

# BRIEFLY

**ROK president to visit US:** President Kim Young-sun plans to visit Washington in late July and hold summit talks with President Clinton, government officials said Friday, AP reports from Seoul.

In a 25-minute telephone conversation with Kim on Friday, Clinton said he hoped to meet Kim when the South Korean president visits Washington to attend a ceremony dedicating the 1950-53 Korean War memorial monument, chief presidential spokesman Yoon Yu-jun said.

**US population will be 26.16 cr Jan 1:** On New Year's day the population of the United States will be 261,653,497, not counting Americans who live overseas, according to the latest estimate from the US Census Bureau released on Thursday, Reuter reports from Washington.

The Census Bureau said the US population during 1994 grew by one per cent, or 2.5 million people. A third of that increase can be attributed to net migration.

**Velayati visits India Jan 2:** Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati will visit India for three days from January 2 in a move seen here as thawing of the strained bilateral relations, officials said today, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Velayati will call on Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma, Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and External Affairs Minister Dinesh Singh before going to Calcutta to attend a business meeting, Indian officials said.

**Aftershocks in Japan continue:** Aftershocks from a major earthquake continued to rock northern Japan on Friday, two days after a quake killed two people and injured 284 others, AP reports from Tokyo.

Official warned that the aftershocks could continue for as long as a month, with jolts as powerful as a magnitude reading of 7.

**Tremor shakes eastern Turkey:** A moderate earthquake shook eastern Turkey yesterday, Anatolian news agency said, Reuter reports from Ankara.

The quake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale occurred 220 KM (140 miles) south of the city of Erzincan, monitors at Istanbul University told the news agency. There were no immediate reports of damage. The quake was felt in the provinces of Diyarbakir, Malatya and Elazig, Anatolian said.

**China's first prison law:** China's top legislative body Thursday passed the country's first prison law, requiring prisoners to perform work and guaranteeing their rights to safety and appeal, AP reports from Beijing.

The National People's Congress passed the law, part of the government's attempt to rein in rising crime, at a standing committee session that closed Thursday, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.



King Birendra of Nepal receiving a bouquet from an unidentified tourist on the occasion of his 50th birthday December 29 at the Narayanhi Royal Palace. The Royal Palace was open to the public to mark the occasion.

**Iran warns Gulf Arab states:** Iran has warned Gulf Arab states following the visit of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to Oman that contracts with the Jewish state would threaten the stability of the region, Reuter reports from Nicosia.

State-run Iranian television, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, said on Wednesday night that a Foreign Ministry spokesman commented on Rabin's visit to Oman on Monday, the first by an Israeli leader to a Gulf Arab state.

**12 die in Thai road mishap:** A passenger van crossed a red light in a city north of Bangkok and smashed head-on into a 10-wheel truck, killing all 12 people in the van, highway police said yesterday, AFP reports from Bangkok.

The 10 women and two men in the van died instantly in the crash late Wednesday in Pattanankhrom district of Lopburi province, police said.

**Leopard kills girl in India:** Panic struck the workers of the Bghatpur Tea Garden under Nagrakata police station in the Doora area of North Bengal after a six year old girl was killed by a leopard on Wednesday last, PTI reports from Jalpaiguri.

The girl was attacked and killed on the spot by the leopard when she was passing through the tea garden at night with her relatives, the divisional forest officer, Wildlife Division (2) said in Jalpaiguri yesterday.

**Quake shakes China:** An earthquake measuring 5.7 on the open-ended Richter scale struck the southern part of Sichuan province, southwestern China, early yesterday, the official news agency Xinhua reported, AFP says from Beijing.

"So far, there have been no reports of casualties," it said, adding that a team of experts had been sent to the area by the Provincial Seismology Bureau.

**Egypt to get back antiquities:** Some 1,000 boxes containing the Egyptian antiquities previously seized by Israel will be returned back to Egypt, Xinhua reports from Cairo.

The boxes will be transported by heavily-guarded trucks and lorries to the northern border town of Rafah.

## No concessions to Pyongyang at Seoul's expense: Clinton North Korea frees US pilot

PANMUNJOM (Korea), Dec 30: U.S. Army helicopter pilot Bobby Hall walked to freedom Friday, ending a 13-day crisis that threatened to plunge relations between the United States and communist North Korea back to Cold War levels, reports AP.

The South Korean Defence Ministry said Hall walked across the border in the truce village of Panmunjom at 11:16 a.m. (0216 GMT) Friday. The Pentagon confirmed the release.

Hall, captured after his helicopter went down in North Korea December 17, was released after the Clinton administration publicly expressed regret for the incident — but did not admit to spying as the North had charged.

Hall's co-pilot was killed in the downing. Hall's family in Brookville, Florida, cheered when they got word he had been released. Tears streamed down the face of his wife, Donna, and mother Diane.

President Clinton had called them a few hours earlier to tell them of the impending release.

Hall, 28, was to go to a military base in Seoul for medical evaluation and a debriefing and then return to the United States. Harvey Perritt, a Pentagon spokesman, said Hall could be back in Florida as early as Friday afternoon.

U.S. and North Korean officials agreed to a written understanding saying the helicopter "accidentally strayed into North Korea," State Department spokesman Michael McCurry said in Washington on Thursday.

As its part of the deal, McCurry said, "the United States expresses sincere regret for this incident" and will

work to prevent similar occurrences.

North Korea said it decided to return Hall "with magnanimity and humanitarianism" after he "admitted his crime of illegally intruding into" North Korean airspace, according to its official news agency. The North released a handwritten apology it attributed to Hall on Thursday.

The breakthrough ended days of delicate negotiations in which U.S. officials tried not to antagonise the North Koreans nor sound too conciliatory.

Clinton this week dispatched State Department diplomat Thomas Hubbard to work for Hall's release amid concerns that the incident would jeopardise a fragile agreement over North Korea's nuclear programme.

Hall was captured after his helicopter went down in North Korean territory more than 10 miles northwest of a checkpoint beyond which it should not have flown.

AFP from Washington adds: The United States made no concessions to North Korea at the South's expense to win the release of captured US airman Bobby Hall, President Bill Clinton said Thursday.

Clinton told reporters he spoke by phone with the freed airman, whom the president said was "held for too long" by the North Koreans after Hall's helicopter was downed on December 17, killing his crewmate.

But Clinton gave a flat "not" when asked whether he made any concessions at Seoul's expense in agreeing to future military contacts with the North Koreans to prevent a recurrence of the helicopter incident.



US pilot Bobby Wayne Hall strides across the military demarcation line dividing the two Koreas to freedom at this border truce village yesterday as North Korean soldiers, some with video cameras look on. Hall was held for 13 days after his observation helicopter was shot down in North Korea.

## Lankan Buddhist monks demand withdrawal of Pope's remarks

COLOMBO, Dec 30: A conference of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks on Thursday demanded Pope John Paul II withdraw his controversial remarks on their religions in his book "Crossing the Threshold of Hope," a spokesman told Reuters.

The spokesman for the Federation of Buddhist Organisations said they were not satisfied with last week's apology by Sri Lanka's Catholic Church and resolved the people's visit to Sri Lanka next month would be an act of aggression if he did not withdraw his comments.

More than 100 Buddhist priests from various parts of the island took part in the meeting, the spokesman added.

In the book the Pope writes: "The Buddhist doctrine of salvation constitutes the central point, or rather the only point of this system. Nevertheless, both the Buddhist tradition and the methods deriving from it have an almost exclusively negativ-

soteriology (doctrine of salvation).

Another passage reads: "Buddhism is in large measure an 'atheistic' system. We do not free ourselves from evil through the good which comes from God, we liberate ourselves only through detachment from the world, which is bad."

"The fullness of such a detachment is not union with good, but what is called nirvana, a state of perfect indifference with regard to the world," the Pope wrote.

The remarks angered sections of Sri Lanka's Buddhists, and leading Buddhist monks have said they will boycott John Paul's visit unless he apologises for his published remarks.

Some 70 per cent of Sri Lankans are Buddhists and most government ministers, including President Chandrika Bandarnaike Kumaratunga, follow the religion.

Pope John Paul makes his first visit to Sri Lanka in January 1995 to testify a Goanese missionary who worked among the island's Catholics in the 17th century.

The 74-year-old pontiff will arrive in Sri Lanka on January 20 accompanied by an entourage of 23 officials including at least two cardinals from the Curia, the Vatican cabinet.

The next day the people will testify Father Joseph Vaza at a public open air mass at Colombo's seaside galle face green esplanade, where up to half a million people are expected. He leaves the same day.

Bishop Malcolm Ranjith, head of the committee organising the Pope's visit, last week expressed the church's deep regret that Sri Lankan Buddhists were hurt by the Pope's published comments.

"The church is very sorry, and we express our regrets to the (prelates) and the public," Ranjith said.

## Israel may take action to thwart Iran's N-plan

JERUSALEM, Dec 30: Israel may take action next year to thwart Iran's nuclear programme and prevent in posing a military threat, an Israeli army general has warned here, reports AFP.

"The significant advance in Iran's nuclear capabilities could lead Israel to take a decision on this matter next year," army planning chief Uri Dayan told a conference at Tel Aviv University on Thursday.

Dayan said the possibilities for speeding up the acquisition of nuclear technology and developing it into a military programme were "greater, due to the international situation".

Israel "must observe, develop counter-measures and prepare for decisions aimed at removing this threat," he said, without elaborating.

"Israel is in an environment where doubts can arise about the rationality of existing regimes, while Israel is still regarded as a target."

## Opposition returns to parliament in Mozambique

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE, Dec 30: Mozambique's main opposition party has ended its boycott of parliament, according to a newspaper report Friday, reports AP.

Opposition leader Afonso Dhlakama, quoted in the Maputo newspaper Noticias, said "refusal to participate in the discussions at the assembly will only hand the whole thing over to (the governing Mozambique Liberation Front), and allow it to do what it likes."

Dhlakama's Mozambique National Resistance had walked out of the first session of the National Assembly on Dec 8 in a disagreement over voting procedure.

The assembly has met once since then, on Dec 21, and was next to convene March 21.

The Mozambique National Resistance and Mozambique Liberation Front fought a 15-year civil war before signing a truce.

# Off the Record

## Mother of big family refused gold medal

PARIS: A French woman with 12 children on Thursday accused the government of hard-heartedness for refusing her a gold medal awarded to mothers of big families, reports Reuter.

Solange Claren, 73, had five of her children before she married their father — disqualifying her from getting the medal automatically awarded to women with eight or more children born in wedlock.

"I was a good mother... my children have no reason to reproach me. I've done what I can for them," she told France's TF-1 television in an interview in her home in the eastern French region of Neuchâtel et Moselle.

Claren, who also has 37 grand-children and 17 great-grand-children, planned to appeal again to the Ministry of Social Affairs, which reiterated its refusal to give her the medal this month.

## Sulfur clouds killed off dinosaurs?

LOS ANGELES: The asteroid collision with earth that is believed to have wiped out the dinosaurs may have been deadly because it sprayed clouds of sulfuric acid high into the atmosphere, scientists said Wednesday, reports AP.

The clouds could have then blocked out sunlight and plunged the Earth into near freezing conditions for as long as a century.

According to the asteroid theory, the impact 65 million years ago at what is now Chicxulub in Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Would have thrown enough debris into the air to block out sunlight and cool the atmosphere.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration scientists contend that most of that dust and soot would have fallen back to the ground within six months, however, too soon to chill the world enough to kill off the dinosaurs.

But they say lightweight sulfur compounds could provide the missing piece of the extinction puzzle, according to their study, detailed in the latest issue of Earth and Planetary Science Letters, a monthly European science journal.

The asteroid would have vaporised sulfur contained in the rock at Chicxulub and spewed more than 100 tons of it into the air, the NASA scientists and their outside collaborators said Wednesday.

The sulfur would then form tiny droplets of sulfuric acid, creating a dense haze that could filter out enough sunlight to drop surface temperatures to near freezing for at least a decade, they said.

"It could have been up to a century. Most of us are betting on 20 to 40 years," said Kevin H. Baines, an atmospheric scientist with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena.

## Rao strikes back at main rival 26-member Cong polls body without Arjun

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao has struck back at his main rival in the ruling party who quit the cabinet one week ago in a move widely seen as a brazen leadership challenge, reports AFP.

Former Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh does not figure in a 26-member committee formed by the Congress(I) Party to oversee its campaign in five states which go to the polls in February.

Congress sources said on Friday that the decision, taken late on Thursday by party president Rao, was "to teach Arjun Singh a lesson."

Arjun Singh, a party heavyweight and the former de facto number two in the cabinet, resigned on December 24 after blaming Rao for the crisis in the ruling party following its election rout in two key states

He said then that he would campaign for the party in the February elections, which is seen as the final dress rehearsal before parliamentary polls are held nationwide in mid-1996.

Congress sources said Rao decided to strike at Arjun Singh after a 20-minute closed-door meeting here on Thursday with Vijay Bhaskara Reddy, chairman of the party's Disciplinary Action Committee.

Arjun Singh "has disqualified himself from (the campaign committee's) membership by the manner of his protest and resignation," a Congress leader who did not want to be named said.

Arjun Singh, however, remains a member of the Congress Working Committee, the ruling party's most powerful body.

## Clinton intends to seek re-election in '96

WASHINGTON, Dec 30: US President Bill Clinton, vowing to champion his agenda and ignore his low popularity ratings, said on Thursday he intends to seek reelection in 1996 and can see nothing that would make him change his mind, reports Reuter.

In an interview with news agency reporters, Clinton said: "I'm just going to keep doing the very best job I can and do my very best to say I intend to seek reelection, but that is not uppermost in my mind."

"If that had been uppermost in my mind, I never would have taken on all these tough battles and all the interest groups I've taken on the last two years," Clinton said.

Asked if he could think of "any reasons" that would keep him from seeking a second term in 1996, Clinton replied: "No. I have my health, and I'm

doing a good job." The declaration of his intentions, coming two years before Clinton's term ends was unusual. Most incumbent presidents tend to qualify their plans more than Clinton did in the interview, often waiting until the year of the election before bluntly stating their candidacy.

In the wake of the Republican landslide in the November congressional election, there has been speculation among some Democratic officials and political experts that Clinton might decide not to seek a second term — clearing the way for Vice President Al Gore to run.

Clinton brushed aside the possibility that he might be challenged for his party's nomination, saying: "I don't know and I'm not worried about it."

## UNSC again divided on Iraq

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 30: The Security Council again on Thursday was hopelessly divided on a Russian-French statement characterising Iraq's progress to date on an arms-monitoring programme, reports Reuter.

The United States wanted no statement while other Council members, in closed-door consultations, argued, about the type of statement the 15-member body should issue, envoys said.

The division is indicative of what will happen in 1995 when the Council is expected to seriously consider lifting the oil embargo against Iraq, imposed after Saddam Hussein's force invaded Kuwait in 1990.

## Police loyalty to Arafat in question after repeated attacks

GAZA CITY, Dec 30: Are Yasser Arafat's police officers all reporting to the same boss? Opponents may be infiltrating the PLO police force, leaving his self-rule authority vulnerable, reports AP.

On Christmas Day, a police cadet loyal to the Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas, carried out a suicide bombing at a Jerusalem bus stop frequented by Israeli soldiers. The bomb malfunctioned, killing only the cadet and wounding 12 Israelis.

There have been other incidents: — In early December, a policeman opened fire at an Israeli borders policeman, wounding him. — In October, an Egyptian-born policeman affiliated with Hamas and another activists gunned down

two Israelis on a Jerusalem pedestrian mall before being shot dead. — In July, Palestinian police opened fire at Israeli troops attempting to quell Palestinian workers rioting at a crossing point into Israel. Casualties included a dead Israeli reservist and two Palestinians.

Policemen running amok pose a danger both to Arafat's own grip on power and to future attempts to forge a Palestinian state. Israeli public disenchantment with the peace process due to a wave of deadly attacks by Islamic extremists forced Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government to review conceding further autonomy outside the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Palestinian officials concede that about 60 security officers in the force of 12,000 are known to be card-carrying members of Hamas or its sister organisations opposed to making peace with the Jewish state.

Islamic activists claim they have more than 600 loyalists in the security forces.

"There are many in the police force who are against the Oslo agreement, the agreement of surrender," said Hamas spokesman Imad Ifranji, referring to the secret talks in Oslo, Norway, that led to the September 1993 Israel-PLO autonomy accord.

Palestinian officials argue that accepting some Islamic activists gives Hamas a stake in the accord's success. But Arafat

aides conceded further investigation was needed after the Christmas Day bombing in Jerusalem.

Arafat spokesman Marwan Kanafani said several Palestinian policemen were being investigated for suspected activity with Islamic militant groups.

On Thursday, police began house-to-house searches of Hamas supporters in two areas, looking for the Christmas bomber's missing automatic rifle and other weapons.

Palestinian police officers said they were ordered to purge the ranks of Hamas activists. Police commander Brig Ghazi Jabali refused to comment on the issue, but one senior officer said it was considered a crisis.

Over 50 per cent unemployment in Gaza, plus widespread disappointment that self-rule did not free the Strip of Israeli soldiers or 4,000 Jewish settlers, make it a fertile breeding ground for opposition. The police are not immune.

Police salaries are the equivalent of 260 dollars per month. Arafat slashed pay 40 per cent due to budget problems. Rank and file policemen do not have the resources to return to their families from far-flung Arab countries.

Young men joining the police were asked about their ideology but membership in an Islamic group did not automatically disqualify them.

Christmas Day bomber Ayman Radi was a case in



Three Muslim women carrying their newborn babies, wait December 29 at the UN checkpoint in Turani, a suburb of the Croatian city of Karlovac, to be reunited with their families. Some 25,000 Muslim refugees take shelter in Turani.

## Syria welcomes results of Arab mini-summit

DAMASCUS, Dec 30: Syria today hailed the results of an Arab mini-summit after winning the backing of Egypt and Saudi Arabia for its stand in the peace process, reports AFP.

Syrian official newspapers voiced satisfaction with the Alexandria summit which ended Thursday, saying it had "rekindled hopes of overcoming the Arabs worsened situation."

The government daily Tishrin said the summit "rose to the challenge of remedying the Arab imbalance, for the battle for peace is fiercer than war."