

## Arab League to hold confce for solution to Somalian crisis

CAIRO, Jan 6: The Arab League on Sunday decides to convene a national reconciliation conference to end civil strife in Somalia that has left tens of thousands dead or wounded in the horn of Africa state, reports AFP.

The league's permanent representatives, meeting here in special session, said in a statement they were "deeply concerned" by civil strife in Somalia.

They appealed to all the Somali parties to stop fighting immediately and to resolve their differences by peaceful means within the framework of dialogue and reconciliation.

Fighting resumed in Mogadishu on November 17 between two rival factions of the United Somali Congress (USC), which a year ago ousted

Somalia's long-ruling military dictator Mohammad Siad Barre.

U N sources estimate the number of dead and wounded in the conflict at about 20,000.

U N under Secretary General Janis Jonah went Friday to Mogadishu where he met one of the USC leaders, general Mohammad Farah Aidid, who rejected all offers of foreign mediation or of intervention.

The other USC faction is headed by interim President Ali Mahdi Muhammad.

The Arab League meeting mandated Secretary-General Esmat Abdel Meguid to "make urgent contacts with Arab foreign ministers for the settling up of a ministerial committee, which should in turn contact the parties concerned by the conflict in Somalia, with a view to convening the reconciliation conference.

Somalia is a member of the Arab League.

The statement said the conference would have to "study the best means of reaching a peaceful solution guaranteeing the unity of Somalia and ensuring its people's security and stability."

It expressed deep concern at the grave political developments in Somalia, saying these constitute a growing threat for its national unity and territorial integrity.



JERUSALEM, Khalde Jarrar (c), wife of Ghassam Jarrar, one of 12 Palestinians to be deported by Israel at a press conference with Palestinian peace talks spokeswoman Hannan Ashrawi. She called on the Palestinian delegation to withdraw from the talks on grounds they do not represent the Palestinian people. —AFP/UNB photo

## Baltic leaders want former Soviet troops out

MOSCOW, Jan 6: The leaders of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania called on Sunday for the immediate withdrawal of members of the former Soviet armed forces from their territory and for them to leave behind their equipment, reports AFP.

Russian television and the Tass news agency said the appeal came at a meeting Sunday of the Baltic Council, grouping the former Soviet Baltic republics.

Attending the day-long meeting in the Latvian town of Jurmala were the Presidents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, respectively Arnold Ruitel,

Anatoly Gubunovs and Vytautas Landsbergis.

The Baltic leaders also discussed economic policy, borders and visas.

Russian television said they had called on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) "to immediately open negotiations on a withdrawal of troops from the capitals of the Baltic republics and their territories."

They urged members of the CIS "to leave behind equipment, armoured vehicles and military bases to allow for the creation of Defence forces" in the three Baltic states, it said.

Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, along with Georgia, are the only former Soviet republics not to join the CIS set up last month following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The Baltic leaders and CIS members should no longer send troops to the Baltic states and that former Soviet units there should not be replaced.

Landsbergis, Gorbachev and Ruitel also agreed that their citizens can travel from one Baltic republic to another without visa.

They further decided to try to coordinate economic and financial policy, Tass said.

## North Korea's pursuit of N-arms source of danger: Bush

SEOUL, Jan 6: U.S. President George Bush said today that North Korea's pursuit of nuclear arms was the single greatest source of danger to peace in northeast Asia.

Although Seoul and Pyongyang agreed last week to ban nuclear arms from the Korean peninsula, reports AFP.

"Speaking before South Korea's parliament, Bush said that "paper promise won't keep the peace" and demanded that North Korea "implement in full, without exception, without delay," at international atomic energy agency safeguards for its nu-

clear facilities.

He said however that progress between South and North on easing tensions, with agreements on non-aggression and denuclearization, had made prospects for real peace on the Korean peninsula "brighter than at any point in the past four decades."

These positive developments come at a critical moment of rising concern at a time when North Korea's pursuit of nuclear arms stands as the single greatest source of danger to peace in Northeast Asia," Bush said, adding that "prompt action by the North

will mark a new milestone on the path toward peace."

Bush said he was pleased that his announcement in September of the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from South Korea lent momentum to the effort to make the Korean safe from nuclear proliferation, and added that Washington had worked with others in the region to send a multilateral message to Pyongyang.

He also noted that the United States has been willing to open its military facilities in South Korea to inspection to challenge North Korea to do the same.



KARACHI: Female supporters of Pakistan People's Party celebrate the 64th birth anniversary of former Pakistani Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was executed by former military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq April 4, 1979. —AFP/UNB photo

## Israeli ministers threaten to quit

JERUSALEM, Jan 6: Two ministers threatened to resign from Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government if Palestinians were offered self-rule as Israeli negotiators headed for Washington to take part in Middle East peace talks, reports Reuter.

Delegation members said before leaving today that they

expected the peace talks to resume this week despite an Arab delay over Israel's decision to expel 12 Palestinians.

The ministers said they would quit their posts and possibly topple the government if Israel offered Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip autonomy.

Israel is committed to offering Palestinians self-rule in the occupied territories under the 1978 Camp David accords as a first stage towards a final settlement.

The current US-sponsored talks began with a Middle East peace conference in Madrid last October.

## Najibullah sees early end to war

KABUL, Jan 6: President Najibullah on Sunday predicted an early end to the 13-year-old Afghan civil war, saying: "The train of peace cannot be reversed," reports Reuter.

He said in an interview the warring parties should throw away their weapons now that Washington, which supported the rebels, and Moscow, which backed his government, had halted arms supplies to promote a United Nations peace plan.

"Peace will come soon to Afghanistan — in months, not years. The souls of our forefathers will be dissatisfied with us if we do not find peace now," he said.

Najibullah said the United Nations should ask Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to follow the so-called "negative symmetry" agreement between the United States and the former Soviet

Union and stop aiding the rebels. But he said his government would act in self-defence if the guerrillas continued to fight.

The UN plan envisages a ceasefire and an interim administration leading to elections. Some radical Muslim guerrilla groups have rejected it and vowed to defeat the Kabul government militarily.

Najibullah said Washington and Moscow had a moral and political responsibility to make sure that the negative symmetry agreement halting arms supplies worked in practice.

"It makes no difference who the source of arms is. Supplies must be stopped to both sides," he said.

"The people of Afghanistan are fed up with war. All the world has opted for a peaceful solution. The way is paved — all it takes is one step."

He added: "But there must be two conditions — there should be no interference from



Najibullah, dressed in a smart suit, appeared in good humour during the interview at his presidential palace in Kabul, laughing as he narrated Afghan proverbs.

He said his forces had adopted a defensive policy since the Soviet military pulled out of Afghanistan and repeated charges that Pakistan was helping the rebels.

"It is the opposition, supported by regular Pakistan army, reactionary and extremist elements in Pakistan, and Arab mercenaries who have been on the offensive," he said.

"In the last three years we have proved that our army can independently defend the territorial integrity of Afghanistan. We still have possibilities in the future of doing so. We have a proverb: 'If you try to slaughter a sparrow it will fight against the sword.'"

## Palestinians appeal against deportation orders

JERUSALEM, Jan 6: Twelve Palestinian activists due to be expelled from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip have appealed to the Israeli army against the deportation orders, a military spokesman said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

They appealed and it will come under discussion Monday, the spokesman said. "The discussion can take days."

Israel's announcement last Thursday that it was expelling the 12 Palestinians, led Arab delegates to postpone their departure for Middle East peace talks with Israel which had been scheduled to resume in Washington on Tuesday.

Israel's delegation to the talks was due to leave on Sunday night.

## Yang Shangkun visits Malaysia, Singapore today

BEIJING, Jan 6: President Yang Shangkun is to begin official visits to Singapore and Malaysia on Tuesday, becoming the first Chinese head of state to visit the two Southeast Asian countries, reports AFP.

The largely symbolic visit follows numerous Chinese reiterations in recent months of its desire to maintain good-neighbourly ties and strengthen dialogue with countries in the region.

Both Malaysia and Singapore belong to the once staunchly anti-communist Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose political and economic clout Beijing cannot afford to overlook.

In June, Yang visited two other ASEAN countries, Indonesia and Thailand. The other ASEAN members are Brunei and the Philippines.

## Australia recognises former Soviet republics

CANBERRA, Jan 6: Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans announced today Canberra's recognition of the 11 former Soviet republics that have established the Commonwealth of Independent States, reports AFP.

These concerns included security, central control of the nuclear arsenal, compliance with arms control commitments, human rights, protection of minorities and arrangements for meeting the Soviet Union's international obligations.

"Australia is now satisfied with Russia's assurances on these issues and now recognises the reality of Russia as an independent state," he said in a statement.

## Teresa celebrates 63 years as nun

SAN DIEGO, Jan 6: Mother Teresa celebrated her 63rd anniversary as nun on Sunday in hospital and her doctors said she was winning her battle against heart and lung disease and could be released in a week, reports Reuter.

The 81-year-old missionary wants to go home, according to Dr Patricia Aubanel at the Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation.

"She said to me this morning, 'when am I going home? I want to be with my sisters in my home (mission) in Tijuana. I think it is time,'" said Aubanel.

Dr Paul Teirstein added, "she is definitely getting back to her feisty old self, and that's a very encouraging sign."

She now was missions in 80 countries worldwide and was taken ill in Tijuana Mexico, a border town near San Diego, California on Christmas Day as she was ending a world tour of her facilities.

## Off the Record

### Hands up with clothes off!

HUNTINGTON BEACH, Calif: A man who shot at police officers then holed up in his apartment for four hours Sunday ended the standoff by surrendering in the nude, an official said, reports AP.

"He walked out unannounced wearing nothing but a baseball cap," Lt. Ed McErlain said. "He was holding a white towel above his head."

Kent L. Maynard, 40, was booked for investigation of attempted murder of a police officer and for shooting at an inhabited dwelling. He was being held on 250,000 dollar bail.

Officers went to the apartment before dawn after a man believed to be Maynard called police to report a kidnapping, McErlain said. As they approached the building, the gunman fired several rounds from a shotgun and pistol at the officers, who returned fire, McErlain said. He said the gunman also shot at an uninhabited home next door and an apartment building across an alley.

As many as 50 officers were sent to the scene and the neighborhood was evacuated. The gunman repeatedly hung up on negotiators who reached him by telephone, McErlain said, and officers heard him beating on pots and pans.

Maynard surrendered at mid-morning, McErlain said. Police discovered he had been alone in the apartment.

Neighbors reported that Maynard, a heavy equipment operator, had been despondent since he suffered an injury and was unable to work, McErlain said.

### Gulf Air kid

MANILA: A 23-year-old Filipino gave birth Saturday to a 5.5 pound (2.5 kg) baby boy shortly before her Gulf Air flight touched down at the capital's airport.

The mother, Veronica Cordero, said she would name her son "Guilén John" in honor of the airline.

Officials said Miss Cordero, who had been working as a maid in Dubai, went into labor as the plane was approaching Manila on a flight from Bahrain and Bangkok.

A Filipino midwife assisted the flight crew in the delivery, which occurred five minutes before the plane touched down.

### Trojan horse fools them again

SYDNEY: A metal trojan horse used by protesting wheat farmers during President Bush's visit to Australia was used for its original purpose Sunday — with great success, reports AP.

Police said workers at a repossessed factory in Sydney's west foiled security guards by slipping into the premises inside the four-meter-long (13-foot) metal drum-constructed horse.

The horse was used by farmers at Canberra's Parliament House on Thursday when President Bush was in the capital. Carrying a sign saying "Not a New World Order, a New Wheat Order," the demonstrators were protesting US grain subsidies that Australians say place its farmers at a disadvantage in world markets.

On Sunday, about 20 workers spilled from the horse after it was allowed to pass through the gates on a semi-transport trailer. The guards thought the horse was being returned to the plant after being used in the demonstrations.

Joe Bryant, managing director of the Bryant Group heavy transport company, said the factory was repossessed by the Commonwealth Bank last week over a mortgage dispute.

Guards were placed at the site when the bank took over. But they left after being outnumbered by workers following Sunday's takeover.

Police said no charges will be laid. Commonwealth Bank officials were not available for comment.

"It's going to be business as normal this week," Bryant said. "If we are going to have to pay the banks, we are going to need to generate income and we do that by working."

## Malaysia won't oppose US base in Singapore

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 6: Malaysia will not oppose a U.S. plan to move a major naval command from the Philippines to Singapore, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was quoted by the National Bernama news agency as saying today, reports Reuter.

He said the plan was consistent with an agreement Singapore signed with the United States in 1990 that gives U.S. air and naval forces limited access to facilities.

"Singapore only agreed to provide facilities for repair and servicing of U.S. navy ships and not allow it to set up a new naval base there," Mahathir said.

As such, he said, the United States would move to Singapore only personnel required for that kind of duty and not transfer the entire naval command from the Philippines.

Mahathir said he saw no need for a U.S. military base in southeast Asia. He did not elaborate.

More than 100 members of Malaysia's Islamic Opposition Party held a peaceful demonstration outside the U.S. Embassy in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday to oppose the U.S. plan.

The relocation of the naval logistics command, agreed in principle by President George Bush and Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on Saturday, will involve the transfer of about 200 personnel who arrange movements of U.S. warships and supply vessels in the Pacific.

The transfer follows the Philippine senate's rejection last year of a pact to renew the U.S. case on the giant Subic Naval Base.

Malaysia has previously said it opposed any move to set up a U.S. naval base in Singapore, its southern neighbour, since this would violate the zone of peace, freedom and neutrality concept advocated by the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

## Arafat, Hussein talk ME peace process

AMMAN, Jan 6: King Hussein and PLO leader Yasser Arafat on Sunday discussed the fate of next round of Middle East peace talks after Arab delegates put their involvement on hold, reports Reuter.

"We shall discuss with the King important issues dealing with the impediments Israel is placing in the path of peace," Arafat told reporters after arriving in Amman from Cairo.

"We want to remove these obstacles before continuing in the peace process."

Jordan and Palestinians from the Israeli-held territories have formed a joint delegation to get round the Jewish state's refusal to talk to Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Syria, Lebanon, and the Jordanian and Palestinian peace teams have delayed their departure for peace talks due to reconvene on Tuesday. In protest at Israeli plans to deport 12 Palestinian activists from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Arafat said earlier in Cairo Palestinian leaders were still discussing whether to send delegates to Washington in consultation with other Arab parties to the talks.

The PLO Executive

Committee suspended a meeting in Tunis on Saturday without a decision.

PLO executive committee member Yasser Abed Rabbo told reporters in Amman Palestinian delegates would only go to Washington if Israel reversed plans to deport the 12 Arabs and improved treatment of civilians under occupation.

"The team will not go to Washington before the issue related to the deportations is solved"

## PLO security official killed in Sidon

SIDON (LEBANON), Jan 6: Unidentified gunmen killed a security official of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in the southern port city of Sidon on Sunday, police said, reports Reuter.

Hussein Sulaiman, an official in Force 17 — the security network of PLO leader Yasser Arafat's mainstream Fatah Movement — was hit by two bullets as he left his house in Sidon, 40 km (27 miles) south of Beirut.

## Explosion in Belfast

BELFAST, Jan 6: A 600-lb (270-kg) Irish Republican Army bomb exploded in Belfast, devastating scores of offices and inflicting minor injuries on security forces, police said today, reports Reuter.

It was a miracle no one was killed, a police spokesman said. Several police and troops received minor injuries in the Sunday night blast, he said.

## BRIEFLY

### Peace talks start in El Salvador:

Salvadoran rebel leaders began consultations with the U.N. envoy on El Salvador on Sunday in the start of the final phase of peace accords, reports Reuter.

Negotiators for the Salvadoran government and the rebels, who have been fighting a civil war for 12 years that has killed more than 75,000 people, had been scheduled to resume the final phase of peace negotiations on Sunday.

But government representatives did not appear at Sunday's talks.

They were expected to arrive in New York on Sunday night and to appear at the United Nations this morning.

Instead, the rebels of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) began consultations with U.N. envoy Alvaro De Soto. Discussing their proposals for resolving remaining issues between rebels and the government of the central American nation.

Rebel spokesman Roberto Canas said the Salvadoran government owned the world an explanation for failing to appear for the talks.

### 22 killed in Indian road mishaps:

Twenty-two people were killed at the weekend in two road accidents in India, the Press Trust of India (PTI) from New Delhi reports on Sunday.

A bus plummeted into a river in the northeastern state of Meghalaya late Saturday, killing a dozen passengers and injuring 10 more.

Ten people died and eight more were seriously injured also on Saturday when a van crashed into a bus in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, PTI said.

### Truce in Croatia continues:

A new ceasefire is holding in war-torn Croatia but few Serbs and Croats near the battle zones believe it will last and many have contempt for a U.N. peace plan, reports Reuter from Erdut, Yugoslavia.

"I don't trust these ceasefires any more," said a Serb refugee in this Serb-controlled village in eastern Croatia, 25 km (16 miles) from the front. "We expect an explosion any minute."

Fourteen previous ceasefires to halt six months of conflict triggered by Croatia's bid for independence have collapsed.

But the latest truce, in force since Friday evening, held through Sunday and could take root. U.N. envoy Cyrus Vance says he will recommend deployment of peace-keeping forces if it does.

### China tests first turbogenerator:

China has successfully tested the first turbogenerator at the 1,800-megawatt Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station, the country's largest nuclear power project, the official New China News agency reports from Beijing.

In a steam-run test last week, the plant's first generating unit produced 23 megawatts, the agency said in a report issued late on Sunday. The unit is designed to produce 900 megawatts.

"The trial run shows that the number one generating unit is upto British national standards," the agency said without elaborating.

Daya Bay, just across the border from the heavily populated British colony of Hong Kong, has been plagued by problems since construction began in 1987.

China's first nuclear power station, the 300-megawatt Qinshan plant about 100 km (60 miles) outside Shanghai, went into operation last month.

### 24 killed as storm lashes Brazil:

Gusting winds and rainstorms lashed Rio de Janeiro state Sunday killing 24 people and leaving more than a thousands homeless, rescue officials said, AFP says.

Heavy rains began just after midnight, triggering landslides, flooding streets and collapsing hundreds of houses in northern and western parts of metropolitan Rio de Janeiro, which is ringed by steep slopes crowded with precariously perched homes.

Firefighters and emergency civil defence rescue squads said they had received more than a hundred calls for help, mostly from residents of poor neighborhoods who were left homeless by the storm.

In the city of Rio de Janeiro, six people were crushed to death when their fragile homes collapsed, while one person was struck by lightning and another two drowned, a civil defence spokesman said.

### Falkland to observe Thatcher Day:

Falkland Islanders will this week declare January 10 Margaret Thatcher Day, the Times newspapers reports Monday, Reuter from London says.

As Prime Minister, Thatcher, who left office more than a year ago, sent a Naval Task Force to the remote Falkland Islands in the south Atlantic after Argentina invaded them.

The day is to commemorate her visit to the British colony on that date in 1983, seven months after the end of the conflict.

The decision was taken by the Falklands Islands legislature.

The Times said some of the former Conservative party leader's closest aides knew nothing of the decision.

"Good lord, she hasn't even mentioned it. It is splendid news. I am sure she is absolutely delighted," one of the former Prime Minister's closest Parliamentary supporters said.