

### NATO warns Croat forces New consignments of arms arrive in Bosnia

ZAGREB, Dec 14: New consignments of weapons for Bosnia's Muslim-Croat federation under a controversial US aid programme arrived Friday in the Croatian port of Ploce, the Croatian news agency Hina reported, reports AP.

Soon after a ship from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) finished unloading 36105 mm Howitzers, another vessel from Egypt arrived with 24 long-range guns and 18 anti-aircraft guns.

The US-sponsored train and equip programme is aimed at establishing a military balance between the Muslim-Croat federation and the Bosnian Serb republic, which each control half of Bosnia-Herzegovina in line with the Dayton peace agreement.

US envoy James Pardew Thursday handed over 45 US-built M-60 tanks, and announced that another 42 French-built AMX 30 tanks and 44 AML 90 armoured reconnaissance vehicles, supplied by the UAE, would follow.

The train and equip programme, financed by the United States, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia will also provide the joint Croat-Muslim forces in Bosnia with 80 armoured personnel carriers, 15 helicopters and 45,000 US-made M-16 assault rifles.

Malaysia, Pakistan, Turkey, Germany and the United States have offered training for federation forces.

The purpose of this programme is to provide the federation with the capability to defend its people and its territory," Pardew said.

Meanwhile, NATO warned Bosnian-Croat forces (HVO) Friday that "swift military action" will be taken if their troops are found to have taken part in illegal evictions of Muslims and Serbs in Mostar.

The NATO-led Peace Implementation Force (IFOR) has ordered an investigation into allegations that HVO troops took part in the expulsion of Muslims from the Croat-dominated western part of the city, and IFOR source said.

The probe order was addressed Friday to HVO leader General Zivko Budimir, the source said.

Earlier IFOR spokesman Major Jan Joosten said investigations had confirmed at least one instance of troops from the HVO evicting civilians from Mostar.

## Kofi Annan, a longtime bureaucrat, to lead UN into 21st century

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 14: Kofi Annan, the West African picked to become UN secretary-general, is a longtime bureaucrat well-versed in the intricate workings of the United Nations. In short: just what Washington wanted, reports AP.

Born in the English-speaking nation of Ghana, Annan has spent 30 years at UN posts in Egypt, Ethiopia and Switzerland as well as at headquarters in New York.

Annan, the 58-year-old chief of UN peacekeeping, has "a style of quiet elegance," said US magistrate Jack Mason, a former classmate at Macalester College in Minnesota.

He powerfully delivered points in the most understated way," Mason told the Associated Press in a telephone interview from St. Paul.

"He sort of combined the qualities of, on the exterior, having a very nice self-deprecating sense of humour yet there (being) an inner strength that just radiates," he said.

A fashionable dresser who favours charcoal business suits that accent his salt-and-pepper hair and goatee, Annan was the US choice to succeed Boutros Boutros Ghali, an Egyptian whose bid for a second term was opposed by Washington, which called him too slow in promoting UN reform.

In an interview Friday with The Associated Press, Annan said his main goal would be to work closely with the 185 UN member states to decide "what sort of UN we want in the 21st century and in a climate where financial resources are diminishing."

Washington had said it wanted a secretary-general with enough administrative skills to push through a streamlining of UN operations.

Annan first captured US attention when he helped negotiate the release of Western hostages held by Iraq during the Gulf War and resolve the plight of 800,000 Asians stranded in Kuwait and Iraq.

He also served as special envoy for Boutros Ghali to the former Yugoslavia and to NATO after peace accords last year ended the 3 and a half year Bosnian war.

As UN undersecretary for peacekeeping operations, he administered a budget of 3.8 billion dollars.

From his 37th floor office overlooking New York's East River, Annan oversaw 18 operations ranging from factional fighting in Somalia to the refugee crisis in Rwanda and a multinational force in Bosnia.

### Hamas vows new attack US terms Israeli grant for settlers 'troubling'

WASHINGTON, Dec 14: The United States described as "troubling" Israel's decision Friday to grant financial benefits to Jewish settlers in the West Bank and suggested it was aimed at preempting Middle East peace talks, reports Reuter.

The Israeli move, which could lead more Jews to settle in the occupied area, was a strong sign of defiance by right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to world opposition to his plans to tighten Israel's hold on captured Arab land.

"We've seen the statement and frankly it's troubling," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said. "As I said before many times, settlement activity is unhelpful and clearly complicates the peace process."

But in remarks going beyond standard US phrasing, Burns added: "There's no doubt that when either side says or does things that are seen to preempt the outcome of a negotiation, it makes it that much more difficult to achieve progress in those negotiations."

AP adds ignoring warnings of fresh violence, Israel's Cabinet on Friday approved tax cuts and grants for Jewish settlements that will draw more Israelis to disputed lands claimed by the Palestinians.

The decision came two days after Palestinian gunmen killed a Jewish settler and her 12-year-old son in a West Bank drive-by shooting. After the attack, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu found himself under increasing pressure from settlers to make good on campaign promises to expand the 144 Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But Yasser Arafat's deputy Ahmed Qureia warned later that settlement expansion would lead to renewed confrontation between the two sides.

"No issue is more dangerous than the settlement expansion, therefore the Legislative Council called the Palestinians to start confrontation, to prepare themselves to confront settlement activities," Qureia said in an interview with Israel TV.

Qureia did not detail what measures the council was encouraging Palestinians to take.

The threats of violence came from the military wing of the Islamic group Hamas, Izzeddin al-Qassam, which said in a leaflet distributed Friday that it would carry out new attacks to mark the anniversary of Hamas chief bomb maker Yehia Ayash.

## BRIEFLY



Residents pause to look a poster Friday announcing a reward of 28,000 USD, for information leading to the release of four Western hostages abducted by Muslim separatists last year. The four hostages, two Britons, an American and a German, were kidnapped by Muslim militants while trekking in the Pahalgam district of Kashmir July 1995. — AFP/UNB photo

**Taiwan recalls its envoy from SA:** Taiwan's Foreign Ministry yesterday recalled its envoy to South Africa in response to Pretoria's decision to switch diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing, AFP reports from Taipei.

The ministry said in a statement that the South African government November 27 announced it would adjust its relations with Taiwan in the coming 12 months towards recognition of Beijing. The Foreign Ministry withdrew ambassador I-Cheng Loh for an indefinite time as the unfriendly announcement has seriously damaged Taiwan's dignity and interests as well as bilateral relations, it said.

**Mother Teresa improves further:** Mother Teresa's health improved further Saturday and doctors reduced the quantity of medicines being given to her, a hospital statement said, AP reports from Calcutta.

But she was still not fit enough for doctors to decide when they can discharge her from hospital, said the statement by the B M Birla Heart Research Center. The 86-year-old Catholic nun was cheerful on Saturday morning after a good night's sleep, the statement said.

**2 more dissidents jailed in China:** Two Chinese dissidents have been sentenced to terms in labour camps for penning articles calling for democratic reforms, dissident sources said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

Fu Guoyong, 29, who had already served two years in a reeducation through labour camp for his role in the 1989 pro-democracy movement was sentenced to three years last month.

Meanwhile, another dissident Chen Ping, was given a one year labour camp sentence for co-authoring a separate article with Fu that had also called for democratic changes sources said.

**23 executed in China:** The southern Chinese city of Guangzhou has executed 23 criminals following a mass rally, including a peasant who doused a fellow worker with petrol and burned him alive a report said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The 23 criminals were condemned to death Friday at a vast public rally on the outskirts of the city and executed immediately, the Yangcheng Evening News said. One of those who received the customary bullet to the back of the head was Zhang Wen, a migrant worker from Sichuan.

## US diplomat barred from meeting Suu Kyi

WASHINGTON, Dec 14: The highest-ranking American diplomat in Myanmar was stopped Friday from meeting with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Department said Friday, reports AP.

The United States is "very deeply disturbed" by the authorities' warning to Charge d'Affaires Kent Wiedemann that he should not meet with the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize-winner, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

"We certainly want the Myanmar government to understand that it is on notice," he said, noting that the United States has already imposed a number of sanctions against Myanmar.

Wiedemann was reportedly on his way to meet Aung San Suu Kyi on Friday in Yangon when military authorities warned him to call off the visit, Burns said.

In Yangon, authorities lifted blockades around the city on Friday following a week of student protests but also deployed tanks in a key downtown area in an apparent warning against any unrest.

Security has been high in the past week in Yangon following a wave of student protests, with a heavy police and troop presence on the streets.

However, on Friday the only troops seen downtown were manning the tanks.

Members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) meanwhile said 22 members of the main opposition party were being held by the authorities in the two weeks since the student unrest broke out.

The NLD won 1990 elections by a wide margin but had never been allowed to take power.

Earlier AP says: After a week of student protests, a main road was opened in northern Yangon Friday, but schools remained closed and military security was beefed up as rumors spread of new demonstrations.

Pnyay Road, a main thoroughfare used by commuters, was opened along with inter-sections where students demonstrated just days before. But troops and riot police kept universities locked down and off limits.

Although fewer troops were visible around the Sule Pagoda, which was the locus of the 1988 nationwide democracy uprising, five tanks were parked across the street, the first show of heavy artillery since the unrest began.

Heavily armed troops also manned checkpoints leading to Dagon Township, a satellite town just outside Yangon. The satellite towns, populated mostly by poor people forced to relocate there by the government, are considered potential hotbeds of dissent.

A government spokesman confirmed that 200 to 300 students had staged a demonstration by the most ringing the old royal palace in the northern city of Mandalay on Wednesday.

## UK softens stand on opposition to EU integration

DUBLIN, Ireland, Dec 14: Britain, its government weakened and faced with losing power, has softened its opposition to closer integration of the European Union — as long it is not forced to go the whole way, reports AP.

The 15 EU leaders were expected to pledge Saturday, at the end of a two-day summit, that they will agree by mid-1997 on a new union treaty aimed at streamlining decision-making.

The changes, including expanding EU powers, are necessary to make the union workable when up to a dozen new countries join.

However, the draft treaty which Ireland presented to the two-day Dublin summit leaves key issues unresolved — such as giving up powers of national veto.

**Attack on Uday**

**Tehran-based Iraqi opposition group claims responsibility**

BEIRUT, Dec 14: A Tehran-based Iraqi opposition group said on Friday that it was behind the assassination attempt against President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday in Baghdad, reports Reuter.

"A group of our heroic strugglers... inflicted the verdict of God and the people unto the enemy of God and the people, Udaya Saddam al-Tikrifi, who has caused mischief and crime in the land, like his dictator father — the Islamic Dawa Party said in a statement faxed to an international news agency in Beirut.

The group said in the statement dated December 12 that its fighters "besieged" Uday's motorcade at Al-Mansour Market in Baghdad on Thursday afternoon and fired a hail of bullets, wounding him several times, so he escaped from a certain death."



A dejected-looking British Prime Minister John Major (C) is followed by his Foreign Minister Malcolm Rifkind (behind Major) as they leave the traditional 'family photo' during the EU Summit in Dublin Friday. Major lost late Thursday the Barnsley-East by-elections and his majority in the House of Commons in Britain. At bottom (L) German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and (R) French President Jacques Chirac. At left from Major is Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky and at Major's right Portuguese Premier Antonio Guterres. — AFP/UNB photo

## Tanzania trying to drive Rwandan refugees home Canada decides to end relief mission in eastern Zaire

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 14: Canada has decided to end the multinational relief operation it headed in eastern Zaire, saying its mission had been largely accomplished, reports AP.

Lt. Gen. Maurice Baril, commander of the international relief force in the region, said the refugee "situation has changed on the ground" so much in the past few weeks that there was little need for a multinational operation in eastern Zaire.

The Canadian government has decided to end the mission on 31 December 1996," Assistant Foreign Minister Paul Heinbecker told reporters following a briefing at the United Nations on Friday.

The Canadians were overseeing a humanitarian mission that included American and British assistance to hundreds of thousands of Rwanda refugees that had fled during ethnic violence to Zaire.

But Tanzania is where the refugee crisis has shifted to in recent days. Tanzania has about 535,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees — more than any other central African country — and the Tanzanian government has given them until the end of the month to leave.

Another 640,000 Rwandan refugees returned home from Zaire last month when attacks by Zairian rebels freed them the control of Hutu militants.

Raymond Chretien, Canada's ambassador to Washington, had signalled Wednesday that he thought an international relief force was no longer needed after visiting eastern Zaire at the behest of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Another report from Benaco, Tanzania adds: Tanzania's military began a major operation Saturday to return hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees home. The refugees trudged out of the forests and back toward their camps — but after 2 and a half years in exile they still didn't appear to be headed home.

More than 10,000 soldiers fanned out Saturday to round up 535,000 Rwandan refugees, most of whom fled deeper into Tanzania from camps on the Rwandan border on Thursday.

The refugees reversed their direction on Friday, heading back toward the camps, and the Tanzanian troops set up roadblocks to make sure they kept going — not only back to the camps, but on to the Rwandan border.

But Red Cross workers said the refugees were settling back into their camps, and didn't appear to be moving back home just yet. They said they expected that to happen later Saturday.

"They're in the camps. They're settling down. Everything is calm," said Abbas Gullet of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

He said he knew of no refugees on the road back to Rwanda, and across the border there was no sign of refugees coming from Tanzania.

## Ghali plans to write, consult

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 14: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali will retire to a life of writing and consulting in his native Egypt and Europe, his spokesman said Friday, reports AP.

The 15-member Security Council agreed Friday on the head of UN peacekeeping, Kofi Annan of Ghana, to replace Boutros-Ghali as UN chief and was expected to formally ratify the choice later Friday.

The 185-member UN General Assembly then makes the appointment based on the council's recommendation.

## Clinton inducts 2 friends, allies into his cabinet

WASHINGTON, Dec 14: President Bill Clinton on Friday named two longtime friends and allies to his cabinet, saying he would nominate representative Bill Richardson to be his new UN ambassador, and William Daley to be Commerce Secretary, reports Reuter.

Richardson, a seven-term Democratic veteran of the House of Representatives who has built a formidable reputation as a diplomatic troubleshooter, was someone "who can not only talk but also act effectively," Clinton said.

He praised Daley, who led the 1993 drive for approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement and more recently orchestrated the Chicago Democratic Convention in August, as "a man of rare effectiveness."

At the crowded, stuffy news conference which had a moment of drama when Daley fainted and fell off the stage, Clinton also named White House aide Gene Sperling to head the National Economic



The Pope and Kuwait Sheik Saad Al-Abdallah during the traditional exchange of presents Friday at the Vatican. The Sheik's visit has been a "friendly courtesy call," said the official spokesman of the Vatican. — AFP/UNB photo

## Off the Record

### Madonna's trick to avoid unwanted question

CHICAGO: Sensing the conversation was turning to her baby's father, Carlos Leon, Madonna turned the tables on talk show host Oprah Winfrey by bringing up Winfrey's long-time beau, Stedman Graham, reports AP.

"I was just wondering. When are you and Stedman going to get married?" Madonna asked.

"About the same time you and Carlos do," replied Winfrey, known as Oprah and whose popular TV show is seen by millions in America daily.

"Hey, we can have a double wedding. Cool!" Madonna responded.

Friday's show, taped earlier in the week, was touted as Madonna's first televised interview since the October 14 birth of her daughter, Lourdes Maria, who did not appear on the show. Madonna has said she has no plans to marry Leon.



The discussion between Madonna and Winfrey was interspersed with clips from Madonna's movie, "Evita," which opens on Christmas, December 25.

Winfrey also brought up pro basketball bad boy Dennis Rodman of the Chicago Bulls. Rodman earned a spot on Madonna's bad side by detailing their relationship in his book, "Bad As I Wanna Be," and saying Madonna begged him to get her pregnant.

"I don't have any respect for a man who kisses and tells," said Madonna, who dated Rodman for about two months.

"He says you wanted his baby," Winfrey said.

"Really. Well, he's lying," Madonna responded.

Winfrey said Rodman, who was on her show earlier this year, mentioned that he wants to apologise to Madonna.

Her response: "Well, he better crawl from here to China."

### Self-sticking postage stamp headaches

WASHINGTON: Self-adhesive postage stamps are winning a place in the hearts and on the envelopes of many Americans while troubling those assigned to recycle the paper they're stuck to, reports AP.

The problem is the glue on the new stamps. Unlike glue on regular lick-and-stick stamps, self-adhesive glue is not water soluble and can clog recycling equipment and leave marks on fine-grade paper.

Blemishes don't matter in using recycled paper to make wrapping or anything where imperfections are expected. But problems arise when office paper to be recycled into more fine-grade paper gets mixed with envelopes contaminated by the insoluble glue, it was explained. Other hard-to-recycle items include plastic windows in envelopes and carbon paper.

"We don't want our writing paper with blemishes on it," said Les Ulanow, general manager of ABC Recycling Service in Washington. "Some people say it's recycled and supposed to have blemishes. But if you're in an office, you don't want a blemish where the dollar figure is."

The Postal Service hopes to develop an "environmentally benign" adhesive that won't gum up the recycling process by the end of 1997, said Postal Service Spokesman Barry Ziehl.

In the meantime however, it won't cut back selling no-lick stamps because "the American people have just fallen in love with self-adhesive stamps," Ziehl said.

### Pentagon plans wide range of force cuts

WASHINGTON, Dec 14: Pentagon planners mulling over future armed forces are looking at options that include "worst-case scenario" cuts of two Army divisions, three Air Force fighter wings and dozens of Navy surface ships, reports AP.

But The Associated Press has learned such drastic reductions are far from being accepted by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

"More realistically, we are probably looking at cuts of 5 to 10 per cent" being proposed in the force structure of the nation's 1.4 million armed forces, a senior official knowledgeable about the planning proposals said Friday.