

International

Baghdad turns back UNSCOM for 2nd day

Annan sending team to defuse tension between UN, Iraq

NLD puts off planned meet amid tight security in Yangon

YANGON, Nov 4: Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi put off a planned meeting of her National League for Democracy Tuesday, apparently because of tight security measures that suggested that authorities would try to block it, reports AP.

Barbed wire barricades had been seen since early Tuesday along roads leading to her party's office in Tamwe township in eastern Yangon, about five kilometres (three miles) from downtown.

Traffic into the area was allowed, but police had barriers ready at all road junctions and several riot police with shields and batons were seen. No party members were seen around the party branch office.

Traffic was banned as usual from University Avenue, where Suu Kyi lives.

The meeting was cancelled due to circumstances, a party member said by telephone. But another party official said later that the organisational meeting had been postponed rather than cancelled.

Another branch meeting last week was cancelled under similar circumstances.

The military government

that seized power in 1988 has severely restricted the activities of the National League for Democracy. The party won a landslide victory in a 1990 general election, but the junta refused to allow parliament to convene and cracked down on dissenters.

On October 21, Suu Kyi and other party leaders were permitted to visit the Thaketa township party office without interference. But an October 28 meeting at Mayangon township in northern Yangon was cancelled because the road leading to the party office was blocked.

Party leaders were told to hold the October 28 meeting at Suu Kyi's house instead of at the Mayangon party office. They were allowed to proceed to the party office after three hours waiting at the road junction.

Most of the party members, however, were trucked away by police and released at places away from Mayangon. Eight party members were later arrested, party sources said.

Authorities accused the opposition group of deliberately trying to "embarrass the government and to politicise the incident."

UNITED NATIONS, Nov 4: Secretary General Kofi Annan is sending a three-man team to Baghdad to "defuse very tense situation" that has resulted from Iraq's refusal to cooperate with the UN Special Commission overseeing the destruction of Iraqi weapons (UNSCOM) and demand that American weapons inspectors leave the country, a UN spokesman said Monday, reports USIS.

After discussions with Security Council members throughout the weekend, Annan asked three experienced diplomats to go to Baghdad immediately to talk with Iraqi officials.

The Security Council was scheduled to meet in closed session late in the afternoon Monday to review the latest developments and hear a report from UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler as the confrontation between Iraq and the Security Council escalated with new threats from Iraq.

The team is headed by former Algerian Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special envoy to Afghanistan, and includes Ambassador Emilio Cardenas, a former Argentine UN envoy, and Jan Ellanson of the Swedish Foreign Ministry and a former UN Ambassador and undersecretary general for humanitarian affairs.

Iraq has notified the UN that it would accept the mission, which is expected to arrive in Baghdad no later than Wednesday.

However, UN officials stressed that the team will not be negotiating new criteria for the weapons inspections. UNSCOM's mandate was laid down in a Security Council resolution at the end of the Gulf War and accepted by Iraq. Under the terms of that resolution (687), UNSCOM is to have full control over its operations and access to all sites in the country.

There's nothing to negotiate," UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said. "This is a diplomatic effort to defuse a very dangerous situation."

A number of governments conveyed their concern to Iraq and any sense that the Security Council is divided on this issue has now been dispelled," Eckhard said.

The next step is up to Iraq and this mission is looking to facilitate that next step," the spokesman said.

The secretary general gave no fixed duration for the mission, Eckhard said.

In a letter to the Security

Council, UNSCOM Chairman Richard Butler described the events of Monday during which the special commission was forced to cancel inspections by biological, chemical and ballistic missile weapons teams when Iraq refused to allow Americans on one of the teams to enter a site.

The inspections were the first since Iraq gave UNSCOM one week to remove all Americans from the country on October 30.

AP adds from Baghdad: Iraq turned back UN weapons inspectors for a second day Tuesday, saying it would not grant access to teams that included Americans.

The move came as UN negotiators rushed to Baghdad in an attempt to diffuse the crisis.

Iraq has vowed to expel seven American inspectors working with the United Nations by Wednesday. Iraq has accused the Americans of espion-

age. "All three teams were told they can continue their inspections but without Americans," said Maj. Gen. Nils Carlstrom, the Swedish head of the UN monitoring office in Baghdad. "The heads of the three teams cancelled their inspections and returned to the headquarters.

"There was no hostility, no threats, and everything was conducted in a professional manner," Carlstrom said.

He did not say how many Americans were on the teams or which sites the teams were trying to inspect.

On Monday, Iraq told members of a UN missile inspection team that included at least one American that weapons monitors from the United States were no longer allowed to work in Iraq.

The missile team and two other inspection groups that were sent out Monday morning were subsequently called back



United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan, centre, poses with Emilio Cardenas of Argentina, left, and Lakhdar Brahimi of Algeria at the UN, Monday, in preparation for a trip both men will make to Iraq. Seeking to wrest concessions from the United Nations, Saddam Hussein agreed Monday to let a three-member UN mission visit Iraq to try to defuse the crisis over his plans to expel American arms inspectors. — AP/UNB photo

Strong quake rocks Chile: A strong earthquake Monday rocked the same area as a massive and deadly quake two weeks ago. Electricity briefly went out and schools closed, but preliminary reports indicated no casualties or serious damage, authorities said. AP reports from Santiago.

The quake registered a preliminary magnitude of 6.4, according to the head of the government's National Emergency Office, Alberto Maturana. Its epicentre was located 405 kilometres (250 miles) north of Santiago, near the city of Ovalle. The quake was felt across a 700-kilometre swath of Chile's narrow territory, particularly in the same centre-north region where a 6.8-magnitude struck Oct. 14. That quake, which caused extensive damage, killed eight people, injured 260 and left thousands homeless.

In a letter to the Security

spokeswoman for the Mission Control.

The next spacewalk is to install a replacement solar panel, which is some 30 per cent more effective than the one removed Monday. The panel is stored on the outside of the Mir, and the cosmonauts will unpack the panel and mount it on the Kvant module.

The mission is the final part of a long effort to restore Mir's power supply, cut nearly in half when a cargo ship crashed with the station in June.

If successful, then eight of the Mir's 10 solar panels will be working normally. Another one is operating, but at less than full capacity, and one was damaged beyond repair in the June crash.

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