

## Taiwan shelves plan to buy arms from US

TAIPEI, Jan 23: Taiwan's military here has decided to shelf plans to buy 1.05 billion US dollars worth of arms, including tanks and an improved missile system, from Washington due to opposition from legislators and an inadequate budget, Taiwan's Central News Agency (CNA) reported today, says AFP.

The Defence Ministry has told the United States that it has to postpone its procurement plans until they have the budget, CNA said.

This marks the first time in more than four decades Taiwan is delaying the purchase of military items approved for export by the United States, the news agency said.

Members of parliament here have strongly criticised the ministry's 50 million US dollar plan to buy 200 US M60-A3 tanks, which are left over from the Korean war (1950-53), saying they are obsolete and not fit for modern war fare.

The ministry also decided to postpone its purchase of at least two other major military hardware systems that have been approved for sale to Taiwan, including a modified air defence system, believed to be priced at a billion US dollars.

It also postponed a plan to lease two squadrons of T-38 advanced trainer jets, the CNA said.

The shelving, or postponement, of the purchase were due to declining defence budgets and pressure by MPs to scrutinise major procurements, CNA said.

Taiwan has purchased 5.4 billion US dollars worth of 150 F-16 fighter jets from the United States and 60 mirage jetfighters from France, valued at 3.8 billion US dollars. It has also ordered 16 lafayette-class

frigates, worth 4.8 billion US dollars, from France.

The ministry has also announced that it is considering opening maintenance work of military planes to the private sector in an attempt to cut expenses and boost the aerospace industry, the leading China Times reported here today.

Economics and defence authorities are evaluating the project which is expected to bring a yearly business of about 740 million US dollars.

Taiwan now has close to 1,000 warplanes, and it would be too much work for the military to do the maintenance alone, the paper said.

Defence Minister Sun Chen was not immediately available for comment.

### Six more children killed in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO, Jan 23: Shelling that killed six children in Sarajevo makes a mockery of international pledges to protect the city, the Bosnian prime minister says, reports AP.

"How many times has it been said that the United Nations will not allow Sarajevo to be strangled," asked Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic in a protest letter to UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali.

The children were playing in fresh snow Saturday in the city's Alipasino Polje neighbourhood when the shells slammed down, killing six and wounding at least three children and one adult.

This act humiliates the international community, mocks the dignity of the United Nations and renders senseless all of our efforts to reach peace through negotiations," Silajdzic said in the letter, which was released to journalists in Sarajevo.

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## Cluster-bomb attack rocks Kabul

KABUL, Jan 23: A cluster-bomb attack by a rebel jet preceded a massive artillery bombardment which rocked Kabul early today, during which infantry clashed on the frontlines in the eastern suburbs of the capital, reports AFP.

The multiple explosions of the deadly cluster-bomb rippled through the former diplomatic enclave of Wazir Akbar Khan as the jet struck at heavy weapons based on nearby Bibi Mahru hill.

The jet, belonging to rival faction leader, ex-communist general Abdul Rashid Dostum, missed its target, reported locals, with many of the small bomblets showering civilian houses with shrapnel.

Defence Ministry officials were unavailable to comment

on the factional fighting which is now in its third week in Kabul, but it appeared that Dostum forces launched an infantry attack against state positions.

The sounds of intense small-arms fire — anti-tank rockets, recoilless rifles and Kalashnikovs — were heard in the vicinity of Bala Hissar, one of Dostum's last remaining strongholds in Kabul, as heavy weapons on Bibi Mahru hill thundered against Dostum positions on Marjan hill.

It is not clear if the Hezb-e-Islami faction of Dostum's ally, Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, have joined the fighting or not.



A group of young Russian women pose during the opening show of the beauty contest "Miss Moscow" on Saturday. At least thirty women aged between 16 and 18 years participate in this contest. — AFP photo

## Former beauty queen claims affair with Clinton

LONDON, Jan 23: A former beauty queen has said she had a five-month affair with US President Bill Clinton back in 1983 and was threatened unless she kept quiet about the liaison during the 1992 presidential election campaign, reports AFP.

Sally Miller Perdue, 35, told the British weekly the Sunday Telegraph that she and Clinton were lovers between August and December 1983 when he was governor of Arkansas.

"If I didn't take the offer, then they knew that I went jogging by myself and couldn't guarantee what would happen to my pretty little legs. Things just wouldn't be so much fun for me any more. Life would get hard," she was quoted as telling the Sunday Telegraph.

The former Miss Arkansas told the paper that during Clinton's presidential campaign she was threatened by a man — who claimed to be

speaking on behalf of Democrats in high places — not to talk about their affair.

She alleged that if she agreed to behave as a "good little girl" she would be set up for life with a federal job and a regular monthly pay check.

"If I didn't take the offer, then they knew that I went jogging by myself and couldn't guarantee what would happen to my pretty little legs. Things just wouldn't be so much fun for me any more. Life would get hard," she was quoted as telling the Sunday Telegraph.

The Sunday Telegraph said the allegations had been reported to the FBI, which said it could not comment on an "ongoing investigation."

She said they became lovers. "He had this little boy that I found very attractive."

Clinton aide stressed during the presidential campaign that Clinton has denied knowing Perdue. The paper said the White House last week would not reply to requests for comment.

After Perdue — a divorcee — turned down the offer she lost her job at Lindenwood College in Missouri, had her ear damaged and received anonymous telephone calls and hate mail, the paper reported.

The Sunday Telegraph said the allegations had been reported to the FBI, which said it could not comment on an "ongoing investigation."

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