

# BRIEFLY

**Fahd, Balladur hold talks:** King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur held talks in Riyadh late Saturday during a brief visit by the French Premier designed to boost bilateral trade, reports AFP from Riyadh.

French officials said an outline cooperation agreement was to have been concluded during the discussions.

The king and the prime minister met face to face following a dinner given by Saudi authorities.

French sources said the proposed cooperation accord could result in billions of dollars in trade and defence contracts.

**Tribal leader killed in Yemen:** Unidentified gunmen have killed a tribal leader and member of the Yemen Socialist Party (YSP), which said on Saturday that political assassinations were pushing the country towards civil war. Reuter reports from Dubai.

Party sources said three gunmen shot Abdel-Karim Saleh Al-Ghami in the head on Friday as he was arriving by car at his home in the capital Sanaa.

**Hungary to join NATO scheme:** Hungary has decided to join a NATO scheme offering closer military links and may be the first former Soviet bloc country to do so, a visiting US envoy said on Saturday. Reuter reports from Budapest.

Madeleine Albright, US Ambassador to the United Nations, made the announcement after she and General John Shalikashvili, the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, held talks with Prime Minister Peter Boross and other Hungarian leaders two days before a NATO summit is due to open in Brussels.

**3 drug dealers held in Bangkok:** Two Americans and a man from Barbados were arrested carrying 1.3 KG (2.85 lb) of heroin when a patrol car stopped their taxi in central Bangkok, police said. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

Police Lieutenant Colonel Chalad Utasing identified those arrested and charged with possessing narcotics for sale as Tanzanian-born Yafya Ali Alim, 40, his fellow back American John Charles Hulten, 20, and Barbadian Daniel Jame Mungah, 28.

He said Salim was carrying a US passport issued in Seattle and Hulten was born in California.

**Iranian Speaker blasts Pope:**

Iran's Speaker of Parliament Ali Akbar Nategh Nuri yesterday blasted Pope John-Paul II for the Vatican's recognition of Israel, saying the move was an insult to the image of Christ. AFP reports from Tehran.

"The fact that the Pope has sanctioned the crimes of Israel is nothing new to us," Nategh Nuri said. "What is important is committing such an act on the birth anniversary of Christ."

"The move to recognise the Zionist regime was the greatest insult to the image of the Christian prophet," he said. In Islam, Jesus Christ is regarded as a prophet.

**Blast leaves 33 injured in ROK:** An explosion, probably caused by leaking gas, rocked a block of flats in southwest South Korea yesterday, injuring 33 people, police said. Reuter reports from Seoul.

A police spokesman in the city of Yosu said the blast caused extensive damage to several flats and blew out hundreds of windows. About 1,000 residents were evacuated.

"Most of the victims were injured after being hit by pieces of broken glass," the spokesman said. He said police were investigating the blast on the eighth floor of the building.

**Wife wants to bury Gamsakhurdia outside Georgia**

MOSCOW, Jan 9: The wife of former Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia called on Saturday for international pressure on the Georgian government to allow her husband's body to be buried outside Georgia, reports Reuter.

But, three days after Manana Gamsakhurdia first announced that her husband committed suicide on December 31, there was still no definite information on where his body was or even how he had died.

Gamsakhurdia took refuge in the rebel southern Russian region of Chechnya in early 1992 after fleeing to escape armed opponents besieging his parliament. His wife wants to bury him in the Chechen capital, Grozny.

"Considering the current anarchy in Georgia, we find it impossible to bury him in Georgia," she said in a statement published by the Georgian news agency Iberia.

It is also possible that his corpse might be desecrated. Therefore, our wish is to bury Zviad Gamsakhurdia temporarily in Chechnya."

Gamsakhurdia returned to Georgia twice after being ousted

**2 fundamentalists killed in Algeria**

ALGIERS, Jan 9: Two armed Islamic fundamentalists were killed Saturday evening in an attack on the police station at Baucheray, on the outskirts of Algiers, the newspaper Liberate reported today, reports AFP.

Two passersby were also wounded in the attack.

**China, Japan to work for N-free Korean peninsula**

BEIJING, Jan 9: China and Japan agreed to do their best to encourage North Korea to accept international nuclear inspections, visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata said Sunday, reports AP.

"We aren't saying we want China to put pressure on North Korea to open up its nuclear programme," Hata said, "but rather to pass on to North Korea the misgivings and worries of the world about the North Korean nuclear problem."

China has refused to publicly comment on what it has told its ally North Korea regarding the nuclear issue, insisting it is a matter for North Korea to resolve in negotiations with the United States and the International Atomic Energy

Agency. However, other countries, including Japan, have repeatedly appealed to China to use its close ties with North Korea to help defuse tensions.

Hata said China and Japan both want a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and agreed to work toward that goal, but that China made clear its opposition to sanctions against North Korea.

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