

BRIEFLY

Clashes leave 5 dead in Kenya:

Five people were killed and another five wounded in fresh tribal clashes sparked by a cattle rustling incident involving members of the Kikuyu and Maasai ethnic groups in Kenya's southwestern region of Mau Narok, local newspapers said yesterday. AFP reports from Nairobi.

4 climbers die in Japan:

All of the four climbers missing on mount Daisen in the western Japan prefecture of Tottori were found dead yesterday, police said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

Indonesia deports 40 immigrants:

Authorities in the Indonesian province of East Kalimantan have deported 40 illegal immigrants, mainly Malaysians, the Antara News Agency said Sunday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

5 Chinese murdered in Spain:

Five Chinese nationals were found murdered in this east coast resort Saturday night, victims of an apparent revenge attack, the Commercial Radio Station Cadena Ser reported, AFP reports from Spain.

3 Mexican police officers killed:

Attacks by hundreds of armed Indian peasants on four towns in the southwestern state of Chiapas left at least three police officers dead and 18 wounded, news reports said, AP reports from Mexico City.

Road mishaps claim 19 in Thailand:

Nineteen persons were dead and several others injured in five road accidents in Thailand on New Year's Eve, according to local press yesterday. Xinhua reports from Bangkok.

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Dostum's forces lay siege to Afghan presidential palace

ISLAMABAD, Jan 2: The Afghan presidential palace was under siege today in the second day of heavy fighting in Kabul between presidential and rebel forces which have left hundreds dead or injured, Afghan sources said, reports AFP.

The attacks from combined anti-government forces, aimed at toppling President Burhanuddin Rabbani, resumed at dawn, centering on the palace and the Defence Ministry.

A spokesman for Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a long-time rival of Rabbani, told AFP that the palace was under the siege by the joint forces of a newly formed four-party military alliance.

Reporting a string of strategic gains from Saturday's pre-dawn operation, Haji Fareed said "the situation is in favour of Mujahideen," a term now used to identify Rabbani's rivals.

Afghan diplomatic sources here said hundreds of people including civilians were feared dead in Saturday's fighting. The exact figure was not available as Kabul became paralysed by the heavy shelling. A hospital was among the buildings hit.

The offensive was launched by Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum after difference had developed between him and Rabbani and between his main commander and former Defence

Minister Ahmad Shah Masood, an ally of Rabbani. Apparently with prior agreement, Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami and the pro-Iran-Hezb-i-Wahdat joined the new year offensive with Dostum's forces, while reports of pro-Saudi Arabia Ittehad-i-Islami Party's participation were contradictory.

Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami sources said Rasul Sayyaf of Ittehad had responded to Rabbani's appeal for help to "save Kabul from communists."

The Jamiat spokesman claimed that the rival forces were repulsed at several places including the airport. However, he said fighting was heavy in southeastern and western parts of the city.

AP adds: Workers with the International Committee of the Red Cross, normally the most reliable source for casualty figures, had to take cover from the shelling in the basements of their homes, and no one was at the office.

However, Red Cross officials in the main northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif said fighting broke out there between rival factions, leaving the streets deserted except for the combatants.

Much of the fighting in Mazar-i-Sharif appeared to be near the airport, where Dostum controls more than 40 jet fighter planes.

Arafat urges Israel to abide by autonomy deal

NICOSIA, Jan 2: PLO chief Yasser Arafat on Saturday called for accurate application of the Israeli-Palestinian autonomy accord for the occupied territories and urged Israel to abide by it, reports AFP.

"Israel must respect what it signed. I only ask for faithful and accurate implementation of what was signed," he told Radio Monte Carlo in an interview monitored in Nicosia.

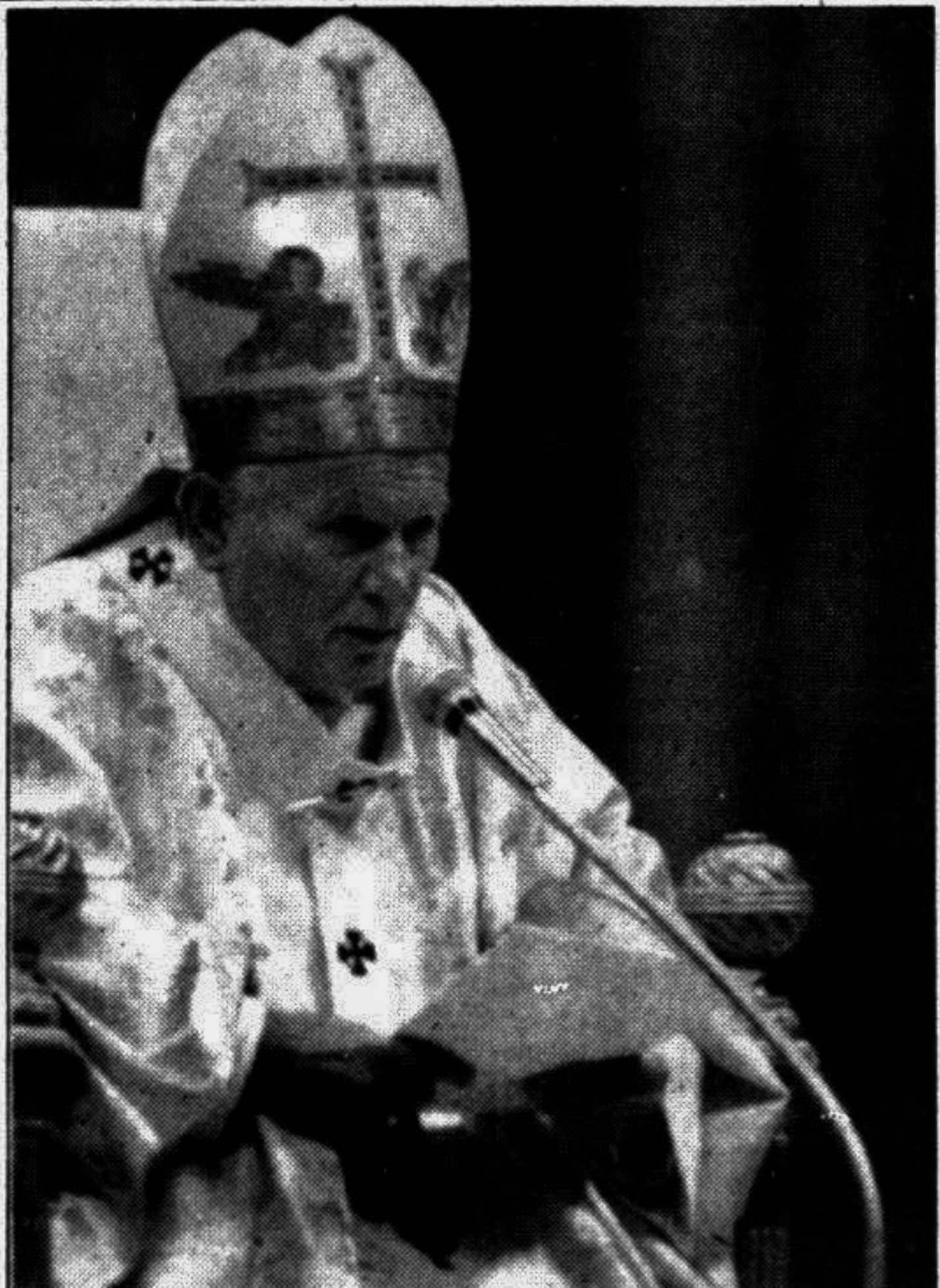
"When we speak of withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho that means pullout, not redeployment," he said about the two regions from where the Israeli army was to have begun withdrawing on December 13 under the accord signed in Washington on September 13.

Arafat said the Palestinians had no intention of living in ghettos or bantustans. "That's why we cannot accept the conditions that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and others have tried to impose on the Palestinian people," he said.

Rabin can continue the occupation of our land for some time to come, but he must understand that he will never be able to impose his injustice and his contempt," Arafat said.

The PLO chairman said that a summit in Geneva this month between US President Bill Clinton and his Syrian counterpart Hafez al-Assad would provide the needed push to revive the deadlocked Israeli-Syrian talks.

He added that the meeting would undoubtedly promote progress on all the other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations.



Pope John Paul II celebrates the Angelus mass at Saint Peter's Basilica in Vatican City Jan 01 on the occasion of the new year. The Pontiff expressed his concern over the rise of nationalism and the world economic crisis. — AFP photo

Sino-Indian talks on reducing border forces soon

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: Asian giants China and India will soon start talks aimed at cutting military deployment on both sides of their disputed frontier, the Chinese envoy here was quoted as saying today, reports AFP.

"Both sides want to divert their resources from military to economic development," ambassador Cheng Ruisheng told the Press Trust of India (PTI).

An expert group of military personnel and diplomats set up to maintain peace on the border will meet here in February to discuss the pruning of top levels, Cheng said.

The issue also figured at talks held here last month by a high ranking Chinese military delegation led by Lieutenant General Xi Hui, vice chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army.

India has some 60,000 combat troops on its side of the rugged mountainous frontier. The Chinese military strength across the Himalayan border is estimated to be much greater.

The two countries fought a brief but bitter war in 1962 over a border dispute which involves 128,000 square kilometres (51,200 square miles) of territory. The war led to a 14-year freeze in diplomatic relations.

Cheng told PTI that the conflict and resultant tensions belonged to history. "We are trying to catch up with the lost time," the envoy said, referring to a gradual improvement in relations.

"We should keep the tempo next year," he was quoted as saying.

A high level Chinese Communist Party delegation is to visit here January 7-13 at the invitation of the ruling Congress (I) Party. The Chinese Defence Minister is also due to travel here in the second half of 1994.

Indiah Vice President K R Narayanan is expected to visit China for a festival of Indian culture in May.

Ambassador Cheng stressed that Beijing's relations with Pakistan, India's bitter rival, had no bearing on its ties with New Delhi.

Off the Record

Male contraceptive safe

NEW DELHI: An injectible contraceptive for men developed by a team of scientists here has passed the mandatory safety trials in human volunteers, reports PTI.

The successful safety trials clear the way for the second phase efficacy trials that might ultimately help this injectible emerge an alternative to vasectomy.

The technique was devised at the Centre for Biomedical Engineering, a research centre run jointly by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here.

The new technique involves injecting a chemical into the vas deferens, a narrow channel through which spermatozoa pass before ejaculation.

The injection contains a polymer-like substance called Styrene Maleic Anhydride (SMA) which blocks the way out for the spermatozoa and also reduces their ability to fertilise.

Reporting their findings in the international research journal "contraception," the IIT-AIIMS scientists said the safety trials conducted on 38 male volunteers showed that it is a safe procedure with no adverse effects.

Cat causes fire

LUCENA (Philippines): A stray cat caused a fire here that claimed the lives of three children on New Year's eve, police said Saturday, reports AFP.

The feline entered a squatters' shanty on the outskirts of town and accidentally knocked down a kerosene lamp that had been set on a window sill.

The lamp fell to the floor, causing a fire that killed two sisters aged 11 and seven and their nine-year old brother.

Flight lands with one passenger more than expected

LONDON: A Thai Airways flight from New Delhi arrived in London Saturday with one passenger more than expected — a baby boy born to an Indian woman who went into labour while the Boeing 747 was in the air, reports AFP.

Udom Tawatsin, the carrier's manager at London's Heathrow Airport, said the woman began having contractions three hours after the flight took off and that she gave birth in the first class cabin before landing.

"Fortunately, we had two doctors on board and they both came forward to help with the birth," he said. "There was little space on the plane for the baby's delivery but we managed."

Mother and child were taken to a hospital in London and were doing well. The father, who had come to Heathrow to meet his wife, was said to be "surprised and delighted."

Don't try to make eye contact with an elephant

UNDATED: Never stand in an elephant's path. And whatever you do, don't try to make eye contact, reports AP.

With a herd of lost and hungry wild elephants roving through the nearby countryside, having trampled six people to death, Calcutta newspapers on Saturday published reports on elephant behaviour and tips on what to do if one approaches.

The bottom line when you face an elephant, they said, is to avoid walking in front of it or letting it get a direct look at you.

The elephants' small eyes and huge bulk limits their peripheral vision.

The good news: Elephants rarely go on the offensive unless teased or maddened, and at least a herd's pecking order is far less threatening than a lone bull, contends Shantanu Ghosh of the Zoological Survey of India.

The Telegraph newspaper asked Calcutta residents as well as experts what they would do if confronted by one of the huge beasts.

"I don't run," replied Mama Ghosh, no relation to the pachyderm expert. "I just hide."

Birth of a boy means year of war ahead

SARAJEVO: Sarajevo's first baby of the new year was a boy and according to local superstition this means the city will face another year of war in 1994, reports Reuters.

Hospital authorities said 30-year-old Zvezka Dzafovic gave birth to a baby boy of four kilos (nine pounds) at 7.50 PM on the evening of January 1.

The gloomy superstition attached to the birth of a boy as the new year's first baby stems from Sarajevo's unsettled history over the last century. In 1914, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in the city led to World War I.

Hospital officials said that in 1993, 1,400 babies were born in the Bosnian capital, which has been under Serb siege for 21 months.

Aristide asks Haitians to resist military regime

PORT-AU-PRINCE (Haiti), Jan 2: Haitians must do more to resist the Haitian military and its allies, exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide said in a radio address to his homeland, reports AP.

"We are on the road of resistance, mobilisation and resistance everywhere," Aristide said Saturday.

"The year has to change gears so that the car of democracy will run more swiftly home."

Aristide, Haiti's first democratically elected leader, gave the speech to mark Haiti's 190th anniversary of independence from France. It was carried in Creole by the Voice of America.

The Haitian military has ruled Haiti since ousting Aristide in a coup in 1991.

While pledging to work toward a negotiated solution, Aristide used a harsher tone than in an address earlier last week.

He said that Haitians in 1994 will "march more to the rhythm" of Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who became the first ruler of independent Haiti in 1804. Dessalines helped defeat France through violent means, including decapitating his enemies and burning down their homes.

On Tuesday, Aristide had called for an end to the country's violence following a fire in a Port-au-Prince slum that left more than 5,000 people homeless.

Armed men set the fire hours after a pro-military activist was killed in the Cité

US threat may invite catastrophe over N-issue: Kim Il Sung

TOKYO, Jan 2: The United States should "behave with prudence" in talks aimed at convincing North Korea to allow international monitoring of its nuclear programme, President Kim Il Sung said, reports AP.

Kim, who has ruled the hard-line Communist state since 1948, also acknowledged Saturday that North Korea's economy faced "enormous difficulties" with the end of the Cold War and increased tension on the Korean peninsula.

The United States has hinted at possible sanctions if North Korea continues to refuse mandatory inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency, a UN watchdog, at two suspected nuclear sites. The North denies that it is trying to build a nuclear bomb.

"Pressure or threat will have no effect on us. Such an attempt may invite catastrophe, far from finding a solution to the problem," Kim said in his address, carried by the official Korean Central News Agency and monitored in Tokyo.

"The United States must see all the facts squarely and behave with prudence."

The warning was Pyongyang's strongest yet on the nuclear issue, according to North Korea watchers in Japan. Other official statements had used phrases such as "grave consequences."

However, the two sides reported progress after talks last week, and Kim's statement included vague reference to accord.

"Since a joint statement has been adopted by (North) Korea and the United States, the nuclear problem on the Korean peninsula can be settled fairly if both sides keep and implement the principles that have been agreed upon," he said.

The speech did not give any details about just what joint statement Kim meant.

North Korea has had a series of informal meetings with American officials in New York, and both sides reported progress on ending the dispute over the inspection of nuclear facilities after their latest meeting Thursday. Kim did not specifically discuss the contacts in his speech.

"It is the United States that has created the fictitious 'doubt about nuclear development by the North'," Kim said. "Therefore, the nuclear problem on the Korean peninsula must on any account be settled through Korea-US talks."

The comments by the two sides after the New York meetings were the most promising sign to date that a peaceful resolution may be possible.

The Central Intelligence Agency believes the North Koreans have one or two atomic bombs, although there is widespread disagreement over whether they can deliver the weapons. The issue has prompted fears of a nuclear arms race in Northeast Asia.

India hopes to sign extradition pacts with US, Canada and Germany

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: India hopes to sign extradition treaties with the United States, Canada and Germany in a bid to fight insurgents operating from foreign shores, Home Minister Shankarrao Chavan said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Chavan told the National Herald newspaper that he would be visiting the three countries by early February to finalise the agreements that would be modelled on an India-British treaty signed in 1992.

That accord, ratified during a visit here in January 1993 by British Prime Minister John Major,

has made barter and black marketeering the dominant trade. Poverty and ubiquitous guns lure people into banditry to survive. Even many of those who do not live directly off the war do so indirectly.

The retreat of a sophisticated society into subsistence and dog-eat-dog morality is as devastating as the physical toll of more than 200,000 killed and missing many more wounded and countless buildings destroyed since war erupted when the Yugoslav federation began splintering in June 1991.

War has become the only profession in former Y'slavia

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jan 2: In this battered capital, 20 months under siege, many people still get up and go to work. It's no normal 9-to-5 toil, more a way of defying the Serb gunners who want the city to die, reports AP.

But most Bosnians — and many people in neighbouring Croatia and Serbia — do not have the luxury of even pretending life is normal. War has become almost the only profession with work to offer.

Across Bosnia, and in much of Croatia and Serbia, the ravages and brutal displacements of Europe's worst bloodletting since 1945 have brought manufacturing and commerce to a standstill.

Near-worthless local currencies have made barter and black marketeering the dominant trade. Poverty and ubiquitous guns lure people into banditry to survive. Even many of those who do not live directly off the war do so indirectly.

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111,000 greet Akihito

TOKYO, Jan 2: Emperor Akihito on Sunday received his largest crowd of well-wishers since assuming the throne in 1989, making one more palace balcony appearance that scheduled to accommodate the New Year's crowd of more than 111,000, reports AP.

"I pray for the happiness of all people and wish for peace in the world," Akihito told the crowds on each of eight appearances behind bullet-proof glass.

In clear, windless weather, the visitors waved small Japanese rising sun flags and shouted "banzai" or long life for the emperor, who turned 60 on December 23.

About 2,600 policemen were mobilised in and around the palace grounds.

ceasefire has brought almost two years of uneasy peace, there is little normal life left.

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