

Gamsakhurdia men surround govt building in Tbilisi

LONDON, Jan 27: Some 200,000 supporters of ousted Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia surrounded the government building in Tbilisi Sunday night, a television report monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) said, reports AFP.

Tengiz Sigua, the head of the military council that forced Gamsakhurdia to flee, was among those trapped inside, Moscow's channel 1 said.

The demonstration started after a statement by Gamsakhurdia urging his supporters to overthrow the council was distributed.

"In Tbilisi and throughout Western Georgia the text has

been publicised of the appeal from Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Who now heads the republican strike committee there, the television said.

In the text, Gamsakhurdia said, "let no one think that I president of the Republic of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, am isolated from those actions of disobedience which are taking place everywhere. On the contrary, I am directing them in every way."

The protests came after Georgia's ruling military council said that supporters of Gamsakhurdia in the ousted Georgian president's stronghold in Western Georgia had rejected calls to negotiate.

CIS combat troops to leave Poland by Nov

WARSAW, Jan 27: Combat troops of the Commonwealth of Independent States will leave Poland by mid-November and non-combat troops will have left by 1994, a CIS general announced yesterday, according to the Polish news agency PAP, reports AFP.

tioned in eastern Germany, will be repatriated by the end of 1993, PAP quoted Dubinin as saying.

PAP said Dubinin and Polish general Zdzislaw Ostrowski, the government representative for questions linked to the pullout from Poland, clashed at the news conference over the rent of barracks occupied by the CIS troops and the price to be paid for pollution they caused.

Warsaw has estimated CIS liabilities at several billion dollars but the figure has been rejected by CIS members.

The Tass news agency in Moscow said 23,000 officers and soldiers, 400 tanks and 200 armored personnel carriers had already left Poland since the start of the withdrawal in early 1989.

General Victor Dubinin, commander-in-chief of CIS troops in Poland, said the agreed timetable for the withdrawal of the troops and their families, estimated at 100,000 would be respected.

Speaking at a news conference at Legnica, southwest Poland, Dubinin said combat units would quit Poland by November 15, 1992.

The rest, or nearly 6,000 troops monitoring the transit via Poland of the troops sta-

EC urges ASEAN to help restore human rights in Myanmar

SINGAPORE, Jan 27: The European Community has urged the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to help press for the restoration of human rights in Myanmar western diplomats here said Monday, reports AFP.

They said Portugal, which currently holds the rotating presidency of the 12-member EC, also asked ASEAN to appeal to the military regime to allow the family of detained opposition leader Aung San

Suu Kyi to visit the Nobel Peace Prize winner.

The message was addressed to Singapore Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng and delivered Friday, ahead of the two-day ASEAN summit that opened here Monday, they said.

The text said the EC was deeply concerned with human rights abuses in Myanmar and had made several unsuccessful approaches to the military junta, which ignored the results of 1990 elections, the sources said.

It called on ASEAN members Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to use their influence with their neighbour Myanmar to press Yangon on the human rights situation on humanitarian grounds.

While some ASEAN leaders have condemned the military's crackdown on the democracy movement in Myanmar, the group's members states have

resisted calls from the West for a hard line and sanctions against Yangon.

ASEAN has preferred an approach of "constructive engagement" and sent Philippines Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus to Yangon last year to make a representation of its views.

But the junta refused to recognise him as an envoy of ASEAN and the mission was downgraded to a bilateral visit.

PLO to take part in Moscow talks

AMMAN, Jan 27: The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has decided that a Palestinian delegation will take part in multilateral talks with Israel in Moscow, the Palestinian envoy to Jordan, Tayeb Abdel Rahim, said here early today, reports AFP.

Headed by Abdel Shafi, head of the Palestinian delegation at the bilateral Israeli-Arab negotiations will not be a member of the delegation which is to leave for Moscow today, he added.

Jordanian officials and the PLO leadership kept close contacts Sunday to "assess the situation and decide on the participation at the multilateral," Rahim said.

Informed Jordanian sources here said King Hussein and Prime Minister Zeid Ibn Shaker talked to PLO leader Yasser Arafat by telephone to coordinate their positions.

Jordan has decided to take part in the Moscow talks due to open Tuesday and its delegation has already arrived in the Russian capital.

The PLO's executive committee met in Tunis overnight Sunday to give its official verdict on the conference.

A senior PLO official, Yasser Abed Rabbo, said earlier the

PLO demanded that the Palestinian delegation to the talks include representatives from both inside the Israeli occupied territories and from abroad.

Allowing Palestinians from outside the territories to take part would open the door for PLO participation in the US and Russian-sponsored peace process, Israel rejects any direct PLO role.

In the occupied territories, Palestinian leaders on Sunday urged the PLO to declare a Palestinian boycott of the multilateral talks.

Two other Arab parties, Syria and Lebanon, have al-

ready said they will not attend the Moscow conference because Israel — in recent bilateral negotiations — had failed to commit itself to a withdrawal from occupied Arab territory.

Arafat charged Saturday that the United States had reneged on a pledge to allow the organization to attend the multilateral talks.

The PLO has argued it was entitled to take part in the Moscow conference because the multilateral talks would also cover the issue of Palestinian refugees, a prime concern of the organisation.



KARACHI: Kashmiri women protest against the unfurling of the Indian national flag in Indian-held Kashmir by the leader of the Hindu fundamentalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Muslim separatists are waging a campaign for secession in Indian-held Kashmir. — AFP/UNB photo.

Japan sets up ties with 5 former Soviet republics

TOKYO, Jan 27: Japan opened diplomatic ties with Ukraine and four other former Soviet republics, Foreign Ministry officials said Monday, reports AP.

Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe, now in Moscow, exchanged diplomatic papers on Sunday with representatives from Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan establishing relations effective immediately, they said.

Japan had recognized the member countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States in December and transferred its relations with the former Soviet Union to Russia.

Azeri troops shell Armenian village: 7 killed

MOSCOW, Jan 27: Armed Azerbaijani soldiers shelled an Armenian village in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh, killing seven people and wounding more than 10, the Tass news agency reported Monday, says AP.

The Azerbaijani forces on Sunday fired artillery on the small village of Karin-Tak in an attack that reportedly killed some women and children, Tass quoted a spokesman for the Republican Self-Defence Headquarters as saying.

Armenian forces counterattacked nearby Azerbaijani villages, according to Russian television.

One fighter killed in the counter strikes reportedly carried a document identifying him as a French citizen. The TV report quoted a spokesman for the Azerbaijan People's Front saying the man was a mercenary.

French embassy officials in Moscow said Monday they had no information about the man.

Bharat Bhushan dead

BOMBAY, Jan 27: Noted actor Bharat Bhushan died at his residence in Bandra, a north-west city suburb, this morning. He was 71, reports PTI.

He is survived by his wife, Ratnamia, and two daughters. Bharat Bhushan's most popular films include *Baju Bawara*, *Basant Bahar*, *Mirza Ghalib* and *Barsaat Ki Ek Raat*. Besides he also acted in many TV serials.

Pan Am, UTA bombings

Libya to cooperate with UN chief in investigations

TEHRAN, Jan 27: Libya pledged Sunday it was ready to cooperate in full with the UN Secretary General in investigating the bombings of two civilian airliners but warned against any US attack, reports AFP.

"The West must know that if they attack Libya, the United States will be confronted by the Arab and Muslim masses, and the political and military battle will spread to all Arab and Muslim countries," a top Libyan official cautioned.

Major Abdelsalam Jalloud

was addressing a press conference at the end of a three-day visit to Tehran.

"We are ready to cooperate in full with the United Nations Secretary General to clarify the facts and establish the responsibilities" in the bombings of the US and French planes in 1988 and 1989 that killed 440 people, he said.

"But we will never agree to be scapegoats for the Americans, who are treating this affair as if we were one of their states."

Libya's second-in-command

UN mine-sweepers to arrive in Cambodia by Saturday

PHNOM PENH, Jan 27: More than 1,000 UN soldiers from Thailand and other countries are to arrive by Saturday to clear the numerous land mines that are preventing Cambodian refugees from returning home, a UN official said, reports AP.

Yasushi Akaishi, head of the UN authority in Cambodia, also said the plan for UN supervised elections by 1993 remains on track despite the slow arrival of UN peacekeepers and renewed fighting between the government and guerrillas.

US Senate for big cut in defence spending

NEW YORK, Jan 27: The US Senate's Democratic and Republican leaders said yesterday they supported major cuts in defence spending because the threat of war from the former Soviet Union had virtually disappeared, reports Reuter.

Senate majority leader George Mitchell told CBS television he believed the biggest defence cuts should be in strategic nuclear weapons systems and in US force based abroad, especially in Europe.

"We're spending 32 billion dollar to support our forces in Europe now to confront a major land war with the Soviet

Arrests aimed at leading people, army into war : FIS

ALOISERS, Jan 27: Muslim fundamentalists, waging a war of words Sunday against Algeria's military-backed rulers, said the arrest of their leaders was aimed at leading the people and the army into war, reports AP.

The Islamic Salvation Front warned such practices "will spare neither blood, nor honor, nor possessions."

In the statement dated Saturday but made public Sunday, the movement said the electoral process, abruptly cancelled earlier this month, should continue and the front's imprisoned officials be set free.

The Salvation Front's acting leader, Abdelkader Hachani, was arrested Wednesday for allegedly calling on the army to desert.

Fundamentalist sources said Hachani was transferred to Algiers' Serkadji prison on Sunday. The information was not officially confirmed. The exact charges against him were not immediately known.

Numerous other fundamentalists also have been arrested since the High State Committee came to power on January 16, the same day second-round parliamentary elections were to be held.

The Salvation Front, which wants to install an Islamic State, swept the December 26 first-round vote. Its near-certain parliamentary victory was thwarted by a series of maneuvers which resulted in the resignation of President Chadli Bendjedid and brought in the five-member High State Committee.

The Salvation Front said the series of arrests "are aimed at leading the people and the national Popular Army into war."

The Salvation Front has made increasing references to the army in its official statements as their standoff with the new rulers continues.

Off the Record

Major fell asleep on first date

LONDON: British Prime Minister John Major lived up to his bland image on Sunday by admitting in a much-heralded radio programme that he fell asleep on the first date with his wife, reports Reuter.

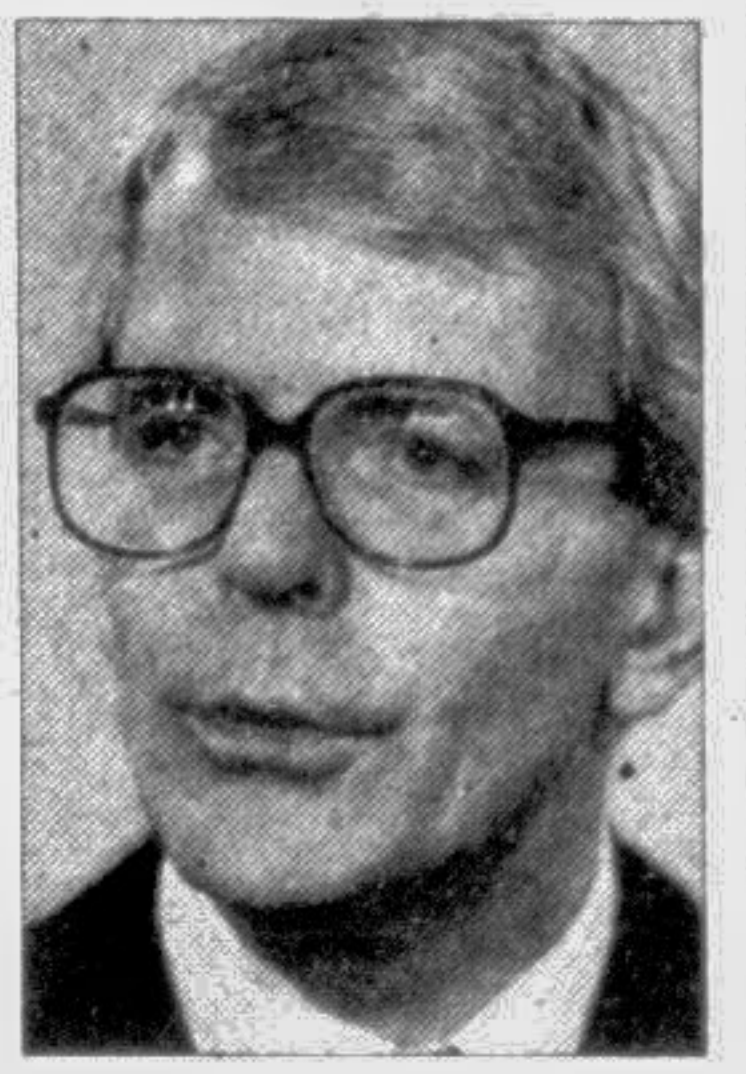
He also included a 1948 cricket match commentary in his selection of recordings on Britain's longest running radio show "Desert Island Discs," which celebrates its 50th anniversary this week.

The much-loved British Broadcasting Corporation programme invites celebrities to imagine themselves cast away on a deserted island and choose the eight records they would want with them.

It is famed for getting guests to reveal intimate details about their private lives, but Major kept a determined stiff upper lip throughout. War heroes and blustering politicians are sometimes reduced to tears as they reminisce over the music.

Major came across as a steady family man with few interests outside politics and cricket. He floundered for a moment when asked what he would do if he was no longer in politics.

"Perhaps I would like to do a bit of writing," he said.



Mrs America may lose title

CORONADO, California: You can't get divorced and stay Mrs. America, says AP.

Jill Scott, the current Mrs. America, will lose the title if her divorce becomes final before her reign ends in April, a pageant official says.

"Our regulations state that any contestant or titleholder must be married," said David Z. Marmel, president of the Santa Monica-based pageant. "If she is divorced, we'd have a problem."

Mrs. Scott, 32, separated from her husband, G E Scott of Scottsdale, Ariz. in September 1990, three months before winning the Mrs. America title, and filed for divorce in May 1991, said Matthew M. Kremer, her attorney.

Mrs. Scott hasn't signed papers that would make the divorce final, Kremer said.

Mrs. Scott, who lives in suburban San Diego, has an unlisted telephone number and couldn't be reached for comment.

Her husband said Kremer was not authorized to say one word to the media and had made statements that were 'totally false'. He declined to identify or correct any specific statements he contends are false.

Dapper President, better model

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina: Argentine President Carlos Menem, 61, who has been called the world's most dapper head of state, modeled elegant sports clothes for the latest edition of the Daily La Nacion's Sunday Magazine, reports Reuter.

Menem posed wearing stylish Italian linen blazers and trousers at the Uruguayan seaside resort of Punta Del Este.

The peronist leader, who travels with his personal hairdresser, plays soccer and tennis to stay trim and admits he touches up his grey hair, leaving a streak of white on his trademark sideburns.

But last year he hotly denied rumours that he had undergone cosmetic surgery, blaming his suddenly swollen features on a sways sting.



BOSTON, Arkansas government and Democratic Presidential hopeful Bill Clinton embraces his wife Hillary after some lighting fell near them during the taping of CBS's '60 Minutes' interview. —AFP/UNB photo.

BRIEFLY

Rebels kill 7 troops in Colombia:

Colombian guerrillas killed 11 soldiers and wounded seven in two ambushes less than a week before the rebels are due to restart peace talks with the government, the army said on Sunday, reports Reuter from Bogota, Colombo.

The attacks, the most serious against the security forces this year, coincided with a radio report that one guerrilla movement will send two senior commanders to the new round of negotiations with the government.

In the most serious attack, Marxist Guerrillas ambushed soldiers patrolling near the oil industry center of Casabe, 250 km north of Bogota on Sunday, killing seven soldiers and wounding five.

In an attack on Saturday afternoon, rebels ambushed an army convoy near the Andean town of Valdivia, 300 km northwest of the capital, in which four soldiers were killed, two were injured.

281 detainees freed in Jammu:

The Jammu and Kashmir government Monday released 281 Kashmiri detainees who were arrested in connection with subversive activities, PTI says from Jammu.

The release was ordered on the occasion of the 43rd Republic Day after the screening committee reviewed their cases, an official spokesman said here.

Chinese N-scientist missing:

A Chinese nuclear scientist vanished in the mountains of southwest China three months ago, and authorities have failed to uncover any clues about his disappearance, an official newspaper reported Monday, AP from Beijing says.

Hua Tianqiang, a senior engineer at the Shanghai Nuclear Institute of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, was last seen on October 15 in Sichuan province's Emei Mountain, one of China's holy mountains and a popular tourist site, the China Daily reported.

The New York Times said Hua was director of the institute's intelligence unit and that he had access to a wide range of secrets about sensitive projects in China's nuclear programme. It said Hua's prolonged disappearance had raised suspicion that he was either dead or had been smuggled abroad by a foreign intelligence service.

The China Daily report said authorities had ruled out homicide because their exhaustive searches have uncovered no signs of foul play. The paper did not suggest that Hua had been kidnapped abroad.

Levy heads Israeli team in Moscow:

Foreign Minister David Levy became the highest-ranking Israeli government member to visit Moscow when he arrived on Sunday to head Israel's delegation to Middle East peace talks, reports Reuter from Moscow.

"We have come here with great hope and faith all the sides are interested in promoting peace," Levy said after arriving on an Israeli plane from Beijing, where he established diplomatic ties with China.

Clashes leave 4 dead in Lebanon:

One Israeli soldier and three pro-Iranian guerrillas were killed on Sunday in one of the worst clashes between the two adversaries in South Lebanon this year, Reuter reports from Hama, Lebanon.

A dawn ambush of an Israeli patrol driving through the Shiite Muslim village of Sribitine inside Israel's self-declared security zone triggered a seven-hour battle with Islamic resistance guerrillas, security sources said.

Curfew in Mauritanian towns:

Mauritania's two main towns were under overnight curfew Monday amid opposition claims that police killed up to five people demonstrating against disputed presidential elections, Reuter reports from Nouakchott.

State radio announced a curfew from 7 pm to 6 am (1900 to 0600 GMT) in the capital Nouakchott and main port of Nouadhibou, starting on Sunday night and due again on Monday. It gave no explanation.

Various opposition sources said two to five people were killed in Nouadhibou on Sunday in clashes with police. It was not immediately possible to verify the claims.

Friday's polling was chaotic in many districts. The opposition accused Taya of massive fraud and some western diplomats said they were sure there was cheating.