

## Lanka to shift main army headquarters

COLOMBO, Jan 11: The Sri Lankan military will shift its main headquarters from Colombo to the northeastern battle front where troops are fighting separatist Tamil guerrillas Defence officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

The Joint Operations Command (JOC), made up of combat troops from the army, navy, airforce, police and all para-military groups, will move to Anuradhapura, they said.

It will enable field commanders to communicate easier with JOC headquarters responsible for conducting the war against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), they added.

JOC headquarters was first located in a fashionable residential area of Colombo till it was destroyed on June 21, 1991 in a LTTE bomb attack.



BAGHDAD: A Baghdad citizen reads a newspaper on Sunday which announces that the Iraqi leadership has answered to 'American threats'. Iraq denied on Sunday that it had backed down in its latest war of nerves with the West, saying its anti-aircraft missiles were still deployed in the southern no-fly zone on a state of alert.

## BRIEFLY

### Int'l film festival begins in Delhi:

The 24th International Film Festival was inaugurated in New Delhi Sunday, reports Xinhua.

Nearly 200 feature and non-feature films will be shown in the 11-day festival.

The Indian Panorama will open with the screening of a non-feature in Hindi and a feature in English.

A couple of retrospectives have also been listed to give a touch of seriousness to the festival.

### 2 monkeys spend 2 weeks in orbit:

Two monkeys returned to Earth in good condition Sunday after spending nearly two weeks in orbit aboard a Russian spacecraft, the Interfax news agency reported, says AP from Moscow.

The monkeys had been launched December 29 aboard a Soyuz booster rocket fired from the Plesetsk cosmodrome north of Moscow. The rocket also carried plants, insects and cell and tissue cultures.

The press service of the Military Space Programme said experts from the European Space Agency as well as Italian, German and other foreign scientists oversaw biological experiments on the monkeys and insects.

Interfax quoted the press service as saying without elaboration that such experiments could not have been conducted on human beings.

### 12 killed in Pak blast:

At least 12 people were killed and 15 injured at a power plant explosion in southern Pakistan, authorities said Monday, reports AP from Hyderabad, Pakistan.

The cause of the blast, which occurred late Sunday in the nearby village of Kotri, was not immediately known.

Kotri is about 150 miles (240 kilometres) from Karachi, the capital of southern Sindh Province.

### Peru violence claims 39 more:

At least 39 people were killed in a string of clashes between the Peruvian army and leftist rebels over the weekend, officials said, report AFP from Lima.

On Saturday, Peruvian army troops backed by helicopter gunships led a four-hour attack on a Shining Path rebel base in the Peruvian Amazon killing at least 15 guerrillas, President Alberto Fujimori said.

The army, which gave no figures for its own casualties, razed the camp and collected a large quantity of weapons, Fujimori said, describing it as one more defeat for the Shining Path.

Fourteen people, including soldiers, guerrillas and civilians, died in an attack Saturday by the pro-Cuban Turac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) on police stations in the northeastern city of Moyobamba, officials said.

### Chamorro opens NA session:

President Violeta Chamorro opened a session of Nicaragua's national assembly Sunday, with members of the coalition that helped her topple Sandinista rule three years ago boycotting, AP reports from Managua.

Chamorro read her speech to a half-empty assembly, a day after leaders of her National Opposition Union announced they were deserting her.

The inaugural session was attended by the 39 Sandinista deputies and eight former coalition members still loyal to Chamorro. Representatives of Nicaragua's Roman Catholic Church were also absent.

### Ship with 129 Chinese held:

A small freighter carrying 129 people who were being smuggled to the United States was held Monday by Singapore authorities, reports AP from Singapore.

Marine police who boarded the 499-ton ship Sunday found 138 people — 116 men, 13 women and nine crewmen. They said 128 of the illegal immigrants were from China and one from Hong Kong.

The human cargo was squeezed on three tiers of makeshift wooden bunks in the cargo hold.

"Each of the illegal passengers had apparently promised to pay up to 30,000 dollars to get to the United States," said Chia Chia Kiat, director of operations at the Home Affairs Ministry.

## Labours approve coalition govt in Ireland

DUBLIN, Jan 11: The Labour Party overwhelmingly approved a plan Sunday night for a coalition government with acting Prime Minister Albert Reynolds Fianna Fail party, reports AP.

The new government is expected to take power on Tuesday when the Dail, or Parliament, reconvenes. The alliance, the first between the two parties, will have a record 36-seat majority in the 166-seat Dail.

Reynolds is expected to remain as prime minister and political leaders say Labour will receive six of the 14 Cabinet posts.

Reynolds has been operating as a caretaker prime minister following devastating losses for Fianna Fail in the November 25 general election which saw Labour emerge with its highest number of seats in Irish history.

Talks between Labour and Fianna Fail began before Christmas, and negotiations produced a 58-page joint policy document that aims to reduce unemployment.

## Sultan Hassanal, model of a modern Muslim monarch

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, Brunei, Jan 11: Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, the world's richest man, is casting himself as the very model of a modern, Muslim monarch — caring, religious and as one with his subjects, reports AP.

No longer a globe-trotting playboy, he has adopted a more sober image. He appears less often in military uniforms and astride polo ponies, doesn't travel as much, and, diplomats say, is exercising more direct rule.

Hassanal, 46, says he wants to blend Islam, his absolute monarchy and the cultural life of this oil-rich country on the northern coast of Borneo.

The relationship between the monarch and the people is not purely based on the tradition of the ruler and the people, but it is also due to a sense of mutual responsibility in carrying out together the amanah (trust) of Allah, the Sultan said.

He said during October celebrations of his 25 years on the throne that Southeast Asia's oldest continuous royal line would change with the

times, but on its own terms. Hassanal began to shed his playboy image and become more involved in Brunei's affairs after the 1986 death of his father, Omar Ali Saifuddin, who gave up the throne in 1967 but continued to run the sultanate behind the scenes.

Hassanal's new creed of Malayu Islam Berja (Malay Muslim Monarchy) stresses conservative Islamic values, the uniqueness of Brunei Malay society and the sultan as defender of the faith.

The creed was announced two years ago and in practice has meant that Brunei has become a stricter Muslim state. It is not fundamentalism, but rather a prudish form of religious observance that one Asian diplomat likened to "Victorian Islam."

Muslim holidays are being celebrated in a bigger way and upholding the creed is the main theme on these occasions.

Academy of Brunei studies has been launched. Alcohol has been banned, although visitors from abroad are allowed to bring in two bottles. Dating couples require

a chaperone. The chador, fully covering the body is the dress code for women, who are expected to be modest in both garb and behavior. A few years ago, only the very religious wore the chador.

Western diplomats and bankers, all of whom insisted

on anonymity because of the sensitivity of talking about the host government, said the creed as well as Hassanal's silver jubilee in October stressed loyalty to the sultan.

Officials insist the creed is nothing new, just a reemphasis of what makes Brunei different. "Brunei with her monarchy system is unique among modern countries, while the predominant values in society are those based on Brunetian culture. This is the secret behind

the stability and survival of Brunei," said Pehin Haji Awang Badaruddin permanent secretary in the prime minister's office.

One of the world's few absolute monarchies, Hassanal is regarded as the richest of the rich by the Guinness Book of Records and Fortune magazine because Brunei's oil income and foreign currency reserves are "effectively at his disposal." That cash hoard has been estimated at 37 billion dollars.

## Severe steps by UN Council to harm ME talks: Rabin

## Israel won't take back deportees

JERUSALEM, Jan 11: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, rejected a UN appeal that Palestinians expelled to Lebanon be allowed to return and warned that action by the world body against Israel would seriously harm Middle East Peace Talks, reports Reuter.

I made every effort to make clear that any severe steps taken by the UN Security Council will seriously harm the chances of continuing the peace talks, Rabin said after his meeting with special UN envoy Chinnmaya Gharekhan on Sunday.

Rabin said Israel stood firm on the expulsion.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said that he would recommend further steps if Gharekhan's mission failed to persuade Israel to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 799 demanding the deportees be allowed back.

Gharekhan was the second

UN envoy to visit Israel since it expelled 415 alleged Islamic activists to a desolate no man's land on December 17. The first also failed to budge Israel.

Israel began US-sponsored peace talks with Palestinians, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan at the end of October 1991. The chief Palestinian peace negotiator has said he will boycott the round to resume in February if the deportees are not returned.

The Arab League will hold an emergency session on the deportees, trapped between Israeli and Lebanese forces, in Cairo today, it is expected to press the United Nations to say how and when Israel should return the deportees.

League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid said that Israel's refusal to abide by Resolution 799 puts the Israeli practices within the context of war crimes.

Israeli ambassador to Wash-

ington Zalman Shoval said on Saturday that the US State Department assured him it would block any UN sanctions against Israel.

"I hope very much that Shoval's assessment is correct," Rabin said when asked about the ambassador's statement.

Hours before Gharekhan's arrival on Thursday Israel allowed two Red Cross officials through its territory to visit the deportees, who have been barred humanitarian aid by both Israel and Lebanon.

Lebanon insist Israel take back the deportees.

The Red Cross officials on Saturday brought back a 16-year-old youth deported by mistake. They also evacuated a sick deportee to Israel's self-declared south Lebanon security zone.

Israel said it would let the Red Cross evacuate by helicopter nine other Palestinians

banished by mistake. But Lebanon, insisting all the deportees should return, would not allow the flight.

The nine men were waiting at the make-shift snow-covered camp with packed bags when news came of Lebanon's decision.

"We will wait more. I want to return even if I go back to jail because it is my homeland, said Iyad Izzedine, 18. Israel has said the nine will go back to prison when they return.

Israel Army Radio said late on Sunday that Gharekhan would stay in Israel another day, despite the dead-end in his meeting with Rabin, in an effort to find a solution before returning to New York to report to Boutros-Ghali.

A UN source speaking on condition of anonymity said Gharekhan had planned all along to leave Israel tomorrow. He said it was doubtful there would be another meeting with Rabin or other Israeli leaders.



SARAJEVO: An elderly woman of the old people's home of Nedzariu, situated between the Serb and the Bosnian position, is evacuated on a vehicle of the UN Protection Force here on Sunday. Several elderly people recently died at this home due to the cold temperatures.

## Kyrgyz border with Tajikistan closed

OSH, Kyrgyzstan, Jan 11: Tajik refugees accused Kyrgyzstan on Sunday on closing its border with Tajikistan, and Kyrgyz officials admitted stepping up security checks to prevent the Tajik civil war from spilling over the border, reports AP.

Hundreds of refugees who fled the fighting in neighbouring Tajikistan have found shelter in hotels, schools and among friends in this town 90 miles (145 kilometers) from the border.

But now the government of Kyrgyzstan is demanding special permits from Tajiks, said Nabijon Akhmadov, an official from the remote Tajik city of Garm.

"They do not allow women and children to enter, and even Tajik businessmen are finding it difficult to travel back and forth," he said.

Since last spring, Tajikistan has been racked by a civil war that left thousands dead and tens of thousands homeless, many have fled to other parts of the former Soviet Union and to neighbouring Afghanistan.

A pro-Communist coalition led by Emomali Rakhmonov now controls most of Tajikistan after 11 ousted a short-lived government of democratic and Muslim groups in December.

Only the central Garm-Karategin and the eastern Badakhshan regions still re-

main in rebel hands. Most refugees in Osh come from Garm and Badakhshan. Many have said they plan to return and fight the government forces, which have advanced to about 60 miles (95 kilometers) from Garm.

Akhmadov said there are more than 35,000 displaced Tajiks around Garm, 220 miles from Osh. Officials from the Badakhshan region say they have 100,000 refugees who fled battles in other parts of Tajikistan.

"Our young men are defending Garm," Akhmadov said. "The Tajik government wants to kill us all. They have planes and tanks. Our fighters only have machine guns and hunting rifles."

Officials at the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry denied the border was closed to refugees but said security at checkpoints has been tightened.

"We would not like to have these armed people here, but ordinary Tajiks are free to cross," Deputy Foreign Minister Askar Aitmatov said in a telephone interview from the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.

Uzbekistan, also fearful that the civil war could spread, has banned flights to Tajikistan and imposed strict border controls.

Akhmadov said Uzbekistan also denies entry to refugees, many from Garm and Badakhshan.

## Off the Record



TAIPEI: Ginny Pan, a 26 year-old fashion model shows off a hat made of flowers and fruits designed by florist Chi Yung in the make-up room before the 1993 Flower Fashion Show on Saturday.

## Foundation for sex slaves

Japan has ruled out compensation for Filipino women forced to become sex slaves to Japanese troops during World War Two, but has proposed establishing a foundation for them, a Manila official said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The official said Tokyo was willing to finance a foundation that would help improve the welfare of not only the so-called "comfort women," but of Filipino women in general.

The official, who declined to be named, gave no other details about the proposed foundation.

The offer was the subject of a recent discussion between Philippine and Japanese officials. The issue is expected to come up when President Fidel Ramos visits Tokyo in March, the official said.

## No question of divorce

LONDON: One of Princess Diana's closest friends denied a report that she wants to divorce Prince Charles. The mail on Sunday said, reports AP.

The paper said Carolyn Bartholemew, one of Diana's roommates before her marriage, telephoned late Saturday after the Sunday Mirror reported that the princess wanted a divorce, even if it means losing custody of their two sons.

"As far as I am concerned there is no question of divorce, and she treasures her boys above all else," Ms. Bartholemew, who is godmother to the royal couple's youngest son, Prince Harry, was quoted as saying.

The prince and princess announced last month that they were separating, but had no intention of getting a divorce.

The separation announcement said Charles and Diana would continue to "participate fully in the bringing up of their children" and would continue to attend family occasions.



HONG KONG: Miss Chinese International 1993 Chung Thi Minh-Thu from Montreal, Canada, (C) smiles as she poses on Sunday with its runner-up Emily Lo from Hong Kong (L) and 2nd runner-up Elaine Barbara Der from Vancouver, Canada. Twenty seven beauty queens of Chinese descent from around the world joined hands to foster a spirit of unity and to encourage more communication among various overseas Chinese communities.

## Boat with 400 Haitian refugees missing

MIAMI, Jan 11: A boat that reportedly left Haiti three weeks ago with nearly 400 refugees is missing, and Cuba has reported finding eight survivors of a shipwreck that could be it, the Coast Guard said Sunday, reports AP.

Cuba told the Coast Guard on Friday of rescuing the eight off Cuba's northeastern coast on December 23, officials said. The survivors said their ship, the 25-meter (70-foot) wooden freighter "Virgen Mirach," has gone down in the southeastern Bahamas on December 21.

The boat was carrying 396 people when it sank, according to the Cuban report.

The Coast Guard has no direct evidence of the shipwreck, said chief Petty Officer Joe Dyne, but had heard reports for more than a week that a ship called "Vier ge Miracle" left Haiti on December 19 for a five-day trip to Miami and never arrived.

All secular, religious and military power rest with the sultan, a hereditary ruler who functions as head of state as well as prime minister, defence minister and commander of the armed forces. One of his brothers is in charge of foreign affairs and another heads the finance ministry.

The royal family, which has held power for 29 generations, tries to ensure continuing support for an autocratic form of government by providing subsidised food, fuel and housing and free education and medical care. There is no personal income tax.

Visitors find a prosperous, easygoing backdrop with no evidence of serious political dissent, ethnic tension or religious zealotry. Brunei has no foreign enemies and cultivates good relations with Malaysia and Indonesia, the other countries that share the island of Borneo.

Apart from the sultan's 1,778-room palace and several elaborate mosques, there are few overt signs of great wealth.