

UK newspaper editors amend code of practice

LONDON, Feb 6: Britain's newspaper editors said Friday they have amended their industry's code of practice to bar journalists from using bugging devices or telephone taps...

Saddam to support ME peace talks

BAGHDAD, Feb 6: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has moved dramatically to back Middle East peace talks, reversing his long-standing opposition to negotiations with his arch-enemy Israel...

Arafat said. Baghdad-based PLO officials said the change in position by Saddam, who is seeking improved relations with Arab states and the West, would give them ammunition against hardline Palestinians who reject the US brokered peace talks.



Saddam: A dramatic change

were expelled en masse from Kuwait, few people hold better credentials than Saddam among anti-Israeli forces in the Arab world. The Iraqi leader pledged to liberate Palestine when he invaded Kuwait in 1990 and sent Scud missiles flying into Israel in the subsequent war.

ment, which has previously called the 15-month-old peace talks a sell-out to Israel, had made clear that it would back whatever approach the PLO took towards the negotiations. Much of the Palestinian opposition to the talks has come from the PLO's rival Hamas, a militant fundamentalist movement Arafat says is funded by Iraq's traditional enemy Iran.

Diplomats said government-controlled Iraqi newspapers had been increasingly referring to Israel by name rather than "the Zionist entity." Arafat, who overcame hard-line opposition to back the historic talks over a year ago, has faced increasing Palestinian opposition to the negotiations which are now stalled.

Influx of US tourists in Vietnam

BANGKOK, Feb 6: Some 700 American tourists have arrived in Vietnam aboard cruise ships within the last week and more will be coming in the near future, a Vietnam News Agency reports seen Saturday said, reports AP.

Castro tries to lift US sanctions

HAVANA, Cuba, Feb 6: President Fidel Castro said on Friday his country would wage a campaign across the world to obtain the lifting of a US economic embargo against it, reports Reuters. "United Nations agreements are not enough," Castro told a conference of Latin America teachers in Havana.

Union, its main suppliers for 30 years. Those who organised and created the (US) blockade wove their web well and tangled it up like a godian knot, difficult to unite," Castro said. The Caribbean Island is currently experiencing an economic recession marked by shortages of oil, food, medicines, raw materials and consumer goods.

Krajina Serbs won't attend UN talks



SARAJEVO: Two small boys with their dog play during a lull in fighting in an empty street of Sarajevo. The city ended its first 10 months of siege still under fire from Serb gunners with fighting particularly fierce around the airport Friday.

BELGRADE, Feb 6: Rebel Serbs in the Croatian enclave of Krajina will not attend peace talks at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the Belgrade-based Tanjug news agency reported today, says Reuters. It said Krajina Serb authorities would only negotiate with Croatia, which lunched an offensive to reclaim Serb-held areas of the enclave on January 22 after its troops had withdrawn from the land they had seized.

India plans to set up human rights body

NEW DELHI, Feb 6: Home Minister SB Chavan will meet political party leaders Monday to discuss setting up India's first Human Rights Commission, a move which has earned praise from Britain, reports AFP. Chavan will also meet federal ministers and state chief ministers next week, in the run-up to parliament's budget session during which a bill on the proposed commission will be moved, officials said Friday.

of violating human rights by detaining Maoist rebels and ordinary criminals without judicial approval or killing them in staged encounters. The planned discussions follow a series of meetings between state police chiefs and Home Secretary Madhav Godebole -- in charge of setting up the rights commission -- last month. British Prime Minister John Major, who made a landmark visit to India last month, praised India's pledge to create the commission saying local human rights groups could address their grievances to the forum.

Lord Bernstein dead

Lord Bernstein, a 20th century pioneer of popular entertainment and founder of Britain's Granada television station, died Friday at his London home, his son said. He was 94, reports AP from London. David Bernstein said his father died peacefully "of old age" and left instructions there should be no mourning or memorial service.

Philosopher Jonas dies

The German-born philosopher Hans Jonas, author of the influential "Principle of Responsibility," died Friday in New York, his German publisher said. He was 89, reports AP from Frankfurt. A student of Martin Heidegger, Jonas, a Jew, fled from the Nazi rule in 1933 to Palestine, joined the British military during World War II and resettled in the United States in 1955.

Irish censors ban US film

Ireland's censors on Friday banned an American film about a crooked cop, reports AP from Dublin. "Bad Lieutenant," starring Harvey Keitel and directed by Abel Ferrara, charts the moral descent of a New York detective who abuses his position to feed his addictions to sex, drugs and gambling.

Avalanche claims 9 in Iran

At least nine people were killed and several others injured on Friday when an avalanche cut the Tehran-Shemshak road 40 kilometers (25 miles) from the capital, official Iranian television reported, says AFP from Tehran. It said the four-meter (13-foot) avalanche blanketed several vehicles, including two buses carrying skiers to major resorts in the area.

Plans to resume Guatemalan peace talks cancelled

GUATEMALA CITY, Feb 6: President Jorge Serrano said Friday that plans to restart peace talks on ending Guatemala's 32-year civil war have been cancelled, reports AP. The president said the chief peace mediator, Monsignor Rodol of Quezada Toruno, informed him that the leftist rebel Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union rejected plans for the peace talks to restart February 15.

FNC will press UAE govt to cut number of Asian labourers

ABU DHABI, Feb 6: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) parliament will focus on pressing the government to cut the number of mostly Asian foreigners when it reconvenes this week after a recess of more than a year, reports AFP. The measure, if implemented, will mostly affect Asians who account for more than half the two million population and 70 per cent of the 600,000-strong workforce in the Emirates.

Mobutu sacks PM for second time

GBADOLITE, Zaire, Feb 6: Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko fired reformist Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi for the second time on Friday, blaming him for riots which killed at least 80 people, reports Reuters. Mobutu said he would ask the transitional parliament of the huge central African country, the High Council of the Republic (HCR), to propose a fresh premier as Tshisekedi had not fulfilled his mandate to form a new, broad-based cabinet.

personality to be charged with forming a government of public salvation," he said on a televised speech, the text of which was given to reporters before broadcasting. Tshisekedi was elected by a national pro-democracy conference last August. Mobutu previously appointed him premier in October 1991 but sacked him within a week after he refused to swear and offer of allegiance.

pose another name," he said. "Because of him my soldiers shot at each other." The two men are locked in a power struggle which has come to a head over new five-million-Zaire banknotes, issued by the pro-Mobutu central bank but outlawed by Tshisekedi as inflationary. AFP adds: Officials of Zaire's High Council of the Republic appealed Friday for foreign troops to help restore peace and legal order in the troubled African state.

A high council communiqué, telephoned to AFP by council spokesman Tshimpumpu, said conditions for protecting people and good haven't been decided. Also, legal institutions aren't functioning normally. This is why the council office confirms the need to obtain support from foreign troops for Zaire's army with the goal of restoring and consolidating civil peace and republican lawfulness. The High Council statement also said "it had pursued talks with the Prime Minister on the subject of reorganizing the transition government."

Two lakh flee Lome to Ghana

AFLAO, Ghana, Feb 6: Some 200,000 people from the Togolese capital Lome have fled their homes to neighbouring Ghana, a local chief said here Friday in this border town. Paramount chief Togbe Pitti IV told AFP that entire families had been fleeing across the loosely guarded border since Sunday to escape political violence in Lome.

US plans to close 20 embassies

WASHINGTON, Feb 6: The State Department on Friday disclosed the names of 20 US embassies and consulates which it plans to close this year and next year to offset spending on new diplomatic posts in former Soviet republics and central Europe, reports AP. The list includes several desirable travel destinations. Deputy Secretary of State Clifton Wharton told reporters the list was prepared by President Bush's outgoing administration and was sent to Congress January 14, six days before President Clinton was inaugurated. After the Senate confirms Clinton's nomination of Brian Atwood as undersecretary of state for management, "we plan to review that list to be certain that we are fully in accord with those posts that have been designated," Wharton said.

Other consulates on the list are Maracaibo in Venezuela, Songkhla in Thailand, and a "branch office" in Geneva of the US embassy in Bern, Switzerland. Congress has often resisted proposals from the State Department to close diplomatic posts. The Senate has blocked attempts in the past to shut the consulates in Salzburg and Genoa. But the latest request comes after the United States has had to open posts in 14 newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, 3 former Yugoslav republics, and Slovakia and Albania.

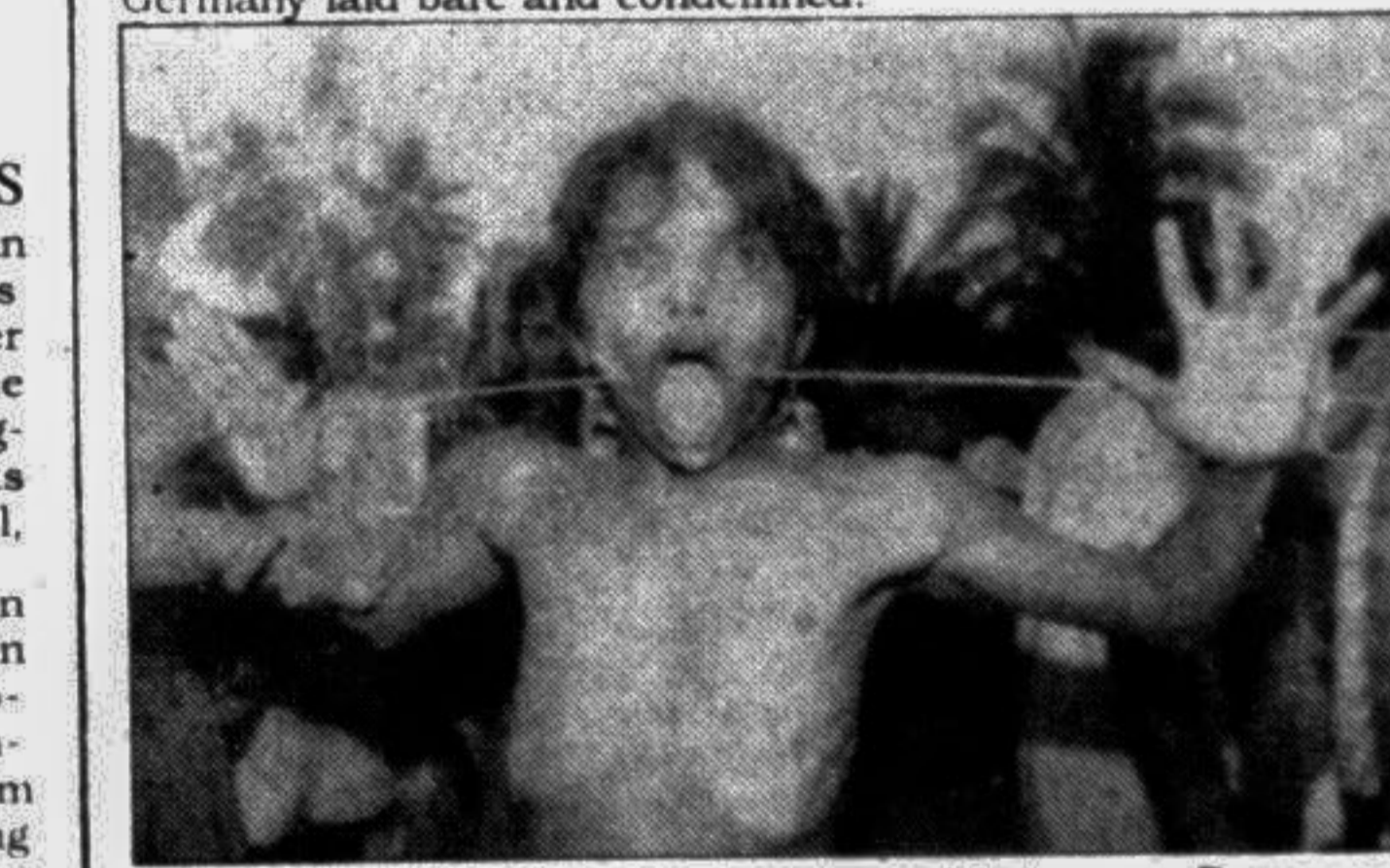
Indians slates UK politicians for encouraging Kashmir militants

LONDON, Feb 6: The Indian community in the UK has voiced its deep concern over the disquieting role of some British politicians in encouraging the Kashmiri separatists operating from the British soil, reports PTI. A delegation of the Indian Overseas Congress called on the Foreign and Commonwealth Minister Mark Lennox-Boyd, and conveyed to him the widespread anguish among the Indian community here over the manner in which some British MPs were lending respectability to the Kashmiri separatist movement and thus allowing the British soil to be used for the extremists' campaign. The Indian Overseas Congress delegation also drew Lennox-Boyd's attention to the support the Kashmiri militants were getting from Islamabad. Meanwhile, the India High Commission here has rejected the so-called peace initiative launched by Azam Inqilabi, a close associate of Maqbool Butt of JKLF, proposing tripartite talks between Indian, Pakistan and the representatives of Kashmir for a negotiated settlement of the Kashmir issue.

Off the Record

Honecker is gone but controversy on

BERLIN: Erich Honecker is gone but controversy over the former East German leader's manslaughter trial rumbles on. German courts are a laughingstock and a politician is under fire for interfering in court affairs, reports AP. Honecker, 80 years old and suffering from liver cancer, flew to Chile on January 13 when his trial was abandoned on the grounds that he wasn't expected to live to see the verdict. Yet the Berlin district court invited him to return to wrap up the case properly -- a request that Honecker snubbed with a telefax from Santiago. The Volkstimme newspaper in the eastern city of Magdeburg printed a cartoon with three judges dressed as clowns pondering a fax saying Ha ha ha and signed EH. The Berliner Morgenpost had a cartoon Friday with three judges lecturing a scarecrow: "Don't think you can make the rule of law look stupid, Herr Honecker." German law doesn't permit a trial in absentia for Honecker's case, but it appears that in absentia, he can pose a severe trial for German justice. When he was brought unwillingly from exile in Moscow last July, Honecker was promised a fair trial, not a political show. Though some Germans doubted the wisdom of the whole affair, many hoped to see the brutality of Communist East Germany laid bare and condemned.



KUALA LUMPUR: Twelve-year-old Ayavoo Remasamy fulfills a vow to the Hindu deity Muruga by piercing an iron rod through his mouth whilst in a trance during the Thaipusam festival at Batu Caves Temple Saturday. 800,000 devotees are expected to gather at the temple during the two-day festival.

World's second baboon liver recipient dies

PITTSBURGH: The world's second baboon liver recipient, who had been battling an infection in his abdominal cavity, died on Friday night, a spokeswoman for the University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre said, reports Reuters. The patient, a 62-year-old man who had asked to remain anonymous, died at 6:50 pm est (2350 GMT), 26 days after the transplant operation, the spokeswoman said. She quoted doctors as saying that one of the reasons for his death was due to sepsis, widespread infection throughout his body. The actual cause of death will not be determined until later next week, when results of an autopsy will be known.

Russia earned \$1.8 b in arms sales last yr

MOSCOW, Feb 6: Russia earned 1.8 billion dollars in arms sales last year, the Trade Ministry disclosed Friday in figures carried by the Interfax news agency, reports AP from Moscow. In 1993 Russia hopes to boost sales to 3.8 billion dollars, according to the head of the country's Defence Industry Committee Viktor Glukhin. Key market targets for Russian arms dealers over the last few months have been in Asia and the Middle East, where material is being offered at very competitive prices.