

Ghali orders special mission to Kabul

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 13: UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called Wednesday for fighting in Afghanistan to cease immediately and ordered a special mission



Boutros Ghali to Kabul to help restore peace, reports AFP.

The fighting contradicts the agreements concluded among the Afghan leaders, disrupts efforts to establish a normal political process, (and) is producing another wave of refugees," Boutros-Ghali said in a prepared statement.

He noted that the UN General Assembly had passed a resolution calling on him to dispatch a special mission to

assist Afghans restoring peace and normalcy in their country, including a peaceful political structure.

Boutros-Ghali said the special UN mission has the support of Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United States, but it will not be sent until the fighting is brought under control and conditions allow it to carry out its mandate.

Another reports says: In the wake of present fighting in Afghanistan, over 20,000 Afghan refugees are expected to cross into Pakistan.

According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) sources here, about 1600 families comprising 14,650 members have crossed the Pak-Afghan border at Torkhan since Saturday last when warring factions observed a temporary ceasefire.

The rival Afghan groups had agreed last Saturday on a 24-hour ceasefire that was extended for another day making it possible for foreign diplomats, UN personnel, foreign aid workers besides women, children and wounded persons to leave war-ravaged Kabul city.

In the face of fresh exodus of Afghan people, UNHCR has prepared an emergency budget.

Israel won't make concessions over control of borders

JERUSALEM, Jan 13: Foreign Minister Shimon Peres warned today that Israel would make no concessions over control of international borders in its autonomy talks with the PLO, reports AFP.

"Israel will retain sole responsibility for control of borders and crossing points between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, and the West Bank and Jordan," he said.

"The Palestinians are wrong if they think Israel is going to make concessions on security issues," he said following three days of autonomy talks between Israel and the PLO in Egypt.

The Palestinians have an emotional attitude and want to

make sure that their dignity is respected," he said. "They want a Palestinian policeman to meet all visitors crossing the Jordan bridge, while for us the question of security is primordial."

He welcomed progress in talks on transferring civilian powers, but added that these were the "easiest part" of the negotiations.

Meanwhile, Reuter from Taba says: Israel and the PLO wrapped up the first week of resumed talks with scant progress on core issues, but signs of fresh US-driven momentum emerged in the wider Middle East peace process.

Talks in the Red Sea resort of Taba recessed on Wednesday with officials saying

there had been no agreement on points that have blocked a planned Israel troop pullout from occupied land.

Both sides, however, reported progress on transfer of civil authority to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho under a peace deal they signed in September.

Middle East troubleshooter Edward Djerejian arrived in Israel on Wednesday to take up duties as US ambassador in Tel Aviv less than a week before President Bill Clinton is to meet Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in Geneva.

The choice of Djerejian — a

former ambassador to Syria and a key player in the US-brokered peace process that brought Israel and arch-foes Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon to the table in 1991 — is seen as part of a new American shove to the on-again-off-again negotiations.

Israeli sources said suspended talks in Washington between heads of the delegations of Israel and neighbouring Arab states could resume on January 24 if the Geneva summit went well.

The Israeli-PLO pact signed in September took Arab nations by surprise, and has complicated progress on other tracks.

Arab-Israeli talks may resume Jan 24

WASHINGTON, Jan 13: Arab-Israeli peace talks could resume in Washington January 24 with meetings between heads of delegations, Israeli sources said, Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The sources, who did not want to be identified, said the aim was to hold private talks away from the media spotlight.

Heads of the Syrian, Lebanese, Jordanian and possibly the Palestinian delegations and their Israeli counterparts are expected to take part.

"But everything is still fluid and the plans could change," said one source.

Much depends on a positive outcome in President Clinton's meeting this weekend with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad. It had always been assumed the negotiations would resume soon after that meeting.

A state department official said it was hoped the delegation heads would come to Washington next week.

Pakistan shuts its border in Khyber Pass

TORKHAM, Pakistan, Jan 13: Pakistan on Wednesday shut its border in the Khyber Pass to Afghan refugees fleeing factional fighting in Kabul, government officials said, reports Reuter.

About 15,000 refugees have entered Pakistan from Torkham in the Khyber Pass since fighting erupted early in January when a Northern Afghan warlord launched a power grab in Kabul.

"The border has been closed for an indefinite period," government agents in the Khyber tribal area Habibullah Khan said. An official at the border said, "Only those seriously injured are allowed on humanitarian grounds."

The officials said, however, that Afghans carrying valid travel documents would still be allowed in.

Unilateral truce in Mexico

MEXICO CITY, Jan 13: President Carlos Salinas De Gortari Wednesday ordered a unilateral cease-fire in a bid to end 12 days of fighting between the Mexican army and some 2,000 indigenous peasants in the southern state of Chiapas, reports Reuter.

The government news agency Notimex said peace talks between mediators and the rebels would begin "very probably in the next few hours," a government source said talks were likely but could give no details on when they would happen.

Government-appointed peace commissioner Manuel Camacho Solis, who arrived in Chiapas Wednesday, urged the rebels to come to the negotiating table but said any talks would take time.



A model presents an evening dress by Christian Dior Jan 11 in preview of the Spring Summer 1994 high fashion collections in France. — AFP photo

Off the Record

Nurse wins slimmer of the year award

LONDON: British nurse Jan Taylor has won a slimmer of the year award — just 18 months after her once hefty 238 lbs (108 kgs) body broke a bed she tried to sit on, reports Reuter.

"When I sat down on the bed and it broke I was mortified, disgusted with myself," she told reporters.

"It was then I realised that I had to do something about my weight."

Taylor, 33, received her award on Wednesday after shedding 126 lbs (57 kgs) by shunning the fried food, sweets and crisps that were responsible for her weight problems.

She slimmed down by eating fish and vegetarian food. "I used to be as wide as I was tall. Now I'm less than half the person I used to be and I like myself for the first time in my life," said Taylor.

Widow receives corpse of another man

NICOSIA: A widow in England received the corpse of another man and her own husband was buried by mistake in Cyprus following a new year's eve mix-up at a mortuary in east Mediterranean holiday island, reports AFP.

Cypriot authorities have back flown the body of another Briton, 75-year-old Ronald Vivian, and exhumed the corpse of 55-year-old Victor Ralph Knight to send to his widow in Northampton, the Cyprus Mail newspaper said.

Vivian, a resident of Cyprus for three years, was buried on Monday in Epipia village near the southwestern resort of Paphos where holiday maker Knight was buried by mistake last Friday, it said.

Knight's widow first detected the mix-up, which occurred at the Paphos mortuary as the staff prepared for new year's eve celebrations. Knight died of a brain haemorrhage while Vivian had a fatal heart attack.

Court clears Jackson of stealing 3 hit songs

LOS ANGELES: A court cleared pop star Michael Jackson of stealing three hit songs, including "Thriller," from two song writers on Wednesday, reports AFP.

The jury cleared Jackson and three others of copyright infringement in the songs, that also included "The girl is mine" and "We are the world."

Two childhood neighbours of Jackson in Indiana alleged that parts of their songs were taken for the Jackson hits.

Rynaud Jones said: "We are the world" was based on his 1977 song "What will become of the children?"

Robert Smith and Jones claimed that Lionel Richie, Rod Temperton and Quincy Jones also lifted material from a demo tape that had been left at the Jackson's home.

Jackson, who faces a civil child sex molestation lawsuit, did not attend the three-week trial.

Pedophile ring on trial

SWANSEA, Britain: Eleven men and one woman went on trial here Wednesday charged with sexually abusing at least 13 children over a four-year period, reports AFP.

The Pedophile ring, whose victims included some of the defendants, own children and a two-year-old toddler, allegedly organised ritual orgies in an isolated barn near this Welsh city.

The accused are also charged with threatening the children not to talk about the abuse. One 13-year-old boy was thrown from a boat into the open sea by his father as a warning to keep quiet, the court was told.

The 12 defendants, aged between 20 and 68, face 42 charges relating to alleged abuses committed between 1987 and 1991.

The trial is expected to last several months and will include video evidence from the alleged victims.

India changing demographic composition in Kashmir

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan, Jan 13: The Indian government is carrying on with its plan to change the existing demographic composition in the occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which has a Muslim majority, reports AFP.

The Radiance-Views weekly from New Delhi in its recent publication disclosing the facts stated: The Bharatiya Janata Party, an extreme Hindu revivalist political party, position on abrogation of Article 370 from the Indian Constitution and subsequently change the population composition in Jammu and Kashmir is glaringly clear in its declared Kashmir policy. This party has not even hesitated to take and accept the advice of the Israeli government and political and non-political

leaders of that country in this regard."

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres during his recent visit to India also gave clear ideas for carrying out the plan to change the dominant Muslim character of occupied Jammu and Kashmir, disclosed the weekly.

The planned scheme to alter the demography figures in a systematic manner for broader political objectives, has already been noticed by the Kashmiri intelligents which demanded a fresh census in the state.

After the 1981 census, strong protest was launched by the Kashmiris who fully disagreed with the figures. The then J and K government ordered a mid-decade census to be carried out afresh, but it could not be carried out due to

the alleged unstable political conditions and the resistance of the non-local bureaucracy in the state government.

"Some elements in other political parties in India too uphold more or less same views as that of BJP, but they prefer to pursue this objective silently. The assurances given by Congress party leaders in this regard cannot be taken for granted. The Babri Mosque case is an eye-opener in this regard," the weekly added.

Quoting figures of previous census, certain crude realities, with regard to the Muslim population proportion, came to light. In the past five decades there has been a continuous fall in the Muslim population in the occupied Jammu and Kashmir and simultaneous rise in the non-Muslim especially Hindus.



At least 100,000 people marched towards the centre of Mexico City Jan 12 to demand a cease to the massacre in the state of Chiapas. The demonstration is the biggest seen in the city since the post-electoral conflict of 1988. The sign reads "Stop the killing." — AFP photo

Myanmar students vow to continue struggle

MANERPLAW, Myanmar, Jan 13: Dissident Myanmar students who fled a bloody crackdown against democracy to join ethnic minority rebels vowed today to press on with their war against Yangon's junta, reports Reuter.

The students were reacting to a decision of their allies to enter peace talks with the generals.

"Even if the Karen and other rebel organisations reach agreements with the regime we will continue our struggle because our goals are different," Kyaw Kyaw, 29, vice chairman of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDP) told reporters at a jungle camp in the Thai-Myanmar border.

The ethnic minority rebels have been fighting for their au-

tonomy but we students are fighting for democracy throughout Myanmar," Kyaw Kyaw added.

Another pro-democracy dissident said they would never abandon efforts to free Myanmar's detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi who has been under house arrest since 1989.

"We must wait and see what happens with these peace talks but whatever the outcome we will continue our efforts to free Aung San Suu Kyi. She is our leader," said the dissident who asked not to be identified.

Thousands of students and other young people fled to rebel strongholds in 1988 after the military crushed widespread pro-democracy demonstration in Yangon and other towns.

US opens trial of 11 cult members

SAN ANTONIO, Jan 13: The US government opened its trial against 11 cult members by telling jurors that group leader David Koresh exported disciples "to kill for God," reports AP.

The defence for the Branch Davidian cult members blamed a faltering agency that "declared war on its citizens."

The trial of the 11 cult members charged with murdering four federal agents in a gun battle last February opened Wednesday with details of bullets blazing amid horrified women and children.

Six of the 11 on trial are foreign-born. They include three Britons, an Australian, a Jamaican and a Canadian.

Prosecutors also maintained that Koresh's followers killed their wounded after the raid by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

"People who were too wounded to fight were executed, put out of their misery," Assistant US Attorney Ray Jahn told jurors.

Four ATF agents were killed and 16 wounded in the February 28 shootout at the cult's compound near Waco when more than 100 officers, tried to search for guns and arrest Koresh on weapons charges. Six branch Davidians are believed to have died in the assault.

After a 51-day standoff, federal agents pumped tear gas into the complex, and Koresh and some 80 followers died as the place went up in flames. Investigators said cult members set the fire in a mass suicide.

If convicted, the defendants, some of whom survived the fire by jumping out of windows, could get life in prison without

parole.

Members of the Texas Rangers were the first witnesses called and they described several weapons pulled from the ashes. They also described how they barricaded the site after the standoff to assure there could be no cover-up.

Jahn said he would show that Koresh taught his followers to do battle in the name of God and stockpiled weapons to carry out his prophecy. He said the Branch Davidians carried out his plans February 28 with the "physical acts of an army."

He said the cult had prepared for a giant fire so they would be "sucked up to heaven."

David Koresh's theology was the theology of death, Jahn said. "If you want to die for God, you must be willing to kill for God."

He said prosecutors would "put a firearm in everyone's hands and show that they were not mere biblical students but armed and ready on February 28."

Jahn described the 10 male defendants as a group Koresh deemed his "mighty men," a group of Davidians believed by authorities to be well-trained in paramilitary manoeuvres.

Ten defence lawyers took turns telling the jury and a packed courtroom that their clients were forced to retaliate as victims of an ill-conceived raid designed to pump life into a faltering government. Officials say 107 people have died in the fighting, although church groups put the number higher.

Most of the fighting died out after several days, although some violence has continued.

IRA steps up attacks on security forces

BELFAST, Jan 13: Suspected IRA guerrillas stepped up attacks on security forces in northern Ireland, throwing a bomb at a patrol within hours of shooting an unarmed woman soldier and setting a booby-trapped bomb in a nearby house, reports Reuter.

Police said a device was lobbed at a police vehicle in the town of Lurgan, southeast of Belfast, late on Wednesday but it failed to explode.

They said they also foiled a bomb attack in Belfast when they arrested a man carrying a suspect object and three apparent accomplices in a car.

It was too early to say whether that bomb was the work of the Irish Republican

Army or of Protestant paramilitaries. Both loyalists who support British rule of Northern Ireland and republicans live in the neighbourhood, police said.

The IRA's attacks on security forces, together with tit-for-tat shootings by Protestant extremists, have escalated since the start of the year, leaving a December 15 peace initiative launched by Britain and Ireland in limbo.

London and Dublin have hailed the plan as the best bet for peace in the province for two decades and they say they are prepared to be patient while the IRA weighs its response. But republicans have warned that might not come for months.