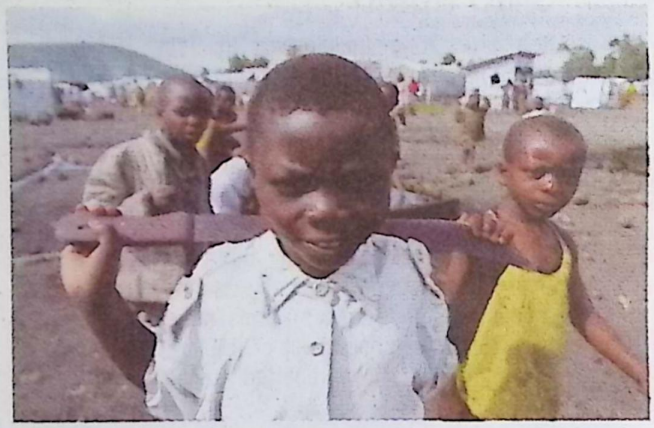
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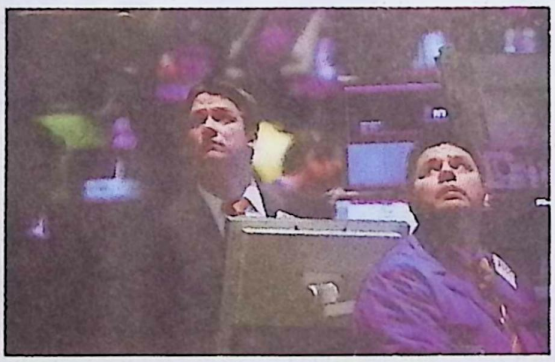


No resolution for Congo's conflict

Renegade Tutsi general Laurent Nkunda's rebels flatly rejected proposals designed to end fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo put forward by the provincial government - Nord-Kivu province governor Julien Paluku had said he was ready to meet with Nkunda, the cashiered Tutsi general at the heart of persistent unrest that has displaced more than 250,000 people and left more than 100 civilians dead, according to UN and private aid agencies.Since fighting resumed in August, Nkunda's forces have pushed back government troops in Nord-Kivu, also clashing with pro-government Mai-Mai militia and the Hutu rebels from the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda. Aid workers say the fighting has led to an increasingly desperate plight facing refugees.

US officially in recession

The United States officially joins the recession camp on December 1, as an economic panel announces the downturn began a year ago, while a deluge of weak data pointed to a severe global slowdown. The grim news prompted heavy selling on global markets. A private panel of US economists charged with the official designation of business cycles said it had determined the world's largest economy has been in recession since December 2007. Although a recession is generally defined as two consecutive quarters of declining activity, the panel has its own criteria for determining a downturn based on a measure of income, employment and other factors.. Asian markets were in turmoil as investors sold off stocks following an eight percent overnight fall on Wall Street, which lost almost eight percent.





Bhopal, 24 years later

Hundreds gather to mark the 24th anniversary of the Bhopal Gas Tragedy in Bhopal, in memory of those who died when a cloud of methyl isocyanate leaked from the Union Carbide chemical plant, exposing at least 520,000 people to toxic gases early in the morning on December 3, 1984. The world's worst industrial accident, official figures state nearly 3,000 people died on the night of the disaster, and there have been nearly 15,000 deaths related to the accident. However, campaign groups put the figures much higher. Many local people still suffer respiratory and other illnesses and say their water supplies are still contaminated. The Indian government is awaiting the outcome of a US court hearing on whether Dow Chemicals, which took over the plant from its subsidiary Union Carbide, should be asked to clean up the site.