

AI alleges killings, torture in Zaire

Canada discloses formation of multinational force for C Africa

OTTAWA, Nov 30: Canada on Friday announced the formal establishment of a multinational force that will bring humanitarian aid to Central Africa, reports AFP.

More than 20 countries have offered to supply personnel, finance or other assistance.

But the coalition could not officially begin operations until its mandate was approved by a 14-national steering committee, which met here Friday.

Paul Heinbecker, the senior Canadian official who chaired the steering committee, which is made up of the largest contributors to the multinational mission, said the group formally approved the establishment of a multinational force with headquarters in Entebbe.

The steering board will now be responsible for making op-

erational decisions on the recommendation of Canadian lieutenant general Maurice Baril, who is the multinational force's commander.

That committee will in the future hold its meetings in New York and report to the UN Security Council, said Heinbecker.

While Heinbecker said no decision on airdrops or other methods for helping the refugees would be made until Baril had assessed the situation in the field planning for airdrops had already started.

"Today we are putting into place the capacity for airdrops," said Heinbecker.

Asked how the decision-making process will operate, Heinbecker replied: "The situation is that (Baril) will make his recommendations to us (the steering board)."

He said the decisions taken Friday meant that "now the multinational force is constituted... now the international force exists."

Technically, until now, the troops in Entebbe and other parts of the region were not part of a UN-sanctioned force and Baril had no formal command over them.

Friday's decision paves the way for the establishment of the military headquarters in Entebbe, he said, a task which should be completed "within a few days."

Members of the steering board, which Heinbecker described as the "major contributors," are: Belgium, Cameroon (as the current president of the Organisation for African Unity), France, Ireland (as current president of the European Union), Italy, Japan (which

he said would be contributing money but no troops for the mission), Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Britain, the United States, Uganda and Canada.

AP adds, Zairian soldiers as well as rebels are killing, torturing and detaining civilians nationwide. Amnesty International said Friday.

Herve Berger of the London-based human rights group said abuses were taking place in eastern Zaire, throughout the interior and in the capital, Kinshasa. He accused foreign governments of indifference to the violence.

The report was the latest in a series of such allegations to emerge since rebels began fighting Zairian soldiers and Hutu militiamen in eastern Zaire this fall.



Cuban President Fidel Castro (C) is surrounded by French actor Gerard Depardieu (L) and the President of the French Federation of Managers and Businesses, Gerard Bourgoin (R) late on Friday in Havana, Cuba, during a ceremony that Castro offered his AFP/UNB photo

Sunnis demand dismissal of Sindh minister

KARACHI, Nov 30: Three vehicles were torched in stray incidents here today as Muslim fundamentalists protested against a member of the Ahmadi sect being made a provincial minister in Pakistan, witnesses said reports AFP.

The city largely ignored a strike call by the Sunni Tehrik, an organisation of radical Sunni Muslims, but minor incidents of violence among groups of demonstrators were reported from some parts.

The Tehrik (movement) is demanding dismissal of Kanwar Idrees from a ministerial post in the southern province of Sindh because he belongs to the minority Ahmadi sect.

Ahmadias in Pakistan lost their legal status as Muslims when the parliament in 1974 declared them a non-Muslim sect for not subscribing to the Muslim belief that Hazrat Mohammed (SM) was the last Prophet.

Several other religious bodies have also staged demonstrations in the city.

BRIEFLY

Mother Teresa's condition stable

Mother Teresa was stable and cheerful Saturday morning, a day after surgery that doctors said saved her life, AP reports from Calcutta.

The pumping action of the 86-year-old Catholic nun's heart began to improve immediately after the angioplasty, which involved inflating tiny balloons in two major arteries to clear blockages, improving the flow of blood. Mother Teresa slept well Friday night following the two-hour surgery and was in stable condition Saturday morning, said S K Tewari, a spokesman for the Birla Heart Research Centre.

Jacques Chirac turns 64

President Jacques Chirac yesterday won a present of a 12th century terracotta statuette from his friends on his 64th birthday, reported Agence France Presse, Xinhua says from Paris.

The statuette, which is in the form of an animal, is originally from the bank of river Niger in Mali and was made during the time of Djenné Kingdom. The friends of the French President gave him on his birthday last year a statuette from Colombia, which was made by the Maya Indians before the arrival of European colonials in South America.

Fahd, Perry hold talks on security

US Defence Secretary William Perry held talks on Saturday with Saudi Arabia's King Fahd on Gulf security and protection for American troops as US forces remained on high alert for any attacks in the kingdom, Reuter reports from Riyadh.

They met for about forty minutes. The focus of the discussion was force protection measures, a senior defence official told reporters. Two bombings have killed 24 American troops in Saudi Arabia in the past year. "They also reviewed the security situation in the region, including Iran and Iraq," said the official who asked not to be identified.

5 trapped in Turkish mine mishap

An underground explosion in a private coal mine trapped five miners Friday evening near the central Anatolian city of Cankiri, a municipality worker said early Saturday, AP reports from Cankiri.

"Rescue workers rushed to the scene," city employee Ahmet Ozbek told The Associated Press by telephone from Cankiri.

Details were not immediately available. Ozbek suggested that methane gas leak might have caused the explosion in the mine 190 kilometres (118 miles) northeast of Ankara.

'Passion', 'Stanley' awarded in London

Stephen Sondheim's "Passion," a critically acclaimed Broadway flop that lost money in its British debut earlier this year, was named Best Musical Friday at the Evening Standard Drama Awards honouring the season's best theatre, AP reports from London.

"It's heartbreaking for a show to lose every penny," producer Bill Kenwright said of the Sondheim musical, which he had backed on the West End. But, Kenwright added jubilantly, "I'm one of those strange people who actually love awards." Pam Gems' "Stanley," a Royal National Theatre production about English painter Stanley Spencer, was cited as best play. An American production has been mooted for Broadway next year.

12 drowned in Vietnam

Twelve people, mostly women and children, were feared dead after a passenger and cargo river boat capsized in Vietnam's central province of Quang Nam Da Nang, the Lao Dong newspaper said yesterday. Reuter reports from Hanoi.

Provincial officials were not available to comment on the report, which said the accident occurred on the Tranh river last Tuesday after the captain fell overboard with the vessel's rudder. "The people in the boat were scared and made the boat turn upside down," Lao Dong said.

EU to fight against child porno trade

The 15 European Union nations agreed Friday to jointly combat the sexual exploitation of children by pursuing producers, vendors, distributors and owners of pornographic materials that feature youngsters, AP reports from Brussels.

The initiative was proposed by Belgium, which has been shocked in recent months by revelations of a child sex ring believed responsible for the murders of four young girls and the disappearance of half a dozen others. The EU justice ministers agreed to step up the fight against trade in child porno materials by imposing minimum penalties across the EU.

Eggs thrown at Milosevic's office

Serbian opposition rises on popular discontent

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Nov 30: Balancing in a fourth-floor window with a loudspeaker in one hand and waving to the crowd with the other, opposition leader Zoran Djindjic tells Dictator Slobodan Milosevic with red paint and eggs, chanting: "Red Bandits and Thieves."

In what appeared to be the biggest of 12 straight days of rallies, more than 100,000 people jeered, booted and set off firecrackers every time.

Djindjic and other opposition leaders face a tough dilemma: allow protest to fizzle, or let it turn violent.

If violence does occur, "the blame won't be on us," said Djindjic, at 44 the youngest leader of Serbia's opposition coalition, Zajedno, or Together.

"One must be aware that this energy isn't generated only by anger over election fraud. It is generated by empty stomachs and people's general discontent," Djindjic said, referring to the election fraud that sparked the protest and the ruin brought by years of funding war and mismanaging the state-owned economy.

Talk like that has won Djindjic support recently, particularly among young Serbs who thought they had elected him Belgrade's first non-Communist mayor since 1945 — until Milosevic's courts annulled the results of November 17 elections won by the opposition in the capital and several other

large towns.

Meanwhile, gaining momentum from daily protests, demonstrators pelted the offices of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic with red paint and eggs, chanting: "Red Bandits and Thieves."

The Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council has requested the national police and the air force to rush helicopters to the island province to ferry much-needed foodstuffs and medicine to the affected areas.

Iraqis hold a portrait of President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad Thursday celebrating the acceptance of the of the UN conditions for the implementation of the humanitarian arrangement, the oil-for-food deal, which was reached on Monday.

— AFP/UNB photo

Pressure mounting on Africans to submit new candidates for UN secy gen

MADELEINE ALBRIGHT urged the Africans to "stop dilly-dallying" and submit new candidates to break the impasse caused when the United States cast the lone veto of the 74-year-old Egyptian incumbent.

The United States position has been very clear from the very beginning" Albright said after the meeting. "We have said that we need a new secretary-general and it is our position that no compromise formula is acceptable."

The Security Council met late Friday behind closed doors to discuss the election of a new secretary-general, but no vote was taken. The council would like to forward a name to the 185-General Assembly by December 17.

The United States has accused Boutros-Ghali of not pursuing reform aggressively enough.

Some governments appear to be holding out hope that President Clinton can be convinced to extend.

Boutros-Ghali's term for a limited period, such as one to

three years, to avoid a leadership crisis in the financially troubled world organisation.

But Albright said the Clinton Administration wanted a change in UN leadership "for the United States to fully support the United Nations and get a United Nations that is ready for the 21st century."

African diplomats said the council should not bend to the will of a single member, meaning the United States. Diplomats speaking on condition of anonymity described the closed-door session as "Occasionally" tense.

After the United States vetoed the Egyptian incumbent for a second term November 19, council members agreed to give African countries time to submit new candidates from their continent.

African leaders endorsed Boutros-Ghali at their summit last July in Yaounde, Cameroon. African ambassadors say they must stick by Boutros-Ghali until their governments tell them to do otherwise.

Botswana's ambassador, Legwala J. Legwala, said it takes time to consult 53 African presidents and reach a consensus on a new candidate.

"All we can tell you is we have been saying since the 19th of November that we are all engaged in electing a secretary-general," Legwala said. "The most dangerous thing you can do is elect a secretary-general of the United Nations in a hurry."

But other council members are frustrated. Wisnumurti met Friday night with Cameroon's acting ambassador, Jean-

March Mpay, and told him the members wanted to know when the chairman of the OAU, Cameroonian President Paul Biya, expected to finish his consultations.

"I am very much concerned about the slow space," Wisnumurti told reporters.

"Pressure for opening the door to candidates from other regions is there, I can feel it."

To prod the council, General Assembly President Razali Ismail said last week that he plans to adjourn the body December 17 for the Christmas and New Years holidays.

That effectively gives the council little more than two weeks to find a candidate acceptable to such varied member governments as the United States, Russia, China and France.

— AFP/UNB photo

Legwala asked "why should Africa be asked to make up its mind on such-and-such a date or else? We are ready to live up to our responsibilities."

Wisnumurti said some undisclosed governments had told him they would like to see the door opened to candidates from other regions if the Africans cannot agree on a replacement for Boutros-Ghali.

But China is expected to veto any candidate who is unacceptable to the Africans. Apart from China and the United States, three other permanent council members — Britain, France, and Russia — hold veto powers.

Many UN diplomats suspect that French-speaking African countries are waiting until next week's summit of France and French-speaking African leaders in Burkina Faso.

A complementary mission to put a global surveyor satellite in orbit round the planet blasted off earlier this month.

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Off the Record

Clinton family featured in the greetings card

CLEVELAND: For the third year, artist Thomas McKnight has designed President and Mrs. Clinton's official Christmas card, featuring the Clinton cat, socks, resting on a chair in the Green Room of the White House, reports AP.

McKnight, known for his homespun, whimsical style, designed the Clinton's 1993 holiday card featuring the Red Room, and the 1995 card showing the Blue Room.

"I have to say there's not too much you can do differently," McKnight said, referring to similarities in style to past years.

Sending greeting cards is a common practice around Christmas time in the United States.

The 300,000 presidential greeting cards are being produced by the Cleveland-based American Greetings Corp, which announced McKnight's selection as designer Friday. The Democratic National Committee is paying an undisclosed price for the cards.

Neither the president, nor First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, nor their daughter Chelsea, are depicted in the card. The family cat, socks, is shown resting on a chair, and in a flourish of artistic license, the artist's dog, shadow — not a White House resident — is shown among the presents under the Christmas tree.

'Baywatch' stars for saving of real-life ocean

LOS ANGELES: A couple of "Baywatch" beach adventurers turned up on the sand to support the saving of a real-life ocean, reports AP.

"The cast of "Baywatch" is very in tune with coastal preservation," Traci Bingham said Wednesday at Will Rogers State Beach, where the show is often filmed.

"While it may look great on camera, sometimes the water is really filthy."

Actor Ted Danson's environmental group, American Oceans Campaign, recruited Bingham and fellow "Baywatch" player Jeremy Jackson to help promote new designer license plates. Proceeds for the plate sales will be used to underwrite coastal preservation efforts.

Fergie to host her own show

NEW YORK: America's crowded field of daytime talk show hosts may face some royal competition, reports AP.

The former Sarah Ferguson is fielding offers to be host of her own show, said her spokesman, Howard Rubenstein. The Duchess of York is also considering other opportunities in television and as a corporate spokeswoman, he said.

"She's had offers of all kinds," Rubenstein said Wednesday, adding that her show could begin in 1997.

Fergie, 37, who was divorced from Prince Andrew in May, toured the country this month to promote her autobiography. Her appearance with the popular nightime host David Letterman, among other things, led to a surge of offers.

What would make Fergie a good talk show host? "She has a terrific sense of humour," Rubenstein said. "She's quick. Her spontaneity is amazing ... She's demonstrated she's a very real person."

Holy water can harm rather than heal

LONDON: Holy Water can harm rather than heal, a British study has found, reports AP.

And at least two hospitals now sterilise the water — taken from Catholic religious shrines abroad and carried carefully home in small bottles — before letting relatives give it to patients in the hope it will speed recovery.

The problem is how people use it, said Linda Parsons, the nurse of charge of infectious control at Wiston Hospital in northwest England.