International —

India to buy advanced Russian jet fighters

MOSCOW, Dec 1: In a deal worth more than 1 billion dirs. India signed an agreement with Russia to purchase dozens of Su-30MK jet flighters, officials said Sunday, reports AP.

The agreement was signed on Saturday by Russian arms exporters and Indian Defence Ministry officials in the Siberian city of Irkutsk. The first eight warplanes would be delivered this year and in 1997.

spokesman for Rosvooruzheniye, Russia's state run a ms exporter, told Russian news agencies that the contract is valued at more than I billion dirs and is "one of the largest" deals between the two countries.

The Interfax news agency quoted officials as saying the deal was worth 1.8 billion dol-

The contract will raise Russian-Indian military relations to a new level, because it calls for long-term joint work in the area of aircraft building, said the spokes:nan. Valery Pogrebenkov.

He said the deal will keep the

at the initial stage and 40 more country, reports AFP. later, the ITAR-Tass news

a broad marketing campaign to promote Sukhoi aircraft on the international market. Pogrebenkov said.

Several countries have already shown interest in the purchase of such aircraft." he

Colombian small commuter

1: A small commuter plane plunged into a mountain on the outskirts of this city in northwest Colombia on Saturday. killing 13 of the 15 people on board, authorities said, reports Reuter.

Civil aviation officials said the plane, a Canadian-built twin Otter belonging to Colombia's Aces airline crashed into the Padre Amaya Mountain southwest of the city and burst into flames shortly after takeoff from the Enrique Olava Herrera Airport.

It was headed for the Bahia Solano beach resort of Colombia's Pacific coast and two crew members when it went down for unknown reasons in fair weather, the officials said.

"We don't know what happened: "All we know is that it crashed" one civil aviation official told reporters.

the pilot never reported any

The two survivors, who were 15-year-old Olga Lucia Moreno and Pedro Rafael Rojas, 23

Protesters throng Belgrade streets to force Milosevic out

BELGRADE, Dec 1: More than 100.000 protesters thronged the streets of Belgrade Saturday in continuing efforts to drive out President Slobodan Milosevic, and the opposition pledged to set up its own authorities in towns across the

Massive crowds have been gathering for 12 consecutive days in freezing conditions here to protest at the cancellation of municipal election results. which the opposition coalition. Together, claimed to have showed it won in 15 of 18 key

leaders Zoran Djindjic, told reporters Saturday the opposition would set up rival authorities in towns when it believed it had won the November 17 vote. only to see those victories overruled by courts favourable to

"We are going to set up local

authorities in the towns where we won municipal elections to present a democratic alternative to the ruling Socialist Party." Djindjic said.

He emphasised that the opposition did not expect to set up a parallel government, would

From Monday, the opposition will organise demonstrations in the towns it does control. Djindjic continued. notably Arije, Cack, Jagodina Kragujevc. Krajeva and Novi



A protester kisses the hand of opposition leader Vuk Draskovic as tens of thousands take Crowds have been gathering for 12 consecutive days to protest the cancellation of municipal election results and demand the resignation of Serbian President Slobodan

AP adds: The rallies get bigger every day, but Slobodan Milosevic's hold on power remains firm

Govt-rebels sign peace accord in Sierra Leone

ABIDJAN. Dec 1: Sierra Leonean President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and rebel leader Fody Sankoh signed a longawaited peace accord in Abidian Saturday, ending more than five years of civil war, reports

But both men and other parties in the peace process warred the accord alone was not enough to end the crisis in Sierra Leone, one of the poorest countries in the world. "The challenge facing us now is how best to address ourselves to good leadership, governance and democracy." said Sankoh. whose Revolutionary United f-Front (RUF) has battled successive governments in Freetown since 1991. "If leadership fails, the people will take up arms

The long-awaited agreement calls for the immediate cessa tion of hostilities, the demobil isation and disarmament of the RUF and its integration into the national army. The rebel group will also become a legitimate political party.

The agreement was signed at 4:00 pm (1600 GMT) in Abidjan capital of neighbouring Ivory Coast, whose government had been attempting to broker an end to the conflict since Febru-

News of the peace accord was greeted with widespread jubila tion in Freetown itself, where people danced and cheered, cars and ships honked their horns and church bells rang.

Sierra-Leone President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah (L) and rebel leader Foday Sankoh hug each other Saturday in the Ivorian capital after signing a long-awaited peace accord, ending more than five years of civil war in Sierra Leone. - AFP/UNB photo

Bid to avert Iran-like incident

CIA beefs up intelligence service in Saudi Arabia

WASHINGTON, Dec 1: The US Central Intelligence Agency is beefing up intelligence gathering on Saudi Arabia to avoid being caught unaware of any threat to the regime as was the case with the Shah of Iran's surprise ouster, the New York Times reported today, according to AFP.

The US spy service organised a special task force among government analysts in the wake of the June 25 bombing of a US military facility in Dahran that left 19 US service personnel dead, the daily reported.

The bombing convinced the

CIA that it lacked adequate intelligence about the opposition to the ruling royal family "Saudi Arabia is a black hole," one unnamed senior administration official told the paper. "We have enormous gaps

in understanding what is going

on there," the source added.

The CIA subjected Saudi Arabia to "hard target strategy" which it uses for nations like China, Iran and Russia. The task force concluded that the world's largest oil producer remains politically stable and is unlikely to become another

Perry concludes ME tour

US prepared to counter threat from Iran, Iraq

ABU DHAFI. Dec 1: US Defence Secretary William Perry wound up his Middle East tour on Saturday with a warning that the United States would not hesitate to sink any Iranian attack on its warships in the Gulf, reports APP.

"Their entire havy is going to be submarines" if Tehran launches are attack on the US fleet stationed in the Gulf, Perry told reporters as Iran on Saturday announced it had completed its biggest-ever military exercises.

The outgoing Pentagon Chief has used his Gulf trip to reaffirm Washington's support for its allies in the region and to pledge its readiness to counter any threat from Iran and Iraq. both regarded as hostile na-

The United States has 27 vessels in the Gulf as part of a 40-strong allied presence and a total of around 27,000 troops in the region.

"We are prepared to go to war

to protect our interests. We have done that once earlier." Perry said, referring to the US-led force that evicted Iraqi forces from Kuwait in the 1991 Gulf

The US official, who has visited Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Qatar as well as the United Arab Emirates during his tour, said the United States was operating a policy of "dual containment" as a deterrent to Iran and Iraq.

Perry has visited several sites where US troops are stationed, mainly in Kuwait and Qatar where equipment is based which would allow the United States to react rapidly in the event of any Iraqi attack.

In Saudi Arabia earlier Saturday, Perry held talks with King Fahd on the security situation in the region and the probe into the June 25 truckbombing of a US barracks, in the Saudi city of Khobar which killed 19 US servicemen.

Zairian rebel leader says

Relief effort for Rwandan refugees unnecessary

GOMA, Zaire, Dec 1: The Zairian rebel leader says an international relief effort for Rwandan refugees is now unnecessary and that the people roaming eastern Zaire are mostly Zairians displaced by fighting, reports AP.

Laurent Kabila said Saturday he would nonetheless cooperate with the Canadian-led military mission to central Africa, approved by 14 countries at a meeting a day earlier in Ottawa.

Kabila said most of the Rwandan refugees who fled to eastern Zaire in 1994 have gone home, and that the people spotted by foreign reconnaissance planes in the region were actually Zairians trying to escape

Western officials say at least 100,000 Rwandan refugees remain in the mountains of eastern Zaire.

The Rwandan refugees.

mostly Hutus, had lived in UN aid camps in eastern Zaire until five weeks ago, when they van ished into the countryside to escape clashes between the rebels and Zairian soldiers. The refugees had fled Rwanda 2 half years ago, fearing retribution for the Hutu-led massacre of at least a half-million people Tut-

On Friday, the 14 countries agreed in Ottawa to participate in an aid operation, a scaleddown version of the multinational force proposed last months before hundreds of thousands of refugees began leaving Zaire on their own.

Diplomats agreed to establish a military headquarters in the Ugandan capital of Entebbe to run reconnaissance missions and possibly airdrops.

About 260 troops each from the United States and Canada are already in Entebbe, sharing makeshift headquarters in the airport terminal. Military transport aircraft that could be used for airdrops are also in Entebbe, about an hour's flying time from eastern Zaire.

On Saturday, a Canadian military cargo plane from Entebbe carried cholera medicine to a refugee camp on Tanzania's border with Zaire. The medicine would help prevent an outbreak among the refugees. said Tom Kaptyn of Doctors Without Borders, who asked for

the airlift to Kigoma, Tanzania "I'm more than just a little pleased." Kaptyn said, looking relieved as his cargo was taken

off the Hercules. In all, about 20 countries. including the United States. Britain, France, South Africa. Spain. Senegal and Japan, are expected to provide support to the force. Canadian officials

Britain and France have not said what their role in the mission will be.

Al-Masari affair Saudi envoy to UK to be withdrawn soon

LONDON, Dec 1: Saudi Ara bia will soon withdraw its am bassador to London as a good will gesture following contro versial efforts to get a Saudi dissident deported from Britain, a newspaper reported Sunday, reports AP.

Britain's government unsuc cessfully tried to deport Mohammed Al-Masari to the Caribbean island nation of Dominica earlier this year, af ter it had been pressured to do so by from the Saudi royal fam

Ambassador Ghazi Algo saibi was the most outspoken advocate of Al-Masari's deportation, warning that unless Britain expelled the dissident, Saudi Arabia would cancel trade deals with Britain worth millions of dollars.

Al-Masari runs a faxing and E-mail operation from Britain. flooding Saudis and news media with the alleged misdeeds of the royal family.

Sunday Business quoted unidentified Saudi sources as saying that Algosaibi would be transferred to Germany within

Qatar pledges funding UNSCOM

MANAMA. Dec 1: Qatar has promised funding for the cashstrapped UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, UNSCOM chairman Rolf Ekeus said here Saturday, reports AFP.

"All the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council, (GCC) have expressed their support to UNSCOM," Ekeus told reporters in Bahrain, the last stop on a regional tour aimed at drumping up financial support for UNSCOM.

"In fact, Qatar volunteered help and has pledged the same level of support. Given during 1996, if not more," he said.

"Therefore reports suggesting that Qatar had refused financial support are completely

wrong. Qatar is a member of the GCC along with Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Damn fool but not Nazi sympathiser

Off the Record

LONDON: A royal mystery will be solved this week when secret British documents will show King Edward VIII was no Nazi sympathiser but a "damn fool", according to the Express on Sunday newspaper, reports Reuter.

The paper said secret foreign office documents - previously kept back by the royal family for fear of humiliating the former

king — would be released on Tuesday. They will apparently clear up long-running controversy over Edward's political sympathies, with many historians believing Edward actively helped Adolf Hitler

Edward was king of Britain from January to December 19936, when he renounced the throne to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson, after the abdication crisis Edward moved to France and the paper said the documents show British concerns at the couple's lavish life style and his ill-considered

visits to pro-German, Spain and Portugal in 1940. The Express said Queen Elizabeth had given permission for the papers to be made public and quoted one insider as saying "the papers confirm Edward was a damn fool, but not a traitor."

Bob Dylan's plea for gun control

LONDON: There's a new verse in an old Bob Dylan song, adding a tribute to slain Scottish schoolchildren and a plea for gun control, reports AP.

Dylan authorized a new recording of "Knockin" on Heaven's Door" with additional lines commemorating the massacre of 16 first-graders and their teacher in March. The single — featuring a 14-child choir accompanied by Dire Straits guitarist Mark Knopfler and others - was released

Friday. The new verse alludes to Dunblane, Scotland, where gun enthusiast Thomas Hamilton gunned down 16 first-graders and

their teacher in March. "Lord, these guns have caused too much pain.

"This town will never be the same.

"So, for the Bairns of Dunblane. We ask please — never again."

Dylan scored a hit with the song in 1973. It featured on the soundtrack to the film, "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" - a paean

to gunfighters. Proceeds from the new version will go to children's charities.

Dickens' desk on charity show

HARTFORD: The desk where Charles Dickens wrote "Great Expectations" and "A Tale of Two Cities" is doing charity work,

reports AP. The famed author's furniture is making its US debut at the Old State House as part of an exhibit ending January 12 meant to raise funds for the needy.

The work surface Dickens wrote on had a magical affect on Theresa V Long, executive director of the Hartford Neighborhood Centre who said the desk seems to radiate the English author's spirit.

"It's unbelievable. I felt he was there," Long said of her experience while dusting the desk specially designed for Dickens, who used it for the last 15 years of his life.

Jeanne-Marie Wenckheim Dickens, wife of a Dickens descendant, said Hartford is a good site for the desk to make its first appearance outside of England. Dickens celebrated his 30th birthday in the city in 1842, one of two visits he made

Arab films make US debut at month-long film festival

festivals ever held in the United States - including dozens of movies never before shown here is underway in celebration for the centennial of Arab cin-

ema, reports AP.

The 40 films feature a blend of new releases and beloved classics, and vary widely in style and content. They reveal an Arab world seen through Arab eyes, an refreshing alternative to the stereotypes which too often depict Arab culture on the American screen.

In addition to their cultural and artistic differences, the movies - all subtitled - are rich in historical and political context and help humanize an often misunderstood part of the world.

"A common first reaction to seeing the films is shock at their diversity and sophistication, said Alia Arasoughly, who co-curated the festival with Richard Pena, programme di-

NEW YORK, Dec 1: One of the rector of the Film Society of fortunate that American audiences have been deprived of many of these films. Hopefully, this festival will open the door. "It's wonderful to be able to

French President Jacques Chirac (L) looks at the French translation of the cook book

"Culinary Journey Through Germany" by Hannelore Kohl (3rd L), wife of German

Chancellor Helmut Kohl (2nd L) as Chirac's wife Bernadette (R) looks on at the

international cookery book fair in Perigueusx Saturday.

share the rich tradition of filmmaking in the Arab world and to show the films' whole regional and historical sweeps, said the Palestinian-born Arasoughly, who has taught filmmaking at Tufts and Northeastern universities and is currently director of August Light Productions. The Centennial of Arab

Walter Reade Theatre through Dec 5, is being co-presented by August Light Productions and Pacific Film Archives. After leaving New York, it will have a run at the University of California-Berkeley's Pacific Film Archive from Jan. 16 to Feb 6. Showings in Washington, DC., and Los Angeles were being planned.

Cinema," at Lincoln Center's

The first Arab film was performance by Omar Sharif most comprehensive Arab film Lincoln Center. "It's really un- made in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1896 with the help of French film-making pioneers the Lumiere Brothers — about a month after the first Lumiere film was made in France.

— AFP/UNB photo

For decades after that, Egypt was the only Arab country to produce motion pictures of its own. Some of the festival's oldest films include the 1939 Egyptian classic "Al-Azimah" ("Resolution"), directed and produced by Kamal Salim.

The movie marks the beginning of realist film in the region. It's a traditional boy meets girl story, but unlike earlier films, the boy is a credible representation of a young man from a traditional quarter of

Many early works were based on literary works. The 1960 film "Al-Bidayah wa Al-Nihaya" ("The Beginning and the End"), featuring a superb

breaking sister, is based on a book by Nobel Prize-winning author Naguib Mahfouz. Although Egypt still domi-

nates the Arab film industry. cinema began to emerge elsewhere in the Arab world in the "The evolution of film making in different parts of the

Arab world can be traced according to larger historical trends, which makes it distinct from films coming out of many other parts of the world." Ara soughly said The Arab defeat in the 1967 Middle East war was one such

example. "Suddenly, people around the Arab world wanted to look much more closely at their own countries. They wanted to express things in their own vernacular and speak to their own local experience and not just the Arab community as a whole." Arasoughly

performance by Omar Sharif Kuwaiti film director pro-with San'a Gamil as his heart- ducer Khalid Siddiq, the first issues," Arasoughly said. "Befeature-film maker to emerge from the Gulf region, produced the haunting "Bas ya Bahr" ("The Cruel Sea") in 1971

The actors speaking the local dialect of Arabic - difficult to understand for those from other parts of the region. Set in the period before the discovery of oil in Kuwait, the film tells a suspenseful story of pearldivers and criticises a feudal mercantile society entrenched in its ways

In 1979, Algerian Farouk Beloufa produced "Nahla," the first film produced after the North African country's independence. While local in setting and dialect, the film addresses issues of women's roles in Arab

society and Arab nationalism. "A characteristic of some of the most recent Arab films is that they most closely resemble European cinema. They focus

fore they focused more on character and mood and soundtrack build-up. More recent works in the se-

ries include the 1993 Syrian film "The Extras" and several recent Tunisian movies, including the 1995 Tunisian film, "A Summer in La Goulette," by Ferid Boughedir

Also featured at the festival is an earlier work. "Al-Haram" "The Sin", a 1965 film by Egyp tian director Henri Barakat starring Fatin Hamama and Abadalla Ghaith. Siddig, who was in New

York for the festival's opening shook his head in wonder that so many of the films had not been shown in the United States before. There are some wonderful

movies out there," he said. " It seems time to share and enjoy them here. Maybe now is the on family dramas and show the

BRIEFI Y

8 Palestinians held in Hebron: Eight Palestinians were arrested by Israeli soldiers on Saturday after clashes with Jewish settlers in Hebron, Palestinian sources

said, AFP reports from Hebron. A group of about 50 Jewish settlers began throwing stones at Palestinians near Hebron's tomb of the patriarchs, a sacred site for both Jews and Muslims, injuring one, the sources said. Israeli soldiers intervened, arresting eight Palestinians and dispersing the settlers, they said. Tension remains high in this flashpoint West Bank city because of the deadlocked talks over the log-delayed withdrawal of Israeli forces from most of He-

Road mishap claims 18 in Gabon: Abus carrying voters to polling stations in Gabon crashed with a

lorry, killing 18 people and injuring nearly 70, national radio said Saturday, AFP reports from Liberville. Sixteen people were killed instantly and two others died later of their injuries in the crash Friday, some 35 kilometres (20 miles) east of the capital Liberville. Many of the injured were in serious condition in hospital. Legislative elections were

set to take place on Sunday, but were postponed Saturday until a later date. WW II bomb found in Malaysia: A suspected World War II bomb has been found by a group of fishermen in the straits of Malacca, about 300 km (190 miles) north of the Malaysian capital, the national Bernama News Agency

said on Saturday, Reuter reports from Kuala Lumpur. It said fishermen trawling the area found the bomb in their net on Thursday, four nautical miles from their village in Bagan Panchor. They left the bomb, which bore the words "US MK-13-Mogo' and is still active, on a nearby island and lodged a

police report Irish minister resigns: A minister in Prime Minister John Bruton's government resigned Saturday over allegations that a supermarket chain paid for major improvements on his home, AP reports from Dublin.

Michael Lowry, 42, the minister for transport, energy and communications in Bruton's cabinet since the three-party coalition took power in December 1994, resigned after a 30minute meeting with Bruton. The decision followed allegations that 207,820 Irish pounds (dlrs 350,000) in improvements to Lowry's Georgian home in country Tipperary, southwest Ireland, were paid by Dunnes Stores, a supermarket and discount clothes chain.

Small US jet crash claims 3: A small jet nose-dived into the roof of a two-story warehouse, killing all three passengers in a fiery crash that set the building ablaze, AP reports from Irvine.

The pilot radioed after takeoff that there was a problem, and was trying to return to John Wayne Airport on Saturday when the twin-engine jet plummeted into the warehouse, police Lt Tom Hume said. Officials believe no one was inside the building at the time. All three people aboard the aircraft were killed, said Jerry Johnston, a spokesman with the Federal Aviation Administration. The National Transportation Safety Board was

investigating.

irkutsk aircraft association producing the planes "busy for five to seven years and raise its

workers' wages.' The sides declined to provide information on how many aircraft India will buy. However, Rosvooruzheniye did not deny early Indian Defense Ministry reports that the country may purchase at least eight fighters

agency reported. India would be the first country to import Su-30 fighters, but the company has plans to sell the aircraft to other countries.

The company is conducting

The current deal also provides for the delivery of landbased equipment needed to service the aircraft and a complete set of arms and ammunition for

plane crash claims 13 was carrying 13 passengers and MEDELLIN, Colombia, Dec

> We've been in touch with the control tower and apparently

emergency, he added. rushed to Medellin's Las Vegas Hospital with multiple fractures and burns over as much as 90 per cent of their bodies, were identified by rescue officials as

In recent days the protesters have begun calling for the resignation of Milosevic, the Communist-era leader of Serbia and one of the key strong-

men in the region. One of the main opposition

govern where it had won.

to the streets in Belgrade in the biggest anti-communist protest in years, Saturday - AFP/UNB photo Milosevic.