

## 84 saboteurs arrested in Algeria

ALGIERS, Dec 28: Police have rounded up 84 on sabotage charges, while a military court began trying up to 90 Muslim soldiers accused of plotting against the government, reports AP.

Nearly one year after cancelling January elections, Muslim fundamentalists were about to win, the government continues struggling against violence that has killed more than 250 police and soldiers.

The now-banned Islamic Salvation Front had blamed government mismanagement and corruption for high unemployment in this oil-rich North African nation.

Several took refuge in a nearby forest, where police killed two and arrested seven, it said.

## Iraq to accept UN guards in Kurdistan

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 28: Iraq is willing to let UN guards accompany convoys bringing humanitarian aid to Kurds in northern Iraq, Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoun said Sunday, reports AP.

Hamdoun told AFP that he had informed Jan Eliasson, the head of all UN relief operations, that Baghdad was "ready to accept" the UN guards in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Following the bombings of several relief trucks this month, UN and Iraqi negotiators have been holding talks for the past week on how to protect aid shipments to the Kurds.

## Amnesty for 2 Filipino rebels

MANILA, Dec 28: A government commission has recommended amnesty for two Communist rebels convicted of killing an American colonel despite objections by US authorities, an official said Monday, reports AP.

Assistant State Prosecutor Nilo Mariano said he made the recommendation to Justice Secretary Franklin Drilon. Mariano said he expected Drilon and President Fidel Ramos to approve the recommendation.

They were among 23 rebels recommended for amnesty, Mariano said.

The two—Donato Contintente and Juanito Itas—were sentenced to double life sentences for the April 1989 assassination of Col James "Nick" Rowe.

## US fighter warned Iraqi Mig to leave 'no-fly zone'

# Saddam has made a 'big mistake': Bush

HOUSTON, Dec 28: President Bush said Sunday that Saddam Hussein made a 'big mistake' by allowing his warplanes to enter the no-fly zone over southern Iraq, reports AP.

One of Iraq's warplanes was shot down Sunday when it confronted two US F-16 jets south of the 32nd parallel that marks the UN-restricted airspace over southern Iraq.

The whole international community told him not to fly below the 32nd parallel, and he did it," Bush said as he began his annual Texas vacation. "I don't know what he's doing, but he's made a big mistake."

"I've heard that it might be some test of our will near the

end of my presidency," Bush added. "But those F-16s sent the message to him pretty clearly. The president spoke with reporters after inspecting the top-floor suite of offices he will occupy following his retirement. About 200 meters (yards) away in the city's exclusive Galleria section, Bush also visited the rented home in which he and his wife Barbara will live.

Reuter adds: A US jet fighter warned an Iraqi Mig fighter to leave a no-fly zone established over Iraq before shooting it down, a US military spokesman said on Sunday.

Lieutenant Colonel Robert Donnelly told the British TV network, Sky News, from

Washington. "The F-16s did give a radio warning to the Iraqi aircraft before they were



engaged." Asked if the US planes be-

lieved they were in danger, he said: "I'm sure they thought they were in danger. They did not establish two-way radio communications."

On whether he knew the condition of the Iraqi pilot, he said: "No. I do know the aircraft was shot down. An Iraqi search and rescue helicopter... was permitted to fly to the crash site. However we have no information concerning the fate of the pilot."

It was the first time a US plane shot down an Iraqi plane since a no-fly zone was established over southern Iraq earlier this year.

Iraq said on Sunday reserved the right to respond to "this criminal act" in a suitable

manner at an appropriate time. On Nelly, speaking to Sky from the Pentagon's Central Command, said he had "no information" on whether US planes in the area were now on extra alert.

Questioned if US planes would continue to fly normal patrols in the no-fly zone, he said: "that's correct."

The United States, Britain and France guard two no-fly zones: one below the 32nd parallel to prevent Iraqi planes and helicopter gunships attacking dissident Shi'ites in the southern marshlands, and the second in the north above the 36th parallel to protect the Kurds.

## Expulsion decision irreversible, Israeli leaders tell UN envoy



JERUSALEM, Dec 28: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin addressing press after his meeting with UN Under Secretary General James Jonah December 27 in Jerusalem. Rabin reiterated his refusal to let the Red Cross bring aid to the deportees through the security zone. — AFP/UNB photo

JERUSALEM, Dec 28: A UN envoy charged with persuading Israel to take back more than 400 Palestinians deported to Lebanon was blocked by Israeli leaders Sunday who told him their decision was irreversible, officials said, reports AP.

James Jonah, the special envoy of UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, held an hour of talks with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and later met with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Before meeting with Jonah, Rabin said he would not allow the deportees to return or supplies to reach them via Israel.

"I will not permit a single Israeli citizen to be in contact with the expelled," he told a delegation of 200 Arab-Israeli mayors and municipal officials who were demonstrating against the expulsion.

After his talks with Jonah, Rabin said he held the Lebanese government responsible for the blockade of needed supplies.

"I explained to my interlocutor that the (Israeli) government has decided to fight, without mercy, the terrorism of Islamic extremists," Rabin added.

Peres accused the UN Security Council of having taken a unilateral decision that ignored "the crimes of Hamas and Islamic Jihad."

He was referring to Islamic resistance movements of which the 415 deportees have

claimed membership.

Peres nevertheless said Jonah was a goodwill emissary and voiced his government's wish to cooperate with the United Nations, adding that the expulsions were limited to between three months and two years.

But Jonah got no reply on a request that Israel allow passage of humanitarian aid to the Palestinians.

The Israeli government on Friday endorsed Rabin's refusal of a request by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to send supplies to the deportees through areas of south Lebanon under Israeli control.

Two of the deportees, stranded on a snow-swept no-man's land between the Israeli and Lebanese armies, are seriously ill and could die if they are not evacuated from their camp.

Israeli officials have vowed not to comply with a UN Security Council resolution demanding the immediate and safe return of the deportees, who are suffering from cold and dwindling supplies.

The deportees can appeal their December 17 expulsion before military commissions in the 60 days following their deportation but only one of the men has so far done so.

The Daily Maariv said at least 40 of the expelled — including six who were deported by mistake — might secure their return through the appeals process.

## Hamas to join PLO body to deal with deportees' issue

TUNIS, Dec 28: Three days of talks in Tunis between the PLO and its main rival in the Israeli-occupied territories, the Islamic fundamentalists Hamas Movement, have helped to bring down the "psychological wall," separating them, senior Hamas official Mohamed Nazzari said Sunday, reports AP.

One practical outcome of the talks is that Hamas has agreed to join a "high committee" led by Palestine Liberation Organisation Chief Yasser Arafat to deal with Israel's controversial deportation of 415 Palestinians, most of them Hamas members.

## Colombian troops kill 12 rebels

SANTAFE DE BOGOTA, Dec 28: Army troops killed 12 rebels in southern Colombia and two police officers died in a separate clash this weekend, a military spokesman said Sunday, reports AP.

Soldiers killed 12 Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) rebels near the southern oil town of Orto, following a rebel attack Thursday which left nine soldiers dead and eight injured, said army Colonel Luis Hernan Silva.

Troops also captured large quantities of weapons, ammunition, explosives, maps and documents to be examined by Colombian intelligence services, Silva said.

## Off the Record

### Grandchild's snowball gives president a shiner

HOUSTON, Texas: President George Bush had a black eye Sunday from a Christmas Day snowball fight with his six-year-old grandson at the presidential retreat in Camp David, reports AP.

Bush had a large bruise under his right eye when he took questions from reporters about a US F-16 fighter jet shooting down an Iraqi jet in the no-fly zone over southern Iraq.

The president was in Houston, Texas only briefly while on his way to Beeville, Texas for his annual Quail hunt.

Bush got the shiner from a snowball thrown by his grandson Marshall, the son of Marvin Bush, on Christmas morning, aides said.

Marshall and 11 other Bush grandchildren spent Christmas at Camp David.

### Man-made earthquake

HONG KONG: Residents in Hong Kong and Macao felt slight tremors Monday that apparently emanated from the man-made "earthquake" in southern China to level a small mountain as part of an airport expansion project, reports AP.

There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. Hong Kong's government-owned Radio Hong Kong said.

There also was no immediate confirmation that the tremors were caused by the scheduled 1.60 pm (0550 GMT) detonation of 11,120 tons of dynamite to clear Potal Mountain in the southern city of Zhuhai.

But Hong Kong's Royal Observatory said it recorded tremors that were "consistent with the scheduled major blasting works at western Zhuhai," lasting less than one minute.

A resident of the nearby Portuguese colony of Macao said the "water in my tea cup moved a little bit" and that others felt slight vibrations.

"But some people called radio stations asking if it had happened. They didn't feel a thing," the resident said.

In the British colony of Hong Kong, few people walking in the downtown Central and Wanchai districts reported feeling any tremors amid the din of jackhammers and construction work.

The Beijing-funded Hong Kong newspaper Ta Kung Pao said the 43 kilometers (27 miles) from Hong Kong.

The blast had been billed as Asia's largest man-made "earthquake," with a force nearly equal to that of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in World War II.

### Robbery of the century

BUENOS AIRES: Newspapers are calling it Argentina's "robbery of the century" and so far it looks like a perfect crime, reports AP.

Three men posing as Central Bank inspectors convinced officials at a regional depository to hand over 30 million dollars worth of worn-out austral bills worth 50 dollars each that had been collected for incineration.

The robbery last Tuesday went off like clockwork. No one was threatened or injured. A security guard from the depository, located 200 kilometers (124 miles) north of Buenos Aires in Rosario, watched the money being loaded onto two small planes that flew to Buenos Aires.

The money — 600,000 bills weighing 650 kilos (1,330 pounds) — reportedly was transferred to a white van at suburban San Fernando airport. Where it is now, only those who have it know.

Central Bank and Economy Ministry officials made no public comment on the robbery during the long Christmas holiday weekend. By late Sunday afternoon, police reportedly had no one under arrest and few clues.

A Central Bank spokesman cited by the newspaper La Nacion said it looked like an inside job. The bogus inspectors knew the australs were at the Regional Treasury in Santa Fe Province Bank in Rosario. The documents and procedures they used to identify themselves seemed legitimate.

## BRIEFLY

### Clinton backs sanctions on Iraq

President-elect Bill Clinton on Sunday said he fully supports international sanctions against Iraq and warned Iraq against mistaken tests of international solidarity, reports Reuter from Little Rock.

This is part of a series of tests of international resolve to bring Iraq into compliance with United Nations resolutions," Clinton said in a statement issued after a US fighter jet shot down an Iraqi plane in a no-fly zone in southern Iraq.

"Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is mistaken if he believes that United States or the United Nations lacks that resolve. I support efforts to bring Iraq into compliance."

### Ramos to visit China in April

President Fidel Ramos plans to visit China next April despite speculation that he would pursue closer ties with Taiwan, it was reported Monday, reports AP from Manila.

The Philippine Times Journal quoted unidentified sources in the Department of Foreign Affairs as saying the two governments were discussing a visit in late April.

According to the newspaper, Ramos, who took office last June 30, also hopes to visit Japan, the United States and the other countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations next year.

Ramos has already visited Brunei and Thailand. Other ASEAN countries include Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. A decision to visit China early in his six-year term is considered significant because of Ramos' personal ties to Taiwan and the Philippines' growing trade relationship with Taipei.

**Quake shakes Japan:** A strong earthquake shook northern Japan early Monday, the Central Meteorological Agency said. There were no reports of injuries or danger of seismic waves from the tremor, reports AP from Tokyo.

The quake, with a preliminary reading of 6.2 on the Richter scale, struck at 1:20 am (1620GMT Sunday) about 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) below the sea floor off the coast of Miyagi Prefecture, about 400 kilometers (248 miles) northeast of Tokyo.

On the Japanese scale of one to seven, the tremor registered a four in Ofunato and Miyako, both cities in Iwate Prefecture, a nearby state.

The Japanese scale measures intensity at various locations. It is not convertible to the Richter scale, which measures the magnitude of a quake at its epicentre according to ground motion as recorded on seismographs.

### 14 killed in Kerala bus mishap

Fourteen people were killed and 35 others injured Sunday when a bus fell into a ravine in the southern most state of Kerala, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AP from New Delhi.

The accident occurred outside Kasargod down, state government officials were quoted as saying.

### Singer Harry Connick held

Singer Harry Connick Jr was arrested at Kennedy International Airport on Sunday after a gun was found in his carry-on bag as he was about to board a plane, police said, reports AP from New York.

The 9mm weapon, which wasn't loaded, was seized by a guard at a security checkpoint, said Sgt Stephen Prospero, a Port Authority police spokesman.

Connick, 24, was charged with fourth-degree possession of a weapon, a misdemeanor. He was taken to a police station in the city's borough of Queens for processing, Prospero said.

## No-fly zone over Bosnia US pressing for military enforcement from Jan 1

GENEVA, Dec 28: The United States is still pressing for military enforcement of a no-fly zone over Bosnia to begin on January 1, according to US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, reports Reuter.

He told reporters travelling with him from Washington to Geneva he believed the United Nations Security Council would pass its long-delayed resolution by the end of this week, though he could not be sure.

"One of the questions that's still up is how long before strict enforcement begins. We have suggested and continue to believe the cutoff ought to be January 1 but we may have to compromise," Eagleburger said on Sunday.

The United States has run into opposition in the Security Council from Britain and France which want a longer warning time before enforcement of the resolution begins.

They are worried their peace-keeping troops in Bosnia may become a target of Serbian revenge attacks if the resolution results in Serb planes being shot down.

The UN passed a resolution imposing a no-fly zone in October but established no mechanism to enforce it. Since then, Bosnian Serbs and their Belgrade allies have largely halted bombing raids against

their Muslim forces in Bosnia. But they have violated the resolution hundreds of times with helicopter flights carrying troops, equipment and supplies from place to place.

The proposed enforcement resolution has become a symbol of western efforts to take a tougher line against Serbia. But the difficulty strong allies like the United States and Britain have had in agreeing what to do has highlighted their reluctance to take any action

## Japan to develop reactor alternative to Monju

TOKYO, Dec 28: As environmentalists planned protests for the arrival of a shipload of plutonium, an official on Monday said research has begun to develop a new, more efficient plutonium-fueled reactor, reports AP.

The official at the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the research is to develop a high-conversion reactor that could be an alternative to the controversial fast-breeder reactor Monju.

Tokyo had already acknowledged a need to review its plutonium programme because of a backlash of international criticism sparked by the controversial shipping of the deadly radioactive material from France. Even so, Monju is still expected to begin operation next year.

Opponents have also charged that by developing a fast-breeder reactor, which produces more plutonium than it consumes, Japan could stockpile plutonium.



RAWALPINDI, Pakistan: A Hindu family gather bricks to rebuild the temple destroyed here during violent protest against demolition of Babri Mosque by Hindu extremists in Ayodhya. — AFP/UNB photo

## Soviet breakup was not necessary: Gorbachev

MOSCOW, Dec 28: Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev said Sunday that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was a "tragic mistake" and defended Russia's hard-line Congress as setting the right course for the country, reports AP.

"I think it was not necessary," Gorbachev said of the Soviet breakup speaking on Moscow's Channel One television.

"It had very hard consequences for the whole country, for all of the republics. I have thought and I still think that it was a tragic mistake. We will face the consequences of it for

a long, long time," Gorbachev said.

Gorbachev denied accusations that he left behind a legacy of crumbling economy and ethnic conflicts, blaming his successors for the trouble.

"There have been promises that the Commonwealth (of Independent States) will give us the possibility to resolve all the problems," he said. But its problems "were not only left unresolved but became even more acute."

Gorbachev, 61, resigned on Dec 25, 1991, following the collapse of seven decades of central Kremlin authority. The Soviet Union's demise was

brought about by many of the political reforms that Gorbachev himself unleashed after coming to power in 1985.

Gorbachev remains popular abroad but is widely criticized at home, with the hard-liners blaming him for the collapse of the Soviet system. Liberal critics say he had failed to address pressing political and economic issues, only making current free-market reform harder to achieve.

But Gorbachev defended his tactics of limited reforms, saying: "What is happening now in Russia and the Commonwealth countries proves that our line, that tactics that we

adhered to, were necessary...."

"Whatever began in 1985 is continuing," he added. "Do you think that the Gorbachev epoch is over? No, it was only the dawn, not even midday. We would not have today without what was started in 1985."

Gorbachev accused his political rival, Russian President Boris Yeltsin, of losing control over himself at this month's Congress of People's Deputies.

Russia's highest legislative body, dominated by former Communists, forced Yeltsin to accept painful compromises and abandon his reformist acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar, the architect of eco-

## US, Russian officials for missile-cut treaty before Jan 20

GENEVA, Dec 28: Senior US and Russian officials are holding last-chance talks to try to conclude a new nuclear missile-reduction treaty before President Bush leaves office, reports AP.

Eager to set the stage for a summit signing with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the US side hopes concessions on two key issues will produce an accord for signing after New Year's Day.

"I can't believe at this stage it will take more than 24 hours to get it all settled if we are going to get it all settled at all," US Secretary of State Lawrence S Eagleburger said Sunday on his flight from Washington.

He rated his chances of success as better than 50-50, but said, "I can personally see no way, if we don't get it settled this time, that there's any chance of getting it settled in time to do a summit in early January."

Two sessions were scheduled Monday. Joining Russian Foreign Minister Andrei V Kozyrev at the table for the first time is Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, an indication Moscow is ready to make a deal.

"I have to take that as a earnest (indication) of President Yeltsin's intentions

## Kim may seek UN help to resolve inter-Korea disputes

SEOUL, Dec 28: President-elect Kim Young-sam said Monday his new administration may ask the UN Security Council to help solve inter-Korea disputes over nuclear inspections, reports AP.

"If the issue continues to remain unresolved, we should take it to the UN Security Council," Kim told a breakfast meeting of Christian leaders.

Kim also said he expects four major powers surrounding the Korean Peninsula — the United States, Russia, China and Japan — to play a role in solving the issue.

Kim, 65, was elected as South Korea's next president in the December 18 elections. He begins his single five-year term on February 25.

Kim said the rival Koreas must foster trust for unification and that doing so would not be possible without solving the nuclear disputes.

The Koreas, bitter enemies since the division of their peninsula into the Communist North and the capitalist South the 1945, adopted a reconciliation accord early this year. But their relations still remain chilly largely because of the nuclear disputes.

As part of a nuclear arms ban treaty signed early this year, the Koreas are required to inspect each other's suspected nuclear weapons sites but they have failed to work out inspection rules.