

Gulf Arab rulers pay bribes to maintain sanctions : Saddam

BAGHDAD, Jan 6: President Saddam Hussein accused Gulf Arab rulers on Wednesday of paying bribes to maintain UN trade sanctions on Iraq, reports Reuters.

"Some treacherous rulers in the region are spending what money is left to them as bribes here and there to obstruct the growing trend towards lifting the unjust blockade," Saddam said in an address marking the Iraqi army's 73rd anniversary.

"These rulers have lost their honour and will lose the last of their ill-cottenwealth without being able to foil Iraq's steadfastness and its ability to march forward over the debris of the blockade walls," Saddam added.

Saddam did not mention any country by name.

He urged the Iraqis to show self-reliance in their uphill bat-

tle against the UN embargo which has blocked Iraq's lifeblood of oil exports.

"We are confident that steadfastness and the continuation of construction and innovation represent the only deliverance from the unjust blockade," he added.

Saddam made no mention of United Nations resolution passed during the 1990-91 conflict over Kuwait which Iraq has to comply before sanctions are eased or lifted.

"As Iraqis and as free Arabs, we want to enjoy in the world of today the dignified position which we deserve," Saddam said.

He called for more hard work to "defeat the unjust blockade and to prove to our enemies and that this embargo is to no avail."

Aidee reelected President of USC-SNA

MOGADISHU, Jan 6: General Mohamed Farah Aidee has in his absence been re-elected president of his United Somali Congress-Somali National Alliance (USC-SNA) faction, a party spokesman said here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The whole party leadership drawn from the Habr Gedir subclan was reappointed for six months by the party's central committee meeting in Mogadishu, spokesman Abdi Abshir Kahiye said, adding that "the situation does not allow for changes at present."

The United Somali Congress, which played a decisive role in the January 1991 overthrow of Siad Barre, subsequently split into two factions led by Aidee and his rival, self-styled interim president Ali Mahdi Mohamed.

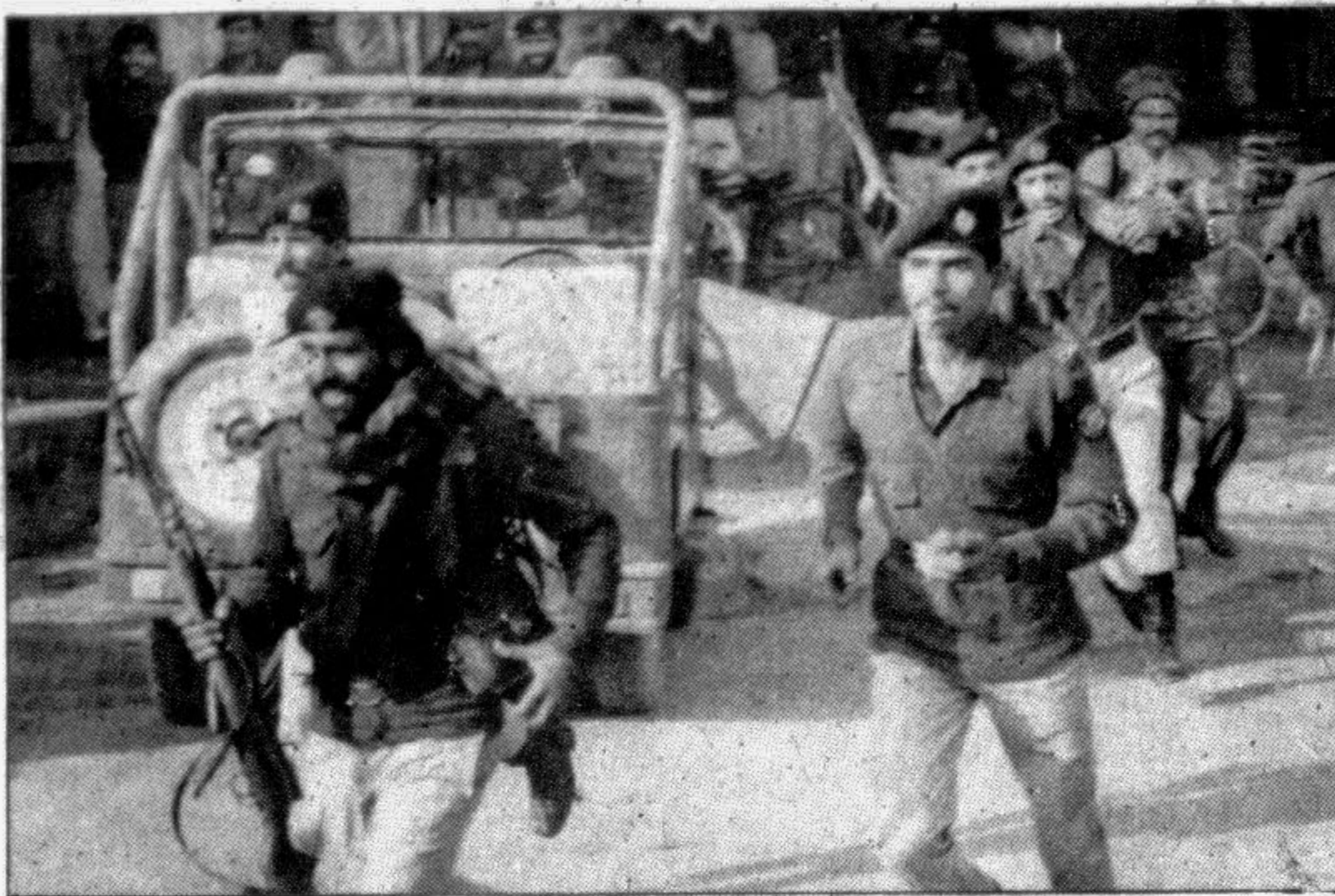
Women allowed to serve on warships in Indonesia

JAKARTA, Jan 6: The Indonesian navy will for the first time allow women to serve on warships, navy spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa said here today, reports AFP.

"The navy has trained women at marine education centres in the past two years and some of them will be posted to warships in the near future," he told AFP by telephone.

Initially the navy would post them to smaller craft and patrol boats, he said. But there was nothing to prevent them becoming ship's captains eventually, he added.

All 799 members of Indonesia's marine corps (KOWAL), set up in 1963, are currently serving in training and education departments or as computer operators.



Riot police rush towards supporters of Murtaza Bhutto, brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Jan 05 after crowds gathered to take part in ceremonies marking the 66th anniversary of the birth of former premier Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, founder of the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Larkana. At least two people were killed and 20 others injured when police opened fire on hundreds of demonstrators. — AFP photo

Nusrat demands probe into police firing

KARACHI, Jan 6: Nusrat Bhutto, mother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, has demanded that a Supreme Court Judge investigate why police fired on a procession she was leading outside the family estate, reports AP.

Wednesday's shooting resulted in several casualties and has again heightened tensions among the feuding Bhutto family.

"My demand is that there should be an inquiry by an independent body headed by a judge of the Supreme Court," she said late Wednesday.

Nusrat Bhutto was leading about 500 people from the family estate to the nearby grave of her husband, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, on the 66th anniversary of his birth.

She said police fired bullets and tear gas without provocation on the marchers in the southern city of Larkana, about 480 kilometers (300 miles) north of Karachi.

Off the Record

Hosokawa receives world's largest New Year's card

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa was Thursday given what was claimed to be the world's largest New Year's card measuring 15 meters by 23 meters (49 feet by 76 feet), officials said, reports AFP.

The card, made of corrugated cardboard, was delivered to his official residence here by truck, they said. Hosokawa was not at home when it arrived, they added.

It was made by 24-year-old freelance cameraman Tadayuki Yoshida, of Hyogo prefecture, western Japan, who wanted to send it to the most popular figure in Japan in 1993.

He started work on it in November, the officials said.

"It's the world's largest. I'll apply to have it registered in the Guinness Book of World Records," Yoshida was quoted as saying.



Dogs remain welcome only on the menu

HONG KONG: Dogs remain welcome in the Chinese city of Canton — but only on the menu, reports AP.

Authorities have decided to enforce a ban on pet dogs following a spate of complaints from bitten Cantonese, the state-run China News Service said Wednesday.

The Communists outlawed all pets as a bourgeois extravagance when they came to power in 1949, and exterminated all they could find.

But enforcement has waned over the decades. By the 1970s, some people were keeping fish again. Birds came back in the 1980s, followed by cats. And dogs became a status symbol for affluent Chinese in the 1990s, especially in the booming southern city of Canton.

"The situation of dogs biting and injuring people has become serious," the China News Service said, adding that in the first nine months of 1993 Canton hospitals gave 13,000 rabies injections for dog bites.

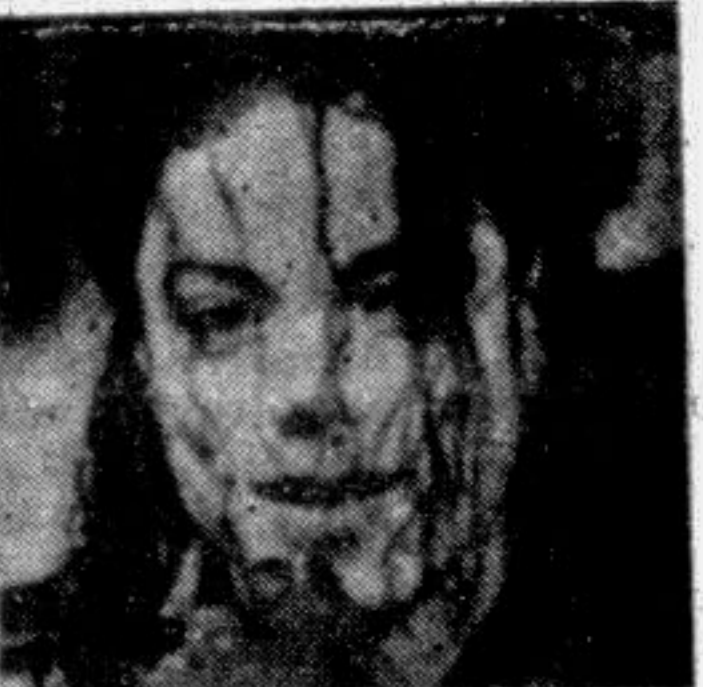
The ban applies to all dogs, guard dogs and show dogs, it said. Dogs sold in marketplaces for their meat, a Cantonese delicacy, will undergo health checks, it added.

"Truth will be my salvation"

PASADENA, California: Pop superstar Michael Jackson emerged from seclusion Wednesday night to deny allegations that he sexually molested a 13-year-old boy and proclaim that "the truth will be my salvation," reports Reuters.

In his first public appearance since making a nationally televised statement December 22, Jackson told a wildly cheering crowd at the NAACP's image awards that "not only am I presumed to be innocent, I am innocent."

"Everyone is presumed to be innocent and totally innocent until they are charged with a crime and then convicted by a jury of their peers," Jackson told the mostly black audience at the civil rights organization's annual awards ceremony for artists and entertainers.



Kim Il Sung makes 70 slips of tongue

TOKYO: North Korea's aging President Kim Il-Sung made about 70 slips of the tongue or misstatements he had to correct in his New Year's speech, according to an analysis by Japan's radio press reported today, reports AFP.

Last year he only made about 40, it said. Radio press, a private news service which monitors and compiles foreign language broadcasts, said Kim Il-Sung's broadcast new year message lasted about 25 minutes on January 1, the same length as last year.

The state of Kim Il-Sung's health is the subject of considerable speculation because of the delicate question of his succession by his son and heir apparent Kim Jong-Il.

"Such an increase in misstatements is noteworthy," a radio press official said. Kim Il-Sung turned 81 on April 15 last year. However, one foreign visitor who met him recently told Japanese sources that he still looks alert and has a strong handshake, despite apparently having some hearing problems.



Akira Kiuchi, wearing a tiara which says "Happy New Year," shows off a swimsuit of embossed metallic foil during Teijin's 94 swimsuit collection in Tokyo. Akira is this year's campaign girl for Japanese designer Teijin. — AFP photo

PLO, Israel agree to resume peace talks next week

JERUSALEM, Jan 6: Israel and the PLO said today they had agreed to restart talks on implementing their peace deal, ending a week-long stalemate over a disputed document, reports Reuters.

A joint statement on the resumption of negotiations in the Egyptian resort of Taba was released by Israel and the PLO.

Israeli radio stations reported the talks would get underway on Sunday or Monday.

The two sides agreed to resume the Taba negotiations on the basis of the (September 13) declaration of principles and the Cairo understandings (last week), a joint PLO-Israel letter

released in Tunis and Jerusalem said.

Negotiators had been expected to meet in Taba this week to try to iron out differences that delayed the planned December 13 start of an Israeli troops pullout in the occupied Gaza strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

But the talks were put on hold while Israel and the PLO argued whether there had been agreement in negotiations in Cairo last week on a document, or understandings, on ways to resolve outstanding security issues.

Both sides, which signed the

declaration of principles on Palestinian self-rule in Washington, are at odds over control of border crossings, the size of an autonomous Jericho enclave and security arrangements for Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip.

Today's letter was signed for the PLO by Mahmoud Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, and for Israel by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

The two parties support the renewal of their full commitment to the text and spirit of the declaration of principles and the two sides feel that the discussions in Norway, France and Cairo were useful to reach an

agreement as soon as possible and to transfer the declaration of principles in to reality on the ground," the letter said.

"When such an agreement will be reached it will not be possible to change it unilaterally," it said.

Israeli Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said the PLO had tried to rip the Cairo document to pieces.

"I understand that is no longer the intention and therefore it is possible to resume the talks on the basis of the Cairo understandings. That is what Israel asked for and that is what it got."

Kashmir problem an obstacle to peace in the region : Leghari

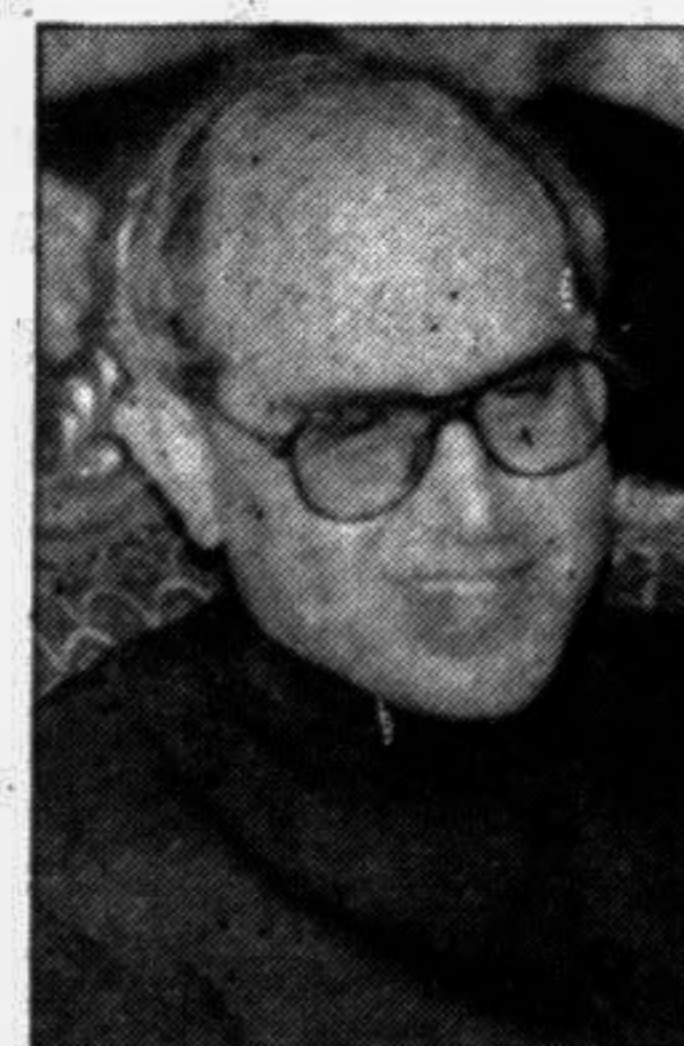
ISLAMABAD, Jan 6: President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari has said that the Kashmir problem was a stumbling-block in the way of durable peace and stability in the region and its early resolution would be in the interest of both India and Pakistan, reports AFP.

He was talking to Lord Eric Avebury, chairman, All Party Parliamentary Human Rights group, UK, who called on him at the Alwan-E-Sadr yesterday.

The president said that the only way to resolve the problem was to give the people of Kashmir their inalienable right of self-determination as enshrined in the relevant UN resolutions.

Referring to the gross violations of human rights in the occupied Kashmir, the president said that Pakistan would continue to utilise all diplomatic channels, to awaken the world conscience against continuing

repression in the valley. He said that it was the high time that the international community should take notice of the alarming situation in Kashmir, and the atrocities being com-



Farooq Ahmed Leghari

mitted on innocent people there.

While briefing on recently held talks between Pakistan and India at foreign secretaries level, the president explained to Lord Avebury about Pakistan's principled stand and Indian intransigence on the Kashmir issue.

The president also thanked Lord Eric Avebury for arousing the conscience of the world to stop the crime against humanity that was going on the held-Kashmir.

Lord Avebury told the president that the UN ability to help in the resolution of the problem had been stymied by the Indian reluctance to cooperate. He said that his repeated attempts to persuade India to allow human rights observers had run up against the wall of silence.

Additional Foreign Secretary Gul Hanif and head of Jammu Kashmir People's Party Khalid Ibrahim Khan were also present

BRIEFLY

Shevardnadze to visit Turkey:

Georgian Head of State Eduard Shevardnadze will visit Turkey on January 12-13. Foreign Ministry spokesman Ferhat Ataman said here Wednesday, Xinhua reports from Ankara.

Ataman announced that Shevardnadze and his Turkish counterpart Suleyman Demirel will sign a declaration during the visit.

The declaration will include "bilateral cooperation for supremacy of welfare and law within the pluralistic democracy, stability, peace and democracy."

Ex-US Speaker O'Neill dead:

Thomas (Tip) O'Neill, former Speaker of the US House of Representatives, died Wednesday night in a Boston hospital, local television reported, Reuters reports from Boston.

WBZ-TV reported that O'Neill, 81, died at Brigham and women's hospital at about 9:30 pm ES (0230 GMT) Thursday.

Iran restores ties with S Africa:

The Iranian government yesterday decided to resume diplomatic relations with South Africa after a suspension of 14 years, Xinhua reports from Tehran.

According to the Iranian official news agency IRNA, the Iranian cabinet voted for resumption of relations with South Africa because the problems of racial discrimination had been solved in that country.

Thai Red Cross team in Yangon:

A seven-member goodwill Red Cross delegation of Thailand arrived Yangon on Wednesday evening, Xinhua reports.

The delegation was led by Phan Wannamathee, the secretary of the Thai Red Cross society.

Hekmatyar to welcome Pak team:

Afghan Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar would welcome any visit from Pakistan aimed at restoring peace in Kabul, his official representative in Islamabad said Wednesday, AFP report from Islamabad.

"Hekmatyar has always welcomed visitors from Pakistan," Mangal Hussain said in a statement on the Hezb-i-Islami leader's response to a planned mediation trip to Kabul by Pakistani Foreign Minister Asaf Ahmed Ali.

The foreign minister had to put off a scheduled visit after fighting broke out in Kabul on New Year's day.

"We respect Pakistan's concern for peace and stability in Afghanistan and are always ready to receive any delegation from the brotherly country," Hussain said.

Mexican troops search for armed peasants

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico, Jan 6: Armoured cars patrolled highways while soldiers and helicopters searched mountain villages Wednesday trying to root out armed Indian peasants who staged a New Year's uprising, reports AP.

The government offered to negotiate but set conditions that would amount to surrender by the rebels, who are protesting the plight of the predominantly Mayan people in Chiapas, one of Mexico's poorest states.

It appeared unlikely the terms would be accepted by the guerrillas, who retreated into the sanctuary of jungles and forests Tuesday after four days of fighting in towns. The government demanded they first dis-

arm, identify leaders, free hostages and return 3,000 pounds (1,350 kilograms) of stolen dynamite.

Just south of this picturesque 16th-century town, columns of armoured cars cruised the main southbound highway while dozens of tense soldiers manned roadblocks to keep out other traffic.

It is an unfamiliar role for most Mexican soldiers, who have been used in the fight against drug trafficking but spend much of their time on civic projects and as guards for government buildings.

The independent Excelsior news agency said about 14,000 soldiers were in Chiapas, a region of lush beauty that is plagued by illiteracy, poverty and land disputes.

Mystery surrounds fate of Gamsakhurdia

MOSCOW, Jan 6: Mystery surrounded the fate of ousted Georgian president Zviad Gamsakhurdia today with family, aides and opponents giving conflicting reports of whether he is dead or alive, reports Reuters.

From exile in southern Russia, Gamsakhurdia's wife, Manana, told Interfax news agency the former dissident and translator of Shakespeare had killed himself last Friday as an act of protest, after the failure of his latest bid to return to power.

Gamsakhurdia, 54, was ousted from power in Georgia in January 1992, just seven months after being elected president. Since then, he has orchestrated two failed comeback attempts from Mingrelia, his ethnic homeland in western Georgia.

Between armed uprisings, he took shelter in the rebel south-

ern Russian republic of Chechnya, where he left his wife Manana before heading home to Mingrelia last fall for his second



Zviad Gamsakhurdia

push to oust new Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze, who is a former Soviet Foreign

Minister.

The Commonwealth of Independent States' Ostankino television channel quoted Manana as saying her husband killed himself after he was surrounded by warriors of the Mkhedroni (horsemen) militia, nominally loyal to Shevardnadze.

The Mkhedroni's press centre quickly denied the allegation. Itar-Tass news agency quoted it as saying Gamsakhurdia was wounded in clashes in Chechnya on Friday and died of his wounds in western Georgia on Wednesday.

Russia's Itar-Tass news agency quoted Gamsakhurdia's press service in the breakaway Russian region of Chechnya, where Gamsakhurdia spent his exile, as saying he had made a statement several minutes before his death.

"I commit this act in sound

mind, as an act of protest against the existing regime in Georgia," his statement said.

There was no independent confirmation of the report and Tass did not say how he killed himself.

Gamsakhurdia's Moscow-based spokesman, Georgy Gulbani, on Wednesday dismissed the conflicting reports of the death as no more than deliberate disinformation by his enemies, Interfax said.

Gulbani said he had seen him alive on Saturday, a day after his reported death, but he could not say whether Gamsakhurdia was still alive now.

He added that Manana Gamsakhurdia had simply been misled. Suicide was impossible, Gulbani said, without "all Georgia finding out within a day at most."