UN calls for complete cessation of hostilities in Congo

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 16: The UN Security Council on Wednesday called for a "complete cessation of hostilities by allsides" in Congo and deplored "foreign interferences" there, reports AFP.

The 15-member council also repeated its call for a "political settlement" to the civil war waged for five months by expresident Denis Sassou Nguesso and President Pascal Lissouba, Council President Juan Somavia of Chile told reporters.

Nguesso's forces, aided by Angolan Troops, held the capital Wednesday and were on the verge of taking control of the entire country.

The council did not move forward on the "possible deployment" of a peacekeeping force in Congo which was proposed Tuesday.

AP adds, with events in the Republic of Congo moving faster than UN planning, the Security Council responded to Gen Denis Sassou-Nguesso's victory by repeating calls for reconciliation ignored in four

months of fighting.

Sassou-Nguesso's forces claimed victory Wednesday against the government of President Pascal Lissouba after seizing the capital Brazzaville. The Angolan army crossed the border and captured the second-

largest city, Pointe Noire. On Tuesday, Secretary-General Kofi Annan suggested that the council impose an arms embargo on both sides and dispatch an advance military team to neighbouring Gabon to prepare for a larger UN peacekeeping force if the two sides accepted a ceasefire.

But UN spokesman Fred Eckhard acknowledge Wednesday that there was "no peace to keep" and that the United Nations lacked the means or the mandate to send troops to impose a peace.

Nevertheless, the presence of Angolan forces appeared to constitute a violation of the UN Charter, and failure to respond would call into question the fundamental mission of the United Nations to halt international aggression.

Annan met for more than two hours Wednesday evening with the council but refused to answer questions following the meeting.

Council President Juan Somavia of Chile said the members deplored the loss of life and called for an end to violence and a "cessation of hostilities."

AFP adds, Angola Wednesday confirmed its military intervention in the Congo in a message to the United Nations, according to a reliable source.

The source said the government told the United Nations it had the right to pursue aggressors, in an explanation of why its troops had entered civil wartorn Congo.

The government said this in a message to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who had demanded an explanation of why Angolan troops had entered the oil town of Pointe Noire, apparently in support of Congo's expresident Denis Sassou

Ranariddh for int'l war crimes court to prosecute Hun Sen

International

PHNOM PENH, Oct 16: Ousted Cambodian co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh today called for an international war crimes court to prosecute the country's leader Hun Sen for allegedly ordering scores of opponents executed, reports

Reuter. Ranariddh, who was deposed by Hun Sen on July 6, blamed his former coalition partner for the killing of two senior royalist officials whose graves were found by rights workers on Wednesday.

"We would like to ask the international war criminal court to immediately form and investigation team so (as) to issue an arrest warrant for Hun Sen to relieve him from his immediate duties so the subsequent investigations ... can be done in a free, fair and just atmosphere," said the statement

from Ranariddh's office. "The Souls of Krouch Yoeum, Chao Sambath and others who were executed by Hun Sen's orders will not rest in peace until justice has been served," said the statement, which was faxed to news agencies.

Wednesday exhumed the body of ment.

General Krouch Yoeum, undersecretary of state for defence. from a shallow grave off a country road 40 kms (28 miles) north of Phnom Penh, rights workers said they believed a grave nearby was that of senior royalist official, General Chao Sambath.

Both men were captured by government troops under second Prime Minister Hun Sen two days after Hun Sen deposed Ranariddh in a bloody takeover, the UN Centre for Human Rights (UNCHR) in Cambodia said in a report last

month. The UNCHR verified the politically-motivated killing of at least 41 and possible up to 60 of first prime minister Ranariddh's supporters from his FUNC-INPEC Party during or after Hun Sen's seizure of power.

Hun Sen's government has denied rights abuses but said one senior royalist official was executed after his arrest.

In his statement, Ranariddh accused Hun Sen of 'mass killing" after the coup.

"Hun Sen lives and leads with brutality and violence." Human rights workers on the prince said in his state-

Colombo blast death toll rises to 18

COLOMBO, Oct 16: Colombo police and hospital officials reported today that the death toll had risen to 18 from a bomb blast and gunbattles in the capital's business district, reports Reuter.

Three of 110 people wounded in Wednesday's attack, one of the worst outbreaks of violence in the country's 14-year ethnic war, had died in hospital, officials said, all the dead were Sri Lankan.

The dead comprised 12 civilians, one soldier and five suspected Tamil Tiger rebels, officials said.

Thirty-four of the 107 wounded are foreigners.

The bomb explosion devas-tated three hotels, the Stock Exchange and several other buildings in the central business district.

The Stock Exchange was closed today but may resume on Friday from a backup site, the country's Central Bank, whose main offices in the same building as the Stock Exchange were damaged, said its services would function normally from a backup suburban centre.



A model sports an open buttons grey long dress with a matching hat and necklaces as part of Givenchy's 1998 spring-summer ready-to-wear collection designed by Britain's Alexander McQueen and presented in Paris

BRIFFIY

10 Israelis held in Jerusalem: Ten Israelis have been arrested on suspicion they sold explosives to Palestinians from the West Bank, Israel radio reported

Wednesday, AP says from Jerusalem. Islamic militants have carried out more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel since 1994, and Israel is on high alert for more attacks. The Israelis, all Jews from Jerusalem, were arrested earlier this week and found to be in possession of over 200 kilograms (440 pounds) of explosive material, the report said. Police believe there may be a connection between this group and two Palestinians arrested last week in the West Bank on charges of stealing explosives.

Narayanan congratulates Arundhati: The President, KR Narayanan, on Wednesday congratulated Arundhati Roy for winning the prestigious Booker Prize for her

novel "The God of Small Things", PTI reports from New Delhi. In a letter to Roy, the President said "It was delighted to learn that you have been awarded the Booker Prize this year, please accept my hearty congratulations. All of us in India are proud of your achievement." On a personal note, Narayanan also added "I feel particularly proud as you hail from my own district of Kottayam.

Pickering leaves for India, Pakistan: US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering headed for India and Pakistan Wednesday to prepare for President Bill Clinton's visit early next year, AFP reports

from Washington. Pickering was to visit India from Oct 17-18 and Pakistan Oct, 19-20 and was scheduled to meet top officials in both countries, a senior State Department official told reporters here. He will be the first in a series of high-level US visits to mark India and Pakistan's 50th anniversary of independence, with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright expected to follow in

Canada's envoy to Israel returns: Canada's ambassador to Israel returned to the Jewish state on Wednesday following assurances that Israel would stop using Canadian passports in secret Mossad operations, Reuter reports

late November and Clinton early next year.

from Tel Aviv. "We consider this matter closed," Ambassador David Berger told reporters upon his arrival. Berger was recalled on October 2 over the use of forged Canadian passports by Mossad Secret Service agents in a bungled murder attempt in Jordan on Khaled Meshal, political chief of the Islamic militant Hamas Movement, on September 25.

Another quake shakes Italy: Another strong earthquake, centred near this heavily damaged Umbrian town, jolted central Italy Thursday, waking up people as far away 175 kilometres (110 miles) in Rome, AP reports from Sollano.

The National Institute of Geophysics put the magnitude at 4.1. Shaken awake in this mountainous region were some of the more then 10,000 people who have been driven from their homes by damage or fear. They have been living in tents and trailers after two strong quakes hit the region on Sept. 26, killing 10 people.

AIDS awareness campaign in Vietnam: Vietnam with the help of the United Nations has launched a dlrs 635,000 AIDS prevention campaign, official media reported Thursday, AP reports from Ho Chi Minh City.

The project will target Vietnam's major urban centres, including the capital, Hanoi, and the economic hub, Ho Chi Minh City, the state-controlled Saigon Times Daily reported. The programme will later be extended to the central city of Danang and the northern port city of Haiphong.

Strong quake rocks China: A strong earthquake jolfed a remote mountainous area in China's Xinjiang region early Thursday, the official Xinhua News Agency reported, AP reports from Beijing.

The magnitude 5.1 earthquake struck at 4:30 am (2030 GMT). near Xinjian's southern border with Tibet, the report said. The likelihood of major casualties or damage was slight, given the sparse population in the area. Xinjiang is one of earthquakeprone China's most seismically active regions. A series of disastrous quakes that struck earlier this year killed dozens of people and destroyed many buildings.

WW-II bomb found in Germany: About 2,500 people were evacuated from their homes in Bremen late Wednesday as a precaution, after a dredger on the Weser river pulled out an old World War II bomb from the murky water, AP reports from Bremen.

Police said the crane operator immediately recognised the danger and stopped dredging at about 2:30 pm (130 GMT) to notify authorities, leaving the 2,000 pound bomb in the shovel. Residents in homes within in an area 700 meters (760 yards) were evacuated and streets were blocked off, while an explosives them was called in to disarm the bomb, police said.

of a no-confidence vote against

his reformist government con-

firmed the president as Russia's

dominant political figure, ana-

tanks to settle his dispute with

parliament about who ran the

country, the Russian President

needed only a shot across the

legislatures bows to halt at-

tempts to unseat his pro-reform

dissolve the Communist-dom-

inated state Duma, the lower

house of parliament, Yeltsin

warned deputies to abandon the

tion. I do not want new early

elections. Don't put me in a

complicated situation," Yeltsin

"I do not want confronta-

no-confidence debate.

In a thinly veiled threat to

Four years after he used

lysts said, reports AFP.

government.

warned.

Militants kill 4 villagers in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Oct 16: Muslim militants shot and killed four villagers and injured two others in the northern Indian state of Jammu-Kashmir, police said Thursday, reports AP.

Militants fired at residents of Kotedhara village Wednesday night when they were walking toward an army picket to tell soldiers about the rebels hiding in the nearby mountains, police

The villagers were armed but did not fire back because their guns were not sufficient to counter the militants sophisticated weapons.

Kotedhara village is 200 kilometres (130 miles) northeast of Jammu, the winter capi-After the incident, soldiers

search the mountains for the

rebels, but were unable to find

Muslim militants in Kashmir have been fighting for independence or union with Pakistan since 1989.

AI urges ROK candidates to improve HR records

SEOUL, Oct 16: Presidential contenders in South Kerea should promise now to release political prisoners and improve other human rights if they're elected. Amnesty International said Thursday, reports AP.

With two months left in the presidential campaign, the London-based human rights group sent an open letter asking candidates to commit to 18 measures it said would advance rights in South Korea. Among other things, the let-

ter from Amnesty Secretary General Pierre Sane repeated the group's years-old proposal that Korea amend its National Security Law. The espionage law is aimed at Communist North Korea but has been used to repress political opposition in Democratic South Korea through a provision making it. illegal to "praise or encourage" the northern government.

"There is clearly a need for national security in South Korea," Amnesty said in a statement issued in Seoul. "But too many South Korean governments have used the threat from North Korea as an excuse to crack down on opponents."

Other suggestions include establishing an independent humans rights commission, promoting rights in schools, giving human rights training to government officials and law enforcement agents, improving prison conditions and ending the practice of forced "conversions," in which political prisoners must renounce communism as a condition for release.

In his letter to candidates. Sane urged all of them to make public their positions on the suggestions.

To date only presidential front-runner Kim Dae-jung of the opposition National Congress for New Politics has promised change on human rights issues if elected.

He said he would revise the security law so that the nation's main spy agency would concen-trate on gathering information about North Korea and other nations, and not involve itself in domestic politics.

'Seshan concealed information about threat to Rajiv's life'

NEW DELHI, Oct 16: TN Seshan, who had served as cabinet secretary and the secretary (security) in the Rajiv Gandhi government, had allegedly concealed information about the threats to the life of late premier, the AICC counsel, RN Mittal, told the Jain Commission yesterday, reports PTI.

Arguing before the one-man panel, which took up the crucial conspiracy aspect of its probe, the AICC counsel said that the book on 'Seshan-My Intimate Story, a biography on the for-mer bureaucrat written by K Govindan Kutty, had indicated certain circumstances which pointed towards the "conspir-

Stating that Seshan had himself admitted that the contents of the book were correct. Mittal said though Seshan had opined that the victory of the Congress was certain, there was double about who would head the government.

Alleging that Seshan must

have had some information. the AICC counsel said the former bureaucrat had not explained this aspect during his deposition before the panel.



had concealed, Mittal alleged.

should have clarified, but he The AICC counsel also blamed the then Congress government, headed by PV

Narasimha Rao, for having

The commission had on sev-

bungled the matter.

eral occasions charged successive governments at the centre with being non-cooperative and failing to supply crucial documents and records of various central agencies which were essential for its probe. The deposition of some other

key witnesses also pointed the needle of suspicion towards foreign agencies, such as CIA and Mossad, as strong circumstantial evidence, Mittal said.

According to its terms of reference, the commission would now probe whether any person or persons or agencies were responsible for conceiving. preparing and planning the assassination and whether there was any conspiracy and if so all its ramifications.

The one-man panel had earlier concentrated on investigating the sequence of events and circumstances leading to the assassination of the former

Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, at right, welcomes Sister Nirmala, the head of the Missionary Sisters of Charity, as she arrives at Rome's Quirinale Presidential Palace, Wednesday. - AP/UNB photo

Serbs will surrender heavy weapons, hopes US

WASHINGTON, Oct 16: The United States is optimistic that Bosnian Serbs will soon bow to demands to surrender heavy weapons and comply more with the terms of an arms control agreement, a senior US official said Wednesday, reports AP.

"Six months ago, the projections were kind of alarming." said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It looked as if the parties would be far out of line with the ceilings, particularly the Bosnian

The Serb refusal to part with their overwhelming advantage in tanks and artillery has often been cited as one of the principal violations of the US-spon-

sored Dayton peace accord that ended the Bosnian war almost two years ago.

Other transgressions include the Serbs' refusal to allow the return of displaced Bosnian Muslims and Croats in significant numbers and their reluctance to hand over indicted war criminals to an international tribunal.

The peace accord includes disarmament provisions aimed at creating a balance of power in the war-torn nation. These allocate 273 tanks and 1,000 artillery pieces to the Muslim-Croat federation that forms one entity within a unified Bosnia. The other entity, the Serb Republic, was allowed 137 tanks

The deadline for the reductions is November 1. But several months ago, the Serbs still had 1,000 tanks and cannons over the limit, according officials of the NATO-led peace force.

"We approach the ... deadline with a much, much greater degree of comfort than we would have looking at it six months ago," the official said. "The gap between what is expected of them and what they're doing has reduced dramatically from the projections of a few months

The Serbs acquired their weaponry from the Yugoslav army when Bosnia seceded in spring 1992.

New Pak air chief appointed

ISLAMABAD, Oct 16: Air Vice Marshal Parvaiz Mehdi Qureshi has been appointed new chief of Pakistan Air Force (PAF), replacing Air Marshal Abbas Khattak who is retiring next month, the defence ministry said Wednesday, reports

He will take over command from Air Marshal Khattak on November 8, the sources said.

Qureshi has also been promoted to the rank of air marshal from the date of his appointment.

Khattak is to retire on November 7 after the completion of his three-year tenure. Khattak accompanied by his successor called on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who extended his facilitation to Qureshi on his appointment.

UK to spend \$ 162m on 7 new N-missiles

LONDON, Oct 16: The British government is to spend almost 100 million pounds (162 million dollars) on seven new nuclear missiles for its trident submarines, The Daily Telegraph reported today, says

The newspaper said the move would be seen as a sign that the government's strategic defence review, due at the turn of the year, will aim to keep trident as the backbone of Britain's nuclear deterrent well

into the next century. "This will bring the number of trident missiles purchased or ordered by the UK to 58," the paper quoted Lord Gilbert, minister of defence procurement, as saying in a written answer to the Upper House of parliament.

presidential guards killed in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, Oct 16: Several dozen unidentified gunmen attacked the headquarters of Tajikistan's presidential guards early Thursday, killing 13 guards, including five officers, news agencies reported, savs AP.

A force of more than 70 gunmen opened fire on the presidential guards compound with automatic weapons and grenade launchers shortly before 3 am local time (2200 GMT Wednesday), the ITAR -Tass and Interfax news agencies reported, citing presidential guard commander Maj. Gen. Gaffar Mir-

The gunmen seized two guard posts, and then stormed a barracks shooting five sleeping officers at point-black range before being forced to retreat, Interfax reported.

Special forces are searching for the gunmen in villages near the guard headquarters, in the southern outskirts of the capital, Dushanbe, the reports said.

Off the Record

Genital herpes rates jump in young whites

NEW YORK: Despite the emphasis on safe sex to prevent AIDS, genital herpes has increased fivefold since the late 1970s among white teen-agers and doubled among whites in their 20s, reports AP.

In all, about one in five Americans over age 12 has the

sexually transmitted infection, and most of them don't know it, the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention reported. Dr Michael St Louis, who wrote the report with colleagues at the CDC, said it was surprising that herpes went up during the 1980s despite publicity about AIDS. Other sexually transmitted diseases, such as gonorrhea, declined.

He said other studies have shown that young people increased their rates of unprotected sex, premarital sex and multiple sex partners. And condoms appear to be less effective in blocking herpes than other diseases because the virus can be transmitted from parts of the body not covered by a condom.

Gray Davis, president of the Herpes Advice Center in

Durham, North Carolina, said the study shows many people ignored safe-sex warnings about AIDS in the 1980s. "What these numbers are telling us is that the young. sexually active white population didn't consider themselves at risk for HIV," she said. "So the HIV message, while it was very

effective in the gay population, where it was targeted to, didn't reach the rest of the population. One reason for concern is that herpes sores may make a person more vulnerable to infection with the AIDS virus, the researchers said in the study, published Thursday in the New

England Journal of Medicine. Experts said it is time to get tougher on herpes. They said new steps could include screening for its in patients at clinics for sexually transmitted diseases and in pregnant women, whose

newborns could die if infected "We're screening for HIV, we're screening for hepatitis B, we aren't screening for genital herpes," said Dr Lawrence Corey of the University of Washington.

Children from broken homes likely to be shorter!

LONDON: Children who live with warring parents or come from broken homes are more likely to be shorter, according to a British study published Wednesday, reports AP. And children who grow slowly may suffer from psychological problems caused by stress that have lifelong

consequences, according to the report in the Archives of Disease in Childhood, the journal of the Royal College of Pediatrics. "It may be that family conflict begins a spiral of disadvantage that results in the accumulation of health risks throughout life," the researchers said. Those researchers, led by Dr Scott Montgomery of London's

Royal Free Hospital, noted that previous studies have shown that slow growth in childhood is associated with unemployment as adults. To determine whether family conflict was associated with slow growth up to the age of 7, they studied 6,574 British boys

and girls born in the same week in 1958 who have been tracked for nearly 40 years as part of a National Child Development Study. The researchers checked their heights at the age of 7 and separated the shortest 20 percent. To assess family conflict, they checked reports from health visitors and found that almost 300 children - 4.5 per cent - came from homes with

family difficulties resulting from domestic tension, divorce,

separation or desertion. He pays his bill for birth

PIERRE: A 61-year-old man has paid a hospital bill for charges dating back to his own birth in 1935, a hospital spokeswoman said Thursday, reports Reuter.

Jerry Henricksen, a businessman from Spokane, Washington, showed up last Friday at Saint Mary's Hospital in Pierre and paid the long-standing 70 dollar bill plus 61 years of interest - a total of 238.30 dollar.

Henricksen told surprised hospital officials that he was sorting through his late mother's affairs when he came across the bill for his birth. He said he had no idea why his parents had never settled it but he felt obliged to do so. "To my knowledge we've never had anybody come in and

pay a bill this old," said Beth Simon, the hospital's marketing director.

Yeltsin halts Communists' no-confidence vote against his govt MOSCOW, Oct 16: Boris That was enough to send ment on most important matthe result of the vote. Yeltsin Communist leader Gennady Yeltsin's dramatic last-minute had room for manoeuvre, "I Zyuganov and his leftist allies intervention Wednesday ahead

the Kremlin chief. The Duma's leftist majority vote to delay the no confidence vote for seven days.

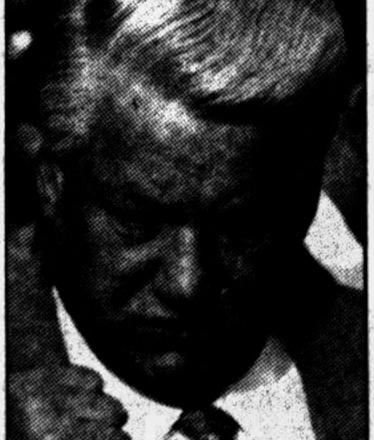
scuttling for consultations be-

fore they voted to back off from

an immediate showdown with

"The situation is entirely in Yeltsin's hands," said analyst Nikolai Petrov, about the censure vote. "Whatever happens, Yeltsin's position is more advantageous than the Duma's, he

"The communists need to show their voters they are not just agreeing with the government. If the no-confidence vote is passed. Yeltsin would probably put Chernomyrdin forward again and the government would change slightly, with maybe Chubais or Nemtsov". leaving he said.



Valery Mazing at the USA-Canada institute said whatever

think this whole game will be resolved, and it will not really affect the government's work . each player knows his role," he

Chernomyrdin has emerged as a key asset to the president, the stocky, heavy-jowled technocrat, a proven loyalist, has better relations with the Communists than reformers Anatoly Chubais and Boris Nemtsov, who have become hafe-figures for the hard left. Ousting him would only see

fresh elections or Chubais or Nemtsov named interim premier, a post either could, in theory, hold indefinitely. Analysts say the oppositiondominated Duma knows it has a week hand, the Russian con-

stitution concentrates massive

powers in Yeltsin's hands. en-

abling him to overrule parlia-

Even if the communists muster the necessary 226 votes to pass the no-confidence vote

next Wednesday, Yeltsin only has to sack Chernomyrdin if

deputies repeat the vote within

three months. When parliament sanctioned the government last year Yeltsin ignored it, the government presenting, and winning, a vote of confidence later which effectively annuled the initial censure vote. Chernomyrdin said Tuesday he would force an

Petrov said parliament's weakness meant crises sparked by censure votes had become the oppositions only real way of influencing government policy. Significantly, Yeltsin combined Wednesday's dissolution

threat with the prospect of a

immediate second vote if his

administration was censured.