

Two Koreas agree on non-aggression pact

SEOUL, Dec 12: North and South Korea, bitter enemies since the Korean peninsula was divided in 1945, agreed Thursday to a historic accord on non-aggression and reconciliation, reports AP.

The accord, reached at prime ministers' talks, is the first major agreement between the Communist north and capitalist south and is considered a key step in ending nearly five decades of hostility in the last theater of the Cold War.

Still technically at war from the 1950-53 Korean conflict, the north and south share the world's most heavily guarded border. Relaxed relations could speed the withdrawal of the 40,000 US troops stationed in South Korea.

But the sensitive and difficult issue of North Korean nuclear arms development apparently remains unsettled. Officials on both sides said nuclear issues were not discussed at the sessions that led to the agreement.

Yet as long as the international community shares concern that North Korea continues nuclear arms development and if intelligence reports continue to indicate it has reprocessing facilities, other agreements could be at risk.

"Nuclear is a different issue and we need more discussion on it," said North Korean delegate Choe U Jin. He did not elaborate.

There was immediate speculation that the agreement would lead to the first summit talks between South Korean President Roh Tae-woo and North Korean Communist leader Kim Il Sung.

Both presidents have said suggested a summit is necessary to make further steps toward eventual unification. Kim said last year it would be held as soon as there was meaningful progress in the prime ministers talks.

They are increasingly worried about rioting or military conflict there. Soviet officials say President Mikhail Gorbachev still controls the Soviet nuclear button and considers himself president of the country, although Russian leader Boris Yeltsin and other republics have declared the union extinct.

The NATO ministers are to replace European military plans dating from the Cold War era that are oriented toward countering Soviet attacks with conventional and nuclear arms.

Tibetans' bid to hold anti-Li march foiled : 50 arrested

NEW DELHI, Dec 12: Police arrested 50 more Tibetans on Thursday, foiling attempted protests for a second day against an official visit by Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, reports AP.

At least 330 people, mostly Tibetans, were detained earlier in the week under Indian law which permits preventive arrests to forestall potential trouble.

"There is no way we are going to be resilient," said Prafulla Ranjan Brar, one of the senior police officials in charge of Li's security.

"We have many of them in our custody, and we are going to arrest anyone who seems a potential troublemaker," Brar said.

Li arrived in New Delhi Wednesday for a six-day visit to India, the first by a Chinese head of government in 31 years. Both India and China consider his visit a milestone for improving relations, but neither expected a breakthrough in a border dispute that sent them to war in 1962.

While India has given sanctuary to 110,000 Tibetans who fled their Himalayan homeland after the Chinese invasion, it wants no embarrassments or disruptions during Li's visit.

Tibetan leaders have urged their followers to refrain from violence. About 50 Tibetans, including four women with babies slung on their backs, were arrested Thursday when they

tried to march out of a refugee camp and head toward the Chinese Embassy.

They shouted "Down with Li Peng" as they approach police blocking the road, ten turned obediently and filed into police buses and were driven away.

Assistant sub-inspector of police Ravinder Singh said the group probably would be released later Thursday. On Wednesday, senior police officials said most detainees would be held until Li leaves for Beijing on Sunday.

Earlier Thursday, police stopped 30 Tibetans from approaching a memorial to Indian freedom leader Mahandas K. Gandhi where Li placed a wreath and planted a sapling.

Indian commandos armed with Uzi machine pistols

perched in trees near the black granite memorial on the bank of the Yamuna river. The 10-kilometer (6 mile) route from the presidential palace, where Li is staying, and the memorial was sealed to traffic.

On his way back to the presidential palace, Li stopped for a 25-minute visit with Sonia Gandhi, widow of assassinated Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Li's visit to New Delhi is in reciprocation for Gandhi's 1988 trip to Beijing which started the healing process in Indian-Chinese relations.

The Indian government says it recognizes Chinese sovereignty over Tibet, but it has granted asylum to the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual and temporal leader.

Hawke under pressure to resign

SYDNEY, Dec 12: Plagued by a year of political controversy and an economic downturn, pressure mounted Thursday for Prime Minister Bob Hawke to resign, reports AP.

Calls for more forceful leadership have become increasingly strident as the economy continues to wallow in recession. Figures released Thursday showed unemployment climbed to 10.5 per cent in November, the highest rate since World War II.

Hawke's Labour Party, already suffering from sinking popularity, has lagged further behind in the polls in the weeks since the opposition coalition announced plans for a major revamp of the tax system.

Winnipeg MP David Walker said the Conservative Prime Minister used the profanity during a Commons debate after Walker charged that Mulroney was more interested in photo opportunities than in eradicating poverty among Canadian children.

"I wouldn't be willing to repeat in public what the Prime Minister said," Walker said. "The first word begins with 'F' and refers to sexual activity. The second one refers to my lack of parents. I have parents and I don't use the F word."

A spokesman for Mulroney denied he made the remark, and it was impossible to verify because Mulroney's microphone was switched off and his remarks weren't captured by the parliament's electronic transcript service.

But several opposition MPs and a Canadian Press news photographer said they clearly heard Mulroney use the two words. "We all looked at each other rather incredulously, not quite believing what we believed he had uttered," said Nelson Rits, House leader of the opposition New Democratic Party.

Lanka will open detention camps to outsiders

COLOMBO, Dec 12: The government said Thursday it will open its detention camps to outsiders, acting on a recommendation by Amnesty International, reports AP.

Bradman Weerakoon, international affairs advisor to President Ranasinghe Premadasa, said the government has accepted and will implement many of the 32 recommendations made by the London-based human rights group.

Weerakoon was not specific about who would be allowed to inspect the camps or which other recommendations will be adopted. But he said the government will release a statement next week.

Nujoma reelected

WINDHOEK, Dec 12: Namibian President Sam Nujoma was re-elected unanimously as President of the ruling South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) by over 1,000 delegates at the closing session of the SWAPO national congress here yesterday, reports Xinhua.

At the closing session of the five-day congress, the first ever since the SWAPO won the pre-independence elections in November 1989, Hendrik Witbooi was reelected Vice-President and SWAPO Chief Co-ordinator Moses Garab was elected at Secretary-General.

Bush urges Soviet leaders to work out crisis peacefully

WASHINGTON, Dec 12: President George Bush on Wednesday urged Soviet leaders to work out their new crisis peacefully and said the United States would watch the situation evolve from the sidelines, reports Reuters.

"They are going to sort these matters out for themselves," Bush told reporters during a picture-taking session at the start of a meeting with members of his cabinet.

Tadzhikistan would decide on Thursday. He also said in his speech to the lawmakers that representatives from Moldavia, in the southwestern Soviet Union, were arriving in Moscow later Thursday to discuss joining the commonwealth.

Armenia's decision was no surprise. Surrounded by hostile neighbors, Armenia has sought recently to improve relations with Russia.

NATO ministers discuss fate of Soviet N-arms

BRUSSELS, Dec 12: NATO Defence Ministers met Thursday to discuss their growing concern over the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the uncertain fate of nearly 30,000 Soviet nuclear weapons, reports AP.

During the two-day meeting, which opened Thursday morning, the ministers of the 16-nation alliance also will approve a landmark reform of their European forces to adapt to the shrinking might of the once-powerful Red Army.

The latest tumult in the Soviet Union has NATO in-

creasingly worried about rioting or military conflict there.

Soviet officials say President Mikhail Gorbachev still controls the Soviet nuclear button and considers himself president of the country, although Russian leader Boris Yeltsin and other republics have declared the union extinct.

The NATO ministers are to replace European military plans dating from the Cold War era that are oriented toward countering Soviet attacks with conventional and nuclear arms.



CONCORD, New Hampshire: Conservative columnist and commentator Patrick Buchanan Tuesday announces that he will challenge President Bush for the 1992 Republican Party presidential nomination. — AFP/UNB photo

Troops deployed in front of Suu Kyi's House

BANGKOK, Dec 12: Hundreds of Burmese troops were deployed in front of the Rangoon house of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi today, an Asian diplomat said from the Burmese capital, reports Reuters.

Three military trucks filled with soldiers were deploying on the road in front of the house of Aung San Suu Kyi this morning, he told Reuters by telephone.

He estimated the number of soldiers at 300.

Other sources said that usually a dozen guards were posted near the house, where the dissident democracy campaigner has been confined since July 1989.

The house of the 46-year-old academic is on university avenue near Rangoon University, ordered shut by Burma's military rulers after two days of student demonstrations calling for democracy and freedom for their heroine.

City residents and official state broadcasts said hundreds

of students had joined the rallies at Rangoon University, which, the residents said, were ended by heavily armed troops who used barbed wire to isolate the institution from the rest of the capital.

Official Radio Rangoon said on Wednesday night that all universities, colleges and technical schools in the country would be closed beginning Thursday "because of the disturbances by unscrupulous elements and some political parties."

Kennedy Smith acquitted

WEST PALM BEACH (Florida), Dec 12: William Kennedy Smith was found innocent on Wednesday of raping a Florida woman at the Kennedy family estate, reports Reuters.

The 31-year-old nephew of Senator Edward Kennedy and the late President John F. Kennedy broke into a broad grin after hearing the verdict. He jumped up to embrace his lead attorney, Roy Black, but the judge ordered them to sit back down.

The jury of four women and two men deliberated for less than an hour and 20 minutes after hearing testimony from 45 witnesses over 10 long court days.

The woman, aged 30, described through 10 hours of tearful testimony a sudden, savage attack after she drove Smith home from the Au Bar Night Club and walked with him along the beach in the early morning of March 30.

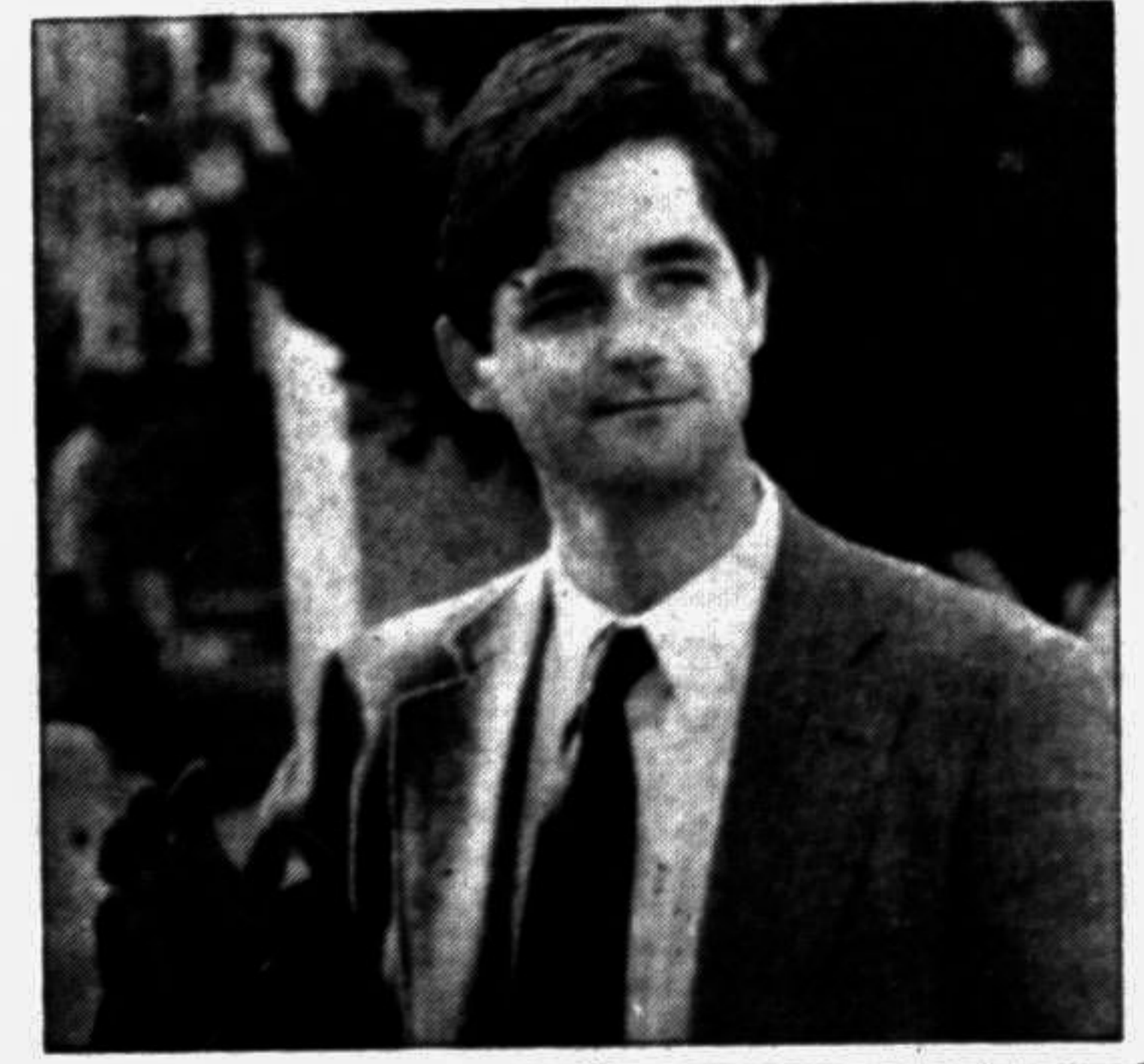
Smith countered with a description of a sexually aggressive "kooky" woman who picked him up, led him to an ocean-side tryst, then turned on him in fury when he called her by another woman's name during sex.

Smith was also acquitted of a minor battery misdemeanor charge.

His mother, Jean Kennedy

Smith — sister of the assassinated president as well as Edward Kennedy — was in the courtroom for the verdict. Smith's brother and two sisters, as well as several Kennedy cousins were also present.

The case has drawn much international attention, with hundreds of reporters from all over the world descending on the posh resort town of Palm Beach.



Union incapable of existing any longer : Yeltsin

MOSCOW, Dec 12: Russian President Boris Yeltsin said Thursday that he and the leaders of Ukraine and Byelorussia created their Slavic commonwealth because the Soviet Union "was incapable of existing any longer," reports AP.

In a speech to the Russian Federation legislature, which is weighing approval of the commonwealth plan, Yeltsin said support for the agreement was growing with Armenia, Kirgizia and Moldavia expressing interest in joining.

Yeltsin said he and Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev reached agreement Wednesday to keep the "currently working structures" of the central government functioning until a majority of the republics join the com-

monwealth. Yeltsin and Gorbachev are vying for the right to decide the future of the former Soviet Union and the loyalty of the Soviet military, which will play a key role in determining whose political concept will win out.

The legislatures of Byelorussian and Ukraine have already approved the treaty, but it has not yet been put to a vote by Russian lawmakers.

Although Gorbachev has struggled to keep the union intact, an aide acknowledged Wednesday night that it was a lost cause. Igor Malashenko said on national television the Soviet leader must retain that power and the right to represent the republics in foreign relations —

even if he were to resign. "I think that Mikhail Gorbachev is ready to resign, probably he will do that, but I don't think his potential is exhausted," said Malashenko.

"The USSR, though no longer existing, remains a nuclear superpower, and for an interim period Russia, Byelorussian, Ukraine and Kazakhstan can form a military strategic union and entrust Mikhail Gorbachev with authority to be at its head," he said.

Those four republics hold the Soviet Union's 27,000 nuclear warheads. Yeltsin said Armenia and Kirgizia would be the first non-Slavic republics to join the commonwealth, and he said Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and

Tadzhikistan would decide on Thursday.

He also said in his speech to the lawmakers that representatives from Moldavia, in the southwestern Soviet Union, were arriving in Moscow later Thursday to discuss joining the commonwealth.

Armenia's decision was no surprise. Surrounded by hostile neighbors, Armenia has sought recently to improve relations with Russia.

Despite Yeltsin's announcement, Kirgizia President Askar Akayev told his republic's lawmakers it was up to them to decide the issue of membership in the commonwealth, Tass reported. Kirgizia was expected to join the other Central Asian republics of Tadzhikistan,

Off the Record

'Free speech is life itself'

NEW YORK: Author Salman Rushdie in hiding for nearly three years since Iran sentenced him to death for blaspheming Islam, turned up in New York on Wednesday in his first public appearance in the United States since going into seclusion, reports Reuters.



Rushdie, who spoke to Columbia University journalism students, was whisked in and out of the university with police escorts. The writer asked the invited audience of more than 300 students and profes-

sors not to forget that he was still under an Iranian death sentence issued by the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

"Free speech is the whole thing, the whole ballgame," Rushdie told the assembly at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism, "free speech is life itself."

Khomeini, condemning the author's book "The Satanic Verses", called on Muslims throughout the world to kill Rushdie on February 14, 1989.

This was believed to be Rushdie's first trip abroad and it was his first public appearance outside Britain since the death decree.

New York police said Rushdie left the podium and was escorted directly to the airport where he was flown out of the country to an unknown destination.

PM's first word begins with F

OTTAWA: Prime Minister Brian Mulroney cursed a liberal deputy during a debate Wednesday, according to several parliamentarians and others within earshot, and outraged opposition members demanded an official censure, reports AP.

Winnipeg MP David Walker said the Conservative Prime Minister used the profanity during a Commons debate after Walker charged that Mulroney was more interested in photo opportunities than in eradicating poverty among Canadian children.

"I wouldn't be willing to repeat in public what the Prime Minister said," Walker said. "The first word begins with 'F' and refers to sexual activity. The second one refers to my lack of parents. I have parents and I don't use the F word."

A spokesman for Mulroney denied he made the remark, and it was impossible to verify because Mulroney's microphone was switched off and his remarks weren't captured by the parliament's electronic transcript service.

But several opposition MPs and a Canadian Press news photographer said they clearly heard Mulroney use the two words.

"We all looked at each other rather incredulously, not quite believing what we believed he had uttered," said Nelson Rits, House leader of the opposition New Democratic Party.

The big difference was that in the end Major got his way. The 12-nation trade bloc got a historic accord—although well short of continental visions of a federal-type Europe—and no tempers frayed.

"The United Kingdom is very much the same," Dutch Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, the summit host, remarked wearily when two days of haggling finally ended in Wednesday's early hours. But, he added, this British "minister does not have a handbag."

The quip underlined the contrast in style between Major and Mrs. Thatcher, who during her 11 years in office was regularly depicted by cartoonists as pounding male colleagues with her trademark handbag.

HIV-carrier deprived of comforts of bed

MOSCOW: When Andrei Plotnikov tested positive for the HIV virus, articles appeared in his home town newspapers warning that he was a danger to society, reports AP.

Not long after, Plotnikov was in jail, was dumped in a cell without mattress or pillow. His alleged crime: knowingly infecting his homosexual lover with the AIDS virus.

"Of course I'm scared," Plotnikov said, sitting in Moscow's Second Infectious Disease Hospital, where he was admitted for treatment. "I don't want to go back to prison and die there." He denied the charge.

The healthy-looking 26-year-old is one of three Soviets who have been imprisoned under a law that makes it a crime to transmit knowingly the AIDS virus, a law that has counterparts in other countries.

A number of people in the United States have been prosecuted under various state laws for knowingly transmitting the virus. But AIDS activists say the Soviet law really exists to quarantine people who are HIV-carriers and humiliate them, both as a punishment and as a warning to others to discourage them from high-risk activities.

BRIEFLY

Bush welcomes EC's steps : US President George Bush on Wednesday welcomed the European Community's steps towards economic and political union as laying the groundwork for a Europe able to take on larger responsibilities, reports Reuters from Washington.

In a written statement, Bush said the United States was celebrating the results of the EC summit in Maastricht. "The United States has long supported European unity because of our strong conviction that it was good for Europe, good for the Atlantic partnership and good for the world," he said.

He said a strong, more united Europe is in America's interest. "A more united Europe offers the United States a more effective partner, prepared for larger responsibilities," he said.

Rebel shelling kills 70 in Sudan : A Sudanese government official said Wednesday that rebel shelling of the southern town of Juba killed 70 people and wounded more than 130, reports AP from Khartoum.

Brigadier Dominik Kassiano, a member of Sudan's ruling military junta told the official Sudan News Agency all the casualties were civilians. But Kassiano did not say when the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army shelled Juba.

Juba, 744 miles (1200 km) south of Khartoum, has been under rebel fire for the past two weeks. Ten people were reported to have been killed in previous shelling.

Fighting between government forces and the rebels on the one hand, and rival SPLA factions on the other, has disrupted relief work in Juba. The city depends largely on aid from international organizations for survival.

Gates shuns 'commercial spying' : New CIA Director Robert M Gates said Wednesday he opposes expanding his agency's role to include "commercial spying" in foreign countries on behalf of US businesses, reports AP from Washington.

In a luncheon interview with reporters and editors of the Washington Post, Gates acknowledged that foreign intelligence organizations have planted "moles" in American companies.

But the newspaper quoted him as saying that such economic sleuthing poses a "potentially bottomless well for the intelligence community."

The only two areas in which US intelligence can make "a unique contribution," Gates said, are in uncovering foreign economic espionage and gathering information about other countries' attempts to violate international trade agreements and other standards of fair play.

US envoy to Ecuador resigns : US Ambassador Paul C Lambert, who has clashed with Ecuador's government over his disparaging assessment of the country's business climate, has resigned, the US Information Service said Wednesday, reports AP from Ecuador.

Lambert presented his resignation, effective in January, to President Bush in a letter dated July 29, the service said. There was no explanation for the delay in announcing his plans.

Lambert was unavailable for comment Wednesday. USIS officials said their statement, which gave no explanation of why Lambert was stepping down, was the only information available.

Lambert is the second US envoy to leave Ecuador after relations with the government deteriorated. His predecessor, Robert N. Holwill, had complained of the military's control of business and banking in Ecuador. After Holwill left Ecuador in November, 1989, the United States delayed eight months before naming Lambert.

Shiites mount attacks on Israelis : Shiite Muslim fundamentalist guerrillas mounted two attacks on Israel's self-designated security zone in south Lebanon on Wednesday, wounding five Israeli-armed militiamen, sources said, reports AP from Lebanon.

Two members of the South Lebanon Army militia, financed and armed by Israel, were slightly injured when a roadside bomb exploded at 9 a.m. (0700 GMT) on the Rimat road in the Christian town of Jezzine.

Jezzine, 25 miles (940 kilometers) south of Beirut, forms the northernmost edge of the zone that was carved out by Israel in 1985 as a buffer against cross-border guerrilla raids.

The bombing was claimed by the Iranian-backed, Hezbollah, or Party of God, in a communique released in Beirut hours later.

Mujahideen kill Islamic scholar : Guerrillas fighting the Afghan government have killed a prominent Islamic scholar in Kandahar province, official Kabul radio said on Wednesday, reports Reuters from Islamabad.

Mawlana Muhammad Omar Osmanzai, 70, was killed in the southern province's Dausatabad region recently, said the broadcast monitored in Islamabad. It gave no date or other details.