

## International

## Ciller for joining hands to bar Islamists from power

ANKARA, Dec 26: Turkey's secularist parties were expected to start coalition negotiations on Tuesday to block Islamists from power after general elections in which the religious-based Welfare Party (RP) narrowly came first, reports Reuter.

Prime Minister Tansu Ciller suggested joining forces with the Motherland Party (ANAP), a conservative rival, to keep the pro-Islamic RP out of power.

"If necessary, we will not be the ones to stand in the way of a coalition with ANAP," she told a news conference on Monday before she and her cabinet resigned.

Ciller of the True Path Party (DYP), will stay in office until a new government is formed, a spokesman for President Suleyman Demirel said.

The RP, led by Necmettin Erbakan, received 21.32 per

cent of the vote in Sunday's polls, state television TRT 1 said. It was the first general election victory by an Islamist party in Turkey's 72-year history as a secular republic.

But, short of an absolute majority, the RP is unlikely to find a coalition partner in the two largest secular parties.

"As the situation looks today, it is not possible for us to form a government with the RP," Motherland leader Mesut Yilmaz told Anatolian news agency.

Social Democrat leader Bulent Ecevit, echoing calls for a conservative coalition, told Anatolian the Islamic party was out to destroy Turkey's secular foundation.

"I expect that DYP and ANAP officials are also worried about this. This is why without delay the two parties must produce a solution to the problem of a government," said Ecevit.

## Authorities search 3 more planes, chase Omanese jet

# Delhi stiffens air security in response to Purulia arms-drop

NEW DELHI, Dec 26: Authorities searched three more planes and chased an Omanese jet in Indian airspace as New Delhi stiffened air security in response to a huge arms-drop in the country's east, officials said today, reports AFP.

Indian Air Force fighters on Monday stalked a Gulf stream jet from Muscat carrying an Omanese minister to China, and police searched two Chinese planes as New Delhi ordered a review into the December 18 arms-drop.

The air force planes allowed the Omanese jet to proceed on Monday to China

following a mid-air clearance of the passenger aircraft, said Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) officials today.

Two Chinese Wak-12 planes held in Ahmedabad were also allowed today to leave for Pakistan.

The latest action followed the force-landing on Sunday of a Russian An-26 in New Delhi and the detention of its nine Ukrainian crew members for allegedly violating Indian airspace.

The fate of the plane, on a flight from the Pakistani city of Karachi to Nepal, would soon be determined, DGCA officials said.

Another cargo plane was

searched in the eastern port city of Calcutta late Monday but details of its origin or destination were not immediately known.

"We are toning up aviation security and streamlining procedures as a precaution against what happened in Purulia," a DGCA spokesman said of the 10-million dollar arms-drop by another An 26 last week in the eastern town.

Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao called an emergency meeting on Christmas day to review the incident, which has now flared into a political issue

with the opposition blaming the federal government for the security lapse.

The meeting came two days after the seizure of the An-26 in Bombay and the arrest of its six crew members on charges that they had air-dropped crates of weapons to the sleepy town of Purulia in eastern India.

The Antonov was forced to land in Bombay by air force Mig jets while it was on a flight to Karachi in Pakistan. Police said the crew, including five Latvians and a Briton, had confessed to dropping the consignment of weapons.

## BRIEFLY

### Clinton to visit Japan in Apr: us

President Bill Clinton will make a state visit to Japan from April 16-18, Jiji news agency reported on Monday. Reuter reports from Tokyo.

It quoted Prime Minister Tomichi Murayama as telling reporters that the dates of Clinton's trip, rescheduled after the cancellation of a visit last month, would be formally announced by both government yesterday.

### 300 cops to be deployed in Hebron:

About 300 Palestinian police will deploy in five villages near the West Bank city of Hebron on Tuesday morning an Israel army spokeswoman said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Under a Palestinian self rule deal signed in Washington in September, Israel has pulled out of five West Bank cities and will withdraw from a sixth, Ramallah, by the end of the year.

### Khmers kill 8 Cambodians:

Eight Cambodians including a two-year-old girl were killed and four others were wounded when Khmer Rouge guerillas attacked the western Cambodian town of Polpet, a Thai army officer said yesterday, Reuter reports from Aranyaprathet, Thailand.

He said the Khmer Rouge fired three mortar bombs into the border trading town on Monday and one hit a house near the central market, killing eight people.

### Flood kills 13 in Philippines:

At least 13 people died in flash floods that struck over the weekend and on Christmas day in the northern Philippines, relief officials said yesterday, Reuter reports from Manila.

Heavy torrential rains brought by easterly winds from the Pacific Ocean lashed the eastern side of Luzon island and triggered flooding in the provinces of Aurora, Isabela and Cagayan, they said.

### Zairean army officer killed:

A Zaire army officer was killed in a grenade attack in the eastern town of Goma on Monday and three more soldiers died in unrest that followed witnesses said, Reuter reports from Kinshasa.

The dead lieutenant colonel was second in command of operations in the area where more than one million refugees fled last year from fighting in Rwanda said a journalist of the Zaire press agency contacted by telephone from Kinshasa.

### 706 Ethiopians back home:

Some 706 Ethiopian refugees arrived in Humera, a border town in northwestern Ethiopia, on Sunday from the Sudan, the Ethiopian news agency said on Monday, Xinhua reports from Addis Ababa.

This is the fourth batch of Ethiopian refugees who returned home since the resumption of voluntary repatriation of refugees from the Sudan on December 15, 1995. About 60,000 Ethiopians are expected to come home before next June.



US actor, singer and comedian Dean Martin performs at the Moulin Rouge in Paris July 3 1984. Dean Martin died at his home on Monday on acute respiratory failure. He was 78.

### Jakarta plans to end movement in East Timor

JAKARTA, Dec 26: Indonesia has no plans to increase its military presence in East Timor but it will take steps to end the separatist movement in the former Portuguese colony, the official Antara news agency said today, reports Reuter.

Indonesian armed forces chief General Feisal Tanjung was quoted by the agency as saying the six battalions stationed in the territory were sufficient for local needs.

"Armed forces troops in East Timor consist of six battalions and this number is enough to help the local government and the local people," he told Antara in the East Timor capital Dili.

Six battalions consist of 960 soldiers.

## Asians unhappy with NZ's English proficiency test

AUCKLAND, Dec 26: New Zealand wants to be seen as part of Asia, but it is scaring away Asian migrants with a compulsory English-language test that is so rigid, even white New Zealanders are said to have failed parts of it in a trial run, reports IPS.

Prime Minister Jim Bolger refers to New Zealand as an Asian nation and Foreign Minister Don McKinnon recognises Asia's contribution to the country's economic growth in recent years.

Asian New Zealanders, however, are unhappy with the government's recent introduction of an English proficiency test for would-be immigrants which they feel are targeted mainly at Asians.

Asian migration to New Zealand has increased rapidly in recent years. Migrants from North and South-East Asia comprised 24,000 of the

50,000 residence visas granted in the past year.

Foreigners wanting to migrate here must pay a bond of about US 13,330 dollar if they fail the required English test. They begin losing the deposit if they do not get a basic grasp of the language after three months. If they still fail the oral and written test after a year, they forfeit the amount entirely.

The language test has been imposed on applicants who want to migrate here under the 'general skills' and 'business investor' category, the very kind of migrants the government wants to attract for their potential contribution to economic growth.

These applicants also have to pay mandatory fees of about US 160 dollar each for the granting of residence visas. This levy earns New Zealand an estimated 2 million US dollar a year.

One newspaper reported that the new English language test for immigration applicants is so tough that two Anglo-Saxon New Zealanders failed parts of it in a trial run conducted by the South China Morning Post in Hong Kong.

The new language test is not the first move made to discourage Asians from settling here. For more than a century, Chinese have been coming to New Zealand first as gold miners, then as market gardeners and now as rich business migrants. Between 1881 and 1920 they were persecuted and efforts made to send them back.

Between 1908 and 1920 there was a dubious English language test where they were required to read a passage of at least 100 words after arriving here, before being allowed to land on

shore. Ganges Singh, the spokesman on Immigration for the Auckland Ethnic Council, says Australia and Canada also have language tests similar to the new one adopted by New Zealand. "It has just come out. We have to wait and see how it affects the community. If it's too tough, we'll definitely ask for relief."

He points out that this test will not only affect Asians but non-English-speaking Europeans as well. "People who are crying foul of this are the immigration consultants who have been making thousands of dollars from the immigration programme," he said.

Immigration Minister Roger Maxwell admits the test is likely to turn off Asian immigrants. But he said the measure was taken because New Zealand's tolerance and

acceptance (of new immigrants) without some disruption or adverse reaction had reached its optimum level."

Maxwell admits Asian immigration is likely to drop as a result of the test. But he explained the measure was taken because New Zealand's "tolerance and acceptance (of new immigrants) without some disruption or adverse reaction had reached its optimum level."

Soo Lee Lim, Director of the Auckland Chinese Radio am 1476, agrees many New Zealanders are opposed to Asian migration, but she says there is a stronger view that New Zealand should not be over-populated. "On the whole the Kiwis (New Zealanders) are broadminded people. That's my experience," added Lim, who migrated from Hong Kong five years ago.

There is, however, a strong feeling within the Asian community here that New Zealanders should be thankful to Asians, and Asian money in particular, for pulling them out of their worst recession in living memory.

Asian investments here and New Zealand's exports to Asia have risen dramatically since 1991. And a third of the country's tourists — a major foreign exchange earner — comes from Asia.

## Covert action against US

# Iranian parliament urged to okay budget

TEHRAN, Dec 26: The Iranian parliament was urged here today to approve a budget for covert action against the United States to retaliate against similar measures taken by Washington against the Islamic republic, reports AFP.

The hardline newspaper Jomhuri Islamic called for an "immediate" vote on the measure to foil "before it has a chance to turn into action" a 20-million-dollar anti-Iranian programme approved by the US House of Representatives on Thursday and accepted by the White House.

"The first step is to approve a fund for anti-US liberation movements to help them target US interests

throughout the world and make the United States regret its crimes against Iran," it proposed.

Iran has condemned the programme and warned it would encourage terrorism.

Earlier the Iranian parliament's Speaker, Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri, called here Monday for closer ties with Arab kingdoms across the Gulf in an effort to undermine the influence of Western countries in the region.

Nategh Nuri, meeting with his Omani counterpart Abdullah ben Ali al-Qatabi, said his country favoured "strengthening solidarity and developing cooperation" with the monarchies.

## Off the Record

### Balloonist's bid to encircle earth

SAN FRANCISCO: Aviation experts are scanning the skies in a race against the weather and teams of European rivals, seeking the right time to launch an American balloonist on his bid to encircle earth, reports Reuter.

American Steve Fossett, a 51-year-old securities dealer, hopes to set out soon from rapid city, South Dakota, on an epic solo journey to become the first person to circumnavigate the globe by balloon.

"We are waiting for the appropriate weather window to launch," said Timothy "bo" Kemper, Assistant Vice-President at Chicago's Loyola University and Project Manager for Fossett, who this year became the first person to cross the Pacific Ocean alone in a balloon.

Kemper told Reuters in California that Fossett could launch by year's end or soon after, depending on the weather. The voyage should take 16 to 21 days.

While Fossett makes final preparations in South Dakota, his European rivals are racing to beat him to the skies. Dutchman Henk Brink and British Tycoon Richard Branson, founder of Virgin Atlantic Airways, both plan to attempt the voyage. But both will have flight crews.

"This is really the last great record in aviation history to be broken and Steve's going to do it solo," Kemper said. "Steve would like to win for the United States."

A team of meteorologists and long-distance ballooning experts have gathered in rapid city, in southwest South Dakota, to prepare the balloon and its systems for the voyage.

### Unconquered mystery of Amazon

CAMPO GRANDE, Brazil: For four centuries, the Pantanal has earned a reputation as an unconquerable and dangerous wetland — a place to avoid or to get through as soon as possible, reports AP.

The huge kidney-shaped lowland, which some scientists say may be as critical to the biosphere as the Amazon jungle to the north, remains a place of immense natural beauty.

It is largely unknown to many ecologists outside Brazil, and receives only a fraction of the news coverage devoted to the Amazon.

This "East Africa of the Western Hemisphere," as naturalist Vic Banks once called it, is a vast wildlife sanctuary that is covered a good part of the year by a blanket of water.

Each year, torrential rains inundate 70 per cent of the Pantanal, merging rivers, lakes and ponds into a vast inland sea.

The Paraguay River, which runs north to south, boats from a streambed of 300 yards (270 metres) to nearly 37 miles (60 kilometres) across at some points when the rains come.

The rainy season lasts from November to March and the waters drain partially during the dry winter, when the powerful tropical sun and river outflow transform the region into a verdant grassland.

## US may attack Libya from Egypt or Tunisia: Gaddafi

TUNIS, Dec 26: Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi has warned that the United States might launch an attack against Libya from neighbouring Egypt or Tunisia, reports Reuter.

In a speech carried on Monday by the official Libyan news agency Jana, Gaddafi called on Libyans to reinforce defences along the 2,000 km (1,200 mile)-long North African country littoral to face possible attacks.

"It is necessary and important to reinforce the Libyan littoral, this is a strategic task to defend ourselves," Jana, received in Tunis, quoted him as saying on Sunday at a rally celebrating the anniversary of a local battle against Italian troops in 1913.

"It is possible that the

Americans land in Egypt and attack us from Egypt," Gaddafi said.

"It is possible that they occupy Tunisia and attack us from Tunisia," he added.

But the Libyan leader said that he did not believe this would happen as long as President Hosni Mubarak held power in Egypt and President Zine al-Abidine ben Ali in Tunisia.

"They (the Americans) want to get rid of Hosni Mubarak at any time and are now plotting against Hosni Mubarak because he doesn't want to touch the job they want, and that's why they plot against him," he said.

"It is possible they get rid of Zine al-Abidine ben Ali and replace him by a collaborator, land in Tunisia and attack us," Gaddafi added.

## Yemen urges US to mediate in dispute with Eritrea

CAIRO, Dec 26: Yemen urged the United States on Monday to mediate in its dispute with Eritrea over the Hanish Island chain in the Red Sea, an official report here said, according to AFP.

Yemeni Foreign Affairs Minister Abdel Karim al-Armani called on the United States to assume the role of mediator in the crisis according to the Tuesday edition of the Egyptian government daily Al-Ahram.

Eritrea has said it would prefer to take the issue before the UN's International Court of Justice in The Hague often called the World Court. Armani said all the American maps and documents show that the greater and lesser islands of Hanish al-Kabir and Jebel Zogor belong to Yemen.