

Sino-Indian border talks open Thursday

BEIJING, Feb 15: China and India will open a fourth round of talks about their disputed border on Thursday in New Delhi, officials media reported Saturday, reports AP.

The border dispute involves thousands of square miles (kilometers) of land on India's northeastern border plus territory that China captured from India in a 1962 war in the western Himalayas.

The talks in New Delhi, scheduled to last three days, will be the first negotiations on the border dispute since Chinese Premier Li Peng visited India in December. Li was the first Chinese head of government to visit India since 1960. During the visit, Li and In-

dian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao agreed to give more authority to a joint committee formed three years ago to discuss the border problem.

The committee was authorized to set up wider contacts between military commanders on both sides of the boundary and to decide on further confidence-building measures.

The two countries began border talks a decade ago, but little substantive progress has been made.

Deputy Foreign Minister Xu Dunxin will head the Chinese delegation at the talks in New Delhi, the state-run Xinhua News Agency said.

CIS fails to resolve differences over unified army

MINSK, Belarus, Feb 15: Commonwealth leaders have failed to resolve differences over creating national armies from the former Soviet Union's vast conventional forces, reports Reuters.

Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk told a news conference on Friday that the leaders would stick by an earlier agreement on joint command of nuclear forces.

But two rival camps emerged on the issue of non-nuclear forces.

Leaders of the 11 former Soviet republics held talks in the Belarusian capital Minsk on Friday that were dominated by military issues. Several agreements were reached but many key issues were put off until the next summit on a March 20 in Kiev.

Two groups of Commonwealth members were March 20, created—one group agreed to unified control of the armed forces and one group agreed to create its own armed forces, Kravchuk said.

Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan supported national armies.

The other eight states

agreed to unified forces but Belarus, which proposed a two-year transition period, and Uzbekistan expressed reservations.

Russia and Ukraine, the two most powerful Commonwealth states, at odds for weeks over control of the Black Sea Fleet, again appeared at opposite ends of the spectrum.

But Kravchuk denied that the differences over conventional armed forces threatened the future of the Commonwealth, created in December on the ruins of the Soviet Union.

He told reporters after the news conference: "The fact that half of the member states want their own armies is of no significance to the Commonwealth... the Commonwealth is concerned mainly with economic questions."

Kravchuk said 20 documents were signed at the Minsk meeting, including accords on strategic arms, social protection for troops and ensuring material supplies for servicemen.

He also said some impor-

tant economic agreement were reached, including coordination of electricity and railways and ways of regulating trade and economic cooperation. But he gave no details of any of the documents.

"The main thing is to restore economic links between enterprises," he said. "There are and will be disagreements because the Commonwealth is a new body which is trying to define the rules governing mutual relations."

Putting aside their obvious differences, Russia and Ukraine signed a protocol on establishing diplomatic relations.

Two other Commonwealth members, Armenia and Azerbaijan, as far apart as ever as fresh fighting was reported around the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Azerbaijan's President Ayaz Mutalibov left the Minsk meeting for home urgently because of a large-scale Armenian offensive in the enclave, an Azeri spokesman said. Armenian Leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan said he had no information on this.

Kravchuk said he still believed in the future of the Commonwealth. "If people understand that this is a critical hour and they must stop arguing and do what is necessary for people, then the documents which we have adopted will work."

Commonwealth Commander-in-Chief Yevgeny Shaposhnikov, confirmed in his post at Friday's meeting, also assessed the results of the Minsk meeting positively, saying: "In such a collective not everything can be done so quickly, but the steps we have taken today were very important. I am satisfied."

Kravchuk, who earlier reiterated his regrets at approving Shaposhnikov's appointment in December, said the commander or his deputies had been responsible for most of the misunderstandings that have arisen in military policy.

The Ukrainian leader met Russian President Boris Yeltsin after Friday's summit but the outcome of the talks was not known. The results will be good, Kravchuk said.

Fresh clash in Algeria: Five more killed

ALGIERS, Feb 15: Heavily armed security forces, backing the government, in its determination to keep Muslim fundamentalists from power, held the Algerian capital in an iron grip after thwarting a banned march, reports Reuters.

At least five people were killed in clashes after Friday prayers. Diplomats said nothing had been solved in the struggle between the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and the government.

"What are they (the authorities) going to do next Friday, bring out the troops again?" asked one Western diplomat late on Friday as sporadic shots could still be heard in FIS stronghold.

Security forces were deployed in Algiers and several towns on Friday to crush any show of defiance.

A state of emergency has been in force since Sunday following clashes after last week's prayers in which at least 50 people were killed.

This Friday, little trouble was reported outside two flashpoints in the capital, the Casbah and Martyrs' Square where the planned march was

due to end.

Five people died in an explosion during a gunfight in the Casbah, the old heart of the city, where commando and police units were searching for gunmen who killed six policemen in ambushes on Monday.

The Algerian news agency APS said the unexplained blast was triggered after gunmen in a "suspect" building opened fire with automatic weapons, wounding three members of the security force.

"The five unidentified dead were found under debris after the explosion which caused the collapse of a wall sheltering an armed group which had refused to obey orders to surrender," the agency said.

Twenty people were arrested on the spot and 20 more later.

In the same area, a fundamentalist stronghold, armed men attacked a police station, wounding several members of the security forces, APS said.

Shooting also erupted around Martyrs' Square. Algiers Radio said the exchange of fire was started by FIS militants and it wounded a child about six years old.



BAGHDAD: An Iraqi woman cries while holding photo of her sister with her child, who died 1991 in the precision bombing of the Ameriah shelter here, as hundreds of Iraqis gathered to mark the bombing's one year anniversary February 14.

— AFP photo

UN Council agrees to meet with Tarek Aziz

NEW YORK, United Nations, Feb 15: The UN Security Council has agreed to meet with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tarek Aziz or Foreign Minister Ahmed Hussain al-Khadair for what will likely be a defence of Iraq and criticism of UN sanctions, diplomatic sources said Friday, reports AFP.

The sources said Iraq would argue that it had complied with Council resolutions stemming from the Gulf War ceasefire, an assertion some Council members are skeptical of.

Iraqi ambassadors Abdul Amir Al-Anbari has said his country had lived up to 90 per cent of the resolutions passed by the Council, which has not lifted sanctions enacted following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The Iraqi ambassador said the officials would not appear before the beginning of March, when the rotating Security Council presidency changes. It is now held by US ambassador Thomas Pickering.

The United Nations has been pressuring Iraq to cooperate fully with UN teams sent to destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and has accused Baghdad of still holding Kuwaiti prisoners and refusing to return all Kuwaiti goods or pay war damages.

Council members have not ruled out the possibility that Iraq will use the opportunity to address the panel to denounce the embargo and how it has affected the population.

Iraq may also argue that UN conditions on selling its oil are not only violating its sovereignty but technically too complicated so that oil sales have been impossible.

Rushdie supporters meet Iranian diplomats

LONDON, Feb 15: Salman Rushdie says his supporters have met with Iranian embassy diplomats in London in a bid to have Iran's death threat against him lifted, reports AP.

This is the first direct contact between Iran and its supporters, Rushdie told supporters Friday night, on the third anniversary of the call by the late Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini for Muslims to kill him.

His surprise visit to London's stationers' Hall was greeted by tremendous applause from 300 writers and civil rights campaigners who convened a conference on freedom of speech in his honor.

The visit Friday to the Iranian embassy was led by Frances D'Souza, chairman of the International Committee for the Defence of Salman Rushdie.

Jordan agrees to resume talks with Israel

WASHINGTON, Feb 15: Jordan has agreed to resume peace talks with Israel February 24 in Washington, the State Department announced Friday, reports AP.

Department spokesman Richard Boucher said that the United States expected that the other parties would soon agree to the US-proposed date.

The talks are to be bilateral discussions between Israel and its Arab neighbours, represented by a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, Syria and Lebanon.

The talks opened November in Madrid, with two sessions following in Washington, one in December and the other in January.

Off the Record

It was only 28 years late

ST. PETER, Minnesota: Mary Briggs received a letter last week from Minnesota's two US senators offering congratulations on her high school graduation. She graduated in 1963.

It was a nice letter, telling her they hoped she would continue her education and that she should call if she ever needed anything.

"I don't know. It's weird. It's really weird," she said. The letter, slightly yellowed and inside a well-worn envelope, was from Sens. Hubert H. Humphrey, who died in 1978, and Eugene J. McCarthy.

Even though she didn't get the senatorial advice about continuing her education until last week, the woman, known as Mary Mears since her marriage more than 20 years ago, went to the Mankato Business College following her high school graduation.

In one way, Mears is happy the letter came late.

"I'm glad it worked out this way. I don't think it would have meant as much at 17."



HYDERABAD, India: The Princess of Wales watches entertainment at Lalipet High School February 14 with a young girl in traditional dress on her lap. The Prince and Princess of Wales are on a six-day tour to India.

— AFP photo

Accused of fathering 75 of his patients' children

ALEXANDRIA: A doctor being tried on charges he fraudulently inseminated women with his own sperm often went to the restroom with a vial just before the procedure, his former secretary testified, reports AP.

Nancy Whitten, who worked for Dr Cecil Jacobson from December 1980 to May 1982, told jurors at his US District Court trial Friday she never saw any sperm donors visit the office.

But "I would observe him going to take the vial and going to the restroom," usually twice a week, Whitten testified. Prosecutors allege Jacobson would use his sperm to impregnate his patients after telling them the semen had come from an anonymous donor bank.

Jacobson is accused of fathering as many as 75 of his patients' children that way. He's also accused of using hormone injections to trick some women into believing they were pregnant, then tell them they had miscarriages.

Dr. Glenn D Braunstein, a medical school professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, testified he found it impossible to believe that Jacobson would not know the hormone injections would trigger false pregnancy tests.

He said he and another researcher arranged to inject 20 non-pregnant women with the same amount of the hormone HCG used by Jacobson, and all falsely tested positive for pregnancy several days later.

"This was a purposeful pattern of deceit on these women," Braunstein told jurors. "He was tricking people into thinking they were pregnant when they were not. To me, it's beyond belief."

Jacobson's trial on 52 counts of fraud and perjury will resume Tuesday.

Class is not a place to sleep

MIDNAPUR: The class is not the best place to sleep, as a teacher of the Nakindi Hartcharan Primary School, in Midnapur district, learnt the hard way recently, reports PTI.

The other day, the teacher had comfortably dozed off in the middle of a class when his pupils decided to swap roles and teach their 'sir' a lesson. They carried the sleeping man to a nearby pond and threw him in to wake him up from slumber. Delighted villagers looked on and encouraged the youngsters.

The aggrieved teacher has lodged an FIR in the nearby police station seeking redressal, police said.

BRIEFLY

Teresa gets Albanian citizenship:

Nobel Peace Prize winner Mother Teresa has been awarded Albanian citizenship and a diplomatic passport, Tirana radio said on Friday, reports Reuters from Tirana.

Mother Teresa, the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, was born Gonxhe Bojaxhi of Albanian parents in Skopje, Saturday the capital of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, in 1910. She left her home to enter a convent in Dublin and spent many years caring for the poor in Calcutta.

Cuellar special adviser to ENI:

Former UN Secretary-General Javier Perez De Cuellar has been named special adviser to Italy's State Energy Group ENI, the company said on Friday, reports Reuters from Rome.

A statement by the Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi said De Cuellar would act as special adviser to group President Gabriele Cagliari on its interests abroad.

Contacts built up by De Cuellar, a Peruvian career diplomat, during his term as United Nations Secretary-General from January 1982 to December 1991 would help the group strengthen interests in foreign countries, Cagliari said.

Truce in Somalia month end likely:

Somalia's two main warring factions Friday signed a document committing them to an immediate ceasefire, representatives of the two factions said, reports AFP from New York.

A formal cease-fire will be signed in Mogadishu, probably before the end of the month, representatives of interim President Ali Mahdi and of the unified Somali Congress of his rival, General Mohammed Aidiid said.

27 hurt in Amritsar blast:

Suspected Sikh rebels exploded two bombs in the troubled Punjab state Friday, injuring 27 people, 14 of them seriously, police said, AP reports from Amritsar.

The first bomb, concealed in a tricycle rickshaw near a bus station, exploded in the town of Nabha in Patiala district, said Police Superintendent Satish Sharma reached on telephone. Nineteen people were injured in the blast, six of them seriously.

Half an hour later in Amritsar, a bomb concealed in a bicycle parked between a movie theatre and a beer bar exploded, seriously injuring eight people, Police Superintendent Siddhartha Chattopadhyay said.

Amritsar, the centre of an 8-year-old separatist rebellion by Sikh militants, is 200 kilometers (120 miles) northwest of Patiala.

Nobody claimed responsibility for the blasts, but police officials said they were linked to elections in the state scheduled Feb 19.

40 Maoists held in Bihar:

Authorities in the eastern Bihar state have arrested 40 people in connection with the massacre of at least 39 upper caste villagers by Maoist guerrillas, news reports said Friday, AP says from New Delhi.

The state-run television reported 40 people had been arrested since Wednesday night's killings in the remote village of Bara in Gaya district, 875 kilometers (540 miles) southeast of New Delhi.

Press Trust of India news agency, however, put the number of arrests made at more than 20.

The massacre, by hundreds of armed members of the Maoist Communist Centre, was to avenge the killing of 10 lower caste people by a private army of upper caste landlords last December.

The Maoist guerrillas attacked the village, dragged out sleeping men and women from their homes and slit their throats with spears and knives.

Most of the dead were 50- to 60-year-old farmers and hired farm workers, witnesses said police took away bodies of at least 20 women and children.

Electrified fences claim 93:

Electrified fences on South Africa's borders with Zimbabwe and Mozambique have killed 93 people, Defence Minister Roelf Meyer said on Friday, Reuters reports from Johannesburg.

He was replying to a question in parliament from the Liberal Opposition Democratic Party. The fences were built in the mid-1980s to keep out guerrillas and illegal immigrants.

Attacks on Pan Am, Uta planes

Ghali to act as intermediary

NEW YORK, United Nations, Feb 15: The UN Security Council has authorised the world body's chief to act as an intermediary between Libya, the United States, Britain and France in the probes of two civilian airliner bombings, diplomats said after an informal council meeting Friday, reports AFP.

Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's role will be simply that of an intermediary and messenger — not that of a mediator, diplomatic sources stressed, in investigations of possible Libyan links to attacks on a Pan Am jet over

Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988 which killed 270 people, and on a French UTA aircraft over Niger in 1989, which killed 171.

The UN chief's involvement will not in any way establish a mechanism to council orders included in last January's Resolution 731.

The current council president, Thomas Pickering of the United States, who met Thursday with his Libyan counterpart Ali Ahmed Al-Hudhairi, has insisted during these closed-door consultations that Libya should act swiftly to cooperate in the probes or face the possibility of

council-imposed air and arms embargoes.

Libya has said it would let the four Libyans sought by France in the UTA bombing appear in French courts, a proposal welcomed by France, which has called for respect for the council's decisions on the issue.

But Libya has refused to surrender two suspects indicted by Washington and London in the Lockerbie case.

Tripoli repeatedly has called for setting up an international tribunal in the cases, a proposal which British, French and US officials flatly have rejected.

Sharif off to Tehran

ISLAMABAD, Feb 15: Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left for Tehran today to attend the first summit of the regional Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) beginning on Sunday, reports Reuters.

The ECO was formed by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey in 1985 to expand trade and economic cooperation.

Last month it admitted as members the newly-independent central Asian states of Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan of the former Soviet Union.

China urges US to respect commitment

BEIJING, Feb 15: China reacted today to reports that the United States is about to sell about combat helicopters to Taiwan, urging Washington to respect its commitments, reports AP.

"The August 17 (1982) communique between China and the United States contains explicit stipulations on the sales of weapons by the US to Taiwan," the Foreign Ministry said.

"The US side should observe those stipulations, keep their promise and refrain from doing anything that would

harm Sino-US relations."

According to the 1982 communique, the United States promised to gradually reduce its arms deliveries to Taiwan, which disputes the Chinese Communist Party's claim to be the sole ruler of all China.

Military sources cited in Taipei press reports have said Taiwan would take delivery by year's end of at least 10 bell AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters and a like number of bell OH-58 Kiowa Scout attack helicopters.

Baker considers moving ME talks out of Washington

WASHINGTON, Feb 15: Secretary of State James A. Baker is considering shifting Mideast peace talks away from Washington and has asked Israel and the Arab participants to submit suggested sites by next Friday, sources familiar with the negotiations said Friday, reports AP.

Baker still intends to hold the next round here, however, beginning February 24, Jordan has announced publicly it would send a delegation. Palestinian Arabs have accepted privately and Israel most probably will attend, according to US sources who declined to be identified. That leaves Syria and

Lebanon undecided. Both boycotted a Mideast conference held in Moscow last month, but US officials said at the time that both were expected at the next, face-to-face negotiations with Israel.

The talks are aimed at a plan for limited Palestinian self-rule on the West Bank and in Gaza. The two other main topics are the status of territory that Israel captured from Jordan, Egypt and Syria in the 1967 Six-Day war and the refusal of all Arab states except Egypt to recognize the Jewish state.

Ever since Mideast talks opened last October in Madrid, Israel has been trying to shift

the negotiations to the Middle East, or at least to a European location close to the region.

The purpose is both practical and symbolic, Israel, having to negotiations on three fronts with Syria, Lebanon and joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, wants to make it easier to be in touch with the government in Jerusalem.

The symbolic reason is that holding negotiations in the Middle East would mean Arab delegations visiting Israel for one session or another or making a new issue by refusing.

Two rounds were held in Washington in December and January after the mostly cer-

emonial opening in Madrid, Baker's soliciting of proposed sites for the fourth round appears to be a gesture to Israel.

Meanwhile, a State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher, urged all sides on Friday to hold serious negotiations.

"We think it's important that the parties get beyond procedural matters and discuss substance," he said.

An earlier report said: The UN Human Rights Commission on Friday urged Israel to stop expanding settlements in the occupied territories.

The United States was the only delegation abstaining

from the 45-0 vote on a European-sponsored resolution. The measure expressed "grave concern" over the large-scale settlement building for immigrants in the occupied lands.

The resolution also said Israel would improve the climate for Middle East peace talks if it stopped the construction of settlements which it said violated the Geneva conventions on protections of civilians in occupied lands.

The 53-member commission, which is dominated by Third World countries, also overrode objections of the United States in approving more strongly worded resolu-

tions denouncing Israel.

While the Soviet Union had supported such Arab-led attacks on Israel as recently as this past year, Russia this year either abstained or voted "No with the United States."

The Russian delegation opposes any violation of human rights in the occupied territories, said Vacheslav Bachmin. "But we consider that the resolutions really did not correspond to be realities taking place in the world today."

Bulgaria, another member of the former Soviet bloc, said it abstained or voted no in part because some of the resolutions failed to note that Middle East peace talks were underway.