

First Ladies' drive to foster women's rights

LA PAZ, Bolivia, Dec 4: Hillary Rodham Clinton and other First Ladies from all over the Americas launched a drive on Tuesday to foster women's and children's rights, combat family violence and give women more participation in public life, reports Reuters.

"Democracy requires the participation of all citizens, including women," Clinton told the opening session of the sixth conference of first ladies of the Americas.

Bolivia's first lady Ximena Irujo-Sanchez, who is hosting the four-day meeting, demanded concrete steps so that "women have equal access to positions of power."

The conference, entitled "the rights of women and children within the framework of sustainable human development," runs until Friday. It will be followed immediately by a week-end hemispheric summit on sustainable development in Santa Cruz, 300 miles (500 km) southeast of La Paz.

On the opening day of the meeting, the first ladies demanded better access to health



and education for women and children and legislation to protect them from abuse at home. Clinton argued that better access to schooling should also help bring down the number of deaths from illegal abortions. "Education is closely related to abortion," she said.

Revolt draws int'l attention

Zairean rebels claim to have captured 3 major towns

GOMA, Zaire, Dec 4: Zairian rebels claimed Tuesday to have captured three major towns and said they were surrounding the last city in eastern Zaire under government control, reports AP.

Jean Kabongo, a senior member of the rebel alliance, claimed that his forces had captured Bunia and Walikale in northeastern Zaire, and Kindu in southeastern Zaire.

"We are advancing on Kisangani now and we have surrounded it. It is our next objective," said Kabongo. He said that Bunia and Walikale fell Monday night and that his troops secured the areas Tuesday.

The revolt attracted international attention when the fighting between the rebels and former Rwandan Hutu soldiers and militia began driving more than one million Rwandan and Burundian refugees from their camps in eastern Zaire. The moves prompted more than 600,000 Rwandans to return

home. Canadian Lt. Gen Maurice Baril, organizing aid for Rwandan refugees from his base at neighboring Uganda's main civilian airport said Tuesday. "The fighting is very, very fluid. It's shifting very quickly."

A large number of Zairian troops and members of Rwandan Hutu militia who have been living in exile in Zaire for two years were believed to be in Walikale, 145 kilometers (90 miles) northwest of Goma, and in Bunia.

Bunia, near the border with Uganda, is 400 kilometers (250 miles) north of Goma, the main refugee crossing point into Rwanda.

There was no independent confirmation of Kabongo's claims. But aid officials in Kisangani did report rumors of infiltrations into the town by rebel forces and said that Zairian soldiers were beginning to panic.

"We will liberate our people

very soon," Kabongo said. The victories achieved in the last two days leave only Kisangani, Zaire's fifth largest city, under government control in eastern Zaire.

The fall of Kisangani would be a dramatic loss to the government of President Mobutu Sese Seko. The rebels demand the ouster of Mobutu, whose regime they see as a corrupt and exploitative.

Deep in the interior of the country, Kisangani is an important port and trade link on the Zaire river — known as Stanleyville during Belgian colonial days when the river was called the Congo.

An angry Zairian Prime Minister Leon Kengo wa Dondo on Tuesday accused neighbouring Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda of backing the rebels.

"Zaire intends to reconquer its territory, whatever the cost," Kengo said at a summit of Central African leaders in Brazzaville, Congo.

Cong (I) begins expelling corrupt senior leaders

NEW DELHI, Dec 4: India's Congress Party has begun to expel senior leaders accused of corruption, news reports said Wednesday, reports AP.

On Tuesday, the party expelled Sukh Ram, a former communications minister who presided over the deregulation of the industry he headed, but in now charged with taking bribes in exchange for awarding government contracts.

Similar action was being contemplated against two other ministers in former prime minister P. V. Narasimha Rao's Cabinet, said the Pioneer newspaper, quoting party spokesman, Vithal Gadgil.

One of them, Sheila Kaul, is accused of taking bribes to allot government housing and the other, Satish Sharma, of selling lucrative fuel business concessions to relatives of Rao and other officials.

Rao himself is implicated in several cases, the biggest being bribing opposition lawmakers to support him during a no-confidence vote.

Rao stepped down as party president in September, but continues to lead a powerful committee of party lawmakers. On Tuesday, spokesman Gadgil said there was no move to expel Rao, who continues to have supporters within the party.

Canada to sign air services deal with Philippines

MANILA, Dec 4: Canada expects to sign an air services agreement with the Philippines when Prime Minister Jean Chretien visits the country next month, Canadian officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

Chretien is to make a state visit to the Philippines January 14-16 as head of a large trade mission, part of a three-nation Asian swing that also will take him to South Korea and Thailand.

A meeting between Chretien and President Fidel Ramos is expected to deal largely with improving commercial ties and Canada's staging of next year's 18-nation Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, Canadian Ambassador Stephen Heeney said. This year's APEC summit was held in the Philippines last month.

Top executives of about 300 Canadian companies are accompanying Chretien on the Asian trip, Heeney said.

Canada is one of the Philippines' major trading partners, and trade between the countries reached \$2.5 billion last year.

Govt, rebels to sign peace deal in Guatemala

OSLO, Norway, Dec 4: Although nearly four decades of war have flooded Guatemala with bitterness, both the rebels and the government believe forgiveness may at last be at hand, reports AP.

The longtime adversaries are expected to sign an accord Wednesday declaring a permanent cease-fire after 36 years of fighting that killed some 140,000 people.

The signing at Oslo's city hall would be a significant step in the peace process that began with a cold and awkward meeting in the Norwegian capital in 1990.

The cease-fire is one of three partial accords to be signed in Europe over the next six days, leading up to a final peace accord scheduled to be signed in Guatemala City on December 29.

The Oslo signing ceremony is expected to have about 1,000 guests, including Guatemalan President Rios Montt, who accepted the Nobel Peace Prize in the same building in 1992.

FBI men in Kashmir to trace whereabouts of 4 westerners

SRINAGAR, India, Dec 4: Two FBI officers have met with Kashmiri police to establish the whereabouts of four Westerners kidnapped in the Himalayan state 17 months ago, officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

Nevina Ripley and William Paul Woods, of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), held discussions here late Monday with crime branch official Mohammed Amin.

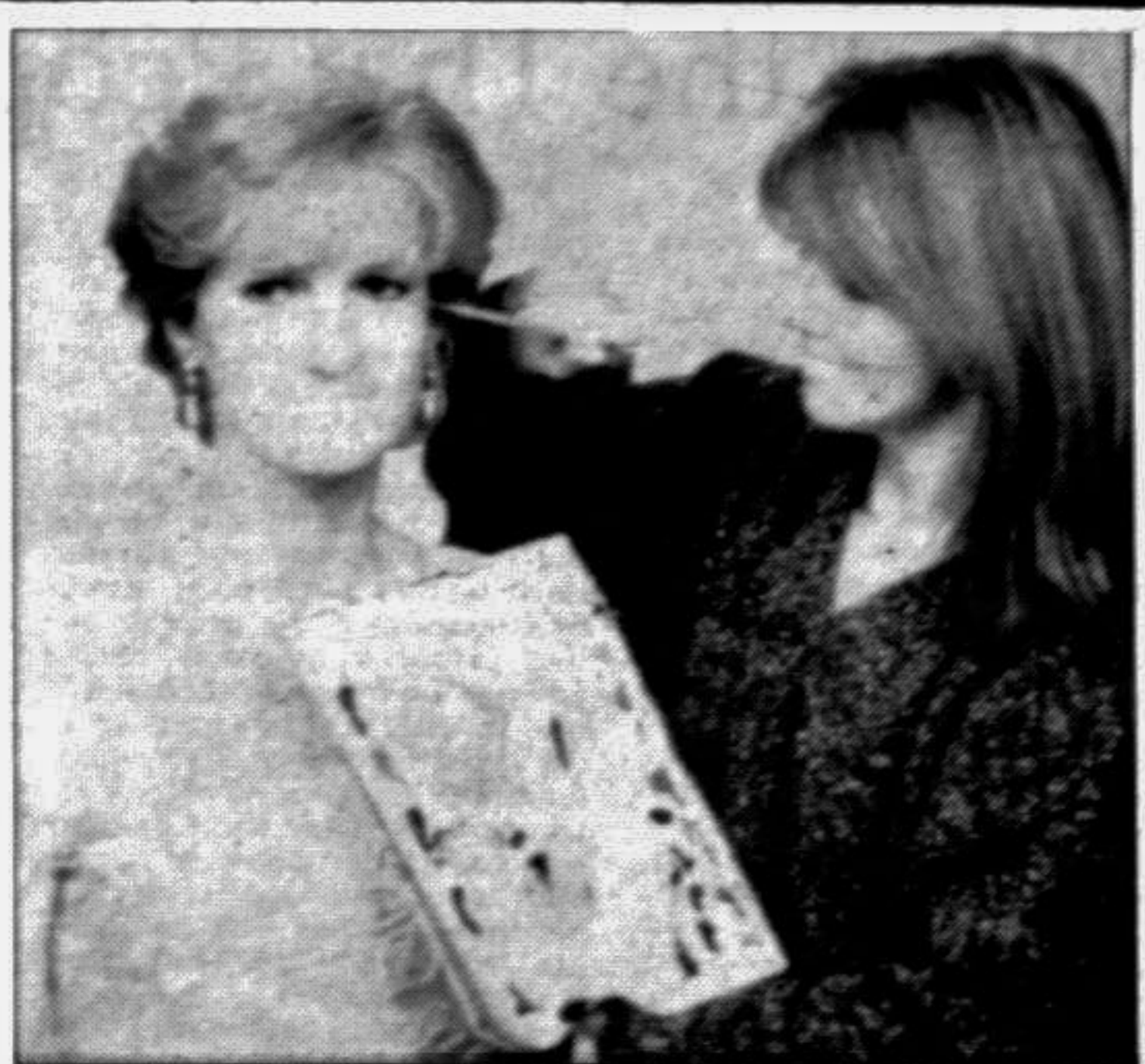
Some ambassadors said the letter did not formally withdraw OAU support for Boutros-Ghali but simply gave individual countries the go-ahead to submit additional names.

British Ambassador John Weston said he expected the Africans to submit new names to the Security Council within a few days.

Congolese Ambassador Daniel Abibi said some countries were waiting for guidance from this week's summit of France and French-speaking African countries in Burkina Faso.

The council must select a secretary-general and forward the name to the 185-member General Assembly by December 17, when the current session adjourns for the holidays.

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Hair and colour artist Nell Clarke puts the final touch to the skin tones of the very latest Madame Tussaud's waxwork figure of Diana, Princess of Wales, before being unveiled to the public in the Grand Hall at the popular tourist attraction Tuesday. The likeness took over six months to complete and the Princess posed for two hours while hundreds of detailed measurements and photographs were taken at Kensington Palace last April. Real hair was used to match those famous royal tresses.

— AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Bid to become first male Miss Australia!

MELBOURNE: Brad Rodgers is a dark-eyed brunette who wants to be the first male Miss Australia, reports AP.

The 27-year-old department store manager will compete against more than a dozen females in the national final for the Miss Australia beauty contest in February.

Rodgers became the first man selected for the final in the contest's 42-year history when he was named "Miss Victoria Fundraiser" at a state preliminary hearing on Monday night.

He earned his place as a contestant after he raised more than Australia 100,000 dollars (US \$78,000 dollars) for the quest's favorite charity which helps autistic children.

Dressed in a tuxedo rather than the traditional ball gown, Rodgers said he was glad to end the female dominance of the Quest.

"I'm not here to make a political statement for blokes (guys), but I do hope I'll be the first of many more to come," he said.

In the past men have been specifically barred from the contest, but organisers say they've now had a change of heart.

Looted W W II treasures go on display

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia: A controversial collection of art treasures looted by the victorious Red Army at the end of World War II went on display Tuesday at the Hermitage Museum, reports AP.

Many of the 89 drawings, lithographs and watercolours were believed lost in the war; the hermitage only recently revealed that they had survived and had been hidden away in Russia for 50 years.

These trophies of war are at the heart of bitter disputes between Russia and countries like Germany, where special Soviet teams scooped up millions of art works, rare books and other precious objects.

The original owners, which range from museums and libraries to the families of private collectors, want their treasures back.

Fat women more prone to breast cancer

LONDON: Plump women may be more prone to breast cancer because chemicals, which trigger the disease, are stored in their body fat, researchers said on Monday, reports Reuters.

Scientists from Britain's Institute of Cancer Research carried out tests on breast fat taken from 40 healthy women undergoing reconstructive surgery. Their findings were published on Monday in the December issue of the journal Cancer Research.

In more than one third of cases the samples contained substances that damaged DNA, a potential trigger for cancer.

While the chemicals are yet to be identified, this is the first evidence that human fat can act as a reservoir for cancer inducing agents.

Dr David Phillips, who led the research at London's Royal Marsden Hospital, said it could mean overweight women were most at risk from breast cancer — but not necessarily those with large breasts.

US Congressman joins rally in Belgrade

Protest on against Milosevic

BELGRADE, Dec 4: Nearly 100,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Belgrade in a 15th straight day of protests against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, as the government cracked down on independent radio stations, reports AP.

The second day running, a heavy police presence accompanied the demonstration, which drew the highest level of support since a government warning to protestors issued on Sunday.

In addition to the throngs in Belgrade, several thousand demonstrators also held protests in Nis and Podgorica in the south, and Novisad north of the capital.

Belgrade's independent radio station B-92, which has given wide coverage to the protests that began following the cancellation of municipal elections, was declared illegal and closed down, the station said Tuesday.

Shortly afterwards, radio index, the Belgrade students' radio station, which has also reported on the protests, was similarly shut, it said.

Meanwhile the Belgrade electoral commission questioned the legal procedure by which the election results were cancelled, saying it had addressed a letter contesting the move to the legal authorities.

The protests were launched after the government cancelled the results of municipal elections in which the opposition claimed victory in 15 of Serbia's 18 largest towns, including the capital Belgrade.

Reuters adds: Four US Congressmen on a fact-finding visit to the former Yugoslavia on Tuesday joined a huge rally in Belgrade mounted by Serbian opponents of President Slobodan Milosevic.

They walked with 50,000 demonstrators and later waved their support to the crowd gathered for a rally in a central Belgrade Square from a window of the opposition headquarters



Dr Paul Spudis (2nd-L) of the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory speaks at a Pentagon Tuesday press briefing about the discovery of water on the Moon. Dr Stewart Nozette of Livermore (2nd-R) and Dr Dwight Duston (R) hold a photo of the Moon's south pole taken by the US space probe Clementine.

Pakistan rejects US criticism on China's help for N-energy

ISLAMABAD, Dec 4: Pakistan on Tuesday rejected US criticism of Sino-Pakistan cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology, saying it did not violate any international law, reports AP.

"Whatever cooperation Pakistan has with China in the peaceful use of nuclear technology is under the safeguards of IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency)," a foreign office spokesman said here.

He was commenting on a statement by a US State Department spokesman on Tuesday, discouraging any nuclear dealings between the two nations.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin made a pledge here Sunday, to continue nuclear cooperation for peaceful purposes.

Jiang concludes a four-day visit to Pakistan on Wednesday. "We are not breaking any law. We are not doing anything which 'contravenes any international law,'" the Pakistani

Chechen commander to run for presidency in '97

GROZNY, Dec 4: Aslan Maskhadov, Chief Commander of Chechnya's independence fighters who have humiliated the Russian army, said on Tuesday he planned to run in the presidential election expected early next year, reports Reuters.

Maskhadov's announcement ends weeks of speculation about whether or not he planned to seek office.



Onlookers check the wreckage of destroyed vehicles after a car-bomb exploded outside a shopping complex in Lahore Tuesday. The blast which occurred during Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit, left three passers-by injured.

50,000 flee home for fear of cyclone in India

HYDERABAD (India), Dec 4: More than 50,000 people have fled their homes in southern India ahead of an impending cyclone which officials warned today could be harsher than one that killed 1,000 people last month, reports AP.

Authorities alerted the Army, Air Force and Navy in Andhra Pradesh state after evacuating the tens of thousands of villagers from the winding coastal region, officials said here.

Andhra Pradesh relief commissioner H.S. Brahma said the cyclone with wind speed touching up to 200 km (125 miles) per hour was expected to hit the state around 2-30 pm (0900 GMT).

It is Boutros-Ghali's right to run a second time," said Mubarak, quoted by Egypt's semi-official Middle East News Agency. "But we did all what we can as Egypt, and I don't think he will be able to continue in

this process, unless he is supported by someone else."

Boutros-Ghali will end his five-year term December 31. The United States opposes a second term, saying he has not been aggressive enough in pursuing reform.

While African ambassadors rallied behind Boutros-Ghali on Tuesday, Mubarak said he expected they would nominate an acceptable alternative.

Western diplomats warned the Africans to quickly offer new candidates or risk losing the position to a non-African.

The United States cast the lone negative vote against Boutros-Ghali in the 15-member Security Council on November 19. It urged African nations to make other nominations in order to keep an African in the position.



Boutros Boutros Ghali

African ambassadors said they could not do so since the Organisation of African Unity had endorsed Boutros-Ghali in July.

"The Organisation of African Unity was supporting Dr Boutros-Ghali and he was its only candidate but it seems there are obstacles," Mubarak said. "If Dr Boutros-Ghali is not going to run, I believe that the Organisation of African Unity will nominate some else who is acceptable to become secretary-general."

In an effort to break the stalemate, OAU President Paul Biya of Cameroon sent a letter suggesting that African leaders were free to submit other names.

After meeting privately for more than three hours Tuesday, OAU ambassadors said they

were unable to agree on other candidates.

Sierra Leone's ambassador, James Jonah, said "all reports about abandoning Boutros-Ghali are rubbish. He is still maintained by the African group."

But it appeared that confusion — rather than wholehearted support for Boutros-Ghali — was behind the Africans' continued public endorsements.

Several ambassadors said their heads of state had not received Biya's letter or had not issued new instructions. There were also disagreements on the interpretation of the letter, which was made public on Monday.

Some ambassadors said the letter did not formally withdraw

Taliban asked to behave gently

ISLAMABAD, Dec 4: Afghanistan's radical Islamic Taliban Movement told its members on Tuesday to relax their harsh treatment of people in the capital Kabul, official Kabul Radio said, reports Reuters.

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, quoted Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar as telling his followers to "behave with the disturbed citizens of war-shattered Kabul so you get Allah's mercy."

He told Taliban members to behave in accordance with Islamic sharia law and not to harm or tease residents of the capital.

The radio also quoted another Taliban statement advising the movement's fighters to avoid harsh treatment of citizens, particularly women.