

China supports Saudi stand on Afghan crisis

BEIJING, Jan 30: China lent its support Friday to a proposal by Saudi Arabia inviting warring factions in Afghanistan to hold peace talks, reports AFP.

The Chinese government always stands for a political settlement of the issue of Afghanistan, and hopes that the conflicting parties in Afghanistan will stop fighting each other as soon as possible, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

The official Xinhua news agency quoted the unidentified spokesman as saying China supported all efforts to advance the peace process in Afghanistan.

Bombay police chief replaced

Iran praises India for 'prudent' handling of Babri Mosque crisis

TEHRAN, Jan 30: Iran's President has said Hindu extremists should be sorry for destroying a 16th century mosque in India last month but he praised New Delhi and called for closer ties between the two countries, reports AFP.

Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani told visiting Indian Agriculture Minister Balam Jhakari in a meeting Thursday that Hindu extremists had been the source of the 'Bitter incidents' unleashed by the Mosque's destruction.

He hoped they were sorry, the official IRNA news agency reported.

The President, however, praised New Delhi for what its "prudent" handling of the situation, referring to the government's assurances that the mosque in Ayodhya, northern India, would be rebuilt.

Rafsanjani joined Jhakari in calling for increased Indo-Iranian cooperation.

Hindu zealots stormed and brought down the mosque on December 6, saying a temple to their deity Lord Rama had stood on the site before the founder of the Moghul dynasty Babar raised the mosque in the early 16th century.

Nearly 2,000 people have

been killed in Hindu-Muslim clashes throughout India since the mosque was destroyed.

Meanwhile, a message from Delhi says: The chief of Bombay police, which are under widespread flak for failing to contain bloody Hindu-Muslim violence, was Friday shunted out to a less important job, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

Police commissioner Shrikant Bapat, who took charge six months ago, was appointed a member of the Maharashtra Public Service Commission, which conducts examinations for high-level government jobs.

Bombay is the capital of Maharashtra, a western coastal state.

Bapat was replaced by Amarjit Samra, who headed the police in the industrial belt of Thane near Bombay.

Nearly 700 people were killed in an orgy of Hindu-Muslim violence this month in Bombay, India's financial capital.

Muslims, who were the worst hit, accused the Hindu-dominated Bombay police of collusion with Hindu militants during the riots which paralysed the city for more than 10 days.

BRIEFLY

Tokyo's plea to Yangon junta: Japan has urged the Myanmar junta to transfer power to a civilian government and to improve its human rights record, the Foreign Ministry said Friday, reports AFP from Tokyo.

Tadashi Ikeda, heading the ministry's Asian Affairs Bureau, called in Myanmar Ambassador U Thein Han on Thursday and told him the international community was closely monitoring developments at the national convention.

Japan thinks it extremely important that the convention, which is to be reconvened February 1, lead to "an early transfer of power to a civilian government and to the improvement of human rights," Ikeda said.

The convention, which is to discuss principles for a new constitution, was adjourned by the junta only a day after it began earlier this month.

Protesters burn Walesa's effigy: More than 5,000 protesters took to the streets Friday demanding that President Lech Walesa step down and accusing him of secretly cooperating with Communists, reports AP from Warsaw. The protesters burned Walesa in effigy outside the president's palace after they marched in icy weather for about two kilometres (one mile) through downtown Warsaw. They shouted "Down with Walesa," "Down with Communists" and "Poland - Yes, Walesa - No", expressing dissatisfaction with deteriorating living conditions and accusing Walesa of failing to fulfil his electoral promises.

"I am disappointed with Walesa, I see no change," said one of demonstrators, Maria Majewska, complaining that Walesa have not purged the political scene from Communists since he became president in December 1990.

Moscow calls army to curb crime: Russian soldiers will patrol the streets of Moscow in an effort to curb a crime wave, the Interfax news agency said Friday, reports AP from Moscow. Mayor Yuri Luzhkov told the agency that soldiers will be on patrol with city police in high-crime areas. He described the measure as temporary. The decision to deploy troops was made this week by local and national security officials. President Boris Yeltsin has vowed to crack down on crime, which has been steadily rising since the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union.

4 terrorists held in Cairo: Authorities on Friday arrested four persons suspected of involvement in recent attacks on policemen in Cairo, Egyptian Interior Minister Abdel Halim Musa told reporters, says AFP from Cairo. "These four terrorists carried out a series of attacks on policemen, the last being on Thursday against Colonel Mustafa Ashmawi in the neighbourhood of Imbaba," a stronghold of Muslim fundamentalists in Cairo, he said. Police said earlier that Ashmawi, a senior officer, was burned in the face when a suspected Muslim extremist hurled a fire-bomb at his car.

Velayati flies to Turkmenistan: Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati flew to Turkmenistan's capital Ashkhabad on Friday, starting a tour of three former Soviet Asian republics, the Iranian news agency IRNA said, reports Reuter from Nicosia. Velayati, who will also visit Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, said he would discuss bilateral and regional cooperation with officials of the three republics, it said. Iran is developing its ties with Muslim ex-Soviet republics like its neighbour Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Kazakhstan where half the population is Muslim.

3 executed in Saudi Arabia: A man and a woman were executed in Saudi Arabia on Friday for killing the woman's husband, and another man was put to death for brewing and distributing alcohol, official news agencies in the Gulf said, reports Reuter from Dubai.

The Gulf news agency, quoting a Saudi Interior Ministry statement broadcast on Riyadh radio, said an Egyptian man named as Mahmoud Bin Abdullah Bin Mohammad Siam, and a Saudi woman of Egyptian origin named as Salwa Bint Mohammad Bin Ali were executed in Dhahran for the murder of the woman's husband. The Saudi press agency said a Yemeni man convicted of brewing and distributing alcohol was executed in Riyadh.

It said Abdul Wahid Bin Hamoud Al-Jarashi had been sentenced to death after being expelled from the country on six previous occasions for distributing alcohol and drugs.

Filipino gunmen seize 5 hostages: Gunmen seized five hostages Saturday during a failed robbery at a pawn shop in the second major crime threatening bystanders in this turbulent city in as many days, reports AP from Manila.

On Friday, a 12-year-old student was wounded when bank robbers fleeing police scammed through an elementary school, firing weapons wildly.

Manila's talks with military rebels fail

MANILA, Jan 30: Talks between the government and military rebels responsible for coup attempts against former President Corason Aquino broke down after the mutineers said the administration negotiators lacked authority, reports AP.

Talks between the government and military rebels began this month. The Revolutionary Patriotic Alliance was the first of various military, Communist and Muslim dissidents to begin formal talks after president Fidel Ramos offered peace talks to unify the country.

On Friday, Brig. Gen. Edgardo Abenina, chief of the rebel panel, said the talks would be suspended until the government clarified the authority of its own negotiators.

'Global shock' may be more traumatic than oil crisis of '70s

MANILA, Jan 30: With the decade of the 90s now on its third year, experts warn of a 'global shock' more traumatic than the oil crisis of the 1970s, reports IPS.

All over the world, because of over use, waste and neglect fresh water resources — lakes, rivers and aquifers — are being exhausted or polluted at an alarming rate. Meanwhile, demand for water — for industrial, agricultural and domestic uses — continues to rise rapidly as the global population and economy keeps growing.

By the end of this decade, if not earlier, water will be the critical resource problem of the world, somewhat similar to what the energy crisis was in the 1970s, according to Asit Biswas of the International Water Resources Association (IWRA).

The 'water shock' may be worse, unless urgent steps are taken to ensure the efficient use of water resources, the world may soon be unable to grow enough food to feed its growing population, warns the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO).

Speaking before an international conference of water experts early last year, FAO Director General Edouard Saouma said, "We are reaching the limits of good quality water."



MARJ EJ ZOUHOUR, Lebanon: Palestinian deportees from the Hamas movement display an Israeli placard which they found next to their camp in the no-man's land in South Lebanon, Friday. The placard reads: "Danger Mines". — AFP/UNB photo

Israel may take back more deportees

JERUSALEM, Jan 30: Prospects for a compromise emerged Friday in the standoff over 400 Palestinian deportees when Israeli officials said they were reviewing the cases again and that more of the men may be allowed to return, reports AP.

The move followed a Supreme Court ruling Thursday that upheld the December 17 expulsions of the alleged Muslim radicals and threw the ball back to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government. The court also said the Palestinians could appeal their expulsions.

Israel has refused to comply

with UN Security Council Resolution 799, which calls for the men's return. The United States also has urged Israel to resolve the issue.

Secretary of State Warren M. Christopher sent a note to Rabin on Thursday night which US Ambassador William Harrop delivered to Rabin Friday morning. Christopher later talked with Rabin by telephone.

State Department sources in Washington, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that while nothing was decided, it was "a good and long conversation" and further conversations would likely follow over

the weekend. Christopher will be seeing UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in New York on Monday.

Israel argues that the deportees, now stranded in a tent camp in southern Lebanon, were behind a wave of attacks on Israelis by fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad militants.

The current review is separate from the advisory committee Israel appointed following the Supreme Court ruling to hear the cases of deportees who decide to appeal.

So far none of the men has filed appeals. They maintain

Hepburn awarded posthumously

INDIANAPOLIS, Jan 30: Actress Audrey Hepburn, who died last week of cancer, has been awarded the 1992 Kiwanis World Service Medal, the organization announced Friday, reports AP.

This is the first time the award has been given posthumously, said William Lieber, president of Kiwanis International. He said Hepburn had been chosen for the award before her death January 20 and the board of trustees did not want to consider a second choice.

A representative of UNICEF will accept the medal in honor of Hepburn at the Kiwanis International Convention in Nice, France. The award will be accompanied by 10,000 dollar grant from the Kiwanis International Foundation, which will be used by UNICEF.

World's first parts of lungs transplant

LOS ANGELES, Jan 30: Parts of the lungs from a mother and a father were transplanted into their dying 22-year-old daughter Friday in the world's first such operation, a hospital announced, reports AP.

"Surgeons removed portions of the lungs of the patient's 49-year-old mother and 55-year-old father to transplant into the young woman in an urgent and high-risk emergency procedure to extend her life," said a statement from the University of Southern California's University Hospital. James Sewell, his wife, Barbara, and their daughter Stacy — all from Qurtir Hill, Calif. — were in critical condition after the five-hour set of simultaneous operations performed in three operating rooms.

But "they're all doing fine," said Beverly Strong, a hospital spokeswoman.

The young woman was dying from cystic fibrosis, Strong said. "It became apparent she was going into (lung) failure

of the normal five," said Dr. Richard Barbers, a USC internist and medical transplant director.

The parents have enough reserve lung capacity that "they will not miss the lobes," he said.

The surgical team was headed by Dr. Vaughn Starnes, described by the hospital as an internationally recognized transplant pioneer. About 30,000 Americans are afflicted by cystic fibrosis, caused by a genetic defect that makes the body secrete a mucus that clogs the lungs, leading to repeated infections and scarring. Lung transplantation is becoming a last-chance alternative for people with terminal lung diseases such as cystic fibrosis and emphysema.

Doctors have said lung transplant patients have only a 50 per cent to 75 per cent chance of surviving a year. Leonard said 75 per cent to 80 per cent of Starnes' lung transplant patients survive at least a year.

Off the Record

Only to exorcise evil spirit

SANTA ANA, Calif: A man was sentenced to at least 30 years in prison Friday for drowning his 5-year-old daughter in a bathtub during an attempted exorcism in 1978, reports AP.

Marcos Morales, 56, was convicted in October of first-degree murder in the death of his daughter Lisa. His wife Beatriz, 47, was convicted of second-degree murder.

Superior Court Judge Richard Weatherspoon added five years to Morales' sentence for a prior felony conviction, making the total sentence 30 years to life.

Morales and his wife thought Lisa was possessed by demons after she pushed a sister down a flight of stairs, prosecutor Lew Rosenblum said during the trial.

They kept the child naked and unwashed in a bathroom, finally drowning her in November 1978 during a supposed exorcism, prosecutors said. Lisa's body was never found.

Dead men do tell tales

ST LOUIS: In mystery novels, a blood-spattered wall can tell investigator all they need to know to solve a murder, reports AP.

For real-life investigators who often have to work harder, the St. Louis University School of Medicine offers a five-day "Medicolegal Death Investigators Course."

About 50 investigators from 18 states and Canada attended the session that ended Friday. Courses covered everything from blood-spatter interpretation and blunt trauma to explosion-related deaths and notification of next of kin. The teachers are forensic pathologists, coroners, police officers and even judges.

"We've been offering this kind of training for more than 10 years," said Mary Fran Ernst, executive assistant in charge of forensic teaching programs at the school. "County coroners are usually elected officials without specific training in the field and they need this."

Student Jo MacQuarrie, chief coroner of Northwest Territories in Canada, was appointed to her job.

King Zahir, Hekmatyar favour new govt to end civil war

Hardline Mujahideen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has proposed a six-point formula to end factional fighting in Afghanistan, the news agency said in a report published Friday.

The dissident leader, whose forces are currently engaged in a renewed battle for Kabul that has claimed several hundred lives in the last week, has asked President Burhanuddin Rabbani to step down for the sake of peace.

Hekmatyar, a Pashtun, has suggested the formation of an interim government after Rabbani's resignation comprising elements who would not participate in elections to be held six months later, the Afghan News Agency (ANA) said.

The Hezb leader along with several influential Afghan Mujahideen factions have rejected as "unrepresentative" a consultative Shura or council that elected Rabbani for two years in December.

"A new arrangement is imperative for the maintenance of peace, security, integrity and solidarity of Afghanistan," Hekmatyar said in a statement released by ANA.

He also called for an election commission to be appointed "with full authority" to conduct the polls.

The commission would be empowered to determine the age and number of voters, delineation of constituencies and to screen candidates, he said.

Hekmatyar's plan is the latest in a series of proposals aimed at ending the bloody fighting around Kabul and continued instability eight months after the capital's takeover by a Mujahideen government.

Former Afghan King Zahir Shah in a recent statement proposed choosing a new government with UN help to end the country's civil war.

The 78-year old monarch, whose ouster in 1973 paved the way for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1978 and who now lives in exile in

Rome, criticised the selfish struggle for political power... and foreign interference in Afghanistan.

Pakistan, an ardent supporter of the Mujahideen's 14 year struggle for an Islamic government in Kabul, called Thursday for a broad-based government to be set up.

President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, talking to Rabbani's special emissary Noorullah Emad here, urged the Afghan President to open political dialogue with opposing factions.

"A broad-based government could help the Afghan people to wage a second Jihad (holywar) for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of their country," Ishaq Khan stressed.

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, who extended material and financial assistance to sustain the anti-Communist war in Afghanistan also urged the Afghan groups last week to end their internecine fighting and invited factional chiefs to the kingdom for peace talks.

11 more killed in Kashmir violence

SRINAGAR, Jan 30: Eleven persons, five of them suspected militants, were killed and nineteen subversives, including fifteen militants, were nabbed in Kashmir valley and hilly regions of Jammu since Thursday night, reports PTI.

Militants gunned down four Bihar labourers in Srinagar and torched seven houses, a shopping complex, a bank and a truck during the past 24 hours, an official spokesman told reporters here yesterday.

No militant organisation claimed responsibility for the killings so far.

Two militants, who were arrested by the security forces during search operations at Masri-Pranoo in Doda district of Jammu region on Wednesday, were killed when they were caught in exchange of fire, he said.

A militant was killed and two of his associates were arrested after an exchange of fire with security forces at Gujarmangah in frontier district of Kupwara during search operations last evening, the spokesman said.



PARIS: A model from couturier Louis Feraud wears a long satin dress with a flower bustier January 26, during the Spring/Summer 1993 haute couture collections. — AFP/UNB photo

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In terms of their global impact, just nine countries that account for three-fourths of the developing

world's population would count the most — with five of them in Asia, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Vietnam, along with Egypt, Nigeria, Brazil and Mexico.

But famine is already upon the poorest of the poor countries, such as the drought-stricken states of Sub-Saharan Africa, tighter water supplies in the future would thus mean even more catastrophic food shortages.

For others, particularly in volatile regions like the Middle East, competition for diminished water supplies may set off bitter conflicts and even wars. "There is now no longer an unlimited supply of fresh water, and international competition it is growing, as

demand grows the competition will grow more fierce, more violent," said Mustafa Tolba, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) at the international conference on water and the environment last January.

"With no clear consensus on how best to use shared water resources for the benefit of all riparian states, that competition will become conflict," he added.

Going by that measure, the potential for future conflict is large. There are 214 international rivers and lake basins in the world Tolba pointed out. Of these, 155 were shared by two countries, 36 by three countries and 23 by up to a dozen countries.

Guatemalans resume talks next month

GUATEMALA CITY, Jan 30: The Guatemalan government and leftist guerrillas have agreed to restart peace talks in the third week of February, the Roman Catholic bishop mediating the peace process told reporters Friday, reports AP.

The talks on ending the nation's 32-year civil war broke down in August over disagreements on human rights.

Monstigneur Rodolfo Quezada Torunio, the mediator, said the guerrillas agreed to new negotiations with the government after he met with rebel commanders in Mexico City on Thursday.

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