

Seoul students demonstrate against US

SEOUL, Feb 8: Riot police fired tear gas Tuesday to disperse about 500 students hurling rocks and yelling anti-American slogans near a US cultural centre in a provincial capital, a report said, according to AP.

Students were demanding a halt to the annual US-South Korean military exercises called 'Team Spirit', claiming it hinders dialogue with Communist North Korea.

The students waved clenched fists and chanted 'No Team Spirit!' according to a report by the national Yonhap news agency. Riot police blocked the students from reaching the US facility, located in an office building in downtown Kwangju city.

At least one protester was seriously wounded, Yonhap said. No arrests were reported.

No-trust motion against NWFP govt likely

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: A bitter row has erupted in Pakistan over political control in a province bordering Afghanistan, with the opposition crying foul play by Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, reports AFP.

The dispute, related to maneuvering by the ruling Pakistan People's Party (PPP) to unseat a rival administration in North West Frontier Province (NWFP), has infuriated the opposition led by former Premier Nawaz Sharif.

"There is a serious constitutional crisis in the country," Sharif, a former premier, told President Farooq Ahmad Leghari in a letter, alleging kidnapping and bribing of deputies in the province.

The PPP is poised to steer a no-trust motion in the 80-



Benazir Bhutto

member NWFP assembly during the current month against Chief Minister Sabir Shah, an ally of Sharif, for which a formal notice has been made.

The October general election, won by Benazir and her allies, gave Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) and its partners control in NWFP.

The no-confidence move from PPP, the main opposition group in the NWFP legislature, followed reported resignations by several ministers from the provincial government.

In his letter to the president, published today, Sharif said the ministers "have been made to resign with lucrative offers by the federal government, thus indulging in horse-trading."

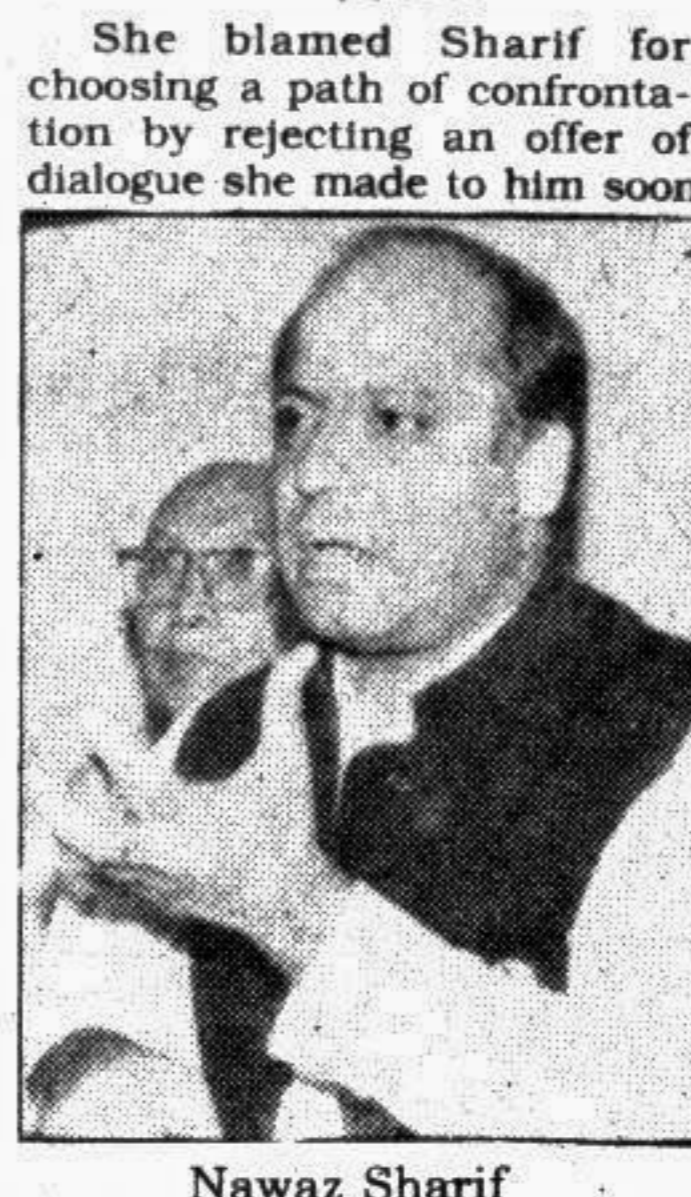
"Some of the provincial deputies 'have been taken away' from their houses and the province to be kept as 'hostages,' for the upcoming showdown in the provincial

assembly, the opposition leader said.

He acknowledged the opposition's constitutional right to seek a no-confidence vote, but said the PPP was adopting "illegal" practices and demanded Leghari summon a joint session of the federal National Assembly and Senate on the issue.

Sharif, who quit as Prime Minister over six months ago amid a power tussle with the then Benazir backed president, threatened public mobilisation against the federal government if it continued "dirty tricks" in NWFP.

Benazir has denied any interference in the province, telling Sharif he was free to "bring a no-confidence motion against her government ten times."



Nawaz Sharif

She blamed Sharif for choosing a path of confrontation by rejecting an offer of dialogue she made to him soon after assuming office in October for evolving a mutually binding code of ethics in politics.

In a goodwill gesture, Benazir invited him to tour foreign countries as a special envoy of the government to mobilise world opinion on the Kashmir issue with India — an offer spurned by Sharif.

As both sides trade insults, allegations and threats ahead of the expected crucial vote, political crisis in NWFP's capital of Peshawar fear the ongoing tussle could lead to incidents.

"The PPP move against the NWFP chief minister can destabilise the entire political system," Sharif's brother, Shahbaz Sharif, opposition leader in the Punjab assembly, warned.

1m illegal immigrants in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: Illegal immigrants in Pakistan number around one million, Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar said in a statement today, reports AFP.

Most live in Pakistan's largest city of Karachi, the country's commercial capital and main port, Babar said.

He did not cite nationalities, but reports indicate the immigrants come from India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and some other Asian countries.

Babar said strict vigilance had been enforced along the border with India to control illegal entry.

A draft law is being prepared to enhance punishment for unauthorised immigration into the country, he said.

BRIEFLY

Blast kills Indian cop: An Indian police officer died when a powerful bomb exploded early yesterday in his home inside a police station in the far-eastern state of Assam, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, AFP says from New Delhi.

The news agency identified the slain officer as the chief of the police station located in the frontier town of Tezpur, and blamed the pre-dawn attack on tribal guerrillas of the United Liberation Force of Assam.

The outlawed organisation is spearheading a campaign for a separate tribal homeland in the timber and oil-rich Indian state.

Artificial cyclone: Scientists at the Structural Engineering Research Centre (SERC) in Madras are building a unique facility that will produce artificial cyclones in the laboratory, PTI reports from Madras.

The idea is to use man-made cyclones to collect data for designing buildings and structures that will not collapse when struck by high speed winds in actual cyclones. SERC director Dr N V Raman told PTI.

Winds speeds of up to 200 km per hour will be produced in the "wind tunnel" which is nearing completion at SERC as part of the rs 60 million project on "engineering of structures for mitigating damage due to cyclones" funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Fire claims 8 in Singapore: Eight people, including two Singaporeans were killed when a fire broke out aboard a tanker at Jurong shipyard yesterday, a shipyard official said, Reuter reports from Singapore.

Singapore television said three others were also injured in the fire which started at 10am (0200 GMT).

The ship was supposed to have set sail yesterday, state television said.

3 foreigners to die in China: A Chinese court has sentenced two Filipino engineers and a Taiwanese businessman to death for smuggling drugs and guns, a Beijing-funded newspaper in Hong Kong said Tuesday, AP reports from Hong Kong.

The Hong Kong Commercial Daily said June Efrenc Torres, 35, and Joels Aristoteles, 24, were sentenced Monday by the Intermediate People's Court in Xiamen, in coastal Fujian Province.

They were arrested in 1992 boarding a flight from Xiamen to the British colony of Hong Kong with 22 pounds (11 kilos) of amphetamines, it said.

Kazakhstan denies Iranian report: President Nursultan Nazarbayev has denied Iranian reports that Kazakhstan is rethinking its commitment to eliminate the nuclear weapons it inherited from the Soviet Union, AP reports from Kazakhstan.

The Central Asian nation of 17 million people will "fulfil its obligations before the international community" and send all of its 104 SS-18 nuclear missiles to Russia for dismantling, Nazarbayev told reporters Monday.

22 killed in China blasts: Three separate fireworks explosions in the North China province of Hebei killed 22 people and injured dozens the Xinhua Daily Telegraph reported yesterday, Reuter says from Beijing.

It said all the accidents occurred on February 5, the first two in separate villages. In the first explosion, six people were killed, eight seriously injured and seven slightly injured.

In the second, a trader setting off firecrackers to attract customers to his stall started a chain of explosions in neighbouring firecracker stalls, killing 16 people and injuring seven.

World Court office-bearers: Algerian Judge Mohammed Bedjaoui was elected president and American Judge Stephen M. Schwelb vice president of the World Court Monday, AP reports from the Hague.

The 15-member UN Court, formally known as the International Court of Justice, elected two jurists to three-year terms.

Bedjaoui, 64, is a resident of Paris and the New York City-born Schwelb, also 64, lives in Washington, DC.

Titan 4 blasts off: An air force Titan 4 Rocket blasted off Monday afternoon, bound for orbit with a one billion dollar military communications satellite that has been criticised by some experts as a relic of the cold war. Reuter reports from Cape Canaveral.

The air force flight marked the 300 million dollar rocket's return to the skies after a botched launch last August that destroyed another military satellite over California.

The Titan Thundered from its launch pad at 4.47 pm est (2147 GMT) within seven hours after liftoff. It was to lob the massive militar satellite into orbit some 22,300 miles (35,900 km) above the equator.

British MP found dead in 'suspicious' circumstances

LONDON, Feb 8: British Conservative Member of Parliament Stephen Milligan, was found dead here Monday in "suspicious" circumstances, police said, reports AFP.

The body of the 45-year-old MP was found at his home. No details were given on the cause of death.

A former BBC and Sunday Times journalist, Milligan, who specialised in international affairs, was elected in 1992 as a member for Eastleigh, southern England.

He was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Defence Minister Jonathan Aitken.

Reuter adds: British Prime Minister John Major's embattled government faced the prospect today of a damaging by-election defeat after the death of a ruling Conservative Member of Parliament in possibly compromising circumstances.

Major, cabinet ministers

and fellow Conservative MPs expressed shock on Monday over news that the body of Stephen Milligan, had been discovered at his West London home.

"The Prime Minister has been shocked and saddened by Stephen Milligan's untimely death," said a statement issued by Major's office early today.

"His deepest sympathies and condolences go to Stephen's family and friends."

"I'm devastated by the loss of Stephen Milligan" Aitken told Britain's Channel four news. "He was arising parliamentary star...and I think he was destined for high things."

Despite a series of statements on Milligan's death from colleagues, police refused for eight hours after the body was found to confirm its identity.

A police spokesman finally issued a formal identification of the body in the early hours of this morning, but he still re-

fused to comment on news reports the body had been found naked except for a pair of women's stockings.

He said a post-mortem was being carried out at a mortuary not far from Milligan's home in Chiswick, West London, but this would not be completed for several hours.

The death was front-page news in all Britain's newspapers today. The Times and the Telegraph made no mention of the report Milligan was wearing stockings, but the Independent did and the Guardian reported that he was found partially clothed, bound and gagged and may have been strangled.

The country's sensationalist tabloids showed no restraint. Tory (Conservative) MP strangled in stockings and suspenders blared today's front page while the daily Mirror went a step further with "Tory MP dies in gay sex riddle."



Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres (L) gestures while shaking hand with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat in Cairo on Monday as they met to secure an accord to launch Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho. — AFP photo

45 Pakistanis beheaded in S Arabia

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: Some 45 Pakistanis, convicted on drug smuggling charges, were beheaded in Saudi Arabia over a period of five years up to August 1993, the government has told the National Assembly, reports AFP.

More than half of the executions occurred in the 1992-93 period, while 12 were beheaded in 1989 and 1990, Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar told the assembly late Monday.

Among the oil-rich Gulf Arab states, Saudi Arabia employs the largest number of Pakistani workers.

Israeli army on alert in South Lebanon

JERUSALEM, Feb 8: The Israeli army was on the alert in Southern Lebanon today fearing new attacks by pro-Iranian guerrillas a day after the killing of four Jewish soldiers, military officials said, reports AFP.

Israeli forces retaliated Monday with air and artillery strikes on positions held by Hezbollah fighters, but the officials would not say if reinforcements had been deployed in the "security zone."

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said today that Syria, which has thousands of troops in Lebanon, should "put a break on Hezbollah."

But in a radio interview

S African talks end in deadlock

PRETORIA, Feb 8: Talks between the Conservative Freedom Alliance, the government and the African National Congress (ANC) ended in deadlock Monday, with the ANC accusing the alliance of continually "moving the goalposts," reports AFP.

"We have reached for the moment a deadlock," South African Communist Party delegate Joe Slovo, who is also one of the ANC's chief negotiators, said after five-and-a-half hours of talks here.

"We should be saddened," he added.

All three parties said, however, they would report back on the outcome of the meeting and held out the hope that there would be further talks

Stop using force against Kashmiris, Kabul urges Delhi

ISLAMABAD, Feb 8: Afghanistan's government asked India Monday to stop using force against "defenceless" people in the Indian-ruled Kashmir, reports AFP.

The Kashmir issue should be resolved politically on the basis of the UN resolutions, said a government statement, released here by the Afghan embassy.

"The government of the Islamic state of Afghanistan is in favour of preventing tension in Kashmir for peace and stability in the region," the statement said.

Pakistan and India have fought two wars over the disputed Himalayan region since their independence from Britain in 1947.

A nationwide general strike was observed in Pakistan Saturday in solidarity with the four-year old Muslim freedom struggle in the Indian-ruled southern two-thirds of Kashmir.

Off the Record



US singer Whitney Houston displays one of the seven awards she won on Monday at the 21st annual American Music Awards. Houston won as favourite female artist in both pop and soul categories, favourite single and album for both pop and soul and favourite album in the adult contemporary category. — AFP photo

Ironic reversal of roles

PATNA, India: Eligible bachelors walk warily this winter in India's eastern Bihar state, reports IPS.

The biting cold here heralds the start of *lagan*, the Hindu marriage season. But the otherwise festive time of nuptials is drenched these days as scores of single men have been kidnapped and forced to marry strangers.

Subash Kumar, a bank clerk in Patna, the state capital, recently paid the price for venturing out alone one evening.

Four days after he was abducted by a gang of hoodlums, manacled to a bedpost, starved and severely beaten, Kumar found himself marrying a girl he had never seen before.

During the nuptials, a rope was tied around his waist in case he disgraced the bride's family by attempting to escape.

The next day Kumar took his wife home, vowing vengeance against his-laws. But like thousands of other similarly shanghaied Bihari grooms, Kumar knows deep down that there little he can do. He must stay married or risk being killed.

In a country where women cannot choose their marriage partners, this is an ironic reversal of roles.

But the kidnapping of single men for shot-gun marriages has been going on across Bihar for more than a decade. Local officials say at least 1,000 such nuptials take place every *lagan* which falls twice a year, in summer and winter.

Comments one social worker in Patna. "These marriages have been happening long enough for them to have acquired social sanction and acceptability."

'90 pc American don't know the name of Hosokawa'

TOKYO: More than 90 per cent of Americans do not know the name of the Japanese Prime Minister, Morihiro Hosokawa, according to an opinion poll published Tuesday ahead of his talks with US President Bill Clinton on Friday, reports AFP.

Only one per cent of the 1,007 Americans interviewed in the telephone poll last week, could correctly cite the name, while five per cent responded with wrong names for the premier, the Japanese newspaper Sanket reported.

It added that the 93 per cent said they did not know and the remaining one per cent had no answer.

The poll was jointly conducted by Sanket, Tokyo's Fuji television station, the American daily USA Today and the US polling agency Gallup. It showed that the rate of correct answers had not improved since a similar survey was conducted in September, one month after Hosokawa took office.

It also said 69 per cent thought the fundamental US-Japan relationship was "good" and 22 per cent considered it "not good".

US-ROK wargames in late March

TOKYO, Feb 8: South Korea and the United States has decided to stage controversial joint wargames in late March unless North Korea agrees to open its nuclear sites to international checks, Yomiuri Shimbun reported today, says Reuter.

Quoting an unnamed source at the South Korean Defence Ministry, the Japanese daily said the 'team spirit '94' exercise was provisionally set to run from March 22 to March 31, but would be sharply scaled down from previous years.

The exercise will go into gear in the face of certain North Korean fury if the Stahmist state fails to accept inspection of its secret nuclear sites before February 21, Yomiuri said.

World still divided over air strikes on Serb positions

BRUSSELS, Feb 8: Two days after a mortar attack killed 68 people in Sarajevo, the international community was still divided on using air strikes to end the siege of the Bosnian capital, reports AP.

France failed Monday to win European Union support to give Bosnian Serbs an ultimatum: Remove your artillery from the hills around Sarajevo or face Western military intervention.

Instead, the EU foreign ministers only welcomed a Wednesday meeting of NATO envoys whose "aim should be to bring about the immediate lifting of the siege of Sarajevo, using all means necessary, including the use of air power."

In London, Britain called for

"more muscular action" in Bosnia to end the killing of civilians.

But in Moscow, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said bombing Serbian positions would be the "least successful" response to Saturday's carnage in the Sarajevo marketplace.

And while United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has asked for the authority to order NATO bombing runs on Serb positions, president Clinton is playing down the prospect of such a move.

The EU foreign ministers statement made no mention of Bosnian Serbs, who keep a stranglehold on Sarajevo and are widely seen as the main

aggressors in a 22-month-old war that has left more than 200,000 people dead.

Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias, who presided at the EU meeting, said there was "a convergence of view that there is no alternative solution to the (Bosnian peace) plan of the European Union."

The EU has drafted a plan for a three-day division of Bosnia Herzegovina. Which the Muslim-led government has rejected as insufficient.

Lord Owen, the EU peace mediator, is to meet again on Thursday with the warring sides.

He told the EU that Bosnian Serbs were ready to make a separate peace deal for

Sarajevo that would demilitarise the city and put it under UN administration.

He told reporters later that Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic signalled his willingness to discuss this even before Saturday's mortar attack.

At the EU meeting, the 12 foreign ministers issued widely varying views on the wisdom of air strikes.

Declaring the carnage in Bosnia "a test of our honour," French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe proposed giving Bosnian Serbs an ultimatum or face allied air strikes.

But only the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy favoured this outright.

Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Luxembourg, Portugal and

Spain rejected it, arguing the EU must give peace talks another chance.

Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes expressed disappointment after the meeting, saying, "I had hoped for a more forceful attitude... his won't do our image any good."

But British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd called Saturday's mortar attack "a turning point... There is an overwhelming feeling now that the lifting of the siege of Sarajevo 'has to be attempted.'"

A source at NATO, who demanded anonymity, said the sense at the alliance headquarters "is that there has to be a more muscular response, that they have to be serious about air strikes."

He said allied air attacks must have political objectives — such as a withdrawal of Serb forces or UN control of artillery around Sarajevo — and not be based on a desire for revenge for the mortar attack.

If the allies endorsed air strikes, it would then be up to Boutros-Ghali to order them.

Legally, officials said, Boutros-Ghali need not consult the United Nations Security Council, but that Russia and some NATO nations would like him to do so.

On Monday, Russian officials said they opposed air strikes.

Kozyrev told the interfax news agency that Russia would not accept air strikes as "punishment" for Bosnian Serbs.

Russia plans to create military bases in CIS

MOSCOW, Feb 8: Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev said on Monday that Moscow plans to create 27-28 military bases in the territories of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) this year, the interfax news service reported, says Xinhua.

At a meeting of the leadership of the Privolzhskiy military district in the Russia's North-western city of Samara, Grachev said, however, that over 270,000 Russian servicemen, about 3,100 tanks, 6,000 vehicles and 1,500 planes had been withdrawn into Russia from the former Soviet Republics since 1992.s