

## Ghali asks Libya to surrender airline bombing suspects

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 31: Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali summoned Libya's ambassador on Thursday and urged him to press his government to surrender Libyan agents suspected in airline bombings that left hundreds dead, reports AP.

The US chief met with Libyan Ambassador Ali El-Houdet to request that Libya obey a Security Council resolution passed earlier this month that seeks the extradition of the alleged Libyan intelligence agents. They are suspected in the bombings of Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland and a French UTA flight over Niger. A total of 440 people died in the bombings.

Britain and the United States have charged two Libyan intelligence officers in the December 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight. France has charged four Libyans, including a brother-in-law of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, with the 1989 destruction of the French jet.

The United States, Britain and France have said they will seek economic sanctions against Libya if it does not comply with the Security Council resolution.

Libya's Maj. Abdulsalam Jalloud, the No 2 leader behind Gadhafi, suggested earlier this week that Boutros-Ghali set up an international commission to study the charges. Libya does not have an extradition treaty with Britain, France or the United States.

"If such an objective, legal commission is set up and it asks for it (the extradition), it will be accepted by us," Jalloud said.

## Najibullah urges Mujahideen not to miss chance of peace

# Kabul ready to improve ties with Islamabad

KABUL, Jan 31: President Najibullah said Thursday that Kabul was ready to improve ties with Islamabad, which backs the Afghan resistance, and urged Afghan rebels not to miss an opportunity for peace.

He also hinted that Mujahideen extremists should be ignored if they laid down conditions for attending an intra-Afghan dialogue which the United Nations hopes to convene in the next two months.

"All Afghans should come aboard the peace train. They (the Mujahideen) should not isolate themselves by avoiding this great opportunity in our view many forces and a wide range of force should take part in this process," Najibullah told AFP in an interview.

United Nations Secretary General Boutros Ghali has called for an early convening of the UN proposed intra-Afghan dialogue and has sent his personal envoy Benon Sevan to the region to speed up the peace process.

Najibullah, in his first response to Pakistan's backing this week for the UN peace plan, said in the interview that the condition laid by the Mujahideen — that he resign before they agree to participate — was "a pretext for a few of a few," Najibullah said.

Reiterating Kabul's right to participate in the intra-Afghan meeting, Najibullah said a strong, comprehensive and durable solution could be found only with the participation of all Afghan groups and parties involved in the 13-year-old civil war.

Najibullah said he was delighted at recent "positive developments" for peace in Afghanistan which he said were in harmony with his own policy of national reconciliation launched in 1987.

Following the major shift in Pakistan's Afghan policy, Kabul was ready to take the lead in improving relations with its neighbour, Najibullah added.

Relations between the two countries were strained, but not broken, after the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan which provoked Pakistan to back an Afghan resistance movement aimed at toppling the Kabul regime.

Najibullah said he had the fully backing of his ruling Watan Party for the five-point UN peace plan and

## Off the Record



MALIKI DARGAH, Lucknow: Syed Nawab Md Zainul Abdeen Ali Khan alias Prince Zainul Nawab Maliki offering prayers (Namaaz) on a burning pit, which is 12 feet in length, 3 feet in width and one foot deep. He offers Namaaz on a 'chatai' for 6 minutes and 14 seconds setting a new world record.

### Bookworm town

SHANGHAI: Half a century ago, a gang of bandits robbed a group of people as they fled a town under fire in war time. To their surprise their booty was nothing but books, reports Xinhua.

These people were from Zhujiao town on the outskirts of Shanghai city. The town has been famous for hundreds of years for locals' love of books.

"Regardless of size, rooms here are all known to hold great quantities of books," says an inscription carved into a stone monument nearly 1,000 years ago when the town was founded. That passion for reading and collecting books still graces the town today.

Gong Chang, a minister in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) who had roots in the town, brought home a boatful of books when he left office.

Chen Lianfang, a senior official in the Qian dynasty (1844-1911) who hailed from the town, risked his life to lug back two boxes of books inherited from his ancestors as he escaped the war-torn capital.

Shu Minghao, who is now living in the town, spent all he had while touring in Eastern China's Shandong province to buy a book that had sold out in Shanghai. He carried the 10 kg book even as he climbed Mount Taishan in Shandong.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that this village of Bibliophiles has produced more than 50 intellectuals of associated professor rank or higher in recent decades.

### Ambulance first, not doctor

PHOENIX: Doctors studying what people should do if they think they're having a stroke came up with some surprising advice: Don't call your doctor, reports AP.

Instead, they say to call an ambulance at the first sign of a stroke. The distinction could mean the difference between life and death.

While health officials have long campaigned to get people to the hospital at the first sign of a heart attack, the urgency of treating strokes has gotten less attention.

The study, conducted at the University of Cincinnati, found that people who called 911 the emergency number throughout much of the United States got to the hospital in about three hours. Those who phoned their doctors were not hospitalized until about 10 hours after the first symptoms.

### From Sake to suit

TOKYO: A 50-year-old Japanese woman fired from her job after she refused a drink from her union boss is suing for damages, the Mainichi daily newspaper said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

A spokesman at a Fukuoka district court in southern Japan confirmed a suit had been filed on Tuesday for four million yen (\$1,700 dollar) in work-related damages.

During a year-end party in December, the union boss offered the unidentified woman Sake, a rice wine, but she refused saying she had a cold, Mainichi said.

The boss called off the party and sent everyone home when he later saw the woman accepting a drink from a colleague.

She was dismissed from the union and lost her job at a company where she had worked for 10 years because of a labour-management rule that workers must be union members.

### Charles starts architecture as he hates mod structure

LONDON: Prince Charles, a stern critic of much modern building, said Thursday he is setting up his own Institute of Architecture to teach the "timeless values", reports AP.

"It is in bringing together the best traditions of the past, and the diverse technological potential of the future, that I hope my institute may become a crucible in which the architecture of the 21st century can begin to be forged," the prince said at a reception.

The new institute, funded by anonymous donors and charitable trusts, opens in October with a one-year foundation course for 150 students from Britain and other countries. The studies will be in addition to students' full-time education in colleges of architecture or civil engineering.

The prince has no architectural training but his attacks on many modern buildings that he considers ugly and uncomfortable have won widespread public support.

His position as heir to the throne is influential enough to have forced the redesign or abandonment of public buildings he was attacked at a cost of millions of pounds (dollar).

The prince said the contemporary environment had reflected the spirit of the age, but he was concerned that an "age without spirit" was being created.



## Yeltsin's reform programme rudderless: Russian VP

MOSCOW, Jan 31: Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi accused his boss on Thursday of leading Russia to economic ruin just as President Boris N. Yeltsin left for Britain, reports AP.

In a biting critical article on the front page of the former Communist Party daily Pravda, Rutskoi renewed charges that Yeltsin's reform programme was rudderless and ultimately could destroy Russia.

Rutskoi, several other Russian leaders and papers such as Pravda have been coalescing into an opposition movement trying to express the anger of Russians coping since the beginning of January with a tough market reform that has raised prices by several times.

Rutskoi, a former military officer, warned that the breakup of the Soviet Union could be repeated within Russia itself.

Echoing one of the main tenets of centuries of Russian political practice, he called for a strong central government to prevent the more than 100 ethnic groups from breaking up in chaos.

He appealed to Russian national pride — including the military — to help hold the country together and indicated Russians might actually be tempted to expand to recover past glories. However, a strong center would not result in discrimination against minorities, Rutskoi said.

Yeltsin, after announcing dramatic cuts in Russian nuclear forces on Wednesday, left for Britain, the United States and Canada.



ALGIERS: Riot police patrol in the main streets of the capital as a precarious calm reigns on the eve of Friday prayers. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has announced plans to take charge of the 10,000 listed mosques that FIS has used to muster support, by replacing FIS Imams with preachers paid by the state.

# Govt captures FIS-controlled mosque, removes Imam

ALGIERS, Jan 31: The authorities in Algeria maintained the pressure on the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) Thursday, seizing control of a key mosque in Algiers and naming its own appointee as imam (preacher) to replace an FIS supporter reports AFP.

In the eastern city of Constantine riot police fired tear gas grenades to disperse a demonstration.

The ES Sunna Mosque, in the working-class district of Bab El-Oued, was placed under state authority, the El Watan newspaper said, quoting authoritative sources. The move came on the eve of Friday prayers where an FIS preacher was due to officiate.

The name of the state-appointed imam was not divulged. His predecessor Abdelkader Moghni, who was elected deputy for the district before the military called off the second round of voting earlier this month, has been on the run from the police since last Friday.

ES Sunna, with the Kouba Mosque, is one of the two main fundamentalist strongholds in Algiers, with the leading FIS preachers alternating between them.

The lawyer of Rabah Kebir, meanwhile, said that his client, the latest in a series of FIS leaders to be arrested, was presented to an Algiers court on Wednesday, charged with incitement to rebellion, and placed in remand.

The FIS has said that around 500 of its leaders have been arrested since a high state council was formed following the resignation on January 11 of President Chadli Bendjedid.

The provisional leader of the FIS, Abdelkader Hachani, was arrested last week and has also been charged with incitement to rebellion.

In Constantine, riot police used tear gas to break up a crowd of around 300 FIS supporters protesting against the appearance of three imams (preachers) at a local court.

There were no reports of casualties, but witnesses told AFP that first aid vehicles were sent to the scene of the demonstration to the hospital.

The police intervened after demonstrators gathered outside the courthouse and began to chant the names of the FIS's historic leaders, Abassi Madani and Ali Belhadj, imprisoned since an army crackdown on the movement last June. The demonstrators also chanted anti-government slogans.

## Riyadh threatens crackdown on fundamentalists

RIYADH, Jan 31: Saudi Arabia's security chief Thursday threatened to crack down on Islamic fundamentalists who have criticized the nation's more moderate religious scholars and political leaders, reports AP.

"Punishment is severe for anyone who infringes on the rights of society," Gen Abdullah bin Abdul-Rahman al-Sheik said in a statement published in the Asharq al-Awsat daily newspaper.

"We will confront all the elements of sick minds that are a residue of the Gulf crisis," King Fahd has made clear he is determined to curb a wave of fundamentalist militancy, attributed in part to a backlash from the deployment of non-Muslim Western forces on Saudi soil.

Fundamentalists said the presence of so many non-Muslims threatened to contaminate the country's religious purity.

The hard-liners have launched vilification campaigns against the nation's moderate Islamic scholars, political and economic leaders, and even members of the royal family.

Security organs will show "no mercy" to troublemakers, al-Sheik said. "We shall use the necessary firmness in dealing with their weakness."

"The government's own religious police — the Mutawa, or 'enforcers' — are seen by many here as contributing to the post-Gulf war backlash. Liberal Saudis and foreigners have reported almost daily confrontations with the cane-wielding Mutawain, mostly young Islamic zealots.

They Mutawain beat people who don't stop for the five-times-a-day prayers prescribed in the Koran, and jab women with sticks for showing naked arms or legs.

Shopkeepers in Riyadh, the capital, threatened in December to close unless the zealots stopped harassing women customers.

Fahd told his cabinet Monday that "if matters go beyond their limits, then we will deal with them when we get to that point."

The fundamentalists growing militancy also stems from Fahd's plan to create a "consultative council" that would allow selected citizens to offer opinions to the government. The militants that such a council would spawn dilution of the country's religiosity.

In December, the kingdom's leading theologian, Sheik Abdel-Aziz ibn Baz, lashed out at the fundamentalists' actions as "against the teachings of Allah."

## Habash placed under guard at a Paris hospital

PARIS, Jan 31: Ailing Palestinian hardliner George Habash has been placed under guard at a Paris hospital and will be interrogated in connection with terrorist cases if medically possible, a Cabinet minister said Friday, reports AP.

Social Affairs Minister Jean-Louis Bianco said a dossier on Habash, whose entry into France for treatment has created a furor, had been opened by Judge Jean-Louis Brugiere, France's top anti-terrorism investigator.

Bianco said Habash could be interrogated as early as Friday, but did not specify on what cases.

On Thursday, four top French officials were forced to resign for their roles in allowing Habash, an acknowledged Palestinian terrorist leader,

## BRIEFLY

**46 die of cholera in Tanzania:** Forty-six people have died of cholera in the northern Tanzanian district of Tarime in the past four weeks, Tanzanian radio monitored here reported Thursday. AFP report from Nairobi.

It said 91 other cholera patients had been admitted to hospitals in the area.

According to the radio, 583 people have contracted the infectious intestinal disease, and 476 of them have been treated and discharged from hospital.

Cholera epidemics have been reported in at least seven other regions in various parts of Tanzania, including Dodoma, Mwanza and the capital Dar Es Salaam, since the middle of last year.

**France fires 3 civil servants:** Three top-level civil servants were fired and a presidential adviser who heads the French Red Cross resigned Thursday night amid a public outcry at the hospitalization in a Paris Red Cross hospital of a Palestinian leader linked to hundreds of terrorist attacks, AFP reports from Paris.

The office of President Francois Mitterand announced the resignation of Georgina Dufout as adviser to the president. Members of the Board of Directors of the Red Cross called for resignation from that post too, charging they had not been consulted.

The three civil servants who were fired were Francois Scheer, the Junior Minister for Foreign Affairs Bernard Kessedjian, the Chief of the Staff of Interior Minister Philippe Marchand.

**New cabinet in Estonia:** Estonia's parliament approved a new government Thursday led by new Prime Minister Tii Vjahi, the former transportation minister, news agencies reported, AP says from Moscow.

Vjahi succeeds Edgar Savisaar, whose government resigned on January 20 because of severe food and energy shortages caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The vote to confirm the new government was 52 in favour with 24 abstentions. There were no votes against, according to the Estonian News Agency and Tass, now called the Information Telegraph Agency of Russia-Tass.

Just five months after winning international recognition, the Baltic country of 1.6 million people earlier this month imposed a three-month state of emergency and named special with broad powers over production and distribution.

**Bodies of 24 Iraqi troops found:** Iraqi authorities said they found Thursday the bodies of 24 Iraqi soldiers who were buried alive by Allied Forces in the Gulf War last year. AFP reports from Baghdad.

The grave was discovered in the Samawa area, about 40 kilometers (24 miles) north of the Saudi Arabian border, the Iraqi news agency INA said.

The Iraqi Red Crescent said dozens of similar graves have been discovered in the Safwan area, which is near the border with Kuwait.

In September, the Pentagon announced that Allied tanks and bulldozers, used to break Iraqi defensive lines, buried alive Iraqi troops on the first day of the ground war.

**UN food, medicine for Ethiopians:** The United Nations has started an airlift of food and medicine to 350,000 people threatened by starvation and disease in Ethiopia's eastern Ogaden region. UN officials said Thursday, Reuter reports from Addis Ababa.

World Food Programme official Osei Owususu said bandit attacks on food convoys had reduced transport of emergency supplies by road to a trickle.

Most of the 350,000 are former Ethiopian refugees who fled to neighbouring Somalia to escape war between the two nations in the late 1970s but returned when civil war erupted in Somalia last year.

**Earthquake shakes Nepal:** A mild earthquake measuring 4.7 on the Richter scale rocked the far south west of Nepal, the state radio reported today, AFP from Kathmandu reports.

The epicentre of the earthquake Thursday was around the area of Raniban in Dailekh district 320 kilometres (200 miles) west of Kathmandu, radio Nepal reported quoting the department of Mining and Geology.

No damage reports have been received so far.

# US suggests Indo-Pak N-safeguards deal

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: The United States, seeking to break the South Asian nuclear stalemate, is urging India and Pakistan to make their own deal if they cannot agree to attend a wider disarmament conference, a US expert said Friday, reports AP.

Ronald Lehman, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, said if both countries persist in refusing to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, they could conclude a bilateral safeguard arrangement.

Lehman pointed to the models of Brazil and Argentina, which struck a safeguard deal despite their refusal to sign the NPT, and to North and South Korea, which negotiated their own inspection regime last year.

As the Middle East moved toward disarmament as part of the Arab-Israeli peace conference, the Indian-Pakistan conflict was emerging as the world's most volatile nuclear threat.

"Clearly, South Asia is lagging behind the rest of the world," he said at a news conference.

US experts discount claims by India and Pakistan that they have no clandestine weapons programmes. Lehman said both were capable.

"When you have nuclear industries as advanced as India and Pakistan have, either country could make the decision to acquire nuclear weapons," Lehman said.

The United States and Pakistan have proposed a 5-nation conference to discuss a nuclear free zone in South Asia. Russia and China have agreed to join in, but India has not replied.

Lehman said he discussed alternative ideas with Defense Minister Sharan Pawar and with Foreign Secretary JN Dixit, India's top civil servant in foreign policy.

"I didn't come here asking for decisions and answers. These were general consultations, but it is clear that the time has come for some new thinking on these issues," Lehman said.

Among the ideas was a bilateral endorsement of the safeguard agreement drawn up by the International Atomic Energy Agency. That agreement would allow inspection of fissionable materials to ensure none was being used for weapons.

Lehman said he also made clear the limits on any high technology trade with India that could be used for nuclear weapons. India has increasingly turned westward since the collapse of the Soviet Union, its former patron for military and high-tech equipment.

Lehman's visit in New Delhi coincided with talks President Bush planned to hold in New York with Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, seeking a commitment on nuclear weapons.

The US government suspended military aid to Pakistan in 1990 when it failed to certify that it was not building any bombs. Washington has no military aid programme with India.

## Five blacks killed in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 31: Five blacks were killed, including two men flung from a train, and 20 were wounded in political violence in South Africa, police said today, reports Reuter.

"At Boksburg east station east of Johannesburg, two black men were killed when they were thrown from a train," a police daily bulletin on unrest said.

It said the three other people were killed in fighting around Johannesburg townships.