

Pak-Bosnia treaty soon : Silajdzic

KARACHI, Jan 11: Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic said on Monday Pakistan and Bosnia would hold negotiations on a friendship and cooperation treaty between them, reports Reuters.

"On the bilateral level, we agreed to work on the treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries," he told a news conference after talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Karachi.

The treaty will be signed as soon as possible after a committee drafts its proposals, he said without giving details.

Bhutto had confirmed she and probably Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller would visit Bosnia on February 2, he said adding: "It will be very important for our cause."

He said Bhutto thought the

present UN arms embargo on Bosnia was unjust and must be lifted to help the country defend itself.

"There is a heroic struggle in Bosnia. People are fighting tanks with almost bare hands," he said.

Earlier on arrival in Karachi from the capital Islamabad, Silajdzic called on Pakistan to support his government in all international forums.

"We want that the Pakistan government should support our cause at the United Nations and other international forums," he told reporters.

"We know the Pakistan government is on our side. It is supporting the Bosnian people's cause," said Silajdzic, who arrived in Islamabad on Sunday.



Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (L) chats with her Bosnian counterpart Haris Silajdzic during a meeting at the Quaid-e-Azam International Airport in Karachi, Pakistan yesterday. Silajdzic is on a three-day visit to Pakistan. — AFP photo

Kabul relatively quiet

KABUL, Jan 11: The Afghan capital was relatively quiet early today after fierce clashes overnight between forces loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani and troops of rebel General Abdul Rashid Dostam, reports AFP.

Sporadic explosions rocked the eastern districts with rockets and artillery shells landing in the Zambourak hills, where fighting had been reported earlier between Rabbani's soldiers and rival Mujahideen of Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, whose Hezb-i-Islami was siding with Dostam.

No casualty figures were available and sources here believe the toll may not be heavy as the population had already started shifting to safer areas.

A steady evacuation of civilians has left the city dominated by soldiers or members of the Security Department, witnesses said.

Off the Record

Rs 1.4 m telephone bill

NEW DELHI: India's state-run telephone company has handed a New Delhi resident phone bill for nearly 1.4 million rupees (46,666 dollars) — just two months after he was connected to the network, reports AFP.

It translates into a call made every 5.5 seconds of the day. Ram Krishna said he had been unable to sleep ever since he received the bill from the Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd. (MTNL) last weekend.

"At my place we make at the most half-a-dozen calls daily and what they (MTNL) are saying is impossible," Krishna, a sales manager in a private firm, said. "If I sell off my flat and everything else I own I will still not be able to pay more than half this amount."

Krishna said the bill may have been caused by computer error and has asked MTNL to double-check. He said his family had celebrated when the phone was installed after a six-year wait.

'World's noblest flier' dead

MANILA: Diola, the Philippine eagle that hatched the first two chicks of the endangered species ever bred in captivity, has died, officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

Israel Gaddi, regional director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said in a report that Diola died of cardiopulmonary failure at the Philippine Eagle camp in Malagos village in Southern Davao city, 976 kilometers (610 miles) southeast of Manila, January 8.

Diola would have been 25 years old next month. The life span of Philippine eagles is 45-60 years, said Lito Sereno, education officer of the Philippine Eagle Conservation Programme.

The death brought the Philippine eagle population to 54, including 36 in the wild. Widespread deforestation has been responsible for the eagles' decline. Diola hatched Pag-as (hope), the first Philippine eagle bred in captivity, in January 1992, and another eagle, Pagkakaisa (Unity), a year later.

The Philippine eagle, with an average two-meter (yard) wingspan, is the second largest eagle in the world after the Harpy eagle of South Africa. Aviator Charles Lindbergh once described it as the "world's noblest flier."

Officials said Diola's remains will be stuffed and exhibited at the eagle camp.

A holy war!

LONDON: Five players ended up with painful injuries when a soccer match between Salvation Army and Baptist Church teams turned into what British newspapers on Tuesday described as a holy war, reports Reuters.

"It sounds strange for Christians to suffer so many injuries in a game but it was all played in good spirit," said reverend Mike McGill of the Baptists' team as he nursed a broken ankle.

"It was a very rough game and it did turn into a bit of a bloodbath. None of the injuries was caused maliciously and there are no hard feelings."

Two of McGill's teammates left the pitch in Sheringham, eastern England, with broken noses. The Salvation Army won 4-3 but suffered two casualties, one with a twisted leg and another with a damaged shoulder.

Haryana stops water supply to Delhi for voting BJP

NEW DELHI, Jan 11: The administration of an Indian state cut water supplies to this national capital of eight million people late Monday over a political feud between Premier PV Narasimha Rao's party and the opposition, reports AFP.

The action will hit embassies, hospitals and military garrisons dotting the Indian capital, officials from New Delhi's main water supply agency warned.

The Haryana state administration of Rao's ruling Congress (I) Party turned off the taps to New Delhi, cutting the supply of 150 Million Gallons Daily (MGD) to the crowded city without warning, the local administration said.

A statement said Haryana stopped water supply at 5.15 pm (1145 GMT) and described the action as "unilateral" and "intentional" to punish the

people of New Delhi for voting the opposition into power here last month.

The Haryana administration halved water supplied to the city in December due to a running feud between the Congress and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), or Indian People's Party, which now administers New Delhi.

"It is a problem... no, no, it is a crisis," said an executive of Delhi's Water Supply Agency which rations supplies to balance out a shortfall.

New Delhi Chief Minister Madan Lal Khurana's administration has been locked in a political dispute with the Congress since polls in December ushered a BJP administration into the city legislature.

Xinhua adds: India will spare no efforts to speed up the process of cooperation with

China, its biggest neighbour, in various fields.

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao who met Wen Jiabao, the leader of a high-level Chinese Communist Party delegation visiting India said Monday India hoped that close cooperation with China in agriculture, industry, joint ventures and other fields be pursued.

He said the two largest countries in the world have a great potentiality to expand economic cooperation which would be beneficial to both countries.

Wen Jiabao highly praised the contribution made by Rao to the development of the friendly neighbourhood between the two countries, saying the two countries have common ground on many international matters as well as

issues of bilateral concerns.

They recalled Rao's visit to China in September last year when the two countries had signed an agreement in maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the area around actual control of line between the two countries.

Rao said his visit to China had opened a new chapter in the friendly relations between the two countries.

Wen said the agreement had promoted further the relations in foreign affairs, economic and cultural fields between the two countries. He expressed his hope that the existing relations be further strengthened.

Rao again extended his invitation to the Chinese leader Jiang Zemin to visit India, saying the Indian people are expecting an early visit by the Chinese leader.

Arab FM's for ME peace based on UN resolutions

DAMASCUS, Jan 11: The foreign ministers of Syria, Egypt and six Gulf Cooperation Council states ended their two-day meeting here Monday with a call for a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East based on UN resolutions, reports Xinhua.

A statement issued at the end of the meeting said the participants support the forthcoming summit between Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad and US President Bill Clinton and Syria's role which is vital to the Middle East peace process.

They also expressed hope the Syrian-US summit will lead to a comprehensive and just peace in the region on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 425 and the principle of exchanging land for peace, the statement said.

Implementation of the resolutions will ensure the Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories seized by the Jewish state in the 1967 Middle East war, including

Jerusalem, and guarantee the restoration of the national rights of the Arab Palestinian people, the statement said.

It said that the ministers reviewed the Middle East peace process.

The eight countries are the signatories to the Damascus

US asks DPRK to halt missile sales

SEOUL, Jan 11: North Korea must pledge to renounce terrorism and halt missile sales as well as resolving suspicions over its nuclear programme before normalising relations with the United States, a US senator said Tuesday, reports AP.

Sam Nunn, chairman of the US senate Armed Services Committee, warned of the danger of a nuclear-armed North Korea but said the problem must be handled without endangering peace on the volatile Korean Peninsula.

"North Korea must satisfy all IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) inspections," Nunn told a news conference.

Declaration signed in the Syrian capital a few days after the Gulf War in early 1991.

The ministers also discussed the situation in the Gulf region, the statement said.

They stressed their keenness on Iraq's sovereignty and security and territorial integrity and at the same time called on Iraq to respect the cease-fire conditions and implement all the Security Council resolutions, especially on the UN demarcation of the Kuwait-Iraq border, release of all those captured in the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis and compensation.

The statement said that with considerable interest the ministers reviewed the call by President Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates upon the Republic of Iran to conduct a direct dialogue to settle their dispute on the islands of Abu Musa and greater and lesser islands.

The ministers decided to hold their next meeting in Kuwait.

Int'l film festival of India opens

CALCUTTA, Jan 11: The Indian retrospective section of the 25th International Film Festival of India featuring the films of Utpal Dutt and Vijay Bhattacharya was inaugurated here today, reports PTI.

The Union Information and Broadcasting Minister, K P Singh Deo and noted personalities from the film and theatre world recollected the contributions of Utpal Dutt and Vijay Bhattacharya at the brief inaugural ceremony at the renovated Chaplin theatre here.

Earlier, Singh Deo unveiled a statue of Charlie Chaplin in the lobby of the hall and released a book on Utpal Dutt.

To mark the occasion, Mrinal Sen's Bhuvan Shome was screened, in which Utpal Dutt had won accolades for his brilliant performance. Four other films featuring Utpal Dutt would be screened during the festival — 'Agantuk', Padma Nadir Majhi, 'Jhar' and 'Dutta'.

Five films highlight in the creative genius of Vijay Bhattacharya would also be screened — 'Bajju Bawra', 'Ram Rajya', 'Goonj Uthi Shehnai', 'Hariyali Aur Raasta' and 'Himalay Ki Godh Mein'.

Israel, PLO talks fail to make headway

TABA, Egypt, Jan 11: Israel and the PLO failed to make any significant headway at the start of renewed talks on implementing their peace deal, Israel's chief negotiator said, reports Reuters.

Asked if the thought talks on Monday had been positive, Major General Amnon Shahak said: "I think so although I cannot point to any impressive progress today."

Both delegations headed to a meeting today on key security issues that delayed the planned December 13 start of an Israeli troop withdrawal from the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Negotiations which began in the Egyptian resort of Taba in October broke down in Cairo last month with the two sides arguing over whether they had an agreement or not, Israel said yes; the PLO said no.

The talks got under way again in Taba after the Palestinians agreed to negotiate on the basis of what they and the Israelis are now diplomatically calling the Cairo understandings.

"In size, I would say if there is an agreement of 100 pages, there is disagreement on two to three pages," chief Palestinian negotiator Nabil Shaath told reporters.

He said on Saturday a schedule for a troop pullout was no longer a problem and agreement on security coordination on the borders and roads of Palestinian self-rule enclaves in Gaza and the West Bank had practically been finished.

He and Shahak were tight-lipped on details of their talks on Monday. Shahak said the Palestinians had presented several position papers which the Israelis would study overnight.

What was clear that there would be no quick final agreement paving the way for the exit of Israeli troops after 26 years of occupation.

Israel has said it could take two months to iron out key disputes such as control of border crossings and the size of Palestinian self-rule enclaves.

Shahak told reporters the negotiations would continue as long as was necessary to reach a final agreement.

Haiti's assembly opening turns into brawl

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti, Jan 11: An opening session of the National Assembly degenerated into a brawl Monday and the president of the legislature was assaulted, reports AP.

"This country is ungovernable," said Commerce Minister Louis Dejoie II, wiping his brow and shaking his head a few minutes before shouting turned to blows.

The aborted joint session of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate dimmed hopes of finding a parliamentary solution to for restoring democracy in Haiti. The country has been under military rule since President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster in September 1991.

Aristide and army commander Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras signed a UN-brokered agree-

ment last summer for restoring democracy and returning Aristide to power. The agreement fell apart after the army refused to step aside for Aristide's scheduled Oct 30 return.

The agreement called for parliamentary action on several issues, including granting amnesty to soldiers and their allies involved in political crimes and creating a police force separate from the military.

Parliament also must approve a new premier to replace Robert Malval, Aristide's choice who resigned on Dec 15 in frustration over his unsuccessful efforts to provide a smooth transition to democracy.

The diplomatic corps watched in horror as lawmakers shouted and scuffled during the short session.



Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller (C), German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (L) and British Prime Minister John Major pose for the cameras prior to the NATO summit in Brussels on Monday. — AFP photo

NATO supports reforms in Russia

BRUSSELS, Jan 11: NATO leaders agreed here Monday on the need to support reform in Russia by encouraging privatisation and social support, US President Bill Clinton said, reports AFP.

He was speaking after a working dinner on the first day of a two-day summit of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Clinton said the leaders discussed "How we could build a better partnership with Russia and have the kind of future we want, with Russia being a great nation but a non-aggressive one."

Clinton added that privatisation was "The real guarantor of reform, and Russia has done a phenomenal job of privatising industries, thousands just in the last year."

Salinas shuffles cabinet

MEXICO CITY, Jan 11: President Carlos Salinas accepted the resignation Monday of his Interior Minister, and named his Foreign Minister as special envoy to seek a settlement of an indigenous uprising in Chiapas state, reports AFP.

Salinas, said Attorney General Jorge Carpizo would replace Pedro Cinio Gonzalez as Interior Minister. The new appointments, Salinas said, should "tend to strengthen respect for human rights" while the army "will continue guaranteeing citizens' security in Chiapas."

LONDON, Jan 11: The escalating crisis in Prime Minister John Major's government took a new twist today as newspapers revealed that the former Transport Minister — who resigned on Sunday after his wife apparently committed suicide — was "besotted" with another woman, reports AFP.

The revelations will further hurt Major's government, whose Tory party has been preaching a "return to traditional family values". In less than a week two ministers have resigned.

On Sunday, Lord Malcolm Cairness resigned as Minister for Transport after his wife

Diana reportedly shot herself the previous evening, and earlier in the week Tim Yeo quit his post as Environment Minister after admitting to fathering two children out of wedlock.

Major, in Brussels for the NATO summit until today, will later in the week face a gleeful Labour opposition in the House of Commons intent on highlighting the hypocrisy of the government.

The Times, quoting senior Tory sources, confirmed the

existence of a "friendship" between Lord Cairness and Jan Fitzalan-Howard, 40, a former secretary to the daughter of Queen Elizabeth II, Princess Anne.

MS Fitzalan-Howard separated from her husband Tom, a colonel in the royal scots guards, 15 months ago, the paper said.

The right-wing tabloid The Sun quoted a friend of Lord Cairness as saying, Malcolm was besotted with her. They were frequently seen together

in the dining room at the House of Lords.

"He tried to resolve the situation with Diana last week. She was very upset. Tragically on Saturday she took her own life."

The Daily Mirror and The Daily Express said that at Christmas the countess became so distraught over their marital problems that she had told the earl to leave the family home in Oxfordshire, central England.

The Mirror said he went to

stay with his half-sister in London for a time until last weekend when he and his wife discussed their problems.

It reported one friend saying, "Rightly or wrongly, she believed her husband was having an affair."

Lord Cairness, the 20th earl, married Lady Cairness 19 years ago, on January 9, 1975. Her apparent suicide came on the eve of their wedding anniversary.

A post-mortem examination confirmed she died of severe

Yangon ready to hit Khun Sa's positions

BANGKOK, Jan 11: Myanmar government troops are advancing towards key positions held by opium warlord Khun Sa and have fired a mortar barrage across a key river, a source close to the rebel leader said today, reports Reuters.

Myanmar troops were firing at Khun Sa's positions from the west bank of the Salween River and were preparing to launch an attack across it soon, the source said.

"They planned to launch the offensive against us by January 10 but our officers at the front line said that so far the Myanmar troops have only fired mortars across the river," the source said.

A thousand Myanmar troops equipped with mortars and ar-

tillery pieces were advancing towards Khun Sa's stronghold in eastern Myanmar's Shan state and were 20 km (2 miles) from Pang Malsong, a major outpost of Khun Sa's rebel army, the source added.

"They fired at us but we did not respond. We will hold our fire until they try to cross the river," he said.

More than 30 Myanmar soldiers were killed in the Salween when they tried to cross it on December 19 and were repelled with mortars, local people said.

Heavy fighting broke out between Myanmar troops and Khun Sa's Mong Tai army on December 15, two days after the opium warlord proclaimed

his stronghold an independent state.

Mass grave of KGB victims

LONDON, Jan 11: A mass grave containing some 700 victims of the former Soviet Secret Service, the KGB, has been discovered in downtown Vilnius, the Head of Lithuania's National Security Service said Monday, reports AFP.

Jurgis Jurgelis told a press conference more than 700 victims of "Soviet repressive structures" between 1944 and 1947 had been buried in a public garden in the centre of the capital, said Lithuanian Radio, monitored here by the BBC.

head injuries caused by a single gunshot wound.

The story is only one in a recent string of scandals that have humiliated the government.

Another Tory MP was under pressure to resign over reports alleging he had had five mistresses.

A ministerial aide also quit during the weekend over a controversial real estate deal.

And another Tory MP conceded Monday that he had one time shared a bed with a French friend with a "close" friend, but only to save money, stressing there was no homo sexual relationship involved.