

Anti-Indian rally in Kashmir

SRINAGAR (India), Jan 11: Kashmiris held anti Indian demonstrations in the town of Sopore on Friday, after two labourers had been shot dead by Indian security forces, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

The witnesses said security forces shot the two labourers on Thursday after dragging them out of a Sopore mosque where they had refuge to escape the crossfire as troops clashed with Kashmiri militants.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) criticised the Pakistan government over the reported kidnapping of one of its leaders, Amanullah Khan. The JKLF is a group fighting for the independence of Kashmir, two-thirds of which is controlled by Delhi and the remainder by Pakistan.

Khan, the JKLF's political chief who has returned to his headquarters in Rawalpindi, said he had been held for 12

hours at gunpoint in Pakistani Kashmir by a rival splinter group.

A spokesman for JKLF said it was the responsibility of the Pakistan government to ensure Khan's safety.

Criminal charge against Yugoslav air force officer

ZAGREB, Jan 11: Yugoslavia's Defence Ministry has opened criminal proceedings against an air force officer after five European Community monitors in Croatia died when their helicopter was shot out of the sky, reports Reuter.

Militant Serbs in Croatia — whose hardline allies in the army are accused by many Croats of planning the attack — vowed to resist the planned deployment of United Nations peace-keepers in the disintegrating Yugoslav Federation.



An Israeli 'Peace Now' activist (R) recently argues with Jewish settlers in Beth-el, located in the occupied West Bank during a demonstration, protesting Israel's politics of settlements. —AFP photo

ME peace talks resume today

WASHINGTON, Jan 11: Israeli and Arab negotiators were expected to resume Middle East peace talks on Sunday with both sides expressing optimism they would be able to solve a procedural dispute and move on to issues of substance, reports Reuter.

Officials said Friday the chief Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian negotiators had spoken by telephone and agreed in principle to meet Sunday at the State Department. They were working out final details.

It was not immediately clear whether two separate negotiations matching Israel with Syria and Lebanon would also reconvene on Sunday or wait until Monday.

The bilateral talks, inaugurated by the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference last October, adjourned in Washington on December 18

after six days of discussions.

Their resumption was delayed for five days beyond plans after Israel announced it was deporting 12 Palestinians from the occupied territories. Arab delegates delayed their arrival in Washington until the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution strongly condemning the expulsions.

Officials and analysts said a key test of this new round of talks would be whether the Israelis and Palestinians could solve their dispute over the status and functions of the joint delegation which the Palestinians form with Jordan.

They are arguing over how to pursue what both sides agree should be twin-track negotiations between Israel and Jordan on the one hand and Israel and the Palestinians on the other.

The Palestinians pushed hard last month for virtual

recognition as a separate delegation when negotiating Palestinian issues. But Israel resisted, fiercely, seeing the move as a dangerous precedent that could in the future lead to Palestinian independence.

While they argued this point, both sides refused to enter the negotiating room at the State Department. Delegation heads spent the six days wedged together on a couch in a corridor.

"We believe we can soon finalise the procedural stage and move to agenda and subjects leading to substance if the rules are respected," said Chief Israeli Negotiator Eli Rubinstain.

The aim of these talks is to agree on self-rule for 1.75 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip by next November.

Uzbekistan, Kirghizstan apply for UN membership

NEW YORK, UNITED NATIONS, Jan 11: Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan have officially applied for UN membership, the UN said Friday, reports AFP.

Spokeswoman Nadia Younes said the UN had received application letters from the two governments.

Kazakhstan, another former Soviet republic, had already filed its own application December 31.

Ukraine and Belarus are founding members of the world body while the three Baltic states—Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—were admitted last September.

Last month, Russia took over the permanent seat in the Security Council held by the former Soviet Union and it was then made clear that other former Soviet republics would seek separate UN membership.

A decision on admission is made by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

Ukraine and Belarus are founding members of the world body while the three Baltic states—Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia—were admitted last September.

Last month, Russia took over the permanent seat in the Security Council held by the former Soviet Union and it was then made clear that other former Soviet republics would seek separate UN membership.

A decision on admission is made by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council.

Thatcher to visit Falklands

PORT STANLEY (Falkland Islands), Jan 11: Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said on Friday she would go to the Falkland Islands to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the expulsion of Argentine invaders, reports Reuter.

Thatcher, who ordered a naval task force to the South Atlantic colony after the April 1982 invasion, accepted an invitation to attend the June 13 celebrations when she telephoned William Fullerton, Governor of the Falklands.

Pan Am plane bombing

Big 3 want UN sanctions against Libya

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 11: Britain, the United States and France circulated a draft resolution on Friday urging Libya to hand over its nationals accused of involvement in the plane bombings over Scotland and Niger that killed 441 people, reports Reuter.

The Security Council resolution, which may come to a vote in the next week, is the first UN step in an allied plan to deal with the alleged involvement of Libyan agents in the blowing up Pan American World Airways Flight 103 in

December 1988 over Lockerbie, Scotland, and France's UTA Flight 772 in September 1989 over Niger. The Lockerbie bombing killed 270 people and the Niger blast 171.

The three resolution sponsors are hoping the initial measure will be followed by a stronger version imposing sanctions, such as cutting air traffic, if Libya doesn't comply.

Deliberations on the current draft will give the United States, France and Britain time to make a political assessment as to whether they could get

sanctions adopted. Britain holds the rotating presidency of the Council for January.

An early draft, obtained by Reuter, says the Council is "deeply concerned over results of investigations that implicate Libyan government officials and include requests from the US and Britain that the accused be surrendered."

It urges Libya to "provide a full and effective response" to the requests.

It also would "condemn the destruction" of the two planes and loss of hundreds of lives

and "strongly" deplore the fact Libya has not yet responded effectively to cooperate fully in establishing responsibility for the "terrorist acts."

The United States and Britain have asked that the agents be surrendered for trial and French officials say they want the accused to be interrogated by their judges.

Two Libyans, Abdel Basset Ali Meghrabi and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, were charged in Britain and the United States over the Lockerbie bombing.

Dispute over Black Sea Fleet to be resolved peacefully, hopes US

WASHINGTON, Jan 11: The United States on Friday expressed optimism that Ukraine and Russia would peacefully resolve their dispute over the Black Sea Fleet but warned that continued conflict over such matters would only undercut reform efforts, reports Reuter.

"A conflict over these issues is in no one's interest, and will only detract from the real need to push forward with necessary economic and political reform," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters.

He also announced that Washington has now established formal diplomatic ties with four of the newly-independent former Soviet Republics — Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Armenia.

Official relations with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are expected shortly, and a senior US official, Deputy Under-Secretary of State Robert Fauver, is now on a visit to both countries to discuss economic reform, Boucher said.

During a trip to the former Soviet Union last month, Secretary of State James Baker found the presidents of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan eager for western investment.

The quarrel over control of the huge Black Sea Fleet threatens to split the new Commonwealth of Independent States that was formed out of the disinte-

grated former Soviet Union.

Boucher told reporters the United States expects these newly-independent states to sort out their military relationships in accordance with international obligations.

"We'd also like to see this matter done in a way that strengthens stability and the common interests of the states in pursuing responsible security policies and in building democratic and free market systems," he said.

Although some analysts disagree with his conclusion Boucher asserted that "during this transition period the states of the commonwealth have managed to reach amica-

ble agreements in a number of areas.

"We trust that they will be able to do so in the important military sphere as well," he said.

Pressed on whether the US view really was wishful thinking, Boucher insisted: "We think it's possible to work out this issue without coming to any great sense of conflict."

Ukraine's stated intention to turn the Black Sea Fleet into its own navy from July has angered Russia and raised questions about the cohesiveness of the 11-member commonwealth that emerged last month in place of the Soviet Union.



Admiral Vladimir Chernavin, Commander of the former Soviet Navy sits in front of a map showing NATO forces on the southern edge of the Black Sea. —AFP photo

"Canada to become part of US within 50 years"

MONTREAL, Jan 11: One in three Canadians believes that Canada will become part of the United States within 50 years, and two-thirds say their giant neighbour already exerts too much influence on them, according to a poll published on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The Gallup poll showed that 67 per cent of the 1,006 adult Canadians surveyed said the United States has too much influence on their way of life, up from 58 per cent in 1985.

At the same time, the percentage of Canadians who believe their country will merge with the United States is climbing, to 37 per cent from 25 per cent in 1988.

The feeling that Canada will join the United States was strongest in Ontario, Canada's most populous province, with 41 per cent believing the border will disappear.

Ontarians also registered the highest level of resentment, with 74 per cent saying the United States exerts too much influence.

The poll, conducted in early December, is accurate within four percentage points.

Teresa's condition good

LA JOLLA, (CALIFORNIA) Jan 11: Mother Teresa's condition was upgraded to "good" Friday and she is continuing physical therapy, Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation said, reports AFP.

Off the Record

'It's a male'

DENVER: Embarrassed wildlife experts called off an attempt to reduce the beaver population with the long-acting contraceptive Norplant when they found out their first specimen was male, reports AP.

Television cameras rolled Thursday to record the first operation to implant the birth-control device in a beaver.

The beaver had been anesthetized before veterinarian David Robinson conducted a last-minute examination and declared, "It's a male."

"The problem with beaver is their sexual organs are drawn way up inside their bodies and they're darn hard to sex," Robinson said.

Norplant, which the Food and Drug Administration approved for use by women in December 1990, consists of six matchstick-sized capsules inserted into the arm above the elbow. It's effective for about five years.

The plan was an attempt to limit the number of beaver without killing them, said Nick Fisher of Wheat Ridge's animal and park enforcement department. It was put on hold until a female beaver can be found.

'Follow rhythm method of birth control'

VATICAN CITY, Jan 11: Pope John Paul II on Friday praised couples who practiced "marital chastity" as a birth-control method, reports AP.

Addressing a group who had been studying what the Vatican calls "natural methods" of birth control, the pontiff said that marital chastity during a woman's fertile period prevents sex from disintegrating into egotism. It also acknowledges the link between sex and child birth, he said.

"The increasingly accurate knowledge of the rhythms of fertility of the female organism finds its proper horizon and the condition for its morally correct use in the perspective of marital chastity," he added.

The Catholic Church bans use of artificial birth control, but allows couples to follow the so-called "rhythm method," which entails abstinence from sexual activity during a woman's fertile period.

Use of artificial birth control, the pope said, "reflects a pessimistic judgement on existence, and a preference for immediate pleasures."

Tibetan prisoners fear Chinese reprisals

BEIJING, Jan 11: A leading Tibetan dissident has urged foreigners to stop visiting prisons there for fear of triggering Chinese reprisals against inmates, according to a group which supports independence for the region, reports Reuter.

The London-based Tibet information network said prisoners were penalised after protests during "a visit by Swiss diplomats to Draphi prison near the Tibetan capital Lhasa."

"A number of Tibetan prisoners shouted slogans supporting the (spiritual leader) Dalai Lama and calling for Tibetan independence during the visit of four Swiss diplomats to a Tibetan prison on December 6, 1991," the group said in a statement received by fax on Friday.

It said the delegation was led by Swiss Ambassador Erwin Schurinerberger. The ambassador was not available for comment.

After the protest authorities placed four prisoners in solitary confinement, the statement said. One was tentatively identified as Tanak Jigme Zangpo, serving a 19-year sentence for shouting political slogans in 1989.

The group quoted an unidentified senior independence activist in Lhasa as appealing to foreign delegations to stop visiting Tibetan prisons for the time being.

Iraq to resume oil exports shortly

VIENNA, Jan 11: Iraq will be able to resume oil exports shortly, a United Nations negotiator said here late Friday after three days of talks with Iraqi officials, reports AP.

"The question is no longer if but when Iraq can resume its crude exports," UN Deputy Secretary-General Kofi Annan told a press conference.

"We have made considerable progress at this meeting on a number of points," he added, "but some small and big problems remain to be solved at a new meeting that will take place before the end of March in Vienna."

The UN imposed an embargo on Iraqi oil exports in the wake of Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait and has since said part of Iraqi oil revenues should be used for war reparations.

Annan said two working groups had examined the two major series of problems: The question of oil sales (quantities, outlets and sites of extraction) and monetary problems, (control and use of the money resulting from the sales).

Sources close to the conference said Iraq had asked for double what the UN proposed to allow it to export—1.6 billion dollars' worth of crude — to buy medicine and essential goods.

"Iraq wants to export its crude through the Mina Al-Bakr terminal, while the UN favours shipment through one of the Turkish pipelines.

The Security Council has said the entire export process should be carried out under UN control and part of the money — some 600 million dollars — should be used to pay the UN committees in charge of Iraqi disarmament.

US denies involvement in attack on Cuba

WASHINGTON, Jan 11: The United States on Friday denied involvement in a purported attack on Cuba and said preliminary indications are that three intruders alleged by Cuba to have infiltrated the communist-ruled island are not Americans, reports Reuter.

The Cuban government's allegations of US government involvement in a terrorist incident are untrue and unacceptable. We're telling this to the Cuban government through diplomatic channels.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters.

He complained that Cuba has not responded to a US request for information about three armed men the communist government said it captured on December 29 after they landed by dinghy on the Cuban coast.

"To date, Cuba has shown no signs of pursuing this investigation in a serious manner and has instead concentrated on propaganda," he said.

Boucher said a second request for information would be made.

"If any (of the three arrested men) are US citizens, we will request immediate consular access. Preliminary information indicates that none of these people are US citizens."

Boucher said the three men, reported by the media to live in Miami where a large Cuban exile community is located, may have been legal US residents instead of citizens.

On Thursday Cuba accused the United States of harbouring "terrorist organisations" on US territory and of allowing them to launch attack and sabotage missions against the Caribbean island.

BRIEFLY

Israeli planes kill 12 in Lebanon

Israeli planes killed 12 people, including five women and four children, in an attack aimed at Palestinian guerrilla bases south of Beirut, security sources and witnesses said, reports Reuter from Lebanon.

The jets fired rockets on positions of the popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (FPLP-GC) near Na'ameh, 15 KM (nine miles) south of Beirut, the sources said.

But two rockets slammed into a nearby Bedouin Camp, killing five women and four children and wounding 11 others, four seriously, they added.

DPRK sets up ties with Ukraine

North Korea and Ukraine have established formal diplomatic relations, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported Saturday, says AFP from Tokyo.

Pyeongyang's official news agency, in a report monitored in Tokyo, said that a communique to open the diplomatic ties was signed in Kiv on Thursday.

The governments of North Korea and the Ukraine agreed to open diplomatic relations from the day when the communique is signed and exchange diplomatic missions at ambassadorial level," the communique said, according to KCNA.

Two pilots killed in plane crash

Two Canadian Forces pilots were killed Friday when their CF-5 jet fighter plane crashed near the Primrose weapons range in northwestern Saskatchewan province, officials said, reports AP.

Libya denies hiring Soviet N-experts

Libya denied Friday it is trying to hire Soviet experts for its nuclear programme, saying it has no interest in developing weapons of mass destruction, reports AP from Cairo.

The denial was issued by the official Libyan news agency JANA.

French newsmen in Chad jailed

The Chadian correspondent for a French Radio network faces five years in prison for broadcast about last week's failed rebellion that led officials to accuse him of siding with the insurgents, officials announced Friday, reports AP from Chad.

Sosthene Gargoune, a Chadian working for Radio-France Internationale, was charged with "diffusing news of a military character that hadn't been published by the authorities."

State Prosecutor Ruth Roumab said that Gargoune broadcast January 22 that the town of Mao in western Chad had fallen to rebels loyal to former President Hissene Habre.

The story was denied by the government at the time, and it was never verified that the town had been taken.

UN Council meet on Jan 31

Leaders of the 15 countries belonging to the U.N. Security Council will meet January 31 for their first summit under the direction of new Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, reports AP from Paris.

Boutros-Ghali informed President Francois Mitterrand in 45-minute talks here that the meeting in New York will coincide with the end of Britain's six-month presidency of the council.

Pierre Morel, diplomatic adviser to the French president, told reporters after the talks that Boutros-Ghali hopes to discuss a broad programme for his five-year term when he meets the heads of state and government.

Elements include the support of democratic institutions, preventive diplomacy, and how to reinforce peace and security in the world following the end of the Cold War, Morel said.

Afghan peace confce in Feb likely

The United Nations may organize a peace conference on Afghanistan in February at a site yet to be decided, informed sources said in Geneva Friday, reports AP.

Helen Sevean U.N. representative for Afghanistan, is to discuss the proposal with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in New York at the weekend, the sources said.

Seven has just returned from a trip to Kabul and Islamabad. The peace conference, grouping representatives of the Kabul Government and factions in the opposition that support a negotiated settlement, could take place here, the sources said.

Salonga nominated presidential candidate

MANILA, Jan 11: The senator who engineered the defeat of a new US lease on the Subic Bay naval base was nominated Saturday for president by a center-left coalition, reports AP.

Former Senate President Jovito Salonga joins a crowded field that includes indicted former first lady Imelda Marcos in the race for the May 11 election to succeed President Corason Aquino.

The People's Coalition also chose Sen. Aquilino Pimentel as Salonga's running mate.

Key republics will honour European arms-cut treaty

BRUSSELS, Jan 11: NATO, deeply worried by a row over control of the former Soviet Union's huge armed forces, won a pledge from key republics on Friday that they would honour a landmark European arms-cutting treaty, reports Reuter.

With Russia and Ukraine squabbling over control of the Black Sea Fleet, the alliance has been concerned that the republics could fight over the shareout of tanks and other military hardware covered by the East-West Treaty signed in 1990.

NATO has insisted that the

Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) agreement, widely seen as the most far-reaching arms treaty in history, must be implemented by the republics now that the Soviet Union has disappeared.

On Friday, senior NATO officials met counterparts from the former Soviet republics, including Russia and Ukraine, and eastern European nations which also signed the treaty.

A statement issued after the talks at the alliance's headquarters said all participants had agreed to ratify and implement the treaty as soon as possible and that the former Soviet republics would reach

agreement among themselves on how to divide up the equipment.

"The CFE treaty should enter into force without renegotiation and be fully implemented as soon as possible," the statement said. Another meeting is planned next month to discuss progress.

But NATO officials said there had been no discussion yet between republics like Russia and Ukraine about how the equipment should be shared.

"The CFE treaty is the cornerstone of disarmament in Europe," said one official.

"If it breaks down because

the old Soviet republics can't agree to respect its limits or share out the hardware, then we have a very serious situation indeed."

The treaty, which has been ratified by only a few national parliaments in the West, was signed by all members of NATO and the now-defunct Warsaw pact. It provides for deep cuts in tanks, artillery, armoured vehicles and other equipment in an area stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Without it, NATO is worried that an arms race could begin among the republics of the

Commonwealth which emerged in place of the defunct Soviet Union, making the new democracies of eastern Europe uneasy and western allies reluctant to abide by the treaty's terms.

The CFE pact does not cover naval forces or troops, but experts say the current row over control of the Black Sea-Fleet bodes ill for discussions on how to share out military hardware.

"It's going to be very difficult," said Simon Lunn, Deputy Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Assembly in Brussels.

"There's such a row going on over who controls what