

# Sino-Kuwait defence agreement soon

KUWAIT, Dec 15: Kuwait expects to conclude a defence co-operation agreement with China, Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was quoted yesterday as saying, reports Reuter.

"Our next agreement will be with China," he was quoted as saying by the London-based Al-Sharq Al-Awsat newspaper, the official Kuwait-news agency reported.

Kuwait last month signed a defence pact with Russia its fourth with a permanent member of the UN Security Council since the 1991 Gulf War that ended Iraq's 1990-91 occupation.

## Iraq frees German

BAGHDAD, Dec 15: Chancellor Helmut Kohl personally sent a message to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein pleading for the release of a jailed German, a German mediator said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"The Chancellor asked me to plead on his behalf with the President to free Kai Sondermann, veteran German politician Hans-Juergen Wischniewski told reporters.

Wischniewski said he came to Iraq at the request of German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel.

An accord with China would give it defence accords with all five permanent members of the Council.

Sheikh Sabah was quoted as saying the pacts with Russia, the United States, France and Britain were "not treaties, but cooperation agreements... each agreement differs from the other depending on the country and its circumstances."

The agreements variously provide for joint training, joint manoeuvres, technical cooperation, possible weapons purchases and, in the case of the US agreement, pre-positioning of weapons in Kuwait for use in case of emergencies.

Last year the emirate said it planned to sign an accord with China that would be similar to its other defence agreements.

But the plan ran into unspecified difficulties. Kuwaiti newspapers said China had declined for constitutional reasons.

In August this year, Defence Minister Sheikh Ali Al-Sabah said Kuwait was again in contact with China to "overcome those difficulties and obstacles."

Last year, the emirate set aside 3.5 billion dinar for weapons purchases over the next 10 years.

# Delhi to deal firmly with militancy, says minister

## Over 200 disappear from custody in Kashmir, Punjab

NEW DELHI, Dec 15: The government today told the Rajya Sabha it will continue to deal firmly with militancy in Kashmir and at "no stage will the interest of the country be compromised," reports PTI.

Replying to supplementaries during the question hour, the Minister of State for Internal Security, Rajesh Pilot, said the Narasimha Rao government was taking all possible steps to restore normalcy in the valley and provide safety and security to government employees who were working under trying circumstances in Kashmir.

Referring to the rocket attack on Doordarshan Kendra in Srinagar which claimed the life of the Station Director, S P Singh, recently, Pilot said the secretariat, Doordarshan Kendra and air station were the targets of rocket attack and the administration had provided a screen around the buildings.

He said all measures were being taken by the security forces to prevent recurrence of such rocket and other attacks by militants in the Kashmir valley.

Even in the case of Doordarshan Kendra, foolproof arrangements had been made and it was unfortunate that such an incident occurred in spite of it.

AFF from London adds: More than 200 people have "disappeared" after having been taken into custody by Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. Amnesty International charged today.

The organisation in a report also accused Indian authorities of covering up and obstructing inquiries into what it described as "appalling violations" of human rights in the two territories.

"We have details of over 200 individuals who have apparently 'disappeared' from security custody since January 1990. 128 in Jammu and Kashmir and 80 in Punjab," the report said.

The broad powers of arbitrary arrest given to the security forces facilitate 'disappearances' and, what is more, in many of these cases there is clear evi-

dence of attempts to cover up the problem with police and military deliberately prevaricating, ignoring the law, and obstructing relatives and lawyers."

"In Jammu and Kashmir officials have subverted legal proceedings refusing to respond to Habeas Corpus petitions from the state's High Court, which found evidence that several victims who had met 'an unnatural fate' had been in fact tortured before being secretly killed in custody."

"In Punjab court orders to clarify 'disappearances' have also been ignored and police routinely deny arrests."

"Little is done to stop the violations or bring those responsible for 'disappearances' in Punjab, none of those responsible for 'disappearances' have ever been brought to justice by the police, which operates a 'licence to kill' policy, and in Jammu and Kashmir we know of only two cases where members of the security forces have received substantial prison sentences."

More than 7,000 people have died in Kashmir since 1989, when Muslim militants launched a violent campaign for an end to Indian rule over the country's only Muslim-majority state.

Sikh militants launched a bloody separatist campaign in Punjab in 1984 seeking to establish a Sikh homeland called Khalistan, or land of the pure, in the northern state.

The Sikh separatist campaign has been on the wane in recent months.

Amnesty said that while it recognised that the Indian government was confronting "ruthless and violent opposition in both Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab," it was also evident that security forces had resorted to "appalling violations themselves."

Amnesty, which said it had sent the text of its report to the Indian government several weeks ago, urged that Indian authorities establish a commission to ensure the safety of detainees.

# Off the Record



US actor Richard Gere (L) and super-model wife Cindy Crawford arrive on Tuesday for benefit premiere of the movie 'Philadelphia' starring Tom Hanks as a lawyer who contracts AIDS virus. The event benefited AIDS Project Los Angeles. — AFP photo

## To limit bathing in massage parlours

BANGKOK: To cope with an anticipated water shortage, authorities may limit the high-volume water use in Bangkok's numerous "massage parlours," a city official said Wednesday, reports AP.

This year's short rainy season left the country's two major dams at their lowest levels in 30 years, and Bangkok officials have drafted a water rationing plan for the city from January to July.

The plan includes limiting use by massage parlours and other entertainment spots, said Noppadon Promsom, an official of the Metropolitan Waterworks Authority.

Most Bangkok massage parlours are brothels in which customers are bathed in tubs before sex with the "masseur," and bathed again afterward, said informed sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. The masseuse also bathes twice and washes the tub a couple of times.

The Thai newspaper The Nation recently reported that there are 99 licensed massage parlours in Bangkok, and most have 500-liter (130-gallon) tubs. If 70 masseuses at a parlour serve two customers daily, that would amount to 7.7 million liters (2 million gallons) of water a day, the paper said. Some parlours have up to 150 masseuses and some girls serve up to four customers daily, it said.

## Prince and the paupers

LONDON: Princes Diana has given her young son Prince William a glimpse of the harsher realities of life, taking him to meet homeless people at a London day centre, newspapers reported Wednesday, says Reuter.

The 11-year-old prince, whom many clergymen would like to see as Britain's next monarch, visited the shelter near Westminster Cathedral on Tuesday with his mother and cardinal Basil Hume, leader of Britain's Roman Catholics.

William is second in line to the throne after his 45-year-old father Prince Charles.

Some suggest he should step aside in favour of William, the older of his two sons, when Queen Elizabeth, 67, and in fine health, dies or abdicates, which is unlikely at present.

The newspapers said the fair-haired young prince met some of around 100 down-and-outs who visit the catholic-run centre every day for warmth and a cheap lunch.

"Clearly shy, he didn't say much. Instead he dutifully listened to what the homeless had to say and then shook hands," the left-leaning Daily Mirror reported.

The tabloid drew a contrast between the plight of those in the shelter and the 1.75 million cost to taxpayers of improvements to nearby St James palace, home of William's father, "Prince and the paupers", the paper's headline said.

No one was available at Buckingham palace to comment on the visit.

## Unwelcome gift

JAKARTA: A newly-appointed local government official in Blora, Java Province, received an unwelcome gift recently — a box containing six live poisonous snakes, it was reported Wednesday, says AFP.

Onariyah, who assumed her post only three months ago, said the gift box was signed from a secret "admirer", the Jakarta Daily quoted her as saying.

The daily said two men had asked a driver to deliver the box personally to Onariyah, who was at a loss to know what she had done to merit the poison present.

## Sea lion pup used as bait to catch shark

ADELAIDE, Australia: Three men who used a sea lion pup as bait to catch a 1.5-ton shark were fined more than 30,000 dollars (US 20,000 dollar) Wednesday, reports AP.

Trevor Gilmore, 47, his son Dion Gilmore, 24, and James Gardiner, 60, were first charged in 1990 with catching and possessing an Australian sea lion pup. The pups are protected under Australian law.

The men caught a 1,520-kilogram (3,300-pound) white pointer shark in April, 1990, which would have broken the world record for a shark caught on a rod and line.

But the record was disallowed because of the allegations that the men used a 3-week-old sea lion pup as bait.

Magistrate Fred Field fined the three men 4,500 dollars (US 3,000 dollar) and ordered them to pay 27,000 dollars (US 18,000 dollar) in court costs.

"You took a sea lion pup and killed it and used it as bait in an attempt to catch a record-breaking shark," Field said.

"The act of taking such a young sea lion pup must have been a cause of distress to the pup and its mother," he said.

Prosecutor Mark Stevens told the court the men had acted cruelly "for commercial gain and personal status or glory."

# BRIEFLY

**Canada invites Arafat:** Canada has invited Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman Yasser Arafat to visit. Foreign Affairs Minister Andre Ouellet said Tuesday, Reuter reports from Ottawa.

"We are waiting for an answer," Ouellet told reporters. No specific date has been set, but it will most likely be in the new year, a Foreign Affairs spokesman said. It would be the first visit for Arafat to Canada.

**Sino-Russia border bridge soon:** China and Russia, rivals for much of their recent history, will build the first bridge across their border to facilitate trade, an official report said Wednesday, AP report from Beijing.

The pontoon bridge will stretch across the Amur or Heilong River to link Mohe in northeastern China's Heilongjiang province with Galinda, the Xinhua News Agency said.

Chinese and Soviet soldiers clashed along their northeastern border in 1969, and the two sides maintained heavy fortifications along the Ussuri and Amur Rivers well into the 1980s.

**DPRK military team in Cuba:** A high-level North Korean military delegation began a 12-day visit to Cuba on Tuesday aimed at improving cooperation between the two countries' armed forces, the official National Information Agency (AIN) said, AFP reports from Havana.

The Pyongyang delegation was headed by Admiral Kimil Chol and was greeted by Rear Admiral Pedro Perez Betancourt of the Cuban Navy, the agency said.

**12 die in Mexico prison riot:** At least 11 prisoners were killed and 12 injured Tuesday in fighting at a high-security prison near Mexico City, officials said, Reuter reports from Mexico.

"There was a clash in the prisoners' area," Hugo Vilacana, Director of Information for the State of Mexico, told a local radio station. "As a result of these events, 11 of them lost their lives and 12 more are injured."

**Russian gets Booker prize:** Writer Vladimir Makarin has won the second annual 10,000 pound (15,000 dollar) Booker prize for Russian fiction for his novel "A Baise-Covered Table With A Decanter In The Middle," Reuter reports from Moscow.

The prize, an offshoot of the British Booker prize for fiction, is sponsored by Booker PLC, a British food manufacturing and trading company.

Makarin was awarded the prize at a ceremony in Moscow on Tuesday night. His novel portrays an insignificant individual face to face with an oppressive bureaucratic state — a traditional theme in Russian literature.



British Prime Minister John Major shakes hands with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat inside 10 Downing Street Wednesday in London on the second and last day of Arafat's visit to Britain. — AFP photo



Pakistani Foreign Minister Asif Ali (R) chats with US senators before their formal talks, (from left) Thad Cochran, Larry Pressler and Hank Brown Tuesday in Islamabad. The senators discussed bilateral issues with their Pakistani counterparts, including nuclear proliferation. — AFP photo

# 550,000 Americans have AIDS

WASHINGTON, Dec 15: About 550,000 Americans are infected with AIDS virus, according to the first nationwide survey of AIDS infections released on December 13, reports Xinhua.

The few figures is considerably below previous government estimates that put the number of Americans infected with AIDS virus at about one million.

The survey, the first attempt to estimate the score of AIDS infection in the United States by directly testing ordinary Americans, also found blacks were four times more likely than

whites to be infected. The new study "implies the epidemic is slowly increasing in the general population. It is not exploding," said Dr Geraldine McQuillan, who presented the new data at a medical meeting.

But she also said the new figures is a conservative estimate, because the survey covered only people who live at home, not prisoners, the homeless or hospitalised patients.

The true number, based on the new survey, could range anywhere from 300,000 to 1.02 million, given the margin of error, she said.

The survey was based on a randomly chosen sample of 7,992 households and compiled by the National Centre for Health Statistics.

However, other researchers said the new data could mean that more people are dying of AIDS than are catching new infections so the total number infected is actually falling.

Dr Scott Holmberg of the US centre for disease control and prevention, (CDC) said that because of deaths from AIDS, the total number infected has fallen and may now total perhaps 700,000 or 800,000.

## South Africa to restructure riot police

CAPE TOWN, Dec 15: South Africa's White Police Minister Hennis Kriel bowed to the authority of the country's first all-race governing body on Tuesday, offering to restructure the controversial Internal Stability Unit (ISU) riot police, reports Reuter.

Kriel, who has repeatedly resisted calls to rein in the ISU or withdraw its men from black townships, also agreed to pull them out of a Natal province Shanty Town where they have been accused of brutality.

The minister made his offers in letter to the multi-party Transitional Executive Council (TEC).

## Future of Europe rests on Franco-German ties

PARIS, Dec 15: Continuing cooperation between France and Germany "is the best guarantee of a peaceful future for Europe in the face of new threats to its unity, French President Francois Mitterrand said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Writing in a special edition of a publication called *La Lettre Diplomatique*, Mitterrand commented: "The future of all Europe rests on the entente between Germany and France."

"Today more than ever before this position is at the heart of all policy concerning the security, prosperity and unity of Europeans."

The French president's text was published today in a bilingual edition of the magazine de-

voted to the 30th anniversary of the January 1963 Franco-German Co-operation Treaty.

General Charles De Gaulle and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer signed the document, which provided for Franco-German Coordination on foreign affairs, defence, information and culture.

Mitterrand wrote that many agreements set up between France and Germany had acted as a lever in the construction of Europe.

He cited the European monetary system, as well as Europe's recent economic, monetary and political union under the banner of the European Union as examples where the two countries had played a pivotal role.

## Actress Myrna Loy dies

NEW YORK, Dec 15: Myrna Loy, the cool beauty whose sly wit, easy charm, unbridled sophistication and intelligence made her the paragon of a perfect wife for millions of movie fans, died Tuesday. She was 88, reports AP.

Miss Loy died at Lenox Hill Hospital after a lengthy illness, said Pat Sumers, a nursing supervisor. Further details were not immediately available.

A freckle-faced redhead from Montana, she was the woman every man wanted to marry.

She was best known as socialite Nora Charles, wife of sleuth Nick Charles, in the six "Thin Man" movies of the 1930s and 1940s. Together, knocking back martinis and dining with thugs, she and co-star William Powell made marriage look like a sophisticated lark.

# 'NY concert to help combat stereotyping of Islamic music'

WASHINGTON, Dec 15: Islamic music is as rich and diverse as the Islamic world itself, US and regional scholars agree, reports USIS.

This rich diversity is what is on display in "The Musical World of Islam," a programme of concerts sponsored by the World Institute of Music in New York City. The concert series has been running since November and continues through March 1994, offering American audiences a broad view of the many different musical traditions found in the Islamic world, according to Robert Browning, artistic director of the institute.

The festival features music from Iran, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey, Sudan and Azerbaijan. Artists include: Simon Shaheen and the near eastern music ensemble, Dimi Mint Abba, Meral Ugurlu, the Persian traditional music ensemble Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Ilyas Malayev ensemble, Hassan Hakmoun, Tantrikorur ensemble, Ali Jihad Racy and Mansour Ajami, Hamza El Din, and Alem Kassimov.

Browning said he hopes the concert series will help combat the stereotyping of Islamic music and the Islamic world.

"We have to adjust our ways of thinking," Browning said. "The series gives people an opportunity to see that the Islamic world produces a wealth of music, as wide in scope as what the western world offers."

Philip Schuyler, and American musicologist, and Simon Shaheen, a performing artist, underscored this point in a December 7 world net television programme with interlocutors

in Algiers, Beirut and Damascus. The worldnet participants included musicians, musicologists, journalists and ministry officials from the region.

"If you include the entire world of Islam, including the United States for that matter, but certainly from Mauritania to the Philippines — there can be said to be no single music of the Philippines — there can be said to be no single music of Islam," said Seuyler, a professor of ethno-musicology at Columbia University who has lived and studied in Morocco and Yemen.

Regional differences can influence the interpretation of the music, he added. "Individual circumstances — social and political and religious — have enormous impact on the music. And there have been different contributors to music of the region — Muslims, Christians,

Jews and others." Even though Islamic music is very often sung in Arabic — interpretations of the music will vary from region to region because of different dialects and accentuation, Schuyler said.

"Local accents and local dialects will also influence the way the words are enunciated," he noted. "There is a tremendous spectrum, a huge range of styles, even though they all share the Arabic language."

While there is diversity in Islamic music, there are also shared characteristics, Schuyler said. One common thread in Islamic music — and other religious music as well — is giving preference to the human voice over man-made musical instruments, Schuyler noted. "The most spiritual instrument is the human voice, because it

is separated from the man-made object of musical instruments."

Another shared aspect is the priority given to "unmeasured music," i.e. music lacking a "measurable beat or definite rhythm," he explained. This aspect of the music "goes back to the spiritual nature that is not governed by physical rhythms, just as it is not governed by physical instruments."

Simon Shaheen, a well-known composer and performer of near eastern music, rejected identifying genres of music produced in the Islamic world. "I consider these terms not necessarily important," he said.

Shaheen argued that western genres such as "classical" or "traditional" don't tell us very much about the music or the culture in which the music was produced. These terms are often based on another region's musical traditions and interpretations, he said.

"It seems to me that the western intellectual influence on the musical thinking in the East has forced us to create these pigeonholes and create these classifications and terms. And it seems to me that the meaning of that is wrong," he remarked.

Shaheen, who plays the "Oudh," an Arabic string instrument, stressed the importance of preserving one's native musical roots. "In think that every people, every country, every region should always go back to its musical native roots, in order to progress. To imitate or import from the rest of the world is not good in this respect."

## Ghali backs Japan to become UN Council member

TOKYO, Dec 15: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said Tuesday he supported Japan's bid to become a member of the United Nations Security Council, news reports said, according to AFP.

In an interview with Japanese reporters in New York, Boutros-Ghali said Japan would play a more important role internationally if it gains a permanent seat, in addition to current members Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States.

The UN chief is to visit Japan on Saturday for a five-day trip to meet top officials, including Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata and possibly Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa.