

UN Council members to attend Jan 31 summit

LONDON, Jan 14: British Prime Minister John Major said on Monday all 15 members of the Security Council had agreed to attend a summit at United Nations headquarters on January 31, reports Reuters.

Major, whose country currently holds the Security Council presidency, was speaking to reporters after talks with visiting UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali during which they discussed an enhanced peace-keeping role for the world body.

Major said Russian leader Boris Yeltsin was considering stopping over in London for talks on his way to New York on January 30, although that was not yet confirmed.

Boutros-Ghali, who came here from Paris on his first foreign trip as UN Chief, said he hoped the summit would be useful for promoting peace, human rights and democratic government.

The New York meeting was proposed late last year by French President Francois Mitterrand to take new look at world security, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

United States President George Bush, Mitterrand, Major, Yeltsin and a senior Chinese official will represent the Security Council's five permanent members.

In a day of talks with Boutros-Ghali, British officials raised concerns over the civil war in Somalia and repeated a call for a UN conference on aid for Iraqi Kurds and Shi'ites, who say they have been persecuted by Baghdad since the Gulf War.

Major and Boutros Ghali were believed to have discussed international disarmament, particularly fears over the future control of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet States.

Kuwaiti women fighting for voting right

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 14: Hussein was the only woman from a wide spectrum of political figures in the Emirate who took part in the October 1990 Kuwaiti popular congress in the Saudi city of Jeddah.

The congress grouped all strands of the Kuwaiti political spectrum.

In a luxurious office where she works as managing editor of the independent daily Al Watan, Hussein said she believed the Emir's statement was a pledge to give Kuwaiti women the right to vote and run for office.

To formalize the promise, she said, the first clause in the electoral law of 1962 must be amended.

Kuwaiti women active during the seven-month Iraqi occupation are trying to secure the right to vote and to run for office in polling for a National Assembly scheduled for next October, reports AFP.

The women are seeking a place in the sun in a country that, while claiming to be "the first democracy" in the Gulf, does not recognize women's political rights.

"We want to capitalize on the interest currently shown for the return of democratic life in order to push forward the women's cause," Fatma Hussein, a women's rights militant, told AFP.



UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali (R) is greeted by British Prime Minister John Major at No. 10 Downing Street for talks which include the forthcoming UN security Council meeting following the break-up of the Soviet Union. —AFP photo

Third round of ME talks gets underway

Israel, Syria frustrated

WASHINGTON, Jan 14: Israeli and Syrian negotiators Monday expressed frustration following their first meeting at the State Department as the third round of bilateral Middle East peace talks got underway, reports AFP.

The two delegations are to meet again early Tuesday at the State Department to resume their discussions, said Mouaffak Allaf, the chief of the Syrian delegation.

The heads of the Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian delegations are to begin their talks Tuesday afternoon.

Allaf complained that the substance of the peace talks had not been discussed, accusing the Israelis of only being interested in where the next discussions would be held.

Describing the Syrians as "greatly disappointed," Allaf

said the meeting had been "an exercise in futility in which the Israeli side referred again and again to the question of venue."

Yossef Ben Aharon, who heads the Israeli delegation's talks with the Syrians, said "there was a growing degree of frustration" among the Israelis.

Syria denies the legitimacy and existence of Israel he said, observing that the only issue that Syria wants to address is its demand that Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights.

PLO-Israeli talks

Another report says: Israeli and Plostinian negotiators held their first formal session Monday after breaking a procedural deadlock that had paralyzed their meetings at the last round of the Middle East peace conference.

The two-hour session was taken up mainly by "opening remarks" and discussion of an agenda, Israeli delegation chief Eliakim Rubinstein said.

"We hope to continue this process tomorrow afternoon," Rubinstein said.

The head of the Palestinian team, Haidar Abdel Shafi, said he had submitted to the Israelis a draft agenda for the talks between the two sides.

Israel proposed an agenda dealing with these discussions and with Israeli-Jordanian issues. But the Palestinians want "an agenda specifically for the Palestinian-Israeli track," Shafi said.

The Palestinians, who came to the conference as part of a joint delegation with Jordan, had insisted on discussing self-rule in the Israeli-occupied territories alone with the

'Russian govt incompetent'

MOSCOW, Jan 14: A top Russian lawmaker said Monday the Russian government was incompetent and should resign as the administration headed by President Boris Yeltsin faced mounting criticism for its handling of market-oriented economic reforms, reports AFP.

Rusland Khasbulatov, President of the Russian Parliament, told a group of visiting Italian legislators that the current government was "not only ineffectual but poorly qualified" and should step down, Interfax news agency reported.

Speaking later to Chairmen of parliamentary committees, Khasbulatov sharply criticized the manner in which the government liberalized most prices from January 2, saying the move was not a reform but simply an increase, uncontrollable and chaotic.

Pakistan not under influence of radicals: Sharif

ISLAMABAD, Jan 14: Pakistan Premier Nawaz Sharif told AFP on Monday that he regretted the cancellation of elections in Algeria, and rejected suggestions that his government is under the influence of Islamic radicals.

"As you are waiting, I am also waiting anxiously to see the results of the cancellation of the elections," he said in an interview the day before his departure for an officials visit to France.

"I think that if elections are held, anything which comes as a result of the elections has to be accepted by the country itself and also by the outer world," he said.

Asked if Islamic fundamentalists represented a threat to democracy in Algeria and other Muslim countries, Sharif said he was willing to work with her.

"She is most welcome. She is leader of the opposition. I respect her and I would always be ready to welcome her."

There is no concept of

US tells Islamabad to destroy N-arms

WASHINGTON, Jan 14: Washington believes Pakistan has key components for two nuclear weapons and has urged Islamabad to destroy them if it wants US financial aid to resume, the Washington Post said today, reports AFP.

Unidentified Pakistani and US officials told the daily that the issue was brought up during high-level meetings here last week with visiting Pakistani army chief General Asif Nawaz, but that no progress was made.

Islamabad has officially denied making or wanting to make nuclear weapons and has insisted that it has complied with US conditions for resumption of financial aid Congress froze in late 1990.

The officials spoke with the post shortly after US Senator Larry Pressler, on Monday in Islamabad, urged Pakistan to publicly dismantle any nuclear weapons it may have so as to qualify for renewed US aid.

The Republican Senator from Dakota was the chief author of legislation which led to the suspension of more than 500 million dollars US aid to Pakistan.

BRIEFLY

Cuba to execute two in escape plot: Two members of a group arrested trying to flee Cuba appear likely to face a firing squad for the deaths of three government agents during the escape attempt, a news report said Monday, reports AP from Mexico City.

In a separate case, human rights groups and political figures appealed to Cuba not to carry out a death sentence imposed Saturday on three other men convicted of landing illegally on the island intent on sabotage.

41 Prisoners flee Brazil jail: A group of 41 prisoners broke a hole in the brick wall of their cell at an overcrowded Sao Paulo Jail and escaped overnight, a police spokesman said on Monday, reports Reuter from Brazil.

Police launched a manhunt around the city, said Ailton Ferreira, chief investigator at the 11th district police headquarters where the jailbreak took place Sunday night.

Shamir wins vote of confidence: Prime Minister Yitzham Shamir's government easily won a vote of confidence in the Israeli parliament on Monday, reports Reuter from Jerusalem.

The right-wing coalition was backed 62-51 in the 120-seat Knesset against four motions brought by leftist opposition parties in protest against rising poverty in the Jewish state, Israel Radio said.

Proposal to put Soviet CP on trial: The Russian parliament committee investigating the August 19 coup attempt on Monday proposed putting the former Soviet Communist Party on trial for "crimes against humanity," reports AFP from Moscow.

"We propose a trial against the Soviet Communist Party for genocide and crimes against humanity," Committee Chairman Lev Ponomarev, a former dissident, told parliament.

The proposal, he said, was motivated by collusion between the communist party and the former Soviet political police, particularly the KGB.

Nawaz Sharif leaves for Paris: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left Islamabad Tuesday for Paris for an official visit during which he is expected to stress bilateral cooperation, especially in the area of defence, officials said, reports AFP.

Sharif is going at the invitation of French President Francois Mitterrand, who visited Pakistan two years ago, and will stay until Sunday.

Sharif told AFP Monday that his country was interested in purchasing about 40 Mirage 2000 jets, as well as other arms deals.

Sharif said Monday that France and Pakistan had reached an "agreement in principle" regarding a financial dispute that strained bilateral ties for more than a decade.

Paris agreed to pay 600 million franc about 118 million dollar to Islamabad as compensation for having unilaterally pulled out of a nuclear deal in 1978.

'Nine Third World Nations may possess N-missiles by 2000'

BONN, Jan 14: US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney said on Monday as many as Nine Third World Nations, some hostile to the West, could possess nuclear missiles by the year 2000 as a result of the break-up of the Soviet Union, reports Reuter.

Cheney told reporters after meeting German Chancellor Helmut Kohl that the United States would now take into account, when planning for military contingencies, that there

might be more nations in the future with nuclear arms than today.

"Over the course of the next several years we will see perhaps 15 or 20 developing nations acquire Ballistic missiles," he said. "Some of them already have them."

"By our estimates as many as half of those nations with Ballistic missiles may in fact possess nuclear weapons by the end of the century, some eight or nine nations," Cheney said.

The United States would seek to stop such transfers from happening, but the possibility was there.

He said the break-up of the Soviet Union had enhanced risks of the proliferation of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction to developing nations.

Scud Ballistic missiles fired by Iraqi Leader Saddam Hussein's troops during the Gulf War had also highlighted the problem, he added.

There are unscrupulous operators in the world who would love to get their hands on some of the military capabilities that the Soviets have developed in the past," Cheney, flanked by German Defence Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg, told a news conference.

There is no doubt in my mind that there are governments that are unfriendly to the United States and Germany and other Western democracies who would like to acquire some of that capability."

But he said he was not as concerned about actual weapons transfers as about the possibility of former Soviet nuclear exports transferring their knowledge to such states.

He said the risks underlined the need to develop the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI)—"the ability to deploy defences against Ballistic missiles."

Cheney welcomed the news that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to share command over the mighty Black Sea Fleet, settling an emotional dispute, but said he was more worried about control of nuclear weapons in the former communist superpower.

In a statement, Kohl expressed the same concern, saying the world must prevent the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Indo-UK accord on dealing terrorists soon

NEW DELHI, Jan 14: India and Britain are likely to initial a pact on the confiscation of assets of terrorists and drug runners during the visit of British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd, a senior Indian diplomat said today, reports AFP.

The reciprocal agreement, if signed, would be the first of its kind, India's High Commissioner to Britain L M Singhvi was quoted by the Press Trust of India (PTI) as saying.

Hurd is to arrive here Wednesday for a four-day visit.

Occah first woman Speaker of Trinidad

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, Jan 14: A British-trained lawyer on Monday became the first woman Speaker of Trinidad and Tobago's lower house of parliament, reports Reuter.

Occah Seapaul, 52 took the oath of office in the Red House, the parliament building damaged by gunfire in a July 1990 coup attempt by black Muslim extremists. She is the sister of new Foreign Minister Ralph Maraj.

35 Hindu pilgrims killed in bus fire

NEW DELHI, Jan 14: At least 35 Hindu pilgrims were killed Tuesday when their bus caught fire near the west Indian city of Bhavnagar, Press Trust of India news agency reported, reports AP.

Thirty-one of the victims were women going to the Somnath temple in Gujarat state.

The bus caught fire from leaking fuel after hitting a roadside milestone about 900 kilometers (558 miles) southwest of New Delhi.

Off the Record

Mega star Mao

BEIJING: He doesn't have the glamour of some of Hollywood's top money-earners. Infact, he's not even a lie. But Mao Tsetung, the revolutionary founder of communist China, is once again the leading man in China's cinemas, reports Reuter.

Chinese film production companies are now preparing a raft of block-buster epics for the 1992 season featuring the late chairman Mao in the leading role. Shanghai's Wenhui Bao newspaper reported today.

Chinese movie-goers will be able to chose from "our leader Mao Tsetung", "Mao Tsetung and Chiang Kai-shek in Chongqing", "Mao Tsetung in western Fujian", "Mao Tsetung in Yanan", history chose Mao Tsetung, "Mao Tsetung and Zhou Enlai" and "Mao Tsetung in the year 1927," the newspaper said.

Mao will also appear in number of movies centering on other Communist heroes including China's current paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, the newspaper said.

"The government gives every encouragement for these movies, and party and national leaders often appear at the premieres," it said.

Sterilized lady stuns with a baby

LONDON: A woman who gave birth eight months after a sterilization operation won 96,700 pound sterling (174,500 dollar) damages in Britain's High Court on Monday, reports Reuter.

Divorcee Linda Allen discovered she was pregnant three months after the operation and had a daughter, Faye in February 1986.

Judge Sir Henry Brooke said Allen's life had been seriously affected by the baby. She had faced financial difficulties after being forced to give up work, he said.

Damages and costs were awarded against London's Bloomsbury health authority, which admitted liability.

Kim-Hak-Soon (R) who was a Korean 'Comfort-Girl' allegedly forced into prostitution for Japanese in World War II at a protest with her supporters against Japanese Prime Minister Miyazawa's planned visit to Seoul starting January 16.

—AFP photo



A Croatian soldier is carrying his son while waiting for the train taking him back to the frontline near Osijek, after the Christmas holidays with his family. —AFP photo

Lebanon, PLO restore ties

BEIRUT, Jan 14: Lebanon and the Palestine Liberation Organization re-established ties Monday following a 10-year break after President Elias Hrawi met with senior PLO official Shafiq Al-Hout, the National Information Agency (ANI) said, reports AFP.

Hout, a member of the PLO's executive committee, is director of the organization's Beirut office, which has been closed since the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

"Mr Hrawi promised to pay particular attention to this matter and we agreed to meet again to discuss it further," he said.

FIS urges army to take stand against new rulers

ALGIERS, Jan 14: Islamic Fundamentalists, accusing Algeria's new rulers of treason, called on Monday for a nationwide struggle after being robbed of victory through the ballot box, reports Reuter.

The Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) appealed to all Algerians, including the army, "to take a stand against this giant of power"—the newly installed high security council.

"Faced with this serious situation, no individual can remain neutral today," the FIS said in its first response to the scrapping of Algeria's first multi-party general elections and President Chadli Benjedid's shock resignation.

The statement was drawn up at a secret meeting of the FIS, leadership as Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali and military strongmen tightened their grip on the country after cancelling Thursday's second round of polling.

The FIS, which vows to transform the North African country into an Islamic state, won 188 seats in a first-round landslide on December 26 and needed just 28 more to control the 430-member parliament for the next five years.

Tanks and troops guarded key buildings in Algiers. The city appeared to be calm but political sources said they expected the high security council would take further measures soon.

A Western diplomat said: "I don't think this state of affairs and uncertainty can continue. They are going to have to do something probably declare a state of emergency."

Under a state of emergency the constitution can be suspended and political activity frozen or parties dissolved.

There was no confirmation of one diplomat's report that some people had been detained.

The FIS statement, signed by provisional leader Abdel

Kader Hachani, said the high security council was an "illegitimate giant" that had usurped the people's choice to "satisfy the appetite of power and the new world order."

The situation is very serious. It's essential to prepare for all eventualities to save the country, its sovereignty and its inhabitants," the FIS said.

AFP from Washington reports: The U.S state department said Monday it was concerned about the situation in Algeria after the electoral process was interrupted this weekend but said the current system remained constitu-

tional.

"We view the situation (in Algeria) with concern," said state department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler.

Algerian Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghazali, backed by the military, forced President Chadly Benjedid to resign Saturday and cancelled legislative elections in which fundamentalists seemed on the verge of taking control of parliament.

Tutwiler criticized the cancellation of the elections as an "interruption of the electoral process" and said she be-

lieved the move was unconstitutional.

But she stressed that Algeria had made "impressive strides" toward democracy in recent years and said the United States hoped Algeria would find a way "to resume progress as soon as possible."

"We urge all parties to remain calm and to find a peaceful resolution in accordance with the Algerian constitution," she said.

"Under the Algerian constitution, right now the prime minister and the cabinet remain in place and will handle day-to-day running of the government," she said.

Six Mexican military men detained

MEXICO CITY, Jan 14: Six members of the Mexican military, including two generals, have been detained and chaired over a shootout with the police that left seven police agents dead, the defense ministry said Monday, reports AFP.

Among those detained was Major General Alfredo Moran, who commanded the military in the Veracruz region where the incident occurred. His is charged with using violence that led to homicide, disobedience and failing to fulfill his duties.