

De Klerk announces all-race council

White rule ends in South Africa

CAPE TOWN, Dec 7: Exclusive white-rule ended formally in South Africa at about 10 A.M. today when President F.W. de Klerk promulgated the names of an all-race council to oversee the run-up to a democratic election in April, reports Reuters.

meeting in Cape Town this morning to adopt rules of procedure and to elect a chairman, Carter said. The white-dominated parliament adopted a TEC law in August, but it required de Klerk's promulgation of the names of the members to create it formally. The country's last white minority parliament is currently sitting to pass an interim constitution and other legislation leading to black majority rule after three centuries of white domination.

But he said he was disappointed the freedom alliance of white separatists and conservative black groups "could not be brought aboard." "We had hoped to bring the freedom alliance on board. They refused. Talks collapsed. That was very disappointing. But we are still hopeful," he said. "We always said we wanted an all-inclusive settlement, but time is running out for the freedom alliance. In just a day or so, parliament will be discussing the interim constitution," Ramaphosa said.

The inauguration of the Transitional Executive Council was marred by a boycott by parties in the Freedom Alliance, a potentially dangerous partnership of white, right-wingers and conservative black leaders who have pledged to resist the new constitution as drafted. In a symbol of rejection, self-styled "Boer commandos" occupied a fort outside Pretoria on Tuesday. They are part of a white, right-wing movement that wants to create a separate white homeland rather than compete in elections in a unified country.



PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (R) speaks to the press as US Secretary of State Warren Christopher (L) looks on at the American embassy in Amman on Monday. — AFP photo

12.9m children in India don't go to school

NEW DELHI, Dec 7: At least 12.9 million children at the age of six to 14 in India do not go to school, the Indian lower house has been told, reports Xinhua. Deputy Minister for Education and Culture Selja said in a written reply to a lower house session that at least 8.22 per cent of the school going age group stayed out of school for various reasons. Besides socio-economic reasons which are the major factor to compel children to keep out of schools, inadequate infrastructure in schools, lack of awareness on part of parents, the perception of curriculum not being related to local needs and inability of the school system to attract and sustain children's interest were other reasons for the school absence.

Pindi urged to end human rights violations

LONDON, Dec 7: Amnesty International Tuesday called on Pakistan's new government to respect its campaign promises by ending human rights violations it said had been a mark of a succession of previous governments, reports AFP. "Torture, including rape, in the custody of police, paramilitary and armed forces is endemic in Pakistan, of ten leading to death," the London-based Rights group said in a statement. "Extrajudicial executions, by or with the approval of the authorities, are rife, and some prisoners have disappeared in custody... members of these forces have been allowed to torture and kill with impunity," said Amnesty.

Amnesty said police in Pakistan routinely used torture to "obtain confessions, punish, humiliate, intimidate and terrorise." "In fact," it said, "the majority of people held in police or military custody are exposed to some form of torture or ill-treatment." Techniques, said the statement, include blindfolding, and beating with sticks and leather truncheons. "Victims have been kicked with heavy boots, had their legs pulled apart painfully, their genitals beaten or damaged by heavy metal or wooden rollers, burned with cigarettes or given electric shocks," said Amnesty.

Pak NA starts debate on N-plan

ISLAMABAD, Dec 7: Pakistan's National Assembly, for the first time in its history, began today a formal debate on the country's nuclear programme, reports AFP. The session to discuss the key security issue was requested by the main opposition leader and former Premier Nawaz Sharif following a recent statement by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto alleging that the nuclear programme had been capped by Sharif's government. The government at first resisted the debate but agreement was reached after opposition MPs staged a series of walkouts last week, saying that the two-month old Bhutto administration's reluctance violated the sovereignty of parliament. Parliamentary sources said Sharif was to open the debate after it was agreed that speakers were to avoid discussing

state secrets. Sources said the nuclear issue was to be discussed in two sessions today, which if necessary would be carried over to Wednesday when Foreign Minister Asf Ali Zardari would sum the debate up. Washington has suspended economic and military assistance to Pakistan since October 1990 following reports that Islamabad had developed the capability to assemble a nuclear bomb whenever it wanted. Bhutto had earlier said the nuclear programme had been capped by the government of Sharif. But the former premier strongly denied this, saying that Washington did not restore aid to Pakistan during his 30-month premiership which ended in mid-July, proving that he made no compromise on the nuclear issue. Hitting back at Bhutto, he

accused her government of softening its stand on the nuclear issue and also distancing itself from Muslim militants in Indian-held Kashmir. Sharif has said his Pakistan Muslim League would not allow the government to succumb to alleged US pressures to roll back the country's nuclear programme. Bhutto has denied this, saying her government had added buoyancy to the Kashmiri movement by raising the issue at international forums. Foreign Minister Ali last week told the House that the government would make efforts to remove misunderstanding about the country's nuclear programme. He stressed that a decision had been taken at the highest level not to manufacture nuclear weapons.

Talks on HK legislature begin tomorrow

HONG KONG, Dec 7: China will start this week discussing how to form a Hong Kong legislature in 1997 that would replace one elected under Gov Chris Patten's disputed political reform blueprint, a Beijing-appointed adviser said Tuesday, reports AP. The disclosure by Professor Lau Siu-kai points to China's first concrete countermove in a worsening showdown with Patten over his plans for broadening democracy in the colony. Lau said a China-appointed committee to which he belongs would meet Thursday through Saturday in Beijing and begin discussing how to form a new legislature. A 17th round of Sino-British talks collapsed late last month without resolving the dispute. Beijing so far has left unanswered Britain's offer for an 18th round.

Off the Record

Daughter wins case against father

MADRAS: A young woman who secretly got married and later became pregnant won a case Thursday against her father who wanted to force her to have an abortion, reports AP. The father, V Krishnan, asked the Madras High Court last month to order his daughter to undergo an abortion, saying she is only 16 years old, and that as a minor would be unable to bear the responsibility of having a child. "The constitution does not make any distinction, between an adult and a minor in the matter of fundamental rights," said judges M Srinivasan and A Abdul Hanif in their ruling. The woman, K Shashikala, who claims to be 20 years of age and is now four months pregnant, insists on having the baby, saying she is fully aware of the implications. It is illegal for women below 18 years of age to marry in India. While a lower court clears the dispute about Shashikala's age, she will live in a government-run hostel for destitute women, the judges said. In his petition filed in the highest court of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, Krishnan alleged that his daughter was kidnapped in May by an unemployed youth, Rajan, who raped her and made her pregnant. During closed hearings at the high court, Shashikala said she married Rajan and became pregnant willingly, according to her lawyers. "Even assuming that the pregnancy was caused by rape there is no anguish on the part of the girl," who is keen on having the baby, the judges said. They said termination of first pregnancy could affect the sterility of the woman, and that it would "undoubtedly affect her mental health."

Lady In Red

LONDON: Princess Diana stepped back into the limelight on Monday for a plane-naming ceremony at London's Heathrow Airport — amid reports her estranged husband Prince Charles wants a divorce, reports Reuters. Smiling coyly, a silent Diana was serenaded by British pop star Chris de Burgh as she named the airliner "Lady In Red". The world's most photographed woman refused to acknowledge a huge posse of press cameras, kept well away from the Princess during the ceremony in an aircraft hangar. Last week Diana said she was bowing out of public life from the end of the year because media attention had been too much. Just a year ago royal heir Charles, 45, and Diana, 32, announced they were separating after 12 years of marriage in which they had two sons Harry and William. Dressed in dark green and blue, Diana was determined to keep her engagement at the airport to name the virgin Atlantic Airways plane, a spokesman for the airline said. It was her first public appearance since her surprise announcement. Diana named the Airbus A340 aircraft "Lady In Red" after de Burgh hit song which he performed before Diana, virgin head Richard Branson and 250 guests. Diana Knows millionaire entrepreneur Branson personally, playing tennis with him and holidaying on his tropical island in the Caribbean. Without speaking, she boarded the plane after the 15-minute ceremony to take a one-hour inaugural flight.



BRIEFLY

Five executed in China

Five Chinese men found guilty of exchanging counterfeit money along the Chinese-Russian border have been executed in the northeastern province of Heilongjiang, the China Youth Daily said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing. The men, who did business near the border town of Sufenhe, were able to exchange 220,000 fake yuan (37,000 dollars) for rubles and dollars. They purchased the counterfeit yuan in the province of Guangdong for 59,000 real yuan.

Typhoon kills 64 in Philippines

Typhoon Manny roared Tuesday toward the southeastern part of Luzon island, already battered by Typhoon Lola which killed 64 people, authorities said, AP reports from Manila. The Manila weather bureau said the eye of the storm, with sustained winds of up to 110 kilometres (68 miles) per hour, was about 600 kilometres (370 miles) east of Catanduanes. Catanduanes, 368 kilometres (230 miles) southeast of Manila, was among five provinces on the main Philippine island of Luzon worst hit by Typhoon Lola which struck Sunday.

Benazir to visit Turkey Dec 10

Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto will pay an official visit to Turkey on December 10-12, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said on Monday, Reuters reports from Ankara. She will hold talks with Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on bilateral ties, regional and international issues, a ministry statement said. It will be the first official meeting between the two women leaders of Pakistan and Turkey, Muslim countries of traditional friendship. Bhutto visited Turkey in May, 1990.

Tremors shake Colombo

Earth tremors shook the capital Colombo and other parts of Sri Lanka yesterday morning, a meteorological spokesman and area residents said, Reuters reports from Colombo. "We have had reports from the capital Colombo, southern and central Sri Lanka. It seems to have been felt in most areas," the Department of Meteorology spokesman said. There were no immediate reports of damage. The intensity of the tremors could not be measured because the department's equipment was faulty, the spokesman added.

Actress Rita Macedo dies

Rita Macedo, a veteran actress during the golden age of Mexican movie making, died of a heart attack in Mexico City Monday, her family announced. She was 65, AP reports from Mexico City. In a brief biography, the government news agency Notimex said Macedo was married to movie producer Luis de Liano and before that to novelist Carlos Fuentes, who dedicated one of his novels to her. She was born Maria Concepcion Macedo Guzman in Mexico City in 1928 and the first movie she acted in, "Las Cinco Noches de Adan" (The Five Nights of Adam), was an instant hit in 1942.

Golpaygani hospitalised

Grand Ayatollah Mohammad-Reza Golpaygani, one of Shi'ite Islam's key spiritual leaders, was in critical condition at a Tehran hospital Tuesday after suffering a heart failure, media reports said, AP reports from Nicosia. Golpaygani was rushed to Tehran Monday night from the Shi'ite religious centre in the holy city of Qom, 130 kilometres (80 miles) south of the capital, according to Iran's official news agency.

Russia suspends '91 coup trial

MOSCOW, Dec 7: Judges suspended Tuesday the trial of the remaining defendants in the failed August 1991 communist coup after two alleged plotters said they were ill, reports AP. Doctors for Anatoly Lukyanov, once chairman of the Supreme Soviet, and former Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov said their patients were too ill to continue with the proceedings. Lukyanov and Pavlov were among 12 hard-line Soviet leaders originally charged with plotting to overthrow President Mikhail Gorbachev in the summer of 1991. Three defendants have already had their cases delayed for medical reasons. The coup attempt took place just before some of the 15 Soviet republics were to sign a treaty giving them greater free-

dom. The putsch was to block this move, but instead accelerated the collapse of the Soviet Union. Anatoly Ukolov, chief judge of the military branch of Russia's Supreme Court, said the court would convene Wednesday to consider a possible date for the trial to resume. Lukyanov's lawyer, Genrikh Padva, told the court that his client was in the courtroom against his doctor's advice. "He has bronchitis and doctors say it may develop into pneumonia," Padva said. "He is unlikely to be able to attend the court session for the next few days as his health is worsening rather than improving." Lukyanov, who appeared well and to be in good spirits,

Iran reopens its London embassy

LONDON, Dec 7: Iran's embassy in London, destroyed in May 1980 when British commandos stormed the building to rescue hostages held by gunmen, reopened Monday after a refurbishment costing four million pounds (six million US dollars), reports Xinhua. Four of the five gunmen, who demanded the release of political prisoners in Iran, were killed when British soldiers burst into the embassy to free 19 hostages. In 1988, the British government agreed to pay 1.8 million pounds (2.7 million US dollars) for the refurbishment. In return, Iran promised to pay for the repairs of the British embassy in Tehran. spoke to reporters about his campaign for the new Russian parliament to be elected December 12. Under election laws, he can run for office despite being on trial. "The campaign is going well," he said. I have met some 10,000 people in my constituency and I have good reason to believe that I have chances in this election." The judge said Pavlov had called the court and that his doctors had told him to rest for at least three days because of poor health. The court did not say what Pavlov was suffering from. The trial of the coup plotters has been suspended several times since it got underway in April 1993.

Megawati fails to become PDI chairperson

SURABAYA (Indonesia), Dec 7: A congress of Indonesia's opposition Democratic Party (PDI) ended in deadlock today after pro-government members effectively barred state-founder Sukarno's daughter from becoming its leader, reports Reuters. Megawati, Sukarnoputri, whose father was Indonesia's first president, had appeared certain of becoming chairman of the PDI, one of only two permitted opposition parties. But last-minute stonewalling tactics by pro-government caretakers of the party blocked her election parties. But last-minute stonewalling tactics by pro-government caretakers of the party blocked her election, party members then faced 200 riot police who cleared the hall. "De facto I have become chairman but de jure this has not taken place. Stay calm. If you love me stay in good order," the 46-year-old mother of three told supporters after the Congress passed an official deadline of midnight on Monday. Police, some armed with riot shields and sticks, quickly moved into the building and told delegates the congress was over. Delegates including Megawati dispersed peacefully. While the PDI, hamstrung by government restrictions and internal bickering, is far from presenting a serious challenge to the ruling Golkar Party or President Suharto's government, it has in recent years become a vocal critic in parliament. It won 15 per cent of the vote in last year's election. Delegates said key members of the board, appointed by the government after it nullified results of an earlier congress which re-elected the fiery Surjadi to be chairman, had not been seen since Monday morning. The government has a long history of intervening in party affairs. Surjadi was originally appointed as Chairman by a government-appointed board after a deadlocked congress. Many suspected that the government was delaying the plenary session, which would elect a leader, past the permitted duration of the congress at 1700 GMT (Monday). They said it could then act under a law allowing it to intervene in the case of deadlock.



Undated file photo of Megawati Sukarno Putri, daughter of the late Indonesian president Sukarno. — AFP photo

Malawi president fit to resume duty

HARARE, Dec 7: Two months after brain surgery, Malawi President Kamuzu Banda was pronounced fit to resume his duties Tuesday, state radio in the southeast African nation reported, says AP. The announcement was immediately greeted with skepticism in the capital, Lilongwe, residents and foreign diplomats said. Banda, in his 90s, satisfied doctors who examined him Monday, the radio said, and therefore a three-man presidential council running the country since Banda was taken ill in September was dissolved. Before becoming ill, Banda made regular broadcasts on national issues.

Mixed showing in state polls helps Rao crush party revolt

NEW DELHI, Dec 7: Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao may have earned a breather with a mixed showing by his Congress (I) Party in state elections, but misgivings over his leadership persist, reports AFP. Rao had something to cheer about after his party wrested control of India's largest state, Madhya Pradesh, from the Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) in the staggered polls last month. The win helped the 72-year-old Prime Minister crush a near revolt in the party that erupted immediately after the Congress was routed in balloting in New Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state. "There is no challenge to Rao (from within the party)," Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil said. "He is very secure as the party president. In fact, he has emerged stronger." Rao quickly displayed his grip over the party by sacking a junior minister, Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, whose criticism of his leadership drew the support of two other ministers. Kumaramangalam was forced to resign on December 1, a day after attacking Rao. The two ministers who had backed would have received support from a large number of party members disgusted over the debacle in Uttar Pradesh if the BJP had not itself been routed in Madhya Pradesh. "For the moment Rao is

safe," a party source said. "More than the fate of the Congress, the BJP's poor show has gladdened everyone. People think Rao should get some credit." "But he cannot be complacent," the source said. "Questions about his ability to lead the party remain." The BJP was supremely confident of sweeping the elections in New Delhi and four of India's 25 states. It had called the polls a national referendum on the December 6, 1992 razing of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhya. The BJP was edged out in politically-crucial Uttar Pradesh by a socialist-led coalition.

It was decimated by the Congress in Madhya Pradesh and the tiny state of Himachal Pradesh. The BJP managed a narrow win over Congress in Rajasthan state. Its overwhelming victory in New Delhi was seen as poor consolation for its lacklustre performance elsewhere. "Our first objective in these polls was to halt the forward march of the BJP," said Commerce Minister Pranab Mukherjee. "That we have achieved, although we have not benefited from it everywhere." Mukherjee said the Congress showing was impressive because it was the first major election the party had

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fought without being led by a member of the Gandhi family. It had been widely believed that Rao, who heads a minority government whose five-year term ends in 1996, would have been forced to quit or order mid-term elections to parliament if the BJP had swept the state polls. Rao has been portrayed by critics as an indecisive leader lacking in charisma. Many of his election meetings were poorly attended and scores of candidates did not carry his photograph in their campaign material. Many in the Congress, India's oldest political party, are worried over its deteriorating health. Party sources said doubts remain over whether Rao would be able to lead it to

Arms seized near Thai-Cambodian border

BANGKOK, Dec 7: Thai police intercepted a truck near the Thai-Cambodian border today and seized over five tonnes of weapons destined for Khmer Rouge guerrillas, police said, reports Reuters. A Khmer Rouge fighter, arrested along with six Thais, said the weapons were being moved from a secret cache in Thailand's Chantaburi province, across from the guerrilla headquarters in Pailin. The weapons being to General Gon Sen, the Khmer Rouge guerrilla, identified as comrade Rit, 40, said at a police-organised news conference. Gon Sen, the Khmer Rouge Defence Minister, is regarded as the number four in the shadowy Marxist organisation.

Pythons return to their homes

JAKARTA: A total of 37 python snakes were released recently into their natural home at the Panitan island of Ujung Kulon greater national park in Indonesia, reports Xinhua. The large snakes were brought back into their habitat after a London-based zoo and the Indonesian Forest Ministry's directorate general of forest protection and nature conservation considered it necessary to return the protected species of animals into their natural home in Ujung Kulon, according to a report from the Indonesian Times here on Tuesday. Having been here from the London-based zoo for 18 days to make them suit with the new climate on Indonesia, which is a tropical country. One python snake was picked up from its habitat in Ujung Kulon about eight years ago, and then, with British expertise, it was gone into breedings in London. In Indonesia there are three kinds of python, popularly called "rice-field snakes," which were declared by the government, as protected species and classified as rare animals or nearly extinct species.