

Farah Aided rejects last-minute appeals

ADDIS ABABA, Dec 2: Powerful Somali faction leader Mohamed Farah Aided rejected on Wednesday last-minute appeals to attend a reconciliation meeting of Somali factions in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, one of his allies said, reports Reuter.

Aided's Somali national alliance said there was no need for Aided to travel to the Ethiopian capital for a meeting with 12 other factions led by his rival, Ali Mahdi Mohamed.

"There is no reason for him (Aided) to come here. He is not coming," Aided ally Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess told reporters at a hastily convened news conference.

Ethiopian President Meles Zenawi had invited both Aided and Ali Mahdi to a meeting on the sidelines of a UN sponsored humanitarian conference.

But Jess, speaking with full authority from Aided, said the UN had lost any right to remain in Somalia. "UNOSOM (United Nations Operation in Somalia) has lost all credibility as an impartial body," he said.

Another report says: The arrival of one Somali faction chief for peace talks has raised hopes that Aided will also take part in a fresh bid on Thursday to reconcile warring clans.

Somali faction chief Ali Mahdi Mohamed arrived in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa on Wednesday for talks which have been crippled by the refusal of key figures to attend.

Ethiopian government officials said President Meles Zenawi, leading a regional drive for peace in Somalia, had sent and envoy to Aided to try to persuade him to join the talks on Thursday.



Princess of Wales (L), Patron of the National AIDS Trust, talks with George Michael (2nd R), Kd Lang (3rd R) and other musicians Wednesday before the Concert of Hope at Wembley to mark the World AIDS Day.

27 die after eating meat of shark

ANTANANARIVO, Dec 2: Twenty-seven persons had died by Wednesday and at least 340 were hospitalised in serious condition after eating the meat of a shark fished Sunday off Madagascar's east coast, the Health Ministry said, reports AFP.

The fish was caught off Manakara. By Monday, four people had already died, followed by 13 on Tuesday and another 10 on Wednesday, officials said.

Local hospital doctors said the sharks had fed on masses of poisonous algae. Authorities have since warned locals to stop eating the deadly fish meat.

Off the Record

Teresa, Graham most admired

NEW YORK Religious figures Mother Teresa and Billy Graham are the most admired people in the world, reports Reuter.

According to a magazine poll, beating out presidents and first ladies in the annual rankings by good house-keeping magazine.

The rankings, determined by 10,000 readers of the monthly, put President Clinton at the No 2 spot for men, up from his No 10 ranking the year before.

Former President George Bush was third and former president Jimmy Carter was ranked fourth.

Predecessors Ronald Reagan and Richard Nixon did not make the top 10 list, although former Vice President Dan Quayle, often the butt of comedy routines, came in at No 10.



On the women's side, First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton came in third, behind her predecessor Barbara Bush. At No 4, was US Attorney General Janet Reno, while talk show host Oprah Winfrey was fifth.

Amputate right arms, left legs

KARACHI: A court sentenced three convicted thieves to have their right arms and left legs amputated, a newspaper reported Thursday. But the amputations were not expected to be carried out, reports AP.

The three men, convicted in the armed robbery of a jewelry shop, were sentenced by Judge Saiyid Iqbal Hasan Rizvi on Tuesday in a special speedy trial court in the southern city of Karachi, according to The News, a leading English-language daily.

Pakistan's complicated legal system has elements inherited from Britain, the former colonial power, and from shariah, or Islamic law based on the Muslim holy book, the Koran.

Since shariah was introduced in the early 1980s, convicted thieves have been sentenced to prison in some cases and to amputations in others.



Winnie Mandela sheds a tear at the commemoration service of her bodyguard and driver, John Lawrence, in Soweto on Wednesday. Lawrence was gunned down and killed in central Johannesburg on November 20. — AFP photo

Eye-catching ballerina

LONDON: The Royal Ballet's principal guest artist performed in a see-through fishnet top at the Royal Opera House in London on Wednesday night and caught the eye of Prince Charles, the principal guest, reports AP.

"You managed to put something else on then," said the heir to the throne to French ballerina Sylvie Guillem when he found her covered up from throat to toes backstage after the gala show.

The acclaimed Paris-born dancer gave nothing away as she stood in line to be greeted by the prince.

Miss Guillem, with a smile and a little shrug, said she wears onstage what is ordered for her.

The long-legged ballerina is the kind of agile dancer who can put one foot behind her head while standing tiptoe on the other. She did it in a pas de deux with her British partner, Adam Cooper, in a scene from Thom Willmims' ballet "Herman Schermeran."

American audiences will have a chance to see Miss Guillem when the Royal Ballet opens a four-week tour of the United States in Washington, DC, in April.



Sino-Indian talks on reduction of frontier troops soon

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: India and China will soon hold talks on the reduction of frontier troops and cobbles a control line demarcating their disputed borders, an Indian government spokesman said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The spokesman said an experts group set up in September by the two countries will meet early next year to resolve the thorny issues as a measure to boost confidence in bilateral relations.

The group, formed during Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's visit to China in September, comprises officials from the foreign and defence ministries and the armies of the two Asian neighbours.

The spokesman said the 1994 meeting of the Sino-India

experts group was taken during talks here Wednesday between India's Foreign Secretary Jyotindra Nath Dixit and visiting Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan.

Tang is a member of a high-powered Chinese delegation headed by Li Ruihan, chairman of the National Committee of the People's Political Consultative Conference. Li heads a 10-member team which is presently visiting India.

Li, in a separate meeting with Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma, said his country was committed to maintaining friendly ties with India, officials said.

"The Chinese people and the government believe that India was a friendly country and poses no threat to China," they

quoted Li as saying after the two sides decided to hold the border talks next year.

Rao and Chinese Premier Li Peng had signed the landmark pact "to create favourable conditions" for a settlement to the border dispute, which sparked a war between the world's two most populous countries three decades ago.

The agreement established the Sino-Indian experts panel to speed up negotiations on reaching a final resolution to the dispute and renounce the use of force, or the threat of it.

A series of confidence-building measures were also adopted, including the phased withdrawal of troops deployed along the border, advance notices of some military exercises and preventing airspace intru-

sions. In 1962, the two countries went to war after Chinese troops seized a huge tract of mountainous terrain claimed by India.

The bitter clash led to a 14-year freeze in diplomatic ties, which were not fully restored until the late Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China in 1988.

The dispute which remains unsettled despite steady expansion of bilateral relations in other fields including trade, involves 128,000 square kilometres (51,200 square miles) of territory.

India has some 60,000 troops deployed on the border and Chinese troop strength is believed to be greater.

Libyans protest stiffer UN sanctions

TRIPOLI, Dec 2: Libyans protested stiffer UN sanctions that took effect on Wednesday, with an official saying they could cost the country 10 billion dollars, reports AFP.

The UN Security Council ordered the freeze on Libya's foreign assets and an embargo of oil-related equipment because of Tripoli's continued refusal to surrender two suspects in the 1988 Lockerbie bombing. They add to an air and military embargo imposed on Libya April 15, 1992.

Libyans in Surman, Benghazi and Darna protested "the stiffening of unjust sanctions against Libya through a resolution imposed by the imperialist countries of the UN Security Council," the official Jana news agency said.

Jana did not say how many took part in the protests at the three coastal cities.

"The masses shouted slogans of defiance against the countries behind the sanctions and rejected the policy of threats and ultimatums which westerners have adopted against Libya," Jana said.

The protesters also sent a message to their leader, Colonel Moammer Gaddafi, promising to "protect the revolution's gains without paying any attention to the unjust sanctions," according to Jana.

Among the protesters in Benghazi were Egyptians, Sudanese, Lebanese, Palestinians, Iraqis, Algerians, Pakistanis, Latin Americans and Canadians, Jana said.

Diplomats and economists have said the new sanctions will have limited impact as the country's main earner oil sales will not be affected. The most likely effect will be a further hike in prices.

But a Libyan official at the office of overseas investments said the sanctions would cost Tripoli more than 10 billion dollars in lost earnings on overseas investments, while refusing to give details.

He added that "some European countries like Britain and Italy" as well as Arab and African countries "could also suffer from" the sanctions.

They are "a form of international terrorism," he said. "International and local laws give all those affected the right to seek justice and ask for compensation."

The office of Libyan overseas investments is an official body created in 1981 with start-up capital of 500 million dinars (around 1.7 billion dollars).

Diplomats said the impact of the new sanctions would be limited in the short term because the freeze on Libyan as-

sets abroad, estimated at between four and five billion dollars, will be hard to implement, with little to distinguish individual from state deposits.

However, Tripoli will be deprived of dividends on its investments.

The new sanctions are aimed at forcing Tripoli to turn over two Libyan intelligence officers for trial either in the United States or Britain for their alleged involvement in the December 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jumbo jet over Lockerbie, Scotland, that killed 270 people.

Tripoli is also urged to cooperate in a French investigation into the 1989 bombing of a Uta passenger plane over Niger that killed 170 people.

The Security Council has made it clear that all sanctions would be lifted if Libya complies with all the UN demands.

'Education for all' meet on Dec 16

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: Leaders of the world's nine most populated countries will meet here this month to discuss how they can teach all their citizens to read and write by the year 2000, reports AFP.

The "education for all" summit, the first of its kind, is being co-sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Social Organisation (UNESCO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The summit will put education on the agenda of the nine countries "at the highest political level." India's Human Resources Development minister Arjun Singh told reporters here Wednesday.

The leaders of Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan, meeting on December 16, are expected to pledge their commitment to a massive edu-

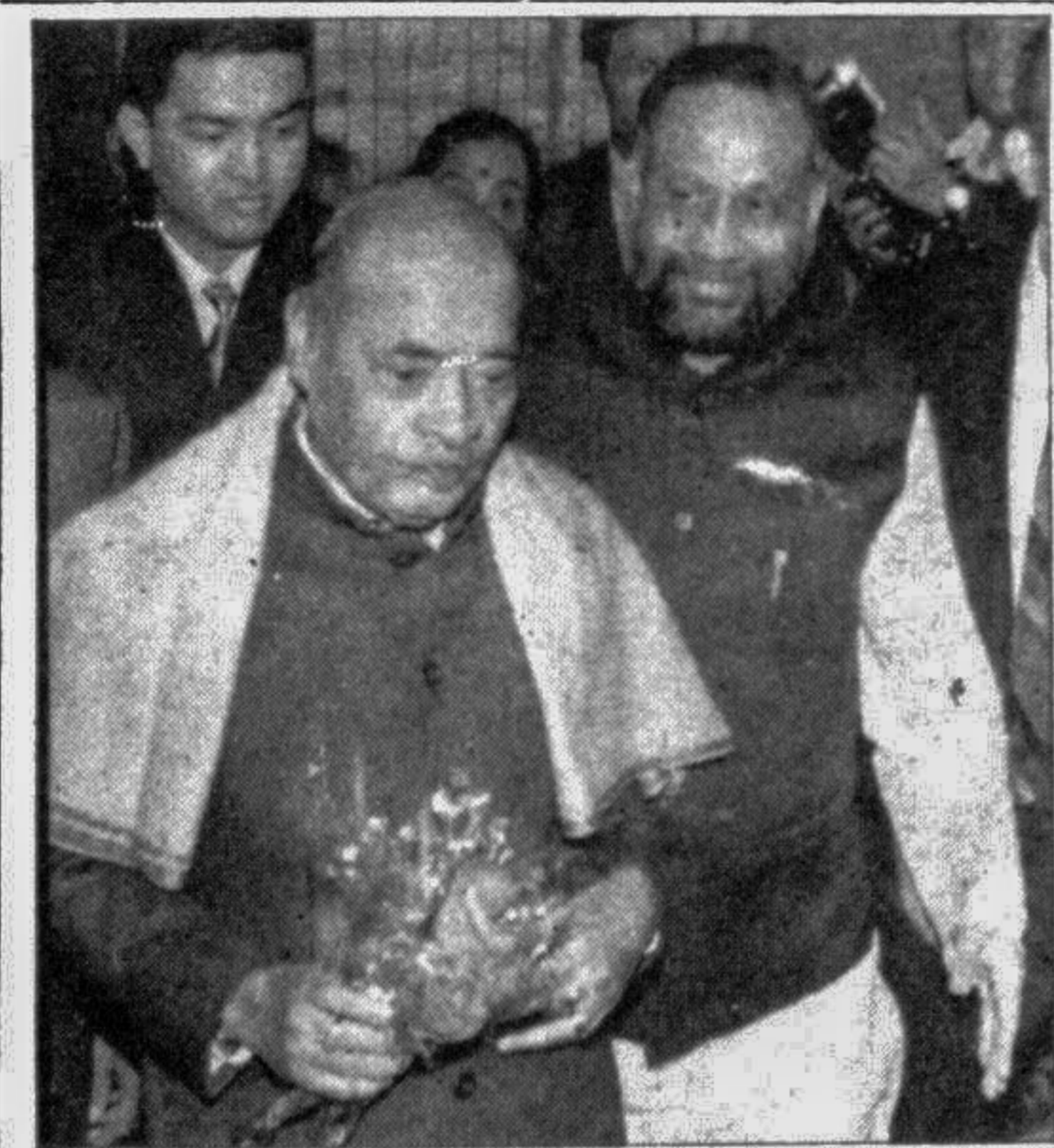
cation drive to ensure "universal" primary education by 2000, he said.

They will consider education programmes that will be bold and ambitious, at the same time "realistic and attainable," compare approaches and strategies and find out how they would raise the money to ensure basic literacy.

Together the nine countries account for 2.7 billion people, or half the world's total, as well as a majority of the world's illiterates. Their numbers are expected to grow to 3.2 billion by the turn of the century.

Ann Lis Svensson, a UNICEF official posted here, said the upcoming summit was a major international initiative in the direction of recognising the "child's right to education."

"Education is the most crucial investment any government can make for the country's future," Svensson said.



Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao (L) arrives at Parliament as his winter session began yesterday. The session was believed to focus on a huge stock market scandal and the army siege of a Kashmir mosque. — AFP photo

Iran an outlaw nation: US

BRUSSELS, Dec 2: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher urged European Community governments to ban exports to Iran of equipment that could have a military use, reports AP.

Repeating a call he made in June to EC foreign ministers, Christopher stressed Washington still considers Tehran to be a terrorist-supporting regime.

"The United States continue to believe that Iran is an outlaw nation resisting the Middle East peace process as well as being involved in terrorist actions in many countries around the world," Christopher told reporters.

"We think that strong action should be taken to deny them dual use technology as well as other steps," he added.

Christopher was in Brussels for a meeting of NATO foreign ministers.

In June, Christopher urged

US allies to deny militarily useful technology to what he said was a dangerous regime in Tehran.

He said US intelligence showed Iran's military buildup and aid to radical groups seeking to depose governments in Egypt, Algeria and Tunisia.

His appeal was aimed at Germany, France and Italy, as well as other European nations that have substantial trade links with Iran.

Tighter restrictions on US technology transfers to Iran were imposed last year, but computers are still sold to Tehran.

Christopher and EC foreign ministers agreed then to study steps for curbing European exports to Iran.

On Wednesday Christopher told reporters he discussed it with Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes, whose country currently holds the EC's rotating presidency.

UK MPs welcome peaceful end of Hazratbal crisis

LONDON, Dec 2: British MPs have welcomed the peaceful resolution of the siege of the Hazratbal shrine in Jammu and Kashmir and applauded the restraint shown by the Indian authorities during the armed occupation of the Mosque, reports FTI.

An all-party early day motion tabled in the House of Commons said the house condemns the cynical use of places of religious worship for political ends, believes that terrorism linked to religious fundamentalism constitutes the greatest threat to democracy.

The signatories included Mr Jim Lester and Mr Piara Singh Khabra.

Rao moves to tighten control over fractious Congress

NEW DELHI, Dec 2: India's main Hindu party was licking its wounds today after a series of humiliating setbacks in state elections which saw the ruling Congress (I) return to power in the country's largest state, reports AFP.

Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao moved, meanwhile, to tighten control over the fractious Congress by sacking a junior minister who criticised him over the performance of the ruling party in the sagged state polls.

Rao sought and received Rangarajan Kumaramangalam's resignation as Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Science and Technology here Wednesday evening, party sources said Thursday.

Kumaramangalam had lashed out at the party leadership Sunday following the dismal performance of the Congress in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state, where it managed to grab just 28 of the 420 assembly seats at stake.

The junior minister's comments came before the release of results from the vote in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh, India's largest state, where the Congress recaptured power from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party.

The victory in Madhya Pradesh provided a much-needed shot in the arm to the 72-year-old Rao, whose prestige was on the line in the state elections seen as a critical test

of strength between the Congress and the BJP.

The Congress captured 170 seats in the 320-seat Madhya Pradesh assembly while the BJP, which had won 219 seats in 1990 polls, managed only 111. The Congress also swept the legislature in the tiny state of Himachal Pradesh.

The BJP, which rode a wave of Hindu revivalism to power in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh in 1990 and 1991 polls, managed victories only in Rajasthan and in polls for a New Delhi city government this time around.

A socialist party-led coalition attracted the support of Muslims and lower castes to upset both the BJP and Congress in Uttar Pradesh, a northern state of 140 million people which often sets the political agenda for the nation.

Rao dismissed BJP governments in Uttar Pradesh. Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh in December following the razing of the Babri Mosque in the Uttar Pradesh town of Ayodhya. The BJP had made the building of a Hindu temple on the mosque ruins its main campaign issue and Congress lead-

ers and newspapers described the election results as a clear rejection of its attempt to use religion to draw votes.

The party will have to seriously reconsider whether it can ever hope to emerge as a serious contender for power at the center if it continues to hang on to its present ideology," the Economic Times said.

"If the demolition of a mosque and the communal frenzy which it generated failed to secure a majority, how much more of the same will the BJP need to realise its objective?"

Even the Indian Express, seen to be usually sympathetic to the BJP, said the election outcome was cause for the party to engage in "self-intro-

Irish-peace move: Clinton backs Major

WASHINGTON, Dec 2: President Clinton expressed support for British Prime Minister John Major in his efforts for peace in Northern Ireland but was not putting pressure on the British leader ahead of his summit with Ireland's Prime Minister, US officials said Wednesday, reports Reuter.

A senior official reacted to a report in the Irish Times newspaper that said Clinton had telephoned Major a week ago at Dublin's request and urged him to "go the extra mile for peace."

The official confirmed the conversation took place but rejected any implication that Clinton was exerting pressure on Major.

