

## Zhirinovskiy cancels Australia visit

CANBERRA, Australia, Dec 30: Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy has cancelled his proposed visit to Australia next week. Australian officials said Thursday, reports AP.

Zhirinovskiy advised the Australian Embassy in Moscow on Thursday that he would not be submitting an application for a visa to visit Australia.

Foreign Affairs Department spokesman John Campbell said Zhirinovskiy indicated he was too busy to make the planned trip.

The Zionist Federation of Australia opposed granting Zhirinovskiy a visa because of his reported comments about Russian Jews, but the new South Wales Council for Civil Liberties argued against any ban.

Zhirinovskiy, the leader of the ultra-right Liberal Democrats, which won 24 percent of the vote in the Russian election earlier this month, has already

outraged Bulgaria and Romania and been refused permission to visit Germany.

Zhirinovskiy's reasons for wanting to come to Australia appear mixed.

The aide who picked up visa applications forms from the Australian Embassy in Moscow late last week said the leader wanted to visit a niece living in Sydney and also wanted a rest after the election campaign.



Vladimir Zhirinovskiy

## India promises 'positive and realistic' talks with Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Indian Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh promised "positive and realistic" new year talks with old enemy Pakistan on the critical issue of Kashmir, the Press Trust of India reported today, says Reuter.

"We are going to be positive and as realistic as possible during these talks," the news service quoted Singh as saying in an interview.

Foreign Secretary J N Dixit of India and Pakistan's Shahar Khan, the top diplomats of the two countries, are due to hold talks in Islamabad on January 2 and 3.

have worsened over the last four years since open rebellion erupted in the two-thirds of Kashmir ruled by India.

Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, finishing a visit to Beijing, accused India on Wednesday of increasing repression in Kashmir but said she expected China's "quiet diplomacy" to help settle the dispute.

India says Pakistan has fomented and fuelled a rebellion in which hospitals and police have reported more than 13,000 deaths since it erupted in January 1990.

Pakistan, which rules the rest of the Himalayan region, denies the charges and accuses Indian security forces of "carnage" in Kashmir.

The two countries are under increasing foreign pressure, especially from the United States, to settle problems that revolve

around the highly emotive issue of Kashmir.

Washington officials say they fear the Kashmir conflict could lead to another war between two countries believed capable of building nuclear bombs.

But the Press Trust quoted the Indian foreign minister as saying the two countries had to settle the long-standing row themselves.

"I don't think that intervention from outside will help," Singh said.

Neither side expects rapid progress in the talks, but diplomats see the start of discussions as a hopeful sign.

AP adds: Indian security forces have killed 10 Muslim separatists in four battles in Kashmir, as violence escalated in advance of Indian-Pakistan talks on the disputed territory, the government said Wednesday.

Government spokesmen said the militants have stepped up ambushes and mining attacks on Indian forces since the January 2-3 talks were announced. Indian forces have responded with more house-to-house searches and arrests.

Local newspapers have identified several young Kashmiri men reportedly taken prisoner and killed in custody recently. There was no comment from the government on these reports.

The attacks were aimed at maintaining pressure on the security forces and keeping up the morale of the guerillas, said a spokesman of the pro-Pakistan Hizbol Mujahedeem, one of the dozen militant outfits operating in the Kashmir valley.

More than 8,000 people have been killed in Kashmir since the army crackdown on militants began in 1989.

## 60 Azeri troops killed in clash with Armenians

LONDON, Dec 30: More than 60 Azeri troops died in fighting on the frontlines of the ethnic Armenian-majority enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh in southwestern Azerbaijan, the Karabakh Self Defence Force Press Service said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The casualties occurred during fierce battles Tuesday along the entire frontline of the breakaway enclave, the press service said, cited by Armenian radio and monitored by the BBC here.

Armenian forces had suffered two dead and nine wounded, the report said.

Azerbaijani forces resumed

their shelling of Armenian positions Wednesday and used helicopters to bomb Armenian positions around Martuni in the east and Gadut in the south, the radio said.

They also launched a heavy attack against border areas of neighbouring Armenia — widely suspected of helping its ethnic cousins in the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave — shelling the Noyemberyan, Idzhevan, Berd and Tavush districts in the north of the republic.

The Radio reported Tuesday that 47 Azeri troops and five Armenian troops had been killed fighting in northern Karabakh during the two previous days.

There was no independent confirmation of the report and the authorities in Baku did not immediately comment on the Armenian claims.

Reuter adds, Azeri Foreign Minister Hasan Hasanov said on Wednesday that his country wanted to sign a border agreement with Turkey, Anatolian news agency said.

"Turkey had a border agreement with the former Soviet Union and we would like to convert this into one between Turkey and Azerbaijan," he told reporters on arrival at Ankara Airport.

NATO member Turkey shares a short border with the Azeri enclave of Nakhichevan, separated from the rest of the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan by Armenian territory.

Hasanov said any new border agreement would not affect what he called Turkey's guarantee rights over Nakhichevan, which would continue as long as Ankara wished.

The 1921 treaty of Kars between Turkey, the Soviet Union and the Soviet republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan said there could be no change in the status of the autonomous enclave of Nakhichevan without the signatories' consent.



Former Pakistan Prime Minister and now opposition leader Muhammad Nawaz Sharif (L) talks with Bosnian ambassador to Croatia, Bisera Turkovic, at Zagreb's Pleso airport Dec 29. Sharif is on a trip to Sarajevo where he will meet with Bosnian officials —AFP photo

## DPRK claims 'breakthrough' in nuclear talks with US

TOKYO, Dec 30: North Korea said Thursday it was moving toward agreement on a package deal with the United States that would reopen the Communist state's nuclear sites to international inspections, reports AP.

"Through the latest contact, the sides removed a series of stumbling blocks... and made a breakthrough," a dispatch by the official Korean Central News Agency, monitored in Tokyo, quoted an unidentified Foreign Ministry official as saying.

The talks were held Wednesday at the United Nations, where the two sides, which lack formal diplomatic ties, have met several times in the past few weeks.

The North Korean official was quoted as saying the United States had indicated willingness to discontinue joint military exercises with South Korea — a major North Korean

demand.

North Korea in turn agreed to limited inspections, but full access for International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors remained to be negotiated, he said.

"We agreed to allow inspection needed entirely for guaranteeing the continuity of (nuclear) safeguards, not routine and ad hoc inspections," said the official. The routine inspections remained to be negotiated, he said.

South Korean officials also said after the latest talks that differences remained over terms for inspections.

Washington has been trying to persuade the North to agree to full international inspections of its nuclear facilities, and has threatened to recommend that the UN Security Council approve sanctions against North Korea if it doesn't cooperate.

After Wednesday's talks, the US side was upbeat but declined to discuss specifics. The US representative, Tom Hubbard, deputy assistant US secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, told the Associated Press that "we expect the dialogue to continue."

The politically isolated North, one of the world's last hard-line Marxist states, is anxious to improve relations with the United States as well as obtain Western help for its struggling economy.

The US Central Intelligence Agency believes North Korea likely has developed one or two atomic bombs. North Korea denies such charge.

South Korea's president, Kim Young-sam, said Tuesday that while the North wants to develop nuclear weapons, it does not appear to have one yet.

## 4000 Indonesian women 'missing' in Saudi Arabia

JAKARTA, Dec 30: Nearly 4,000 Indonesian women working in Saudi Arabia are listed as "missing", reports Xinhua.

Immigration Director General Roni Sikap Sinuraya revealed Wednesday that his office is currently in possession of their passports which were returned by their Saudi Arabian employers.

He said the immigration office does not have enough funding to search for all of the missing workers. Their whereabouts could not be ascertained for certain.

He predicted that some are believed to have returned home without notifying their employers, some may have died and others may have changed their addresses without informing Saudi Arabian authorities or the Indonesian Embassy.

## LTTE declares '94 a year of battles

COLOMBO, Dec 30: The LTTE has declared 1994 a year of battles and already recruited and trained over 3000 students in preparation of a massive offensive against the Sri Lankan security forces, "The Island" newspaper said today, reports PTI.

The LTTE was reported to be holding a series of workshops to explain to the people how to meet the challenge of an all out battle and the precautions to be taken in such a situation, the newspaper said quoting reports from the north.

A defence Minister spokesman denied any knowledge of the alleged LTTE preparations but said the army was prepared to meet any eventuality.

The newspaper also said that walls and buildings in the LTTE controlled areas have been plastered with posters calling on the people to get ready for a large scale war.

## Fresh fighting in Angola

LAUANDA, Dec 30: Fresh fighting erupted between UNITA rebels and government forces on Wednesday north of the capital Luanda but UN mediators expressed confidence peace talks would resume next week in Lusaka after a holiday break, says Reuter.

Loud explosions shook the area near the strategic village of Canacassala in Bengo province, 150 km (90 miles) northeast of Luanda, according to reports by diplomats and Angolan government officials.

Diplomats said the area, where government forces have been trying to root out guerrillas for the past two months, had been scene of heavy clashes over the past 10 days. Military sources said the government troops were blocked about 20 km (12 miles) South of Canacassala.

The latest surge in fighting occurred during a holiday break in six weeks of peace talks between the Angolan government and UNITA. The talks in the Zambian capital Lusaka broke last Friday.

## BRIEFLY

**Rockets hit Kabul, 4 killed:** Four persons were killed and 12 others wounded when rockets hit the western parts of Kabul on Wednesday, Radio Kabul reported, Xinhua reports from Islamabad.

The rockets were fired by forces loyal to Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the radio said.

Hekmatyar's forces were positioned in the outskirts of the capital and have reportedly hammered the city for three days.

**Uzbek President to visit India:** Uzbekistan president Islam Karimov will pay a three-day visit to India from January 3, Xinhua reports from New Delhi.

During the visit the Uzbekistan President and Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao will discuss the problems of Central Asian security, the menace of externally sponsored terrorism and strengthening of economic cooperation between the two countries, according local newspaper the Hindustan Times yesterday.

Several agreements on cooperation in the areas of economy, culture, science and technology and post and telecommunications will also be signed during the visit.

**3 Hezbollah guerrillas shot dead:** Israeli soldiers shot dead three guerrilla trying to penetrate the border from Lebanon overnight, security sources said yesterday. No Israelis were hurt, Reuter reports from Israel.

The sources said the clash occurred about 4.30 am (0230 GMT) on the border fence near Kibbutz Dan in Israel's upper Galilee. No further details were immediately available.

Israeli forces and guerrillas of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God) went on alert on Wednesday following the worst round of fighting in Lebanon in five months.

**Fire claims 10 in Manila:** Ten people, including seven from a family, were killed in a fire in a Manila squatter colony, a fire brigade official said yesterday, Reuter reports from Manila.

The blaze began in a squatter area of Makati, which houses the capital's business district, on Wednesday night and took firemen several hours to extinguish.

## 114 more Iraqis flee to Iran

NICOSIA, Dec 30: Another group of 114 Iraqis, fleeing army attacks in southern Iraqi marshes, have crossed into Iran, the Iranian agency IRNA reported, reports Reuter.

It said the group arrived on Tuesday via the Huweiza marshes which extend to the Iranian border, many with tales of continued assaults by the Iraqi army.

The agency quoted Ali Obaid, from Amara, as saying more Iraqis were on their way to Iran, driven from their homes by army artillery attacks.

Rahim Ja'afar Qathan from Basra, said that the 4th division of the Iraqi army deployed in the marshlands had destroyed and set fire to numerous residential units in the marshes including 150 houses in Basra, IRNA said.

Others spoke of the army

transferring villagers to unknown places and torturing detainees, it said.

## Rutskoi sues Izvestia

MOSCOW, Dec 30: Former Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi filed Wednesday a 200-million-ruble (170,000-dollar) libel suit against the Daily Izvestia, an anti-corruption official and a journalist, Inter Fax reported, reports AFP.

Rutskoi's lawyer, Yuri Ivanov, told a Moscow district court that his client wanted to attend the legal proceedings and proposed that hearings be held in his prison cell.

Rutskoi is currently awaiting trial in Moscow's Lefortovo prison on charges of "organising mass disturbances".

## ANC is a dangerous party, says de Klerk

GANSBAAI (South Africa): Dec 30: President F W de Klerk opened his campaign against the African National Congress on Tuesday, painting his new-reformed party as the best choice for South Africans worried about their economic future, reports AP.

De Klerk was dogged by pro-ANC hecklers during appearances on the southern tip of the country. Twenty people chanting such slogans as, "De Klerk's hands are covered in blood," and singing ANC songs drowned out the president as he tried to address about 100 supporters at his first stop, nearby Genuardendal.

"We have corrected what was wrong in our past, and made the National Party a party of reconciliation," de Klerk told about 250 supporters in Riviersterend, speaking from the back of a flatbed truck.

De Klerk moved to reform his party's apartheid policies after taking office in 1989, and began negotiations with the ANC that resulted in the setting of April 27 as the date for the country's first multiracial election.

The African National Congress is expected to win that ballot, but de Klerk's National Party is likely to be the main opposition in the next Parliament.

De Klerk stopped at a farm near Riviersterend, where he talked to ragged mixed-race onion harvesters who were working for between 18 and 30 rand (about 6-10 dollars) a day.

"The ANC is dangerous," he said. "It is a dangerous party, and there are many wild people within it. If you make me your leader, then in five years after the election, we will make South Africa a better place."

He repeated that theme at

the last stop, Gansbaai, 150 kilometres (90 miles) from Cape Town. A crowd of 250 people, most of them white, heard him



F W de Klerk

link the ANC with communism — a policy which has made one half of the world poor."

He also accused ANC supporters of intimidating and killing their political opponents.

"There is but one way to stop them in their tracks, and that is at the ballot box," he said. "The moral and moderate majority will do so under the banner of the National Party."

About 20 ANC supporters dogged de Klerk at two stops, disrupting his speeches with chants and songs. De Klerk told reporters the tactic was "proof once again of the lack of tolerance on the side of the ANC."

They make a big song and dance about wanting to be able to spread their messages in every corner of South Africa. I say they are entitled to it. But we are also entitled to it."

## Off the Record

### Diana keeping warm inside Brazilian envoy's house

WASHINGTON: Princess Diana of Britain was keeping warm inside the Brazilian ambassador's residence here Wednesday and had no plans to brave the snow and cold outside, an embassy spokesman said, reports AFP.

The British royal, who is on a private visit to Washington as a guest of the Brazilian ambassador and his wife, did not venture out at all Tuesday as snow blanketed the city and she likely to stay on Wednesday as the arctic conditions continued, the spokesman said.

Embassy staff took pity on photographers who waited outside in vain Tuesday, offering them hot coffee and informing them that the Princess would not be leaving the building as the snowfall thickened.

The Princess, who arrived in Washington Sunday, spent the first full day of her visit here Monday on a post-Christmas shopping spree in an upscale suburban mall.

As it is a private trip, the Brazilian embassy is releasing no official programme for the Princess, but the spokesman said she would be staying a few days.

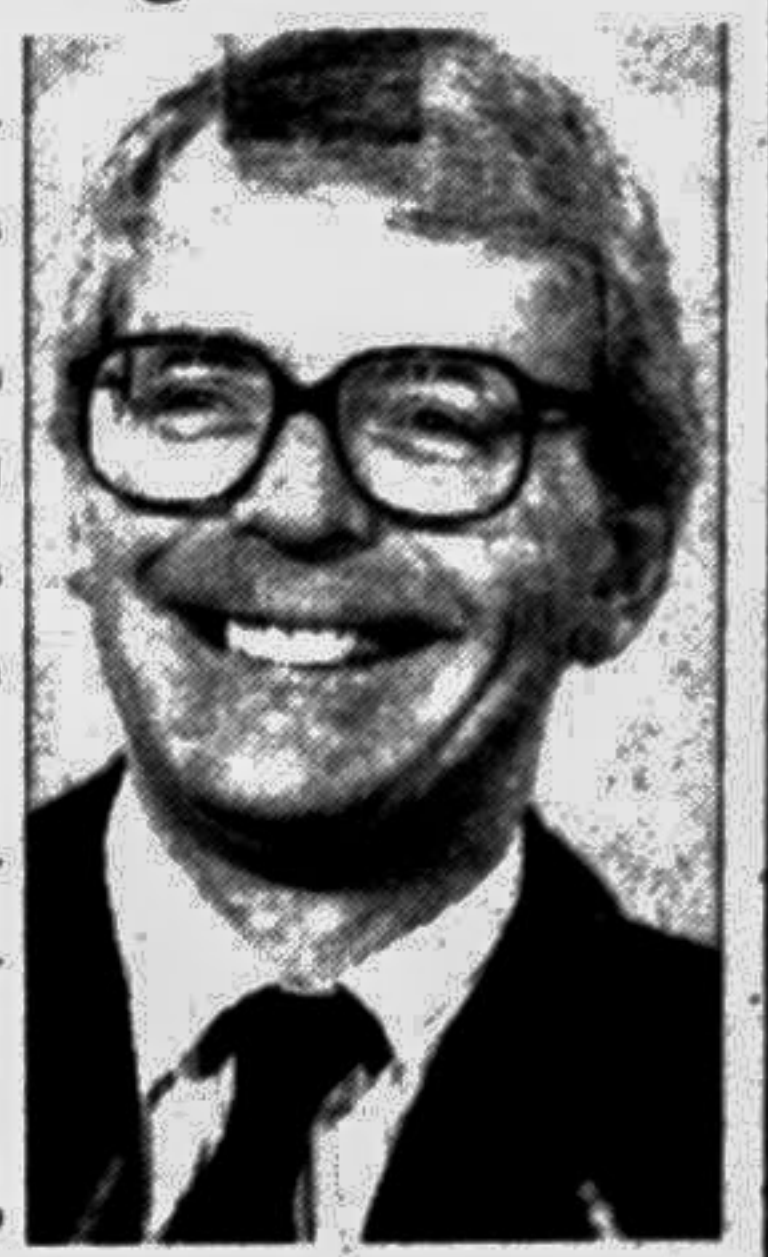
### Major a role model for teenagers

LONDON: Prime Minister John Major has become the fastest-growing role model for British teenagers who believe his grey hard-working image is the ideal approach for the future, according to a survey published Thursday, reports Reuter.

The top-selling Sun tabloid said the survey, carried out by a British bank, showed today's teenagers dreamt more about landing a secure job than making millions.

"The need for soaraway success is being replaced by a need for survival," the paper quoted psychologist David Lewis as saying. "John Major is a role model because he is seen as a hard worker rather than a high flier."

"He is not seen as a risk taker, in short they are glad to be grey."



### Deer halt air traffic for three days

NEW DELHI: Three deer who strayed into the airport at Patna, capital of the eastern Indian state of Bihar, to graze have brought air traffic to a halt for three days, the Hindu newspaper reported Thursday, says AFP.

Indian airlines stopped flying to Patna on Monday after the three blue bulls wandered onto the runway, the daily said.

The deer had strayed into the airport to nibble on the tall grass bordering the runway and were caught inside the walled area, airport officials said.

Some 50 policemen and 70 forest rangers have been trying to trap the animals but only one has been caught so far, the Hindu said.

### Renaissance weekend with movers, shakers

HILTON HEAD ISLAND: President Clinton and his family flew to this posh resort Wednesday to attend a new year's holiday weekend conference with some of the country's best-known, and little-known movers and shakers, reports Reuter.

The so-called renaissance weekend has been a holiday tradition for the Clintons for the past nine years, and has attracted national attention since Clinton was elected President last year.

The Clintons flew here from their home state Arkansas where the President, his wife Hillary and daughter Chelsea spent a few days visiting friends.

More than 1,000 people, a total of 335 families, are attending the four-day conference that includes some 210 discussion sessions focusing on a wide range of social and political issues.

Renaissance weekends were started in 1981 by Philip Lader, who was recently named Deputy White House Chief of Staff after serving as Deputy Director of the office of management and budget, and his wife Linda.

### Radiated trees for New Year's celebrations

MOSCOW: Some of the fir trees being bought in Belarus for new year's celebrations are contaminated with radiation, more than seven years after the Chernobyl disaster. Itar-Tass news agency said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

It said trees sold in Gomel, about 140 km (90 miles) from the site in neighbouring Ukraine of the world's worst nuclear accident, had unacceptably high levels of radiation.

"Trees have always been the main depositories of radioactive elements," it quoted the republic's forest institute as saying. "These green 'mini-reactors' may even grow in relatively healthy soil."

Many Belarussians prefer the safer, if less romantic, alternative of artificial trees for new year festivities.

Christmas trees in the former Soviet Union are actually new year trees since the celebration of religious feasts was discouraged during decades of communist rule.

### Floods leave thousands homeless in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Dec 30: Heavy rains have caused floods in Indonesia, setting off an outbreak of diarrhoea and forcing evacuation of thousands of people across this sprawling Archipelago, the official Antara News Agency said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Antara said floods struck Indonesia's South Sulawesi province when a dyke collapsed after a week of torrential rain, forcing almost 4,000 people to flee their homes.

There were no reports of casualties.

A local official in the province's capital of Ujung Pandang, 1,400 km (870 miles) east of Jakarta, estimated the damage at 1.08 billion rupiah (514,000 dollar).

Antara also reported an outbreak of diarrhoea at Serang in West Java after floods last week submerged up to 3,000 homes in several villages.

Health officials in Serang, 80 km (50 miles) West of Jakarta, said clinics and hospitals were inundated with hundreds of local villagers suffering from diarrhoea, and they appealed for aid. A severe outbreak of diarrhoea killed at least 262 people in Indonesia's easternmost province of Irian Jaya, Antara reported in October without specifying when the people died.

Meteorological officials warned on Tuesday heavy storms were likely to lash wide areas of this commodity-rich nation until mid-January and could endanger shipping and homes.

They said tropical storms would cause high waves around most areas of the world's fourth-most populous nation and trigger torrential rains.