

Clinton sticks to Bush policy on Haitians

WASHINGTON, Jan 15: President-elect Bill Clinton told Haitians Thursday in a radio address that he will temporarily continue the Bush administration policy of forcibly returning boat people, out of concern for their safety, reports AP.

"I have been deeply concerned by reports that many of you are preparing to travel by boat to the United States, and I fear that boat departures in the near future would result in further tragic losses of life," Clinton said in a taped broadcast.

"For this reason, the practice of returning those who flee Haiti by boat will continue, for the time being, after I become president," Clinton said.

Later, at a news conference, he said, "I will end the practice."

VP Singh launches indefinite hunger strike

Violence follows Rao's Bombay visit

BOMBAY, Jan 15: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao turned riot-hit areas of Bombay today to assess the situation in the western metropolis traumatised by 10 days of Hindu-Muslim rioting which left nearly 700 people dead, reports AFP.

Under heavy security, the 71-year-old Prime Minister visited Bombay's Muslim-dominated Mahim neighbourhood and other areas of India's financial capital which were devastated by the communal strife.

Rao, who was also to meet with representatives of both the Hindu and Muslim communities, was accompanied by Najma Heptulla, a Muslim and deputy chairman of parliament's lower house, on the

day-long tour. Rao drove around the city as Muslims prepared for their Juma prayers and former Prime Ministers Viswanath Pratap Singh launched an indefinite hunger strike here to protest against the violence.

Additional troops were drafted in to tighten security for the visit, the Prime Minister's first to the city since the rioting erupted on January 5 as continuing fallout of last month's destruction of a mosque in northern Indian by Hindus.

"We are not taking any chances," a police officer said. "There will be fool-proof security."

The arrival of Rao, whose government's image has been severely dented by the violent

aftermath of his failure to protect the 16th century Babri Mosque in Ayodhya from Hindu Zealots, followed a tense night of sporadic violence.

Police said they had seized a huge arsenal of swords, axes, petrol bombs and acid bulbs from two places and arrested 15 people.

Hindu arsonist torched a row of Muslim huts in a Bombay neighbourhood early today but the fire was quickly doused, the fire brigade said. It was one of 18 minor arson incidents since late Thursday.

No new casualties were reported, and day-long curfew breaks were ordered for a second straight day in 14 riot-torn neighborhoods. Municipal workers started to clean the streets of debris left by arson,

and attendance at offices was better than in previous days.

Police put the death toll in the violence until Thursday night at 433 but hospital sources said at least 670 people have been killed, as appeals mounted for the restoration of peace.

A group of prominent citizens, including city Sheriff FT Khorbwalla, movie star Dilip Kumar, industrialist JRD Tata, former cricket captain Sunil Gavaskar and Attorney Nani Palkhiwalla, called on people to end the bloodshed. "We seek nothing but the welfare of this great city and the well-being of those who live in it," their joint appeal said. "In the name of all that is sacred to all, we appeal for a return to sanctity."

Former premier Singh said the violence had shamed all Indians, as he began his fast under a tent in a city-centre square to express his anguish and as an appeal for peace.

"Whatever has happened has saddened us all," he said in a brief speech. "It is a city that brings together millions of people from all over India. This image has now been shattered."

"So many families have been uprooted, I want to express my solidarity with all those who are in mourning," he said.

Murderous mobs held sway over the city of 12 million people for a week, sacking and torching hundreds of shops and homes in widespread arson, but a semblance of order returned on Wednesday.

UNITA rejects offer for peace talks

LUANDA, Angola, Jan 15: Angolan rebels Thursday rejected a government proposal for peace talks which a top UN official described as the final chance to stop the bloodshed in the war-ravaged country, reports AP.

In a letter Thursday to UN special representative Margaret Anstee, the UNITA rebel organization demanded a final say on the location and agenda for peace talks, adding that political grievances must be addressed first and not just steps towards a cease-fire.

"Most of the problems we are having in Angola are political, not just military," UNITA spokesman Jardo Muekalia told The Associated Press. "And we did not agree to Addis Ababa as a location."

With the UN peacekeeping mandate in Angola due to expire January 31, Anstee called the talks, scheduled for this weekend, "the last chance to stop the slaughter."

"If hostilities don't cease, there is no sense in the United Nations staying here," Anstee said, speaking to reporters after a meeting Thursday with Prime Minister Marcelino Moco.

In its letter to Anstee, UNITA made an alternate proposal—a summit between Savimbi and Dos Santos with UN mediation. Savimbi, speaking on Portuguese TSP radio, suggested talks be held in Geneva with the moderation of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Anstee said she did not know where Savimbi was and that she maintained contact with the rebel leader by portable satellite phone.

BRIEFLY

AIDS to take 3.30 lakh in US by '95:

At least 330,000 Americans will have died from AIDS by 1995, but the epidemic's spread will slow a little, according to projections federal health officials released Thursday, reports AP from Atlanta.

"The AIDS epidemic hasn't plateaued, but it will not grow as fast as in its earlier years," said Dr John Ward, Chief of AIDS surveillance for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

"Why? A slowdown in new infections is a possibility, and another is that people with HIV are getting treatment that slows the progression to AIDS."

Still, the CDC said that by 1995 more than half a million Americans will have been diagnosed with AIDS since the start of the epidemic in 1981. The number of deaths is expected to reach 330,000 to 385,000—more than twice the current number.

Volcano claims 4 scientists:

A volcano erupted in southern Colombia on Thursday, killing four scientists who were working near the crater, and injuring eight, the Colombian Red Cross said. Another 10 people were missing, report AP from Bogota.

"I can hear people below in the crater screaming for help," reporter Jose Meneses of the RCN radio network said in a live broadcast from the rim of the crater. Rescue workers were trying unsuccessfully to reach them, Meneses said.

Three of the injured were identified as Americans.

Cops kill 3 zealots in Algeria:

Three Islamic fundamentalists have been killed and 34 others arrested in a security force crackdown in the Media region south of Algiers over the past few days, police said Thursday, reports AP from Algiers.

Police also dynamited two houses that armed fundamentalists were using as bases, Algerian newspapers reported in Algiers, quoting police sources.

The three killed were allegedly involved in the recent murder of five people—including three police officers—and in an attack on a fourth policeman, who was seriously wounded.

Of the 34 arrested, 27 have been charged with violating state security, attempted assassination, destruction of public property, and disturbing the peace, the reports added. The accused include two doctors and a pharmacist.

Judge to probe Kashmir massacre:

The government has ordered a judge to determine whether 57 civilians, news reports said Friday, reports AP from New Delhi.

Residents say troops of the paramilitary Border Security Force opened fire and set fire to hundreds of homes and shops on January 6 in Sopore, a fruit-trading town in Jammu-Kashmir state.

The government said the troops were shooting back at militants when a stray bullet hit an ammunition dump in a house where the rebels were hiding, starting fires that killed many of the people.

The Statesman newspaper reported Friday that a judge of the Jammu-Kashmir High Court will hold an inquiry into the incident to reconcile the conflicting reports.

TV series on LA riot:

A television series dramatizing the experiences of a Korean immigrant family whose store was looted in the Los Angeles riots has become a smash hit, reports AP from Seoul.

MBC television's 16-part series titled "Strong Wind" concluded this week with news clips of the riot and interviews with Korean victims.

They were among the hundreds whose stores in south central Los Angeles were destroyed in a riot last year that was set off by an acquittal of policemen charged with beating an African American.

"What have I done to deserve this?" a leading Korean actress, in the role of a victim, laments in one episode, tearfully gazing at the store's ashes.

850 Pak troops leave for Somalia:

A contingent of 850 Pakistani troops left the southern city of Karachi on Thursday for Somalia to join a group of 600 sent last year, a government spokesman said, Reuters reports from Karachi.

The soldiers will join the United Nations peace-keeping force in Mogadishu, he said.

"Selection of our troops for the restoration of peace in Somalia is another recognition of Pakistan's efforts at the international level, Rear Admiral A U Khan, commander of the fleet, said before the troops left.



MAZAR-I-SHERIF, Afghanistan: A woman weeps as she recounts the situation in Tajikistan and her arrival in northern Afghanistan Wednesday. Thousands of Tajik refugees without warm clothes reached the refugee camps in Mazar-I-Sherif to find sub-zero temperatures. The United Nations has arranged for relief goods to be sent to the refugees. — AFP/UNB photo

Pakistan eager to improve ties with Clinton admn

ISLAMABAD, Jan 15: Pakistan said on Thursday it wanted early talks with the incoming Clinton administration to improve ties that have cooled in recent years over US fears that Pakistan has developed a nuclear capability, reports Reuters.

"We would be ready as early as possible to have discussions, to find a medium for a better relationship," Foreign Secretary Mohammad Sharahyar Khan told reporters.

Ties between the two countries have soured since US economic and military aid

was cut off in October 1990, when President George Bush failed to sign a certificate assuring Congress that Pakistan did not possess nuclear weapons.

Pakistan wanted to raise several issues with Clinton's incoming administration, including Nuclear non-Proliferation, the so-called Pressler amendment and regional matters, Khan said.

AFP adds: The government has introduced a parliamentary bill providing for the death sentence for drug trafficking offences, officials said.

The bill, introduced to the National Assembly in Islamabad Thursday, is in line with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's pledge to wage war against narcotics smugglers and peddlers, they said.

Chawdhury Abdul Ghafoor, Federal Law Minister, told the assembly the new bill would amend the existing law which provides for life imprisonment only. The death penalty would be an alternative, he said.

The United States and other western countries have been goading Pakistan to adopt stricter measures.

Xinhua reporter sentenced to 15 yrs in jail

HONG KONG, Jan 15: A journalist with China's official Xinhua news agency has been sentenced to 15 years in jail and his wife to seven years for leaking state secrets to a Hong Kong reporter, a report said here today, according to AFP.

The independent Ming Pao newspaper identified the journalist as Wu Shichen, an industrial editor in Xinhua's domestic news department.

His wife was unnamed but acted as an intermediary in the handing over of documents belonging to Chinese Party Chief Jiang Zemin to the reporter for Hong Kong's Chinese-language express newspaper during the Communist Party congress held in October in Beijing, the newspaper said.

In October, an Express reporter was arrested in Beijing where she was covering the party congress.



BAGHDAD: Baghdad residents reading newspaper headlines Thursday after allied bombers destroyed about half their targets in a nighttime raid on Wednesday on eight missile sites in Southern Iraq. — AFP/UNB photo

Miyazawa in Thailand

BANGKOK, Jan 15: Japan's Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa arrives in Thailand with a reported plan for a new security arrangement in Asia that would include China and perhaps Russia and the United States, reports AP.

Greeting Miyazawa at the airport were more than 100 Thai school-children waving miniature Japanese and Thai flags.

The prime minister arrived on a flight from Malaysia to continue his first tour of Southeast Asian nations that depend heavily on Japanese trade and investment but are much less affected by its political or security policies.

Japanese media reports said Saturday's speech will offer a "Miyazawa Doctrine" that may propose a wider security arrangement in Asia including China, southeast Asia and perhaps Russia and the United States.

Piracy increases in Southeast Asian waters

SINGAPORE, Jan 15: Pirates in Southeast Asian waters are becoming more dangerous, bolder and using heavier weapons, a senior official of the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) said on Thursday, reports Reuters.

"They are no longer just using small arms and knives and indulging in petty thefts," Mazlan Abdul Samad, regional manager of IMB in Kuala Lumpur said.

"In some of the latest attacks, they had used machine guns and grenades in hijacking vessels with their cargo," he told an international maritime conference.

IMB's 350 members in 70 countries include shipping lines, banks and insurance companies.

"The pirates are regrouping and are being aided by powerful syndicates. The syndicate will seize a ship, fraudulently re-register it and sell it off to an unsuspecting buyer," Mazlan said.

Modern-day pirates using small fast craft operate mainly in Southeast Asia, particularly in the waters around Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia.

Mazlan said more than 80 piracy cases were reported in Southeast Asia in 1992, over 80 per cent of all worldwide attacks.

Pirates also showed increasing disregard about the safety of ships. "In a recent attack on a petroleum gas tanker in the South China sea, the crew was tied up and the unmanned vessel drifted for hours before the crew could summon help," he said.

Mazlan urged Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia to take joint actions against piracy.

Off the Record

Now I'll be able to support Hillary

NEW YORK: One of the things Bill Clinton looks forward to in the White House is supporting his wife, Hillary, a successful corporate lawyer, instead of being supported by her, reports Reuters.

"She's been supporting me for 15 years and the only year where I made more money than she did is the first year we were married," the US President-elect said in an interview published on Thursday in the New York Times.

"So I got a lot of catching up to do," Clinton said. "I haven't supported her very well all these years."

Asked whether Hillary Clinton would have a job after the couple move into the White House on January 20, Clinton responded emphatically.

"No I didn't want her to have a job outside the White House. I want her to help me."

Clinton's salary as governor of Arkansas was 35,000, dollars his wife earned about 160,000 dollar with a Little Rock law firm plus 60,000 dollar from corporate directorships. The US president's annual salary is 200,000 dollar.

Students carry guns to school

WASHINGTON: The National Education Association on Thursday said 100,000 students carry guns to school every day. The teachers union demanded federal action to combat violence in the nation's schools, reports AP.

"America has become a dangerous place for children," said Keith Geiger, head of the 2-million-member teachers organization.

Citing Justice Department figures, Geiger said 100,000 children go to school with guns every day and 160,000 miss school because of intimidation or fear of bodily harm.

"Before we leave this room today, almost 900 school teachers will be threatened with bodily harm and nearly 40 will actually be physically attacked. On a typical day, firearms kill or injure 40 children, he said.

Geiger said the NEA is urging Congress to pass a "Violence Free Schools Act" that will provide 100 million dollar annually for five years beginning in fiscal 1994 for local anti-violence programmes.

"In some districts that may mean metal detectors. In others, in-service programmes to train staff in effective intervention. In still others, perhaps student-centered mediation programmes or drug prevention or anti-drug programmes, he said.

A similar bill made it through the House last year, but failed to pass the Senate.

The way earth began spinning

WASHINGTON: Huge celestial bodies colliding in the early days of the solar system determined how the earth and three other solid planets would spin, two astronomers report, says AP.

An impact with a body possibly as large as Mars some 4.5 billion years ago produced the spin of the Earth, said Luke Dones, a visiting astronomer at the NASA Ames Research Center in California, and Prof Scott Tremaine of the University of Toronto.

The earth has forward or prograde spin, by which astronomers mean it turns counterclockwise, as viewed from its north pole, the same direction the earth orbits the sun, also from that view.

Writing in the latest edition of the weekly Science, to be published Friday, they say the spins of all four of the terrestrial, or solid, planets—Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars—appear to have resulted from the random collisions of a few large bodies.

Of the four, only Venus has a retrograde, or backward, spin.

Tremaine said these giant collisions probably occurred within a few million years of when the solar system was formed. He said it was likely that the impact that led to the present spin of the Earth also created the moon.

One more aid worker killed in Somalia

MOGADISHU, Jan 15: A Somali killed a Swiss International Red Cross administrator in a wage dispute Thursday night, officials said. It was the second fatal shooting of an aid worker in the past month, reports AP.

The Swiss officials, who was not identified, died while being flown by helicopter from Bardera to a Mogadishu hospital, 400 kilometres (250 miles) to the east, said Nicolas Roggo, an ICRC official in Mogadishu.

But US sources said the Somali fired his weapon into the floor in anger and the bullet ricocheted, striking the Swiss administrator. Bardera has been one of the Somali towns hardest hit by famine.

Last month, Sean Deveraux, and Irish relief worker, was shot to death by Somali gunmen in the southern port of Kismayu. The motive was unknown.

Row over endorsement of genetic treatment for the dying

BETHESDA, Md, Jan 15: A government advisory panel wrestled Thursday with whether to endorse experimental and possibly dangerous genetic treatments for dying people, reports AP.

The issue comes up as a San Diego woman with a normally fatal brain tumour already is receiving injections of genetically altered human cells. The controversial therapy, designed to attack the tumour, was approved for her alone by Bernardine Healy, directors of the National Institutes of Health.

Healy bypassed her agency's normal channels on ground of urgency.

"Today I stand by that decision," Healy told NIH's Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee, a panel of scientists, ethicists and lawyers who normally advise the government about ge-

netic research limited to microbes.

The panel was presented with the San Diego case early last month, but put the issue aside and did not advise Healy on what she ought to do. She acted after doctors argued that the woman's condition was so bad she did not have time to wait.

After its deliberations Thursday, the committee which calls itself "The RAC," agreed, on a vote of 9 to 3, that the NIH could permit use of genetic therapies in emergency cases in which there was not enough time for the panel to convene and make its own decision. The agency still would have to return to the committee and justify its action.

The NIH, in the wake of the San Diego case, is expected to get hundreds, perhaps thousands, of single-use requests for genetic treat-

ments. The advisory committee clearly didn't savor its position. On the one hand, the members worry about what could happen if a genetic experiment runs amok. On the other hand, they don't want to be branded as bureaucratic beasts, deaf to the dying who beg for one last hope.

The media had something of a field day with the NIH bureaucrats' preventing compassionate treatment of a patient with brain cancer," wrote Dr Donald Krogstad, a member of the committee and professor at the Tulane University Medical Centre in New Orleans.

Committee member Robert Haselkorian professor of molecular genetics at the University of Chicago, criticized the researchers treating the San Diego woman, whose identity has been kept private.

The award for cruelty, in the case we were asked to consider, goes to the investigators," Haselkorian said in a statement he distributed to his colleagues. "They must be aware, deep in their hearts, that the therapy they offer is not a therapy, not an immunization. Are they enable to acknowledge the possibility that their procedure is not of greater benefit than acupuncture or a quack nostrum?"

Abbey Meyers, another member of the committee, worried aloud about what could happen with a poorly controlled genetic experiment, raising science fiction-like images of something that escapes from the lab and kills everybody in town.

"With gene therapy, we have absolutely no idea," said Meyers, executive director of the National Organization for Rare Disorders. "It could harm the patient, it could

harm the health-care workers."

She said a genetically altered substance injected in a human could even strike at the next generations or attack the neighbours.

The San Diego woman's doctor, Ivor Royston, scientific director at the San Diego Regional Cancer Centre, rejected the criticism of his methods but would not comment on the condition of his patient.

"She's undergoing tests today," Royston said.

Royston and his colleague, Dr Robert Sobol, injected the 51-year-old woman with her own cells that were altered to contain a gene for interleukin 2, a protein which is believed to attract added quantities of the immune system's cytotoxic T cells.

According to the theory, those added T cells in the body would circulate in the brain

and attack the tumour. She was to get progressively larger injections every two weeks and would be able to stay at home, the doctors said.

Royston also received approval from the Food and Drug Administration for the "compassionate use" of the experimental therapy, which that agency regulates as a drug. The FDA has become more aggressive in recent years about considering and granting such requests from patients with AIDS or cancer, for whom other therapies have failed. Because genetics is such a new field, the NIH has no such mechanism for allowing an individual to receive genetic therapy on a compassionate use basis.

FDA's approval of using an experimental drug is legally required. NIH's approval is needed if the doctors or their universities want to continue receiving grants,

Star Wars poorly planned, short of money

WASHINGTON, Jan 15: The Strategic Defence Initiative for intercepting short-range missiles is poorly planned and short of money, congressional investigators asserted Thursday, reports AP.

The programme, popularly known as Star Wars, will need at least 12.6 billion dollar for fiscal years 1992-97; while the long-range Pentagon spending plan budgets about 10.2 billion dollar, according to a report by the General Accounting Office, Congress investigative arm.

The report focused on the "theater" defence portion of Star Wars, aimed missiles such as the Scuds fired by Iraq during the Gulf War.

Part of the defence system may rely on an upgraded Patriot missile, which was used by the United States to intercept the Scuds.