

HR anniversary observed

Protesters gather in Jakarta, demand trial of Suharto

JAKARTA, Dec 10: Hundreds of chanting protesters marched down Jakarta's main road on Thursday to mark the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, reports AP.

Student activists also planned rallies to demand an immediate trial of former President Suharto, who was questioned by state prosecutors Wednesday about allegations that he corruptly amassed a fortune during his three decades in power.

Hours after the ex-authoritarian leader was quizzed, thousands of students demonstrated and some threw rocks and clashed with riot police not far from the home of president BJ Habibie, Suharto's successor and one-time protege.

Habibie has pledged to hold general elections next year and has implemented some political reforms, but he lacks credibility among activists who say he is a stooge of the old regime. They reject his investigation of Suharto as cosmetic.

Gathering on the human rights anniversary, protesters

shouting slogans for an array of causes marched around a major intersection ringed by five-star hotels to demand swifter democratic change. Others rallied outside the headquarters of the United Nations.

"For the sake of human rights, we oppose militarism," read one banner.

Others read "Release political prisoners" and "Stop money politics and violence."

Habibie has released dozens of political prisoners since taking office in May from Suharto, who was dislodged by riots and protests against his three-decade rule. But some pro-democracy activists remain in jail.

The protesters included members of a women's human rights group, supporters of opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri and students from the disputed territory of East Timor.

Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony in 1975 and annexed it a year later, unleashing a guerrilla war that persists today.

BRIEFLY

Yeltsin recovering at country home: President Boris Yeltsin remained at his country residence outside Moscow on Thursday, taking no part in government talks to draw up a 1999 budget to handle Russia's economic crisis, AP reports from Moscow.

Yeltsin, who was released from a hospital on Wednesday, has turned over almost all responsibility for the economy to Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov. He has practically disappeared from view after a string of illnesses. The Kremlin said it had no information about the president's Thursday plans, but he was expected to stay at the Rus country residence for as long as necessary to recover fully from pneumonia.

Iraq regrets Saudi accusations: Iraq "regrets" Saudi accusations that Baghdad was duping the international community and provoking new crises to achieve a lifting of UN sanctions, an Iraqi official said Wednesday, AFP reports from Baghdad.

"It is regrettable that the number two of an Arab and Islamic country aligns itself with a party whose criminal practices have provoked the indignation of several countries," a spokesman for the Information Ministry said. "The sanctions cannot be lifted until Iraq has implemented UN resolutions and changed its policy of foot-dragging and deception." Prince Abdallah told a closed-door session of a Gulf summit in Abu Dhabi overnight Monday.

Land mine hurts 7 Lankan kids: Seven children aged between eight and 12 were seriously hurt in eastern Sri Lanka by an anti-personnel mine buried by Tamil Tiger rebels, the military said Thursday, AP reports from Colombo.

"We believe the Tigers sneaked into the area (and) buried the mine where our troops often go on foot patrols," said Colonel Ranjith Withana, a military spokesman. He said the children stumbled on the mine and began playing with it. The incident happened Wednesday in a military-controlled area in the Batticaloa district, 220 KM east of Colombo.

Albright arrives in Paris: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived in Paris on Wednesday night and went immediately to dinner with French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, Reuters reports from Paris.

She was scheduled to meet French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin yesterday.

Kim to attend ASEAN summit: South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung will head to this month's Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit with a call for south and north Asia to tackle the region's economic crisis, AFP reports from Seoul.

Kim, the first South Korean head of state to attend an ASEAN summit in the decade since Seoul was granted observer status by the grouping, will hold up South Korea and Thailand as models for battling the Asian malaise.

China repatriates 69 N Koreans: China has repatriated 69 North Korean men, women and children rescued from a stricken barge in the Yellow Sea, reports said Thursday, AFP says from Beijing.

The North Korean barge, blown off course during a storm, was towed to the Chinese port of Donggang in Liaoning province by a local fishery company on December 4, the China Daily reported.

ROK opposition chief's brother held: The brother of the head of South Korea's largest opposition party was arrested Thursday on charges of raising illegal political funds during last year's presidential election campaign, AP reports from Seoul.

Lee Ho-sung, 54, an adviser to a government-funded energy research centre, was accused of collecting 15 billion won (11.5 million dollars) for his brother, Lee Ho-chang, 52, then the ruling party's presidential candidate. The younger Lee allegedly colluded with top national tax officials to pressure major business leaders to contribute funds to his brother's campaign.

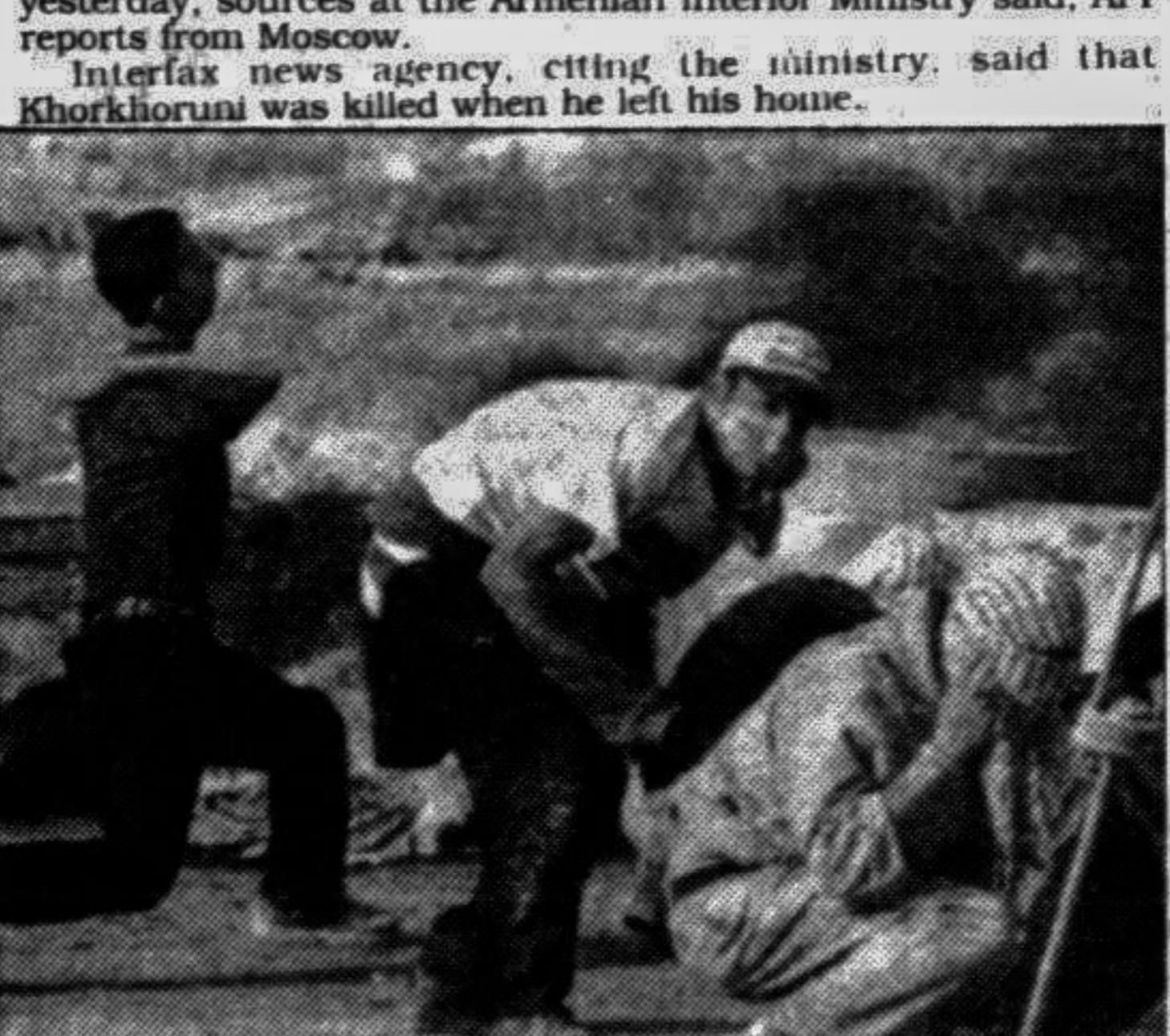
Israeli jets create panic in Beirut: Israeli warplanes flew in low and broke the sound barrier over Beirut early yesterday in the first such night time exercise in more than two years, AFP reports from Beirut.

The double bang at 1 am created panic, shaking windows in homes and waking up the inhabitants, particularly youngsters already traumatised by years of civil war.

The noise, which resembled missile detonations, triggered panic notably in schools in the city's southern suburbs which are a stronghold of the anti-Israeli Hezbollah Shiite movement.

Armenian dy minister shot dead: Armenia's Deputy Defence Minister Vagram Khorkhoruni was shot to death by an unidentified gunman in the capital Yerevan yesterday, sources at the Armenian Interior Ministry said, AFP reports from Moscow.

Interfax news agency, citing the ministry, said that Khorkhoruni was killed when he left his home.



Palestinian youths throw stones at Israeli soldiers during clashes in the West Bank town of Ramallah Wednesday. Despite US calls to stop violence, hundreds of Palestinians marking the 11th anniversary of their uprising against Israel stoned Israeli troops and motorists throughout the West Bank, just days before US President Bill Clinton's visit to the area.

— AP/UNB photo

UN inspectors resume searches of suspected Iraqi weapons sites

BAGHDAD, Dec 10: A full contingent of UN inspectors resumed searches of suspected weapons sites on Thursday, a day after a team was turned back from a branch office of the ruling Baath Party, reports AP.

At least seven four-wheel drive vehicles with the UN logo were seen leaving the Canal Hotel, which serves as the inspectors' headquarters in the outskirts of Baghdad.

"Everyone's gone out today attempting to carry on their normal activities," said Caroline Cross, the inspectors' spokeswoman.

"We're just carrying on with our scheduled activities."

Cross said the teams had made no changes in their routine. "There is no reason why we should stop," she said. But she declined to say whether teams would try to re-enter the Baath Party site.

On Wednesday, a team of 12 inspectors was turned back when it tried to enter a party office, a key site of Saddam Hussein's government. The inspectors left after an Iraqi official demanded they first provide a

written declaration "on the material and items" they sought, the official Iraqi News Agency said.

Later Wednesday, however, an Iraqi official suggested the Iraqi escorts had made a mistake in declaring the site sensitive.

The UN Special Commission, which is charged with dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, denounced the move. Richard Butler, the chief UN inspector, called the action "a blockage." Iraqi newspapers Thursday carried the official agency report on the incident. But surprisingly, no newspaper mentioned it in editorials — a sign Iraq may want to move past the dispute.

They are expected to finish this round of work by Monday.

Seven teams visited 10 sites on Wednesday, and inspectors used helicopters in one of the

searches outside Baghdad, INA

said, quoting Gen. Hossam Mohammed Amin, head of the National Monitoring Directorate, which provides escorts to the inspectors.

A team from the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is responsible for overseeing destruction of Iraq's nuclear weapons program, also arrived in Baghdad on Wednesday and met with Iraqi officials to come up with a "working schedule." Amin was quoted as saying.

The inspectors must certify that Iraq has dismantled its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, long-range missiles and programs to build them before the UN Security Council will lift an oil embargo and other sanctions imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. The sanctions have devastated Iraq's economy. Iraqi officials have long insisted they have eliminated all illegal weapons.

Surprise inspections could still prove a problem.

Iraq's oil minister, Ltd. Gen. Amer Mohammed Rashid, who has been a top weapons negotia-

tor, said the Iraqi escort was wrong in declaring the Baath Party site sensitive. But he warned that future searches of such sites must respect what he called "understandings" reached earlier.

He insisted that in the agreement with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that ended a crisis in February, Iraq agreed to allow surprise inspections. But he said the United Nations also agreed "to respect the security, integrity and legitimate concerns of the Iraqi government."

This, Rashid said, included prior notice in visiting sites the government considers sensitive.

Unannounced visits in the past have been a major source of friction with Iraq, leading to three crises in the past year.

Iraq had suspended the inspections in August. It allowed them to resume only last month, averting a military strike by the United States and Britain. The two countries have left an armada in the Gulf to ensure that Iraq abides by its promise to cooperate.



A young girl and her mother look at captured arms from militants of Jammu and Kashmir and North-East provinces in Calcutta Wednesday. The exhibition, organised by the Indian Army, is being held for the first time in Calcutta.

— AP/UNB photo



Supporters of former Chilean dictator Gen Augusto Pinochet exhibit photograph of British Queen Elizabeth II during protest against the British decision to allow proceeding to start for extradition of Pinochet to Spain, in Santiago, Chile, Wednesday. — AP/UNB photo

Spacewalking astronauts install antennas on int'l space station

SPACE CENTER, Houston, Dec 10: Two astronauts ventured out on another spacewalk and installed antennas on the international space station under construction nearly 250 miles (400 kilometers) above Earth, reports AP.

For the second time this week, Jerry Ross and James Newman on Wednesday floated out the hatch of the shuttle Endeavor to work on the seven-story, 35-ton station, taking shape in the open cargo bay.

Their No 1 priority was to attach two 100-pound (45-kilogram) antennas to Unity, the American-made side of the space station. Their other job, time permitting, was trickier: trying to open a stuck antenna on Zarya, the Russian-built control module.

The planned seven-hour spacewalk was not nearly as difficult or crucial as Monday night's outing, during which Ross and Newman hooked up 40 electrical connections between Zarya and Unity.

It was a struggle, though, to get the suit-size antennas out of the narrow tunnel leading into the cargo bay. The spacewalkers had to back out with the bulky, swinging antennas in tow.

"Pretty tremendous view when you come out and look at that — wow," Ross said, gazing up at the space station.

The astronauts hoisted the antennas halfway up the 36-

foot (11-meter) Unity on the end of the shuttle robot arm. Then they mounted the units on opposite sides of the cylinder, where just an hour earlier they had routed a communication cable.

The aluminum can gleamed in the sunlight, its "Unity" emblem clearly visible.

"Kind of neat working up there right by the Unity sign, isn't it?" Ross called to his partner.

Once activated, the antennas will provide a direct, virtually uninterrupted communication link between Unity and NASA's Mission Control. Otherwise, US flight controllers would have to rely on the sporadic coverage provided by Russian ground stations.

The electronic and computer hookups for the antennas will be made inside Unity on Thursday, after the entire crew enters the orbiting station for the first time.

Other space walking chores for Ross and Newman on Wednesday evening included erecting a sunshade over a computer mounted to the outside of Unity.

Mission Control decided just before the spacewalk to let Newman take a crack at unjamming the Zarya antenna.

Flight controllers urged caution. The antenna was rolled up on a spool, and engineers worried the 3-foot (0.9-meter) strip might pop open with enough force to hurt him if he got too close. Newman had a 10-foot (3-meter) grappling hook for the job.

The antenna is one of two that failed to open properly following Zarya's Nov 20 launch from Kazakhstan.

One more spacewalk is planned for Endeavor's 12-day mission: On Saturday, Ross and Newman will conduct a photo survey and take out a sack of tools that will be used by future station visitors. Newman also may try to unjam the other Zarya antenna.

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