previous deportation cases, Palestinians routinely appealed and the legal process stretched out over several months.

Seventy-three Palestinians have been deported since the start of the December 1987 Palestinian uprising against Israeli rule in occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

In July, six Palestinians were expelled to Jordan for three years as part of a compromise ending a four-day siege on the West Bank University of An-Najah.

Human rights groups oppose the use of deportation as a violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which prohibits "individual or mass forcible transfers as well as deportation," from occupied territory.

Israel says the law does not apply to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Off the Record



LONDON: The Princess of Wales leaves the conference of all 'Caring Charities' Tuesday. The Princess is carrying on with all her official engagements less than a week after the announcement of the separation from the Prince of Wales. —AFP/UNB photo

Khmer Rouge frees 21 UN soldiers

PHNOM PENH (Cambodia), Dec 17: Radical Khmer Rouge guerrillas Thursday released 21 United Nations soldiers they had seized earlier this week in the second such incident this month, a spokesman for the UN mission said, reports AP.

The 21 include four UN military observers — from France, the United States, China and Senegal — 15 Indonesian soldiers and two Cambodian translators. They were seized Tuesday and Wednesday.

Two weeks ago, six peacekeepers — from Britain, the Philippines and New Zealand — were held for three days before being released unharmed.

UN spokesman Eric Falt said the circumstances surrounding the seizure of the soldiers remained unclear, but he confirmed that this morning they left Sala village where they had been held and would be returning to Phnom Penh.

The village is 10 kilometres (six miles) east of the provincial capital of Kompong Thom, 150 kilometres (93 miles) northwest of Phnom Penh.

Falt said that more than half a dozen UN peacekeepers were remaining behind to discuss the incident with local Khmer Rouge commanders. He said the situation in Kompong Thom remained "tense."

The (Khmer Rouge) office here said they knew nothing about it, but they swiftly issued an order from Phnom Penh ordering their release. Falt said before the release, the captive group had radio contact with their base in Kompong Thom, he added.

The names of those who were held have not been released.

Shell kills three children in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Dec 17: Three children were killed Wednesday in Sarajevo when an artillery shell fell outside the house where they were playing, hospital sources and family members said, reports AP.

The incident is an example of what happens on relatively calm days in Sarajevo, when there is still some shelling but no prolonged attacks.

Over the past week, despite the reported calm, the intensive care unit at Kosvo hospital has been shelled and destroyed and two people were seriously wounded when a shell fell outside the entrance to the hospital.

Wednesday's incident came as peace talks were being held in Geneva on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

It occurred in Buljakov Potak in the northern part of the capital near Zuc mountain, where there has been fighting over the past 10 days.

Eight or nine boys were standing outside a house when the shell landed. Three children were killed and brothers Nijaz, 15, and Nihad, 12, Poturak were seriously injured, the boy's uncle Gujak Munir said.

Nijaz had his foot amputated and Nihad suffered multiple wounds, anesthesiologist Amira Karkin-Tals told reporters. Three or four adults were also reportedly wounded.



BEIJING: Russian President Boris Yeltsin (R) and his Chinese counterpart Yang Shangkun pose together prior to formal discussions yesterday. China has spoken in glowing terms of the opportunity for bilateral cooperation provided by the Russian President's three-day visit. —AFP/UNB photo

Arafat calls for urgent meet of Arab FMs

SANAA, Dec 17: PLO chief Yasser Arafat today called for an urgent meeting of Arab Foreign Ministers to discuss the Arab-Israeli peace talks, which he said had failed to make progress, reports AFP.

The convening of such a conference is necessary because the eighth round of peace talks is coming to an end and the new American administration takes office in a few weeks, Arafat told the Yemen news agency Saba.

He said that "no results" had emerged from the peace talks, which were launched 14 months ago under joint sponsorship by the United States and Russia.

As a result, Arafat said, an Arab foreign ministers' meeting should be held as soon as possible if a summit cannot be convened.

India, Pakistan to operate trains

LAHORE, Pakistan, Dec 17: Pakistan and Indian railways have decided to operate an express passenger train daily between the border towns of Lahore and Amritsar, it was announced here Wednesday, reports AP.

The service, called the "Samjhota" or compromise train, will start running immediately, the announcement by the Pakistan railways said, adding that the railway officials of the two sides had negotiated the agreement.

Earlier, a foreign ministry official in Islamabad denied as baseless local press reports that Pakistan had decided to recall its diplomatic personnel from New Delhi and to close its consulate general in Bombay.

He said the officials of the mission in Bombay had, however, been evacuated last Thursday because of the tense communal situation.

BRIEFLY

UN to send troops to Mozambique: The UN Security Council Wednesday approved a mission to send nearly 8,000 men, including troops, to Mozambique to oversee the country's recent peace agreement, reports AP from United Nations.

The UN operation in Mozambique (UNOMOZ) will include troops, police and civilian personnel to supervise the process before the southeast African country holds elections slated for October 1993.

The peace accords were signed October 4 in Rome by the government of President Joaquim Chissano and the Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) rebel movement.

Algerian forces kill 13: Algerian security forces killed 13 armed civilians overnight Monday, in their biggest crackdown on suspected fundamentalist Muslim guerrillas here since a curfew was imposed on December 5, the government announced Tuesday, reports AP from Algiers.

A communique issued by the security ministry gave no details about those killed in the raid in a southeastern suburb of the capital. Earlier in the day Algerian radio said six men had died.

The radio said security forces also seized four Kalashnikov assault rifles, a grenade, a machine-pistol and ammunition in the sweep on the El Harach, Boumati and Oued Ouchatah suburbs.

Local residents told AFP they heard gunfire and explosions during the night as the raid was under way, while armoured vehicles patrolled the streets.

Argentina to sell planes to Lanka: Argentina is to sell four locally-made anti-guerrilla aircraft to Sri Lanka worth 10 to 11 million dollars, officials said Wednesday, reports AP from Buenos Aires.

Argentina would also be providing maintenance and spare parts for the Pucara aircraft, said Air Force Chief Jose Julia.

At the same time, Argentina is planning to buy 54 A4-M skyhawk planes from the United States next year, provided that the US Senate approves the sale.

France to reopen embassy in Somalia: France will reopen its embassy in Mogadishu Thursday to house the headquarters of the French forces taking part in operation restore hope, French military officials said, reports AP from Paris.

A communique released by the military said the embassy, formally closed in March although it had been empty for months after French diplomats withdrew because of the Somali civil war, would open its doors Thursday afternoon.

The Commander of the 2,000 French troops due to take part in the armed relief operation, Colonel Michael Tournon, will set up his headquarters in the building, the communique said.

Ramos leaves for Thailand: President Fidel Ramos left Thursday on a four-day visit to Thailand, his first official foreign trip since taking office and the first to Bangkok by a Philippine president in nearly a generation, reports AP from Manila.

The last official visit to Thailand by a Filipino president was when the late President Ferdinand Marcos traveled there in 1968.

Both countries are members of the association of Southeast Asian Nations. Ramos, who took office June 30, went to Brunei last October for celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the reign of Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah.

In Thailand, Ramos is expected to discuss expanded trade and commercial ties, including the ASEAN Free Trade Association, which is to become effective Jan 1.

Brazil Economy Minister resigns: Economy Minister Gustavo Krause has resigned after less than three months in office, TV Globo reported, says AP from Brasilia.

Brazil's largest network said Acting President Itamar Franco had not yet decided whether to accept the resignation.

China to buy 6 US planes

BEIJING, Dec 17: Boeing Co will sign a \$1.7 billion contract Thursday to sell six jetliners to China Southern Airlines, US Commerce Secretary Barbara Franklin announced, reports AP.

Franklin, the highest-ranking US official to come to China in more than a year, is on a fence-mending trip intended to promote US exports.

The United States is expected to have a \$18 billion trade deficit with China this year.

Boeing's Canton office confirmed that contract will be signed in the southern city Thursday night but refused to disclose any details. Boeing Vice President Neil Stambal is expected to attend the ceremony.

US considers branding Pakistan as terrorist state

ISLAMABAD, Dec 17: A senior government official Wednesday appeared to confirm reports that Washington was considering branding Pakistan as a state supporting terrorism, telling a newspaper that he hoped the matter would be resolved, reports AP.

Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Mohammad Khan told the Muslim daily here in an interview that any US decision to declare Pakistan a terrorist state would be a "disaster" for bilateral relations.

The local press reports linked the US move to Islamabad's support for Muslim separatism in Indian-controlled Kashmir. The US embassy here refused to comment on the matter.

American laws require the state department to provide a list of states promoting terrorism to the US Congress before the end of each year. Libya, Iran, Iraq, Syria, North Korea and Cuba are on such a list.

Shaharyar said the laws could not be applied to Pakistan, which he said had made it clear to the United States that it only extended moral and political support to the Kashmiri people "struggling to free themselves from the Indian yoke."

"We have never provided them arms and ammunition," he said adding that if Washington put Islamabad on the list of terrorist states it would be a "sheer violation of the US laws."

He said the Americans had not accepted Islamabad's offer to send observers to probe the matter as they believed that they had "full information about the questionable activities on our part."

Shaharyar expressed the hope that the issue would be settled through talks as Washington would "certainly not like to see its traditional friend in difficulties."

The official said Islamabad has given sufficient explanations to Washington that Indian allegations of Pakistani support for terrorism were "baseless."

Pakistan expected that Washington would not commit a mistake since "we had been working very closely with each other in various fields," he said.

Shaharyar said camps for refugees from Indian-controlled Kashmir were open to inspection by "anybody at any time." These "oppressed" people had been demanding weapons and training but Pakistan has not given them any, he said.

Shaharyar said however that the whole region had "become an arms bazaar after the Afghan war."

He also accused India of sponsoring terrorism in Pakistan's southern province of Sind.

Claiming that Pakistan had provided "solid" proof of India's direct involvement in its domestic affairs, Shaharyar said "it is India which should be declared a terrorist state."



KARACHI: The second batch of Pakistanis deported from the United Arab Emirates arrive here yesterday. They were arrested by United Arab Emirates authorities and lodged in a desert camp before being deported, because they held a demonstration against the demolition of Babri Mosque. —AFP/UNB photo

MQM founder quits politics

KARACHI, Dec 17: One of the key personalities of Pakistani politics, Altaf Hussain, the main representative of Urdu-speaking immigrants from India, said Tuesday that he was retiring, reports AP.

In a statement sent to Pakistani media from London, where he had lived for the past few months, the 39-year-old Hussain, head of the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) said he was retiring for health reasons.

Hussain was one of Pakistan's most controversial politicians. He founded the MQM in 1985 to represent Mohajirs who came to Pakistan from India after partition in 1947.

He asked the current MQM President, Azeem Ahmed Tariq, to take charge of the organization.

UAE deports 180 Pakistanis

KARACHI, Dec 17: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities have deported some 180 Pakistanis for demonstrating against the demolition of the Babri Mosque in India, immigration officials said here today, reports AP.

The Pakistanis had demonstrated in Al Ain over the destruction of the mosque in Northern India last week by Hindu fanatics, which sparked violent protests in India and other South Asian countries.

A further 200, arrested and detained at the same time, were expected home soon, officials said.

A large number of Pakistanis work in the UAE where political activity is not allowed.

Lincoln's speech against slavery auctioned

NEW YORK: A sheet of paper on which Abraham Lincoln penned part of his speech against slavery fetched 1.54 million dollars at auction Wednesday, a record for an American manuscript, Sotheby's said, reports AP.

The 135-year-old document was bought by an historical documents dealer representing private clients and will go on exhibit at a New York library, the auction house said.

Sotheby's spokesman Matthew Weigman described the price as extraordinary.

The company had originally estimated the page would bring in between 300,000 and 500,000 dollars.

"But we also knew there was tremendous interest in this manuscript because it contains one of the most famous phrases Lincoln ever used."

The previous record for an American manuscript was set last month when a handwritten fragment of Lincoln's second inaugural address — which featured the words "with malice toward none; with charity for all" — fetched 1.32 million dollars at Christie's auction.

Wednesday's manuscript was sold by an unidentified descendant of a Lincoln in law.

The page, which contains part of the anti-slavery speech, reads in part: "a house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently, half slave, half free... I do not expect the union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect it will cease to be divided."

Ethnic Germans make up biggest group in US

WASHINGTON: One in four Americans is of German heritage, making up the biggest ethnic group in the United States, according to statistics published Wednesday by the census bureau, reports AP.

The ancestors of one in six Americans came from Ireland, while one in eight are of English descent, one in ten are African American and one in 17 are Italian, the bureau said.

The 10.3 million Americans with French bloodlines come in eighth place and the more than 12 million who consider themselves Americans plain and simple number one in 20.

The figures were compiled from questionnaires distributed to one of every six US households asking them about their background.

The survey showed that most of those with northern or western European heritage live in California while those of eastern and southern European ancestry live in New York.

Santa sleighs chained to abortion clinic

BATON ROUGE: Twenty-four anti-abortion protesters, some dressed as Santa Claus, were arrested Wednesday after barring the entrances to a women's clinic with their sleighs, police said, reports AP.

A police spokesman said a truck pulled up to the Delta Women's Clinic about 4 am, and while the driver distracted a security guard, the protesters poured out the back and chained heavy sleds to the clinic's entrances.

Cpl Don Kelly said six protesters pinned the guard to his truck with a sled. They were held pending charges of aggravated battery, a felony. The other 18 were to be charged with a misdemeanor similar to trespassing.

The clinic was the site of weeks of protests this summer by the national group Operation Rescue. Participants in Wednesday's protest did not claim affiliation with any group, Kelly said.

"It looked like the same people who are out there every week," he said. "Most of them are regulars."

Cop commits suicide

HONG KONG: A 26-year-old police officer shot himself in the head Wednesday in the latest suicide to hit the Royal Hong Kong force, police said Thursday, reports AP.

Detective Kwok Shue-Cheung was the ninth officer to commit suicide this year, police said. Last year, three officers took their own lives. In most cases, the officers have died from self-inflicted gunshot wounds.

Police discovered Kwok Wednesday morning in his police headquarters apartment and believe he shot himself once in the right temple with his .38 caliber police revolver.

It was not immediately clear why Kwok killed himself, but previous police officers have apparently killed themselves because of job-related stress or financial and gambling problems.

The increase this year in police suicides coincides with a jump in suicides among teenage students. So far eight students have committed suicide in the current academic year, most by jumping off high-rise buildings.

Last year, a record-high 17 students took their lives and more than 50 others tried unsuccessfully.

Social workers say the spate of suicides has been precipitated by this overcrowded capitalist enclave's high-stress, fast-paced lifestyle.

They have also blamed the government for failing to hire more counselors to help students and police officers come to grips with their anxieties.