

BRIEFLY



Hollywood madam Heidi Fleiss looks toward the jury in court in Los Angeles on Friday as they convict her on three charges of pandering, for which she faces three years in prison. They were deadlocked on two other pandering charges and acquitted her of drug charges. — AFP photo

Russian PM to visit India: Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin plans to visit India from December 21 to 24, a government spokesman said on Friday. Reuter reports from Moscow.

The spokesman gave no details of Chernomyrdin's trip.

DPRK, US experts to meet in Jan: North Korean and US nuclear experts, who ended talks in Beijing this week, will meet again in January, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said yesterday. AFP reports from Tokyo.

The official North Korean news agency quoted a joint statement by the experts as saying that the North Korean and US delegations met in the Chinese capital Wednesday through Friday to discuss North Korea's planned replacement of the graphite-moderated nuclear reactor system with light-water types.

Offices of Turkish daily bombed: A bomb explosion early Saturday at the headquarters of the pro-Kurdish newspaper Ozgur Ulke killed one person and injured 19 others, the Anatolia news agency reported. AP says from Istanbul.

The bomb caused heavy damage to the building, destroyed several cars in the street and shattered windows of nearby houses, Anatolia said. Another overnight explosion at Ozgur Ulke's Ankara office caused heavy damage, but no casualties, Anatolia added.

Street vendors riot in Bandung: Indonesian police in the west Java city of Bandung have arrested seven people after vendors and tricycle riders went on the rampage over plans to sweep them off the streets, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from Jakarta.

The arrests followed a riot on Thursday by about 200 street vendors and tricycle riders after rumours that a municipal official had run over and killed one of Bandung's many pedicab riders.

Crackdown on Turkish Kurds: Turkey's army pressed its crackdown on Kurdish rebel bases in the mountains of the southeast, killing 52 of the guerrillas, regional governor's office said on Friday. AP reports from Diyarbakir.

The fighting took place over the last few days in Tunceli and Diyarbakir provinces, it added. Three soldiers were also killed in the clashes.

16 Tuareg rebels killed in Mali: Government troops in the West African state of Mali killed 16 Tuareg rebels who raided the central town of Gourma, a military statement said. Reuter reports from Bamako.

The statement, issued late Thursday, said there had been no military losses during the attack by "armed bandits" — the usual official term for Tuareg rebels.

Karimov named new Tajik PM: President Emomali Rakhmonov named a close associate, Jamshed Karimov, as Prime Minister of Tajikistan on Friday, promoting him from vice-premier to replace the reformist Abdulla Samadov, ITAR-Tass reported. AFP says from Moscow.

Karimov was first named vice-premier in 1988, when the republic was under Soviet rule, after a period out of office in 1990 and 1991, he was back during the 1992 civil war between Islamic militants and pro-Communists.

50th anniversary of end of WWII: The UN General Assembly decided on Friday without a vote to commemorate 1995 as the 50th anniversary of the end of World War Two. Reuter reports from United Nations.

A resolution initiated by Russia proclaimed it the "world year of people's commemoration of the victims of the Second World War." It also decided to hold a special solemn meeting on October 18, 1995, to mark the sacrifices wrought by the war.

Theft at Windsor Castle: A ceremonial sword encrusted with diamonds, given to the Duke of Edinburgh in 1989, was stolen from a museum display at Windsor Castle, southern England, police said on Friday. AFP reports from London.

The sword valued at more than 7,000 pounds (10,500 dollars), which had been part of an exhibition of presents given to the royal family, was taken on Thursday.

4 die in US club stampede: Three men and a teenage girl were found dead in the stairway of a crowded downtown club on Saturday, apparently crushed in a stampede that may have started after a fight broke out, police said. AP reports from Elizabeth, New Jersey.

At least 12 people were injured and taken to hospitals, said Lt. Mark Kurdyka. Police and firefighters arriving at the El Balcon club shortly after 1 a.m. found people "piled four and five on top of each other" in the front stairway, Kurdyka said.

Guard sentenced for biting cop: A security guard has been given a one-month suspended sentence for biting a policeman, after deciding against allowing his dog to do so, officials said on Friday. AFP reports from Senlis, France.

The incident occurred in August when the security guard, on duty in a car park, was approached by policemen who suspected he was up to no good with some cars.

International

Bosnian Serbs reject fresh UN ceasefire offer

SARAJEVO, Dec 3: An end to the Bosnia war seemed no closer despite intense diplomacy to search for peace formula, and international efforts were complicated by a new row between the UN and NATO, reports Reuter.

The Bosnian Serbs rejected yet another ceasefire proposed by the United Nations on Friday but promised to release hundreds of UN peacekeepers they are holding hostage to deter NATO air strikes. They also pledged to allow UN supply and civilian aid convoys into the embattled Bihać enclave.

Foreign Ministers of the Contact Group on Bosnia the United States, Britain, France, Germany and Russia — ended meeting in Brussels on Friday reaffirming the need for a negotiated settlement to the conflict.

They called in a final communique for an immediate ceasefire throughout Bosnia but made no mention of allowing the confederation sought by the Bosnian Serbs with Serbia.

Confederation at least after today's meeting is inconceivable," German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel told a news conference.

The communique said an existing peace plan carving up Bosnia 49-51 per cent between Serbs and Muslims remained the basis of any final settlement.

But it called for constitutional arrangements which would be acceptable to both sides and preserve the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and for equitable and balanced arrangements for the Bosnian-Croat and Bosnian-Serb entity.

Nepali ministers asked to declare their assets

KATHMANDU, Dec 3: Nepal's new Communist prime minister, wary of public disgruntlement with alleged government corruption, has ordered cabinet ministers to declare their assets, officials said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Mamnoon Adhikary, sworn in as the Himalayan kingdom's first Communist leader on Wednesday, told his new cabinet on Thursday to make a public declaration of all property and other assets within seven days, they said.

The Communist Unified Marxist-Leninist (UML) party rode to power in larger part on discontent with alleged corruption in the outgoing government, headed by the centrist Congress Party.

Lankan troops kill 4 Tigers

COLOMBO, Dec 3: Government troops killed four Tamil Tiger rebels in two separate clashes in eastern Sri Lanka, a military spokesman said Saturday, reports AP.

Troops killed three rebels Friday in Panichankern, 200 kilometers (130 miles) east of Colombo, said Brig Gemunu Kulatunga, the military spokesman.

In another incident, guerrillas attacked policemen and one rebel was killed in the cross-fire in Namalpokuna and killed one rebel, Kulatunga said. No casualties were reported on the government side.

Clashes have continued despite President Chandrika Kumaratunga's offer of a ceasefire and restarting the peace talks.

Rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran has agreed to peace talks to end the 11-year-old war, but no date has been fixed for resuming negotiations suspended after a suspected rebel suicide bomber killed opposition presidential candidate Gamini Dissanayake and 56 others on Oct 24.

Assad grooming second son as his heir?

DAMASCUS, Syria, Dec 3: Ten months after his death at age 31, the eldest son of President Hafez Assad, the author, army Col. Bahjat Suleyman, has been emerging.

In the officially sanctioned "Hero to the Thoughts of the Hero Basil Assad," the author, army Col. Bahjat Suleyman, begins.

"Hope vanished ... on a bitter winter day after he brought to us a promise of a beautiful spring that's full of colours and birds chirping."

But the book concludes, nothing can stop "Basil Assad's generation from clinging to the second brother, Bashar Assad, and accompanying him ... towards the third millennium AD."

There are three more Assad sons. The second son, Bashar, is 29. Photographs of him are rarely seen. In Syria, people are used to reading between the lines of propaganda.

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