

# Israeli soldier's kidnap casts shadow over ME talks

WASHINGTON, Dec 15: The kidnapping of an Israeli soldier by a Muslim group cast a new shadow over Middle East Peace talks on Monday as Arabs and Israelis began what is expected to be the last week of negotiations for 1992, reports Reuter.

"We have seen that our common goal is to make progress because the only way to achieve peace is to negotiate despite the violence and this is what we are trying to do," he said.

Chief Palestinian negotiator Haidar Abdel-Shafi said the kidnapping and its aftermath "threw a shadow of grief and discontent on our deliberations today."

"It is needless to say that such tragic developments will be there as long as [Israeli] occupation is there as there is no escaping this," he said.

That is why we feel as negotiators in the peace process our task continues to be sincere and committed attempt to see that this negotiations process comes to success.

Chief Israeli negotiator Elie Rubenstein said the US sponsored peace process must continue as a counterpoint to attempts at sabotage by

## Many Palestinians held

JERUSALEM, Dec 15: Israeli forces have arrested hundreds of Palestinians in a clampdown against the Hamas Islamic resistance movement for the killing and kidnapping of Israeli soldiers, security sources said today, reports Reuter.

Hamas claimed responsibility for killing four soldiers in two ambushes on Israeli army jeeps last week and is threatening to kill a kidnapped border policeman unless Israel frees Hamas founder Sheikh Hamed Yeassin, jailed since 1989.

The sources said hundreds of Palestinians had been ar-

rested in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip since the kidnapping on Sunday, including dozens of Hamas leaders.

Hamas rejects peace talks with Israel, seeking to replace the Jewish state with an Islamic Palestinian one.

Meanwhile another report adds: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has said he will not allow the kidnapping of an Israeli policeman and surging violence in occupied territories to derail peace talks with Arabs.

The kidnapping came as Israel was already facing an upsurge of violence in the occupied territories.

after being found guilty on charges of murder and inciting violence.

Meanwhile: Faisal Husseini, a leader from the Israel-occupied territories, will not be included among the Palestinians President George Bush will meet with this week the White House announced Monday.

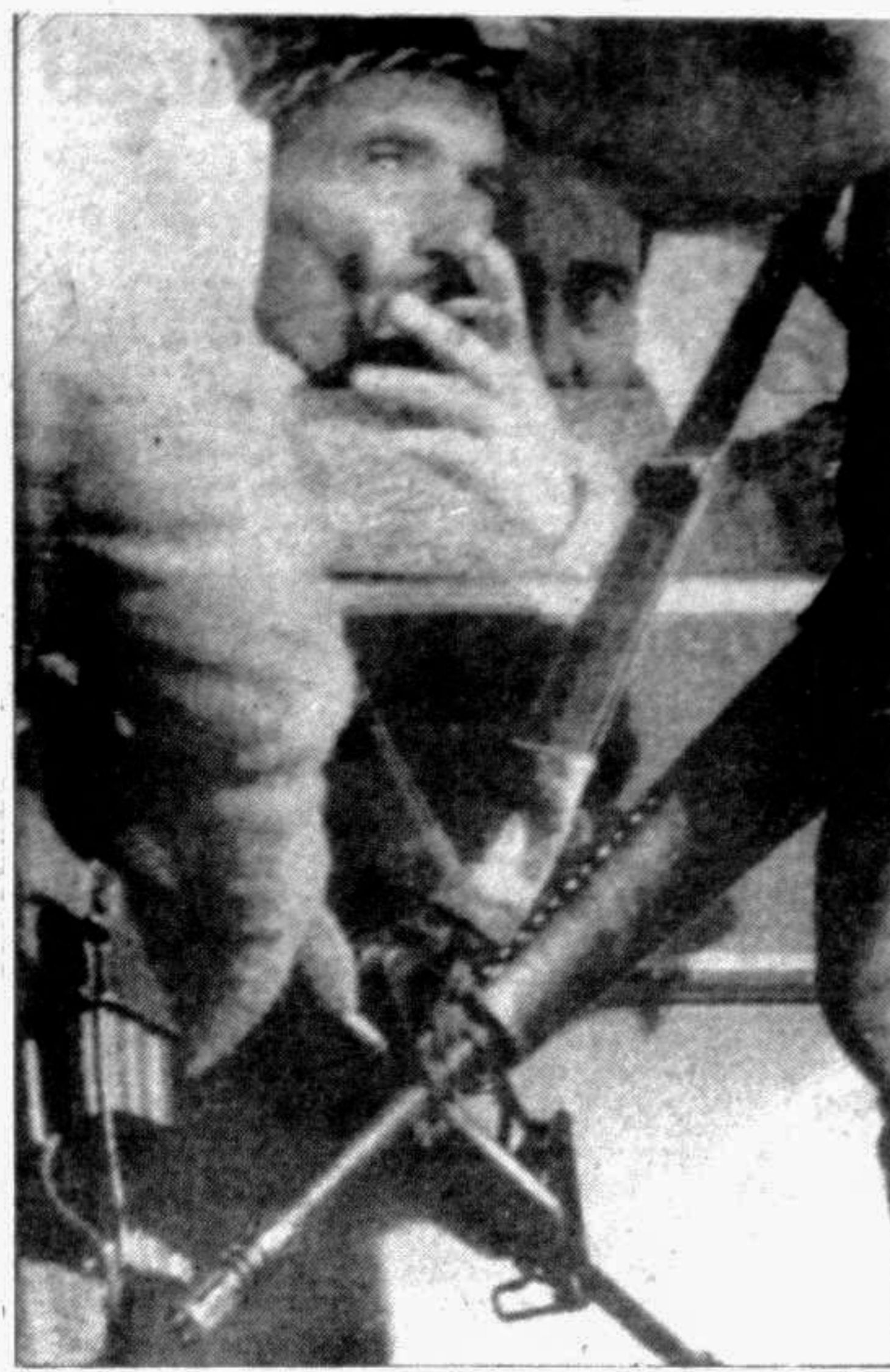
The Palestinian delegation to bilateral Middle East Peace Talks in Washington had wanted Husseini to lead the Group at the meeting Thursday with Bush.

Husseini arrived here Monday ahead of the White House reception. He is not taking part in the negotiations with Israelis, who have refused to deal with people from east Jerusalem.

"This person is not a member of the regular Palestinian delegation. Only the members of the regular delegation are expected on Thursday," the White House said.

Bush is to meet separately with Arab and Israeli delegations at the close of the eighth round of bilateral negotiations.

Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi had said earlier that Husseini would lead the Palestinian group.



Israeli soldiers check Palestinian passengers on Monday at Hebron in West Bank —AFP/UNB photo

# Russia to withdraw troops from Germany six months earlier

MOSCOW, Dec 15: Russia has agreed to pull its troops out of eastern Germany six months earlier than planned, sources in a delegation accompanying Chancellor Helmut Kohl to Russia said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The sources, quoting from the draft of a document to be signed this week, said Russia would agree to pull all troops out of eastern Germany by June 30, 1994.

In exchange, Russia would receive an extra 500 million marks 320 million dollar of German aid.

The soldiers, stationed in eastern Germany since the days when East Germany was a key Soviet ally in the Warsaw pact, had been due to leave Germany by the end of 1994.

The troops of the former Soviet Union will leave Germany by June 30, 1994, one member of the delegation said.

conclude a deal on property in Germany used by Soviet troops. Russia would return the property, but in exchange for Germany dropping claims for damage, would receive no money from Germany in a so-called zero — option deal.

Russia would also get one billion marks (630 million dollars) for victims of Nazi war crimes, the source said.

## Clinton chooses Elders as Surgeon General

LITTLE ROCK, (Arkansas), Dec 15: President-elect Clinton has asked Arkansas Health Director Joyce Lynn Elders to become US surgeon general, and she has accepted, a Democratic source said Monday, reports AP.

Elders, a liberal and often-combative member of Clinton's state Cabinet since 1987, was offered the position over the weekend, said the source, speaking only on condition of anonymity.

Elders, 59, a Little Rock pediatrician, would replace Dr. Antonia Novello.

# China reshuffles its military

HONG KONG, Dec 15: China has completed its largest ever military reshuffle with renewed emphasis on allegiance to the ruling Communist Party, a pro-Beijing daily reported today, says AFP.

An authoritative source in Beijing was quoted by Wen Wei Po daily as saying that the month-long sweeping reshuffle of the PLA's top ranks, the first since 1989, had been officially completed at the end of November with Party Secretary Jiang Zemin officiating the closing ceremony.

The major shake-up, which included transfers, promotions and resignation, was aimed at making the army conscient-

iously adhere to the party central committee in thought and deed as well as political orientation," the source said.

Leaders of all military regions had pledged allegiance to "steadfastly maintain the party as the 'absolutely leader,'" the report said.

The driving force behind the reshuffle to reform and modernize the army was 88-year-old senior Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping, who recently succeeded in getting the party to enshrine his market reforms, the daily quoted, the source as saying.

Both Jiang and Deng had emphasized that personal honour and glory must be subordi-

nate to rallying behind party.

Earlier, reports from Beijing said the aim of the reshuffle appeared mainly to purge many senior officers loyal to an ambitious military duo, President Yang Shangkun and his half-brother General Yang Baibing.

The Yangs were removed from all military posts at the October party congress, reportedly on direct orders from Deng.

According to analysts, Deng was concerned that Gen Yang was trying to use a growing power base to interfere in politics and therefore could threaten to destabilize the country.



## Chernomyrdin Russia's new Prime Minister

MOSCOW, Dec 15: Newly-appointed Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, on Monday asked the ministers of the outgoing government of acting Premier Yegor Gaidar to remain in their posts, Interfax news agency reported, says AFP.

Chernomyrdin made the request at a brief cabinet meeting shortly after President Boris Yeltsin proposed him as Prime Minister and the Congress accepted his appointment.

Reuter adds: President Yeltsin has finally caved in to conservative pressure over the pace of his market reforms, sacking reform Chief Yegor Gaidar and replacing him with a former Soviet technocrat.

Yeltsin on Monday withdrew Gaidar's nomination for Prime Minister in favour of Energy Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, who was overwhelmingly approved by the country's top legislature.

# US ready to end trade ban on Hanoi

WASHINGTON, Dec 15: Moving closer to normalising relations with Vietnam, the United States on Monday allowed American firms to open offices and sign contracts in preparation for ending the trade embargo on its former enemy, reports Reuter.

Whitehouse spokesman Marlin Fitzwater issued a statement saying the step was taken in response to Vietnam's cooperation in determining the fate of Americans unaccounted for in the Vietnam war.

The embargo was imposed against Hanoi in 1964 and extended to all of Vietnam in April 1975, after the communist victory over the US-backed government in Saigon.

Effective today, the United States will permit US firms to

sign contracts to be executed should the embargo with Vietnam be lifted, Fitzwater said.

"To assist US firms, we will also begin implementing a decision that permits a liberal licensing policy allowing commercial transactions relating to contracts, he said.

He said the action gives American firms permission to open office in Vietnam, hire staff and conduct feasibility studies.

"Other than these actions, the embargo with Vietnam remains in effect, Fitzwater said.

Washington has refused to restore relations with Hanoi until a full accounting has been made for the 2,264 Americans missing or unaccounted for in Southeast Asia.

## Benazir blasts presidential decree

ISLAMABAD, Dec 15: Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto today condemned a new presidential ordinance curtailing the powers of courts to grant bail, saying it was aimed against her jailed husband, reports AFP.

The ordinance, promulgated by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on Sunday, curbs all courts from granting bail to an accused facing trial at a special court.

The decree came days before the High Court in Bhutto's home province of Sindh was to decide on a bail application by her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, who is also a member of the national assembly.

Press reports said the ordinance had sparked criticism by the legal community and human rights organisation.

## Salvadoran rebels surrender arms

GUAZAPA VOLCANO (El Salvador), Dec 15: Almost 2,000 leftist guerrillas, their faces etched with sadness, bade farewell to arms on Monday and handed over the weapons they once brandished in the name of revolution, reports Reuter.

As a rebel leader in the capital of San Salvador announced a formal end to 12 years of civil war in line with UN-sponsored peace accords, the last and hardest Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) fighters gave up their rifles.

Just after dawn at a guerrilla camp on Guazapa Volcano, some 100 rebels lined up under the gaze of UN observer forces to hear their last military order from commander "Ramiro": "Hand over your weapons."



MOGADISHU: An old invalid man is carried in a wheelbarrow as a patrol of the Fox Company 2nd battalion 9th US Marine Regiment walk by in Mogadishu December 14. —AFP/UNB photo

# Russia plunges world back into cold war

STOCKHOLM, Dec 15: Ministers at the 52-nation Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSC) in Europe were stunned into silence yesterday when Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev plunged the world back into the cold war, reports AFP.

They fidgeted in their specially designed Swedish wooden chairs as Kozyrev demanded the lifting of Western sanctions against Serbia — or else — and vowed to support Belgrade in the Balkans crisis.

Concern turned to alert when he said Moscow would also "strongly insist" that all the former Soviet republics immediately join the Conference of Independent

States.

And the gasps were audible, participants said, when Kozyrev warned the closed door meeting that Russia would brook no interference in the internal affairs of others and "is capable of standing up for itself and its friends."

It was not true. But it was no joke.

Kozyrev turned a routine international conference on its ear yesterday when he broke out into the ghoulish cold war language heard in years only to say later that he meant none of it.

His aim, he said, was to show the world the danger it faced if Russian hardlines ever got the upper hand in Moscow.

The message got through but the medium was hardly appreciated.

"I understand the tactics, but like smoking it's bad for his health," quipped US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, himself a chain smoker.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said he had never seen anything like it at an international gathering after Kozyrev dropped his "bombshell" in the spacious marble-floored conference hall here.

French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, a former trial lawyer known for his rhetorical prowess, however appeared amused, calling Kozyrev's statement, and clarification, "a

very pleasant moment." Kozyrev spoke for four minutes as the second speaker behind Poland on agenda item four titled:

"Europe in transition: The role of the CSCE." The effect was dramatic.

"Everyone rushed to him to ask for explanations," Kinkel said. "I wanted to go as well but I was too far away."

The speeches droned on: Eagleburger gave his prepared address but made no mention of Kozyrev's remarks.

Still no word from Russia's chief diplomat on whether and why he was abandoning three years of the new world order to revive the nightmare of a new-east-west confrontation.

# Off the Record

## His voice will be remembered

MIAMI: President-elect Clinton offered his condolences Monday to the family of Ricky Ray, saying the 15-year-old AIDS victim won't be forgotten, reports AP.

"He wanted to people to know that AIDS is not a disease that happens to someone else... but a disease that can happen to anyone," Clinton, in Little Rock, Ark, said in a message to the boy's family.

"His voice will be remembered," Clinton said. Ricky died at his family's Orlando home early Sunday. He was the eldest of three hemophilic brothers believed to have contracted HIV from trained blood products.

In 1986 residents of the southwest Florida town of Arcadia barred the brothers from school. An arsonist burned down the family's home in 1987, a week after they won a federal court order sending the boys back to class.

The family then moved 60 miles (196.54 km) north to Sarabosta, where the school and the community welcomed them. The Rays encountered similar acceptance earlier this year when they moved to Orlando.

Ricky was diagnosed with full-blown AIDS in March 1991, and for months had been in and out of a hospital. Clinton called him at the hospital on November 7 and the boy told him that people with AIDS need more help. Clinton promised he'd do whatever he could, and also invited Ricky to his inauguration.

Ricky left the hospital the day before Thanksgiving, saying he wanted to be home for the holidays. A funeral was scheduled for Friday.



## The pregnant pig begs him to spare her life

LONDON: The pregnant pig clutches at the hunter's leg and begs him to spare her life. The hunter, spear poised, replies that he must feed his starving children, reports IPS.

The pig warns to the debate, arguing that her freedom would guarantee a future well-stocked with pigs. There are other sources of food, she tells him, such as canned meats. The pig's life is spared and the audience applauds.

This is one of the short educational skits performed to convert Malaysian rural folk into conservationists under an educational programme run by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Sarawak National Parks and Wildlife Office (NPWO).

But the enthusiastic applause of locals is reined by the defiance of the Malaysian government towards campaigns in developed countries seeking to save tropical forests.

## 'I have never forced myself on any woman any time'

MEMPHIS, Tenn: A state judge charged with sexually abusing eight women said his accusers were liars and flirts who were turned against him by the FBI, reports AP.

"I have never forced myself on any women at any time," Judge David Lanier of Dyersburg testified Monday in US District Court.

Lanier, 58, is charged with violating the civil rights of eight women through sexual abuse. Three of the charges are felonies punishable by up to 10 years each in prison. The rest carry one-year sentences.

Testimony concluded Monday in the trial that began December 1. Closing arguments were scheduled Tuesday afternoon.

Nine women have testified that Lanier fondled them or coerced them into submitting to sexual acts. One of the nine isn't named a victim in Lanier's indictment.

Lanier blamed the allegations on political enemies and disgruntled employees.

During testimony Friday, he admitted having sex on the floor of his office with one of the women, but said it was her idea and that she only admitted the incident under pressure from the FBI.

"She was afraid of them, not me," he said.

## Reef Threatened by Algae Growth

BRISBANE, Australia: Coral on the Great Barrier Reef could be threatened by blooms of microscopic algae plants similar to those which choked Australia's inland waterways earlier this year, officials warned Tuesday, reports AP.

Jon Brodie, from the reef's Marine Park Authority, said fertilizer, sewage, storm, water and other pollutants from farms and towns wash into waters near the reef, which stretches 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) parallel to Australia's northeast tropical coast.

Brodie, who heads the park's water quality programme said, the pollution could encourage the growth of algae and seaweed which compete with coral. The pollution could also weaken coral, he said.

# BRIEFLY

**Reuter correspondent held:** Israeli security forces detained a Reuter Correspondent in the occupied Gaza Strip on Monday, relatives said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

The Shriteh who also works as a part-time reporter for The New York Times and BBC, was taken away by up to a dozen police and soldiers from his home in Gaza City, which has been under curfew since Sunday following a upsurge in violence.

Government officials and the army said they were checking reports of the arrest.

Shriteh, the leading journalist in Gaza covering a five-year-old uprising against Israeli rule, was detained for more than a month during the Gulf War in 1991 for his activities as a reporter. He has not been tried.

**Troops kill 18 Tamils:** Government troops have killed at least 5 Tamil guerrillas in an ongoing offensive in eastern Sri Lanka, the military said Tuesday, AP reports from Colombo.

Two soldiers were wounded in the operation launched last Friday to flush out Tiger rebels in Batticaloa district, said officials at the military headquarters in Colombo.

A large number of rebels from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were believed to have been wounded in the fighting, about 120 miles (200 kilometers) east of Colombo. Their exact number were not immediately available, the officials said.

More than 17,500 people have been killed since the Tigers began fighting for an independent homeland in the north and the east for Sri Lanka's minority Tamil community in 1983.

**Road accident claims 20 in India:** A speeding passenger train rammed into a bus and a jeep at a fog-shrouded railroad and highway crossing Tuesday killing 20 people, news reports said, reports AP from New Delhi.

About 60 people were injured—some of them seriously—in the accident in Moradabad district in Uttar Pradesh state, 100 miles (160 kilometers) east of New Delhi.

Railway officials in the neighbouring Bareilly district said the accident could have been caused by poor visibility because of fog, Press Trust of India news agency said.

Train services in the areas were disrupted following the accident, the report said.

**Yang likely to visit Seoul:** Chinese President Yang Shangkun expected to be the first foreign head of state from Beijing to visit South Korea early next year, a Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday, reports AP from Seoul.

Yang expressed interest in visiting Seoul at an early date when he met with visiting South Korean Deputy Prime Minister Choi Gak-kyu in Beijing last week, said the officials, who requested anonymity in keeping with official practice.

South Korean President Roh Tae-woo visited Beijing a few days after the two countries established formal diplomatic relations in August. At that time, Yang accepted Roh's invitation to visit Seoul.

The Foreign Ministry official said the two countries were discussing the date and other details of Yang's visit.

**Kohl arrives in Russia:** German Chancellor Helmut Kohl arrived in Russia for an official visit on Monday, but his agenda was thrown into confusion by Moscow's political turmoil, reports Reuter from Moscow.

Kohl hoped his talks would lay the groundwork for greater economic cooperation with Russia.

Hours before the German leader landed at Vnukovic Airport, Russian President Boris Yeltsin yielded to criticism from Russia's conservative legislature, ousting reformist acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar. Industrialist Viktor Chernomyrdin was named to head his government team.

It was Kohl's first visit to Moscow since the Soviet Union fell apart last year.

**Sharif leaves for HK:** Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif left Islamabad Tuesday for Hong Kong en route to Japan for an official visit, officials said, reports AFP from Islamabad.

Sharif, making the four-day visit at the invitation of Japanese premier Kiichi Miyazawa, will arrive in Tokyo Wednesday after an overnight stay in Hong Kong.

He was accompanied by a high-powered delegation including members of parliament, industrialists and senior officials.

The officials said his visit to Japan would focus on increased economic cooperation, investment and transfer of technology.

**Peres thanks Miyazawa:** Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on Tuesday thanked Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa for Japan's recent efforts to persuade Arab countries to drop their boycott of firms that do business with Israel, reports AP from Tokyo.

Peres, in Japan on a four-day official visit, said Tokyo's calls for Arab nations to end the boycott "will be Japan's contribution to Mideast peace," according to a Japanese official who briefed reporters.

Until this month, Japan avoided condemning the Arab boycott—an agreement among Arab states not to trade with firms that deal with Israel. The new position marks a reversal of resource-barren Japan's longtime tilt in policy toward Arab nations, where it imports most of its oil.

Japan said its position changed because of Israeli initiatives in Mideast peace talks, and Miyazawa warned Peres that Israel should not "backtrack" from the initiatives.