

## BRIEFLY

**Gunmen kill soldier in Karachi:**

Gunmen on motorcycles ambushed paramilitary soldiers on an early-morning suburban patrol Thursday, killing one, and two people were killed in other incidents in Karachi, AP reports from Karachi.

The death toll in Wednesday's massacre at a mosque rose to nine, police said. Several people were in hospital in serious condition.

**2 Asians jailed in Germany:**

A German court on Wednesday sentenced an Asian man to eight years in jail, without having been able to establish his name, age or nationality, Reuter reports from Berlin.

The man had refused to offer a word in testimony, but was found guilty of rape, robbery and counterfeiting documents. The court in Berlin ruled his South Korean passport was a fake and decided he may have been Chinese because his co-defendant was Chinese. The defendant standing trial with him was sentenced to five years in prison for rape.

**Serbs free 2 photographers:**

Rebel Serb forces in Croatia freed a French and an American photographer on Wednesday hours after the US ambassador contacted the Serb leadership to demand their release, an embassy spokeswoman said, Reuter reports from Zagreb.

The photographers Luc Delhaye from France and Ron Jacques from the United States were detained on Tuesday in the breakaway Krajina Serb region of Croatia.

**Iran vexed by papal remarks:**

The Iranian Foreign Ministry summoned the Vatican's ambassador on Wednesday and demanded an explanation about reported remarks by Pope John Paul II about restrictions on priests in Iran, Iranian television said, Reuter reports from Nicosia.

The ambassador "expressed regret and worry about the fact that Western media had distorted the Pope's comments" and stressed the Vatican's interest in expanding relations with the Islamic republic, the television said.

**5 missing as ferries collide off HK:**

Two passenger ferries collided off Hong Kong in rain and mist on Thursday and one of them sank, leaving five people missing, authorities said, AP reports from Hong Kong.

The sunken vessel was carrying 67 passengers and eight crew, most of whom were picked up by the other ferry involved in the collision, rescue authorities said. The other ferry was disabled and drifting, said Ravi Dewan, duty controller at marine rescue headquarters. He said three passengers and two crew members were missing.

**Two peasants to die in China:**

Two Chinese peasants from Hunan province, in south China, were sentenced to death recently for stealing 66 cows worth 60,000 yuan (7,000 US dollars), The Legal Daily reported yesterday, AFP says from Beijing.

Six accomplices were also jailed, several for life, it said.

**Second UN aid convoy in Kabul:**

For the second time in a week, a United Nations aid convoy carrying food and medical supplies has arrived in Kabul, officials said yesterday, AFP reports from Kabul.

435 tons of food and other items on 37 trucks arrived on Wednesday at UN warehouses located at the centre of the city, which is under the control of President Burhanuddin Rabbani's faction. The same amount of food was delivered to the territories under the control of ex-Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the UN official said.

**14 rebels killed in Algeria:**

Algerian security forces shot dead 14 Muslim guerrillas in the past three days in seven regions, the official Algerian news agency, APS said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Tunis.

Among those killed, five were shot dead when troops stormed their hideout in the eastern area of Batna, APS said, quoting security officials.

**Stockholm shooting, 2 held:**

Police late Wednesday caught two fugitives accused of killing four people in a nightclub massacre, ending a manhunt that had rattled Sweden for days, AP reports from Stockholm.

Guillermo Marquez Jara, 23, a native Chilean, and Tommy Zethraeus, 25, a Swede, were arrested just after 10 pm near the Swedish royal castle just outside the capital, according to Swedish radio and the news agency TT.

**5000-yrs-old tomb discovered:**

An ancient tomb from 5,000 years ago has been unearthed in Shangju prefecture in central China's Henan province, Xinhua reports from Zhengzhou.

According to the archaeologists involved, the tomb, in which they found bones of five Yangshao people and a collection of ceramic and stone tools, dates back to the period of the Yangshao culture (4514-2550 BC).

**MP, 29 others arrested in Bihar for rioting**

PATNA, India, Dec 8: Indian police arrested a member of Parliament and her husband after their high-caste political supporters allegedly stoned a senior civil servant to death, court officials said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Police arrested Lovely Anand and her husband, Anand Mohan Singh, and 28 others for mob violence and rioting in a case which has sparked fear and anger among civil servants in the northern Bihar state.

Anand and her husband are leaders of the Bihar People's Party (BPP), which is led by high-caste Hindus in a state long split by caste divisions.

On Monday an angry mob stoned to death G Krishanaya, district magistrate at Gopalganj, some 150 km (95 miles) from Patna. Post-mortem reports showed the slain official had also been shot at close range.

The mob turned violent at a funeral procession for five BPP workers who were shot dead on Sunday in unknown circumstances. Anand and her husband were present at the funeral.

Anand was elected this year in a highly-charged by-election to the lower house, Lok Sabha. Her husband, a lawmaker in the State Assembly, led a campaign against Bihar's low-caste government.

On Wednesday baton-wielding low-caste protesters called a general strike and took to the streets in Patna, Bihar's capital, to protest the killing.

Ram Vilas Paswan, a low-caste leader from the centrist Janata Dal party which is in power in the state, led supporters who smashed car windscreens and forced shops in Patna to close.

**France asks UN, NATO to draw plans for pullout from Bosnia**

PARIS, Dec 8: France has brandished the threat of a pullout of United Nations peacekeeping forces from Bosnia, but the risks of such an operation are so high that withdrawal in the near future is not on the cards, French military experts said here, reports AFP.

Expressing growing frustration over the dead-end that French diplomacy has reached in Bosnia, Foreign Minister Alain Juppe on Wednesday called the situation of UN peacekeepers "untenable" and said France had asked NATO and the United Nations to prepare detailed pullout plans.

But the military experts said lack of security at Sarajevo airport and the coming winter would make it impossible for the moment to pullout the 3,000 French peacekeepers in the Bosnian capital, let alone the 24,000 peacekeepers in

Bosnia as a whole. As NATO began discussing a contingency plan for a pullout in Brussels, Juppe warned in the French National Assembly: "The decision which we are being forced to take, for lack of determination by the international community, will engender war, that is to say more tragedy and more suffering for the people."

Juppe said it was "our duty" to ask the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to prepare "a detailed withdrawal plan."

"It is a very high-risk operation and will imply prior reinforcement of ground forces if it is to be successful."

Bosnian-Serb forces have periodically blockaded UN troops and halted convoys, most recently after NATO air raids last month.

But French government

sources tried to play down Juppe's remarks. "No decision for a withdrawal of UNPROFOR has been taken to date," said one high official, who asked not to be named.

Juppe's threat showed his "frustration and pessimism" after a series of fruitless international meetings which served only to point up the divisions between the United States, Russia and Europe over Bosnia, the official said.

Added to this was the failure of a joint mission by Juppe and British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd to Belgrade at the weekend, strongly criticised in the French and British press as appeasement of the Serbs, the official said.

In London, Hurd also ruled out immediate withdrawal, telling parliament that Britain was not considering any unilateral withdrawal of troops from Bosnia.

"If the risk becomes unacceptable, there should be a withdrawal," he said, but added, "We have not reached that point yet." Britain has 3,500 troops in Bosnia.

In Paris, military sources said withdrawal was being studied, but was not an immediate option. "It is an extreme solution which we must avoid," a senior officer said.

In Brussels meanwhile, NATO ambassadors on Wednesday began discussion of withdrawal plan. Diplomats said none of the ambassadors spoke of an imminent pullout, "but all emphasised the need for a plan in case sudden action is required."

NATO sources recently said that at least 20,000 soldiers, or three divisions, would be needed to pullout the UN peacekeepers, who total 24,000 men.



President Bill Clinton and his daughter Chelsea hug as First Lady Hillary looks on after singing Christmas carols on Wednesday at Washington's Elipse during the annual Pageant of Peace. — AFP photo

**Kabul terms first round of Tehran talks as positive**

NICOSIA, Dec 8: Nine days of indirect talks in the Iranian capital Tehran between warring Afghan factions were a positive step towards the restoration of peace in Afghanistan, the head of the Afghan government team was quoted as saying, reports Reuter.

The official Iranian News Agency IRNA quoted Hussein Alemi Balkhi as saying on Wednesday the talks were "a successful and positive step towards bringing about peace in Afghanistan."

He said the second round of talks would start after the end of a summit meeting of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference, which is supervising the talks, due to open in Morocco on December 13. No venue or date has been set.

"He (Balkhi) said the view-

points of the delegation sent by the Afghan government and the delegation of the coordinating council of Afghan opposition groups, are very close on the establishment of a ceasefire, course of transition of power and selection of the future government," IRNA said.

"Calling the transition of power as a need to bring about peace in Afghanistan, Balkhi said that in case of establishing a lawful body consisting of the Jihad groups, President Burhanuddin Rabbani will be ready to relinquish his position," it added.

Iran's Foreign Ministry official Mir-Mahmoud Mousavi said on Wednesday the warring factions ended the talks without agreement on a ceasefire or a date to resume negotiations.

But he said the mere fact

that eight of the 10 major Afghan groups had agreed to take part in the talks was a success in the efforts to bring peace to the war-shattered country.

Mousavi said three issues were on the agenda: A ceasefire, a transition period, and long-term arrangements.

He said all groups agreed on the need for a ceasefire but differed over details. They also agreed on a transition government but disagreed on its shape and all said it was premature to discuss long-term arrangements.

Fighting among rival groups has killed 15,000 people in Kabul since Islamic guerrillas took over from a collapsed Communist government in 1992 after 14 years of civil war.

**8 Kurdish MPs jailed in Turkey**

ANKARA, Dec 8: A Turkish state security court jailed eight Kurdish MPs for up to 15 years on Thursday after earlier dropping treason charges that carried the death penalty, reports Reuter.

The court sentenced five MPs including Leyala Zana, the only woman among them, to 15 years. One MP was given seven years and six months.

Two MPs, including independent MP Mahmut Almaz, were given three and a half years each, but were expected to be released, taking into account the nine months they have spent in prison since their March arrest.

"The decision was taken with little evidence and hardly any proper scrutiny," DEP lawyer Yusuf Alatas said of the case that has been widely criticised by the West and human rights groups. "The decision is political."

**Kaifu elected leader of New Frontier Party**

TOKYO, Dec 8: Former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu was elected head of Japan's newest and largest opposition party today, defeating fellow ex-premier Tsutomu Hata in a vote among parliamentarians, party officials announced, reports Reuter.

Kaifu, a popular prime minister in a Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) government from 1989 to 1991, left the Conservative Party last June because he was unhappy with the pace of political reform.

He won 131 votes to Hata's 52 with 31 for Takashi Yonezawa, current chairman of the small Democratic Socialist Party, one of the nine non-Communist opposition parties which have banded into the New Frontier Party.

Kaifu's deputy in the post of party secretary-general is another former LDP stalwart, Ichiro Ozawa.

**Aristide honours newsmen killed during army rule**

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Dec 8: President Jean-Bertrand Aristide honoured journalists killed during army rule and pledged support for the revival of a free press, reports AP.

Respect for the press is "a commitment, not just a favour," Aristide told about 100 Haitian radio, TV and newspaper reporters on Wednesday in the presidential palace. About a half-dozen foreign journalists were also present.

After army strongmen overthrew the elected Aristide in 1991, most radio stations - the main source of news for Haiti's illiterate masses - closed. They soon reopened, but practiced self-censorship to avoid persecution.

Four journalists were killed and dozens more were jailed, beaten by police or exiled.

**Off the Record**

Two Yemenis Ali Abdo (R) and Ahamed Zaid riding their camel in Cairo on Wednesday during their trip throughout the Arab world to claim a 'United Arab Nation'. Since the start of their trip in November from Sanaa, they have covered 4,140 km. After Egypt they will travel to Libya. Their whole trip will be 14,000 km in 360 days. — AFP photo

**Charles blasted for taking sons fox-hunting**

LONDON: More than 100 MPs assailed Prince Charles on Wednesday for taking his two young sons fox-hunting after he had criticised "insensate violence" on British television, reports AFP.

A House of Commons motion pointed to Charles "insensitivity" in taking Princes William, 12, and Harry, 10, on fox hunts which were denounced in a full-page newspaper ad by the International Fund for Animal Welfare as "brutal."

"Prince Charles was quick to condemn TV violence because of its effect on children," said the ad. "How can he allow his own children to participate in the brutal and abominable sport of fox-hunting?"

The Commons resolution called on the government to ban children from attending hunts.

**Moghul romance inspires woman to attempt suicide**

NEW DELHI: Indian fire brigade rescued an Australian woman from the Taj Mahal after she tried to kill herself, saying the Moghul romance which led to construction of the monument inspired her to the act, reports AFP.

Sonaj Bidek, a 30-year-old tourist, climbed atop one of the Taj Mahal's 20-foot (six metres) minarets on Wednesday but was rescued by firemen before she could jump, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

Other tourists watched as the firemen spread a safety net and forced Bidek to come down, PTI said.

The woman, who arrived in India on December 1, said the legendary love of Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal had inspired her to try and take the extreme step, PTI said.

**Order to arrest nudes on nudist beach!**

RIO DE JANEIRO: A Brazilian judge, outraged by press photographs of naked bathers, has ordered the army to arrest anyone found unclothed at a newly inaugurated nudist beach, newspapers reported on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

"As if the gambling racketeers and the drug traffickers weren't enough, now we've got a bunch of people... exposing their entire bodies and their ridiculous buttocks," Judge Moises Cohen told the daily O Globo.

Since the nudist beach was opened last week, various photographs of middle-aged nudists holding hands in the Atlantic surf have appeared in the Rio press.

"I'm sure (the army) has better things to do than chase after naked families," said Alfredo Sirkis, Rio's environment secretary, who authorised nudism at Abrico Beach near the city.

The ruling threatened Brazil's first all-nude samba parade, due to take place on the beach next Sunday, featuring some of Rio's most famous samba composers and performers.

**Men more likely to be victims of domestic violence**

LONDON: One in five men have been victims of domestic violence and men are more likely to be beaten up at home than women, according to a survey for a BBC programme, reports Reuter.

The survey found 18 per cent of men have been victims of domestic violence by a partner, compared with 13 per cent of women, the BBC said before the programme to be screened on Wednesday.

"You're confronting here two taboos. One is that women can be violent and the second is that men can be beaten up by their wives. And that is something that nobody wants to take on board," said Dr Malcolm George, a neuroscientist, in an interview for the programme.

One victim interviewed on the programme was former boxer Paul Cord, beaten by his wife during their five-year marriage.

**UK to consider selling arms to Syria**

LONDON, Dec 8: Britain will consider selling arms to Syria now that the European Union has lifted its arms embargo against that nation, a minister indicated on Wednesday, reports AP.

Applications to export weapons would now be considered on a case by case basis in the light of the international guidelines to which we are committed," said Foreign Office Minister of State Douglas Hogg in a written reply to a parliamentary question.

**Baghdad to start building Saddam Mosque**

BAGHDAD, Dec 8: Iraqi workers this month are to start building Saddam Grand Mosque which will accommodate 100,000 worshippers and have eight minarets soaring into the sky above Baghdad, officials said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Four of the minarets will be 200 metres (more than 600 feet) high and an artificial lake will be built next to the mosque, a blend of modern and traditional Islamic styles. The Baghdad Observer said.

It will have a museum of Islamic treasures and a library

**Japan must cling to non-militarism for sake of all, says Oe**

STOCKHOLM, Dec 8: In the rubble of World War II and two nuclear bombs, Japan enshrined the principle of "eternal peace" in its constitution to help heal the nation's physical and spiritual wounds, reports AP.

Now, like a "conscientious objector" in a time of war, Japan must cling even tighter to non-militarism, for its own sake and the world's, its Nobel literature laureate said on Wednesday.

"To obliterate... the principle of eternal peace will be nothing but an act of betrayal against the peoples of Asia and the victims of the atom bombs

in Hiroshima and Nagasaki," Kenzaburo Oe said.

In his ceremonious Nobel lecture, delivered three days before receiving the 7 million kronor (945,000 dollars) Nobel prize, Oe depicted his society as one still deeply tormented by its World War II aggression — a theme that runs through his works.

In recent years, as Japan's national wealth has grown, other countries have increased calls for Japan to contribute troops to United Nations peacekeeping efforts and other multi-national forces. But Japan should stick by the principle of eternal peace

and keep its soldiers in the writer told the audience in the chandeliered lecture hall of Stockholm's Swedish Academy.

"I trust that the principle can best be understood in the West with its long tradition of tolerance for conscientious rejection of military service," Oe said. International criticism on the issue, he added, makes "our hearts sink."

Coincidentally, the writer delivered his lecture on the 50th anniversary of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour. The attack brought

America into World War II, which in turn ended with the annihilation of 210,000 people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki by two US atomic bombs.

A boy of 6 at the time, Oe grew up like many Japanese with a sense of responsibility for the atrocities inflicted by and against his country.

Now 59, Oe said he has been "making efforts to be cured of and recovered from those pains and wounds by means of literature. I have made my efforts also to pray for the cure and the recovery of my fellow Japanese."

Japan's dilemma, he said, is that the country is both west-

ward-looking and rooted in Asia, creating a conflicted self-image and uncertainty about its place in the world.

"The ambiguous orientation of Japan drove the country into the position of an invader in Asia," Oe said.

Heavily influenced by Western writers, particularly the Irish poet William Yeats, Oe said his guiding literary aim was to inject western humanism into Japan's native conceptions of art and nature — something he hoped would further a "reconciliation with the rest of the world."

Oe was honoured by the Swedish Academy for his