

## Lee appointed new S Korean PM

SEOUL, Dec 17: The president appointed a unification expert as prime minister on Saturday in a prelude to a major government reorganisation expected to affect most key Cabinet posts, reports AP.

President Kim Young-Sam's choice of Lee Hong-Koo was seen as an indication of his desire to improve North-South Korean relations in the wake of the October 21 US-North Korea nuclear accord.

Upon his appointment, Lee said he foresees no big changes in South Korea's policy toward the North under a new Cabinet.

Lee also will be in charge of leading South Korea into a changing global economy regulated by the new World Trade Organisation.

Lee, 60, a US-educated former political science professor, had been serving as a vice prime minister and headed the Unification Board, a government ministry which monitored the US-North Korea nuclear negotiations.

The one-chamber National Assembly, controlled by Kim's Democratic Liberal Party, approved Lee's appointment in a 177-34 vote late Saturday, as required by the constitution.

Now Kim is expected to reshuffle his 22-member Cabinet, possibly next week, presidential officials said, requesting anonymity.

They said the shakeup would affect most key Cabinet posts, including the defence, foreign affairs and economic portfolios.

The shakeup has been expected since early this month when Kim merged and consolidated major government min-

### 9 Chinese dissidents sentenced

BELIJING, Dec 17: International human-rights groups expressed outrage today after a Beijing court handed down China's harshest sentences against political activists in years and urged the world to condemn such abuses, reports Reuter.

"With the extra ordinarily harsh sentences handed down to nine Chinese dissidents yesterday, the consequences of lifting international pressure on China are clear ... the Chinese leadership will stop at nothing to punish dissent," Human Rights Watch Asia said.

The Beijing Intermediate People's Court in the district of Babaoshan on Friday sentenced nine political activists to jail terms ranging from three to as many as 20 years for "counter-revolutionary" crimes, or subversion.

## BRIEFLY

### Milosevic due in Greece Dec 19:

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic will visit Greece on Monday for talks with Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou and Foreign Minister Carolos Papoulias, a Foreign Ministry statement said Friday, AFP reports from Athens.

Milosevic recently met Greek opposition leaders in Belgrade. Greece has taken a largely pro-Serb stance, supporting the lifting of the UN embargo on former-Yugoslavia.

### 12 soldiers missing in Kashmir:

At least 12 Indian soldiers, missing since Wednesday, are feared to be buried under an avalanche in the mountains of the northern state of Kashmir, newspapers said yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

An army spokesman told the Asian Age daily on Friday that a massive search operation, including foot and ski-patrols and air surveillance, had been launched in the northern district of Kargil.

### 3 Thais shot dead in Karachi:

Western diplomats have advised their nationals to keep away from danger zones in Karachi after 12 more people, including three Thai students, were gunned down, AFP reports from Karachi.

The three Thais were shot dead and two of their Thai compatriots injured when gunmen opened fire on Friday outside a religious training centre. Police said the Thai students, who were Muslims, had come to Pakistan for Islamic studies.

### Somaliland clashes claim 20:

More than 20 people have been killed and about 100 wounded during the past week in factional fighting raging in Hargeisa, the capital of the breakaway republic of Somaliland, its self-styled "president" Mohammed Ibrahim Egal said yesterday. AFP reports from Nairobi.

Egal told AFP by telephone from Hargeisa that his government had imposed a state of emergency in the Somaliland last week, and his troops were in process of "chasing" rebel fighters out of Hargeisa.

### Attack on Kampala mosque:

Seven Muslim worshippers were wounded when a man threw a grenade into a crowded mosque in central Kampala on Friday, witnesses said, AFP reports from Kampala.

The attacker was killed by an angry mob who caught up with him and stoned him to death. It was not immediately clear why he carried out the attack, the second in the mosque in two months.

### Israeli officer shot in WB:

An Israeli officer was shot and wounded in the occupied West Bank on Friday and the Islamic Hamas group said it was responsible. Reuter reports from Ramallah, WB.

Jewish settlers said the reservist army officer, a West Bank settler, was driving his car in the town of Ramallah when shots were fired. He was wounded in the shoulder and his condition was described as moderate.

### 8 die in Borneo chopper crash:

A Bell helicopter has crashed into a river in the Indonesian part of Borneo island killing eight people, the afternoon Suara Pembaruan daily reported yesterday. Reuter says from Jakarta.

Suara Pembaruan said the only survivor, a two-year-old child, was in hospital with serious injuries. A five-month-old and two children were among the victims.

## World religious leaders' appeal for peace

BARCELONA, Spain, Dec 17: Some 50 leaders of world religions and peace activists, including the Dalai Lama, issued an appeal for world peace at a meeting in Barcelona on Friday, reports Reuter.

The declaration climaxed a week-long UNESCO conference on the "Contribution of Religions to the Culture of Peace."

"We face a crisis which could bring about the suicide of human species or bring us a new awakening and a new hope," the statement said.

"Our communities of faith have a responsibility to encourage conduct imbued with wisdom, compassion, sharing, charity, solidarity and love."

## Mini-insurgency exists in Karachi, admits Benazir

KARACHI, Dec 17: Gunmen killed six people and wounded more than 20 in Pakistan's southern port of Karachi on Friday despite peace efforts by President Farooq Leghari and stern words from Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, reported Reuter.

"There is a mini insurgency in Karachi. There is guerrilla warfare and we should realise this," Benazir declared.

"We know the designs of ter-

rorists roaming in Karachi. They are against Pakistan's unity and we will fight them at all costs," she told a news conference in Islamabad after flying home from an Islamic summit in Casablanca.

At least 115 people have been killed in ethnic and sectarian violence in Karachi since army troops ended a 29 months deployment in Pakistan's biggest city on November 30.

Benazir said her government would seek to build up Karachi's civil administration and take political and economic measures to solve people's basic problems.

Leghari met leaders of the ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM), which is fighting for the rights of the city's Mohajir majority, in a renewed drive for peace.

An MQM leader said later that Leghari favoured imple-

menting a 10-point agreement reached between the MQM and the government in October, but added that continuing attacks on MQM activists threatened to undermine any dialogue.

While the meeting was in progress armed youngsters, fired indiscriminately from rooftops and set at least four vehicles on fire in troubled eastern and central districts of the city.

One youth was killed in the gunfire and two people including a six-year-old girl were wounded, police said.

A police spokesman said the violence involved not just the MQM and the rival MQM (Haqqi) faction, but also Muslim militants and other groups out to settle scores.

Gunmen killed two people and wounded eight in an evening attack on a restaurant in the busy market area of southern Karachi.

Witnesses said the assailants sprayed bullets at the restaurant from a car and drove away. Among the casualties was an elderly woman shot in the mouth as she stood on her balcony.

A local MQM leader in the volatile Shah Faisal Colony area said armed men were attacking the home of Zulfiqar Haider, an MQM member of the Sindh provincial assembly, on Friday night.

"No police or rangers have arrived to arrest the culprits," the MQM official said by telephone.



Two medical volunteers help take an injured woman to the operating theatre on Friday after she was shot in the mouth when an unidentified gunman opened fire in a busy shopping area of Karachi.

— AFP photo

## Bosnia denounces Carter's mediation mission

ZAGREB, Dec 17: Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic on Friday again denounced former US President Jimmy Carter's projected mediation mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina this weekend, saying it was a "waste of time," reports AFP.

According to US officials in Zagreb, Carter is due in Sarajevo on Sunday at the invitation of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, who put forward a six-point plan Thursday.

Emerging Friday from talks with UN special envoy Yasushi Akashi at the airport in the southern Croatian city of Split, Izetbegovic said: "The call for Jimmy Carter to serve as a mediator in the Bosnian crisis would be a waste of time if it revolves around modifying the peace plan we have accepted."

Under that plan, put forward by the five-nation contact group of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States, the Serbs would relinquish around one third of the territory they now hold, cutting back from 70 per cent

of Bosnia-Herzegovina to 49 per cent.

Izetbegovic said: "Akashi agreed with the Bosnian government that the next step should be a ceasefire in the Bihać pocket, where the mainly-Muslim Bosnian fifth army crops is under siege from the Bosnian Serbs and dissident Muslim leader Fikret Abdic.

"Then the ceasefire should be extended to cover the whole of Bosnia-Herzegovina," he said, according to the Croatian news agency Hina.

Izetbegovic Thursday dismissed Karadzic's plan providing for freedom of movement for UN convoys, reopening Sarajevo airport, a ceasefire in and around Sarajevo, and a pledge to respect human rights.

He branded it mere propaganda designed "to create a good impression with the American public."

If Karadzic wants to let convoys through he can do it "without much talk," Izetbegovic said.

But Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohamad, on an official visit to Croatia, said Friday the Bosnian government should talk to Carter.

"Any possibility to end the conflict including one proposed by Jimmy Carter is interesting," he told a news conference in Zagreb.

"It is important to explore any possibility. I should think that the Bosnian government should look at it," he said, pointing out that Sarajevo could still reject proposals it did not like.

The proposals can do some good. Otherwise the world might think that Bosnian government is not keen to end the war," he said after talks with his Bosnian and Croatian counterparts Haris Silajdzic and Nikica Valetic.

Mahathir, whose visit to

Zagreb marked the latest round of talks between Malaysia and the Bosnian-Croat federation formed in Washington in March, was due to leave Zagreb on Saturday.



Miss World 1994 Aishwarya Rai arrives in her hometown of Bombay on Friday in a horse-drawn carriage through Carter Road where she lives. Seated opposite Rai is the international president of Miss World Inc. Julia Morley. Hundreds of people came to greet her along the route.

— AFP photo

## Myanmar troops attack HQ of rebel students

BANGKOK, Thailand, Dec 17: More than 1,000 Myanmar government soldiers armed with AK-47s, grenades and artillery, have been attacking student rebels in an effort to seize their jungle headquarters near the Thai border, the students said on Saturday, reports AP.

Minn Aung Myint of the All Myanmar Students Democratic Front, said in a telephone interview from the area that the students had repelled government forces that have been trying since Tuesday to seize their headquarters at Dawn Gwin, about 640 kilometres (400 miles) northwest of Bangkok.

The soldiers bombed one of the outposts controlled by the 700 students earlier this week, but the students repelled them with automatic rifles, grenade launchers and mortars from positions on a nearby hilltop, Minn Aung Myint said.

No students have been injured in the skirmishes.

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The joint exercises will be held along the border in the Himalayan region of Ladakh, official said. Officials did not say which armed services would be involved in the exercises.

The joint exercises reflect steadily warming relations between the two Asian giants, who fought a brief border war in 1962 during which China overran the border.

Last year, New Delhi and Beijing agreed to settle peacefully a dispute along their rugged 4,000km (2,485 mile) boundary.

China claims 90,000sq km (35,000 sq miles) in India's northeastern Arunachal Pradesh state. It also regards



## Off the Record

### Diana turns down Xmas lunch with Charles

LONDON: Princess Diana has turned down an invitation to join her estranged husband Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, and Queen Elizabeth II for Christmas lunch, the Sun reported yesterday, says AFP.

The paper said the princess was asked to join the royal family for their traditional celebrations at Sandringham, the queen's state in Norfolk, eastern England, but she will leave after the Christmas morning church service and return along to Kensington Palace, London.

Earlier this month, the tabloid press reported that Diana, the Princess of Wales, would spend two nights with the royal family at Sandringham this Christmas.

But the Sun on Saturday quoted a royal "insider" as saying: "She changed her mind. She could not stomach spending Christmas at Sandringham which she loathes."

### Michael Jackson to buy Einstein's eyes?

LONDON: The eyes of Albert Einstein, long thought to have been cremated with the rest of his body, have been discovered hidden for 40 years in a new Hersey Bank vault, the Guardian reported on Saturday, says AFP.

The paper, which carried pictures of the eyes, reported that the visual organs of the father of relativity whose work led to the creation of the atom bomb, were secretly removed during his autopsy.

Lawyers for the eyes' present-day owner were said to be seeking a buyer. One source close to negotiations was quoted as saying pop superstar Michael Jackson had expressed interest in adding them to his collection of human oddities.

The price could go as high as five million dollars, said the paper.

Dr Henry Abrams of Loveladies, New Jersey, who was Einstein's personal ophthalmologist until the physicist's death in 1955, is now in possession of Einstein's eyes, which he removed using scissors and forceps during the postmortem.

The story of the eyes is a postscript to the fate of Einstein's brain which now sits in three jars in the Kansas apartment of the pathologist who removed it nearly 40 years ago. The doctor says he is keeping it for research.

### Wolves force soldiers to return 'kidnapped' cubs

BEIJING: Chinese soldiers who stole three wolf cubs from their lair were forced to return their new pets after a pack of angry, howling adult wolves surrounded their barracks, the People's Daily said yesterday, reports Reuter.

A group of soldiers on patrol from their barracks in the Taihang area of Shandong province in the northeast found the three wolf cubs in their lair in a mountain cave on December 11 and took the animals home with them to rear, it said.

At about 10:00 pm that night, a pack of more than 10 angry wolves surrounded the barracks, baying and howling, it said.

Since wolves are endangered and protected in China, the senior officer ordered the cubs to be returned.

An army dog was deployed to carry the cubs out one by one in its mouth and return them to the howling pack.

### Jackpot strikes twice!

TALLAHASSEE, Florida: Sometimes, lightning does strike twice, reports Reuter.

Margarita Sanchez, a retired secretary from the Miami suburb of Hialeah, was quite happy in April when she won 22,400 dollars in Florida's Fantasy Five lottery game.

But the regular lottery player, who fled Cuba for the United States 28 years ago, did not stop gambling 10 dollar to 20 dollar per week on the games and on Friday, she claimed her second jackpot—5 million dollar.

The sum, which represents half of the December 3 drawing for a 10 million dollar jackpot, will be paid out over 20 years and comes to about 4,800 dollar a week.

## India, China to hold joint military exercises