

## Universities cancel classes

## Myanmar junta blames NLD for instigating protests

BANGKOK, Dec 9: Myanmar today accused members of the opposition leaders Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), underground communist activists and student exiles of instigating recent student protests.

"We have evidence that not only some NLD members but also members of the All Burma Student's Democratic Front and underground elements of the Myanmar Communist Party are deeply involved in this unrest," a spokesman for the military government told Reuters by telephone.

Meanwhile two universities at the heart of Myanmar's student protests cancelled classes today, campus sources said, raising speculation the military government would close the schools in an attempt to quell growing student unrest.

Dwindling attendance at the Yangon Institute of Technology (YIT) and the Yangon University following anti-government student protests that

rocked the capital Yangon last week prompted the schools to cancel classes, the sources said.

Both schools were closed for about two years shortly after 1988 student pro-democracy uprisings that were crushed by the military, leaving thousands dead or in jail.

Administration officials at the institute and the university said that although the two schools had not been officially closed, they were assisting students who wanted to take leave by arranging air, train and bus tickets.

Rumours circulated today of another gathering of students outside the Institute of Technology, diplomatic sources told Reuters. An institute campus official, however, said there were no demonstrations and described the situation as calm.

Police and soldiers today blocked access to roads leading to the two universities, witnesses said.

## International

## Sindh CM accuses Benazir of holding Nusrat hostage

KARACHI, Pakistan, Dec 9: A Pakistan provincial chief minister accused deposed prime minister Benazir Bhutto on Sunday of holding her mother Nusrat hostage for political ends.

"She (Nusrat) is being held hostage by Benazir," Mumtaz Bhutto, a distant cousin and political rival of Benazir told Reuters in an interview in the southern city of Karachi.

President Farooq Leghari, who sacked Benazir Bhutto on November 5 on disputed charges of corruption and misrule, picked Mumtaz Bhutto to the caretaker Chief Minister of Sindh province.

Once a close associate of Benazir's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Mumtaz Bhutto has spent much time in the political wilderness because of his espousal of Sindh nationalism.

He did not explain how Benazir was holding her Iranian-born mother hostage or what her precise political

aims might be.

A spokesman for the ousted prime minister's Pakistan People's Party denied the charge, saying: "she (Nusrat) is free. She was recently elected as supreme leader of the party."

Mumtaz Bhutto said Benazir had a history of exploiting the misfortunes of her family members — her executed father and two brothers who died in disputed circumstances — to win sympathy and advance her own political career.

"Now she is using her ailing mother," he said.

He said Benazir's popularity had slumped after the September 20 killing of her estranged brother, Murtaza, who died in a hail of police bullets in Karachi, a judicial inquiry into the incident is under way.

Nusrat Bhutto, 67, has rarely appeared in public since Benazir's dismissal and is widely believed to be in poor health.

Mumtaz Bhutto said his Sindh National Front Party was ready to coordinate with Murtaza Bhutto's PPP group.

Benazir of corruption, incompetence and failure to provide law and order while she was in power.

He said inquiries were under way against her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who was investment minister in Benazir's Cabinet.

"There is evidence and record of malpractices all the way from the top to the bottom," Mumtaz Bhutto said.

He predicted that Benazir's PPP would not get more than a dozen seats in the Sindh Provincial Assembly and half that number in the National Assembly (lower house) in national and provincial assembly elections set for February 3.

He described the political atmosphere in Pakistan as quite calm and said he foresaw no security problems during the polls.

Mumtaz Bhutto said his Sindh National Front Party was ready to coordinate with Murtaza Bhutto's PPP group.



Some, 10,000 fighters of the National Liberation Army (NLA) of Iran welcome Sunday Maryam Rajavi, the elected-president of the Iranian Resistance, on her first visit to the NLA in three years. Rajavi, based in Paris, vowed that the 'mullahs' regime will be toppled before the turn of the century.

— AFP/UNB photo

## SC upholds Milosevic's controls over local govt

BELGRADE, Dec 9: The Serbian Supreme Court on Sunday upheld Slobodan Milosevic's hold on Belgrade's local government despite weeks of protests in the city's streets. The move pushed foes into a more determined effort to drive Milosevic from power, reports AP.

The opposition said eight protesters were arrested in the past two days, making 40 in the past week. One of those arrested this weekend was badly beaten, opposition leaders said.

Although the conflict was deepening, it appeared that Milosevic was more likely to be headed for a long struggle of tactics and politics than turning police loose on demonstrators.

Radomir Lazarevic, the chief of the Belgrade election commission, told reporters that the Supreme Court had rejected appeals that would have reinstated opposition election victors.

tories in Belgrade.

The court did not give reasons for its ruling, Lazarevic said. The Belgrade election commission's appeal dealt only with the capital city, but did not bode well for appeals involving other cities where election victories for the opposition also were taken away.

When the commission appealed to the Supreme Court on Thursday, the opposition had assumed it was a way for Milosevic to defuse the daily protests that regularly bring 100,000 people onto the streets.

They are the largest and most sustained protests against Milosevic since he came to power in 1987.

Another 100,000 people were on the streets Sunday. Former French culture minister Jack Lang, a member of the European parliament, lent them their first significant Western support.

## 24th FMs' conference begins

## 'OIC to continue support for Palestinian state'

JAKARTA, Dec 9: The deadlocked Middle East peace process is expected to dominate the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) foreign ministers' meeting which opened here today, reports AFP.

President Suharto of Indonesia started the five-day meeting with a speech saying: "In the Middle East we (OIC members) will continue to support the struggle of the Palestinian people for their right of self-determination and the realisation of an independent state on their own land."

But he also called on members of the Muslim nations umbrella group to make itself more efficient in facing its challenges.

"We need to apply more efficient procedures and work

methods in running the organisations ... our organisation will remain relevant in amidst the flow of change," Suharto said.

Delegates from 53 member states of the OIC and several international institutions attended the annual foreign ministers' meeting.

Host officials had wanted to shift the focus of discussion towards economic issues.

Xinhua adds: The 24th conference of foreign ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) opened in Jakarta today by Indonesian President Suharto.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said in his chairmanship that Indonesia would like to focus on strengthening mutual investment and trade among Islamic nations.

The OIC ought to spend more time and focus on economic cooperation among member states to enhance the economic welfare of its members," Alatas said earlier.

The meeting will also elect a new OIC secretary general. During the five-day gathering, the ministers will discuss current world problems including the Arab-Israel conflict and the conflict in Afghanistan and Bosnia.

The conference is the first of its kind hosted by Indonesia since the OIC was established in 1969.

Delegates from 53 OIC member countries, four observer states and representatives from non-OIC nations and international organisations are taking part in the meeting.

## Banking scandal

## Leghari absolved of any wrongdoing

ISLAMABAD Dec 9: A judicial inquiry into a banking scandal in Pakistan absolved President Farooq Leghari of any wrongdoing, a report released on Sunday said, reports Reuters.

"It is the confirmed opinion of the commission, based on the evidence before it, that the allegations against the President are unfounded," a five-judge commission found unanimously.

In 1994 then opposition leader Nawaz Sharif accused Leghari of accepting money from Yunus Habib, former chief operating officer of the private Mehran Bank Ltd, via a land transaction involving anonymous buyers and fake accounts.

Leghari has repeatedly denied the charges.

The commission said the president had sold the land but at prices that did not exceed market rates. The transaction was done genuinely through the bank and was in his name.

## Tom Cruise of Middle East!

CAIRO, Dec 9: The European Union's special envoy for the Middle East, Miguel Angel Moratinos, on Sunday described himself as the Tom Cruise of the Middle East because of his "Mission: Impossible" in the region, reports AFP.

"I'm often optimistic. My good friends call me Tom Cruise because of my 'Mission: Impossible' so I'm the Tom Cruise of the Middle East," he said in a reference to the start of the recent Hollywood action movie.

"Often I achieve success at the end of my missions," said Moratinos, who was appointed EU envoy in October, despite objections from Israel, in a bid to give a boost to the deadlocked Middle East peace process.

He was speaking to reporters after talks with Nabil Fahmy, policy advisor to Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa, which centred on Israel's military blockade of the Palestinian self-rule territories.

## Foreign policy goals for Clinton's 2nd term outlined

WASHINGTON, Dec 9: President Clinton's choice as national security adviser for his second term outlined five general foreign policy goals Sunday, chief among them to bring Russia into a democratic and united Europe, reports AFP.

Sandy Berger, in his first interview since his appointment Thursday, also told ABC TV's "This Week" the United States will not have a permanent military presence in Bosnia, and US troops will not be involved directly in tracking down suspected war criminals there.

But the result is the same.

## 1 burns himself to death

## 5,000 held for protesting Jayalalitha's detention

reports said.

Jayalalitha, police said, allegedly was paid kickbacks in the purchase of television sets costing 85 million rupees (2.4 million dollars) for the government at inflated prices.

Since Friday, police have raided her house and vineyards in two cities and seized gold and diamond jewels, the reporters said. They also have seized her house in Madras in connection with violating India's foreign exchange rules.

Known popularly as Jayalalitha, she lost power in May after opposition parties successfully campaigned against her five-year rule.

Her administration often was ridiculed as the '10 per cent government,' because of the bribes people claimed they had to pay to get government contracts.

## Off the Record

## Problem child

BOGOTA: A Colombian mother has been forced to put her home up for sale after her 12-year-old son ran up a 12,000 dollars phone bill in one month by calling international sex lines, television news said on Sunday, reports Reuters.

The phone company, meanwhile, took steps to make sure there would be no repeat of the sky-high bills and suspended all international calls out of the working class La Dorada district of Cali, the country's second-largest city, the NTC television news said.

Single mother Ana Maria Martinez said her son, Juan Carlos, called sex talk numbers in Israel, Lebanon and Spain for as long as 30 minutes at a time after seeing advertisements in pornographic magazines.

"I don't know what I'm going to do. I am selling our house but even that isn't worth 12 million pesos (12,000 US dollars)," Martinez said.

## \$ 100 bonds in exchange for guns!

BOGOTA: Roman Catholic churches in the Colombian capital on Sunday offered 100 dollar bonds and poetry books in exchange for guns in an effort to cut crime in one of the world's most violent cities, reports AFP.

Bogota Mayor Antanas Mockus said he hoped residents of the capital would hand over lost weapons "thereby sacrificing their ability to harm others."

The weapons exchange programme was modelled on similar efforts in New York and San Salvador.



Santa Claus is attacked while trying to feed a chicken to "Eric" a five-metre, man-eating saltwater crocodile during the Christmas holiday season at the Australian Reptile Park near Sydney Sunday. "Eric" ate two people before being captured in 1987 in far northern Australia and was moved to a wildlife farm where he killed another crocodile while mating.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Barriers from Hebron street removed

## GCC leaders accuse Israel of violating peace process

DOHA, Dec 9: Gulf Arab leaders on Sunday drafted a statement denouncing Israeli threats to Middle East peace after shrugging off Bahrain's unprecedented boycott of their annual summit, official sources said, reports AFP.

Qatari Foreign Minister Hamad bin Jassim Al-Thani said the boycott, which Bahrain staged to protest Qatar's handling of a territorial dispute, would not undermine the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit, although it "affects us personally."

The leaders of GCC members at the summit, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), meanwhile drafted a statement accusing Israel of violating the principles of the peace process, the official Qatari news agency said.

The statement will urge Israel to "abide by its obligations

with the Palestinian authority. These include the withdrawal from Hebron, the release of prisoners, the lifting of the blockade on Palestinian areas, a pullout from east Jerusalem and a halt to building settlements, it said.

It also called for Israel to resume negotiations with Syria and Lebanon as well as withdraw from the Golan Heights and south Lebanon.

Reuter adds: The Israeli army on Sunday removed cement barriers from a Hebron street closed to Arab traffic two years ago but denied the move was tied to PLO demands the road be opened to Palestinians.

Opening the street in the West Bank city's heart has been a key Palestinian demand in talks on implementing a long delayed handover by Israel of most of Hebron.

Iraqi Trade Minister Mohammed Mahdi Saleh (R) and Jordanian Transport Minister Nasser El-Lawzi (L) address some 300 Jordanian businessmen and industrialists during an open dialogue in Amman Sunday. Saleh pledged Iraq's commitment to give priority to Jordanian goods under the UN oil-for-food resolution.

— AFP/UNB photo

## Taliban terrorising ethnic minorities in Kabul

KABUL, Dec 9: Soldiers of the Taliban religious army stormed into Abdullah's home three weeks ago announcing a search for weapons, reports AP.

They didn't find any, but the soldiers still dragged the 25-year-old man away. They locked him in a dingy room and beat him, then released him three days later without charging him with any crime.

Abdullah is an ethnic Tajik, and his story has become a familiar one among ethnic minorities, who make up roughly three-quarters of the population of Afghanistan's war gutted capital.

Abdullah said he planned to leave Kabul as soon as he could gather enough money to head

north, where the enemies of the Taliban army are in control.

Those enemies — all from Afghanistan's minorities.

The alliance's two main factions are led by Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek, and Ahmed Shah Massoud, a Tajik. Tajiks and Uzbeks live in Afghanistan's northern provinces.

Indeed, workers for international aid groups say ethnic overtones are becoming increasingly evident on both sides of the conflict, with civilians being targeted solely because of their ethnicity.

Indeed, workers for international aid groups say ethnic overtones are becoming increasingly evident on both sides of the conflict, with civilians being targeted solely because of their ethnicity.

It is in the parliaments of the Big Four where basic issues

probably meet the criteria, are highly uncertain about whether to exercise their opt-out.

The smaller states, like

Holland and Ireland, see this as no problem, since economic and monetary union would be followed inevitably by increasing political union, covering defence and foreign policy, and majority voting, which would give them disproportionate clout.

It is in the parliaments of the Big Four where basic issues

probably meet the criteria, are highly uncertain about whether to exercise their opt-out.

The smaller states, like

Holland and Ireland, see this as no problem, since economic and monetary union would be followed inevitably by increasing political union, covering defence and foreign policy, and majority voting, which would give them disproportionate clout.

It is in the parliaments of the Big Four where basic issues

</