

## 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 Reuter.

"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 Iturralde-Sánchez, 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 weekend 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.

Amnesty International alleges Five NLD members held after leaving Suu Kyi's home

YANGON, Dec 4: Human rights watchdog Amnesty International said today that five supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi had been detained by Myanmar's military authorities after leaving the opposition leader's compound, reports AFP.

The five youth members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) were arrested Tuesday after leaving her home, which has since been sealed off, the London-based group said in a statement received here.

The arrests came as Myanmar's security forces rounded up at least 300 student demonstrators Tuesday when they refused to disperse following an overnight student protest march in Yangon.

Amnesty International considers the five to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their right to free association, it said.

Amnesty said it was con-

## BRIEFLY

### Mild quake hits northern Japan:

A moderate earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.5 jolted northern Japan early Wednesday morning, but there were no reports of damage or injuries, AP reports from Tokyo.

The Central Meteorological Agency said the earthquake was centered at a depth of about 150 kilometers (93 miles) in a mountainous area of the Aizu region, 210 kilometers (130 miles) north of Tokyo. It struck at 12:49 am (1549 GMT). Separately, two minor undersea earthquakes, including one with a preliminary magnitude of 4.3, rocked small islands about 170 kilometers (105 miles), south of the capital, the agency said.

### Ethiopia hosting 375,000 refugees:

Ethiopia's Administration for Refugees and Refugee Affairs (ARRA) Tuesday said Ethiopia is hosting over 375,000 refugees from neighbouring countries, Xinhua reports from Addis Ababa.

In a report to the house of people's representatives or parliament, the ARRA said out of the refugees 276,000 are Somalis, over 72,000 Sudanese, 18,000 Djimoutians and over 8,000 Kenyans. The ARRA said the expense to host the refugees is fully covered by foreign assistance including the food aid from the World Food Programme and other necessary expenses by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

### Woman robbed of \$ 690,000 in HK:

A woman was abducted and robbed of US dollar 690,000 in cash

that she was delivering from Macau to Hong Kong, and was then dumped in the countryside, the victim told police in the British-ruled territory, Reuter reports from Hong Kong.

The 23-year-old woman reported she was grabbed by two men on a footbridge in Hong Kong's central business district on Monday afternoon and bundled into a van where two other men gagged, blindfolded and bound her, a police spokesman said on Tuesday. She was later dumped with face and limb injuries in a street in the rural new territories area. The woman said she was carrying the money for her employers, a company in nearby Portuguese-administered Macau.

### 609 detainees freed in Myanmar:

All of the 609 demonstrators up by police after a protest march through the streets of Yangon early this week have been released, a senior military intelligence official told AFP yesterday.

Major Hla Min of the office of strategic studies said that 487 students were returned to their campuses and 122 non-students among the demonstrators were sent back to their townships on Tuesday afternoon.

### 'Columbia' may return to earth early:

The space shuttle Columbia may have to return to earth a day early because of a forecast for bad weather at landing sites on both US coasts, NASA officials said on Tuesday, Reuter reports from Cape Canaveral.

The shuttle's mission was recently extended until Friday, but poor weather is forecast for the shuttle's prime landing site in Florida and high winds would affect the backup landing strips in California and New Mexico, mission control's Marc Garneau told the five astronauts.

## 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 AFP.

Authorities alerted the 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 HS Brahma said the cyclone with wind speeds touching up to 200 knts (325 miles) per hour was expected to hit the state around 2-30 pm (0900 GMT).

## African diplomats yet to agree on candidate to replace Ghali

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 4: African diplomats were unable to agree on a candidate for the top UN position, even though Egypt's president conceded US opposition had scuttled Boutros-Ghali's chances for a second term, reports AP.

UN spokesman Sylvana Foia said Tuesday that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak assured Boutros-Ghali that Egypt remained officially committed to the 74-year-old Egyptian diplomat. But Mubarak, speaking in Tunisia, said the United States had effectively ended Boutros-Ghali's candidacy.

"It is Boutros-Ghali's right to run a second term," 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."

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