

Malaysian ruler's son to be prosecuted

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 7: Attorney General Abu Talib Othman said Monday the son of the ruler of Malaysia's Johore state would be prosecuted if there was evidence he had assaulted a field hockey player, reports AP.

He said Tunku Majid, second son of Sultan Iskandar Ismail, was not above the law. In Malaysia, the sultans that reign in nine states cannot be prosecuted, although other members of their families can.

Tunku Majid has been suspended from playing field hockey for five years following allegations that he assaulted a player in the dressing room after a game in July in which the prince's team lost.

Abu Talib said he had received the police report and would decide next week whether to prosecute.

Meanwhile, Zaman Khan, police director of criminal investigation, said Douglas Gomez, a hockey coach, had made a report to police on an alleged assault and he would comment after seeing the report.

Local newspapers and some politicians reported that Gomez was assaulted last week after being summoned to the Johore palace. He left the palace with bruised lips and other injuries.

This followed an incident on Nov 25, when his team, the College Sultan Abu Bakar hockey team, pulled out of a national tournament under orders from the state Education Department, which declined to say who had asked it to order the withdrawal.

Gomez had criticized the order. It is rare in Malaysia for alleged wrongdoings by royalty to be aired in public, but the latest case has been in Malaysian headlines the past week and has drawn criticism from Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and other leaders.

The sultan and Tunku Majid have not commented on the case. Sultan Iskandar was sentenced to six months in prison for culpable homicide in 1977 before he ascended the throne. He was pardoned and did not go to prison.

State leaders react sharply over demolition of Babri Mosque

Sharif seeks world bodies' help to protect minority Muslims in India

ISLAMABAD, Dec 7: Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called a special cabinet meeting Monday after condemning the "extreme fanaticism" of Hindu militants who sacked a mosque in Ayodhya, India, reports AFP.

"This abhorrent act of extreme fanaticism deserves to be strongly condemned by all civilized countries, and especially those which oppose religious intolerance and extremism and uphold human rights," he said.

Sharif called on the international community to seek India's assurances that it will guarantee protection for sacred Islamic sites and the lives and safety of its Muslim minority against Hindu fanaticism. Muslims make up about 100 million of India's 850 million population.

The 16th century mosque was torn down Sunday by thousands of Hindus who say it stands on the site of an ancient temple to the Hindu god Rama. Officials said today's cabinet meeting would study the new situation created by Sunday's riot. Relations between Pakistan and India are already strained.

In Islamabad Islamic Scholars, who held an emergency meeting late Sunday, plan to organise a protest rally in front of the Pakistani parliament and the Indian Embassy later in the week.

Opposition Leader Benazir Bhutto called the mosque attack a "day of tragedy and mourning for Muslims the world over."

She said "this act of savagery has not only deeply hurt Muslim sentiments but raised questions about India's proclaimed commitment to secularism."

Bhutto said the Pakistan government should have second thoughts about Sharif meeting with Indian Premier PV Narasimha Rao in Dhaka at upcoming meeting of the

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Meanwhile, the government has stepped up security to protect Hindu temples throughout Pakistan.

The destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque was front page news in all Pakistani newspapers with many seeing the latest attack as justification for the Muslim-Hindu partition of the Sub-continent on independence which gave birth to Pakistan in 1947.

Iran

Reuters adds: Iran has condemned the "shameful" destruction of a 16th-century mosque in India by Hindu extremists and called on New Delhi to "restore the injured spirit of Muslims."

This move was yet another tragedy that has befallen the sanctities and cultural symbols

of the Muslims of India and was a violation of the sanctity of their place of worship and also a blatant violation of India's constitution," the Iranian foreign ministry said in a statement on Sunday.

Tens of thousands of Hindu militants demolished the mosque in the north Indian temple town of Ayodhya on Sunday with hammers and their bare hands. They claim it stands on the birthplace of their god-king Lord Rama.

The statement, read on Iran radio monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, said: The Iranian foreign ministry, by condemning this shameful action by extremists, emphasises that it expects the Indian Government to repair the destruction caused, restore the injured spirit on Muslims, confront decisively the elements responsible for this tragedy

and formulate effective preventive measures to stop these kinds of moves."

UAE

AFP from Abudhabi says: Hundreds of Indian Muslims in the United Arab Emirates forced the country's main gold market to close today to protest the demolition of a mosque in the Indian town of Ayodhya by Hindu Zealots.

Witnesses reached by telephone said police dispersed the demonstrators peacefully in Dubai. But the gold market, where most of the shopkeepers are Indians, remained closed.

In Abu Dhabi, some gold and other shops owned by Indians closed today.

Indians, many of whom are Hindus, form the largest foreign community in the UAE, accounting for nearly one fifth of the 1.8 million population.



AYODHYA, India: Hindu fundamentalists attack the wall of the 16th century Babri Masjid (mosque) with iron rods December 6 in this ancient Hindu holy city. Fundamentalists intent on erecting a temple if the site, reduced the mosque to rubble. — AFP/UNB photo.

China sells M-11 to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Dec 7: A former Pakistani official has admitted that China has sold Islamabad M-11 missiles, which has led to US retaliation against Beijing, but said the rockets were not capable of carrying nuclear warheads, reports AFP.

The former Pakistani Chief of Staff Mirza Aslam Beg, in an interview published Sunday by The Daily News, said the missiles had a range of less than 300 kilometers (180 miles) were not built to carry nuclear warheads and were not precise enough to carry out that type of mission.

US intelligence reports, quoted Friday by The Los Angeles Times, said China had exported two dozen M-11 missiles able to carry nuclear warheads to Pakistan in the past two weeks. The reports said the missiles were photographed in the southern Pakistani port of Karachi.

Police guns down fundamentalist in Algiers

ALGIERS, Dec 7: Police killed an Islamic gunman and wounded another in a firefight Sunday after a robbery in an Algiers suburb, the first such clash since a curfew went into effect to curb Muslim extremists, state television announced, reports AP.

The dead man was identified as Hakim Kenoucha, 27, wanted for several attacks on policemen.

The gun battle took place Sunday afternoon, outside curfew hours, in the Algiers suburb of Oued Ouchail after the Kenoucha gang tried to rob a shop.

Earlier, police arrested six people in Oran, Algeria's second-largest city, on suspicion of carrying out fundamentalist attacks on police officers that left one high-ranking policeman's chauffeur dead.

Parties agree on tougher asylum rules in Germany

BONN, Dec 7: Bowing to anti-foreigner sentiment, the nation's main political parties agreed Sunday to seek asylum rules that would turn refugees back at the border, reports AP.

Politicians hope tightening the postwar asylum laws — among the world's most liberal — will help curb a wave of attacks on foreigners that have claimed at least 16 lives and raised concern of a spread of Nazi-style ideology.

Police have vowed to escalate their crackdown of neo-Nazi and other hate groups, but right-wing leaders have threatened to retaliate with even more violence.

Under the proposal reached between Chancellor Helmut Kohl's three-party coalition and the opposition Social

Democrats, all refugees who cross into Germany over land would be turned back.

Others who manage to cross Germany's lightly guarded borders would be reviewed to determine if they entered for political or economic reasons. Those deemed economic refugees would be sent back to the country they arrived from.

The plan — which must be approved by lawmakers — is an apparent attempt to make Germany's neighbours take more responsibility for the huge increase in refugees since the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

Political leaders also fear a voter backlash in 1994 parliamentary elections if the asy-

lum laws are not tightened.

Even though the proposal would in effect close Germany's borders to all refugees, it is unlikely it could be fully enforced. Many small roads across the border are not patrolled and customs officials often wave traffic through. Visa requirements also have been dropped for former East Bloc nations, the homelands of many asylum seekers.

Many other refugees arrive in Germany by plane.

Wolfgang Schauble, parliamentary chairman of Kohl's Christian Democrats, said Germany's constitution would continue to guarantee the right of anyone to apply for political asylum.

Israel will reach peace accord with Arabs next year: Rabin

TEL AVIV, Dec 7: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said on Sunday he was convinced Israel would reach peace agreements with some of its Arab neighbours in 1993 despite Arab pessimism over their 13-month-old talks, reports Reuters.

"I believe, am convinced, that in 1993 agreements will be reached — if not with all the delegations, with some of them," Rabin said before the start of an eighth round of talks in Washington today.

The Arabs have warned they might reconsider participating in the US brokered talks unless a breakthrough was achieved by mid-1993. The talks place Israel opposite Jordanian, Lebanese, Palestinian and Syrian negotia-

tors.

Rabin, who came to power in July vowing to speed up peace efforts that stalled under rightist Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, said the talks had slowed during the US presidential transition from George Bush to Bill Clinton.

Speaking at Tel Aviv airport before flying to Italy and Britain, Rabin told reporters the United States must continue playing a unique role — but within limits.

"The United States has a role, first and foremost in the bilateral negotiations, not by coercing, not by interfering, but by creating an atmosphere an conditions for the conducting of these negotiations," Rabin said.

AP adds: Mideast peace

talks were to resume Monday with a scaled-back, dispirited Palestinian delegation, but with hope that Jordan and Israel may eventually come to terms.

Israel is offering limited self-rule to the Palestinians who live on the West Bank and Gaza, which means they would run their day-to-day affairs, such as agriculture, hospitals and the like. But Palestinian negotiators want the plan to be geared to eventual statehood. They also want Israel to stop settling the territories and expanding Jerusalem.

And they want the United States to lean on the Israelis, which so far American diplomats have been unwilling to do.

Kabul enters second day of non-stop fighting

KABUL, Dec 7: Kabul entered its second day of non-stop fighting Sunday as Hazara faction Mujahideen battled Ministry of Defence troops for control of nearly half the capital, reports AP.

The resonant tramp and boom of rocket and mortar artillery sounded overnight Saturday and continued Sunday as Shiite faction Hezb-i Wahdat Mujahideen fought Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masoud's ethnic Tajik Shoorai-Nazar Mujahideen.

The fighting was focused on the Afghan capital's western suburbs, commercial center and at a northern neighbourhood near the airport.

"Without the sound of war, Afghan bread has no taste," one Wahdat fighter remarked casually.

As fighting continued, it was still a mystery as to how the violence escalated from a minor incident, in which Shoorai-Nazar forces were said to have disarmed five Hazara guerrillas last Friday. In a north Kabul suburb, to inflame broad swaths of the capital.

However, foreign diplomats

based in Kabul do not rule out the possibility that there is a secret political agenda which lies hidden beneath the more obvious level of fighting.

"It may suit the interests of certain Mujahideen factions to have the mid-December Shoorai-Hal-Va-Aqd (Afghan elections) postponed until after winter," one diplomat said, and this fighting could be the way to achieve this result.

The Shoorai-Hal-Va-Aqd, or grand assembly, has to meet within nine days to decide who should lead the Afghan Mujahideen Government.

Fighting was particularly fierce in Kabul's Chindawal commercial section, a Hazara enclave sandwiched between the main Jadayi Mainward Boulevard and the Sherdawa mountain range behind.

After several hours of bitter duelling in Chindawal, Wahdat fighters were dislodged from positions in a cinema building at the Western end of the Boulevard, a development bank and a multi-storey state cooperative building, which was gutted by fire.

Off the Record

Archbishop wishes Anne

LONDON: Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, head of the Church of England, sent prayers and good wishes Sunday to Princess Anne on her impending marriage to a navy commander, reports AP.

Anne, Queen Elizabeth II's only daughter, will be the first close relative of a British monarch to divorce and remarry. The Church of England discourages remarriage by divorced people.

Buckingham Palace confirmed Saturday that Anne, 42, and Cmdr. Timothy Laurence, 37, will marry soon.

A statement from Carey's Lambeth Palace residence said the archbishop wished the princess and Laurence every happiness.

Anne was divorced in April from Capt. Mark Phillips. They have two children.

News reports said the couple will wed December 12 in a small Presbyterian church at Crathie, opposite the queen's Balmoral Castle estate in northern Scotland.

"It must be a disappointment for the queen that her daughter cannot be married in the Anglican Church," the Anglican bishop of St Albans, the Rt. Rev. John Taylor, said in a British Broadcasting Corp radio interview.

"But I'm sure the queen fully understands the Church of England position and actually would want to uphold it."

Planet Hollywood booming

CANCUN, Mexico: Bruce Willis, Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger have a Planet Hollywood restaurant in this Caribbean resort, the third in the string of restaurants they jointly own, reports AP.

Although Planet Hollywood opened for business last Sunday, the actors made it official with a star-studded gathering Friday night, the Mexican newspaper The News reported.

"Cancun is fast becoming one of the great resorts in the world," Stallone told the English-language paper. "We brought Planet Hollywood here because we knew it would be conducive to vacationers."

The actors also have Planet Hollywood restaurants in Los Angeles and New York. The premises are festooned with hundreds of photographs and memorabilia of the stars in a kind of cinematic version of the Hard Rock Cafe.

Willis' wife, actress Demi Moore, and Steven Seagal also showed up for the festivities.

Godfather wants to be worshipped

NASHVILLE, Tenn: James Brown takes his nickname — the Godfather of Soul — a little too seriously, according to a new book by a veteran talent agent, reports AP.

In his book, "Music City Babylon," Scott Faragher details a brief period in 1986 when he was Brown's booking agent. He describes Brown as disorganized, undisciplined and reluctant to heed suggestions from others.

"I was sorry that we had not become friends, but 'the Godfather' doesn't want friends. He wants to be worshipped, and that's not my style," Faragher wrote.

Jeff Allen, Brown's current booking agent, disputed Faragher's characterization.

"James Brown has always been a gentleman, a scholar and a friend," Allen said from his New York City office. "At times he shows signs of an ego, but I can't think of one performer I've met in 15 years that hasn't."

The book, by Carol Publishing Group of New York, is about Faragher's 20 years of working with such singers as Jerry Lee Lewis, Fats Domino, Lou Rawls, Mickey Gilley, Randy Travis, Ricky Scaggs, Ronnie Milsap and Billy Ray Cyrus.

'Women — only coaches'

SEOUL: Afraid of pawing male passengers, an increasing number of female commuters are taking advantage of the "women-only coaches" introduced on Seoul-area trains a week ago, officials said Monday, reports AP.

The Korea National Railroad said about 97 per cent of passengers riding in those coaches during recent morning rush hours were females.

On the "women-only coaches" first day in service, Dec 1, about 70 per cent of their riders were female. Despite the women-only designation, there is no legal ban on men using those cars.

But the railroad said the percentage of female passengers in the cars has increased along with publicity about them.

The state-owned railroad designated two of each train's 10 coaches for women passengers only after mounting complaints about male passengers fondling women in crowded rush-hour trains.

Milan takes lead in Slovenian polls

LJUBLJANA, Slovenia, Dec 7: Slovenia's Communist-turned-independent President Milan Kucan took a commanding lead in this tiny country's first elections since winning independence from Yugoslavia last year, reports AP.

A moderate liberal party was ahead in the race for a new 130-seat bicameral Parliament that will replace the three-chamber system inherited from Yugoslavia's Communist system.

According to preliminary predictions by state TV based

on nationwide exit polls Sunday night, Kucan was far ahead of the other seven presidential candidates with nearly 64 percent of the vote.

He was first elected in 1990 when Slovenia was still in Yugoslavia but had abandoned Communism.

The Liberal Democrats of Premier Janez Drnovsek were leading in balloting for Parliament with 27 percent of the vote, ahead of the conservative Christian Democrats and former Communists, both with 14 percent, TV said.

Bosnians defend Sarajevo Airport road

SARAJEVO, Dec 7: A European Community representative working with the UN relief operation, said a decision was expected Monday on whether to prolong the suspension of the humanitarian airlift into war-torn Sarajevo, reports AP.

Close-quarter combat raged on Sunday as government troops, tried to block Serb forces from cutting off the road to the airport, the lifeline for relief supplies to the besieged city.

The threat facing Sarajevo's 300,000 residents — of being cut off from food and other relief supplies — has led to star-

vation in others parts of Bosnia.

At least 70 people, most of them children, starved to death in a region east of Sarajevo that has been mostly overrun by Serbs, said Bego Uvalic, the mayor of Serb-occupied Vlasenica, about 65 kilometers (40 miles) north-east of Sarajevo.

He said 40,000 people who have fled to Cerska, about 19 kilometers (12 miles) to the northeast, and have been reduced to eating road salt mixed with sand. Children were eating livestock feed Uvalic told The Associated Press.

He made the comments in Zagreb, Croatia, after slipping through Serb lines. A medic in Cerska — the only community in the region not held by Serbs — is helping the sick and wounded and "amputates legs and arms with razor blades or a metal-cutting saw," Uvalic said. "People are dying of infections and disease."

A Serb bombardment hit many parts of Sarajevo on Sunday, adding to the bleakness of freezing rain and an electrical outage. At Kosovo hospital, Sarajevo's biggest, shelling killed a nurse and another person and injured about 30 people, Bosnian radio said.

Meanwhile, on the western outskirts of Sarajevo, Serb fighters tried to expand their hold on Otes, the suburb they captured Saturday in their biggest offensive in the Sarajevo area in the 8-month-old war.

Bosnian defenders held out on the eastern fringe of Otes, trying to prevent Serbs from advancing and possibly blocking the airport road.

"The cutting of the airport road, by whatever means, is something we have to worry about," said Jeremy Brade, a European Community representative with the UN relief operation.

Brade said a decision was expected Monday on whether to prolong the suspension of the humanitarian airlift into Sarajevo, halted Tuesday when planes were shot at.

Forty percent of the food destined for Sarajevo was being brought in by plane. Trying to compensate for the loss of the airport by expanding truck convoys would be very difficult, said Larry Hollingworth of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

At least 17,000 people have died in the fighting, which broke out in March after Bosnia's Muslims.

Russian govt threatens to resign

MOSCOW, Dec 7: Russia's reforming Government is ready to resign if the country's top legislature fails to endorse acting Premier Yegor Gaidar as full Prime Minister in a vote, Itar-Tass news agency said on Sunday, reports Reuters.

But the agency, quoting a government press spokesman, also said Gaidar would be willing to continue as acting Premier if he was rejected by the Congress of People's Deputies on Monday. No officials were available to clarify the statement.