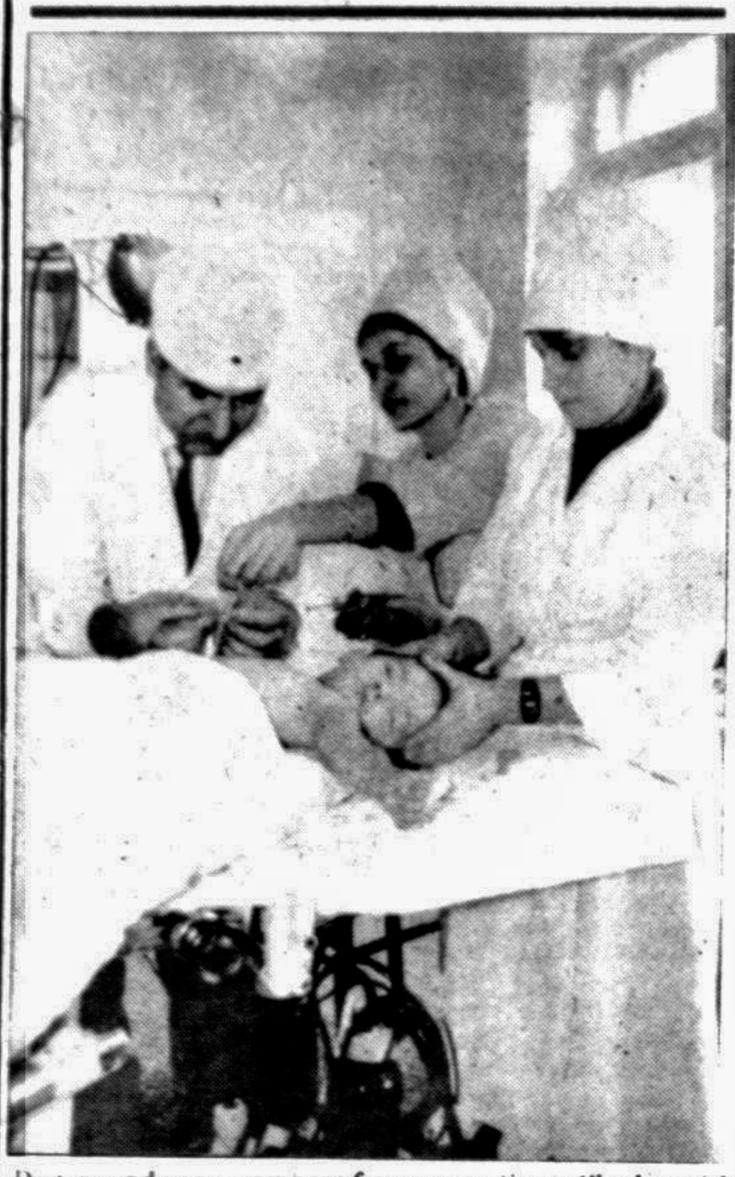
BREFLY



Ductors 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 New Network, Time Magazine poll released on Saturday, AFP reports from Washington.

Despite the rise, a total of 65 per cent of Americans surveyed remain convinced that Clinton will not be re-elected in 1996. Twenty-four per cent believe that he will be.

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

Tita de Villa, an official of the Pope Pius XII Catholic Center, said 15 priests, nuns and lay members from the government-controlled Chinese Patriotic Association would begin arriving on Monday to attend the International Youth Forum.

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 Police discovered the victims, after the woman who was stabbed in the throat and shot, described the killings in a note. The unidentified woman was unable to speak, police said. She is listed in critical condition.

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.

in a letter of appointment, faxed to Reuters by the palace. the King also asked him to try to improve strained ties with Arab countries, support the Palestinians "in their efforts to restore their rights" and continue caring for Islamic sites in Arab Jerusalem until the status of the holy city is resolved.

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 Rretoria,

Van Jaarsveld, who died Saturday, was the victim of a 1979 attack by members of a then little known group called the Afrikaner Resistance Movement after he challenged the religious sanctity of the Day of the Vow, a holy day in the Afrikaner culture.

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

But 55 per cent of registered voters did not cast their bal lots, confirming observers' claims of a low turnout.

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.

Both are charged with murder of four cabinet ministers. 'Anybody who wants to come is at liberty, it's open-ended." Brown Mpinganjira, information, broadcasting, posts and telecommunications minister, told AFP in an interview.

One stabbed to death in Delhi: A shopkeeper was stabbed dead in Delhi by four people after demanding 25 paisa (less than one US cent) for a betel he

had sold, police said yesterday. AFP reports from New Delhi. Shiv Kumar. 32, was killed Saturday after he asked a young man who paid one rupee (three cents) for a betel to hand over 25 paise more. The man refused, and with the help of his father and two brothers killed Kumar. All four were ar-

TEHRAN. Jan 8: Syrian Foreign Minister Paruq 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. Earlier he vowed that framan-backed guerillas would keep up their attacks on Israeli troops in South Lebanon the official agency

Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsaniani in talks here that Damascus insists on restoring its full rights and freeing its lands occupied by Israel.

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,

Reuter. "The cessation of hostilities came into force at 12 midnight on January 7 but peace commutees that would monitor the ceasefire would starting operating probably tomorrow or the day after." a senior military field officer told Reuters.

military officers said, reports

The truce, the first since April 1989, to June, 1990, ceasefire, followed last week's agreement between President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Tamil rebel leader Velupillai Prabhakaran on the cessation as a step towards peace.

The officer said a scheduled 10 a.m. meeting on Sunday between government and rebel military commanders had been called off.

formed us, through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) that the meeting was off because all their commanders in the north and the east had been summoned for a briefing in their northern Jaffna stronghold," he said.

Field commanders from ei ther side had expected to discuss arrangements for the truce, which will last till January 22 and probably be continued thereafter.

The truce was initially worked out by government officials and negotiators for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam guerillas last Tuesday in talks in Jaffna. The two sides also agreed on a 40 billion rupee (816 million dollar) rehabilitation plan for the north.

AP adds: The two-week ceasefire is due to expire the day after Pope Paul II ends a 24-hour visit to Sri Lanka.

The brevity of the truce was an indication of the level of

But government and guerilla negotiators are to review the truce next Saturday, in their

International

Scheduled meeting with LTTE commanders called off

third meeting since October. Fighting had died down even before the truce officially began, with no major clashes since Thursday night.

"I pray that this will be the dawn of a new era of peace for our long-suffering nation," said President Chandrika Kumaratunga, when she announced the truce in Parliament Friday.

A direct radio link was

dent and the rebel leader, said the state-run Sunday Observer newspaper in a report that could not immediately be con-This is the first time we

established between the presi-

are going into an agreement . We want to see how it goes. (it is) a trial round and a confidence-building measure. Kumaratunga said.

. The rebels have been fight ing for a separate homeland in northern Sri Lanka. Tamils say

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.

The government hopes the truce will be the prelude to political negotiations, and has prepared a package that it says offers broad of autonomy for Tamil-dominated provinces but falls short of statehood The guerillas have not vet agreed to begin political talks.

The truce is being monitored by government and rebel representatives. The Dutch and Norwegian governments also have agreed to help monitor the accord.

The two sides agreed not to attack each other and maintain their present positions on the ground, keeping at least 600 metres apart. Government and rebel area commanders will set up communications with each other.

crippled the eastern state of Manipur today, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported. says All vehicles kept off the roads as shops and businesses stayed shut across the state in response to the 12-hour strike

news agency said. Officials in Imphal, the state capital, said there had been no violence.

call by two student groups, the

NEW DELHI, Jan 8: A strike

called to protest the killing of

nine civilians by Indian troops

Indian paramilitary troops on Saturday shot and killed seven pedicab drivers, a student and another bystander at a medical college complex in Imphal after they were fired at by unidentified gunmen.

No one claimed responsi bility for the attack on the security forces, who began firing indiscriminately into the complex, which was crammed with students, hospital workers and patients, police said.

Strike paralyses

Manipur

The All India Students Federation and All India Youth Federation described the massacre as "barbaric," while the opposition Manipur People's Party pressed the government to punish the guilty troops.

Iran warns Israel

of retaliation TEHRAN, Jan 8: Iran on Saturday warned that it would retaliate if Israel attacked its nuclear facilities. Iran's official agency IRNA reported, says

IRNA was reacting to a New York Times report that quoted israeli officials as saying the Jewish state could be forced to consider attacking Iran's nuclear reactors if it does not

stop its nuclear programme.

Meanwhile, Russian nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov arrived Thursday in Tehran to sign a contract

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.

Boutros Ghali said he was prepared to resume the talks which were suspended after Baghdad turned down earlier proposals.

I officially make today the same proposal." he told France 3 Television. 'I am prepared to start again negotiations towards a partial lifting of the embargo." he said.

Boutros Ghali said he had discussed with Iraqi leaders a partial lifting of the embargo in order to create an atmosphere of trust.

"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.

Iraq has, in the past, turned down a trial 1.6 billion dollar oil sale because of the intrusive monitoring which included strict UN control of the contracts and distribution of humanitarian goods bought with the oil revenues. The Security Council, which

discusses sanctions every two months, is due to review at mid-January lrag's implementation of UN resolutions including the dismantlement of

its weapons of mass destruc-

The Council has not yet seriously considered easing the sanctions and diplomats expect no attempt to change them until possibly in April when Russia has given notice it intends to propose a temporary suspension of the oil embargo to allow Iraq to buy badly needed humanitarian goods.

France has advocated a gradual easing of sanctions to reward Baghdad's recognition of Kuwait's borders.

French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe officially received Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz on Friday and announced it was opening a diplomatic toehold in Baghdad. triggering criticism from Washington and London



Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi, (C), a wandan President Pasteur Bizimungu L. and Sylvestre 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 en courage more than two million refugees to go home, reports Reuter.

Six hours of talks in the Kenyan capital ended with a joint communique covering most key issues but the absence of President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire fuelled doubts about implementation.

The presidents of Rwanda and Burundi, their neighbours Uganda and Tanzania, as well as of Zambia, attended the one-day summit chaired by Kenya's Daniel Arap Moi.

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 sale corridors from the refugee camps to the Rwanda border.

They also agreed to estab lish safe corridors and transit points inside Rwanda for returning refugees The leaders expressed full

support for an international tribunal to judge those who planned the slaughter of up to one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus.

"It was a very good meeting but a lot of work needs to be done." Moi told reporters after

Diplomats said the strategy was coherent but finding the political will and the money to put it into action was another Rwanda s defeated Hutu

government, with its 30,000 strong regular army and 10 000 "interahamwe" militia men, are in control of main refugee camps in Zaire and plotting revenge

The communique did not say how the militia and troops would be separated from other refugees. A United Nations plan to raise an international force to enforce order in the dangerous camps appears to have died because of a shortage of funds and of volunteer con tingents.

Asylum seekers' home gutted in Germany: 4 killed

HANOVER, Germany, Jan 8 A mother and her three chil dren died on Sunday when a fire swept through a home for asylum seekers in the north-German town of Mellendorf, near Hanover, police said, reports Al'

Seven people were injured three of them seriously. Police said there was no evidence of arson and the fire appeared to have been caused by a technical fault Authorities could not give

the nationality of the victims who lived in one of five con tainers converted into temporary housing for asylum seek ers. The container was gutted by the fire which broke out about 8 am. On Saturday, a fire in a

nursing home in Euskirchen. western Germany, injured 40 mental patients. 15 of them critically, after locked doors in the building hampered rescue efforts.

The cause of the blaze in the second-floor ward, where 85 patients live, was under investigation.

Japan won't attend US ceremony on World War II OKYO, 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 doméstic feeling is offended, a report said today, reports AFP.

Tokyo wants Washington not to invite Japan to the ceremony to be held in Hawaii on September 2, the date of Japan's official surrender in World War II, the Asahi Shimbun quoted official sources as saving

Japan does not want to send any representative to the ceremony in light of the feeling of its people. Asahi

Russian jets bomb Afghan dist: 10' killed

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

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, said the jets bombed Darwaz district in Badkhaan province hordering Tajtkistan on January 2 and 3 Saturday's was the third

Kabul report in the past week of bombing by Russian planes in areas bordering Tatikistan. where Russian troops are deployed to help fight Islamic rebels Tajikistan says the rebels are based in Afghanistan. At least 20 people were

reported killed in previous bombing raids in Badakhshan and Takhar provinces. On Thursday, the Afghan

government denied that it was helping the Tajik

Chechens vow to hoist flag of Islam over Kremlin Russian conquest of the

> Cauxasus. Oleg Chelnov, 29. a not feel any discrimination against him. The only differ ence that I can see between Orthodox and Muslims is that am the only person here to

But there is no doubt that religious fervour has fortified the resolve of Chechen troops

Off the Record



An amidentified 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-Montaique 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 retit which kept some much-loved features of the old building, including a coffin in the rafters, reports Reuter. Natwest Bank bosses decided to honour the wishes of gro-

cer Henry Trigg who, before he died in 1724, stipulated his cottin and remains should be left in the rafters of his building iii Steenage, a small town, north of London,

Trigg, terrified his body would be snatched by grave robhers supplying surgeons and medical-school students, wanted his corpse left where it could be seen and protected. Sadly his fears came true during World War One when

soldiers billeted in the town stole his bones for souvenirs. "We feel Henry is very much part of the family. No one minds working next to a coffin and there is even talk that his ghost comes out occasionally," said bank manager Noel

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. Auctioneer Jim Smith said he would not reveal the name of the buyer but said it was a private collector, not a museum

Einstein died in 1955 and is most famous for his discovery of the Theory of Relativity. He was often pictured smoking the pipe, and after his death his daughter gave it to friend and photographer Stanford Roth.

The game included 10 two-inch ivory pegs and a spinning top, authenticated by Christie's as a German 19th Century game Einstein played as a child.

The pipe, was sold in its original leather case and was accompanied by a letter from Einstein's daughter. Margo, to Roth saying thanks to you for the happy times spent with

Karens recapture vital river junction

BANGKOK Jan 8 Ethnic manually Karen guerillas 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 guerilla sources said today reports Reuter

The Thu Mwe Ta headland at the junction of the Salween and Moet rivers was captured by main force Karen guerillas on Friday, the sources said. The Christian led Karen

National Union (KNU), the largest guerilla army still army fighting Myanmar's military government, had set a January I deadline for the several hundred Buddhist Karen mutineers to surrender

Karen forces began shelling the beadland which overlooks the iner confluence and the That Myanmar fronter, soon after the deadline expired They managed to destroy the rebels ammunition supplies which were stored in a Buddhist temple. the sources

At least 10 of the muti neers were killed on Friday when Karen forces crossed the Salween to retake the head land. Main force Karen casual ties were light, they said

The remainder of the mutineers scattered into the forest. they said.

The problem is not yet over, it will take some more time." one Myanmar guertila sourcé said by telephone from the Thai-Myanmar border.

The mutiny by several hundred Buddhist troops began on December 2 when they scized the position and began firing at boats travelling along the rivers below their stronghold.

The rebels were demanding an end to what they said was discrimination and unfair treatment of Buddhists in the Christian led KNU KNU leaders said the

mutiny was instigated and manipulated by Myanmar government agents. Weeks of negotiations during which the KNU agreed to

and offered them, a general amnesty failed to end the cri-In late December, the mutineers announced they were breaking away from the KNU

all of the mutmeers' demands

and setting up their own organisation. The KNU, which has been fighting Yangon for greater autonomy since 1949, is he dom inant force in a guerilla al-

hance that is seeking a federal.

democratic Myanmar.

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-Megued, said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Abdel Meguid, a former Egyptian foreign minister who studied International law, said the Libyan offer was "legally correct because it agrees with the principles of international

states' help for ME peace

Syria seeks Muslim

rested, a police spokesman said.

IRNA said. He told Iranian President

Kalashnikov assault rifle. "Allahu Akbar" (God is the greatest) is used by Chechen fighters as a sign of reconna's sauce or a password in communicating positions as they

GROZNY, Jan 8: In their advance from house to house unequal struggle against the in an attack on Russian tanks. 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

have hoisted the flag of Islam

over the Kremlin," swore

Sairan Tebulatov, gripping his

"We won't stop until we

The most fervent of these new Mujahideen "wear a green bank round their headgear indicating that they are Smerthiki" or volunteers for suicide missions.

The green flag of Islam is often added to the flags on Chechen tanks as they go into "We do not have many

weapons but that doesn't matter Allah is with us," said 19year-old Muslim Janeraliyev, a young student of French who carried two hand grenades as he left to lin his comrades. Even while they are fighting Chechen soldiers try as far as possible to fulfil their Islamic duty to pray five times a day. Of course, the fighting often stops us praying when we

a growing number of the

ought to. So we do it when things get quieter, explained Khoja a 40 year old jurist who now commands a commando of eight crack soldiers. Seven decades of commu-

nism failed to eradicate the

Islamic faith from Chechnya

and the many minarets visible in the Caucasian countryside are there to prove it But while nearly all the 1.2 million Chechens who lived in

the republic before the fight

belong to the more tolerant Summ branch of the Islamic faith and generally got along well with the small Orthodox Russian community. Those like Shabasgiri

ing erupted are Moslims, they

Sulcimanov who say their goal is to make Chechnya an Islamic state with no drugs, no alcohol and no prostitutes do not appear to reflect the view of the majority.

For Chechens, Islam was already a symbol of resistance against oppression. In the last century, it was a religious leader. Imam Shamil who led the resistance against the

Ukrainian volunteer fighting with the Chechens said he did

drink Vodka, he remarked.

We know that we are fighting for our God, said Beslan, a law student aged 25. "On their side, the only god the Russians can call on is Yeltsin."