

# BRIEFLY

**UN mission in Liberia extended:** The UN chief recommended on Monday that UN observers remain in Liberia for at least three more months to give a new peace agreement a chance to work. AP reports from UN.

A decision by the Security Council is expected by Friday, when the observers' mandate expires.

**135 peacekeepers died in '94:** The United Nations said on Monday that 135 of its peacekeepers died in 1994, almost half the number of casualties registered in 1993. AFP reports from United Nations.

The UN mission in the former Yugoslavia proved to be the most deadly with 61 deaths registered among the blue helmets, followed by Somalia with 39 deaths. In 1993, 203 peacekeepers died in the line of duty and a total of 1,194 peacekeepers have been killed since the UN launched the protection force in 1948.

**Power outage at Newark airport:** A construction accident blacked out Newark International Airport, bringing passenger traffic to a halt at the nation's 10th busiest airport. AP reports from New Jersey.

Seventy per cent, or 840, of the 1,200 passenger flights handled daily at Newark were canceled Monday night and the remainder were diverted to regional airports, said airport general manager Benjamin DeCosta. Cargo flights weren't affected.

**ROK Red Cross chief honoured:** South Korean Red Cross President Kang Young-Hoon has received an honorary Knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for promoting friendship between South Korea and Great Britain. AFP reports from Seoul.

British ambassador to Seoul, Thomas Harris, announced in Seoul on Monday that Kang had been honoured for the leading role he has played since he assumed the Korean chairmanship of the Korea-Britain Forum and as chairman of the Korea-Britain Society.

**22 militants held in Egypt:** Egyptian security forces arrested 22 suspected Islamic militants in upper Egypt on Monday and seized a large amount of arms and ammunition, the semi-official daily Al-Akhar reported in its Tuesday edition. AFP reports from Cairo.

The arrest of the activities in the region of Beni-Suef came during a massive security operation in the area, said Al-Akhar which described the activists as "some of the most dangerous terrorist elements." Sixty weapons and a large quantity of ammunition were seized by police, the report said.

**No plan for early polls in Spain:** Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez repeatedly denied on Monday he knew about or was involved in a "dirty war" against Basque separatists in the 1980s and said he had no plan to call early elections. Reuter reports from Madrid.

**Guzman re-elected:** A reform-minded moderate who promised to push through a series of constitutional changes was re-elected on Monday as president of Nicaragua's National Assembly. Reuter reports from Managua.

Luis Humberto Guzman of the centrist Union of Christian Democrats won the post for a second time in a bitter fight with Miriam Arguello, a former parliamentary president who was supported by an odd combination of radical leftist Sandinistas and rightwing conservatives.

**16 drown in Sudan:** Twelve women and four children were drowned when a canoe carrying 25 people capsized in the Blue Nile in eastern Sudan, a Khartoum newspaper said yesterday. Reuter reports from Khartoum.

The government-owned Al-Sudan Al-Hadith (modern Sudan) newspaper did not say why the canoe capsized or why so many people were aboard but noted it was the third such incident in the Alaslet area in recent years.



File photo of Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman during a press conference in Jersey city on April 6 in 1993. Jury selection begins in New York in the trial of the spiritual leader and 11 others accused of plotting to bomb New York landmarks.

**Israel uses force to stop settlers in West Bank**

RAMALLAH, West Bank, Jan 10: Israeli troops used force overnight to stop settlers founding a new illegal settlement near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. Military sources said, reports AFP.

Several hundred settlers forced their way past a military road block and installed a caravan near the Halamish settlement where a young Israeli girl was shot dead Friday by Palestinians.

Militants from various other settlements gathered round the caravan to pray and sing. Special army reinforcements evicted the settlers after they refused to move.

**Film world celebrates 100th anniversary of birth in March**

PARIS, Jan 10: The film world celebrates the 100th anniversary of its first flickering image this year, but the rejoicing is overshadowed by fears that much of the globe's screen heritage is dying a slow death, reports Reuter.

A century after Louis and Auguste Lumiere invented the movie camera, the French government and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) are organising a worldwide extravaganza to hail the event.

But the celebrations are dampened by a struggle by movie libraries from Paris to Pyongyang to save motion pictures, many of which were shot on perishable types of film, for future generations.

On March 19, 1895, the Lumiere brothers set up a bizarre contraption outside their factory in the central French town of Lyon, as workers went home at the end of their shift.

The two pioneers, whose surname aptly translates as "light," initially called their cinematograph, an invention which married camera and projector, "a scientific curiosity with no commercial possibilities."

But that December, the tow organised the first ever public screening of a film in the billiards room of the Grand Cafe in Paris, charging their audience of 33 a single franc apiece for the historic privilege.

The programme, made up of them 50-second films, included the workers leaving their factory, one of the Lumiere's infants having lunch, another Lumiere child playing a prank on a gardener, and a horse dragging a truck in Lyon.

As their technique blossomed into a new and lucrative art form, Louis revised his earlier pessimistic forecast and mused: "The cinema amuses the entire world. What better thing could we have done, and what could have given us more pride."

The UN agency has so far set aside 100,000 US dollars for a special fund to help developing countries save their own heritage.

"All the wealth of images captured in art films, features, documentaries, full-length films, shorts, popular-science films, newsreels, educational films, cartoons, etc. is in danger of disappearing forever," said UNESCO head Federico Mayor.

"The art of the cinema is the custodian of the 20th century's memory," he said.

At last year's Cannes Film Festival, mayor appointed US star Clint Eastwood and French actress Catherine Deneuve goodwill ambassadors to head its campaign.

UNESCO estimates that more than three quarters of the films which were made worldwide before 1950 have already disappeared. Until 1955 films were shot on inflammable nitrate materials which have a 50-year life expectancy.

More than half the cellulose acetate films made after 1950 could be destroyed by gradual bleaching if they are not treated.

France launched a salvage effort in 1991, targeting French footage shot between 1895 and 1954 on the fragile celluloid nitrate film.

Its promoters hope to have saved all footage which can be saved by the year 2005.

To mark the centenary in France, filmgoers who buy a movie ticket on January 15 will receive a free ticket to any French cinema, valid all year.

The Lyon based Institute Lumiere, a motion picture museum, will stage a host of events including dance, opera, music, and theatre for schools and universities.

Gaumont made an early start to celebrations of its own centenary in the United States in 1994, with a retrospective of 60 movies at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) and across the country.

In March, an international symposium of film makers, critics and historians at Paris' Sorbonne University will draw up a charter for the defence of quality cinema.

## Perry arrives in Pakistan

# N-plan to dominate talks

ISLAMABAD, Jan 10: Pakistan's controversial nuclear weapons programme is expected to dominate talks between senior Pakistani politicians and US Defence Secretary William Perry, who arrived today on a two-day visit, says AP.

Defence Minister Shahban Mirani, who was at Chaklala Air Force Base to meet Perry, told The Associated Press that Pakistan won't be signing any agreements on the nuclear issue, unless its traditional enemy, India, signs similar agreements.

Perry visits India on Thursday.

Mirani also ruled out international inspections of its nuclear sites, something Washington has been pushing for, unless India also submits to similar inspections.

"We'll be telling him to sort it out with India," Mirani said.

Most Pakistanis, including the powerful military, believe the nuclear bomb is Pakistan's best bet against another war with India.

The two countries have fought three wars since the subcontinent gained its independence from Britain in 1947.

Many people feared a fourth, possibly nuclear confrontation, in 1990 when relations plummeted over the disputed Himalayan state of Kashmir.

Before Perry arrived, more than 5,000 fundamentalist Muslims here protested his visit believing it was the latest American attempt to dismantle Pakistan's nuclear programme.

The group, Jamat-e-Islami, strongly supports Pakistan's nuclear programme.

During his two-day visit to Pakistan, Perry is expected to meet President Farooq Ahmed

Leghari and Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

AFP adds: On the eve of his visit, Benazir conferred with top civil and military officials reportedly to prepare a strategy for talks with Perry, who is leading a 40-member delegation here.

Perry's trip here is the first by a Pentagon chief since Caspar Weinberger's visit to Pakistan in 1988 at the peak of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan during former President Ronald Reagan's term.

Close US-Pakistan relations were strained after the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan and with the suspension of US economic and military assistance in October, 1990 over Islamabad's nuclear programme.

A US embargo stalled delivery of 38 F-16 fighter aircraft ordered and partially paid for by Pakistan as well as some other military equipment deals.

Perry's visit also comes against the backdrop of continuing nuclear controversy between Washington and Islamabad and suspicions by local opposition politicians that the defence secretary is coming here to pressure Pakistan into signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Officials in Washington said last week that Perry hoped to begin building "even-handed" defence relationships with the two South Asian countries.

A US defence official in Washington confirmed that Perry's visit was not aimed at addressing the thorny issues of nuclear non-proliferation and the Indo-Pakistani dispute over Kashmir. "Instead we're going to try to focus on some of the newer issues of the post-Cold War period," he said.

## EC asks Delhi to postpone budget until polls in five states

NEW DELHI, Jan 10: India's Election Commission has asked the government to postpone its annual budget until crucial polls in five states are over, local agencies said today, reports Reuter.

They said K P G Kutty, a senior official of the commission, wrote to Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao's cabinet secretary and asked him to postpone the budget until March 11. The states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Bihar, Orissa and Arunachal Pradesh are due to hold five-yearly elections in February and March.

The agencies said Kutty also asked the Railways Ministry not to present its usual separate budget before the state polls.

The Election Commission gave no explanation for its decision, the agencies said, but opposition groups said a budget just before elections, whether for state assemblies or for parliament, might influence voters.

## Two to die for attempt on Naguib's life

HUCKSTEP, Egypt, Jan 10: A military court on Tuesday sentenced two Islamic militants to death for attempting to kill Egypt's Nobel Prize winning author Naguib Mahfouz, reports AFP.

The court at Huckstep military base just north of Cairo also condemned 11 other militants to various sentences of hard labour and acquitted three others at the end of a month-long trial.

Mahfouz, 83, spent 50 days in hospital mostly in intensive care after he was stabbed in the neck outside his Cairo home on October 14.

Mahfouz, who won the Nobel Prize in 1966, is the only Arab writer to receive the honour.

## Highest security prison opens in US

FLORENCE, Colorado, Jan 10: The worst criminals in the United States are getting a new home "Super Max," a state-of-the-art, highest security federal prison that officially opens today, reports AP.

More than 50 inmates already have moved to the 60 million dollar penitentiary that can house 500 of the nation's most violent, incorrigible prisoners.

Its occupants ultimately will include mafiosi John Gotti and Nicodemo "Little Nicky" Scarfo; Chicago El Rukn gang leader Jeff Fort; arms smuggler Edwin Wilson; Navy spy John Walker; and Charles Harelsson, the hitman father of "Cheers" TV comedy star Woody Harrelson.



Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (R) shares a joke with US Defence Secretary William Perry during their meeting yesterday in Islamabad. Perry arrived this morning for a two-day official visit to Pakistan.

## UN seeks to strengthen Bosnia-wide ceasefire

SARAJEVO, Jan 10: The United Nations, persevering despite hitches over the demilitarised zone around Sarajevo, sought today to strengthen a Bosnia-wide ceasefire now in its 10th day, reports Reuter.

A high level UN delegation, including UN commander in Bosnia Lieutenant General Sir Michael Rose was due to travel to a Croatian Serb stronghold in Knin to persuade them to halt their military involvement around Bihać in northwestern Bosnia. Knin is about 90 km (55 miles) south of Bihać.

The Bihać enclave has been one of the few areas in Bosnia to come under sporadic shelling since the Bosnia ceasefire came into force on January 1.

Bosnian Vice President Ejup Ganic was told by the UN special envoy to former Yugoslavia Yasushi Akashi on Monday that the delegation would insist Croatian Serbs withdraw from the pocket.

"Akashi told me he is sending a delegation to Knin to inform them that if they do not withdraw, problems will arise and he will contact the (UN) Security Council immediately," Ganic told reporters in Sarajevo.

Croatian Serbs joined their Bosnian Kins and rebel Muslims in an offensive on Bihać in November. Neither the Croatian Serbs nor rebel Muslims have signed the latest Bosnia truce.

The four-month ceasefire, brokered with the help of former US President Jimmy Carter, has come under increasing strain following fresh conditions raised by Bosnia's powerful Serbs.

A meeting of rival military commanders scheduled for Wednesday at Sarajevo airport to discuss implementation of the "cessation of hostilities" appeared in doubt.

UN spokesman Major Herve Gourmelon told reporters that a meeting on Sunday between Rose and Bosnian Serb army chief General Ratko Mladic "was not overly positive."

Bosnian Serbs have refused to reopen supply roads into Sarajevo, as called for in the ceasefire, unless Bosnian government troops vacated the demilitarised zone on mountain Igman, southwest of Sarajevo.

Rose has assured Mladic that Muslim-led forces had vacated positions in the DMZ but UN peacekeepers were thwarted in attempts to verify the withdrawal on Monday when a Bosnian army guide refused to lead them to the last known hideout, arguing passage on foot in the snow was unsafe.

## Sai Lek's death weakens struggle for Shan state in Myanmar

BANGKOK, Jan 10: Veteran Shan nationalist guerrilla leader Sai Lek has died in northeast Myanmar after a long illness, casting uncertainty over the merger of his own armed organisation with that of opium warlord Khun Sa, guerrilla sources said today, reports Reuter.

Sai Lek who merged his Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) with Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) last year died on Friday at Khun Sa's headquarters in Shan state as a result of blood poisoning.

Sai Lek has been sick for some time and died last Friday, Kuensai Jaiyen, a close aide of Khun Sa, told Reuters by telephone.

His death was a severe blow to the Shan in the struggle for autonomy from Yangon and to Khun Sa himself other Shan guerrilla sources told Reuter.

The death of Sai Lek has shattered Khun Sa's dream to clear his image as an opium warlord, one Shan source said.

Khun Sa, described by the United States as the world's number one narcotics criminal, has in recent years tried to persuade a number of Shan and other armed ethnic groups in Shan state to join the MTA and fight against the government.

Sai Lek, who was in his late 50's, was believed to have been designated by Khun Sa as a possible successor, and his death was felt equally by the MTA and SSPP, the Shan source said.

Khun Sa's success in winning over the SSPP was a big boost as Sai Lek and the SSPP were widely recognised and supported by the Shan people as true independence fighters.

"Sai Lek was very good as a tactician in mobile guerrilla warfare. He was the one that the Myanmar people were afraid of a former Sai Lek comrade said.

Sai Lek began his guerrilla war against the Yangon government in 1962.

In 1989 the SSPP split and one faction signed a ceasefire deal with the Yangon junta leaving Sai Lek and the rump of the SSPP little choice but to join forces with Khun Sa, observers said.

## India's oil co seeks US help to control blaze

NEW DELHI, Jan 10: India's largest oil company today sought the help of crack US firefighters to control a blaze in a natural gas well as it burned unabated for a third day, officials said, reports Reuter.

"We are in touch with experts in Texas," said an official of the state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), which owns the well, located in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

"There's still no let-up in the fire," the official said, adding that nearly 25,000 people had been evacuated from around the site of the well. There were no reports of injuries.

Local authorities on Monday said towering flames leapt through thick, black billowing clouds of smoke from the well, which caught fire on Sunday evening as gas spewed from a depth of 2,777 metres (9,110 ft) during a drilling operation. ONGC authorities rushed special "blowout" equipment to the well, situated near Bodasakurru village, to help local firefighters struggling to bring the blaze under control.

Loud explosions were heard up to 10 km (six miles) from the well as the fire threw up 100-metre (yard) flames that lit up the sky and thick clouds of smoke, residents said.

Officials in the state capital, Hyderabad, said it would take at least 20 days to snuff the fire completely out.

United News of India (UNI) quoted an ONGC spokesman as saying a 2.5 million dollar drilling rig had been destroyed in the blowout.

## 'Satanic Verses' a collection of lies

NEW YORK, Jan 10: The grand mufti of Egypt, Dr Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, said Monday a controversial novel by British author Salman Rushdie was a "collection of lies and a collection of insults and vices," reports Reuter.

LONDON: Camilla Parker Bowles — the close woman friend of Prince Charles — and her cavalry officer husband are to divorce by mutual consent, lawyers for the couple said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

"We have grown apart to such an extent that with the exception of our children and a lasting friendship, there is little of common interest between us and we have therefore decided to seek a divorce," a statement from the lawyers said.

Solicitors Boodle Hatfield and Charles Russell said the couple had lived apart for two years and a decree nisi — a provisional order for divorce — would be granted this month.

The announcement confirmed intense speculation that their 21 year marriage would not be able to withstand Camilla's long relationship with the heir to the throne. Charles, who separated from his wife Princess Diana two years ago, admitted last year he had committed adultery since his marriage broke down.

He also said he was very close to Camilla, who has never spoken publicly for her relationship with the Prince.

## Any act which strengthens US is haram?

TEHRAN: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has urged Iranians to boycott the popular US soft drinks Coke and Pepsi Cola in a bid to weaken the United States economy, a newspaper reported on Monday, says AFP.

In a religious decree published by the hardline Daily Kayhan, the Iranian leader said: "Any act which strengthens the pillars of world arrogance (the United States) and the Zionist circles is intrinsically haram (forbidden by Islam)."

He was responding to a question on the issue in his capacity as a religious authority, or marja-e-taqlid, for Shiite Muslims.

Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola made a comeback in Iran a year ago. 15 years after the Islamic revolution which toppled the pro-American Shah. The drinks were banned as symbols of "undesirable" US culture.

However the issue has been at the centre of a debate for the past year, with Islamic hardliners demanding that sales of US soft drinks be banned.

## Diet more responsible than heredity for obesity

CHICAGO: Chubby children are more the result of diet and poor exercise than heredity and efforts to prevent obesity should start as early as the age of four, researchers said on Monday, reports Reuter.

"We've gotten the message that if you are overweight it's because of your genes and you can't do anything about it. The message that comes out of this study is that parents can do something about their kids being overweight," said Linda Eck of the University of Memphis.

In a study published in the American Academy of Pediatrics monthly journal, she reported on a three-year study of 221 children aged three and four in Memphis.

The study confirmed that heredity is consistently related to obesity. But it also found that a combination of a high fat diet and little physical activity accounted for more weight gain among the children than did age and family history.

What this study says is that there are some things that parents can do to control their children's weight at an early age, Eck said, and that the age of four is not too early to start.

## Spanking is children's right

CHICAGO: Mothers most often spank their children not out of rage but because they think it's right for the child, according to a US study published on Monday, reports Reuter.

Researchers at the University of North Carolina and the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, said they based their findings on a survey of more than 200 mothers of children aged four and under.

Seventy-four per cent of the mothers "believed that there are times when it is appropriate to spank a child," between the ages of one and three, although only 19 per cent said that of children under the age of one.

The report said one reason parents spank is that they become angry in the frenzy of the moment. "But the survey suggests that belief rather than impulse plays a major role in that form of discipline."

The American Academy of Pediatrics, which published the findings in its monthly journal, said it believes spanking is a bad idea no matter what the motive since it does "children of any age more harm than good."

Forty-two per cent of the women in the survey had spanked their child within the last week.

## Kurd factions agree on fresh ceasefire

NICOSIA, Jan 10: The two main rival Kurdish factions have agreed on a new ceasefire to end their bitter fighting in Iraqi Kurdistan, a senior member of one of the factions told Radio Monte Carlo on Monday, reports AFP.

Fuad Maassum of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) said the accord on a ceasefire from 0900 GMT on Sunday had started bearing fruit unlike previous accords.

A KDP official Sami Abdel Rahman, confirmed the accord and said an INC committee had been set up to monitor its implementation.

## Israel uses force to stop settlers in West Bank

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Militants from various other settlements gathered round the caravan to pray and sing. Special army reinforcements evicted the settlers after they refused to move.