

150 arrested in Punjab on eve of royal visit

Protesters accept Queen's regrets, call off rally

AMRITSAR, India, Oct 14: Queen Elizabeth II made peace Tuesday with families of victims from one of the worst acts of violence of British colonial rule, a 1919 massacre that galvanised the Indian independence movement, reports AP.

In a statement issued to reporters, relatives of the some of the 379 people killed in Amritsar 78 years ago said the Queen's remarks about the slaughter "were virtually nothing short of atoning for the wrongs done by the British rulers in India."

At a state banquet Monday, the Queen described the shooting at the Jallianwala Bagh garden as "distressing," but said that history cannot be rewritten. "However much we might sometimes wish otherwise."

The unarmed Indians were gunned down while attending an illegal but peaceful independence rally, on the orders of a British general who wanted to set an example to those defying Britain's authority.

Although the families of the victims of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre called off their demonstration, scattered protests by left-wing groups were broken up by police across Amritsar on Tuesday.

Police held 150 protesters marching toward the airport Tuesday, hours before she landed in the city.

The Queen followed up her banquet speech with a visit Tuesday to the park where the killing occurred.

Dressed in a bright check peach chignon dress, matching scarf and hat, the 71-year-old British monarch laid a wreath of marigold and leaves at the foot of the obelisk erected in the memory of the killed.

She took off her white pumps and walked barefoot a few steps on a pathway to the monument, going past a sign that said 1,200 people had died, even though the official toll is 379. She passed a well where the bodies were discovered of 125 people who jumped in panic to avoid British bullets.

Among those who signed a statement accepting the Queen's regrets was Mahesh Behl, whose grandfather, Hari Ram Behl, was killed at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919. The bagh, or garden, was named after an Amritsar resident who created it from a trash dump.

On Tuesday, the streets were lined with subdued crowds of Indian, some holding the Indian flag, some holding the Union Jack.

Banners with messages of welcome and fringed streamers in the colors of the Indian flag decorated the streets.

No serious violence was reported when police hustled the

protesters into vehicles, but United News of India news agency reported that police beat protesters with batons at some places.

Earlier, thousands of policemen patrolled the city's streets and its bus and train stations to stop the marchers.

The whole ceremony in Jallianwala Bagh, which had caused a minor storm in India for the past several months, took only five minutes and was witnessed by 70 journalists from around the world.

She was accompanied by her husband, Prince Philip, the governor of Punjab, BKN Chhibber and Gurcharan Singh Tohra, a high-ranking Sikh priest.

The queen and the Duke entered their names in the park's guest book and then were driven about 500 yards to the Golden Temple, Sikhism's holiest shrine that became famous across the world when rebels began using it as the hub of their operations.

AFP adds from New Delhi: The media on Monday unanimously interpreted Queen Elizabeth II's call for greater Asian regional cooperation as a clear reference to India's blighted relationship with neighbouring Pakistan.

All the newspapers reported that the British monarch's

comments about the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had been a veiled reference to New Delhi's continuing strained ties with Islamabad.

The Queen, here on a six-day state visit, told a banquet held in her honour that SAARC could play a similar role as the European Union in ending national conflicts and ushering in economic prosperity.

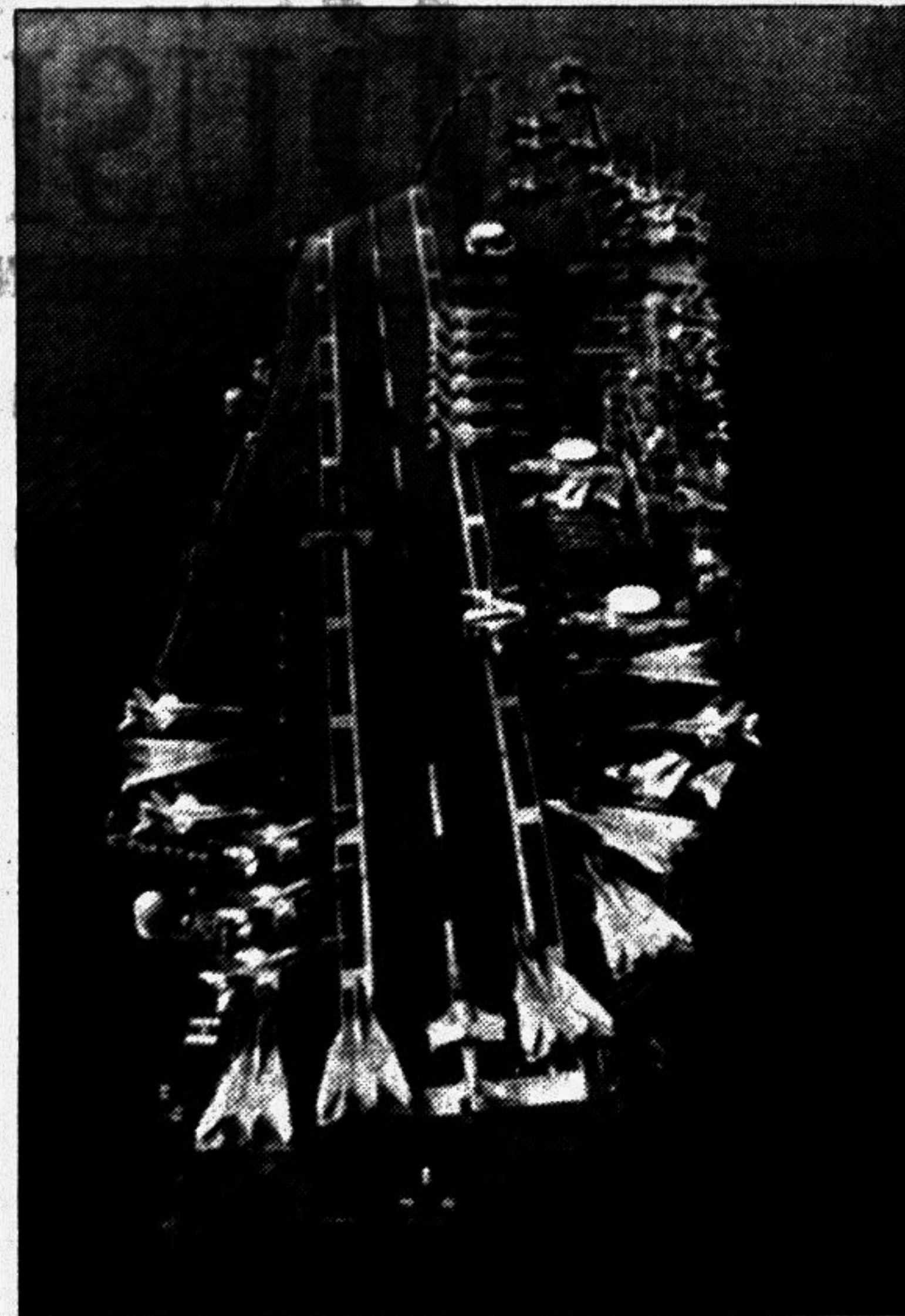
She said SAARC's goals "of closer regional cooperation and economic integration, should provide the key for peace and prosperity in South Asia."

"If countries in the region share a goal, and understand that by working together they give themselves a better chance of achieving it, then historical hostilities can be buried for good," she said.

Last week the Queen, addressing the Pakistan Parliament during her state visit there, praised New Delhi and Islamabad for their efforts to improve their relations.

The 12-year-old SAARC groups Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The Hindustan Times, however, reported that the Queen "urged India and Pakistan to bury their historical hostilities — namely Kashmir — in order to achieve peace and prosperity."



The nuclear powered aircraft carrier USS Nimitz steams in the Persian Gulf on Sunday. Iraq on Monday dismissed the arrival of the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz in the Gulf as nothing more than 'noisy American propaganda.'

'Arms sale booming because of uncertain global security'

LONDON, Oct 14: After a decline in arms sales following the end of the Cold War, the global weapons trade is starting to boom because of uncertainty about international security, a leading military think tank said Tuesday, reports AP.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies said its analysis shows that the arms trade ended a seven year decline in 1995 when sales grew by 13 per cent, and the trend continued last year with an 8 per cent rise.

"Upward movement in the international arms trade is now clear," the institute said in The Military Balance 1997-98, its annual survey of the armed forces and military spending in 169 countries.

While defence spending continues to decline in Europe and North America, spending has increased in the Middle East and east Asia, it said.

The top three arms suppliers — the United States, Britain and France — all recorded large increases in defence exports in 1996, the institute said.

Saudi Arabia was the biggest importer, buying over 9 billion dirrs of military hardware, more than three times second-place Egypt, which purchased 2.3 billion dirrs worth of equipment, it said.

Japan, Britain, China, South Korea and Kuwait all

spent more than 1 billion dirrs. And Israel and Turkey were close behind, buying just under 1 billion dirrs worth of arms, it said.

"Unpredictable tensions" in the Middle East and east Asia contributed to the growth in arms sales, the institute said.

Sustained demand for modern military equipment in east Asia, and more recently in South America, and favorable oil prices that enabled Gulf states to finance large orders of military hardware placed after the 1990-91 Gulf War were also factors, it said.

Worldwide, the institute said, the arms trade grew from 36.9 billion dirrs in 1995 to 39.9 billion dirrs in 1996.

The arms bazaar in the Middle East and north Africa remains the largest in the world — fueled by setbacks in the peace process, concerns in the Gulf about Iran's nuclear and missile programmes, Iraq's failure to comply with UN weapons investigators and ferocious attacks by Islamic militants in Algeria, it said.

In Asia, the institute said violence had returned to Cambodia but that the US-Japan security alliance had been further strengthened and uneasy progress was being made to enhance security on the Korean peninsula.

BRIEFLY

Clinton pays tribute to Denver: US President Bill Clinton paid tribute on Monday to singer John Denver, who died in a plane crash, saying his "soaring music" touched millions and advanced understanding around the world. Reuter Reports from Caracas.

In a statement issued by the White House as he was visiting South America, Clinton said he was saddened to hear of Denver's death. "His soaring music evoked the grandeur of our landscape and the simple warmth of human love," the president said.

Jiang begins US tour Oct 26: China yesterday formally announced the dates of President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States as October 26 to November 2. Reuter reports from Beijing.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said no detailed schedule was available for the trip, during which Jiang will hold a summit with US President Bill Clinton.

Frankfurt book fair opens today: The 49th Frankfurt book fair opens its doors Wednesday for six days in what has become a major annual international showcase for publishers and authors. AFP reports from Frankfurt.

This year, Portugal is the guest of honor with a series of seminars and exhibitions to complement what will be a record number of stands at an event the industry holds up as evidence that books are still holding their own against television and computers.

Rebels kill 6 in Myanmar: At least six people were killed by a group of armed rebels attacked a western Myanmar border town, the Myanmar dissident radio station reported late Monday. AFP says from Bangkok.

About 40 armed guerrillas attacked Tamu, opposite more in the northeastern Indian state on Manipur, shortly before midnight on October 11, the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) reported in a dispatch monitored here. Six including three immigration and three police officers were killed in an hour-long gun fight the Oslo-based Myanmar language radio said.

Floods leave 3000 homeless in Brazil: Floods and mud slides caused by more than four days of torrential downpours have driven close to 3,000 people their homes in southern Brazil, officials said Monday. AP reports from Sao Paulo.

In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Maj Ademir Ferreira of the civil defense bureau said 2,500 people were forced to leave their homes when several rivers overflowed their banks. Most of those fleeing the floods went to the homes of relatives. Only a small percentage sought refuge at government shelters, Ferreira said. "Parts of highways and bridges have been washed away, isolating several rural communities," Ferreira said from his office in the state capital of Porto Alegre. 1,100 kilometres (700 miles) southeast of Sao Paulo.

Gunmen kill 5 in Philippines: Two foreigners believed to be Muslim extremists and three soldiers were killed in a suicide attack Tuesday on an army headquarters in the southern Philippines, a military spokesman said, AP reports from Cotabato.

Four men — two Filipinos and two "Arab-looking" foreigners — entered Camp Siongo, the 6th Infantry Division headquarters, in Datu Udin Sinsuat town in Maguindanao province and shot the lone gate guard, said division spokesman Capt Noel Detoato. The attackers then lobbed grenades while firing their guns indiscriminately around the camp, Detoato said. The four split into two teams with a Filipino and a foreigner in each group, he said. One team, with guns blazing, attacked the office of Detoato, who engaged the attackers in a shootout.

Japan likely to support ban on land mines

TOKYO, Oct 14: Amid mounting international pressure, Japan is moving closer to a decision to sign a comprehensive ban on antipersonnel land mines, a news report said Monday, reports AP.

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto told reporters Tuesday that he has asked the Defense Agency to find alternatives to the use of land mines. Kyodo News Agency reported.

The move is likely to lead to a government decision to support a treaty outlawing land mines, Kyodo said, citing government sources.

Canada has been spearheading a worldwide initiative for an agreement prohibiting the use and export of antipersonnel land mines.

So far, the movement has gained the support of some 100 countries which are expected to formally endorse the treaty at a ceremony in Ottawa, Canada in December.

Ramos in Yangon
Philippines to sign 6 deals with Myanmar

BANGKOK, Oct 14: Philippine President Fidel Ramos on Wednesday becomes the first ASEAN head of state to visit Myanmar after Yangon's controversial entry into the south-east Asian grouping earlier this year, reports AP.

Six bilateral agreements including one on drugs control are due to be signed during the two-day visit, which will bring together leaders from opposite ends of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) political spectrum.

The Philippines president is to meet with Myanmar Prime Minister senior general Than Shwe, who is the chairman of Yangon's ruling military junta which seized power after crushing pro democracy protests in 1988.

Even before Ramos sets foot in Yangon and become the first Philippines head of state to come to Myanmar since the junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), took power — his trip has provoked controversy.

Queen brings out India's love-hate ties with UK

AMRITSAR, India, Oct 14: Once a year, Mahesh Behl prays at the Amritsar park where his grandfather and some 300 other Indians were gunned down by Elizabeth II. He says Queen Elizabeth II should apologise when she visits the park, reports AP.

Fifty years after independence — and 78 after the massacre in this northern border town — a thread of ambivalence runs through India's relationship with its former ruler.

Monday, Indian papers gleefully headlined a report — later officially denied — that the prime minister had called Britain a "third rate power", even as golden streamers were being strung over Amritsar's main street in a shimmering curtain of welcome for the queen.

The queen arrived in New Delhi Sunday and was to spend Tuesday in Amritsar. Among those eager to welcome her in this town 425 kilometres (265 miles) northwest of the capital were the high priests of the Sikh religion, who will guide her through their Golden Temple after she visits the massacre site a few blocks away.

Sikh leader Manjit Singh Calcutta seemed particularly pleased the royal visit had brought a stream of foreign reporters to the Golden Temple, target of a 1984 Indian army

Tigers fire mortars at army base

COLOMBO, Oct 14: Tamil Tiger rebels fired mortars at military bases in eastern Sri Lanka today, wounding at least 14 soldiers and two civilians, military officials said, reports Reuter.

The civilians were wounded when two mortar bombs fell on the government administrator's office in Batticaloa town, damaging the building, officials said.

Seven vehicles parked near the administrator's office, which is almost encircled by an army camp, were also damaged in the attack, officials said.

Details were sketchy, but initial reports said the soldiers were injured when the bombs fell at a stadium where troops were staying.

The rebels fired more than ten bombs, military officials said. The others hit the air force base and an army camp in Batticaloa about 230 km (143 miles) east of the capital Colombo.

Bosnian govt offers reward for information on terrorists

SARAJEVO, Oct 14: The Bosnian federal government is offering a reward to anyone who can provide useful information on the perpetrators of recent attacks on Roman Catholic institutions, Bosnian state radio reported Monday, reports AP.

Alija Izetbegovic, the Muslim member of Bosnia's three-member presidency, called an emergency meeting of the Muslim-Croat government and local authorities in Sarajevo on Monday to discuss the security situation in the capital.

The session was prompted by a weekend attack against Sarajevo's Catholic school. A bomb damaged the building and several neighbouring apartments but caused no casualties.

The blast in the early hours Saturday was the latest in a months-long series of bombings targeting Catholic institutions in Sarajevo. Government officials interpret the attacks as an attempt to undermine Muslim-Croat coexistence in Bosnia. No perpetrators have been found.

raid to drive out Sikh separatist militants. Separatist violence has since been stamped out.

"Now the world will see that the Golden Temple is not a den of terrorist. It is a place of calm and meditation," Calcutta said.

The large number of Sikhs in England may have inspired the royal visit to Amritsar, seat of a religion whose 15th-century founder set out to meld Hindu and Muslim beliefs.

Behl said he was happy to host the queen in his hometown, and glad trade, political and cultural links between Britain and India are strong. But memories, passed from generation to generation, are also strong.

Behl's lounge is dominated by a framed, yellowing portrait of his grandfather, with handwriting in red ink along the bottom identifying lawyer Hari Ram Behl as a "martyr" who died at Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919. The bagh, or garden, was named after an Amritsar resident who created it from a trash dump.

"We heard the story from our grandmother, who used to tell how her husband went knowing something could happen at Jallianwala Bagh, but not knowing it would be this kind of brutality," said Behl, a 51-year-old businessman.

Off the Record

Long-necked dinosaurs may have eaten themselves!

WASHINGTON: Filling in part of an 80 million-year historical gap, fossils found in Utah suggest long-necked dinosaurs may have eaten themselves into oblivion by helping to destroy North American forests. That allowed the rise of shorter, horned dinosaurs that fed on shrubs, reports AP.

Researchers also uncovered fossils suggesting that a toothy dinosaur migrated from Asia and evolved in the Americas into Tyrannosaurus rex, the most fearsome meat eater in history, said Richard L Cifelli, lead author of a study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences to be published Tuesday.

Fossils unearthed in Emery County, Utah, are the first for terrestrial animals and plants from a historical gap that began 145 million years ago and continued until just a few millions years before the dinosaurs became extinct 65 million years ago, Cifelli said.

"This gap has been like a twilight zone in the age of dinosaurs," said Cifelli. Although it was clear that great changes occurred during that gap, little was known because there were few fossils. "This is the first lighted room in a darkened house," he said.

Louis C. Jacobs, a noted dinosaur expert at Southern Methodist University, said the Utah fossil discoveries are "hugely important because they help give a picture of the world during an unknown period."

"There were very major changes then in the ecosystems of the Earth," he said. "What they have done is to document a portion of that change for the first time and put a date on it."

Cifelli said the Utah dig uncovered more than 6,000 fossils representing about 80 different types of animals. They were dated to about 100 million years ago. This is 45 years into the "twilight zone" gap, he said.

"What emerges is a surprising picture, he said.

"The early dinosaurs in North America were dominated by the long-necked, the sauropods," said Cifelli. They were so common 145 million years ago, he said, "it was like it had rained sauropods over the American West."

He said the huge appetite of the sauropods had a major effect on the continent and its forests of primitive plants.

East Asia losing seat on UNSC
UNGA likely to elect Bahrain, Brazil, Gabon, Gambia

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 14: Bahrain, Brazil, Gabon and Gambia are expected to be elected by the General Assembly on Tuesday to two-year terms on the powerful 15-member Security Council, beginning on January, 1998, reports Reuter.

They are the uncontested candidates of their respective regional groups to fill vacancies resulting from the departure from the council at the end of the year of South Korea, Chile, Egypt and Guinea-Bissau.

A fifth seat, to be vacated by Poland, is being contested by the former Yugoslav republics of Macedonia and Slovenia.

AP adds: East Asia loses a seat on the powerful Security Council under the annual realignment which begins Thursday with the selection of five new non-permanent members to serve two-year terms starting January 1.

South Korea will be among the five non-permanent members leaving the 15-member council at the end of the year. Seoul was selected two years ago to serve as a representative of the joint Asia-Africa group.

This year, the Asia-Africa group has selected Bahrain, Gambia and Gabon to fill the three seats it is allocated.



Akramul Qader, Bangladesh Ambassador to Thailand, who is also concurrently accredited to Cambodia, is being received by King Norodom Sihanouk at the Siam Rip Palace in Phnom Penh recently.

Iraq claims compliance with UN orders, warns UNSC

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 14: In an apparent threat to break off cooperation with UN inspectors, Iraq says it has destroyed its banned weapons and the Security Council should lift economic sanctions. Otherwise, Iraq adds, "the situation will become absolutely unacceptable," reports AP.

The claim was made in a letter from Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz to council President Juan Somavia, which was delivered Monday. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the letter.

Later this week, the United States is expected to seek additional sanctions against Iraq for reportedly refusing to cooperate with UN inspectors who must verify whether Iraq has destroyed its long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

The council has refused to lift economic sanctions which were imposed in 1990 when President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, until the inspectors verify Iraqi compliance.

Last week, however, chief weapons inspector Richard Butler reported that Iraq is still refusing to disclose key details of its banned biological

weapons programme and is imposing new restrictions on the inspection team.

Last Friday, US Ambassador Bill Richardson said he expects the council to approve a "strong response" to Iraq. One option would be to seek council approval for a travel ban against Iraqi military and intelligence officers.

In the letter, Aziz accused the United States and Britain of using the United Nations to seek the overthrow of the Iraqi government and "to liquidate its national leadership."

Aziz accused UN inspectors of intentionally repeating inspections and delaying findings although they are "fully aware" that the banned weapons no longer exist.

"Iraq has fulfilled the obligations imposed on it, and the Security Council should meet its obligations under the resolutions themselves by starting very soon" to lift sanctions, Aziz said.

Aziz did not explicitly say Iraq would refuse to cooperate if the council refuses to acknowledge Baghdad's supposed compliance and remove the sanctions, which were imposed in 1990 after Saddam invaded

Kuwait.

But he added: "In case the imbalance of the situation continues, i.e. Iraq continues its compliance but the Security Council does not meet its obligations under the resolutions, the situation become absolutely unacceptable."

That appeared to be a threat to stop cooperating with the inspection team.

Last June, the council threatened to add travel restrictions to the list of economic sanctions imposed on Iraq seven years ago if the inspectors did not report Iraqi compliance with weapons inspections by October.

The warning was issued after President Bill Clinton and Russian President Boris Yeltsin reached an agreement at the economic summit in Denver to give Iraq until the October report to demonstrate cooperation.

But council sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, say the United States has found little enthusiasm among the other 14 members to add new sanctions. As permanent members, France, Russia and China could veto any resolution which they felt inappropriate.

Kabila blasts int'l community over UN investigation

KINSHASA, Congo, Oct 14: The same nations and international bodies demanding investigations into alleged massacres in Congo should assume some of the responsibility for the killings, the president said Monday, reports AP.

"All the forces who contributed in all forms — including in the name of sending humanitarian assistance — to the human suffering of our people, are responsible... for these grave violations," President Laurent Kabila told reporters.

Kabila, who often criticises Western countries for supporting the long, brutal rule of the late Zairian dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, made the comments while pressure increases from the United States and other Western countries to let a UN investigation to go forward.

The efforts of the UN team, which had been in the former Zaire to investigate allegations that Kabila's forces had killed thousands during the revolt that overthrew Mobutu, have been temporarily suspended while team leaders are in New York for consultations.

While Kabila's government has repeatedly said it wants the investigation to go forward, the group never left Kinshasa because of differences with the

government over details and conditions of the investigation.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan called in the team hoping to give the United States time to persuade Kabila and his allies in Rwanda and Uganda that the investigation is in their interests.

But Kabila said Monday that the investigation was nothing but an attempt to shift attention.

"These posturings can only be prompted by the desire to cover up atrocities and human rights committed in the past, or other hidden agendas," he said.

He gave no details.

Kabila also urged that other Central African nations be allowed to work with the UN team.

"All the regional actors must have a primary and active role," Kabila told reporters. He didn't specify which countries he was referring to, but appeared to be referring to Rwanda and Uganda.

He stressed that any investigation it should also probe the abuses of the Mobutu era.

"The hard-won stability will remain precarious unless and until all the violations of human rights... are accounted for in a comprehensive manner," he said.

Battle for world population control still to be won

BEIJING, Oct 14: The battle to stabilise global population growth has not yet been won, experts warned here, saying the world had still to sort out its priorities amid conflicting concerns, reports AP.

Beneath Monday's specialised presentations at the 23rd International Population Conference lay a debate on global priorities, participants said.

According to Michigan University Professor Jason Finkle, the 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo prematurely shifted the global thrust from "cutting fertility to 'reproductive health'."

The latter concept which focused on issues such as preventing sexually transmitted diseases and reducing infant mortality was uncontroversial, but many experts think it distracted from still-urgent overpopulation concerns, he said.

"It was the right message at the wrong time... the battle to stabilise the world population has not been won," the professor said.

Demographers predict the global population will hit 10 billion by the end of the next

century, from around six billion now.

Another Western scholar complained that such global conferences take a lowest-common-denominator approach and lack focus because of widely varying conditions in participants' homelands.

"People avoid certain issues... big questions are buried in a mass of papers on minute questions pertinent only to individual countries," he said.

Reaching over-arching conclusions is not a conference goal, he said.

At the opening of the four-year event on Sunday, Premier Li Peng defended China's draconian family-planning policies.

Policies implemented since 1970 had improved the country's living standards and economic performance by preventing its population — already the world's largest at 1.22 billion — from absorbing another 300 million people.

"This has not only eased pressure on China's economic and social development but also contribute world population control," Li said.

Beijing launched a strict

one-child-family policy at the start of the 1980s in a desperate bid to tame burgeoning population growth. Forced sterilisation and other practices associated with the policy have been fiercely attacked by overseas religious groups.

During the conference organised by the Belgian-based International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, researchers will also discuss the predicted strain on welfare systems posed by increasing life expectancies.

China faces a particularly urgent problem, as the one-child policy is shifting the average age of its population rapidly toward the older end of the scale.

The elderly population, now at 110 million, is expected to hit 130 million by 2000.

The country's medical insurance and welfare mechanisms may not be able to handle the stress as they are in their infancy, Chinese analysts have warned. Until economic reforms were launched in the early 1980s, the country's communist system guaranteed all citizens comprehensive welfare.