

BRIEFLY

Tokyo reopens ties with Pretoria:

Tokyo reopened diplomatic relations with South Africa on Monday in response to continued progress toward democracy in that nation, reports AP from Tokyo.

Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe exchanged letters confirming the step with his South African counterpart, Roelof Frederik Botha.

Watanabe said in a released statement that Japan reopened ties "in view of the positive developments in South Africa toward establishing democratic institutions, and particularly the start of the Convention for a Democratic South Africa" last December.

Croatia violates ceasefire:

Five people were killed when Croatian and Serbian forces clashed on Sunday in the worst violation to date of a UN brokered ceasefire in Yugoslavia, Tanjug news agency said, reports Reuter from Belgrade.

It said Croatian forces launched an attack in the Baranja region near the Hungarian border and Serbian forces returned fire.

Two Serbs were killed and three wounded. Three Croats were also killed in an hour-long fight, Tanjug said.

Ghali in Britain:

United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived in Britain on Sunday for talks with government leaders on a UN Security Council summit meeting on January 31 and the conflict in Yugoslavia, reports Reuter from London.

Boutros Ghali who arrived from Paris is on his first foreign trip since taking over the top UN job from Javier Perez De Cuellar on January 1.

Airport officials at London's Heathrow Airport said he had gone straight on to talks with the European Community's envoy on Yugoslavia former British Foreign Secretary Lord Carington. Official confirmation was not immediately available.

Four killed in copter crash:

Four people involved in Peru's war against cocaine, including three Americans, were killed when a US anti-narcotics helicopter crashed before dawn Sunday in Peru's coca-producing jungle, the US Embassy said, reports AP from Lima.

The embassy statement said the American pilot, copilot and mechanic, and a Peruvian police agent died when the aircraft plummeted to the ground at 2:30 am (0700 MGT) during a rescue of another downed helicopter.

The statement said the cause of the crash was not known but added there was a report of gunshots just before the copter spun out of control and slammed into the ground.

Nine killed in boat capsized:

Nine people died and 38 were rescued after a leisure boat carrying anglers capsized in Choopyy seas off the western port of Shimonoseki on Sunday, a coast guard spokesman said today, reports Reuter from Tokyo.

The spokesman said overloading of the vessel, which was designed to carry 26 was probably the main reason for the accident and an arrest warrant had been issued for the captain.

His arrest is expected after he leaves hospital where he was taken along with 16 passengers following the accident.

Lankan navy blasts Tamil's boat:

The Sri Lankan navy blasted a Tamil separatist boat laying mines off the north of the island, killing two rebels, the military said Monday, reports Reuter from Colombo.

The naval vessel destroyed the small motor-powered boat sighted off point Pedro Coast on Sunday, the military said.

Troops killed three rebels in an attack on a rebel base in eastern Trincomalee on Sunday and two more in Vavuniya in the north.

The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland in the north and east for minority Tamils.

India to build its biggest base in Karnataka

NEW DELHI, Jan 13: The Indian Navy has set up a plan to build its biggest base to be built at Karwar in the southern state of Karnataka following the Environment Ministry's clearance, local press reported today, says Xinhua.

Known as Seabird Naval Base, the 3,500 million rupees (137 million US dollars) base will be the navy's sixth base.

The project had been inaugurated in October, 1986 by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, but much progress was not made because of the pending environment clearance, resource crunch and land acquisition by the state government.

The Environment Ministry has finally given its clearance after attaching some conditions which want the navy to

set up a plant to treat the waste water, do large-scale plantation on 18,000 acres around Karwar and set up a pollution control and safety cell.

The base is expected to be ready by the turn of the century, the reports said.

For long, the navy was looking for an ideal location for a major base on the western coast because of heavy congestion in the Bombay harbour where merchant ships' constant traffic clogs the approaches, affecting its operations and exercises.

The changing geo-political scenario in India's neighbourhood, which places its pressures on the security environment, has underlined the role of the Seabird Naval Base, the reports added.

Another report adds: The Indian army has set up a new command, army training command (Artrac), said to be the 'think-tank' of the entire armed forces.

The sixth command, set up in October 1991, began functioning from Mhow in the central state of Madhya Pradesh, this month.

Talking to 'The Times of India', the Head of the Command Lt. General A S Kalkat said: "We are different from other commands (Western, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Central), in as much as we are not geographically defined. The Artrac is a functional command."

The function of this command is to evolve concepts, doctrines and logistics, cover-

ing activities from strategy to human resource development to enable the armed forces to become more efficient and cost effective fighting machines.

The Artrac would evolve these concepts in an integrated manner as the present day world scenario makes it incumbent that the army, navy and airforce function integratedly, Kalkat, former chief of the Indian peacekeeping force operation in Sri Lanka, said.

It would endeavour to maximize the training effectiveness of the armed forces in a technologically ever-changing world and make it better prepared for complex battlefield situations in futuristic conflict scenarios (wars), Kalkat was quoted by the paper today as saying.

Former Kenyan Vice-President arrested

NAIROBI, Jan 13: A former vice-president and a prominent businessman have been arrested, and state radio accused them Sunday of fanning rumours that Kenya's ruler would turn over power to the army to thwart a possible electoral defeat, reports AP.

The state-controlled Kenya Broadcasting Corp said the two, Josephat N. Karanja and Matu Wamae, would be charged with spreading the rumours. The radio, quoting a police spokesman, said anyone caught passing on the rumour faced arrest.

Chung signs N-free declaration

SEOUL, Jan 13: South Korean Prime Minister Chung Won-Shik signed today the inter-Korean nuclear free declaration and urged the North to honour the spirit of the accord, reports AP.

Chung said the accord, initiated December 31, was a first step towards implementing the inter-Korean reconciliation and non-aggression accord signed on December 13 and called on the North to quickly sign and implement it



Files: File photo of Adel Malek Bahabyles (L) in Algiers who was named interim President January 12 following the resignation of President Chadli Benjedid January 11. Bahabyles is seen here during the party congress of the rally for culture and democracy. —AFP photo

Gamsakhurdia's ouster may bring Georgia into CIS

MOSCOW, Jan 13: The overthrow of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia may bring Georgia out of isolation into the Commonwealth of former Soviet republics, reports Reuter.

But in a reminder that democracy would not come easily after two weeks of bloodshed and months of instability, members of parliament met to legitimise the setting up of a new civilian government but could not muster a quorum.

And there was still lawlessness in Tbilisi, for two weeks the domain of rival militias, where radio Russia said

Zhelev fails to win re-election

SOFIA, Jan 13: President Zhelev failed to win outright re-election in Bulgaria's first free presidential polls Sunday and will face Communist-backed Velko Valkanov in a runoff Sunday, election officials said today, reports AP.

With 80 per cent of the vote counted, Zhelev garnered 44.14 per cent to Valkanov's 30.40 per cent, a spokesman for the government election commission said, adding that the final results "would be nearly the same."

Under Bulgarian law, if a candidate fails to gain 50 per cent of the vote, a runoff must be held. Ganchev, founder of the Bulgarian business bloc, had waged a largely humorous campaign, suggesting he would teach Bulgarians how to get rich.

"criminal elements" had killed one policeman and injured two others.

Sigua's comments suggested there was pressure to set about rebuilding Georgia's ailing economy as well as its government.

Gamsakhurdia, who fled to Armenia on Monday, had been criticised by opponents and had alienated some business circles by failing to follow other republics' economic liberalisation.

He also made Georgia the only one of 12 Soviet republics not to sign the founding treaty of the new Commonwealth despite the danger of economic isolation.

Sigua has set about bringing Georgia back into line saying that he and the ruling military council will hand over power as soon as parliament can convene—possible next Wednesday.

Some parliamentarians who met on Friday were optimistic that he could help bring about a smooth transition.

But more than half the members stayed away from the session—held in a cinema because their building was de-

tated in the fighting—preventing a quorum.

It was a reminder that there might still be strong support for Gamsakhurdia, who has been staying just across the border in Armenia since he fled on Wednesday, and who says he is still president. He was elected with 87 per cent of the vote in May.

Those deputies who came called for a national meeting—gathering deputies, leaders of political parties and regional representatives—to fix a date for new elections.

Foreign governments, whose aid Georgia badly needs for reconstruction, are likely to withhold recognition until they are convinced that power is firmly back in civilian hands.

The rebels say they have already moved most of their forces out of Tbilisi, but National Guard Chief Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Loseliani of the Mkhedroni armed group still maintain a state of emergency in Tbilisi which bans demonstrations.

Some Gamsakhurdia supporters planned to defy the ban by demonstrating on Saturday in central Tbilisi.

Off the Record

'He is very special to me'

BIRMINGHAM, England: A 2-year-old whippet was chosen supreme champion at Crufts dog show on Sunday from among nearly 20,000 competitors, reports AP.

Penelope Dutch Gold clinched the ultimate accolade in the canine calendar after a four-day show that attracted some 70,000 people to competitions involving 166 breeds.

Morag Bolton, happy owner of Dutch, as he is familiarly known, said, "I am absolutely numb. I can't describe how I feel at this moment. It is like a dream come true."

Miss Bolton, from Kilmarnock, Scotland, said Dutch was "a dog in a lifetime. He is very special to me — he is a marvelous character."

All that is charred even sparkle

OAKLAND, Calif: A cleanup crew found the wedding ring that Leslie Sosnick and her husband, David Wangness, had searched for without success after a wildfire destroyed their home in October, reports AP.

City cleanup workers were about to start removing debris from the couple's lot Wednesday when they saw the couple making one last pass through the ashes and offered to help.

About 45 minutes later, Cristino Ibarra found a small box buried in the debris. He looked inside and found the ring.

"It was my happiest moment since the fire," Sosnick, 37. Although its gold setting was charred, the ring's one-carat diamond still sparkled.

"I'm not letting it out of my sight," she said.

Caught beer handed

HUNTINGTON, Ind: A forklift laden with cases of beer didn't look right traveling down a street, so someone called police, reports AP.

Soon, William Hardacre, 40, of Huntington was arrested on a preliminary charge of possession of stolen property. Thirty cases of beer had been taken from the City Beverage Co late Wednesday.

Hardacre had travelled about six blocks on the forklift and was almost home when he was arrested shortly after the beer was taken, police said.

Police said they would have caught him even if they hadn't gotten a tip — his route was marked by a trail of dumped and broken cases.

The worst haze ever

SAO TOME, Sao Tome e Principe: This tropical island nation was enveloped in a cloud of white Saharan dust blown nearly 200 miles (320 kilometers) over the ocean, reports AP.

The powdery haze halted air travel, fishing and farming Friday.

Visibility was less than 1,000 feet (325 meters), halting flights between Sao Tome island and the smaller Principe, and causing long delays in international flights.

Officials were concerned that higher temperatures created by the dust cloud could damage agriculture. Cocoa accounts for more than 90 per cent of Sao Tome's exports.

Fishing boats stayed in port after three fishermen sailed into the dust and did not return. A fine white powder covered Sao Tome's lush jungles.

Dust from the western Sahara has blown into the island between December and February for the past five years, but residents called this the worst haze ever.

The two-island archipelago lies astride the equator, about 190 miles (300 kilometers) west of mainland Gabon.

Talks on Salvadoran peace accord continue

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 13: The Salvadoran government and rebels kept talking past their Sunday midnight deadline on how to implement peace accords ending the 12-year-old civil war, reports AP.

There was no immediate word on the outcome of the UN-sponsored negotiations. The two sides had agreed that if no decision was reached by midnight, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali would step in as arbitrator and announce an implementation plan.

The rebels say they have already moved most of their forces out of Tbilisi, but National Guard Chief Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Loseliani of the Mkhedroni armed group still maintain a state of emergency in Tbilisi which bans demonstrations.

Some Gamsakhurdia supporters planned to defy the ban by demonstrating on Saturday in central Tbilisi.

But the guerillas say they should not have to surrender their arms so quickly while leaving the larger government forces intact.

The peace accords are scheduled to be signed Thursday in Mexico City.

Arabs to help stop fundamentalism in Islamic republics

WASHINGTON, Jan 13: Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab states have decided to channel the bulk of their aid to the former Soviet Union to predominantly Islamic republics in Central Asia to stop the growth of fundamentalism, reports Reuter.

Saudi officials in Washington said this decision would be conveyed to the conference on coordinating aid to the former Soviet Union, due to be held in Washington on January 22-23.

Up to 60 foreign ministers and heads of international financial organisations are expected to attend the conference which is aimed at helping the people of the former Soviet Union get through the winter and plan a coordinated aid effort for the future.

Saudi Arabia and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) of which it is a member have been invited to the conference. The United States, strapped by its own budgetary

constraint is hoping that rich nations of the world will come with extra cash for Russia and other republics.

"Our main concern is the six Central Asian republics which are predominantly Islamic & are being largely ignored by the West"—said one Saudi source in Washington.

The Saudi press agency said the Jeddah-based Islamic Development Bank would give grants totalling 1.4 million dollars to Muslims in Russia.

It said an agreement between the bank and a Russian Muslim organisation was signed on Sunday in Jeddah. The money would be used to finance projects such as the construction of Islamic centres and schools in Moscow and other Russian Muslim cities.

It said the grant was part of the bank's campaign to support "education efforts within Muslim communities" in countries that are not members of the 45-nation organisation of the Islamic conference.

Cory orders to disband all private armies

MANILA, Jan 13: President Corason Aquino today ordered police to disband all private armies in the Philippines to ensure peaceful national elections in May, officials said, reports Reuter.

Aquino met civilian and police officials a day after a nationwide gun ban took effect and also ordered them to recall soldiers and police assigned as bodyguards for politicians.

"She (Aquino) asked police officers to disband all private armies of identified warlords," Local Government Secretary Cesar Sarino told reporters after the meeting.

"The message of the President is that she would like... to ensure clean, orderly and honest elections. The directives are very clear," he added.

Sarino said Aquino wanted a total crackdown on political warlords "without exceptions." The military says there are a total of 129 private armies, most maintained by politicians. They are armed with high-powered weapons, including automatic rifles and machine-guns.

Discontent within Afghan ruling party

KABUL, Jan 13: Discontent within the ruling Watan party surfaced at the funeral of a former junior minister who died while serving a prison term for his alleged role in a coup attempt against President Najibullah, sources said today, reports AP.

Party sources said the funeral here Saturday of former Deputy Education Minister Khalil Kohistani was marked by a revolutionary oration by a member of the Khalq (masses) faction of the ruling Watan or homeland party.

The speech praised Kohistani, who died in hospital in New Delhi last week after a prolonged illness at the main Pule-e-Charki prison here, the sources said.

It referred to him as the martyred son of the masses.

Kohistani was a central committee member of the Watan Party at the time of the March 1990 coup against Najibullah led by former Defence Minister Shah Nawaz Tanai, a Khalq faction leader.

US statement baseless: Pindi

'Pakistan has nuclear bomb'

ISLAMABAD, Jan 13: The US administration is convinced Pakistan has gone beyond a theoretical nuclear capability and has developed a nuclear bomb, a US Senator said today, reports Reuter.

"The Bush administration has determined that Pakistan has a nuclear device it could use," Republican Senator Larry Pressler told a news conference in Islamabad.

"The Bush administration made a determination, and I cannot talk for the Bush administration, that Pakistan has the capability to have a nuclear bomb which may be has to be put together, it is in two pieces or something, but it is there," he said.

"It may not be bomb that we can look at or touch or so forth," he said.

Pakistan denies developing nuclear weapons, but President George Bush halted all military or new economic aid in October 1990 after refusing to certify under a law

introduced by Pressler that Pakistan was not developing nuclear weapons.

US sources said then that Pakistan had stepped up efforts to make weapons-grade Uranium. Pressler made clear that Washington believed Pakistan's nuclear programme had gone much further.

Pressler, who was refused meetings with Pakistan's President Ghulam Ishaq Khan and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his trip, reiterated fears Pakistan may become part of a nuclear-armed Islamic federation, including Iran, Turkey and the newly independent states of central Asia.

If a bloc emerged with two or three states possessing the "Islamic Bomb", it would be of great concern to the United States, he said.

Pakistan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Mohammad Siddique Khan Kanju dismissed those fears on Sunday, calling them baseless.

The official APP news agency quoted Kanju as telling Pressler that Pakistan's nuclear programme was peaceful.

Pakistan's military has suffered badly from the aid cut-off particularly its frontline air defence of US F-16 fighters.

Pressler said a solution lay with the Pakistan government. "I would call on the Pakistan government to take steps to publicly dismantle its nuclear bomb and its nuclear capability and the problem will go away and we can resume our normal relationship."

Islamabad argues the Pressler amendment requiring annual certification from the US President to allow continuing aid is discriminatory because it does not apply also to Pakistan's traditional foe India.

Although India exploded a nuclear device in 1974, the US administration decided that it had not pressed ahead with efforts to make nuclear weapons, Pressler said.

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