

One million victims of sex trade 250m child labourers of Third World subjected to abuse

GENEVA, Nov 12: Some 250 million children aged five to 14 are put to work in the third world often in hazardous conditions and subject to violence and sexual abuse, the International Labour Organisation says in a new report today, says AFP.

About 61 per cent of child workers or nearly 153 million are in Asia. Some one million children in Asia are victims of the sex trade, according to the report.

Africa, however, has the highest incidence of child labour with around 40 per cent of all five to 14-year-old and 32 per cent of the entire child population at work in Latin America, only around seven per cent work.

The ILO estimates that about 120 million children are now working full time and 130 million part-time, the number of those tough to be working full time is double that published by

the ILO earlier this year. Pockets of child labour also exist in many industrialised countries, including the United States, Italy, Portugal, and Britain, the UN agency says noting the use of child labour in agriculture and in immigrant-run sweatshops.

To combat the problem the ILO is urging rapid adoption of a new convention that would ban the most venial forms of child labour.

The most humane strategy must... be to focus scarce resources on the most intolerable form of child labour such as slavery debt bondage, child prostitution and work in hazardous occupations and industries and the very young especially girls.

ILO Director General Michel Hansenne is confident a new convention can be ratified by 2000. The goal, he told reporters Monday, is to eliminate the most odious forms of child

labour in ten years. Of all working children, those bound in slavery and forced child labour are the most imperiled, the ILO report says. "Children are increasingly being bought and sold across national borders by organised networks," it adds, saying at least five are known to exist.

There are no firm estimates on how many children work in domestic service because of the "hidden" nature of the job. But studies in Indonesia, for example, show that there are around 400,000 child domestic workers in Jakarta and "up to five million in the country as a whole."

Children are often crippled physically being forced to work too early in life.

A survey in the Philippines for example found that more than 60 per cent of working children were exposed to chemical and biological hazards and that 40 per cent experience serious injuries or illnesses. Being

forced to work, they miss school.

Today, the "lack of education is especially damaging because both individual and societal well-being increasingly depend on literacy, numeracy and intellectual competence," the report says.

A host of international treaties and conventions are in force that seek to protect children from exploitation, such as the United Nations convention on the rights of the child and the ILO's convention no 138, but enforcement is often weak.

"The world community should manifest its commitment to act in solidarity by adopting an international convention which forbids all extreme forms of child labour. Such a convention, would fill in the gaps in current international legal instruments... and set clear priorities for national and international action, the report says.

4 Egyptians get life-term for airliner hijacking

CAIRO, Nov 12: Two Egyptian men and two teenagers received prison terms up to life Monday for hijacking an airliner to Libya in a confused bid to force an end to what he called Israel's occupation of Arab land, reports AP.

The Supreme State Security Court found the main defendant, Mohamed Mahmoud Selim, 43, guilty and sentenced him to life with hard labour, which is 25 years in Egypt.

On March 17, Selim, his son and a nephew hijacked the Egypt Air plane from the southern resort town of Luxor with 145 people on board. They threatened to set off explosives but released the passengers in Libya unharmed and surrendered.

Selim told investigators that he hijacked the plane to try to force Israeli troops to leave occupied Palestinian territories and to stop the United Nations from imposing sanctions on Sudan.

He also said he was under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Judge Samir Abul-Maaty said the court rejected Selim's claims of temporary insanity and being drugged.



King Hussein of Jordan (R) greets Indonesian President Suharto upon his arrival in Amman Monday. Suharto arrived Amman for a four-day visit at the invitation of King Hussein. The President of the world's most populous Muslim country will begin talks Tuesday with King Hussein and high-level Jordanian officials on how to develop bilateral relations and on the Middle East peace process. — AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Yeltsin making speedy recovery:

Russian President Boris Yeltsin appears to be making a speedy recovery from quintuple bypass surgery and is expected to be back at the Kremlin by the end of the year, renowned heart surgeon Michael DeBakey said Monday. AP reports from Houston.

He said the chances of Yeltsin surviving another 10 years are "pretty good." This is a very rapid recovery considering the extent of the operation and the extent of his heart condition. DeBakey said at a Houston news conference a day after returning from Russia. "His heart is now functioning very well," DeBakey said. "This is what I had hoped to occur and predicted would take place."

3 Bahraini opposition activists held:

Three Bahraini opposition activists have been arrested on suspicion of involvement in an arson attack on a house last month, newspapers reported Monday. AP reports from Manama.

They said the three men were charged with the Oct. 26 attack on a house in Sanad, 12 kilometres (7 miles) south of the capital, Manama, causing extensive damage to the building and destroying a car parked in the garage. No one was hurt. They quoted an Interior Ministry statement as saying that the three — Raed Ali Jassim bu-Hussain, Nayef Yousef Ahmed and Rami al-Sumailik — had confessed to the crime before an investigating judge.

Blast kills 1 in Australia: A massive explosion at an Australian ammunition factory, described by an eyewitness as like "an atomic bomb," killed one person yesterday and shook towns up to 50 kms (30 miles) away. Reuter reports from Sydney.

The explosion at the Australian Defence Industries Factory at Mulwala in southern New South Wales occurred around 8.30 am (2130 GMT), police said. The cause of the blast was not yet known. "I just saw the mushroom cloud. It was like an atomic bomb, and the sirens and I knew it was a disaster," Mulwala resident Clive McCawley told Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio.

Czech secret service chief resigns: The chief of the Czech secret service resigned Monday after being accused of spying on government officials. AP reports from Prague.

Stanislav Devaty's resignation came only days before elections for a new Czech Senate, a contest that will test the strength of Premier Vclav Klaus' minority government against the opposition Social Democrats. Devaty denied the charges. A former anti-communist dissident, he had headed the secret service since Dec. 1, 1992. Vice Premier Jozef Lux on Friday accused Devaty of spying on him and other government officials. Lux said he had learned of documents that proved he had been monitored by the secret service three years ago.

Mexican president to visit Seoul:

Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo will make a three-day visit to South Korea late this month, officials said Tuesday. AP reports from Seoul.

During his visit scheduled for Nov. 28-30, Zedillo will meet with President Kim Young-sam to discuss ways of strengthening economic and other ties, said Yoon yoe-joon, Kim's chief spokesman.

Zedillo will be the first Mexican president to visit South Korea. The two countries established diplomatic relations in 1962.

Gaddafi threatens action against formation of EUROFOR

LONDON, Nov 12: Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi warned Italy, France, Spain and Portugal on Monday that Libya would retaliate against their new rapid intervention force by helping the IRA in Britain, and similar groups in other European countries, including the Balkans, reports AFP.

In remarks carried on Libyan television monitored here, Gaddafi said NATO was behind the establishment of the 250-man intervention force (EUROFOR) in Florence on Sunday and this was terrorism and a threat to peace, for Libya and its neighbours.

Gaddafi said Libya viewed the force as a declaration of war. He said Libya had consulted its Arab neighbours and Egypt, and had fully mobilised

its armed forces.

"This is terrorism and a threat to peace."

"I have informed the leaders of the Arab states whom I contacted yesterday, that we have declared full mobilisation and we will be heading for the shores of the Mediterranean and will have our fingers on the trigger because that European force has been formed and its objective has been defined. The only thing left was an order to attack our independent states and enter into our homes."

"They are waging war. This is considered a declaration of war by Europe..."

"This is a new adventure a new international terrorism and we utterly reject it. We totally reject the notion that this force be named the rapid deployment force in the eastern and southern Mediterranean."

Pak caretaker govt intensifies austerity drive

ISLAMABAD, Nov 12: Pakistan's caretaker government Monday strengthened its austerity drive, scrapping ousted premier Benazir Bhutto's plan to purchase an aircraft for government leaders, Information Minister Irshad Ahmed Haqqani said, reports AFP.

A cabinet meeting chaired by interim Prime Minister Malik Meharaj Khalid also decided to revert to a six-day working week "to increase the output of the government departments," Haqqani told a news conference here.

From now on the weekly holiday in Pakistan will be observed on Friday only, the traditional Muslim holiday, with Thursday a half-day, he said. Under the Benazir government, Fridays and Saturdays were holidays.

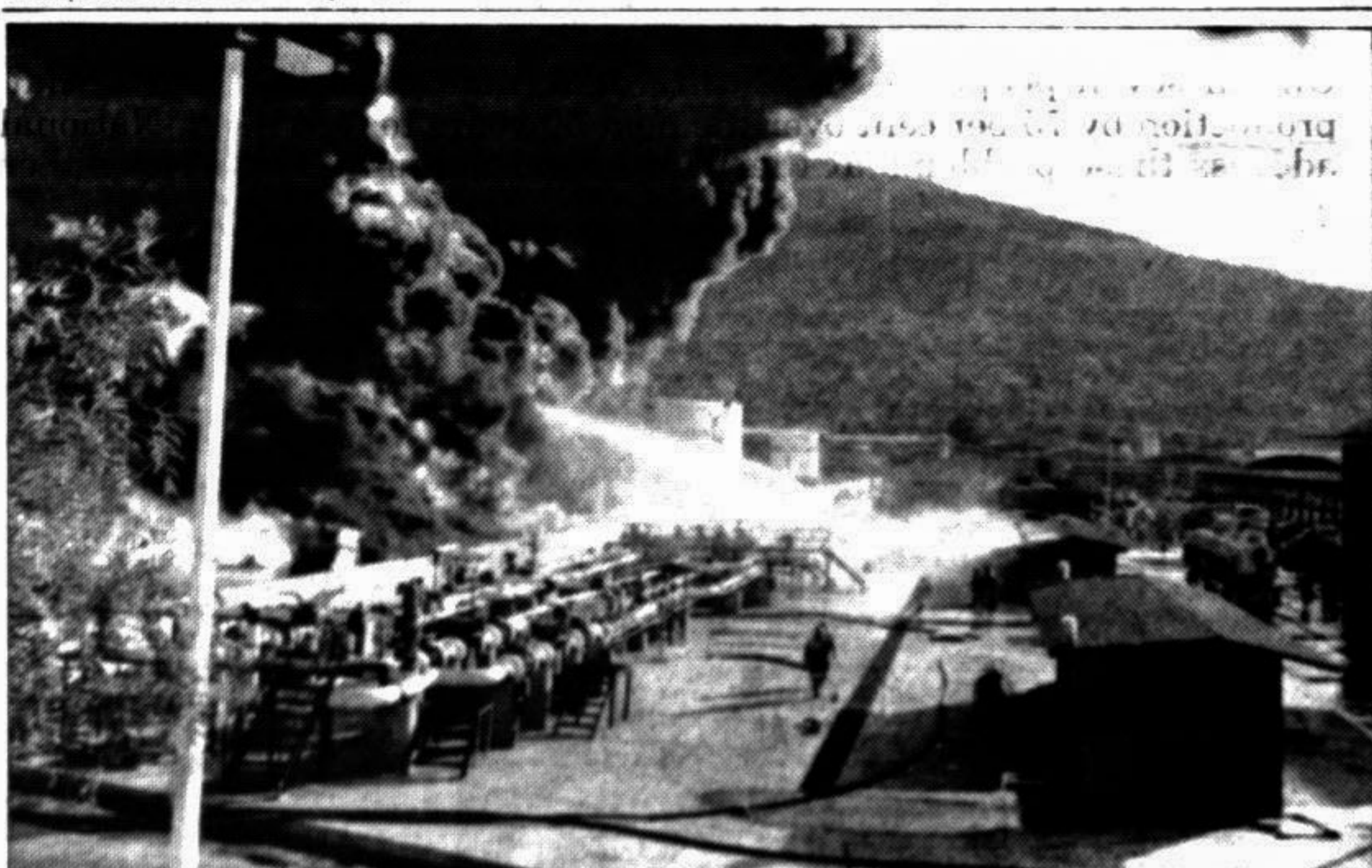
The week-old government also suspended the sale of shares of Burmah Castrol and Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) to the private Hashoo Group, and blocked the privatisation of the Qadirpur gas fields while directing the ministry of petroleum, and natural resources to "thoroughly re-examine" the schemes and report back to the cabinet for a final decision.

President Farooq Ahmed Leghari sacked Benazir on November 5, citing maladministration and corruption and holding her administration responsible for thousands of extra judicial killings.

He suspected irregularities in the privatisation projects. Haqqani claimed Benazir's proposal to buy a Gulfstream executive jet for VIP use would cost 11 million dollars.

The caretaker government has launched an austerity drive since taking over following Leghari's sacking of the Benazir government.

Haqqani said the government had also decided to drop the idea of reconfiguring the interior of a Boeing 747 plane for VIP use as it would have cost six million dollars.



Firefighters try to contain the flames after a storage tank of gasoline at a PEMEX petroleum installation exploded in San Juan Ixhuatpec, a suburb of Mexico City Monday. At least ten people were injured in the blast. — AFP/UNB photo

Canada willing to head multinational force

OAU calls for speedy deployment of int'l force in Eastern Zaire

ADDIS ABABA, Nov 12: The Organisation of African Unity on Monday called for the speedy deployment of an international force carrying a clear mandate to help a million refugees trapped in Eastern Zaire without food, reports AFP.

In a statement issued here, the OAU demanded immediately the rapid deployment of a neutral force "with a clear mandate" in the troubled Great Lakes region straddling the borders of Zaire, and Rwanda.

The meeting of the OAU's conflict prevention mechanism in the Ethiopian capital gathered government officials from 17 countries, but Zaire itself was not represented.

France has urged that a force of some 5,000 troops be sent to Eastern Zaire to open humanitarian corridors and protect aid workers, but the UN Security Council on Saturday postponed a decision until November 20, pending a report.

US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said earlier on Monday that Washington was not yet willing to commit itself to intervention because "there is no coherent plan."

Rebels who have seized control of the Eastern Zairian towns of Goma and Bukavu, the main aid centres helping the refugees up until now, have said they will allow a humanitarian

corridor only on condition that "absolutely impartial forces" be deployed.

AP adds: African leaders said Monday that the United Nations should pay for Africans to join a proposed multinational military force to help more than 1 million Rwandan refugees in flight from fighting in Eastern Zaire.

The demand came at the opening meeting of the 17-member Organisation.

Another AFP report says Canada is willing to head a proposed multinational force that would be deployed to Eastern Zaire on a humanitarian mission, diplomatic sources said in New York Monday.

17 BJP men held Miss World pageants arrive in Bangalore

BANGALORE, Nov 12: Miss World contestants and officials flew in here today, to be greeted by guns and roses. Each of the beauty contest's 89 entrants was given a personal bodyguard after flying in from the Seychelles in the early hours, reports AFP.

They were then ferried in five coaches to their hotel, with two armed guards in each vehicle and 35 armed commandos also in the convoy.

The contest, which ends here on November 24, has aroused continuing controversy, with Hindu nationalists and feminists pledging to disrupt the event.

Bangalore police commissioner FC Burman said 17 members of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian People's Party, who claim the pageant is a threat to Indian culture, had been arrested outside the airport while another 200 protesters with "go on" banners had been moved on.

Ghali finds no reason of US opposition to reelection

WASHINGTON, Nov 12: Boutros Boutros-Ghali says he cannot understand why President Clinton opposes his re-election as U.N. secretary general. "Not a clue," he said in an interview with the Washington Times published Monday, reports AP.

Asked if he felt U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright has a personal vendetta against him, Boutros-Ghali said:

"Not a personal vendetta, but a kind of incomprehension about the role of the U.N and its importance, not only for the community of nations but for the U.S."

Boutros-Ghali said he had tried to get an answer from Albright and from U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, but he said neither has responded to him directly so he can defend his work.

He said Christopher came to his home in May to inform him of U.S. opposition to his re-election but gave no reason, says first government sponsored program to distribute a free cocktail of anti AIDS drugs to victims of the disease on Monday.

A cocktail made up of two older AIDS medicines plus a new class called protease inhibitors is the latest innovation in AIDS therapy, significantly reducing levels of the AIDS virus in patient blood and prolonging the lives of many of the disease's victims.

But the anti AIDS cocktail costs around \$800 a month, more than many AIDS victims can afford in Brazil, where about two thirds of the population makes less than \$336 a month or less.

"As far as I know it's the first program in the world where the government is sponsoring the distribution of the anti-AIDS cocktail."

The non-binding resolution was approved Monday by the UN committee on a disarmament and security by a vote of 130 to three with eight abstentions.

The full, 185 member General Assembly is expected to approve the resolution when it comes to a vote in the next few weeks. It calls on countries of south Asia to renounce the development and use of nuclear weapons.

Visiting US Senator says Attacks on Suu Kyi can lead to bans against junta

PHNOM PENH, Nov 12: Attacks on Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi were "unacceptable" and could lead to sanctions against the Myanmar ruling junta, visiting US Senator John McCain said here Monday, reports AFP.

McCain in Cambodia for talks with government officials, met Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon on Sunday and discussed the attack 24 hours earlier in which a mob pelted her motorcade with rocks, Aung San Suu Kyi said government agents were to blame.

"We discussed the incident and the events surrounding it," the Arizona Republican told AFP following an American Veteran's Day ceremony at the home of the US ambassador to Cambodia.

"My impression is that Aung San Suu Kyi was obviously not receiving the security she needed," he said, adding the at-

tacks were unacceptable and obviously the circumstances surrounding them are inappropriate."

McCain said he would consider introducing sanctions against the Myanmar junta pending the results of a government investigation into the incident which Yangon's intelligence chief Khin Myunt promised him would be undertaken.

Introducing sanctions depends on the results of their investigation and what they do to try to prevent things like this from happening again, McCain said.

Hopefully in the next few days or week we will have a better idea of what happened, he said adding that Khin Nyunt and other members of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) had told him the attacks were "unwarranted and unacceptable."

Cyclone-hit Andhra Hardship turns to tragedy

MASALIDIPPA, India, Nov 12: In the best of times, life is hard in this fishing village: no electricity, no telephone, no school, no health centre, no paved road, reports AP.

But after the fury of the cyclone that hit southern Indian coast, hardship turned to tragedy. In every second family, someone is dead or missing and presumed dead.

As elders from remote villages report the lists of casualties and the missing across two districts of Andhra Pradesh state, the death toll from last week's cyclone could cross 2,000.

So far, 708 victims have been identified, said state Relief Commissioner HS Brahama. At least 250 coastal villages were submerged under rain and sea water.

"We know the magnitude of the cyclone, but we have to go by proper documentation and only then we can say this particular dead body is of a cyclone victim," Brahama told The Associated Press from Hyderabad.

Rescue teams were still looking for 1,200 fishermen who were caught at sea. Their fate is not known. All of them could be dead," said the Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu, the state's chief executive.

He said helicopters which

UN body approves resolution for N-free South Asia

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 12: By an overwhelming margin, a UN committee approved a resolution calling for establishment of a nuclear free zone in South Asia despite opposition by India, the region's biggest country, reports AP.

The non-binding resolution was approved Monday by the UN committee on a disarmament and security by a vote of 130 to three with eight abstentions.

The full, 185 member General Assembly is expected to approve the resolution when it comes to a vote in the next few weeks. It calls on countries of south Asia to renounce the development and use of nuclear weapons.

Int'l emergency aid convoy enters into Goma

GOMA, Zaire, Nov 12: At Goma's main hospital, Dr Patrick Baluba desperately needs the drugs and medical supplies brought into this rebel-controlled town Monday by international aid agencies, reports AP.

Shelling wrecked his last working ambulance, he's running out of antibiotics, and all of the stretchers, wheelchairs and even operating trolleys were looted by marauding and wounded Rwandan refugees fleeing a rebel offensive two weeks ago.

"We're in a sad state," said Baluba, the hospital's technical director. "More than half my staff has fled into the forests, and I'm having to turn away many patients because I don't have the right drugs to treat

them."

Across the road at Unity Stadium, aid workers parked 16 trucks and jeeps carrying food and emergency medicines, then began haggling with local rebel officials to get the supplies to Goma's three hospitals.

Rebel leader Laurent Kabila agreed over the weekend to allow aid agencies into eastern Zaire, where fighting in the past month sent more than 1 million refugees fleeing into forests and mountains without food or water.

"The longer we wait, the more serious it gets," said Samantha Bolton, spokeswoman for Doctors Without Borders, one of 12 groups that managed to get supplies in Monday after a long delay at the Rwandan-Zairian

border.

The aid arriving Monday was enough to feed 2,500 people for a week, a fraction of Goma's 80,000 remaining residents, many of whom have had no access to fresh food for 10 days.

Townfolk were selling bananas, onions and cabbages at a roadside market. Bread rolls in plastic sacks were strung up in rickety kiosks. But prices were prohibitive for most.

"We still have clients but nobody has money to buy much more than bread and beans," said Alain Bailly at the Chez Grez bakery. "The situation is catastrophic."

Without military protection, there was no hope of getting aid to the hundreds of thousands of Rwandan Hutu refugees scattered farther west.

Fighting since early October between rebels and Zairian troops, including the Zairian Tutsis they wanted to drive out of Zaire, has uprooted more than 1.1 million Rwandan Hutu refugees, nearly 150,000 Burundian Hutu refugees and an unknown number of Zairians.

Foreign aid workers fled the region more than a week ago. Although Baluba welcomed Monday's aid, he said it was a drop in the ocean of need washing over Goma.

The hospital operates with no electricity or running water. Its 40 patients lie in rancid-smelling wards, their dressings grubby, their faces lined with despair.

Baluba said only 80 of his 180 staff were working, and they hadn't been paid for

months.

The rest have fled into the forests, just like the Rwandan refugees," he said. "If the agencies want to help us here, they'll have plenty of work to do."

He told how doctors had tended hundreds of Zairians and Hutu refugees wounded in the fighting. Then, as the rebels approached Goma, even the most seriously wounded fled.

They took all the wheelchairs, the stretchers, the trolleys, crutches — anything that helped them get away," he said.

Then a grenade landed in the hospital's outdoor outpatient department and knocked out Baluba's last running ambulance.

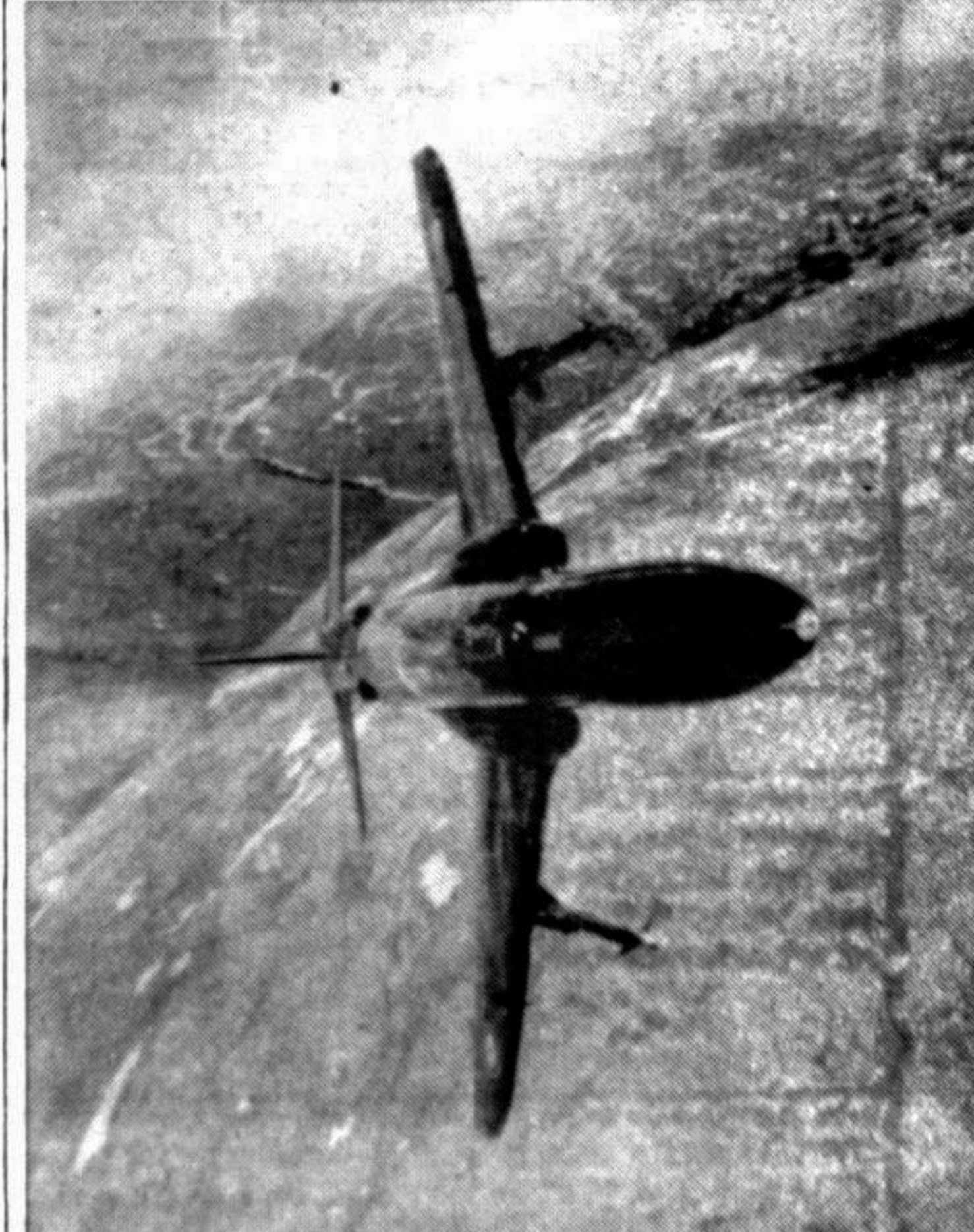
"I'm having to turn people away because I have not even

anti-malaria or anti-diarrhoea drugs," he said. "We'll accept any help — we have no choice now but to live from aid."

The fighting has rekindled international concern about the region after the 1994 massacre of a half-million Tutsis by Hutus in Rwanda and the Hutus' exodus into Zaire and other neighbouring countries.

The Rwandan Hutu refugees were joined by former members of the Rwandan Hutu army and militiamen, who have used the UN camps as bases to attack Rwanda, now under a Tutsi government.

Some African leaders say the root cause of the current crisis was the failure of the aid agencies to separate the Hutu soldiers from the refugees when they first arrived.



Undated filer shows an RAF Hawk jet trainer which has just secured a huge 1 billion order from Australia. Australia's Defence Minister Ian McLachlan announced that the Hawk had been selected as the new trainer aircraft for the Australia Defence Force, and the order for 40 of the jets turns the plane into one of the most successful British exports ever. — AFP/UNB photo