

Soviet collapse poses problems for existing arms treaties : NATO

BRUSSELS, Dec 20 : NATO Foreign Ministers outlined a new arms control agenda on Thursday and said the alliance would forge closer links with a new pan-European security forum, reports Reuter.

Israeli commandos abduct 8 Lebanese

NABATIYEH, Lebanon, Dec 20 : Israeli commandos abducted eight Lebanese from near the south Lebanon village of Jibsheet, a witness said today, reports Reuter.

Pilot killed as Pak fighter crashes:

A Pakistan Air Force fighter has crashed, killing the pilot, an official statement said Friday, reports AFP from Islamabad.

Bush to visit Australia:

President George Bush said Thursday he was looking forward to meeting new Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating when he visits the country at the end of December, reports AFP from Washington.

13 killed in Punjab blast:

Thirteen people were killed and 26 injured, some of them seriously, in a powerful bomb blast in Ludhiana Thursday, reports PTI from Chandigarh.

Sharif visits Singapore tomorrow:

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will pay a two-day visit to Singapore from Sunday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Thursday, reports AFP.

FMLN downs Honduran copter:

Leftist Salvadoran rebels said on Thursday they had shot down a Honduran military helicopter, killing its nine-man crew including two colonels, reports Reuter.

Four killed in Ohio plane crash:

A small airplane lost an engine and crashed in a field, killing at least four people, authorities said. Rescue crews searched for a fifth victim, reports AP from Ohio.

SAARC summit to focus on links between terrorism, drug trafficking

COLOMBO, Dec 20: South Asian leaders meeting in Colombo on Saturday are expected to focus on the growing links between terrorism, drug trafficking and the arms trade, conference sources said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Issues being barred from the formal meetings of SAARC. AFP adds: Security forces continued a drive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas in Sri Lanka's northeast and killed four more rebels in a brief firefight, a military spokesman here said today.

checking the report. Fah's brother told Reuters that Fahs heard helicopters hovering over Nabatiyeh and nearby villages on Thursday night. He went out to investigate and failed to return.



ROME: Russian President Boris Yeltsin smiles as Italian President Francesco Cossiga pins the medal of Grand Cross Knight of the Italian Republic on Yeltsin's chest during a ceremony held Thursday in the Presidential Quirinale Palace.

'Collective control of N-arms absurd' Gorbachev urges republics to set up a single command

MOSCOW, Dec 20 : Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev called on republican leaders Thursday to set up a single command for strategic nuclear weapons, saying collective control would be 'absurd', reports AFP.

ME talks resume in Moscow Jan 28

BRUSSELS, Dec 20 : The next multilateral phase of the Mideast peace conference will take place in Moscow on January 28 and 29, US Secretary of State James Baker said here Thursday, reports AFP.

Ishaq calls for Islamic bloc in Asia

ISLAMABAD, Dec 20 : President Ghulam Ishaq Khan called Thursday for an Islamic bloc in Asia comprising Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Muslim central Asian republics, reports AFP.

Iceland recognises Croatia, Slovenia

REYKJAVIK, Dec 20 : Iceland said on Thursday it had recognised the independence of Croatia and Slovenia from Yugoslavia and would soon set up diplomatic relations with the two break away republics.

Cambodian minister fired

PHNOM PENH, Dec 20 : Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen fired his Transport Minister today in a bid to quell violent demonstrations against official corruption, reports AFP.

Arafat in China

BEIJING, Dec 20 : Yasser Arafat, President of the State of Palestine and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) arrived here this morning by special plane on an official visit to China at the invitation of Yang Shangkun, reports Xinhua.

Deng for powerful army to face hostile foreign forces

BEIJING, Dec 20 : Senior Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, citing the continued presence of imperialism, has called for maintaining powerful armed and police forces, a newspaper reported today, says AFP.

He was the guiding force behind a reduction of one million troops from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the 1980s, as China strove to foster a more professional fighting force. The PLA now has some three million soldiers.

Off the Record

Gorby yet to learn what others know

BOSTON : Mikhail Gorbachev may soon learn what many unemployed political leaders already know : There's life after the last hurrah — on American college campuses, reports AP.



PARIS : — Actress Sophia Loren and her husband Marcel Marceau received high honours Thursday from President Francois Mitterrand at the traditional year-end awards ceremony at the Elysee Palace, reports AP.

Sex in parked car okay if....

ALBANY, New York : Sex in a parked car is allowed, as long as no one is likely to see you, New York State's top court ruled Thursday, reports AP.

Maoists kill 16, kidnap 2 in Andhra

NEW DELHI, Dec 20 : Maoist guerrillas killed 16 bus passengers in a landmine explosion in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh and kidnapped two nuclear scientists in neighbouring Maharashtra, news reports said today, reports Reuter.



LONDON: A new brand of cigarettes just launched here called 'Death' is leaving smokers grasping at the honesty of the tobacco firm behind the product. A pack of 20 cigarettes are among the most expensive on sale and cost 2.95 pounds (5.5 dollars). The Company which distributed the product said they would be giving 10 per cent of the profit to cancer research charities.

Blast kills 8 in Medellin

BOGOTA, Colombia, Dec 20 : A bomb blew up in a shopping centre in the Colombian city of Medellin on Thursday afternoon, killing at least eight and critically injuring 20, authorities said, reports Reuter.

It cited party General Secretary Jiang Zemin, who now heads the military commission, as supporting this stance. 'The building of socialist modernization requires a stable environment, so it is necessary to maintain a powerful army and consolidate national defence,' Jiang was quoted as saying.