

BRIEFLY

Blast kills 3 Indian border guards:

Three border guards were killed and three others seriously wounded when their vehicle was blown up by a remote-controlled bomb in northeastern India, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said yesterday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

The news agency said the explosion, which occurred on Tuesday, took place when the vehicle of the Border Security Force (BSF) was travelling on a road 40 km (25 miles) from the town of Kokrajhar in the southern part of the state of Assam.

Queen Elizabeth begins NZ tour:

Queen Elizabeth II arrived in Auckland yesterday to begin a 10-day state visit to New Zealand, including the Commonwealth heads of government meeting next week. AFP reports from Auckland.

The trip is the first she has taken on a scheduled airline flight — an Air New Zealand Boeing 747.

Hezbollah men attack Israeli post:

Pro-Iranian Hezbollah Islamic militants early yesterday staged a three-pronged attack on positions in the Israeli-imposed "security zone" in southern Lebanon and caused "several casualties," police reported, AFP says from Sidon, Lebanon.

Dozens of Hezbollah Shiite fighters attacked two fortifications maintained by the Israeli controlled militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), near Jezzine in the eastern sector of the zone, they said.

Quake hits southwest shore of Taiwan:

A seabed earthquake registering 5.0 on the Richter Scale was recorded yesterday off the southwest shore of Taiwan, Chinese seismological officials said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

The epicentre of the 6.27 am (2227 GMT Tuesday) earthquake was put at 23.6 degrees north and 120.2 degrees east southwest of Chanhua country in Taiwan, the official Xinhua News Agency quoted the China seismological station as saying, no other details were available.

Clashes leave 13 killed in Turkey:

Eight separatist Kurdish rebels and five government troops were killed in an armed clash in eastern Turkey Tuesday, the Anatolia news agency said yesterday, AFP says from Ankara.

It said the clash erupted as rebels from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) attacked soldiers patrolling near Mount Ararat near the Armenian border.

Local council polls begin in SA:

Polls opened in South Africa's first all-race local council elections yesterday with millions of voters expected to turn out, officials said, Reuter reports from Johannesburg.

The elections — the final step to post-apartheid democracy following last year national and provincial polls which brought black majority rule — are for thousands of representatives on transitional metropolitan, local and rural councils in eight provinces.

US newspaper's circulation falls:

The circulation of most major US newspapers continued to fall during the past six months amid rising prices, according to the semi-annual report of the Audit Bureau of Circulation, AFP reports from Washington.

Only three of 10 major metropolitan newspapers posted an increase in circulation: The Chicago Tribune, the Dallas Morning News and The Houston Chronicle. The Chronicle benefitted from the demise of its sole competitor, the Houston Post.

Int'l Netaji Centenary body formed:

The Netaji Research Bureau has set up international Netaji Centenary Committee with academicians, former members of the Indian National Army (INA) and friends of Netaji in Japan, Germany, Malaysia, USA, UK, Singapore, Bangladesh and Pakistan, PTI reports from Calcutta.

According to Chairman of International Netaji Centenary Committee, Dr Sisir Kumar Bose, Netaji's Nephew, the Netaji Centenary inaugural convention will be held at the Netaji Bhawan in the city in January, 1996, with the participation of fraternal delegates from a number of countries.

Goya portrait recovered:

Argentine police have recovered a stolen Goya portrait valued at up to 5 million dollars, authorities said on Monday, Reuter reports from Buenos Aires.

The portrait of Dona Maria Teresa Ruiz De Apodaca Sesma, painted by the Spanish master Francisco De Goya in 1790, was stolen from a provincial museum 12 years ago along with other valuable art pieces.

Perry rules out reduction in US troops in Japan

TOKYO, Nov 1: US Defence Secretary William Perry today ruled out any reduction in American troops deployed in Japan or the Asia-Pacific, but accepted a Japanese proposal for talks about scaling back the troubled US presence in Okinawa, reports AFP.

In a meeting here with his Japanese counterpart, Defence Agency Director-General Seishiro Eto, Perry agreed to establish a "special action committee" to discuss cutbacks at Okinawa and speed up implementation of other measures agreed in 1990.

"We are open to adjustment and procedures that could lead to reducing size of bases or moving troops from one base to another," Perry told a news conference after the meeting.

Perry's visit comes amid lingering rows over the US bases in the far southern island

which erupted following the rape of a 12-year old girl allegedly by three American servicemen, on September 4. The three were charged by Japanese prosecutors on September 29.

But Perry ruled out cuts in the overall figures of troops deployed, currently standing at 47,000 throughout Japan and 100,000 in the Asia Pacific region.

"They are located here because this is where they have to be to provide a security umbrella to the Asia Pacific region," he told reporters at the National Press Club.

"Our government believes and the Japanese government believes that there is a need of 47,000 troops based in Japan in order to meet the security requirements," he said.

Perry said the bilateral committee to consider staffing at the Okinawan bases would be set up during a visit by US President.

good governance pledge taken in Harara in 1991 will be high on the agenda of the November 10-13 Auckland talks.

The Commonwealth is a club for Britain and its former colonies. Three of them — Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gambia — are under military rule and face worsening social and economic conditions as well as a risk of bloody internal conflicts of democracy is not restored soon, Anyaoku said.

Anyaoku, a Nigerian, said all three countries showed every sign of "serious cases of denial of human rights." He wrote: "to reinforce its

**Tigers kill 8 police commandos
Troops prepare to advance further towards Jaffna**

COLOMBO, Nov 1: Security forces were preparing today to advance further into rebel-held territory in northern Sri Lanka as tens of thousands of civilians fled the area fearing a major showdown, the military said, reports AFP.

Thousands of infantry troops backed by tanks and artillery guns were poised to resume their march towards the town of Jaffna, the headquarters of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a military spokesman said.

He said they were still awaiting details of overnight fighting but ground troops had set up new defences at

the town of Neerveli, captured from the LTTE after a ferocious two-day battle left 176 combatants killed on both sides Monday.

"On the map, it looks easy. We have another five miles (eight kilometres) to cover before go to Jaffna. It is not that easy. The bloodiest fighting is yet to come," spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said.

However, he said the LTTE may have moved some of their heavy equipment, such as the rebel radio station, out of the embattled peninsula and relocated it in the northern mainland where there had been no fighting.

The security forces launched their ongoing offensive, code-named Rivirasa (sunshine), on October 17 with the objective of capturing Jaffna, the capital of the northern region which had been under rebel control for five years.

Tamil sources said that 200,000 to 300,000 people have been made refugees as a result of the fighting and most of them have sought shelter in the southeastern sector of the peninsula, Tamil sources said.

An estimated 10,000 Tamil men, women and children left the peninsula completely and arrived at the

northern mainland on Tuesday, travellers said as the Tigers issued an SOS for recruits to defend Jaffna, their final bastion.

Another AFP report says, Tamil guerillas, facing a major military offensive on their northern stronghold, killed at least eight elite police commandos in the country's east today, police sources said.

Gunmen from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) killed the crack commandos from the police Special Task Force (STF) in a firefight in the Kohombagaskade village in the Ampara district, police sources said.



US President Bill Clinton speaks to reporters at the White House Tuesday about the upcoming Bosnian peace talks scheduled to begin in Dayton, Ohio 01 November, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher looks on. Clinton told reporters, after meeting with his top foreign policy advisers, that the US must lead in the effort to settle the conflict in Bosnia. — AFP/UNB photo

Syria rejects Israeli accusation as 'centre of terrorism'

DAMASCUS, Nov 1: Syria today rejected Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's accusation that it was a "centre of terrorism" and said Damascus did not harm anyone, reports Reuter.

"Rabin's false accusation to Syria is not only aimed at defaming Syria's image and diverting attention from Israel's arrogance, but also at directing new threats against Syria," the official daily Al-Baath said.

"But Israel is making the wrong calculation this time," the paper added.

Rabin told an Israeli parliamentary committee on Tuesday that Syria was "a

centre of terrorism" and that Damascus "could not dictate the peace process."

An official who briefed reporters on the closed-door meeting quoted Rabin as saying he accepted his military's intelligence assessments that the threat of war had not passed.

"What Rabin is trying to forget is well known to the world that Israel was established by terrorism and is based on terrorism," Al-Baath said.

"Israel, as its newspaper admitted yesterday, considers terrorism and assassinations as top priority for its activities," the paper said.

The Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine, which has an office in Damascus, accused the Israeli Mossad intelligence service of assassinating its leader Fathi Shaqaqi in Malta.

"Syria which is defending its rights and the rights of its (Arab) nation for security and freedom does not harm anybody and does not threaten lives of people as Israel does against Lebanon and as the Mossad does" Al-Baath said.

Syria has held sporadic peace talks with Israel since 1991 but the negotiations were stalled over the fate of the Golan Heights.



Visiting US Secretary of Defence William Perry (Rear R), Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono (Rear L), Japanese Director of Defence Agency Seishiro Eto (L) and US Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord shake hands before their round table talks at Foreign Ministry's Likura guest house on Wednesday. The Defence leaders met to discuss Japan's proposal to realign and consolidate US bases in Okinawa. — AFP UNB photo

growing determination to make a reality of its principled commitment, the Commonwealth must now face the question of what it can and should do to promote greater adherence by its members to their commonly vowed fundamental political values."

The report was written before a special tribunal on Tuesday sentenced Nigerian minority rights activist Ken Saro Wiwa and three others to hang for murder, sparking condemnation by pressure groups at home and abroad.

Anyaoku said the Auckland summit must also impart fresh momentum to efforts to

remove what he called the milestone of debt around the necks of many a developing country.

"It goes without saying that the continuing debt burden is one of the greatest factors holding back the economic development of many developing countries," he wrote.

Heavy debts, declining aid flows and a lack of export markets continued to undermine growth, condemning broad swathes of their population to poverty.

He said June's summit of leading industrial nations in Halifax, Nova Scotia, had provided some hope for believing that there was now a

growing readiness to rethink the debt issues.

"The Commonwealth... has made an important contribution to this growing readiness. It should now seek to advance it further," Anyaoku said.

He said the commitment of developing countries — and of the Commonwealth — to go with the grain of the market was now beyond question.

"But that commitment needs to be matched by a corresponding willingness on the part of the economic power brokers to generate there sources needed to validate the new orthodoxy.

ICRC to meet prisoners in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Nov 1: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has sent a delegation to Kashmir to meet prisoners in the strife-torn northern Indian state, the aid agency announced here Tuesday, reports AFP.

It said a seven-member ICRC delegation started a first visit of Kashmir on Monday in line with an agreement reached between the Indian government and the agency on June 22 to allow aid workers to meet prison inmates there.

The Geneva-based agency's office here did not give details of the trip but said the ICRC expected to visit "all persons arrested in connection with the prevailing situation," in Kashmir.

Strike paralyses Champagnagar in Tripura

AGARTALA, Nov 1: Normal life was today paralysed in Champagnagar near here in response to a dawn-to-dusk bandh sponsored by the opposition Cong (I) — TUJS combine in protest against the kidnap of a Congress (I) activist Tuesday, reports PTI.

Official sources said that schools, government offices, banks, post offices and shops in the area were closed and vehicles did not ply on the road.

According to the police, a group of insurgents clad in olive green fatigues had kidnapped the Cong (I) activist, Nital Das from his house from Chandrasadhupara. The police has launched a search operation in the area. A close vigil was being kept and patrolling was intensified to ease the situation.

Nine more killed in Karachi violence

KARACHI, Nov 1: At least nine people were shot dead in Karachi overnight Tuesday as the city remained tense amid sporadic bursts of automatic weapons fire, police said today, reports AFP.

Two people were killed by snipers and four bullet-ridden corpses were found, bearing signs of torture, they said. Most of the violence was focussed on the central and western districts of the city.

In eastern Karachi, a motorcycle rider was killed by a gunman, and in the Korangi industrial area, two other corpses were discovered.

Political violence has claimed nearly 1,600 lives in Karachi, Pakistan's economic capital, since the start of the year.

It has resulted from growing confrontation between the government and an ethnic-based opposition party, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) which claims to represent people who migrated into Pakistan after the division of the Indian sub-continent in 1947.

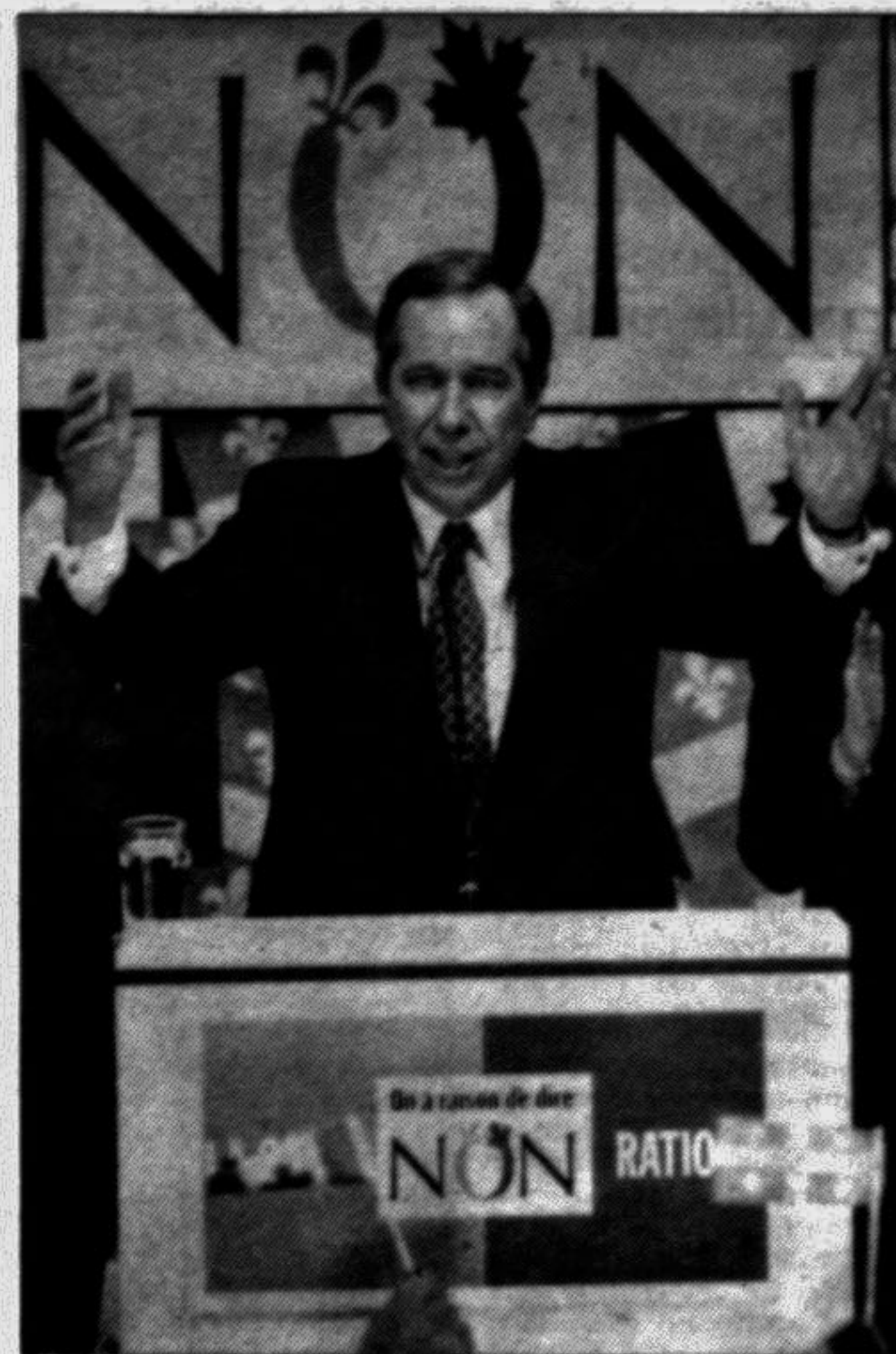
Sarah Balabagan may be pardoned

AL-AIN, United Arab Emirates, Nov 1: President Sheikh Zaid Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan is seriously considering a pardon for the Filipina maid facing 100 lashes in a United Arab Emirates prison, sources close to the case said on Wednesday.

"It (a pardon) is not definite but it is under serious consideration," one source told Reuters.

The maid, Sarah Balabagan, was sentenced on Monday to the lashes plus a year in jail followed by deportation for killing her 70-year-old employer.

Her parents Karim and Bai Balabagan visited her in Al-Ain prison on Wednesday.



Leader of the "no" vote, Daniel Johnson, gives his victory speech in Montreal Tuesday. With 97 per cent of returns tabulated, the "yes" vote won support of 49.62 per cent of Quebecers while 50.38 per cent said "no" to secession from Canada, according to results. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record**Campaign to get back Napoleon III!**

TOULOUSE, France: A French party has launched a signature campaign to get England to return the ashes of Napoleon III, France's last monarch, reports AFP.

"We want the ashes of the emperor, the Empress Eugenie and the imperial prince returned to Compiègne. All three are in a mausoleum in Farnborough South of London," explained Emmanuel Johans, a history teacher and head of the tiny Bonapartist rally.

The Farnborough Mausoleum "is very well-maintained by a religious community," the 26-year-old party chief said, but "now they should be welcomed back to French soil."

"About 40,000 Frenchmen, including many northern workers," attended the funeral of Napoleon III, who died in exile after a kidney stone operation, he said.

Louis Napoleon, great nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, originally styled himself president after the 1848 revolution removed the "bourgeois king," Louis Philippe.

He later assumed the title of emperor, although his forays into empire building were misplaced. He invaded Mexico and installed a bourbon Maximilian as emperor, ironically the French royal family that preceded and returned after the Napoleonic era.

Maximilian was later ousted. Louis Napoleon left France in 1870 after suffering a humiliating defeat to the Prussians at Sedan. He led his 70,000 men into a bowl that was then surrounded by the Prussians on top — leaving him no choice but to surrender.

Fighting bull in action but not in the ring

MARSEILLE (France). An escaped fighting bull wreaked havoc on a motorway in southern France Sunday, attacking several cars before police intervened and killed the animal with six gunshots, reports AFP.

After escaping from its pen the bull initially trotted along the road, but was eventually hit by a car. Only slightly hurt and seeing red, the bull tried to gore several cars.

Its owner called police, who needed six shots to down the animal.

Blast in Iraqi opposition office kills 25

NICOSIA, Nov 1: A bomb ripped through the offices of the Iraqi opposition in Kurdish controlled northern Iraq on Tuesday killing at least 25 people and wounding many more officials from the Iraqi National Congress (INC) said, reports AFP.

INC Vice President Latif Rashid said the explosion caused many deaths at least 25 and there are many, many wounded it caused the destruction of several houses nearby most of the casualties were civilians, he added.

They are still taking bodies out of the rubble.

The blast occurred in the INC security offices in the northern Iraqi town of Salahuddin and rescuers were still searching through the debris late Tuesday.

Rashid, also a spokesman for the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), told AFP by telephone from London that he feared the death toll

could rise after the blast in the heart of the northeastern town, he said there were many children among the casualties.

Among the dead was the Security Chief of the INC and Iraqi opposition umbrella group, Safid Rashid Sindi, he added.

An investigation had been launched to try to determine who was behind the blast.

The London based INC has tried to mediate in a bitter power struggle between rival Kurdish groups who have controlled northern Iraq since the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War in defiance of Baghdad.

It said Monday that Shiite Muslim rebels had been deployed in northern Iraq to launch joint attacks on Iraqi government forces.

An unspecified number of militiamen from the Badre brigade had arrived south of the city of Sualymanya.

A previous attempt by the Taliban, or "students of religion," to capture the capital was repulsed in March.

"C'wealth govts must bolster commitment to democracy, HR"

LONDON, Nov 1: Commonwealth governments must bolster their commitment to democracy and human rights and make fresh efforts to ease the debt burden of poor countries, the secretary general of the Commonwealth said today, reports Reuter.

In his biennial report to the Commonwealth's 51 heads of government, Chief Emeka Anyaoku said their summit in New Zealand this month was an important opportunity to decide how to persuade errant governments to match words with deeds.

The possibility of phased sanctions on Commonwealth members that fail to honour a

growing determination to make a reality of its principled commitment, the Commonwealth must now face the question of what it can and should do to promote greater adherence by its members to their commonly vowed fundamental political values."

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