

BRIEFLY

14 killed in S African violence:

Christmas brought no respite to South Africa's violence, as police reported Saturday that at least 14 people had died in clashes that could have been politically motivated, reports AFP from Johannesburg.

In the worst incident, two men were killed and 34 injured when miners at the Durban deep gold mine in Rooopoort, west of Johannesburg, fought a pitched battle on Christmas Day after an argument over food, police said.

In the Powderkeg Vaal triangle steel conurbation south of Johannesburg, one of South Africa's worst trouble spots this year, three men were shot dead at the Sebokeng migrant workers hostel on Friday night and Saturday morning.

In Alexandra black township north of Johannesburg, a woman was found hanged at the entrance to women's hostel on Friday night, and a man was stabbed to death in broad daylight Friday afternoon.

First multiparty polls in Nigeria:

People in the West African desert nation voted on a new constitution Friday in their first multiparty elections in more than 30 years, reports AP from Niger.

If approved, the constitutional referendum will lead to multiparty presidential and legislative elections next year. Those elections have been postponed three times.

Niger is run by transitional Prime Minister Cheffou Amadou, who was chosen by a national democracy conference in November 1991. The conference stripped president Ali Saibou of power, although he retains influence over the military.

Saibou was forced to call the national conference by the kind of violent strikes and protests that pro-democracy forces have launched across Africa.

3 missing as hotel pier collapses:

Three people were confirmed missing and feared dead after a hotel pier collapsed, plunging some 500 party-goers into Bangkok's Chaophraya river late Saturday night, police and reporters on the scene said, reports AFP from Bangkok.

Hours after the collapse, frogmen and rescue boats with arc lights were scouring the river outside the three-star Menam hotel for survivors.

The new year's party, thrown by a Japanese-Thai joint venture company, YHS International, was in full swing and most guests were dancing to Thai music when the pier-cum-raft suddenly tilted and sank, survivors said.

Police at the scene early today denied initial radio and television reports that scores were missing. They said all Japanese guests had been accounted for and that the three missing were Thai nationals.

Hamas refused PLO membership:

Yasser Arafat has refused to give PLO membership to the Hamas movement because of the Islamic fundamentalist group's insistence that Palestinians pull out of peace talks with Israel, officials said Saturday, reports AP from Tunis.

Hamas' conditions for joining the Palestine Liberation Organization were laid out by four Hamas leaders during a lengthy discussion with Arafat Friday night.

Mohammed Nazzal, a spokesman for the hard-line group, told The Associated Press he and his colleagues presented a memorandum called "Programme for Jihad," or holy war.

Arafat's response was negative, Nazzal said, adding his group hoped the PLO chairman would change his mind later.

Kwanzaa celebration begins:

People around the world are observing the seven-day festival of Kwanzaa, which celebrates African heritage, reports AP from Los Angeles.

"There's no real holiday except Martin Luther King's birthday that's exclusively ours, that celebrates our culture. Kwanzaa's important for that reason," said Stephen Finley, a pastor in Laguna Beach.

Rebels down Georgian chopper: 3 killed

MOSCOW, Dec 27: Abkhazian separatists on Saturday downed a Georgian Mi-8 helicopter, and its three crew members were killed, Abkhazian reports said, reports AP.

The incident happened when Georgian forces launched an attack near the Abkhazian town of Ochamchira, the Abkhazian defence ministry reported.

The Georgians were using land forces backed by Su-25 warplanes and Mi-8 and Mi-24 general purpose helicopters, which were turned into attack aircraft and were armed with bombs, it said in a report carried by the Interfax news agency.

The Abkhazians also charged that the Georgians dropped cluster bombs and

sent Abkhazian hostages to march in front of their advancing troops. There was no immediate comment from the Georgian side.

The Abkhazian defence ministry said its soldiers fired a surface-to-air rocket that destroyed a Georgian Mi-8 helicopter and killed its three crew members. The Georgian news agency Iprinda Lid confirmed the downing of the helicopter but said the fate of the crew was unknown.

Georgia sent its troops into Abkhazia, rich resort area along the Black Sea, in mid-August to root out guerrillas backing the ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia.

But leaders of the Abkhazian minority said the step was meant to crush their proclaimed sovereignty.

Libya alleges West's hand behind plane crash

NICOSIA, Dec 27: A probe into the crash Tuesday of a Libyan airliner has produced evidence that it may have been caused by foul play by the West, a Libyan newspaper said Saturday, reports AFP.

"Evidence shows that the crash of the plane is due to a plot that was well prepared by criminal hands in the West, which an investigation will identify with precision," said the Al-Jamahiriyah Daily, quoted by the Jana news agency.

The agency which was mon-

itored here did not indicate the nature of the evidence.

The paper said the crash was "one of those odious crimes committed by the barbarous West, a historic enemy full of hate for us."

Prior to the report, government, controlled Libyan media had said the crash in which all 157 people on board were an accident.

But a UN embargo imposed on Libya for its support of international terrorism was cited as one of the causes in funeral speeches made Wednesday when the crash victims were buried. The embargo bans all international flights to and from Libya and also deprives Libya of badly needed spare parts.

On Thursday intelligence sources for the first time mentioned the possibility of sabotage and the suspected involvement of foreign intelligence agencies.

Demonstrators blasted the United Nations and western countries for their alleged involvement in the crash in protest rallies held throughout Libya on Friday. They also called for an end to the UN sanctions.

According to western press reports, the Boeing 727 collided with a Libyan military aircraft shortly after the air-force plane took off from Tripoli airport.

Major to visit India next month

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: India's friendship with Britain has emerged stronger in the aftermath of the Ayodhya incident and the British Prime Minister, John Major, and the Home Secretary, Kenneth Clarke, will visit New Delhi next month as planned, reports PTI.

The Indian High Commissioner in London, Dr LM Singhvi, said in an interview here that Major would be the first British Prime Minister to be the chief guest at the country's Republic Day parade.

Clarke's visit from January one to five is aimed at reviewing the issues of terrorism in Kashmir and Punjab.

'Foreign intervention will be counterproductive'

Ghali, Russian FM against use of force in Bosnia

GENEVA, Dec 27: Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said here Saturday they were opposed to any foreign intervention to stop the war in former Yugoslavia, reports AFP.

Kozyrev arrived in Switzerland earlier in the day to prepare for negotiations Monday with US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger aimed at wrapping up a disarmament pact slashing strategic nuclear weapons.

"There is no alternative to the peace process, Kozyrev told a joint news conference after more than an hour of talks with Boutros-Ghali, referring to the Balkans war.

He warned that the use of force there would be unpredictable as well as counterproductive, notably as far as human suffering was concerned.

Boutros-Ghali said the peace process must prevail in former Yugoslavia.

"I know that the international public opinion is frustrated, they want to see quick results. But we believe it's important to avoid an escalation.

The situation in former Yugoslavia was not as difficult as it appears, he said, pointing to the distribution of humanitarian aid.

Important negotiations were also under way to seek an end to the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina where ethnic Serbs are fighting the central government for control of the now independent former Yugoslav republic.

Boutros-Ghali said he would hold separate talks here Monday with Presidents Dobrica Cosic of rump Yugoslavia, Franjo Tudjman of Croatia and Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia-

Herzegovina in a bid to end the fighting.

Reuter adds more than 100 prisoners who were supposed to have been released from the notorious Manjaca detention camp in western Bosnia two weeks ago are still missing, Red Cross officials said on Saturday.

More than 2,000 prisoners were freed from the Scrbrun camp in an operation overseen by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), but aid workers said at the time 529 of the men—Muslims and Croats were missing.

Pierre-Andre Conod, head of the ICRC in Zagreb said his office had been able to track down 401 of the missing men.

"They are held in a camp near Bijeljina," Conod said, naming a town in eastern Bosnia. "But instead of 529

missing prisoners we found only 401. We were not told where the remaining prisoners are."

Conod said 128 people were still unaccounted for. "We regret that these people were not released with the other prisoners from Manjaca as it was agreed," he said.

Pictures of the desperate and emaciated inmates of Manjaca and other detention camps in Bosnia shocked the world when they were shown earlier this year. The Red Cross has persuaded the Bosnian Serbs to close three camps in the area.

The 2,000 free Manjaca inmates are in the Croatian town of Karlovac, southwest of Zagreb. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is trying to get them resettled in other countries.

Khalistan armed forces chief killed

NEW DELHI, Dec 27: The chief of a Sikh militant organization was killed in Batala district in northern Indian state Punjab on Saturday, according to reports reaching here from Chandigarh, the capital of the state, reports Xinhua.

Punjab police said that Khalistan Armed Force (KAF) chief Chanchal Singh Udhoke was accused of 500 killings, including 250 security personnel.

The police said that Chanchal Singh Udhoke was going to Kali Bahmian village to attend a ceremony of his deputy Labh Singh Udhoke on Saturday when he was intercepted and killed in an encounter with police.

Police also shot dead another important militant, Khalistan liberation force Lt General Harminder Pal Singh in Punjab on Saturday.

Harminder Pal Singh was involved in more than 200 killings.

Sikh militants have been fighting for an independent Khalistan against government for a dozen years.

Pindi to withdraw troops from Sindh

ISLAMABAD, Dec 27: Pakistani authorities have agreed to withdraw over 40,000 troops deployed in Sindh province from the first week of February of next year, reports Xinhua.

The process of withdrawal will take at least two to three months and will be completed in phases, local newspaper. The News reported today quoting government and army sources.

Recent talks between the country's President, Prime Minister and Chief of Army Staff and Chief Minister of Sindh province have yielded consensus that "troops be withdrawn from Sindh and law and order be given to the provincial government entirely," the report said.

However, formal approval of the troop pull-out will be accorded at a high level meeting tentatively scheduled in late January of 1993 and to be presided over by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

The first induction of the over 40,000 troops in Sindh

province occurred in May of 1992 under the name of operation clean-up to restore law and order in the province.

Initially the troops were deployed in the province for six months, but later the period of the operation was extended for another five weeks in November till January 5, 1993.

Another report says: Pakistan's Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) on Saturday began the construction of its second nuclear power project for which the plant will be supplied by China.

Excavation for civil works of the 300-megawatt plant began at Chashma in Punjab province, a PAEC statement said.

Pakistan's first and smaller nuclear power plant, supplied by Canada, was commissioned in 1972 in the port city of Karachi. Canada later stopped supplies for the plant as suspicions grew in the west that Pakistan's nuclear programme was weapons-oriented.

Clinton Time's man of the year



NEW YORK, Dec 27: Time magazine of Saturday named US President-elect Bill Clinton as its 1992 "Man of the year", saying his election makes him the most powerful man in the world at a "radically unstable moment in history", reports Reuter.

The magazine also cited Clinton's conduct of his 1992 campaign against President George Bush and said his victory puts him in a position to preside over one of the periodic reinventions of the United States.

Clinton, whose picture appears on the cover of the magazine's January 4 "Man of the year" issue which goes on sale on Monday, takes office on January 20.

Clinton, asked about the Time announcement while golfing in his native state of Arkansas, said "It's a great honour."

Time's cover story said Clinton's presidential campaign earned him the accolade due to its threefold significance.

"The election has made the Arkansas the most powerful man in the world — and therefore the most important — at a radically unstable moment in history, with the cold war ended, the world economy in trouble, and dangerous, heavily armed nationalisms rising around the globe."



TEL AVIV: "Peace Now" activists demonstrate here Saturday against the deportation of 415 Palestinians. Protesters called for negotiations with the Palestinian Liberation Organisation —AFP/UNB photo

German firms firing racist workers

BERLIN, Dec 27: German firms have begun firing workers who use racist language or insult foreign colleagues, saying xenophobia may harm the country's lucrative export trade, reports AFP.

Employers associations have asked their members to follow the lead of the government and the courts in taking a very firm line with the neo-Nazis.

Several workers have already been sanctioned. At the end of November, Coca Cola Germany fired a porter at one of its Berlin plants after the man went into the canteen shouting "heil Hitler" and distributed leaflets critical of asylum-seekers.

"He had been with us for 10 years but with a 10 per cent

ratio of foreign workers we can't afford to keep this kind of person," said Bernd Haeder, a spokesman for the firm.

The racist attacks of recent months have not improved the image of the German economy. From now on, anyone criticising foreigner on company premises will get the sack," he said.

Another worker was dismissed at the beginning of the month from a BMW car plant in Berlin after making anti-Semitic remarks and the same fate befell a man who insulted a black fellow worker at Jungheinrich, the agricultural machinery factory.

Preussag steelworks at Salzgitter has already sacked three people this month, a

week saying: "We must get rid of workers who reach hatred of foreigners because they endanger social peace in the firm."

Most contacts between native Germans and the country's two million-odd foreign workers — one third of them Turks — take place at work.

BMW, whose biggest factory in Munich has a staff which 50 per cent foreign, used a full page in several German newspapers this week to denounce xenophobia with the message that "without foreigners we would be poor."

Chancellor Helmut Kohl reminded Germans that foreigners contributed 10 per cent of the country's gross domestic product.

Astrologers foresee '93 a 'difficult' one

PARIS, Dec 27: Next year will be a "difficult" one with new conflicts breaking out in the world and perhaps a stock market crash, according to astrologers, reports AFP.

On the good side, there will be advances in AIDS research.

In Geneva, astrologer Elisabeth Teissier said 1993 will see the conjunction of uranus and neptune, something which only happens every 172 years, because of this it will be difficult year "marked by the painful emergence of a new form of society". It will be

characterised by a rise in nationalism and racism in Europe and the multiplication of local conflicts in the rest of the world.

Foreign troops will stay in Somalia until April.

For Teissier, the year will see a great many disasters both from natural causes and from pollution and there could be a stock market crashing about April or the middle of September.

French President Francois Mitterrand will face "serious social instability" but will man-

age the situation very well".

The Paris-based fortune-teller Madame Indra was also optimistic for Mitterrand saying "everything will go well for the President".

She said AIDS research would make progress in 1993 with scientists developing new forms of treatment and perhaps a vaccine.

This view was partly shared by Alexey Dodswoth and Richard Newton of the Salvador De Bahia School of Witchcraft in Brazil.

They too predicted advances on AIDS, but no vaccine until 1995 at the earliest.

The Italian show-business astrologer Raffaella Girardo said she saw Brigitte Bardot leaving her new husband Bernard D'Ormale for another man.

Opera star Luciano Pavarotti would fall in love but might also have to have an operation.

According to Girardo, Elizabeth Taylor will be preparing to get married yet again but serious health problems are on the cards for Michael Jackson.

Off the Record

Bill Clinton will be plain Bill

HILTON HEAD ISLAND: On this resort island, President-elect Bill Clinton will be just plain Bill when he arrives Monday with his family for the Renaissance Weekend, reports AP.

"We made it clear to the guests that he's on vacation," said Jackie Kiss, an organizer of the annual retreat, expected to draw 1,500 people next weekend.

Clinton has attended the event for eight years. It combines recreation with seminars on wide-ranging subjects, including public policy, spirituality and personal finance.

Clinton, his wife, Hillary, and 12-year-old Chelsea will stay in Hilton Head through Jan 3. Clinton spokesman Jeff Eller said. They have no public events scheduled.

The Renaissance Weekend is sponsored by Phil Lader, a businessman and unsuccessful candidate for South Carolina governor. He began the retreats in 1981 as a way to make families and the nation stronger through rejuvenating bonds between people.

'Happy hunting Bush'

BEEVILLE, Texas: The headline on the local newspaper Saturday read, "Happy Hunting, Mr President," anticipating President Bush's last quail-hunting visit as chief executive, reports AP.

Bush, who arrives Sunday, isn't scheduled to make any public appearances during his annual trip to will Farish's Lazy F Ranch, where he has come to hunt for 25 years.

The presidential visits "kind of put Beeville on the map," said Neta Faulkner, a local restaurant owner.

"I would say the (the mood) would be mixed emotions," said Lori Manuel, owner of Beeville Boot and Western Wear. "Everyone is glad to see him, but sorry that he won't be president anymore."

Court battle brewing over daughter's grave

FIFTEEN HOLLER, Ky: A court battle is brewing over a man's visits to the grave of his 12-year-old daughter, on a plot belonging to his former sister-in-law, reports AP.

Jerry Belcher has built a shelter over the pink granite, heart-shaped gravestone marking the spot where Melissa Ann Belcher was buried. She died in 1982 of kidney failure.

He visits the grave two or three times a week and in previous Christmas seasons has provided a small Christmas tree with battery-powered lights.

The plot is in a small private cemetery owned by Belcher's former sister-in-law, Patricia Branham. Belcher's brother, Charles Belcher, and Branham divorced two years ago.

Branham's lawyer, Darrell Hall, says she'll file charges if Belcher continues to trespass on her property in rural Letcher County, a 30-minute drive from the trailer where Belcher lives with his wife, Dot.

Last month, Branham went to court to obtain an emergency protective order, saying Belcher threatened to "blow my brains out." She also said her tires have been cut.

"I would like this man away from me completely," she said in court papers. "This is private property. I never gave him permission to place his daughter in our family cemetery."

Belcher says his brother and sister-in-law offered to let his daughter be buried in the plot; Charles Belcher confirms that. Jerry Belcher denies making threats, and says he can't afford to remove the remains.

A judge has granted Belcher permission to visit Melissa's grave as long as he otherwise stays off Branham's property and avoids a public road that goes by her home. Belcher, 46, who is blind in one eye, wears two hearing aids and has a back injury from a coal-mining accident, said he can't follow the order because the only other "burial available" involves climbing a hill.

But he says he won't stop visiting the grave. "She was the world, start to finish, for us," he said. "It's hell living without Missy, and now Patty wants to take that away from us. She can do what she wants."



TOKAI, Japan: An anti-nuclear activist clenches his fist while carrying an effigy of Japanese plutonium carrier Akatsuki-maru in front of an entrance of the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation, Tokai works on Saturday. About 400 people protested against Japanese government's plutonium shipment from France. —AFP/UNB photo

Dalai Lama ready for unconditional talks with China

PARIS, Dec 27: Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, said in an interview published on Saturday he was ready to discuss unconditionally the future of Tibet with Chinese authorities, reports Reuter.

"I have just repeated to the Chinese government that I remain ready to discuss without any preconditions," he told Reuter.