

Rebels want global arms ban on Myanmar

WASHINGTON, June 10: The head of a rebel coalition urged President Bill Clinton on Wednesday to implement a US Senate resolution seeking a global arms embargo and trade sanctions against the military government in Myanmar, reports Reuters.

General Bo Mya, President of the National Council of the Union Myanmar, said the ruling military junta had no intention of honouring the results of May 1990 elections that the generals lost by a landslide.

"The situation in Myanmar is dire. It is time of action," he told reporters at the national press club.

The sense of the Senate resolution, sponsored by New York democrat Daniel Moynihan, urged Clinton to press the UN Security Council to adopt

an arms embargo and other sanctions against the junta, known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

The resolution passed by the US Senate on May 27, demands the release from house arrest of Aung Sun Suu Kyi, head of the party that won 80 per cent of the vote in the 1990 elections, and winner of the 1991 Nobel peace prize. It also calls for the transfer of power to the election winners.

Bo Mya, 65, commands ethnic Karen insurgents, one of the many indigenous minorities battling the junta under the council banner also part of the group are Myanmar students and Buddhist monks who led pro-democracy demonstrations that were crushed by the military in 1988.

Japan asks Iran to avoid major military build-up

TOKYO, June 10: Japan, in resuming its official yen loan to Iran after 18 years last month, urged Tehran to avoid a major military build-up that would threaten neighbouring countries, a newspaper said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The Asahi Shimbun said Japan made the request both verbally and in writing on May 29, telling Iran it may "reconsider" its aid policy if Tehran was to expand its military sharply.

The Japanese government has briefed the United States of these measures, the daily said.

Japanese Foreign Ministry officials were not immediately available for comment on the report.

The United States has re-

portedly asked its allies not to provide economic aid to Iran, which has allegedly been building up its military capabilities.

Japan exchanged diplomatic notes with Iran in Tehran on May 29 to provide 38.6 billion yen (361 million dollars) for a hydro electric power plant project.

It was the first official Japanese loan to Iran since 1975 when Tokyo suspended economic aid to the Middle East country following its revolution and war with Iraq.

Reuter adds from Luxembourg: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Wednesday offered to share intelligence data with western allies in an attempt to persuade them to put economic pressure on Iran to abandon

its programme of nuclear, chemical and biological arms.

The European Community meeting Christopher in Luxembourg, agreed to study the problem, officials said.

Christopher told a news conference with EC officials that non-proliferation was the "most important issue of the 1990s."

"We need to concentrate action to deal strongly and creatively with dangerous states that are contributing to tensions in areas like the Middle East," he said.

"The most worrisome of these countries, the one Europe can most directly influence, is Iran. I suggested the European Community that we need a collective policy of containment."

Delhi's N-plan passing thru' a 'dark phase'

NEW DELHI, June 10: India's nuclear programme is passing through a "dark phase," because of the embargo clamped on exports of various equipment by the United States and Europe, nuclear scientists said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Indian purchases of crucial items required for nuclear research have been hit by the embargo imposed after the Gulf war, the Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted A.N. Prasad, Director of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), as saying in Bombay.

"The embargo by the international weapons community is one of the steps in their stepping up of intrusive inspection capabilities as they do not trust even NPT signatories after the experience with Iran and Iraq," Prasad said.

Off the Record



TOKYO: Newly wed Prince Naruhito (L) and Crown Princess Masako look through an album of impromptu writings by friends at their residence in the Akasaka Palace after they rode in a 4.2 kilometer motorcade Wednesday. — AFP/UNB photo

Honourable Miss Masako

TOKYO: Former diplomat and commoner Masako Owada became not only a Japanese Crown Princess but an 'honourable Miss Masako' following her marriage to Crown Prince Naruhito on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Japanese media have referred to Owada as "Masako-San" ever since her engagement to the Prince was announced in January, adopting the standard Japanese honorific for both men and women, either married or unmarried.

But they immediately switched to "Masako-Sama" after the marriage, using the more polite form which effectively puts "honourable" in front of the title.

Although "Sama" is often used as a sign of respect, it is by no means limited to the Japanese Imperial family or aristocracy — shopkeepers often use this form to address customers. But repeated use can be viewed as sarcasm.

Although some newscasters who had become accustomed to using the term "Masako-San" had to correct themselves Wednesday, bigger mistakes were made.

I am innocent, she is culprit

JOHANNESBURG: A woman convicted with Winnie Mandela on kidnap and assault charges went to jail on Wednesday, declaring her innocence and saying Mrs Mandela was the real culprit, reports Reuters.

Xoliswa Falati went to a police station in Soweto to begin the two-year jail sentence imposed in May 1991 for her part in the kidnap and assault of four black youths in the black township.

Mrs Mandela, convicted on similar charges, had her six-year jail term set aside by an appeal court last week. The court imposed a 15,000 rand (5,000 dollar) fine instead.

Falati told a news conference before leaving for jail that she had simply been following Mrs Mandela's orders. "I've got no money, she has money, that's why I'm going to jail and she's free," Falati said. "I'm innocent. She's the culprit. My hands are clean."

It's harder for US children

WASHINGTON: Eight in every 10 Americans believe it will be harder for their children to achieve the American dream of good life, though only 17 per cent say they have done so, a Gallup Poll released yesterday said, reports Xinhua.

The poll found 80 per cent Americans say those who are children today will have a harder time achieving the American dream. A goal Americans generally connect with having a job they like, owning a home and sending their children to a good college.

The survey, conducted by Gallup for the CNBC Cable Network, found most Americans worried about a number of obstacles that could keep them from achieving the American dream.

The poll showed that 72 per cent Americans were "extremely" or "very" worried about rising taxes, 71 per cent were equally worried about the cost of education and 67 per cent, about catastrophic illness.

It also found 62 per cent of Americans were strongly worried about pension cuts by the Government or their employers, 61 per cent, about cuts in employee benefits and 58 per cent, about losing their jobs.

Among those polled, only 17 per cent said, "they had achieved the American dream." Though 68 per cent said, "they had some hope or expectation of achieving it, less than half believed they had a better chance than their parents had."

The poll, taken by phone May 21-23 with a random sample of 602 adults, has an error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Deficiency causes low IQ

MANILA: Hundreds of thousands of Filipino infants with low Intelligence Quotients (IQ) are born every year due to iodine deficiency in the national diet, the Philippine Health Department said here Thursday, reports AFP.

Health Secretary Juan Flavio told a group of health workers here on Wednesday "Our children's low intelligence is caused not by poverty but by a serious micronutrient malnutrition called Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD)," a spokeswoman said.

The Health Department estimates that every year, 720,000 infants fall victim to this phenomenon, which wastes about 10 percentage points of an individual's IQ, she added.

BRIEFLY

Li Peng well: Chinese Premier Li Peng has recovered from his illness and will begin public duties after being out of view for nearly two months, a government spokesman said yesterday, reports AFP from Beijing.

"Prime Minister Li Peng is doing very well with his recovery," foreign ministry spokesman Wu Jianmin said, he will personally receive Prime Minister Mahathir." Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad is due here Sunday for a nine-day visit.

The 65-year-old Li was believed to have suffered a heart attack, Chinese sources said.

IU in Tottenham starts soon: The Islamic University in Tottenham will soon open its doors for the first batch of students, according to press reports in Jeddah quoting dispatches from London, reports IINA from London.

The University's rector, Sheikh Mohammed Kamal told the Saudi daily Al-Madina newspaper that at the beginning the university will start by teaching secondary stage of education plus English language to prepare its students for university education.

He also said the university will organize intensive courses to teach English language in addition to the other subjects decided by the British government.

Sheikh Kamal said the university will teach the Islamic syllabus which includes the Arabic language, Holy Quran, Hadith, Tafsir, Tawheed and Creed.

Israel raids Palestinian camp: Israeli helicopter gunships fired two rockets into a Palestinian refugee camp in South Lebanon on Wednesday night, security sources and witnesses said, Reuter reports from Sidon.

They said two helicopters, flying low over the Mediterranean under the cover of darkness, fired the rockets at Ain el-Hilweh camp on the outskirts of the port of Sidon, 40 km (25 miles) south of Beirut.

There was no immediate word on casualties and the attacked target was not immediately identified.

Smoke billowed over the shanty town as Palestinian guerrillas and Lebanese army soldiers opened heavy machinegun fire on the attacking helicopters, but none of the aircraft were hit, they said.

Tamil rebels kill 3 cops: Tamil separatist rebels attacked a police post in northwest Sri Lanka, killing three policemen and wounding two, police said Thursday, Reuter reports from Colombo.

The rebels crossed a lagoon to attack police bunkers on Wednesday night, officials said.

The rebels have fought for the past decade for a separate state for minority Tamils.

11 shot dead in Punjab: Eleven people were shot dead by Punjab militants in three villages of Lakhimpur Kheri district Wednesday night, PTI reports from Lucknow.

Militants first struck in village Rahipara killing six people, reports said.

They then shot dead three persons in Kharana and two in Chaturpur villages.

Mondale US envoy to Japan: Former vice president Walter Mondale has accepted an offer to serve as the next US ambassador to Japan, an administration official said Wednesday, AFP reports from Washington.

The official said the White House planned to announce the appointment later in the day.

Mondale, 65, who has practiced law in his native Minnesota since an unsuccessful run for the presidency in 1984, would replace outgoing ambassador Michael Armacost.

The White House was eager to appoint a new ambassador before the summit of the Group of Seven (G7) industrialised countries in Tokyo from July 7 to 9.

Azhar to increase scholarship: Azhar has decided to increase its scholarships to students from various parts of the Islamic world to 1,000 during the next academic year according to the needs and requirements of each Islamic country, reports IINA from Cairo.

The Azhar will particularly increase the scholarships granted to the students from the Islamic republic in Central Asia and the former Soviet Union.

This was stated by the rector of Azhar Sheikh Jad Al-Haq Ali Jad Al-Haq during a meeting recently in Cairo with the graduates of the 20th session of Imams and preachers from a number of Islamic countries.

The Azhar decided to supply each of the graduates with an Islamic library containing a number of important Islamic books to take home and distribute among mosques so as to benefit as many people as possible there.

UK to allow dual passport for HK citizens

HONG KONG, June 10: The British government is to allow Hong Kong citizens to hold dual British passports to enable them to travel freely in the run-up to China's takeover in 1997, it was reported today, says AFP.

Press reports said Britain had softened the insistence that the internationally recognized British Dependent Territories Citizens (BDTC) passport be replaced before the handover by the new British National Overseas (BNO) version.

British Home Secretary Michael Howard granted the concession during a meeting of a group of legislators from the British colony who were in London to lobby against the phasing out of BDTC passports, reports said.

Howard said Hong Kong citizens could use both documents up to 1997.

Famine occurs when people lose means of getting food

NEW YORK, June 10: Economics Professor Amartya Sen of Harvard University says that famine occurs when a substantial proportion of the population loses the means of obtaining food, reports IPS.

"Such a loss can result from unemployment, from a fall in the purchasing power of wages or from a shift in the exchange rate between goods and services sold and food bought," he says.

He notes that famines have occurred when statistics have shown little or no decline in food supply, as was the case in Bengal in 1943 and in the Wollo province of Ethiopia in 1973.

Since food is never shared equally by all people on the basis of total availability, food supply figures do not indicate the real situation of hunger, he says. In fact, the 1974 Bangladesh famine occurred when food pro-

duction was at its highest. Famines can be averted by increasing the purchasing power of those least able to obtain food, he says, adding this could be done by public employment programmes.

Sen believes there is a correlation between the occurrence of famine and the existence of free press. "If leaders must seek re-election and the press is free to report starvation and to criticise policies, then the rulers have an incentive to take preemptive action."

He says this is why India, which saw severe drops in food supply in the 1960s and 1970s, has managed to stave off famine. In contrast, China, which has a better economic record but controls its media, lost 23 to 30 million people in the famine following the failure of its great leap forward policy of the late 1950s.

It is a mere shadow among the volumes of census data and mortality rates spewed out by government agencies every year, but the phenomenon of 'missing women' in population statistics had dark undertones.

According to Prof Sen who says figures on the life and death of people reveal more about a nation than traditional income indicators, there may be more than 60 million females in Asia who are 'missing'.

Medical evidence says that given similar care, women tend to outlive men. In North America and Europe, women outnumber men by about five per cent.

In contrast, a 1992 census in India showed only about 93 females for every 100 males.

The 1992 United Nations report 'The World's Women' also says countries with low female ratios include Afghanistan with 94.5 for

every 100 males, Bangladesh, 94.1 per cent, Bhutan with 93.3 per cent, Nepal 94.8 per cent, Pakistan 92.1 per cent and Papua New Guinea 92.8 per cent.

Sen says if the male-female ratios in China and India were compared to the ratio in sub-Saharan Africa, it would appear that 44 million women in China and 37 million in India are 'missing' from the official population figures.

"The phenomenon of the missing women reflects a history of higher mortality for females and a staunch anti-female bias in health-care and nutrition in these countries," Sen says.

His studies of hospital records in Bombay and nutritional healthcare in two villages in West Bengal, in his native India have confirmed a systematic bias in favour of males.

France and Britain could veto any proposals that would deprive them of a council seat.

Germany and Japan feel they are entitled to seat while Third World countries have argued for years that the council is dominated by the wealthy nations and should be expanded to include such populous states as India, Brazil and Nigeria.

Until now, the United States has ignored these calls, which would need a change in the U.N charter and may open a Pandora's box on other measures.

Earlier this year, Sutherland also issued a report on greater European trade unity that had been commissioned by the EC.

His nomination to become Director General of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) came after the 111 contracting parties to the GATT reached a consensus on his appointment, diplomatic sources said.

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UNOSOM Pakistani soldier watches over some Somali men who were captured in Mogadishu as they were armed with guns Wednesday. The tension between Pakistanis and Somalis is very high after 23 Pakistanis were killed during the last weekend in fighting. — AFP/UNB photo

Funcinpec wins Cambodian polls, certifies UN

PHNOM PENH, June 10: The United Nations certified Thursday that the royalist opposition Funcinpec Party won last month's Cambodian elections by a 7.25 percentage point margin, and that the poll was "free and fair," reports AFP.

Funcinpec won 45.47 per cent of the vote, compared to 38.22 garnered by the government's Cambodian People's Party (CPP), UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTA-C) chief Yasushi Akashi announced during a meeting of the Supreme National Council (SNC).

But the Phnom Penh government announced immediately that it did not recognize the result, and that the creation of the new government

depends on the resolution of what it called "massive electoral irregularities."

Akashi already dismissed the government's claim of such irregularities Wednesday, and reiterated his position to the SNC, which groups Cambodia's main factions.

"I am now prepared to announce on behalf of the Secretary General that the latest stage of the election process has been performed in a free and fair manner," he told the council.

"The result I have just announced early and accurately reflects the will of the Cambodian people and must be respected," he said.

The Buddhist Liberal Democratic Party of former Prime Minister Son Sann received just 3.81 per cent of the vote.

deceit, "believes both Japan and Germany should be made permanent members of the Security Council," according to a text of her address.

But she said proposals to expand council membership should not "sacrifice the council's new-found effectiveness."

Albright said the United States would prepare a "detailed response" at the end of the month to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's request for views on expanding the council.

Of the council's 15 members only five — the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France — have permanent

Sutherland GATT DG

GENEVA, June 10: Former EC Commissioner Peter Sutherland who was appointed to head the GATT on Wednesday is a well-respected diplomat known as a staunch supporter of free trade as well as an advocate of European union, reports AFP.

Irish-born Sutherland, 47, was Commissioner for competition at the European Community (EC) from 1985 to 1989. As such, he was involved in the deregulation of the airline and telecommunications industries



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Tamils reject Lankan offer to trade POWS

COLOMBO, June 10: Tamil guerrillas holding 38 Sri Lankan policemen and one soldier prisoner have rejected a government proposal to exchange them for 60 rebel detainees, a Cabinet Minister told parliament on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Wimal Wickremasinghe said the offer was made through the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC).

The 39 prisoners, seized in guerrilla attacks on police stations and military outposts in northern Sri Lanka, have threatened to begin a hunger strike on June 13 when they will have completed three years in rebel hands.

Wickremasinghe said the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam guerrillas had instead demanded a full list of rebels detained by the government.