



South African President Nelson Mandela with Taiwanese Foreign Minister John Chang explains to the media why his country is shifting diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to Beijing during a presser at the Union Buildings in Pretoria Wednesday. Mandela reassured Taiwan that the two countries will however enjoy a high level of cooperation. — AFP/UNB photo

International

UNGA adopts resolution to accelerate ME peace process

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 5: The General Assembly called on Wednesday for the immediate acceleration of negotiations in the Middle East peace process and urged all parties to fulfil their obligations and implement the agreements already reached, reports Reuters.

The vote on the resolution was 159 to 3, with two abstentions. Iran, Lebanon and Syria voted against, while Libya and Sudan abstained.

The resolution was sponsored by the United States and Russia, which sponsor the peace talks between Israel and its Arab neighbours, and by Norway, which helped initiate negotiations between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The resolution was one of seven dealing with various aspects of the Middle East and the question of Palestine adopted by overwhelming majorities.

Israel and the United States cast the only negative votes against five of the drafts, including one adopted by 152 votes to two, with four abstentions, which stressed the need for the realisation of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the withdrawal of Israel from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967.

They also voted against another, adopted 84 to two, with 71 abstentions, demanding that Israel withdraw from all of the occupied Syrian Golan to the lines it held prior to the outbreak of the 1967 Middle East war.

The United States said the General Assembly would only complicate matters by injecting itself into issues that the parties had agreed to decide in face-to-face negotiations.

Russia voted for the Golan resolution, although it had abstained on similar drafts in previous years. The switch followed an amendment slightly softening the resolution. Israel cast the only negative vote on another resolution, adopted by

148 to one, with 13 abstentions, determining that Israel's decision in 1980 to impose its laws and jurisdiction on Jerusalem is illegal, null and void.

This resolution also deplored the transfer by some states of their diplomatic missions to the holy city in violation of a 1980 Security Council decision. Only Costa Rica and El Salvador currently have embassies in Jerusalem. All other embassies are in Tel Aviv.

Israel and the United States cast the only negative votes against three resolutions adopted by overwhelming majorities that dealt with the activities of the UN committee on the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, the division of the UN secretariat which services the committee, and UN information programmes dealing with the question of Palestine.

AFP adds, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Wednesday that the time has come to meet with Palestinian president Yasser Arafat to forge a deal on Hebron, according to public radio.

Netanyahu said a deal on Hebron was "practically finished" and that a meeting between "the leaders is necessary to wrap it up," said the radio, which said the Israeli premier made the comments on the aircraft bringing him back from a brief state visit to Ireland.

In Dublin, Netanyahu said Israel was ready to "start the redeployment from Hebron" but was waiting for the final go-ahead from the Palestinians.

The Israeli premier said a solution to the Hebron withdrawal would pave the way for the solution of other problems, but added that the process had to be carried out in a "way that is in line with the rights of all parties and security."

Under the terms of 1995 autonomy accords, the Israeli army was due to withdraw from 85 per cent of Hebron in March and hand the West Bank city over to Palestinian municipal control.

on a last rampage of looting before fleeing," said a UN official, who has closely followed the rebel offensive since October.

The rebels hope once the Zairean troops seize whatever they can carry they will flee, leaving rebel forces to walk in almost unchallenged — as already happened in Uvira, Bukavu and Goma.

Residents of Kindu said by telephone on Wednesday that the two were still in government hands, and rebels were not in evidence.

They said Kindu, 400 kms (250 miles) south of Kisangani, had been turned into a military fortress with the arrival of large numbers of Zairean soldiers.

The soldiers, unpaid for months and short of food, had done some limited looting there, the residents added.

The last two staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) pulled out of Kindu on security grounds on Wednesday, warning that thousands of people were without aid in the region.

They warned the cyclone, packing winds of up to 150 kilometres (90 miles) an hour, was likely to cross near Machilipatnam around midday (0630 GMT) today.

S. Balasubramaniam, an official, said the cyclone was in the Bay of Bengal, 80 kilometres (48 miles) off the coastal city of Machilipatnam.

He warned the cyclone, packing winds of up to 150 kilometres (90 miles) an hour, was likely to cross near Machilipatnam around midday (0630 GMT) today.

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officer backtracked on Tuesday, saying only that it was surrounded.

They apparently want to prompt the Zairean troops to go

on a last rampage of looting before fleeing," said a UN official, who has closely followed the rebel offensive since October.

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Jurisdiction over Jerusalem termed illegal

UN seeks Israeli pullout from Golan Heights

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 5: The UN General Assembly on Wednesday called Israel's decision to impose its jurisdiction over Jerusalem "illegal" and demanded that the Jewish state withdraw from the Golan Heights, reports AFP.

The resolution concerning Jerusalem passed 148 to 1, with 13 nations including the United States abstaining. Only Israel opposed it.

Eighty-four countries supported the Golan Heights resolution, with the United States and Israel opposed and 71 countries abstaining.

Concerning Jerusalem, the General Assembly says that Israel's 1980 decision to rule the ancient city is "illegal" and therefore null and void and has no validity whatsoever.

The Jerusalem measures received 15 more votes than a similar resolution passed last year.

US delegate Prezel Robinson said that Jerusalem "must remain undivided and its future should be decided through permanent status negotiations, as

agreed by the parties (Israel and the PLO) in their September 13, 1993, declaration of principles."

The General Assembly "should not interject itself into this most complex and emotional issue," he said.

Height measure declares the Israeli Knesset's 1981 decision to annex the occupied Syrian Golan Heights "null and void" and called on Israel to rescind it.

"The continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and its *de facto* annexation constitute a stumbling-block in the way of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region," the resolution says.

It also calls on Israel to "withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of June 4, 1967."

The resolution getting the greatest support on Wednesday concerned the Middle East peace process. The General Assembly expressed "its full support for all the achievements of the peace process" achieved since the Madrid conference in 1991.

Off the Record

Japanese wins world hot-dog eating title

NEW YORK: A 22-year-old Japanese man ate an American competitor nearly 200 pounds (90 kilograms) heavier than him to capture the world hot-dog eating title, reports AP.

A lightweight at just 144 pounds (65 kilograms), Hirofumi Nakajima ate 23 1/4 dogs in 12 minutes on Wednesday.

"This kid is a phenomenal eater," said George Shea, a promoter for Nathan's Famous, the Brooklyn restaurant that sponsored the contest. "He astounded the competitive eating world with his new style — out slow, home fast."

While his opponent — 320-pound (144-kilogram) Ed "The Animal" Krachie — showedboat for the crowd and swallowed his first dog in under 30 seconds, Nakajima started slowly and worked systematically.

Alternating bites of beef with sips of water, he pulled each dog from its bun, cramming bread and beef separately — but neatly — into his waiting mouth.

Quiet but clearly determined, Nakajima downed dog number 23 without even breaking a sweat. The final tally showed him ahead of Krachie by two and a quarter franks.

"I knew everybody was cheering for Eddie, and I knew everybody thought I was going to lose," the painfully shy Nakajima said through a translator. "That just got me going. I knew I had to do it."

Wednesday's match was the furniture delivery man's first hot-dog event. He became Japan's official eating champ when he fended off 50 challengers in a nationwide contest, wolfing down 15 bowls of noodle soup, 100 pieces of sushi, five plates of wheat noodles, five plates of beef over rice and five plates of curry over rice.

Good news for criminals

LONDON: Koala bears, the slow-moving Australian marsupials that live on eucalyptus leaves, have fingerprints so human-like they could easily be confused with those of offenders at the scene of a crime, says a report published here Thursday, reports AP.

"Although it's extremely unlikely that koala prints would be found at the scene of a crime, police should at least be aware of the possibility," wrote a biological anthropologist and forensic scientist at Australia's Adelaide University in this week's New Scientist Magazine.

While handling koalas in the Urimbirra wildlife park in southern Australia, Maciej Henneberg noticed their fingers carried ridged patterns of loops, whorls and arches like those on a human hand.

He was surprised to find no reference to the patterns in the scientific literature.

Henneberg and a team of colleagues compared fingerprints from koalas, chimpanzees and humans using a scanning electron microscope.

They found that even chimps, the animals most closely related to humans, did not have prints as human-like as the koala.

Henneberg believes the findings are of evolutionary importance.

Actor Jack Nicholson (L) and former companion actress Rebecca Broussard (R) step on his star after he was honoured on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in front of Mann's Chinese Theater in Hollywood, California Wednesday. Nicholson, who has starred in such movies as "Five Easy Pieces," "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and "Batman" will appear in "Mars Attacks" which opens on December 13. In the background are his children by Broussard and a grandchild. — AFP/UNB photo

Wayne, Indiana. "We are going home tomorrow and this was our last chance to go to Paris," said her mother 58-year-old Marvel Crumpacker. "But we didn't realise that this was the first train."

Two paying passengers was a far cry from the normal Eurostar service on the high-speed 794-seat trains that run between London-Paris and London-Brussels.

"I've never been on a train this empty before," train manager Fiona McCallum said on leaving water Loo Station in London.

She said the early morning Eurostar service usually had 200 passengers, mostly business people. Instead it left with a crew of 15, a Eurostar public relations executive and 15 journalists.

Denise Bowers, from Fort

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BRIEFLY

Mother Teresa's condition improves:

Mother Teresa gained strength yesterday after life-saving heart surgery and was cheerful, a hospital official said, Reuter reports from Calcutta.

"Mother Teresa is better. She had a good sleep and is cheerful," said SK Tiwari of Calcutta's BM Birla Heart Research Centre, where the Roman Catholic nun was being treated. Tiwari told Reuters that Mother Teresa took morning tea, then sat in a chair and said her prayers. She was strong enough on Wednesday to walk a few steps with the support of staff, her first steps since surgery.

5 miners still missing in China:

At least five miners are missing after a Nov 27 coal mine explosion that killed at least 91 people, the officials newspaper People's Daily reported Thursday. AP reports from Beijing.

The gas explosion at the Dongcun mine near Datong, one of China's main coal producing centres in north-central Shanxi province, led local officials to stop production at all mines in the area to carry out safety inspections, the report said. The search continues for the five people known to have been working in tunnels affected by the blast, it said. The cause of the explosion is under investigation, it added.

Blast kills 6 in Vietnam:

Five children and a man were killed in southern Vietnam when a war-era bomb exploded and ripped through the man's house, a local official said yesterday, Reuter reports from Hanoi.

The official in Binh Thuan province, speaking by telephone, said 36-year-old Nguyen Van Dinh triggered the blast by trying to saw through the causing of the US made bomb to remove its explosives. Neighbours had advised Dinh not to tamper with the bomb and then fled when he continued. But five curious children, four of whom were from the same family, stayed behind and were caught in the blast.

Zemin returns home:

Chinese President Jiang Zemin returned home from Kathmandu yesterday, at the end of a ground-breaking South Asian tour, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

Before he left, Zemin — the most powerful Chinese leader even to visit this Himalayan nation — thanked his host King Birendra for Nepal's "strong support for China's stand on the issues of Tibet and Taiwan."

20 die as bus overturns in China:

Twenty people were killed when their bus overturned and burst into flame in southern China's Guangdong province, it was reported yesterday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The victims were killed instantly when their bus, with 40 passengers, suddenly overturned at a highway in Huaiji, and burst into flame late Tuesday, the Beijing-limited Ta Kung Pao said. The rest of the passengers were all injured in the accident. The bus was from neighbouring Guizhou province.

Drugs worth \$39m seized in Australia:

Australian customs officials on Thursday announced the nation's largest drug cargo seizure of more than five tonnes of compressed cannabis, worth a dollar 50 million (US \$39 million dollar), found in a ship in Sydney last month, Reuter reports from Sydney.

Road mishap claims 18 in Cameroon:

A runaway truck killed 18 people when its brakes failed Wednesday at Mutengene, in Cameroon's southwest province, state radio reported, AFP reports from Yaounde.

The truck loaded with a timber went out of control on a hill outside the village, mowing down 18 people, including children on their way to a local primary school and market traders, before ending up in the wall of a house.

Suu Kyi attends wedding

YANGON, Myanmar, Dec 5: Pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi broke three days of house confinement Thursday imposed by the military government by leaving her home to attend a friend's wedding, members of her party reported, reports AP.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner left her lakeside compound, sealed off by roadblocks since Tuesday, and attended the wedding ceremony at a Chinese restaurant for about half an hour, family members of the couple said.

The wedding visit came a day after Suu Kyi told the British Broadcasting Corp that she was "illegally confined" following a protest by 1,000 students critical of the government. It was the biggest demonstration since

16000 still missing in Bosnia: ICRC

LONDON, Dec 5: Some 16,000 people are still missing, presumed dead, in Bosnia and the bitterness of their families poses a major threat to peace in the multi-ethnic state, the president of the cross said in an interview published here today, reports AFP.

Cornelio Sommaruga, who is to address an international conference on Bosnia's future here later Thursday, told the Times that about 13,000 of the missing were known to have been in the hands of the Bosnian Serbs.

These included 8,000 who disappeared after the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica was overrun by Serb forces last year, said the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Another 1,500 were missing from Muslim hands and 1,000 from Croat hands, he added.

Sommaruga said that the ICRC, which has a mandate under the Dayton Peace accords to reunite families, has faced "aggression" and harassment in trying to track down the missing people.

Reuter adds: Rebels claimed to have seized a key town and parts of a major northeastern city in an apparent bid to sow panic among hundreds of Zairean government troops in them and prompt them to flee, UN sources said.

The rebels said on Tuesday they had captured Kindu town, an important stepping stone on the way to Kisangani city, which they claimed on Monday to have partially taken. A rebel



The delegation from Bosnia Herzegovina, with Chairman Alija Izetbegovic (C), listens on Wednesday to the opening speech by John Major at the two-day Bosnia Peace Implementation conference in London. — AFP/UNB photo

Milosevic fighting foes with silence

BELGRADE, Dec 5: President Slobodan Milosevic is fighting his foes with an unusual weapon: Silence, reports AP.

Thousands of students rallied outside his office doors Wednesday — but Milosevic wasn't there. Later, 150,000 protesters gathered in Belgrade, the biggest demonstration in 16 straight days. No independent media was able to spread the word.

With Milosevic nowhere to be seen — and even the small, private radio stations that broadcast the rallies silenced since Tuesday — Milosevic can pretend, and try to persuade much of Serbia, that the protests never existed.

Besides several warnings

and a discreet buildup of police, Milosevic has shown few signs that he is ready to use force. But the Serbian president is undermining his foes by blocking their message from the rest of this Yugoslav republic.

That is preventing the protest from spreading to factory workers and farmers outside the capital who are crucial to the opposition's success.

To secure his position, Milosevic has made some minor concessions. On Wednesday, state TV announced a reduction of electricity prices and the resignation of a hard line Socialist Party leader in the provincial city of Nis. But opposition leaders were already claiming victory.

"We are the future of Serbia, Milosevic is the past," opposition leader Zoran Djindjic declared. "They lost their nerve and don't know what they are doing. In 10, 20 days, we'll get rid of him forever."

To accomplish that, Serbia's opposition — made up mostly of intellectuals and middle-class urbanites — needs the support of workers in factories and fields. Without them, it has much less of a chance of driving Milosevic from power.

The opposition has never mounted an effective effort to