

International

Czech Rep welcomes US peace initiative

PRAGUE, Jan 12: Czech President Vaclav Havel on Tuesday welcomed the US partnership for peace initiative on increased western military cooperation with former Soviet satellites, after meeting US President Bill Clinton here, reports AFP.

Meanwhile Clinton himself stressed that the security of the Czech republic and other eastern European countries is vital for the interests of the United States.

"The partnership for peace is the beginning of a general security relationship which can lead to membership in NATO," Clinton said.

"I reaffirm that the security of this republic and of all the nations of central and eastern Europe is important for the security of the United States, and Europe and NATO," the president said.

Havel described the initiative as "good and fair," saying that the Czech republic was

ready to fulfil its terms. He was speaking after a meeting with Clinton in Prague's historic castle, the president's official residence.

Havel added that the partnership was "an open door for all with each choosing their own speed to go through it."

Asked about the threat of nationalism from Russia, Havel said the development of the situation there was "complex, dramatic and saddening."

"But we believe that democracy and market economies will be victorious even in Russia despite all the difficulties," he said.

Clinton said it was possible that some countries may be able to enter the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, earlier than others after joining the partnership for peace initiative agreed at the NATO summit in Brussels.

The US president is to meet Kravchuk at Kiev airport briefly on Wednesday.



US President Bill Clinton clinches his fist as he is flanked by Czech President Vaclav Havel (C) and Mrs. Eusekova in charge of the Charles Bridge as he paid a visit to Prague's historic district Jan 11 at the start of his two-day visit in Czech Republic. — AFP photo

Ghali warns UN may reduce its presence in Somalia

ABU DHABI, Jan 12: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has warned that the United Nations might have to drastically scale down its presence in Somalia if new troops and finances were not made available, reports Reuter.

Boutros-Ghali was speaking in an interview at his New York home with the United Arab Emirates newspaper Al-Ittihad.

"If new forces are not sent and if the United Nations does not have the needed finances we might have to reduce our presence to a minimum level in Somalia," he said.

India developing pilotless craft

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: India is developing a pilotless aircraft as an aerial target system to impart training for surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles, reports Xinhua.

The pilotless target aircraft "Lakshya," which is developed by India's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), will be inducted into service in 12 to 18 months, according to Indian defence sources.

Boutros-Ghali said on Monday that he had asked some 40 countries to provide peacekeepers to Somalia to replace withdrawing US and European troops and vowed to do his best to ensure a continued UN presence.

He recommended last week that 16,000 to 20,000 soldiers — more than 10,000 less than in 1993 — stay in Somalia after Americans and Europeans leave by March 31.

About 9,100 troops, logistics and communications experts from the United States, Belgium, France, Sweden, Italy, Turkey, Germany and Norway have pulled out or will do so shortly.

The Security Council must undertake its first serious review of the new Somalia operation this week.

The UN Secretary General also told Al-Ittihad that Angola's Foreign Minister Venancio de Moura asked him at a meeting in New York to send 10,000 peacekeepers to Angola where fighting has intensified and peace talks with UNITA rebels in Zambia made no progress.

"I told him, we are ready, but after agreement is reached, I told him agree among yourselves first before you ask for peacekeepers."

APP interviews Benazir

Pindi to help solve int'l crises

KARACHI, Jan 12: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said here Monday she will go to Bosnia to protest the killings there and that Pakistan wants to hold its foreign policy to help solve international crises, reports APP.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Benazir also said, she wanted to be helpful in keeping Pakistani forces in Somalia, despite discontent at home over the deaths of more than 30 Pakistani soldiers — the most suffered by any nation there.

But, she said, Pakistan needed assurances about the safety of its 5,000 soldiers, who are likely to become the backbone of the UN military effort after the withdrawal of US troops March 31.

She also said Pakistan deserved reciprocity for its commitment to helping in distant trouble spots, although it wasn't a precondition for renewing Pakistan's troops commitment.

In particular, she said, the United States should improve its relations with Pakistan and the world should back a

plebiscite in the held Jammu and Kashmir.

Most of the territory has remained occupied by India since the subcontinent received independence from Britain in 1947. But many Pakistanis believe the Muslim territory should belong to them.

Pakistan is demanding India comply with a 1949 UN demand and hold a vote on the territory's future.

In an hour long talk at her home in Karachi, Benazir sketched a vision of Muslim Pakistan using diplomacy and offering peacekeeping troops to become a vital part of the post-cold war world — a world based on common values of good governments, of human rights, of anti-narcotics, of anti-terrorism, and resolution of conflicts under the United Nations.

Such a role would be a relief to Pakistani officials who have expressed worry about precisely the opposite: the exile of Pakistan to a remote part of the world's agenda. Pakistan's location next to the former Soviet Union, China, India and

Afghanistan is now less strategically important, and Pakistan's role is over in helping armed anti-Soviet fighters in Afghanistan.

Since the cold war ended, the United States has imposed military sanctions against Pakistan over its nuclear programme. Pakistan says it has stopped short of building a nuclear bomb but argues that it needs the programme to guard against India, which is also considered capable of making atomic weapons.

Benazir said she and Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller would travel to Bosnia in the first week of February to protest the war and to call for an end to the UN arms embargo against Bosnia.

Asked whether Pakistan was lining up with the Muslim-led Bosnian government against their Serb and Croat adversaries, she replied as mothers are concerned at the killings.

She said details of her trip had not been finalised, in another hint that the west should look to countries like Pakistan for help in world crises.

CPI calls for stronger left unity

CALCUTTA, Jan 12: The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) yesterday called for closer co-operation with the CPI and the CPI-M to strengthen left unity in the Hindi belt in general and Bihar in particular, the party General Secretary Vinod Mishra, here said, reports PTI.

Briefing newsmen at the end of the 4-day meeting of the CPI-ML central committee which concluded on Monday, Mishra said that this was necessary in view of the fact that the Janata Dal was in crisis everywhere and the SP-BSP government, headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav in UP, was dependent on the Congress-I support.

CPI-ML would however intensify the people's struggle against the anti-people policies of the left front government in West Bengal, he said.

CPI-ML shall prepare to contest elections under its own banner, he said.

Kashmiris gun down nine Indian troops

NEW DELHI, Jan 12: Muslim guerrillas gunned down nine Indian army soldiers in a weekend attack on a military base in Kashmir, press reports said today, reports AFP.

It was the first attack of its kind in the four year old Muslim insurgency raging in the strife-torn valley.

An unspecified number of armed militants entered the air force complex at Awantipora in South Kashmir late Sunday and opened fire on guards of the defence services corps, the Hindustan Times said quoting delayed reports.

Nine soldiers were killed, the daily said, adding that the gunmen escaped with a light machine gun and other weapons.

Military authorities were investigating how the militants had gained entry into the sensitive complex, the Times added in a dispatch from Jammu, the Kashmiri winter capital.

Muslim guerrillas are fighting for an end to Indian rule over Muslim-majority Kashmir in a violent campaign which has claimed more than 8,000 lives.

Militants frequently attack army pickets in the valley but it was the first time they had struck inside a military complex.

Newspapers reported meanwhile that three Indian soldiers and nine Pakistani troops had been wounded in a fierce gunbattle in Kashmir.

The firing began Monday in the Nowshera area of the disputed state and continued all day Tuesday, they said.

Indian and Pakistani troops frequently exchange fire across the line of control which separates the forces in Kashmir, claimed by both countries.

India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over the Himalayan territory and New Delhi accuses Islamabad of providing arms and training to Muslim separatists.



South African President Frederik de Klerk (L) and ANC President Nelson Mandela shake hands Jan 11 at the Union Building in Pretoria, after a four-hour meeting on how to deal with the violence sweeping across the country. In their first public appearance at home since Aug. 90, the two leaders told reporters that they had made major progress. — AFP photo

BRIEFLY

Mexican peace envoy begins search for solution

MEXICO CITY, Jan 12: A presidential troubleshooter took him first steps toward finding a negotiated solution to an Indian uprising in southern Mexico, as government soldiers advanced on rebel positions near the Guatemalan border, reports AP.

In the poor and remote region of southern state of Chiapas, the troops were reportedly moving toward Guadalupe Tepeyac, a town of only 400 where as many as 500 rebels are believed to be entrenched.

Journalists who travelled Tuesday from the towns of Nuevo Morelos to Las Margaritas said the army was

advancing in that border region. Refugees bucked the tide of the incoming troops, trying to escape being caught in a possible confrontation.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army rebels said they would negotiate if the military stopped bombing with withdraw its troops and recognise their movement.

Otherwise, they threatened to carry the war to Mexico City, where bombings linked to the uprising have put the government on alert and residents on edge.

In the capital, newly appointed peace commissioner



A bedouin woman and her son keep their sheep together Jan 11 before taking them across the road in Jericho that leads down to the Allenby bridge border crossing on the Jordan River in West Bank. The size of the Jericho area and the border crossings in the first autonomy stage are two of the main problems in the negotiations between PLO and Israel, now under way in Taba, Egypt. — AFP photo

Mao's birthday celebrations enrage Deng

HONG KONG, Jan 12: Lavish celebrations in China for the 100th anniversary of chairman Mao Zedong's birth have enraged his paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, Hong Kong newspaper said today, reports AFP.

Quoting sources in Shantou, where Deng is winge-king the south China Morning Post said the 80-year-old patriarch believed the December 26 centenary had been over-played.

"Who is behind the festivities?" Deng demanded to know at a meeting with Shanghai officials, the English-language daily said.

AI offers to help resolve crisis in Yemen

SANA, Jan 12: The Arab League on Tuesday offered to help resolve the political crisis in Yemen which has pitted president Ali Abdallah Saleh against his southern rival, Vice President Ali Salem Al-Baid, reports AFP.

An official here said Arab League Secretary General Esamai Abdell Meguid made the offer during a telephone conversation with Saleh.

The Arab League is ready to take any steps to reconcile the opposing views, remove the challenges Yemen faces due to the continuing political crisis and safeguard the country's unity, the official quoted Abdell Meguid as saying.

Baid, the head of former south Yemen, has been locked in a political dispute since August with Saleh, a Northerner.

Vietnam already accepts this concept. I believe the Laotian and Cambodian sides are also acceptable to this. The question now is getting people on the ground to decide," said former Vietnamese deputy prime minister Nguyen Co Thach, among those who drafted the report.

The report noted that concerns over human rights, democracy, sustainable economic growth and competitiveness, and social justice were among the other challenges facing the region.

On regional reforms, the report said they should proceed in parallel with the process of

Off the Record

150 wild monkeys take over public park

GUIYANG: More than 150 wild monkeys have taken over a public park in southwest China's Quzhou province, reports Xinhua.

The park is situated in the suburbs of this provincial capital.

Every morning when zoo workers bring them food the monkeys rush peacefully to greet them.

Visitors, especially children, like to feed them in turn, the monkeys put on a show for the audience by swinging on trees, diving into ponds and shaking hands with visitors.

According to Lei Yuanqin, who is responsible for this successful tourism project, the monkeys were coaxed down from the nearby forested mountains six years ago.

Lei said that during the years she stayed in the mountains she developed a close friendship with the monkeys.

She said that the monkeys used to visit her in the evening by crawling through her window to watch TV. They liked football matches best, she said.

She said that the current colony of monkeys had grown from four laboratory monkeys who escaped from the provincial epidemic prevention station in 1960 and a couple who eloped from the local zoo when a cage was damaged in 1975.

Because a white child may feel isolated

LONDON: A British hospital has refused a request from an Indian couple for the wife to be implanted with a white woman's eggs, a doctor said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Explaining the decision, top embryologist Simon Fisher said, "We felt being brought up by an Indian community with Indian parents would make a white child feel very isolated and different."

"I am all for mixing and matching as I believe colour is only skin deep," he told reporters. But we decided against going ahead in this case because we felt that in the long run the welfare of the child would possibly be affected."

The request was made at the nurture clinic in the central English city of Nottingham when no Indian donor eggs were available.

Rapid medical advances in the treatment of infertile women have sparked a major ethical debate in Britain.

Politicians, churchmen and doctors have expressed concern about the ethics of so called "womb robbing" after a 59-year-old British woman gave birth to twins on Christmas day following implantation with fertilised eggs.

Scottish researchers revealed they were close to culling eggs from aborted female foetuses but voluntarily stopped the research after the government expressed concern.

Kuwait cancels royal decree that protects ministers

KUWAIT CITY, Jan 12: The Kuwaiti parliament on Tuesday revoked a royal decree that prevented Kuwaiti ministers accused of criminal offences from being tried in the same way as ordinary citizens, reports AFP.

The report, compiled by 17 Asian experts in wide ranging fields, says "the impetus towards arms control and limitations in Asia must start in Asia even though the issue was a global concern."

The experts from the Commission for a New Asia set up a year ago as a regional effort to articulate a vision for Asia over the next generation.

Asia needs to check increasing military expenditure for peace

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12: Asia, presently the biggest defence market, needs to check its ballooning military expenditure amid the threat of an arms race within the region, according to an experts report today, says AFP.

The report, compiled by 17 Asian experts in wide ranging fields, says "the impetus towards arms control and limitations in Asia must start in Asia even though the issue was a global concern."

The experts from the Commission for a New Asia set up a year ago as a regional effort to articulate a vision for Asia over the next generation.

together for common interest.

However, Singh told AFP that qualitatively, China's military capability was "increasing tremendously" and the most populous country had now emerged as the biggest military power in Asia.

He said China's recent arms control agreement with China was a landmark pact for Asia and an example of how two major powers could work

influence each other.

Non-Communist ASEAN comprises Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Vietnam already accepts this concept. I believe the Laotian and Cambodian sides are also acceptable to this. The question now is getting people on the ground to decide," said former Vietnamese deputy prime minister Nguyen Co Thach, among those who drafted the report.

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