COLOMBO. Nov 2: Sri Lankan jets bombed and destroyed a large Tamil rebel ship that was unloading ammunition off the northeast coast Sunday, military officials said. reports AP.

The ship was unloading cargo into small boats 500 yards (meters) from the rebelheld town of Mullaittivu, 275 kilometres (170 miles) northeast of Colombo, when it was spotted by naval gunboats.

An unmanned air force spy plane confirmed that the ship was unloading cargo, said Air Marshal Oliver Ranasinghe, Sri Lanka's air force chief.

A pair of Israeli-built Kfir jets then arrived from the capital, Colombo, and bombed the ship, which caught fire and ex-

"Our planes destroyed the ship completely. The ammunition inside exploded when it was hit by bombs," Ranasinghe

The jets returned safely to their base near Colombo. Ranasi-nghe said.

The pilots reported seeing four trucks on the shore hauling ammunition into the jungle. The nationality of the ship was not immediately known. Ranasinghe said it was "quite large," and was using three

It was not clear if there were casualties. The guerillas did not immediately comment on the

cranes on its deck to unload

The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils, claiming they have been discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese. More than 50,000 people have been killed since the war began in

Sri Lanka's Defence Ministry said Sunday that at least 42 rebels and soldiers were killed or wounded in fresh fighting near the northern town of Kilinochchi on Saturday. The area is 45 kilometres (30

miles) west of Mullaittivu. Troops patrolling the jungle were confronted by a large group of rebels. In the ensuing firefight, 4 soldiers were killed and I2 wounded, said Maj. Kumara Dewage, a Defense Min-

istry spokesman. Rebel radio transmissions revealed that at least 26 guerillas were killed or wounded. Dewage said. Independent confirmation was not possible since the government does not

The guerillas own at least half a dozen cargo ships, which are registered in other countries through front organisations.

allow reporters into the war

They are believed to operate largely as normal merchant ships, but sometimes transport ammunition from East European and Southeast Asian ports to parts of the rebel controlled areas of Sri Lanka's northeast

UN-Baghdad dispute moves from confrontation to crisis

LTTE's weapons ship Iraq won't retreat from its challenge to US

BAGHDAD, Nov 2: Iraq promised that it will not retreat from its latest challenge to the United States, and accused the United Nations' chief weapons inspector of trying to browbeat the country, reports AP.

The US State Department has not ruled out military action against Iraq for demanding Americans leave the team trying to ensure Iraq dismantles its weapons of mass destruction.

Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan said Saturday that Iraq will fight back if attacked: "Iraqis are used to military at-

Last week, Iraq gave the 10 American weapons inspectors in Baghdad a week to leave the country.

On Friday, chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler directed his team, including the Americans, to resume inspections on Monday. He had suspended operations Wednesday after Iraq ordered the Americans out.

Ramadan said he wanted to reply to Butler's comments, "But as he has taken sides, I do not see why I should respond. Butler cannot order Iraq around, nor does he control it.

It was the first time a senior Iraqi official accused Butler of

failing to be neutral. Butler said Sunday he would meet soon with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to discuss the crisis. While neither he nor

Annan want to see military action, Butler said nothing had been ruled out. "When there's a material

breach of an undertaking of the kind that's involved in these circumstances, the Security Council is free to consider all options, and I mean all," he told the Nine TV Network in Sydney. Australia.

Ramadan said Iraq would welcome a Security Council envoy to discuss the standoff. "Our doors are open to whoever wants to come ... and wants

to contribute positively." he The council, which has warned Iraq of "serious consequences" if it sticks to its decision, ended its session Friday

with diplomats talking of in-

tensive diplomacy over the next few days to try to persuade Iraq to back down. Britain has urged the Security Council to respond to Iraq "in the strongest possible

"Iraq's action continues to be unacceptable," White House spokesman Barry Toiv, with

President Clinton at Amelia Island, Florida, said Saturday. "We made it clear last night that Iraq cannot interfere with US monitors."

In Cairo, Egypt, the top US general in the Persian Gulf said forces there are monitoring the situation with Iraq and are ready to take action if neces-

Meanwhile, the dispute between Baghdad and the United Nations moves from confrontation to crisis this week. with the first test coming Monday when American and other UN inspectors resume looking for hidden weapons in Iraq. In an effort to ease tensions

before the confrontation gets out of hand, the foreign ministers of Russia and France issued an 'urgent appeal' to Iraq to comply with United Nations resolutions and allow American weapons inspectors to stay in the country.

This would be a clear signal of a de-escalation of tension." said a joint statement issued by Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov and his visiting French counterpart Hubert Vedrine.

Despite the statement, issued by two Security Council members more sympathetic to Iraq than the Americans and British, the situation between

Iraq and the world organisation appeared to be headed for an escalation.

Iraqi officials have repeatedly warned they will not back down and reverse their decision that the Americans must leave by 2200 GMT Wednesday

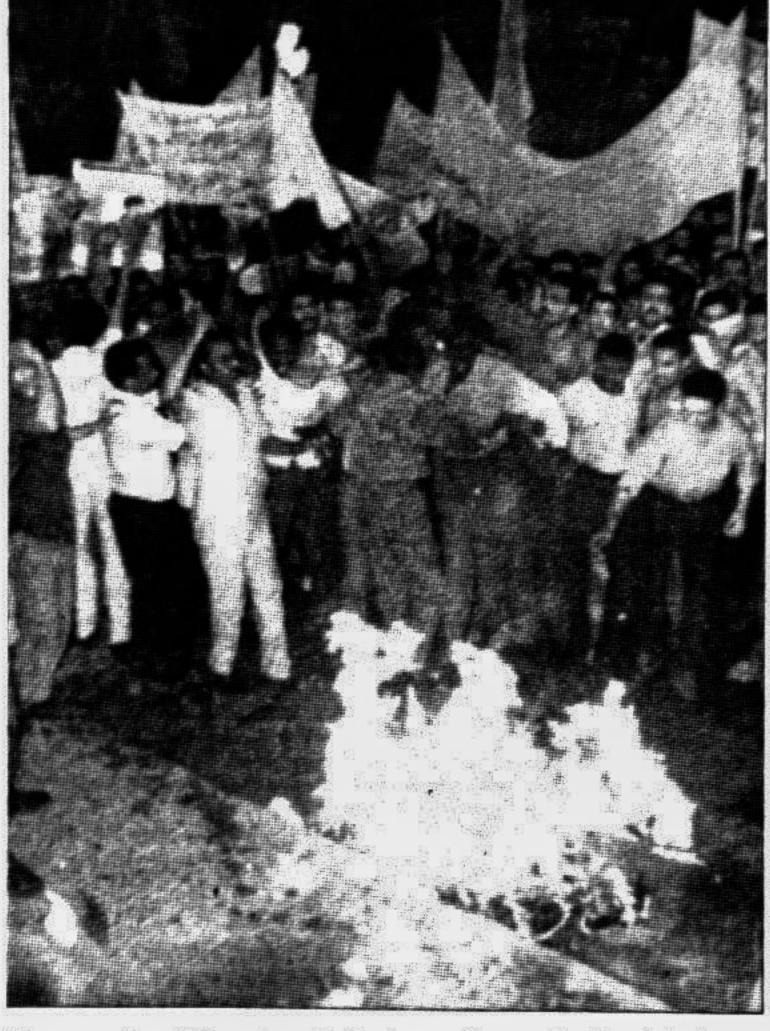
The Australian chief weapons inspector, Richard Butler, has instructed his team to resume inspections, which were suspended last Wednesday after Iraq ordered the 10 Americans on the 40-member team to

Following Butler's decision. announced before the Security Council on Friday, Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan said "on Monday, there will be no American inside Iraq in inspections".

All nationalities, members of the team will go to work and remain in Iraq." Butler declared, making clear the Americans would stay.

After a two-hour Security Council meeting Friday, US Ambassador Bill Richardson said the 15-member body was acting with "unanimity" in the face of the Iraqi challenge.

We believe Iraq is in clear violation of United Nations resolutions and that the ball is in their court to redress their violations." Richardson said.



Thousands of Iraqi and Arab residents in Baghdad on Saturday, who demonstrate in front of the UN Development Programme main office in Baghdad burnt the American flag and shout an angry slogans to express their protest against the UN resolution 1134 and the American stance in the Security Council. - AP/UNB photo

BRIFFIY

Air crash leaves 9 dead in France: Eight parachutists and their 60-year-old pilot died Saturday when their plane crashed into a pond during an outing in northern France, leaving no survivors, AFP reports from Chambry.

Witnesses added that the impact near the town of Chambry had been violent enough to drive the Swiss-built pilatus aircraft's engine deep into the mud. "The plane had been flying at full speed, its engine was operation" the police said.

Chinese security official in Cambodia: China has sent a security official to Cambodia to help investigations into a seized shipment of guns, a senior police

officer said yesterday, Reuter reports from Phnom Penh. The official arrived on Saturday, the same day a Chinese man was arrested in Phnom Penh and charged with illegally importing weapons in connection with the case, the officer said. Police in Phnom Penh confiscated 200 shotguns packed in 40 wooden crates on October 24. The guns were imported on a Cambodian commercial flight from China.

11 Sudanese troops killed in ambush: Eleven Sudanese government soldiers were killed in an ambush by opposition forces in eastern Sudan, according to a statement from an alliance of opposition forces, received Saturday, AFP #

reports from Cairo. The Democratic National Alliance forces ambushed the soldiers Thursday south of the city of Al-Gedaref, about 350 kilometres southeast of Khartoum, killing 11, three of whom were officers, the statement said. The announcement came as peace talks continued in Nairobi between the Sudanese government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army," the main southern Sudanese guerilla group.

33 Yemeni tribesmen held: Yemeni security forces have surrounded the area where kidnappers are holding a US hostage and have arrested more then 33 members of the local tribe, a security official said Saturday, AP reports from San'a.

The security forces have detained members of the Bakeel tribe to gain leverage in negotiations for the release of engineer Steve Carpenter, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. More than 100 troops in armoured vehicles have encircled the northern Barat area where Carpenter is believed to be held, the source said.

Fire engulfs oil refinery in Israel: Fire was raging at an oil refinery in the southern Israeli port city of Ashdod early Sunday following an explosion heard up to

10-km away, Israel radio said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem. The radio said there were no immediate reports of injuries, witnesses told Israeli Army radio that clouds of black smoke were billowing from the industrial zone of the Mediterranean port city. There is a huge container there, when it happened, there was a giant explosion ... I was sure it was an earthquake,' Yigal, a driver of an oil tanker truck told army radio.

Colombian rebels free 2 hostages: Leftist rebels on Saturday freed two Organisation of American States election observers and another man they captured in an effort to sabotage October 26 municipal elections, AP say from

The National Liberation Army turned over Raul Martinez of Chile and Manfredo Marroquin of Guatemala to a commission made up of Red Cross official and government and church representatives in the small village of Santa Ana, 125 miles (200 kilometres) northwest of the capital, Bogota. A Colombian human rights worker captured with the men was also released.

7 of a family killed in Peru: Seven members of a single family were killed in a car wreck as they travelled from the capital to the central town of Jauja to celebrate the Roman Catholic holiday All Saints Day, police

said, AFP reports from Lima. The accident occurred southeast of Lima when the driver of the family's pickup lost control of the vehicle in heavy rain and its slid into the Mantaro river, highway police said.

Floods claim 57 in Ethiopia: Floods caused by overflowing rivers in eastern Ethiopia have left 57 people dead and more than 4.000 displaced, state-run radio reported Sunday, AP says from Addis Ababa

Authorities in the Ogaden region on the border with Somalia said rising rivers had also washed away 9,000 head of livestock. Ethiopian radio quoted health officials as saying malaria and dysentery had reappeared in areas hit by flooding, but it wasn't clear how many people were affected.



Irish President-elect Mary McAleese receives the official "Result of Parchment" the presidential election results, from Lt Col Des Johnston of the Defence Forces HQ in Dublin Castle, Saturday. McAleese swept to the biggest presidential election victory in Ireland's history.

- AP/UNB photo



aboard a boat on he Yenisei River Saturday near the Siberian city Krasnoyarsk. The two had planned to go on fishing, but rain, snow and bad weather caused them to cancel the excursion. Yeltsin invited Hashimoto to this city half way between Moscow and Tokyo to get to know him on a personal level a bit better. - AP/UNB photo

Yeltsin, Hashimoto pledge to sign peace treaty by 2000

KRASNOYARSK, Russia, Nov 2: Hugging and kissing each other at the end of an informal Siberian summit Sunday, the leaders of Russia and Japan proclaimed the beginning of a new friendship and pledged to have their countries sign a peace treaty by 2000, reports

"We became friends," Russian President Boris Yeltsin said, standing beside Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. "We will address each other by name - Boris and Ryu."

Hashimoto said the two leaders agreed to work toward concluding a peace treaty between Russia and Japan by the year 2000. The countries never signed a peace treaty after World War II because of a territorial dispute involving the Kuril Islands.

Russia seized the four southernmost islands in the Kuril chain from Japan at the end of World War II and Japan is seeking their return.

"We had very serious discussions about a very complex problem, the issue of a peace treaty," Hashimoto told reporters. "As a result, we agreed" to put maximum efforts into concluding a peace treaty by 2000 on the basis of the Tokyo

declaration." The 1993 Tokyo document recognised the existence of the Kuril issue, and said it would be solved on the grounds of legality and justice.

Despite the optimistic tone of the two leaders, who spoke at the government retreat of Sosna just outside the Siberian town of Krasnoyarsk, it was not clear how the two countries

"To strive to conclude (a treaty) does not necessarily mean to conclude it," a senior Russian official said.

would resolve the Kurils issue.

And Russia's First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov, who is responsible for ties with Japan, indicated that Moscow would not surrender the isThe Russian constitution, he

said, speaks of the country's territorial integrity, "And the president is the guarantor of

At the 24-hour "no-necktie" summit, Yeltsin and Hashimoto also adopted a wide-ranging plan for political and economic cooperation, meant to take the two countries into the year 2000.

The six-point agreement envisioned steps to boost Japanese investment in Russia, Japanese assistance for deeper Russian involvement in the international economy, Tokyo's support for reforms in Russia and the training of Russian managers. It also dealt with cooperation in energy projects in the Far East and those concerning nuclear energy.

The sides also agreed to increase their military cooperation, including an exchange of visits by senior military offi-

Communists from around ex-USSR gather to found united party

MOSCOW, Nov 2: The strains of the Soviet national anthem filled a Moscow hall Saturday as communist loyalists from around the former Soviet Union gathered to found a united party, reports AP.
About 360 delegates from

Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Moldova and Georgia took part in the convention, the Interfax news agency reported.

Viktor Anpilov, firebrand leader of the hard-line movement Working Russia, said the still-unnamed party "is not new but will be the revival of the party of Lenin and Stalin." He accused other communist leaders of failing to work effectively toward reviving a union based on Marxist-Leninist principles.

50,000 Indians die annually due to air pollution

NEW DELHI, Nov 2: Around 50,000 Indians die annually due to air pollution across 36 cities. an increase of 28 per cent over the past four years, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, reports AFP.

A total of 51.779 pollution deaths occurred in the country in 1995-96, a report by the Centre for Science and Environment was quoted as saying. The World Bank had in

1991-92 estimated the annual number of deaths from pollution in India at around 40,000. The latest report, quoted by

PTI, said the highest number of deaths because of pollution took place in Calcutta (10,647) followed by New Delhi (9,859), Bombay (7,023), Kanpur (3,639) and Ahmedabad (3,006).

Taliban to destroy heroin labs along Pak border

PESHAWAR, Nov 20: Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have sent heavily-armed men to destroy heroin laboratories hidden along Afghanistan's rugged border with Pakistan, a Taliban spokesman said Sunday, reports AP.

"We want to destroy some heroin labs we know about and arrest the people involved in making heroin," said Taliban spokesman Abdullah, who like many Afghans uses only one

230 POWs of Islamic army freed

Dostum for negotiation with Taliban KABUL, Nov 2: One leading

member of the alliance fighting Afghanistan's ruling army said Saturday that he was willing to negotiate a peace settlement. reports AP.

Former communist general and ethnic Uzbek leader Rashid Dostum also said he released 230 Taliban prisoners of war as a gesture of good will. Dostum belongs to a north-

ern-based alliance, which is locked in a fierce battle with the Taliban, an Islamic army led by former religious students that controls roughly 90 per cent of the country, including the capital of Kabul It wasn't immediately clear

when the prisoners were released, but according to Dostum, some of the prisoners were relatively, high ranking Tal-"I am ready for talks under the mediation of Pakistan," he

said. "I am ready to be a part of the peace process." The Taliban already has agreed to talks in Pakistan providing all factions belonging to

the anti-Taliban alliance at The alliance includes former

military chief Ahmed Shah

Massood, as well as Dostum, minority Shi'ite Muslims, Ismailies, ethnic Tajiks and

Uzbeks. The Taliban wasn't available to comment on the prisoner release or Dostum's offer of talks. The Taliban has been reluctant to include Dostum in talks because of his communist

Dostum was a general in the ousted communist regime and a former ally of Afghanistan's communist president Najibul-

The Taliban dragged Najibullah from his sanctuary in a United Nations compound in Kabul within hours of taking over the capital in September 1996. Najibullah was tortured and his bloated and bloodied body left hanging in front of the presidential palace for two

At the time the Taliban said Najibullah was killed because he was a communist and mur-

Dostum joined the Islamic resistance in early 1992, just a few months before Najibullah stepped down and paved the way for the takeover by Muslim insurgents.

Off the Record

Working women going bald!

LONDON: Thousands of young working women are going bald because of "testosterone overload" caused by working in traditionally male roles in the workplace, a report said Sunday, says AFP. A study carried out at the University of Portsmouth on Eng-

land's south coast found that of 800 women interviewed 30 per cent were experiencing hair loss, said the Sunday Times. It quoted a consultant trichologist - a medical hair expert -

form London saying women in the workplace were becoming more sensitive to the circulation of male hormones such as testosterone in their bodies.

"Women's changing role in society is making them more male-like," said Glen Lyons. "Women in all the professions - journalism, medicine, lawyers, pilots - are trying to achieve success and compete in

what was once a male-dominated area, these career-minded women are working doubly as hard as men. Registered sex offenders!

AMELIA ISLAND, Florida: President Bill Clinton has sent 36 US state governors a letter asking their states to participate

in a national registry of sex offenders, the White House said here Saturday, reports AFP. "With an incomplete registry, the law is unable to follow dangerous sex predators wherever they go," Clinton said in a let-

ter dated October 30 and released a day later on this resort island where the president was staying. "I urge you to move expeditiously to participate in our na-

tional registry," wrote Clinton, who was here for a Democratic Party fund raiser.

MQM decides to back Sharif

LONDON, Nov 2: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) representing the 22 million Mohajirs of Pakistan - has decided to back Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for the time being in his current political problems, reports India Abroad News Service.

MQM leader Altaf Hussain agreed to back Sharif in his fight against the "campaign against democracy" within Pakistan at a meeting in London immediately after the Commonwealth summit in Edinburgh, which the Pakistan Prime Minister had attended. Sharif and Hussain met for

an hour and a half, first without aides and then with officials present. The two discussed briefly the coalition between their parties in Sindh province and the constitutional crisis facing the Sharif government. The MQM, formerly called the Mohajir Qaumi Movement.

is a party that represents about 22 million Mohajirs, the name given to Indian Muslims who migrated to Pakistan after partition. Mohajir literally means migrant and they feel discriminated both politically and so cially in Pakistan. Strong differences arose be-

tween the two leaders over the postponement of the Pakistani census yet again, well informed sources involved with the talks told IANS. The MQM believes that it has too few representatives in the Sindh provincial legislature and the national legislature in relation to the Mohajir population and that a census would set the anomaly The London-based MQM

leadership is believed to have warned the Pakistani representatives at the talks that the Pakistani government was in danger of violation of the pledges to "good governance" it had just made at the Commonwealth summit. Sharif is believed to have

promised that the Pakistani government will consider putting through the census after it has survived present attempts to destabilise it. "Altaf Hussain agreed because he really has no choice at the moment," the Pakistani source said. . "Certainly former prime

minister Benazir Bhutto was

far worse for the Mohajirs, and

if there is any central rule that

is backed by the army, that

could be disastrous for the

MQM," the source said.

But Hussain made his displeasure with the Pakistani government plain at the talks, the source said. Sharii has to depend on MQM support to maintain his government in the legislature in the Sindh province. Hussain is believed to have

cited the example of India during the talks. Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral had migrated to India from what is now Pakistan and should have been the Indian equivalent of Mohajir, he reportedly said. But nobody ever opposed Gujral on the ground that he was a migrant from Pakistan, he said. The Mohajirs in Pakistan,

he said, are treated badly and are not given due representation even in the Sindh government. And they have far fewer seats in relation to their population in urban Sindh than a fair census should give them, Hussain is believed to have told Sharif. The MQM issued a statement

that the census had been put off because it would bring about a change "which will articulate a different scenario desiring changes in the geopolitical set up in the national as well as the provincial spectrum."

Jiang concedes mistakes about Tiananmen crackdown

CAMBRIDGE, Mass, Nov 2: Chinese President Jiang Zemin defended his government but conceded in an indirect response to a question about the Tiananmen Square crackdown that China has made mistakes. reports AP.

While he spoke at Harvard University, about 5,000 people outside demonstrated for and against the Chinese government, with loudspeakers carrying their chants to Jiang's ears. Jiang responded to pre-ap-

proved questions, including one asking why he refused to open a dialogue with his people and why the Chinese government sent tanks against pro-democracy demonstrators in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in June

"In China there are various channels for us to learn about people's views," he said. "I am in frequent contact with people's of the country.

deputies China is a large country with different levels of development in different parts He didn't directly answer the reference to Tiananmen

Square, but conceded: "We have

shortcomings and mistakes in our work."

The Communist Party has acknowledged mistakes in the past, such as the disastrous Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, which cost millions of lives and caused huge setbacks in the country's

economic development.

But the party hasn't expressed regret for Tiananmen. saying its actions on June 4. 1989 were for the sake of national stability. On that date, the army gunned down democracy protesters who had gathered in the Beijing square. killing hundreds if not thou-

Jiang's remark caught the attention of his listeners, including the moderator, Prof. Ezra Vogel, director of Harvard's Fairbanks Centre for East Asian Research.

"They haven't gone that far." Speaking on the sixth day of his eight-day trip to the United country "according to law." He stressed the importance of improving relations with the United States, but hinted that it should stay out of China's in-

ternal affairs. "A developing and progressing China does not pose a threat to anyone," he said. "China will never seek hegemony even if it is developed in the future. China is always a staunch force for world peace and regional

stability. He also took on the subject of Tibet, a delicate issue between China and the United States. with a response to a pre-approved question on why Chinese leaders will not lead with the Dalai Lama

Jiang also acknowledged the shouts of the demonstrators. "Although I am already 71 years old, my ears work very well," Jiang said. "I did hear sounds from the loudspeakers

from outside. My approach is to speak even louder. At one corner of the Harvard campus, about 100 pro-China demonstrators sang the Chinese

States, Jiang said his goals were national anthem and shouted "One China."

to reform his country's economy, develop a socialist democracy" and govern his