

## Palestinians to attend peace talks in Washington

TUNIS, Dec 6: Palestinians, who initially threatened a boycott, will attend Arab-Israeli peace talks resuming in Washington on Monday but with a smaller delegation, a PLO spokesman said today, reports Reuters.

The announcement followed a meeting of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leadership in Tunis before the next round of talks, whose lack of progress has been bitterly criticised by Palestinian participants.

The PLO leadership has decided that a limited Palestinian delegation... will go to Washington to participate in the current round of the peace talks, the spokesman said.

Palestinians had called for a

boycott of the eighth round of peace talks, the latest in 13 months of negotiations, saying it should take place after US President-elect Bill Clinton takes office on January 20.

They argued that Israel could be expected to make no concessions until that date. Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt, who are also taking part in the talks, have already rejected Palestinian calls for a boycott and decided to attend. PLO executive committee Member Yasser Abed-Rabbo said in Beirut on Saturday.

The Palestinian delegation going to Washington will ask the United States, which with Russia is a co-sponsor of the peace talks, to intervene efficiently to save the peace process.

## Massive drive against Kashmiri rebellion helps unify militants

SRINAGAR, India, Dec 6: An intensified Indian drive over the past few months against a Kashmiri rebellion has helped unify the militant groups on a common platform and consolidated public support, militant and political leaders say, reports Reuters.

"At present, we are not unhappy the way things are going," said moderate politician Abdul Ghani Lone, released from jail along with five other political leaders in March after two years in detention without trial.

"India is using all its might but has not been able to break our will. The Kashmir move-

ment has been given a re-birth," Lone said in a recent interview about the crackdown in Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state.

Over the past few months, tens of thousands of Indian paramilitary troops backed by soldiers have stepped up operations against groups fighting for either a re-united and independent Kashmir, or to join Pakistan which rules one-third of the Himalayan territory.

The operations have resulted in a new flood of accusations of murder, torture and occasional gang rapes by the security forces -- charges that

are supported by human rights activists in Srinagar, summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, where support for the insurgency appears solid.

But senior militants said the crackdown and its alleged human rights abuses -- along with mediation by the freed politicians -- had pushed the two major insurgent groups, which in the past have fought street battles, into agreement on a common platform.

They said the 21-page agreement between the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JLF) and the fundamentalist pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen

was expected to be signed by other groups over the next few weeks.

Its basic point is that a decision on the future of the region would be made by popular vote and the militant groups would accept the verdict.

"We know we cannot drive Indian out. The point of our war is to put pressure on India because the whole thing must culminate in talks," said the JLF spokesman, who uses the name Zafarullah Khan.

Senior Indian officials in New Delhi said the five politicians were released because the government of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao wanted to restart a political process halted in January, 1990 when direct rules was imposed.

New Delhi toyed with the idea of holding elections, but the thought died in October when a parliamentary delegation -- after being shunned by militants and politicians alike -- reported to Rao that holding polls was impossible.

"Right now, there are no plans for an initiative on Kashmir that I know of," said one senior Indian official who asked not to be identified.

The public position of the Kashmiri militants is that their precondition for tripartite talks is an official Indian declaration that Kashmir is a disputed region and not an integral part of India.

The senior officials in Delhi said that with the Hindu chauvinist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) -- the second biggest party in parliament -- breathing down Rao's neck and ready to pounce on an issue as emotional in India as it is in Pakistan, that was an impossible condition to fulfil.



RAM SANEHI GHAT, India: Demonstrators clash with police December 5 during a protest against the construction of a Hindu temple to Lord Rama on the site of the 400-year-old mosque in Ayodhya. About 350 demonstrators, including former premier V P Singh, were arrested and prevented from entering Ayodhya. —Photo AFP/UNB

## UNITA rebels attack central province in Angola

LUANDA, Dec 6: UNITA rebels mounted attacks in central Bie province Saturday while voluntarily ceding control over two northern towns and military bases taken last week, Angolan state radio reported.

The radio's correspondent in Cuito, the provincial capital of Bie, called fighting heavy and reported six deaths.

In Luanda, UN special representative Margaret Anstee confirmed rebels had withdrawn from Uige and Negage Friday in apparent compliance with a government ultimatum.

"The UNITA military commander in Uige said UNITA did not want war, and the government could move in whenever they wanted," Anstee told

the Associated Press.

President Jose Eduardo dos Santos gave Jonas Savimbi's UNITA rebels one week to withdraw from the towns and join a coalition government or face all-out war by December 10.

Anstee is expected in New York December 11 and 12 to brief UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on the extended UN role in the southern African nation that has been edging towards the brink of a new civil war for he past month.

Fighting broke out Oct 31 after Savimbi refused to accept the results of September elections and accused the ruling Popular Movement for the

Liberation of Angola (MPLA) of rigging the vote.

UNITA, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, lost a parliamentary majority to the MPLA, and MPLA leader dos Santos defeated Savimbi in the presidential race.

Although UN observers judged the elections fair, Savimbi rejected the results and withdrew his forces from the unified Angolan army.

UNITA rebels attacked the northern towns last weekend in violation of a November 26 agreement by both sides to respect May 1991 peace accords that led to the country's first multi-party elections.

## Da Costa Congo's new PM

BRAZZAVILLE, Dec 6: Congo's President Pascal Lissouba has named a new Prime Minister, former World Bank official Claude Antoine Da Costa, to head a Government of National Unity, Congolese Radio said, reports Reuters.

The appointment on Saturday of Da Costa, a 60-year-old agricultural expert who has lived outside Congo for the past 25 years, follows crisis talks between political leaders arranged by the army.

The army had warned them they were propelling the country towards civil war. Unrest in the wake of an opposition-led civil disobedience campaign culminated in soldiers shooting dead at least two demonstrators in the capital Brazzaville on Monday.

## UN may seek to establish 'transitional authority' in Somalia

ATLANTA, Dec 6: The United Nations may seek to establish a 'transitional authority' to run Somalia if its warring factions refuse to cooperate to end the starving nation's anarchy, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

UN diplomats will soon begin negotiating with rival factional and clan leaders for national reconciliation with the goal of creating "a new Somali authority," Boutros-Ghali said.

But he added it may be necessary for the world body to establish a "transitional authority" along the lines of its operation in Cambodia.

"Nothing has been decided. It depends on the reaction to our effort of the first contacts that we shall establish now between the different factions," said Boutros-Ghali in an interview.

"If they will begin to find a

solution to promote a reconciliation then they can have their own administration.

AP adds: Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali said he was optimistic US forces could restore order quickly in Somalia and allow the United Nations to begin to negotiate a political truce.

But he acknowledged he didn't know how long it would take to stabilize the war-torn east African nation.

"It depends on the situation on the ground," he said.

Speaking Saturday after a two-day conference on global development at the Carter Center, Boutros-Ghali said he was confident that gangs blamed for looting famine relief food will quickly lose power once the UN forces start distributing food in Somalia.

"When we will be able to distribute the food, the groups

will disappear," he said. The UN will then broker aggressive peace negotiations with the warring Somali clans, Boutros-Ghali said.

Then, he said, "We will need massive assistance in reconstruction, in creating a police force, in resettling refugees."

The Secretary-General said a small peace-keeping force eventually will replace the US troops and the smaller number of troops from other nations being sent on the mission of mercy.

Former President Carter, who co-chaired the conference with Boutros-Ghali, said the news media has ignored the issue of long-term international economic development, the topic of the conference.

How the world responds to future tragedies partly depends on how the media cover Somalia, Carter said.

Public response would be weak, he said, "if your total focus is on the efficiency of the American Marines and the soldier's wife and how she's hurt over Christmas."

"My hope is that the American people will see Somalia is a tragedy for which we all are responsible and which we could have prevented," he said.

At an earlier news conference Saturday, Boutros-Ghali declared the Somali aid project a new chapter in UN history because it is a collective operation to provide purely humanitarian assistance.

He also called on all countries to help end Somalia's strife by curtailing the flow of weapons to African nations.

"There are no gun factories in Somalia and Somalia did not buy these guns. They were given to Somalia by outside interests," he said.

## Off the Record



NEW BRAZILIAN EXPORT: Twentynine-year-old XUXA (pronounced Shu Sha) turns out to be Brazil's new 'export item' besides coco and soccer players. XUXA whose television programmes for children in Spanish and Portuguese languages are immensely popular, finds no favour with the guardians who say there is nothing to learn from it. She will now go to North America to work for a company which will produce her programmes in English and make films with XUXA as the main character. — Star TV photo

## Hungary's first 'Royal' wedding after WW I

BUDAPEST, Hungary: Walburga von Habsburg married Count Archibald Douglas on Saturday in Hungary's first 'royal' wedding since World War I, reports AP.

About 520 guests attended the ceremony at the ancient Matthias Church, once the coronation church of Hungary and venue of royal weddings for centuries.

The wedding procession was welcomed by a cheerful crowd of 3,000.

The Habsburgs ruled over Austria-Hungary before its disintegration after World War I. Austria abolished the monarchy after the war, but many monarchists still revere the Habsburgs and consider Walburga, the grand daughter of the last emperor, an archduchess.

The 34-year-old bride is a lawyer. Archibald, a 42-year-old Swede, studied economics and serves as a reserve cavalry captain of the Royal Swedish Army.

## Princess to remarry

LONDON: Princess Anne, who was divorced in April, will marry Royal Navy Commander Timothy Laurence, Buckingham Palace said Saturday, reports AP.

The 42-year-old daughter of Queen Elizabeth II, who has two children, would be the first close relative of a British monarch ever to remarry after divorce.

Rev. Eric Shegog, a spokesman for the Church of England, initially said the couple would be married in a private Church of Scotland ceremony at Crathie parish church, used by the royal family when they are at Balmoral Castle.

Buckingham Palace would not confirm the place or date of the wedding and Shegog later said the venue was not certain. A formal announcement from the palace was not expected until next week.

Shegog initially said that as a divorcee, the princess could not be married in the Anglican Church under the Royal Marriages Act of 1772. But later he said it might be "technically possible" with a special dispensation.

The surprise announcement was greeted with delight by Prime Minister John Major, who offered his "warmest congratulations" to the couple.

Last month, the queen called 1992 an "annus horribilis," Latin for a "horrible year," a rare personal comment.

## Letter thief sentenced

PHILADELPHIA: A professor who stole rare papers from the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, including letters signed by Isaac Newton and Voltaire, has been sentenced to a year in prison, reports AP.

Stuart L. Adelman, 54, pleaded guilty earlier this year to interstate transportation of stolen property. He was sentenced Friday by US District Judge Raymond Broderick.

Adelman has a doctorate in physics from England's Cambridge University. Although he claimed to be professor connected to Cambridge's Trinity College and The Sorbonne in Paris, he held only part-time professorships at small colleges, according to Assistant US Attorney Eric Sitarchuk.

Adelman sold a 1784 letter signed by British Gen John Burgoyne, who fought during the American Revolution, and a 1775 letter signed by French philosopher Voltaire to a rare books dealer for 5,800 dollar, authorities said.

A Philadelphia book store owner paid 2,000 dollars for a letter signed by Samuel Pepys and King Charles II in 1673.

Adelman also admitted stealing a 1698 letter signed by physicist Newton and an 1827 book entitled "Shakespearean" by John Wilson and an 1838 essay on the first publication of Newton's Principia, authorities said.

Adelman was caught in July when a Folger librarian who knew a warrant was out for his arrest spotted him in the Washington library and asked him to tea, delaying him until authorities arrived.

All of the documents have been returned to the library.

## 2,000 French troops to join US-led force in Somalia

PARIS, Dec 6: Defence Minister Pierre Joxe said France would send more than 2,000 soldiers to join a US-led force to ensure food reaches starving civilians in Somalia, with the first French troops going into action on Monday, reports Reuters.

Speaking on French television on Saturday, he said that about half the French force would be made up of foreign legionnaires and marines based in Djibouti, an east African republic adjoining Somalia.

Asked if he thought the French troops would have to fight to carry out their mission, Joxe reported: "No, I don't think they will need to fight but they must be ready (for possible combat)."

## Curfew clamped on Algiers

ALGIERS, Dec 6: Algeria's third curfew in four years was clamped on the capital and six nearby provinces today, confining people to their homes overnight, reports Reuters.

The curfew is part of a crackdown by the army-backed government on Muslim fundamentalists, who want to make Algeria an Islamic state and have been blamed for killing more than 170 members of the security forces in the past 10 months.

Algiers radio said no incidents had been reported during the curfew which ran from 10.30 pm on Saturday to 5 am today.

Reuters correspondents and witnesses in the capital said the only activity overnight appeared to be that of patrolling security forces.

Armed riot police today manned checkpoints in the city but there was no sign of additional security.

## BRIEFLY

**Allied groups clash in Kabul:** Two Mujahideen guerrilla groups allied in Afghanistan's interim coalition government fought each other with artillery and small arms in western Kabul on Saturday, eyewitnesses said, reports Reuters from Kabul.

There was no immediate information about casualties or the cause of the fighting between the Shoorai-Nazar followers of Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood and Hezb-i-Wahdat group of Shi'ite Muslims.

But Mujahideen sources in Peshawar, in neighbouring Pakistan, said the clashes erupted after Hezb-i-Wahdat fighters killed a member of Shoorai-Nazar, which is dominated by President Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamaat-i-Islami Party.

Shoorai-Nazar and Hezb-i-Wahdat are partners in Rabbani's interim government but the Hez officers with official plans convene a council on December 12 to elect a new interim President.

**Rebels kill 7 in Lima:** Maoist Shining Path guerrillas killed seven people after condemning them in a "popular trial" in a central Andean highland town, officials and witnesses said on Saturday, reports Reuters from Lima.

About 30 guerrillas entered San Pedro De Cajas, some 350 km (210 miles) northeast of Lima on Friday night shortly after they blacked out the town, witnesses said.

They called out their victims by name and dragged them out of their homes into the town square where they carried out a popular trial, they added. The seven were then killed, some by beheading.

A prosecutor called to the scene said the guerrillas may have been taking revenge on residents who had posed as guerrillas and carried out extortion in the name of the Shining Path.

**Briton sentenced to 50 lashes:** A British hospital manager working in Saudi Arabia has been sentenced to 50 lashes for swearing at his staff, the Foreign Office confirmed Saturday night, reports AP from London.

David Brown, 32, is appealing against the sentence. He and his family in Britain have requested that no detailed publicity be given to the case.

The Foreign Office said the British consul in Jeddah has been in touch with Brown.

Opposition Labour Party lawmaker Bob Cryer said the Foreign Office should intervene "to halt this barbaric medieval punishment."

The Mail on Sunday reported that Brown swore at Saudi employees after an argument at the British-run King Khaled National Guard Hospital. He was arrested by the religious police and appeared before a religious court.

**Actor's illness cancels show:** Two performances of the successful West End play "Our Song" were cancelled Saturday because its star, Peter O'Toole, is suffering from a "serious throat infection," a spokeswoman said, AP reports from London.

Director Ned Sherrin decided to cancel the shows at the Apollo Theatre because O'Toole is on stage for the full two hours of the play, said the spokeswoman, speaking anonymously.

O'Toole gave up drinking a decade ago, but is still a heavy smoker.

## India accuses Pak diplomat of spying

NEW DELHI, Dec 6: India accused a Pakistani embassy employee of spying, after the official displayed bruises that he said he received in a beating by Indian intelligence agents, reports AP.

The incident Saturday is certain to cloud a meeting between the prime ministers of the two unfriendly neighbours at a regional summit in Dhaka, Bangladesh next weekend. It joins a long list of reciprocal allegations of torture and killings.

The Foreign Ministry said the official, Mohammad Ashfaq, was seen Saturday receiving documents from an army soldier on the deploy-

ment of Indian forces in the disputed state of Kashmir.

India routinely accuses Pakistan of arming and directing a guerrilla campaign by Muslim separatists in Kashmir, formerly an independent kingdom that is now divided between India and Pakistan and that is claimed by both. Kashmir was the spark that ignited two of the three Indo-Pak wars fought since 1947.

Ashfaq was detained and later released to the Pakistan High Commission, or embassy, the ministry said. The soldier remained under arrest.

Pakistan "categorically denies" the spying charges, a spokesman said.

## NASA cancels space debris experiment

CAP CANAVERAL, Fla., Dec 6: NASA cancelled a major experiment aboard space shuttle Discovery on Saturday -- the release of six metal balls -- because of a dead battery in the ejection system, reports AP.

"The best thing to do is to call it quits at this point with that experiment and go ahead and bring it home," said flight director Milt Heflin.

Space debris researchers wanted to track the orbiting balls with radar and telescopes to fine-tune their instruments and improve their ability to track small objects.

Discovery's astronauts were about to eject the balls from a can in the shuttle cargo bay Friday when they received bad signals through the deployment mechanism electronics.

Mission Control put off the

test and assembled a troubleshooting team in hopes of salvaging the half-million-dollar experiment. But flight directors gave up when the problem was traced to a dead battery.

The battery is located in the can in the open cargo bay and is inaccessible to the five astronauts. Flight directors decided it wasn't worth the risk to have the crew try sending commands to the equipment, Heflin said.

The astronauts also had to scrap more laser tests Saturday.

A New Mexico snowstorm and clouds over Alabama's Redstone Arsenal prevented the Defense Department from beaming up laser signals to Discovery. It was the third day in a row that the experiment was ruined by bad weather at

laser-sending stations.

The Army wants to see whether laser signals containing navigational data can be acquired in space. Such transmissions could be especially useful during wartime.

So far, the laser receiver mounted on one of Discovery's windows has gotten nothing more than a tiny burst of what may or may not have been data.

The five astronauts had better luck with the military camera experiment, although they were going through batteries faster than planned. Again and again, they had to forgo a planned target because of cloudy weather, but managed to snap pictures of clear nearby sites.

Among the few original targets with clear skies were the Somali coast and Duluth

(Minn.) International Airport.

Military officials insisted the photographing of Somalia had nothing to do with the impending deployment of American troops to the East African nation.

The computerized camera system, called Hercules, provides the latitude and longitude of photographed sites. It was designed by scientists at the Naval Research Laboratory for military, environmental and meteorological use.

The main objective of Discovery's seven-day military mission was accomplished when the astronauts successfully deployed a secret spy satellite Wednesday, just six hours after reaching orbit. Discovery is scheduled to land this Wednesday at Kennedy Space Center.

## Germans fail to stem tide of asylum seekers

BONN, Dec 6: German government and opposition leaders failed on Saturday in a second round of marathon talks to agree how to stem a tide of foreign asylum-seekers that has sparked anti-foreigner violence in the country, reports Reuters.

The leaders, ending 14 hours of closed-door wrangling on the drawn-out issue, agreed to return on Sunday to seek an elusive compromise on tightening Germany's liberal Asylum Laws.

Walter Bajohr, spokesman for members of parliament in the talks from Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats (CDU), declined to give details of any progress in Saturday's meeting.

Bajohr said he had been authorised by negotiators to say they would return to the table "With the declared intention of agreeing on a package."

Kohl's three-party coalition and the opposition Social Democrats (SPD) have had deep differences on the asylum issue, but the Chancellor needs SPD support to amend the constitution and limit Germany's post-war Asylum Law.

Politicians say the law is being abused by economic refugees from impoverished eastern Europe and the third world.

Saturday's talks followed a failed three-day round that ended last Sunday.