

# BRIEFLY



Doctors and nurses prepare for an operation a Chechen girl injured during the battles in Grozny after she was evacuated to a hospital in Khasavyurf on Saturday. — AFP photo

**Clinton's popularity on rise:** President Bill Clinton's approval rating rose six percentage points from last month to 47 per cent, according to a Cable News Network, Time Magazine poll released on Saturday, AFP reports from Washington.

**Chinese team to attend Papal visit:** In a sign that Beijing may want to heal rifts with the Vatican, members of China's state-sponsored Church are expected to attend Pope John Paul II's conference with youth in Manila this week, church officials said on Sunday, AP reports from Manila.

**Six bodies recovered in NY:** The bodies of four women and two men were shot and stabbed to death were discovered after a severely wounded woman who jumped from a second story window scrawled out a note to police from her hospital bed on Saturday, AFP reports from New York.

**Bin Shaker, Jordan's new PM:** King Hussein on Saturday formally asked his distant cousin and former army commander, Sharif Zaid Bin Shaker to become Jordan's new prime minister and seek to boost their recent peace treaty with Israel, Reuter reports from Amman.

**Afrikaner historian dies:** Floors van Jaarsveld, an Afrikaner historian once tarred and feathered by white extremists, has died at the age of 72, AP reports from Pretoria.

**C Africans back new constitution:** Some 80 per cent of voters in the Central African Republic have backed a new constitution, according to official results of the December 28 referendum released Sunday by the President of the country's Supreme Court, Edouard Frank, AFP reports from Bangui.

**HR groups free to visit Banda:** The Malawi government said yesterday international and local human rights organisations were free to visit ex-President Kamuzu Banda under house arrest and his imprisoned close aide John Tembo, AFP reports from Blantyre, Malawi.

**One stabbed to death in Delhi:** A shopkeeper was stabbed dead in Delhi by four people after demanding 25 paise (less than one US cent) for a betel he had sold, police said yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

**Syria seeks Muslim states' help for ME peace:** THHRAN, Jan 8: Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara on Saturday urged Iran and other Islamic states to support his country's stand in the Middle East peace process and its bid to regain territories seized by Israel, reports AFP.

**Chechens vow to hoist flag of Islam over Kremlin:** GROZNY, Jan 8: In their unequal struggle against the might of Russia's armed forces Chechen separatists have turned to Islam to fortify their fighting spirit and for some, the battle for independence has assumed the dimension of a Jihad or holy war, reports AFP.

## Scheduled meeting with LTTE commanders called off Lankan truce takes effect

COLOMBO, Jan 8: A truce between Sri Lankan government troops and Tamil rebels fighting a 12-year war for independence came into force today but without supervision from foreign peace monitors, military officers said, reports Reuter.

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The ethnic Sinhalese-dominated government denies them jobs, education and a fair share of the Indian Ocean island nation's wealth. Tamils comprise 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 17 million people.

## UN offers talks with Iraq on partial lifting of embargo

PARIS, Jan 8: United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali offered on Saturday to resume talks with Iraq on a partial lifting of trade sanctions imposed after the Gulf War, reports Reuter.

"We had long talks, then they changed their mind at the last minute," he said, without specifying which round of talks he was referring to.

Sanctions, including an oil embargo, were imposed on Iraq following its invasion of Kuwait which was reversed in the 1991 Gulf War.

## Asylum seekers' home gutted in Germany: 4 killed

HANOVER, Germany, Jan 8: A mother and her three children died on Sunday when a fire swept through a home for asylum seekers in the northern German town of Mellendorf, near Hanover, police said, reports AP.



Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi, (C), Rwandan President Pasteur Bizimungu, (L) and Sylvester Ntibantunganya President of Burundi, (R) pose at the Presidential Palace on Saturday prior to the start of a one-day summit to discuss how to persuade hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees to return home.

## African summit adopts plan to combat insecurity

NAIROBI, Jan 8: Leaders of seven east and central African countries adopted a strategy on Saturday to combat insecurity in the aftermath of Rwanda's genocide and encourage more than two million refugees to go home, reports Reuter.

With Zaire's Prime Minister Kengo Wa Dondo they agreed to separate suspected perpetrators of last year's genocide from innocent refugees in camps in Zaire and Tanzania and to set up safe corridors for the refugee camps to the Rwanda border.

Diplomats said the strategy was coherent but finding the political will and the money to put it into action was another matter.

## Japan won't attend US ceremony on World War II

TOKYO, Jan 8: Japan does not want to attend a ceremony to be hosted by the United States to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in case domestic feeling is offended, a report said today, reports AFP.

## Russian jets bomb Afghan dist: 10 killed

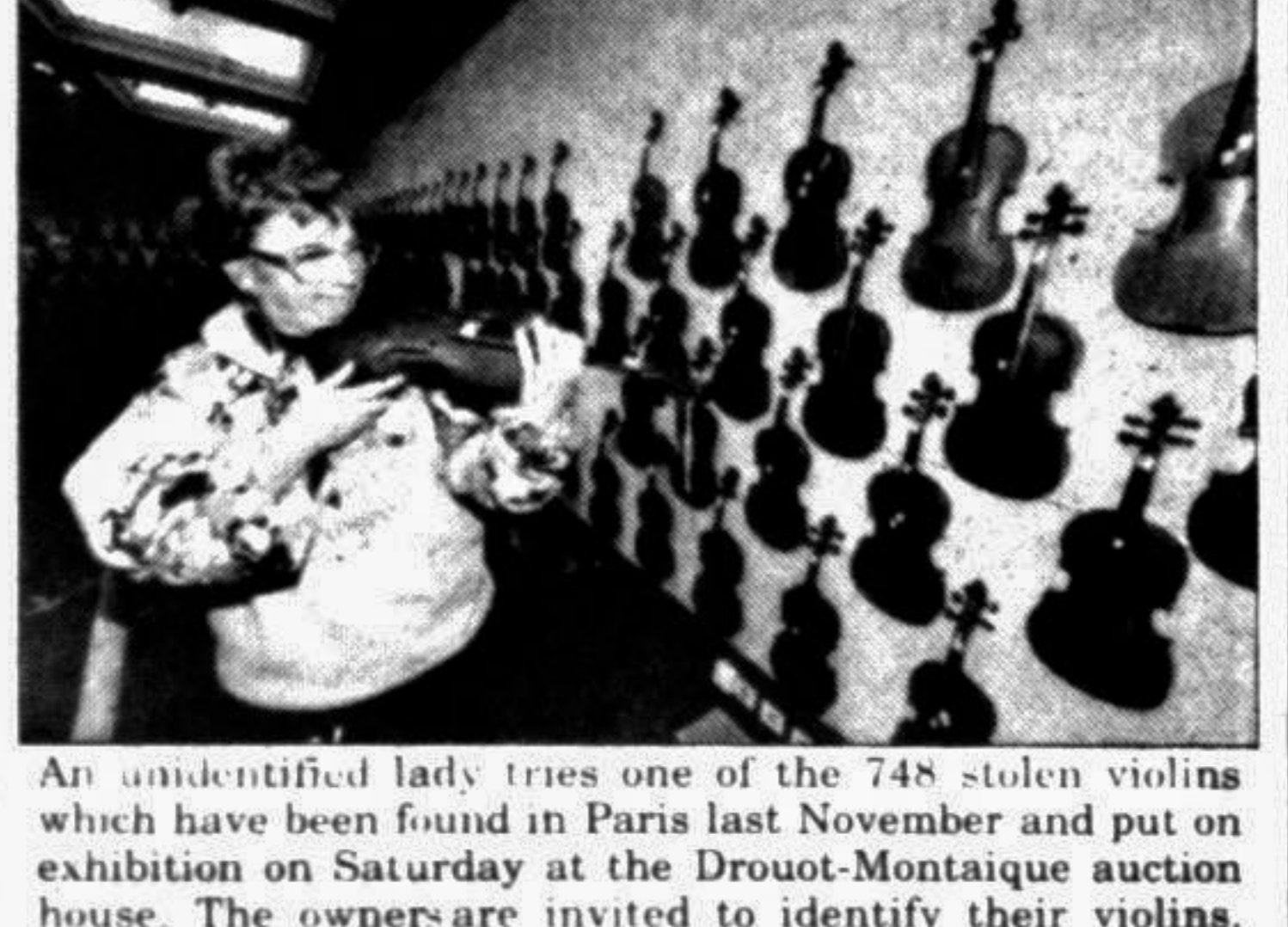
ISLAMABAD, Jan 8: Russian jets twice bombed a northern Afghan district earlier this week killing 10 people and wounding eight, Afghanistan's official Kabul Radio said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

## Strike paralyses Manipur

NEW DELHI, Jan 8: A strike called to protest the killing of nine civilians by Indian troops crippled the eastern state of Manipur today, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

All vehicles kept off the roads as shops and businesses stayed shut across the state in response to the 12-hour strike call by two student groups, the news agency said.

## Off the Record



An unidentified lady tries one of the 748 stolen violins which have been found in Paris last November and put on exhibition on Saturday at the Drouot-Montaigne auction house. The owners are invited to identify their violins.

## Bank reopens leaving coffin in the rafters

LONDON: A branch of a British bank has reopened after a hi-tech relic which kept some much-loved features of the old building, including a coffin in the rafters, reports Reuter.

## Einstein's pipe, game fetch \$20,000 at auction

PORTSMOUTH: The pipe Albert Einstein smoked and a game the Nobel Prize-winning physicist played as a child sold for 20,000 dollar at an auction on Saturday, reports Reuter.

## Karens recapture vital river junction

BANGKOK, Jan 8: Ethnic minority Karen guerrillas in south eastern Myanmar have recaptured a strategically vital river junction that for more than a month was occupied by mutinous troops from their own army guerrilla sources said today, reports Reuter.

## Arab League backs Libya's stand on Lockerbie issue

RIYADH, Jan 8: Libya's latest offer to allow two of its citizens to be tried for the Lockerbie plane crash by Scottish judges at the International Court of Justice in The Hague was "legally correct," Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel-Meguid, said on Saturday, reports Reuter.