

Forces loyal to Masood retake Bagram air base US calls for national govt in Kabul representing all groups

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: The United States has called for a national government in Afghanistan, representing all the ethnic and religious groups and recognition and implementation of the rights of women, reports PTI.

US policy in these terms was expressed by Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Robin Raphel in an interview on Asia's Worldnet.

Raphel stated that the US wholeheartedly supports the view that no one group can run the government of Afghanistan. We believe, said Raphel, that whatever government structure is set up, it has to be representative of all the ethnic and religious groups inside Afghanistan.

She also called for an end to all outside support to any group

in Afghanistan and recognised the UN's role.

Raphel stressed that the US does not support any individual or any group in Afghanistan. She said that there has been misunderstanding over the US dialogue with various Afghan groups.

We have worked over the last three or four years to develop and maintain contacts with all the different groups, and that has included the Taliban. We have had a dialogue with them and we will continue to have a dialogue with them, she remarked.

At the same time she said we will also continue to talk with Masood's group, with Dostum and so on, because we believe that it is important that there be a negotiated settlement. Everyone would have to partici-

rate in that negotiation. That has been our approach.

We believe that there is no solution to Afghanistan to be found on the battlefield. There needs to be negotiation, she added.

Calling for an end to all foreign support to various groups in Afghanistan, she said there are outside governments who have been involved with all the different factions in Afghanistan and we have constantly urged them bilaterally and in conjunction with the annual resolution at the UN.

On the question of Pakistan's support to Taliban she said it has been said that Pakistan has supported the Taliban. I think there's no doubt that some amount of support has come to the Taliban but it is equally true that support has

Protest against education policy, 150 held in Lahore

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16: A police crackdown in the Pakistan city of Lahore netted more than 150 students protesting against the government's education policy and unrest occurred elsewhere as well, police and officials said today, reports AFP.

Some 5,000 people protesting against a government decision to privatise education institutions in the Punjab province attacked police stations and also set ablaze about a dozen government vehicles, officials said.

Scores of people were injured in Lahore, the second largest city, when police tried to break up a demonstration Tuesday by Islami Jamiat Tuleba (IJT), a youth-wing of the country's main opposition fundamentalist party, the Jamaat-i-Islami, witnesses said.

Officials said around 150 demonstrators were taken into custody while the IJT said more than 200 youths had been arrested.

Students protests over the tuition increases also occurred in other cities in the province.

BRIEFLY

New cabinet formed in Kuwait:

Kuwait's Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Sheikh Saad al-Abdullah al-Sabah, announced a new 14 member cabinet on Tuesday with new defence interior and oil ministers, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

The new cabinet includes many previous appointees and consists of four Members of Parliament (MPs) and 10 other people. The selection of the new cabinet, which comes after elections to the 50-seat National Assembly, left the foreign affairs, finance and information portfolios unchanged. They were held by members of the ruling family.

25 kg heroin seized in India:

Indian customs officials and border guards seized 25 kg (55 lb) of heroin in a search near the Pakistani border, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

It said customs authorities and the border security force seized the heroin valued at an international street price of around 250 million rupees (7.0 million) on Sunday during a search at Abdullah village near the Pakistani border close to Jammu, winter capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Road mishap claims 13 in Java:

A train rammed into a bus at a railway crossing in Central Java, leaving 13 people dead, reports said yesterday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

The train serving the route between Surabaya in East Java and Purwokerto in Central Java hit a bus at an unguarded crossing in Karanganyar district on Tuesday, the Kompas daily said. Thirteen bus passengers were killed in the accident while 10 others sustained serious injuries.



(L-R) Miss Hong Kong Choi Wan Yuan, Miss India Fleur Xavier, Miss Israel Ann Kopony and Miss Korea Kim Jung Hwa pose for photographers during a photo session at the Miss International beauty pageant contest in a Tokyo hotel on Tuesday. 51 contestants will be trying for the 1996 Miss International in the final October 27. — AFP/UNB photo

Brazil opens AIDS hotline:

The government is taking calls on a new AIDS hotline — and fielding protests about an explicit AIDS prevention manual handed out in public schools, AP reports from Brasilia.

The free, 24-hour phone service is an attempt to break the taboo that still surrounds the disease in Brazil, one of the world leaders in AIDS. According to United Nations figures, Brazil has more than 425,000 cases. "Many people are reluctant to ask about AIDS," said Health Minister Adib Jatene, who inaugurated the hotline on Tuesday. "Our goal is to offer information and solidarity."

Somali faction leaders sign ceasefire agreement

NAIROBI, Oct 16: Three leading Somali faction leaders signed a ceasefire agreement Tuesday that could bring an end to six years of civil war that have laid waste to the African nation, a faction official said, reports AP.

The ceasefire will begin at midnight October 17 and all sides will continue their negotiations, said Mohammed H. Addo, deputy chairman of the United Somali Congress, the party of Ali Mahdi Mohamed, who controls the northern half of Mogadishu, the Somali capital.

The agreement mediated by the Kenyan government, was reached after shuttle negotiations in at least three Nairobi hotels. The leaders had been talking for about a week.

The agreement was signed by Hussein Aideded, son of the late Gen. Mohamed Farrah Aideded, his father's former ally Osman Hassan Ali, known as Atto, and Ali Mahdi Mohamed.

Aideded and Atto have been fighting for control of south Mogadishu.

The agreement calls for the dismantling of blockades within Mogadishu, which have divided the city into sectors, and roadblocks into the city from main roads leading out into the country. It was not clear when the blockades would be taken down.

Aideded succeeded his father, Gen. Mohamed Farrah Aideded, August 4 as head of the most powerful Somali faction. The

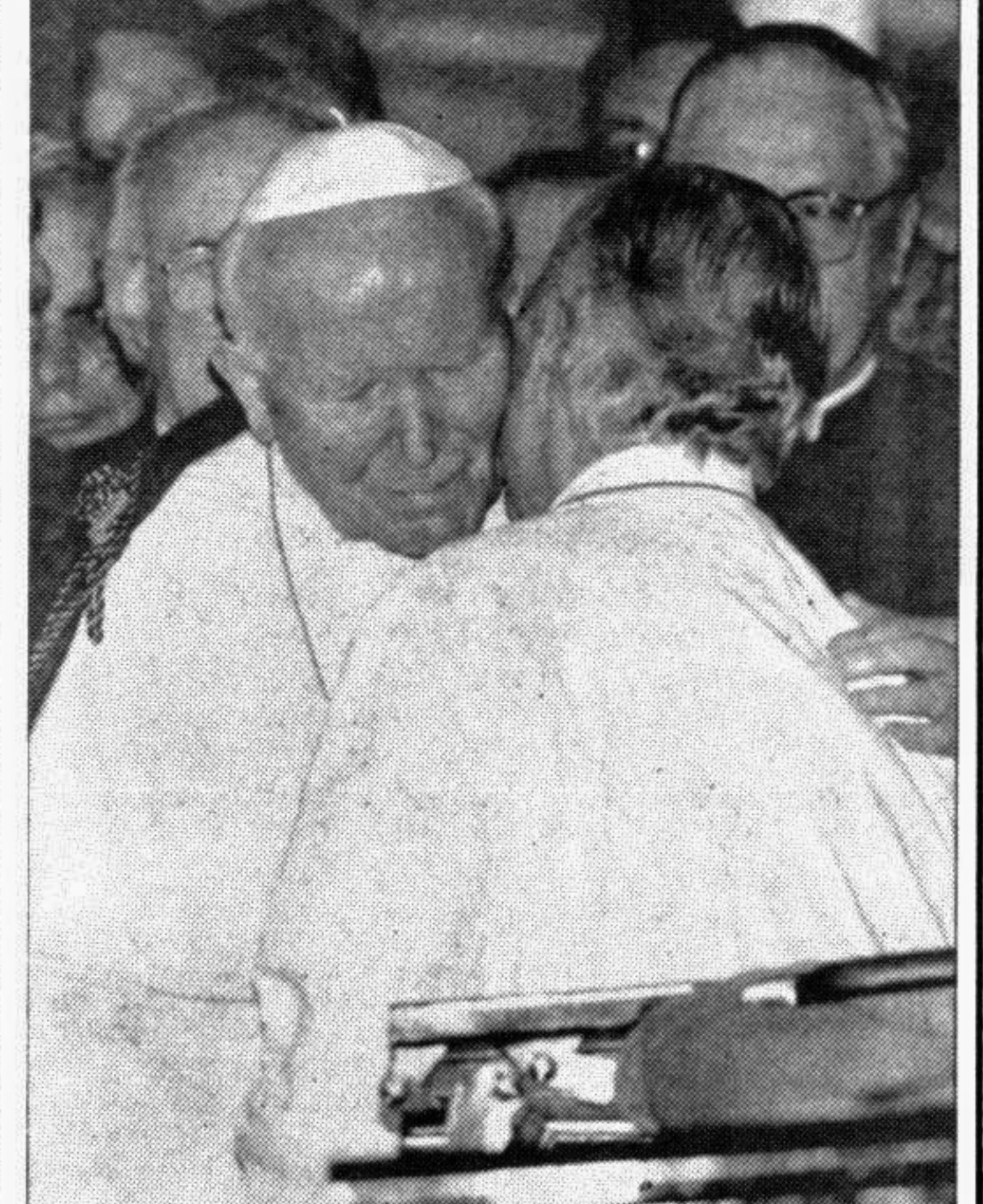
14 Tamil refugees killed in Boat capsized

COLOMBO, Oct 16: Fourteen people were drowned when a boat crowded with Tamil civilians fleeing the fighting between government troops and separatist rebels capsized off northwestern Sri Lanka, officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

Eight children, including one 10-month-old baby and a 1-year-old, were among the dead. Said military officials, who asked not to be named. Four women were also killed.

They were among 110 people on board the small fishing trawler when it capsized shortly before dusk on Monday just after it set off from Mannar island.

Survivors were rescued by other accompanying boats which were also carrying refugees, said the officials. The boats returned to the island, 230 kilometres (140 miles) north of the capital, Colombo.



Pope John Paul II (L) embraces and kisses Italian Professor Francesco Crucitti (R), the surgeon who operated him, at the Pontifical hospital in Rome, Tuesday. Pope John Paul II has been hospitalised Rome ten days ago for medical checks and an appendix removal. — AFP/UNB photo

Lebed defends peace plan at closed-door Duma hearings

MOSCOW, Oct 16: Russia's national security chief Alexander Lebed went to parliament on Tuesday to defend his Chechen peace deal and told lawmakers there was no chance of a military victory in the breakaway republic, reports AP.

At a closed-door hearing, demanded by Lebed following harsh criticism of the peace plan by lawmakers earlier this month, the former general said conflicts such as Chechnya must be resolved quickly or they will drag on for years.

"Such conflicts are either resolved in 42 hours or are fought for 48 years," he said, according to legislators present at the session.

He later told the newspaper Trud that he was unfairly grilled by lawmakers. "It unexpectedly came clear that few people are satisfied with the establishment of peace in Chechnya."

He said the lawmakers asked him "insidious questions," such as whether he had a conscience or how many faces he had.

As part of the August deal brokered by Lebed, Russia agreed to withdraw its troops, and the issue of Chechnya's status was put off for five years.

Politicians in Moscow later criticized the deal. Interior Minister Anatoly Kulikov said it amounted to "high treason."

Prior to the hearing, President Boris Yeltsin ordered his top officials, including Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, to stop public bickering over Chechnya.

"In this light, Yeltsin ordered Chernomyrdin, Lebed and Kulikov to work out an agreed position before today's Duma hearing on Chechnya, which they did," presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky told a news briefing.

Reporters were barred from the four-hour session. Lebed arrived through a back door and left without comment.

Jackson ordered to appear in Indian court

BOMBAY, Oct 16: Pop superstar Michael Jackson, set to perform for the first time in India, has been ordered to appear in court here, officials said today, reports AFP.

Jackson, currently on a world tour, has been told to appear on October 29 — on the eve of the first two concerts he is due to give in this western city — in connection with a row between two firms over the promotional use of his name.

"We have not yet served the summons to Jackson. It will be done through the United States consulate here," lawyer Mukesh Vashi for the Surlux Business Group told AFP.

Off the Record

Laterborns are more likely to be rebels

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts: Charles Darwin was one. So were Nicholas Copernicus, Benjamin Franklin and Bill Gates. They all were "laterborns" — that is, they had at least one older sibling. And they all were revolutionaries, reports AP.

In fact, laterborns are up to 15 times more likely than firstborns to resist authority and break new ground, says Frank J. Sulloway, a research scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In his book, "Born To Rebel," being released this week, Sulloway claims that whether someone is an older or younger sibling is the most important factor shaping personality — more significant than gender, race, nationality or class.

He spent 26 years studying the lives — and birth orders — of 6,566 historical figures to reach his conclusions.

A laterborn himself, Sulloway first wondered how birth order affected personality as a scholar of Darwin at Harvard University.

"How could a somewhat mediocre student at Cambridge become the most revolutionary thinker in the 19th century? he said.

Darwin, the first to challenge the belief that God created the world with his theory of evolution, was the fifth of six children. Most of his opponents were firstborns.

Sulloway used Darwin's survival of the fittest theory to illustrate how siblings develop such different personalities. In order to compete for scarce family resources like parental love, he says, children learn to carve out a niche to get out of childhood alive.

Firstborns are more likely to identify with their parents, power and authority, Sulloway says. They tend to be more assiduous, diligent and ambitious.

Firstborns include Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. Hillary Clinton, Oprah Winfrey and OJ Simpson prosecutor Marcia Clark.

Qiqi recovers from liver disease, diabetes

WUHAN: The world's only adopted Yanotez dolphin has recovered from liver disease and diabetes, according to researchers at the Wuhan Research Institute of Hydrobiology, reports Xinhua.

The dolphin, named Qiqi, was adopted by the research institute in January of 1980. It fell ill in April for the second time in nearly 17 years.

For months, several experts from the research institute gave up their spare time to help save Qiqi's life.

Experts in Japan, the United States, and Hong Kong, Taiwan, and elsewhere in China also offered suggestions, via telephone, for the treatment of Qiqi's illnesses.

The now-healthy dolphin leads a normal life at the research institute, located in central China's Hubei Province.

Thieves steal world's only stegosaurus footprints

PERTH: The world's only known set of stegosaurus footprints — left by the dinosaur some 130 million years ago — have been stolen from aboriginal land north of Broome in Western Australia, reports AP.

According to a spokeswoman for the Kimberley Land Council, the theft of the fossilised dinosaur prints was discovered on a visit to the sacred site late last week.

Power tools were apparently used to remove the footprints from hard rock.

The footprints have great spiritual significance for our people, Joseph Roe, the custodian of the sacred site, said Tuesday. "We urged whoever has taken them to immediately return the fossils to the site."

Suu Kyi holding meetings amid military blockade outside her home

BANGKOK, Oct 16: Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and officials of her National League for Democracy (NLD) have been holding regular meetings despite a military blockade outside her home, sources said today, reports AFP.

Aung San Suu Kyi held a series of meetings this week with members of the NLD Central Executive Committee to map out strategies in response to a recent crackdown against the opposition, a Yangon-based analyst said by telephone.

Military authorities reinstalled a barricade manned by armed riot police at the approaches to Aung San Suu Kyi's suburban home Saturday in an effort to stop a meeting of some 300 NLD supporters from taking place.

Access to Aung San Suu Kyi's house has been restricted to even close aides but she has been able to leave her compound, allowing her to hold party meetings elsewhere in Yangon, the analyst said.

Analysts in Yangon said the meetings of the NLD Central Executive Committee were aimed at showing the main opposition party could still function despite the efforts of the authorities to shut it down.

"Basically the meeting is the message," said one diplomat.

"This is one of the few things they can do — hold their meetings."

Details of the subjects of the meetings were not immediately available.

Death toll in dengue fever rises to 160 Delhi court orders quick eradication of disease

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: As the death toll in the dengue fever outbreak rose to 160, a New Delhi court directed authorities to intensify efforts to eradicate the disease-carrying mosquito, officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

About 3,000 people have come down with the fever in the last two months. Many others are being treated at private hospitals. Four persons died Tuesday night, raising the death toll. Details from many hospitals were not immediately available.

For several days now, the government has urged the 10 million residents of New Delhi to drain water from air coolers, flower vases and to clear stagnant pools where mosquitoes breed. It also advised them to wear clothes that cover arms and legs.

Local officials have asked the army to give them six trucks to carry insecticide spraying equipment. The Times of India newspaper said.

Poor sanitation, ineffective mosquito control and urban decay had contributed to the spread of the disease this year, said V. Ramalingaswami, a former chief of the Indian Council of Medical Research, the government's medical advisory body.

Afghan women still use lipstick in Taliban free towns

MAZAR-E-SHARIF, Afghanistan, Oct 16: It is as colourless as the Central Asian desert it borders. Its economy trembles like the electricity in its shacks and homes. Yet Mazar-e-Sharif is one of Afghanistan's most attractive cities — and a place where Afghan women can walk about freely, reports AP.

With Kabul in ruins and in the hands of militant Taliban Muslims, the remote northern city aspires to be Afghanistan's other capital.

Mazar-e-Sharif is the headquarters of Gen. Rashid Dostum, the warlord who rules northern Afghanistan and is key to the national struggle for power. Compared with Kabul, 300 kilometres (190 miles) away, it is a bastion of liberalism.

The Taliban have told women in the Afghan capital to stay home, and have closed schools for girls.

In Mazar-e-Sharif, the streets and bazaars are crowded with women.

Many of them still observe Afghanistan's Islamic tradition by wearing a *burqa* covering them from their feet up to the mesh screen across their eyes.

But not everywhere. At Balk University, young women shed their *burqas* when they enter the gates, revealing fashionable but modest dress, shoes with raised heels and faces liberally made up with lipstick, rouge and mascara.

The different style of Mazar-e-Sharif has nothing to do with prosperity. Aid workers say this town, like everywhere else in war-ravaged Afghanistan, has no institutions that really work. Unemployment is high and the local currency is virtually worthless.

Still, the city of 2 million shows none of the physical scars of the civil war that reduced Kabul to heaps. Social customs, such as allowing women to study, recall Kabul before the Taliban takeover.

Dostum's forces, mostly Uzbeks from the mountains, arouse fear and suspicion among the mostly Tajik residents. Armed soldiers are everywhere, but the sound of gunfire is rare.

Life in the city — and its few paved streets — radiate from the sprawling green-tiled shrine of Hazrat Ali (R), the son-in-law of the Prophet Mohammed (SM).

Taliban leaders say their rules regarding women, including forbidding foreign women to drive cars, are in keeping with the tenets of Islam. Other

'US doing less to protect youngsters from hunger'

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: Child poverty is greater in the United States than in other leading industrial countries and the government does less to protect youngsters from hunger, says a survey by Bread for the World Institute, reports AP.

Twenty-two per cent of Americans under age 18 live in poverty and about 13 million — more than one in four — under age 12 are hungry or at risk of hunger, it said.

The institute's seventh annual report on world hunger being issued Wednesday includes scathing criticism of current cuts in public assistance to the poor to reform the US welfare system and reduce dependence on government.

All industrialised countries are scaling back social programs but "the United States has higher rates of childhood hunger and has cut back more drastically than any other industrial nation on programmes that help children," it said.

"Despite widespread skepticism and criticism, governments have crucial roles to play in reducing hunger and poverty" by encouraging people to support themselves while ensuring "that basic needs are met for those who cannot secure their own livelihoods," said the 130-page study titled "What Governments Can Do."

It was published by the non-profit, independent institute in co-sponsorship with the Bread for the World movement of Christians against hunger and three dozen other humanitarian groups, major charities and religious denominations.

The coalition has been pressing political candidates for commitments to eradicate childhood hunger and will publicize their responses before the November 5 election.

Most programs of the US

safety net constructed against poverty since the Great Depression have been successful and must not be dismantled, the report says.

Accusing many reformers of exaggerating welfare abuses, the report denounces "those responsible for structuring the economy so that people are squeezed out and communities devastated in pursuit of greater profits for a few ..."

Allowing the homeless to wander and freeze in the streets and leaving children to go hungry is a betrayal of Jesus and every other major religious figure," it says.

The report draws from statistics gathered in Luxembourg showing 22 per cent of American youngsters under 18 living in poverty. Other industrial countries and percentages listed included Canada and Australia 14 per cent, Ireland 12, Israel 11, Britain and Italy 10, Germany and France 7, Netherlands 8, Norway 5, Belgium and Luxembourg 4, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden and Finland all 3 per cent.

It concludes that a child living in a wealthy US family is on average better off financially than the typical wealthy child in any other country but "the average child in a low-income US family is worse off than the average poor child in 15 other industrial countries."

Swedish government efforts are credited with reducing child poverty by 84 per cent while the US government is at the bottom of the list of industrial countries, with 15 per cent. After Sweden come Denmark with 81 per cent, Belgium and Finland 75, France 72, Luxembourg and Britain 67, Norway 62, Ireland 60, Netherlands 57, Israel 54, Switzerland 40, Canada 39, Australia 30, Germany 22, Italy 17.