

START-II Treaty sent to Senate for ratification

WASHINGTON, Jan 16: President George Bush Friday sent the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START-II), which he signed in January in Moscow with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, to the Senate for ratification, reports AP.

In a letter to the Senate just days before the end of his presidency, Bush called the treaty a milestone in the efforts of the two countries to put an end to the threat of nuclear weapons.

The START-II Treaty calls for reducing US and Russian strategic weapons to between 3,000 and 3,500 — a third of the current level — by January 1, 2003.

Bush, who considers the treaty to be one of the main achievements of his presidency, asked the Senate to review START-II as soon as possible.

Clan violence continues despite truce accord: ICRC halts operation for 3 days

Six Somalis killed in clash with US troops

MOGADISHU, Jan 16: US troops shot and killed six Somali gunmen in a clash that began only hours after leaders of 14 Somali factions signed a ceasefire agreement, US military and UN spokesmen reported Saturday, reports AP.

Six Somalis were wounded in the Friday night gunbattle, they said. Marine Chief Warrant Officer Eric Carlson said there were no US casualties.

Clan violence also continued Friday. Members of one clan captured a rival clan member, tied his hands behind his back and shot him in the head.

A Somali crowd kept journalists from approaching the

site of Friday's killing and refused to identify the two clans.

Warlord Ali Mahdi Mohamed said Saturday he was complying fully with the ceasefire agreement for Somalia and was confident that other Somali factions would do the same.

Ali Mahdi, the self-styled interim president of Somalia during two years of civil war, said his followers had already taken their heavy weapons to an assembly point and had shown them to US Marines.

Still since Somali telecommunications have been knocked out by civil war and looting and many freelance bandits are not easily con-

trolled, it was not clear the ceasefire could hold. US military officials said they had not yet been advised about the agreement.

Meanwhile, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced at its headquarters in Geneva on Friday that it was temporarily shutting down some operations in Somalia because of the slaying of one of its staff members. Kurt Lustenburger, 32, a Red Cross administrator from Lucerne, was killed Thursday in Bardera.

Red Cross spokesman Horst Hamberg in Mogadishu said ICRC convoys would be halted for three days.



MOGADISHU: Two US tanks drive down a street Friday near the green line. Rival Somali warlords signed an accord on that day in Addis Ababa providing for an immediate ceasefire in Somalia and a disarmament of the militias of their "political movements". — AFP/UNB photo

Cleanup drive: 70,000 held in China

BEIJING, Jan 16: Police in Beijing and 11 provinces and cities across the country have arrested more than 70,000 people so far in the annual cleanup drive before China's biggest holiday, an official report said Saturday, reports AP.

Spring Festival, or Chinese New Year as it's known in the east of the world, falls on Jan 23 this year. It is China's biggest holiday and police have been working hard to crack down on criminal rings before the holiday, said the Legal Daily (Fazhi Bao).

It said police in Beijing and 11 provinces and cities as well as railroad police have arrested more than 70,000 members of gangs. The report said police also were cracking down on train bandits, thieves, hoodlums, and "others who affect Spring Festival safety," but did not give figures for numbers of those people arrested.

BRIEFLY

Ex-US judge commits suicide: A former judge charged with receiving pornographic videotapes at his courthouse office committed suicide, says AP from Jacksonville.

Richard Kreidler, a former Duval County circuit judge, apparently shot himself in the head at a condominium where he was staying, said Sheriff David Harvey.

His body was found Friday morning by an attorney. Kreidler, 55, pleaded innocent Monday to a federal indictment charging his with ordering "obscene, lewd, lascivious and filthy motion-picture films" and having them shipped to his office on seven occasions since August 1991.

Quake rattles California: A moderate earthquake rattled a wide portion of Northern California late Friday night. There were no immediate reports of injury or damage, says AP from San Francisco.

The quake, which occurred at 10:29 p.m. (0329 GMT Saturday), measured 5.1 on the Richter scale, said US Geological Survey spokesman Pat Jorgenson. It was centered on the southern Calaveras fault, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) south of San Francisco.

"It felt pretty strong. It was like somebody was shaking the building," said Ralph Baig, manager of Denny's restaurant in Gilroy.

"People were like screaming but it lasted only a few seconds. Then everybody had a good laugh afterwards, in relief. Everything was OK," he said.

One hurt as rockets hit Kabul: More than 20 rockets slammed into the Afghan capital on Friday injuring at least one person, state-run Kabul Radio said, reports Reuter from Islamabad.

The rockets were fired from positions of fundamentalist guerrilla leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami party to the south of Kabul, the radio said.

The missiles, fired during Friday prayers, caused extensive damage to government buildings and residential areas, it said. Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami has been firing rockets into Kabul for several days to try to force President Burhanuddin Rabbani to resign.

Lebanese army seizes arms: The army seized quantities of weapons in a raid on a secret arms cache of the Christian Lebanese forces militia, the military announced late Thursday night, reports Xinhua from Beirut.

An army statement said that the raid came as part of a nationwide campaign to confiscate arms, drugs and contraband goods.

The Lebanese forces is a major Christian faction involved in Lebanon's 15-year civil war that ended in October 1990.

The cache was found in a camouflaged warehouse in the town of Nabba, north of Beirut. The booties included missiles, rockets, automatic machine guns, and anti-vehicle and anti-human mines and hand grenades.

Turkey to allow private detectives: Private detectives will be allowed to operate in Turkey under a new law now in the process of endorsement. The Daily News reported Friday, says Xinhua from Istanbul.

The parliament's Interior Affairs Commission has approved a draft of the new law, which will be submitted to the General Congress over the next few days for adoption, the newspaper said.

A senior security official was quoted as saying that the law will allow citizens and companies to handle some of their own cases, thus easing the burden of the police force.

Companies may hire private detectives to look into the behaviour, reliability, contacts and motivations of their employees, he added.

Ex-Chinese police official to die: The former deputy police chief of a county in northeast China has been sentenced to death for accepting bribes and his mistress jailed for life for conspiracy, an official newspaper reported Saturday.

Pan Qinghai, 50, Deputy Director of the Public Security Bureau of Qianggan county in Jilin province, was found to have taken bribes exceeding 124,000 yuan (dls 21,640) from 1987 to 1989, the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao) reported, reports AP from Beijing.

Eruption kills 6 volcanologists

PASTO (Colombia), Jan 16: A volcano erupted Thursday while scientists were perched around its mouth studying gas emissions, leaving six dead and four missing, relief officials said, reports AP.

Another six people were injured, officials said, providing an updated toll.

Rescue teams working after nightfall and in dense fog searched the slopes of the mountain for the missing volcanologists, who officials fear may have fallen into the Galeras volcano.

Civil defence chief Carlos Barrios said their rescue would be extremely difficult because going down into Galeras is like jumping into a bubbling cauldron.

The government in Bogota urged residents of nearby villages to leave their homes because of the danger of another eruption.

Bombay riots point to rising Hindu fundamentalism

BOMBAY, Jan 16: The worst violence in Bombay's 300-year history at first seemed to be a reaction to the destruction of an ancient mosque, which caused Hindu-Muslim riots throughout India, reports AP.

But the methodical persecution of Muslims the last two weeks points to the deepening power of Hindu fundamentalism, and the unscrupulous work of land sharks and political operators taking advantage of a maelstrom.

The attacks on Muslims seem to have been meticulously planned, said Anand Pathwardhan, a Hindu film maker who examined Hindu fundamentalism in an award-winning documentary.

"Everybody is justifiably worried in India," said Ramkrishna Bajaj, chairman of the huge Bajaj industrial conglomerate. More than 500 people were

killed in the riots. Many were stabbed or doused with kerosene and burned alive. The violence shut businesses and industries for 10 days and silenced the country's largest stock market.

The cost was about dls 420 million, not including damaged property.

Communal violence had erupted all over India on December 6, when Hindu extremists destroyed the mosque in Ayodhya, in the north. More than 1,200 people were killed, including about 200 in Bombay slums.

But the violence that broke out here a month later was far worse, and it spread for the first time into middle-class districts and prosperous suburbs.

Mobs of up to 1,000 people stormed through the city, setting fire to temples, mosques, homes, stores, office buildings,

car, trucks and taxis.

Well-to-do apartment dwellers found gangs of Hindus searching their lobby directories for Muslim names. Thousands of Muslims fled the city, fearing a pogrom.

The militant Hindu party, Shiv Sena, openly encouraged its followers to "teach the Muslims a lesson."

"For a couple of days, we took the lead," acknowledged Pramod Navalkar, a Shiv Sena leader, in an interview. Then looters, gang members and slum landlords also got involved. Some even demanded protection money.

According to an account by an army spokesman, underworld gangs and slumlords, seizing on the confusion, burned down shanty towns clustered on prime property to clear the land for building in this overcrowded city of 12 million.

China threatens counter-measures to Hong Kong democratisation

BEIJING, Jan 16: China has threatened unspecified "counter-measures" if Hong Kong's legislature acts on a plan to expand democracy in the British colony before it returns to Chinese rule in 1997, an official report said Saturday, reports AP.

"If the British side does not realize its errors and mend its ways (but continues) attempts to push the responsibility on the Legislative Council, ... the Chinese side will surely have to go a step further in its response and take the necessary counter-measures," the report said.

The front-page article in the People's Daily (Renmin Ribao) paraphrased remarks by Zhang Junsheng, the deputy chief of the official Xinhua news agency in Hong Kong.

Zhan made the threat during a meeting Thursday with members of the Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood, a liberal pro-democracy group. The Xinhua office in Hong Kong acts as a de facto embassy.

Hong Kong's legislature next month is to consider Gov. Chris Patten's plan to increase voter participation in the 1995 legislative elections.

China and Britain have been embroiled in an increasingly bitter dispute over the future of Hong Kong since Patten unveiled the plan in October.

China opposes the political reforms, fearing expanded freedoms in Hong Kong will spark dissent on the mainland. It has repeatedly ordered Patten to withdraw the plan, charging that it violates previous Sino-British agreements and the Basic Law, the Chinese-drafted document that is to serve as Hong Kong's mini-constitution after 1997.

Beijing has threatened to void all contracts after 1997

that were signed by the colonial government without its approval. That threat sent the Hong Kong stock market plunging.

China also has warned that if Patten's democratization plan is implemented, Beijing will have to reorganize the legislature when it takes over. That likely would require new elections.

The Legislative Council on Wednesday overwhelmingly rejected a Chinese-backed proposal urging Patten to scrap his plan.

Miyazawa wants dialogue with ASEAN on regional security

BANGKOK, Jan 16: Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa on Saturday said Tokyo wanted active dialogue with Southeast Asia on ensuring regional security, and proposed cooperation to help troubled Indochina join the larger community, reports AP.

The premise of all cooperation between Japan and Southeast Asia "is that Japan shall never again become a military power," he said in what was billed as a major policy speech.

This is the strong will of the Japanese people based on remorse over Japanese past actions and we shall never stray from this path," he said.

Several Asian countries that suffered World War II atrocities don't want an aggressive Japanese role in the region.

Miyazawa, on his first tour of Southeast Asia since taking office in November 1991, said the Asia-Pacific region needs

to develop a long-term vision of peace and security in the post Cold War world.



"Various ideas should be thrashed out through political and security dialogue among the countries of the region," he said. "Japan will actively take part in such discussions."

But the US presence is most vital to regional security, he said, and Japan will continue to maintain its security arrangements with the United States and host US forces.

Miyazawa said an accord to end Cambodia's civil war has not only opened the way for that country's reconstruction but also for promoting openness in its two Communist-ruled Indochinese neighbours, Vietnam and Laos. And it makes it possible for Indochina and the non-Communist Association of Southeast Asian Nations to develop as an integral whole, he said.

Japan wants to assist Indochina's social and economic development and the integral development of all Southeast Asia, he said.

Miyazawa proposed a Forum for Comprehensive Development of Indochina that would bring together experts from governments.

Pak woman beheaded in Mecca

RIYADH, Jan 16: A Pakistani woman was beheaded Friday in Mecca after a Sharia court found her guilty of murdering her husband, the Interior Ministry announced, reports AP.

The woman, identified as Rani bint Khamisallah Bishk, strangled her husband Haidar bin Ismail Mohammed in his sleep with a rope, then cut him in pieces, the announcement said.

Saudi Arabia rules by Sharia, or Islamic law, which prescribes beheading for convicted murderers. The executions are usually carried out in public squares

Thailand, Vietnam to build military friendship

HANOI, Jan 16: Thailand, which provided bases for US bombers during the Vietnam War, sent a military delegation to communist Hanoi this week, headed by its Army Chief General Vimol Wongwanich, the Vietnam News Agency (VNA) said, reports Reuter.

The agency said late on Friday that both sides agreed Thailand and Vietnam should build a new military friendship.

Wongwanich visited Hanoi on Thursday and Friday at the invitation of General Dao Dinh Luyen, Chief of Staff of the People's Army of Vietnam. He also held talks with Defence Minister Doan Khue, Deputy

Prime Minister Phan Van Thai and Foreign Minister Nguyen Manh Cam.

The two sides informed each other of their respective armies, and exchanged views on issues aimed at strengthening the mutual understanding and consolidating the friendship between the two armies, thus contributing to maintaining peace and stability in the region," VNA said.

It quoted Deputy Prime Minister Khai as saying "the visit would contribute to developing the friendship between the peoples and armies of the two countries."

Carter urges UN to set up special commissioner on human rights

ATLANTA, Jan 16: Former President Jimmy Carter on Friday urged the United Nations to establish a special commissioner who would have the power to intervene in human rights violations around the world, says AP.

Carter convened a meeting of several dozen human rights experts and leaders, including former Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide and Jordan's crown prince El Hassan Bin Talal. They discussed ways of improving what Carter called the UN's largely ineffective human rights protection.

Off the Record

Repetition of 18-year-old news bulletin creates panic

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's state-owned radio company caused a minor panic Saturday when it repeated an 18-year-old news bulletin about a plane crash to convince listeners it was providing a good service, reports AP.

Not aware it was part of a promotional spot, officials of small privately-run air taxi services desperately checked the whereabouts of their aircraft and military headquarters inquired if an air force plane had gone down.

Even several police stations in central Sri Lanka sent out search parties to look for the wreckage in response to the spot over the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation (SLBC), a senior police officer in the area said.

And the main air traffic control tower at the Colombo international airport was deluged with calls from reporters, while an air controller accused the radio of causing unnecessary panic.

Mother convicted for daughter's circumcision

PARIS: An African mother was convicted and given a five-year suspended sentence Friday for having her baby daughter circumcised, an ancient tradition of her native land, reports AP.

The decision came just one week after a court for the first time sentenced a Gambian woman to a year in prison for hiring a midwife to circumcise her two infant daughters.

The ritual, carried out in the mother's presence without anesthesia, entails slicing off the clitoris and adjacent tissue. Some African societies perceive a circumcised woman as more pure and thus more desirable for marriage.

Critics call it genital mutilation that prevents sexual enjoyment as an adult.

On Friday a court in the northern Parisian working class suburb of Bobigny convicted Kumba Djane, a 34-year-old woman from Mali, of having her daughter circumcised when she was less than one month old.

Planet named after 3000-year old city

BEIJING: A planet discovered by Chinese scientists has been named after a city in southwest China, the official Xinhua news agency reported late Friday, says AP.

The planet, discovered on November 26, 1978, had been known as No. 3011 until China's Purple Mountain Observatory, which discovered it, gave it a name.

The observatory in Nanjing, capital of east China's Jiangsu province, named it Choujing, after the 3,000-year-old city on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River in Sichuan province. The report did not say why the observatory chose that name.

Aftershocks continue Quake kills 2, injures 360 in Japan

TOKYO, Jan 16: Streets were cluttered with concrete rubble and hundreds of families had no water Saturday after the strongest earthquake to hit Japan in a decade killed two people and injured more than 360 others, reports AP.

Central Meteorological Agency officials, who estimated Friday's quake at 7.5 on the Richter scale, warned residents on the northern island of Hokkaido to beware of aftershocks, dozens of which had been recorded by early Saturday morning.

The agency said the frequency of the aftershocks was subsiding, however, and that there was so far no fear of tsunami, or tidal waves.

According to the agency, Friday's quake struck at 8:06 pm and was centered about 120 kilometers (76 miles) below sea level 20 kilometers (12 1/2 miles) off Kushiro, a city of 17,000 on Hokkaido's Pacific coast.

The quake was strong enough to sway buildings in Tokyo, about 853 kilometers (530 miles) away.

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The government in Bogota urged residents of nearby villages to leave their homes because of the danger of another eruption.



BOMBAY: An elderly Muslim man walks on crutches before an Indian army patrol Friday as communal Hindu-Muslim riots subsided after more than 10 days of violence, which claimed more than 600 lives, according to hospital sources. — AFP/UNB photo

ASEAN for interim govt in Cambodia

BANGKOK, Jan 16: The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is proposing the formation of an interim government in Cambodia to replace the powerless Supreme National Council (SNC) prior to the scheduled May General Elections, reports Xinhua.

The formation of the interim government would be followed by a presidential election, which would give Samdech Norodom Sihanouk the necessary authority to head and stabilize the country, local English paper "The Nation" reported today.

The SNC would be absorbed into the interim government, which would take over the administrative functions of the present "Phnom Penh government" according to the ASEAN proposal, which will be raised with Sihanouk in Beijing next week by that Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri.