

International

UNITA seeks UN intervention

LUANDA, Angola, Jan 9: Government forces defeated about 6,000 rebel troops in a battle that left the streets of the central city of Kuito strewn with hundreds of bodies...

Portuguese TV said that after Friday's battle in Kuito, forces of UNITA National Union for the Total Independence of Angola...

Marcos Samondo, UNITA representative to the United Nations, sent a letter Friday to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali asking the Security Council to push for a cease-fire...

List of states sponsoring terrorism US keeps Pakistan under review

WASHINGTON, Jan 9: The United States on Friday warned that it was keeping Pakistan under review as a country that may be added to its list of states sponsoring terrorism because of alleged support for extremists in India...

warned that we are keeping the (Pakistan) situation under active, continuing review. Under Secretary of State Arnold Kanter met on Thursday with Pakistani Ambassador Syeda Abida Hussain to discuss Pakistan's ties with the militants in India and other issues.

Americans intensify operations



MOGADISHU, Somalia, Jan 9: Hundreds of US marines have stepped up their operations in lawless Mogadishu with an assault on a major gun market and new food-for-guns rewards...

MOGADISHU: A mother holds her 12-year old son, Ibrahim in the Italian village relief camp on the outskirts of Bardera, 390 kms from Mogadishu on Friday.

BRIEFLY

US team plans Somalia visit: A congressional delegation planned to leave Friday for Somalia to inspect US operations and assess the military's progress in aiding the famine-stricken population...

2 more beheaded in S Arabia: A Saudi Arabian and a Pakistani were beheaded Friday in Saudi Arabia for sex and drug crimes...

Mexican plane with 8 crashes: A corporate jet carrying eight people crashed in the side of a hill on stormy weather in northern Mexico Friday...

Flash flood in S California: Heavy rain from a storm that caused deadly flooding in Southern California and Mexico forced evacuations in Arizona...

McCurdy to be replaced: House of Representatives Speaker Thomas S Foley has decided to replace Congressman Dave McCurdy as chairman of the lower house Intelligence Committee...

Lanka buys aircraft gunboats: Colombo, Jan 9: Sri Lanka has bought new aircraft and gunboats from Argentina, France and Russia...

Key events in no-fly zone: NICOSIA, Cyprus, Jan 9: Key events involving the allied 'no-fly zone' in southern Iraq...

US, EC envoys Boycott convention in Myanmar: YANGON, Jan 9: US and European Community ambassadors on Saturday boycotted the start of Myanmar's constitutional convention...

King Fahd's help for British child: LONDON, Jan 9: Saudi Arabian ruler King Fahd gave money yesterday to help a sick British child go to the United States for a life-saving operation...

Rabin shelves Shamir's doctrine about Jewish settlement: ARIEL, Occupied West Bank, Jan 9: In the good old days Cabinet ministers were forever dropping by to congratulate the Jewish settlers of Ariel on their pioneering zeal...

Terrorism threat to Egypt's tourism industry: LUXOR, Egypt, Jan 9: The terrorist threat to Egypt's tourism industry grew slowly. It began in June with some firebombings in Luxor that caused no damage...

Serbs rape 20000 Muslim women: EC team

GENEVA, Jan 9: A team of European Community experts which visited former Yugoslavia to investigate allegations of mass rape reported that Bosnian Serbs had raped 20,000 Muslim women as part of a campaign of 'ethnic cleansing'...

US, EC envoys Boycott convention in Myanmar

YANGON, Jan 9: US and European Community ambassadors on Saturday boycotted the start of Myanmar's constitutional convention, which many dissident and rebel groups have dismissed as a sham...

Lanka buys aircraft gunboats

COLOMBO, Jan 9: Sri Lanka has bought new aircraft and gunboats from Argentina, France and Russia, in what could be the start of a stepped up campaign to crush the island's separatist rebellion...

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Off the Record

Jail for circumcision of her daughters

PARIS: According to the ancient customs of her African ancestors, Teneng Jahate was merely a dutiful mother. But French prosecutors, in a landmark case, Friday urged that she be jailed for arranging the circumcision of her two eldest daughters, reports AP.

The procedure, carried out in the mother's presence without anesthesia, entailed slicing off the clitoris and adjacent tissue. Critics call it genital mutilation. French law classified it as a form of child abuse so severe it could draw a maximum life sentence.

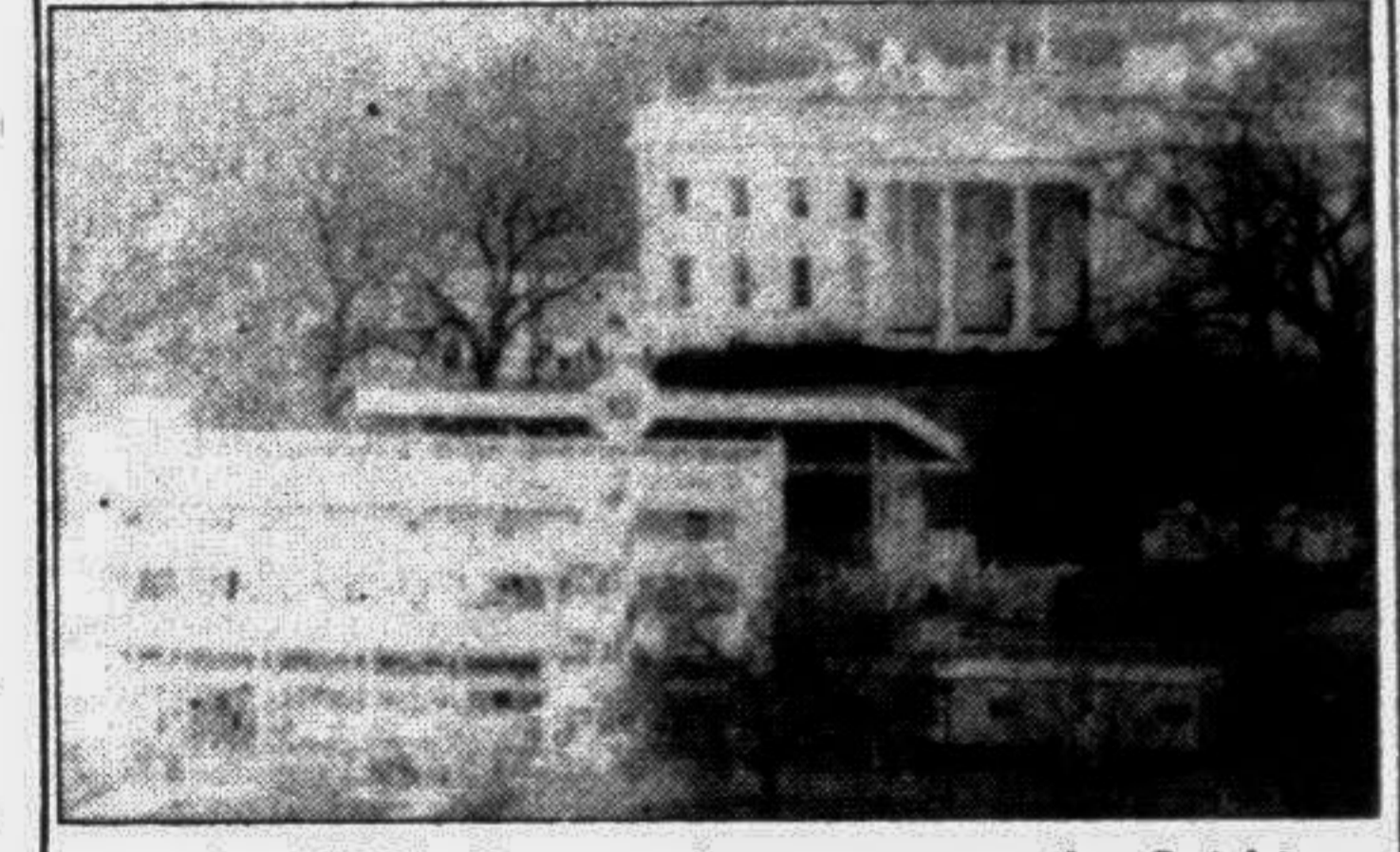
The trial was a milestone in France's battle to quash the practice among its large African immigrant population. Previously, a midwife who performed a circumcisions was sent to jail, but never before had a parent received anything harsher than a suspended sentence.

The nine-member jury, assisted by three judges, then recessed for deliberations. "I didn't know it was forbidden in France," Mrs. Jahate, 34, testified through an interpreter Thursday. "I did it because I knew they would be circumcised once when returned to Gambia, so why not do it when they were little."

The defence attorney, Gilles Flavigny, Friday accused the prosecution of hypocritically trying to inflame jurors' emotions, rather than acknowledging that Mrs. Jahate's intentions were good.

"This has been done since the time of the Pharaohs," he said. "It will take two or three or four generations to die out."

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Spousal abuse

FORT COLLINS, Colo: A man has pleaded guilty to attempted sexual assault against his wife, reports AP. Randy E. Delay his plea Thursday in Larimer County District Court as part of an agreement in which prosecutors dropped two charges of sexual assault.

Christine R. Delay, 32, who made her identity public, said the case's outcome will help her and other victims of spousal abuse. "It's a personal victory for a part of my life that has been tragic and very painful," she said. "It's also a victory for other women in the community who are in abusive relationships and want to get out. It shows that abusive husbands will be accountable for their behaviour."

Delay had been accused of raping his wife in late September at the couple's Fort Collins residence. Ms. Delay told authorities she had taken prescription medication that made her drowsy that night. The next thing she remembered was being awakened by her husband, who was fondling her body.

It's amazing! MOBILE, Ala: One of the juniors at the University of South Alabama has his mother accompany him to school everyday, reports AP.

After all, Michael Kearney is only 8 years old. Michael started classes at the university this week, after transferring from Santa Rosa Junior College in California when his father took a job at the Naval Station in Mobile. His presence in an anthropology lecture earlier this week caught older classmates off-guard.

"If he makes a better grade than me, I'm quitting," said Jenny Glossinger, a senior majoring in English. "This whole thing is amazing. It's hard to believe an 8-year-old can be only a year behind me and I'm 21."

Michael is majoring in anthropology, and after he receives his master's and doctoral degrees, Michael said he plans on becoming a geologist, or a game show host, or a cartoonist.

Michael was reading "Treasure Island" and "The Count of Monte Cristo" and reciting algebraic equations by the time he was 3 years old, his parents said.

He doesn't expect any special treatment from teachers or students. "I just want to be treated like a normal student," Michael said. "I'm 23 when I'm in class, but I'm 8 when I'm out the door."

He said most of his friends are his age, and "we do regular things," like playing video games and watching cartoons and TV game shows.

His mother, Cassidy Kearney, said Michael's motor skills are typical of a third-grader's and he can't write as quickly as the older students.

She helps him with note-taking in some lectures, and drops him off for science or math classes. She also drops him off at exam time.

"He's strictly on his own then," she said. "I'll just stand outside the door."

Key events in no-fly zone

- January 9 - US warplanes drop leaflets warning Iraqi pilots that if they fly below the 32nd parallel 'you won't come back.'
September 21 - Iraq rejects as an 'aggressive measure' Western plan to impose an air exclusion zone below the 32nd parallel to protect Shiite Muslim rebels from air attacks.
August 26 - President Bush, citing UN Resolution 688 of April 5, 1991, declares Iraq has 24 hours to halt air strikes against Shites. Iraq says this could lead to renewed hostilities.
August 27 - No-fly zone takes effect. US and British warplanes begin patrols.
August 30 - Saddam vows to resist, but does not say how.
September 1 - French send Mirage 2000 fighters to joint allies.
September 2 - Iraqi officials says their forces have been ordered not to fire on allied aircraft.
September 9 - US war-

US, EC envoys Boycott convention in Myanmar

YANGON, Jan 9: US and European Community ambassadors on Saturday boycotted the start of Myanmar's constitutional convention, which many dissident and rebel groups have dismissed as a sham, reports AP. A European diplomat in Yangon, reached by telephone from Bangkok, said the EC countries decided not to send the heads of their diplomatic missions to a ceremony starting the convention because they doubted that it would follow democratic procedures. The convention is to approved guidelines for a new constitution. The military junta has said it will not cede power to a civilian administration until the charter is finished.

King Fahd's help for British child

LONDON, Jan 9: Saudi Arabian ruler King Fahd gave money yesterday to help a sick British child go to the United States for a life-saving operation, reports Reuter. Saudi Ambassador Dr Ghazi Algasbi handed 75,000 pounds to the family of three-year old Stuart masters to contribute to the cost of a bowel and liver transplant. It is the second time in a year King Fahd has given money for such an operation, carried out by doctors in Pittsburgh. Last year the Saudi King gave 150,000 pounds to help four-year old Laura Davies go to the children's hospital there for the same operation.

Rabin shelves Shamir's doctrine about Jewish settlement

ARIEL, Occupied West Bank, Jan 9: In the good old days Cabinet ministers were forever dropping by to congratulate the Jewish settlers of Ariel on their pioneering zeal, reports AP. That was when Yitzhak Shamir was prime minister and Ariel was a centerpiece in his grand design of filling the occupied West Bank with Jews. Yitzhak Rabin shelved the Shamir doctrine when he took over in July, and the effect is evident in places like Ariel. Rabin's freeze on settlement development means construction of new homes and factories has all but stopped in Ariel. The second-largest settlement in the occupied territories, whose apartments used to be sold before the first brick was laid, is now stuck with 800 unsold properties. Ariel's 1990-93 plan envisaged 3,400 new homes. The 1,800 under construction when the freeze was imposed will be completed, but 1,600 will not be built. The government has revoked the tax incentives and housing grants offered by the previous administration. Thus the average monthly

mortgage payment in this town has jumped from 160 dollars to nearly 290 dollar according to the mayor, Ron Nachman. Just before Rabin's election victory, Ariel began bulldozing the rocky hills for a 200 acre (81 hectare) industrial park. Contracts were initiated with eight manufacturers. That was frozen," said Dina Shalit, a municipal official. The bulldozers were removed and the companies were told in very clear terms that they could not establish plants there. A four-lane, 40 kilometer (25-mile) highway was planned to transform Ariel into a virtual bedroom suburb of Tel Aviv and attract thousands of new settlers to the town of 11,000. That too is cancelled. And there are few visiting ministers. Justice Minister David Lapid, who came here last week, was the first in six months and brought scant comfort. Lapid is a law professor and human rights advocate. A political dove, he was the only minister who abstained in the Cabinet vote on Rabin's expulsion of 415 Palestinians to

Lebanon last month. He said he had come to see Ariel's courthouse, meet the judge and hear about the town's legal problems. He stressed more than once that he would be making a similar, separate visit to the Arab towns and courts of the West Bank. His dry, lawyerly approach was a sobering reminder to the people of Ariel that times have changed. Lapid showed no trace of the biblical fervour exhibited by Shamir and his ministers. Not for him "Judea and Samaria," the biblical name of the West Bank. The territories' sufficed. Ariel's town councilors complained to Lapid of living in a legal limbo of Israeli civil and military law, plus the relics of the Jordanian legal code. It galled them to have to seek a lowly army captain's approval of every by law they passed. Why couldn't Parliament simply legislate for the settlers? Lapid's reply forced them to look back at a fact they would prefer to ignore: that the West Bank was captured in the 1967 war and has

been under military rule since — a situation that successive right-wing governments, for all their insistence on biblical rights, never altered by law. The residents of Ariel would like Ariel to be in the territory of the state of Israel," he said. "But the political reality is different. Ariel was built outside the borders of Israel." Lapid gazed at a hillside covered with new, unsold cottages and the flattened earth of a shelved road plan, and listened impassively as mayor Nachman bemoaned the building freeze. He offered no comfort — indeed, seemed almost to be rubbing it in — when he said: "From what I could see, the new government's policy of freezing construction in the territories has been most successful." Still, as Nachman pointed out, "the government of Israel cannot ignore us. Ariel is a living, breathing fact." Ariel has 29 kindergartens, a high school, a small university, three synagogues, two supermarkets, a performing arts centre and a 100-room hotel.

Terrorism threat to Egypt's tourism industry

LUXOR, Egypt, Jan 9: The terrorist threat to Egypt's tourism industry grew slowly. It began in June with some firebombings in Luxor that caused no damage. Six months later, it has come to the streets of Cairo, reports AP. Thursday night, a small firebomb broke windows on a bus carrying eight Germans through the city's outskirts to the Giza pyramids, the country's top tourist attraction. No one was hurt. The bomber, like many before him, got away. It seems unthinkable that fundamentalists could succeed in their goal of ousting President Hosni Mubarak and establishing an Islamic state.