

# India blames Pakistan for Republic Day blast

JAMMU, Jan 27. The governor of the north Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir accused Pakistan of planting bombs that killed eight people and wounded up to 100 on Thursday during a Republic Day rally in the restive region, reports Reuter.

Police said three explosions rocked a stadium during a rally attended by about 15,000 people in Jammu, winter capital of largely Hindu India's only Muslim-majority state.

Two devices went off next to the podium where State Governor KV Krishna Rao, a retired general, was addressing the rally.

Rao escaped with a minor injury to his nose and regional army Commander LT Surinder Singh was unhurt. Domestic news agencies said one of Rao's bodyguards was killed.

Police said two soldiers, two paramilitary troopers and

two policemen were among those killed by the bombs, which the United News of India (UNI) agency said were set off by remote control and appeared to have been buried.

PTI quoted hospital sources as saying the death toll could go higher as some of the injured were in critical condition.

About 40 of the injured were children, UNI reported, while PTI said seven senior officials of the government of Jammu and Kashmir were among the wounded.

Rao told a news conference, the blasts were an attempt to assassinate him and a "plot by Pakistan and its inter-services intelligence to thwart the initiation of democratic process" in the state, UNI reported.

It quoted officials as saying the bombings were believed to be the work of separatist militants.

# Fresh fighting in Bosnia Chances of peace sink

SARAJEVO, Jan 27. Bosnia's chances of peace sank again with reports of new fighting — this time between the government and Bosnian Serbs, two main rivals that should be observing a truce, reports AP.

Thursday's violence came as a new UN commander arrived to begin his efforts to end 33 months of war, and as international negotiators tried to revive a stalled peace plan.

Representatives of the five-nation Contact Group of the United States, Russia, France, Britain and Germany planned to meet with Serb leaders Friday in their stronghold of Pale.

They have drafted a peace plan that would give a Muslim-Croat federation 51 per cent of Bosnia and leave Serbs, who now control about 70 per cent of Bosnian territory with 49 per cent.

Serb resistance had sidelined the plan for more than

half a year. But the Contact Group is making a new effort to have both sides negotiate it under modified terms.

The Bosnian government wants the Serbs to accept the peace plan in the next two months and wrap up negotiations by May 1, when the current truce is scheduled to expire.

The start of any negotiations on the plan, however, depends on the truce being respected by all the warring sides. Resurgent fighting Thursday in the northwestern Bihac pocket weakened the already shaky cease-fire agreed to December 31.

Hundreds of detonations shook the enclave, where rebel Muslims and Serbs from neighbouring Croatia have been fighting for months to dislodge Muslim-led Bosnian government forces.

UN officials asserted Thurs-

day that Bosnian Serb forces have taken part in some recent battles in the region.

The rest of Bosnia has been generally quiet since the four-month truce took effect at the start of the year. But persistent fighting in the Bihac region could undermine the cease-fire and the effort to forge a lasting peace.

Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic was gloomy about upcoming talks Thursday after meeting with the European Union's top foreign affairs official in Brussels, Belgium.

"It's so bad, I don't have any comment," Silajdzic said. He travels to Washington on Friday, then to Moscow, for more talks.

UN officials also reported heavy shelling and fighting south of Velika Kladusa in the far north, where over 300 impacts were recorded by mid-day.

# 7 burned alive in Karachi

KARACHI, Jan 27. Seven people, including a woman and her three children, were burned alive and 25 were injured when a fire gutted a bus at a bus-station in Karachi overnight, officials said today, reports AFP.

Some newspaper reports quoted witnesses and an official from the bus company, the New Blue Lines, as saying three young men torched the vehicle, sprinkling petrol (US gasoline) over it.

But police and government officials said they had no evidence pointing to arson.

One senior official said terrorism could not be ruled out, but refused to comment further, pending a full investigation.

The bus had been headed for Larkana, the hometown of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

Last year, 32 people were killed when a fire broke out on another Blue Lines bus. The cause of that fire was attributed to an electrical fault in the air-conditioning system.

# Off the Record



Lace again and again, as always and of course, "organza," for long strapless dresses for summer evenings by Christian Lacroix who fastens the flowing structure with wide ribbon (R) and black corset (L) for his 1995 haute couture collection, presented on Thursday in Paris.

— AFP photo

# Blizzards, rain sweep Northern Europe: 19 killed

LONDON, Jan 27. At least 19 people died as blizzards and record rain swept Northern Europe, six of them children killed when winds toppled a crane onto a French school, reports Reuter.

Vast areas of Germany, France and the Netherlands were under water on Thursday and snowstorms paralysed northern England. Weather forecasters said more rain and snow was on the way, threatening further chaos and possible crop damage.

Rainfall in western France has been the heaviest for 150 years, and 12 people died there in flood-related accidents.

Police recovered the bodies of two men and a woman from a car swept into the harbour at the Brest Port of Concarneau on Thursday. They had been reported missing at the weekend, when three others died in flood-related accidents in the region.

Several towns faced their sixth day of flooding and evacuated residents have been unable to return home.

# Walesa opens commemoration of Auschwitz death camp

WARSAW, Jan 27. Polish President Lech Walesa today opened official commemorations of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp, saying Nazi atrocities had made a mockery of human dignity, reports Reuter.

Flanked by dozens of head of state and other dignitaries, Walesa began a day of remembrance just inside the camp's main gate which still bears the inscription "Arbeit macht frei" (work makes you free).

The idea that work makes you free is something I would agree with if it were not associated with the inscription here," Walesa told the gathering.

"I know labour well myself from when I used to work in the shipyard. I used to feel work was making man free but here these words were a mockery."

The dignitaries were to move on to Birkenau, a twin camp three km (two miles) away where most of the 1.5 million deaths were carried out in gas chambers and crematoriums.

# One dies in SA police shootout

SOWETO, Jan 27. Riot police staged a commando-style assault Friday on a police station occupied by striking policemen leaving one man dead and another wounded, reports AP.

Three trucks carried off 140 of the strikers arrested after the raid at the Orlando police station in this black township southwest of Johannesburg.



Japan's Crown Prince Naruhito, Jordan's Queen Noor and King Hussain and Japan's Princess Masako pose for photographs at the Royal Palace in Amman on Thursday. Crown Prince Naruhito and Princess Masako are in Jordan to boost bilateral relations.

— AFP photo

# Taipei - Beijing talks fail

BEIJING, Jan 27. Despite initial high hopes for success, negotiators from Taipei and Beijing ended talks Friday without signing any agreements on handling day-to-day disputes between the two sides, reports AP.

The two sides earlier this week reached consensus on repatriation of hijackers and illegal immigrants, but the talks bogged down over how to handle fishing disputes.

Tang Shubert of Beijing's Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits and Chiao Jen ho of Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation decided to extend the talks by a day in a last-ditch effort to work out the differences. But by the end of the day Friday they still were unable.

The talks, which began Sunday, opened with high expectations that all three agreements could be signed by the scheduled end of negotiations Thursday.

Tang told reporters that the two sides had agreed on the

main issues but still had problems with the wording. The problem was mainly in how to define territorial waters in which government boats would be authorised to operate.

Taiwan wanted to define clearly which areas each side Major dismisses Iran's link with Pan Am bombing

LONDON, Jan 27. British Prime Minister John Major on Thursday dismissed reports that Iran and not Libya was behind the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Scotland that killed 270 people, reports Reuter.

Major told parliament that Scottish legal authorities who are investigating the case were convinced that the evidence pointed clearly to two Libyans.

"There is no evidence to establish that other persons or nations were involved," Major said.

could operate in its goal was to prevent mainland government vessels from intruding into its waters.

Beijing's negotiators wanted to avoid the use of the term "territorial waters" and call it "the area where one side's government vessels are allowed to cruise" because a clear definition of territorial waters would touch on the thorny issue of sovereignty.

The Nationalist government fled to Taiwan after losing a civil war in China in 1949. Beijing regards Taiwan as a renegade province with no right of sovereignty and says it eventually should be reunified with the mainland.

On technical matters, the two sides agreed to two versions of the final agreements, reflecting the different style of Chinese characters and terminology used on the mainland and in Taiwan.

Taiwanese newspapers viewed the two-version proposal as a pragmatic approach by both sides.

# Somali warlords won't disrupt UN operation

NAIROBI, Jan 27. Somali warlords have pledged not to interfere with the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers from Mogadishu, an American diplomat says, reports AP.

Daniel Simpson, US special envoy to Somalia, said Thursday all major faction leaders in Mogadishu had given assurances they would not try to disrupt the operation.

However, Simpson noted that some militants in Mogadishu operate beyond the control of the warlords and could pose a threat to UN and US troops.

The United States is sending about 3,000 Marines aboard four ships to safeguard the final phase of the UN withdrawal, tentatively scheduled for early March.

# Saudi-Yemeni talks proceed well

RIYADH, Jan 27. Yemeni and Saudi Arabian negotiators discussed a border dispute in Riyadh on Thursday and a Yemeni delegate denied reports of troops massing on the frontier, reports Reuter.

High-ranking sources confirmed in Saudi and Yemen that there is no concentration of troops along the border and all is normal. Yemeni parliamentary Speaker Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hussein Al-Ahmar told the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

He was speaking after political sources in Sanaa on Wednesday charged that Saudi Arabia was massing troops, tanks and aircraft near the border.

Ahmar leads a Yemeni dele-

gation holding talks in Sanaa trying to resolve the 60-year-old border dispute.

A Saudi Defence Ministry source told SPA there was no tension on the border and that talks were proceeding well.

Sheikh Abdullah and Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal met on Tuesday. Saudi Education Minister Abdul-Azz Al-Abdullah Al-Khawwari and Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister Abdul-Qader Bajamal represented the two sides on Thursday.

Saudi Arabia cut financial aid and political backing for Yemen when it voted in the United Nations Security Council against the resolution that sanctioned the 1991 Gulf War to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

# BRIEFLY

**US-Vietnam accord today:** Vietnam and the United States will sign an agreement on Saturday settling diplomatic property claims outstanding since the end of the Vietnam war in 1975, an authorised Vietnamese source said Friday, Reuter reports from Hanoi.

The agreement will clear the way for the two governments to open liaison offices in Hanoi and Washington, their first diplomatic missions in each other's capitals since the end of the war.

**13 die in Indian road mishap:** 13 persons were killed on the spot and 21 others were injured when a bus collided with a tractor in Rajkot district in western Indian state of Gujarat, according to a report reaching New Delhi yesterday from Rajkot. Xinhua says from New Delhi.

The report said that the accident occurred on Thursday evening, when the bus was going from Rajkot to Dwarka-Okha. The report said that the injured have been admitted to a hospital in Rajkot. Seven of them were seriously injured.

**Huge cocaine washes up in France:** Bags of cocaine worth about 11 million dollar have washed up on beaches in southwest France, police said on Thursday, Reuter reports from Bordeaux.

They said packages totalling 75 kg (165 lb) of the drug were probably dumped from a ship coming from South America for traffickers to collect. The bags had apparently been in the water for weeks or months.

**Algerian elections in July:** Algerian Foreign Minister Salah Dombri said on Thursday that presidential elections promised by the army-backed government before the end of this year could be held as early as July, Reuter reports from Rome.

He told a news conference that the government had sent out invitations to all political groups to discuss how the elections should be staged.

**Another satellite to be launched:** The Hong Kong-based satellite operator whose satellite was destroyed after takeoff from China on Thursday said Friday it would try to launch a replacement in the near future, AP reports from Hong Kong.

Built by Hughes Corp of the United States, the satellite was to have provided television, telephone and digital telecommunications.

**10 killed in Egyptian clashes:** Ten people were killed in southern Egypt on Friday in two separate clashes between police and Muslim militants, security sources said, Reuter reports from Assuit, Egypt.

They said four suspected militants were killed when police stormed a flat in the town of Minya around dawn. Three hours later six policemen were killed and five wounded when gunmen fired on a police patrol in the nearby town of Abu Qurgas, they said. There were no further details.



South African Archbishop Trevor Huddleston receives the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 1994 from Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma (C) on Friday during a ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. At left in sunglasses stands South African President Nelson Mandela.

— AFP photo

# Sihanouk's call to stop fighting

PHNOM PENH, Jan 27. King Norodom Sihanouk has appealed to both the royal armed forces and the Khmer Rouge (KR) troops to stop fighting immediately in order to restore peace in Cambodia, reports Xinhua.

Sihanouk made the appeal when the distributed relief supplies to the displaced people in Phnom Sambe, about eight kilometers west of Battambang, capital of Battambang province, on Wednesday.

According to today's Commercial News daily, the king said that Co-Prime Minister Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen have agreed to ceasefire if the Khmer Rouge first stops fighting.

# Myanmar troops capture major stronghold of Karen rebels

BANGKOK, Jan 27. About 15,000 Myanmar troops captured the last major stronghold of one of the world's longest running insurgencies in a major blow to the ruling junta's opposition Friday, reports AP.

The Karen National Union, the military arm of the Karen ethnic insurgency, told The Associated Press it evacuated thousands of civilians from its headquarters of Manerplaw on Thursday.

It said Yangon's troops pounded the 1,000 rebels defending the base with artillery and small arms overnight and its ground forces pushed the remaining rebels out of the base at 9 am.

"It is a major defeat in the loss of ground, but morale is still quite high," said a Karen rebel who demanded anonymity. "We will continue to fight."

The rebel said the group had retreated to Thi Thay Kee, several kilometers (miles) from Manerplaw along the Myanmar Thai border. The troops are to move further away from the border, which is now saturated with Myanmar troops, and return to hit-and-run guerilla warfare, the rebel said.

The Karen have been fighting for greater autonomy since 1948. The group, which has 4,000 troops, is the largest and most important insur-

gency fighting the junta. The group is closely aligned with the self-declared opposition government and student rebels who fled Yangon after the junta crushed a pro-democracy uprising in 1988. The Karen headquarters of Manerplaw was the centre of the opposition movement.

The rebels have refused to say how many casualties they suffered.

The offensive came three years after Yangon declared a unilateral cease-fire to convince the dozen or so ethnic minority insurgencies to lay down their arms.

Yangon began moving in on Manerplaw in December in launched its final assault a

week ago to bring to heel the four ethnic groups that have refused to sign cease fires.

The Karen had offered last year to negotiate an end to the war with Yangon but were rebuffed.

Sources close to the rebels said Yangon had 50 armored personnel carriers posted just 30 kilometers (19 miles) from the headquarters of Manerplaw and had pounded it for a week with artillery from three sides.

"They are trying to finish the opposition groups by using superior weapons and manpower," said Sen Aung, Minister of Health and Education for the self-declared National Coalition Government of the

Union of Burma, an opposition group. "We will continue to struggle for democracy and equality for our people."

The attack on the jungle base forced up to 10,000 refugees across the border into Thailand, Sen Aung said.

The United States urged Yangon Thursday to end the fighting.

The United States government calls upon the government of Myanmar to act in accordance with its own stated intent to resolve its difficulties with Myanmar's ethnic minorities peacefully. State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly said Thursday in Washington, DC. "We call on

the Myanmar government to respect the human rights of all its citizens."

The United States has hostile relations with Yangon's military junta, which refused to give up power when it lost the 1990 election to the opposition party of Aung San Suu Kyi. Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, is in her sixth year of house arrest in Yangon.

"Any improvement in our relations depends upon progress in Myanmar," Shelly said. "We are evaluating how human rights violations connected with the current fighting might affect our relationship with the Myanmar government."

# DPRK rejects talks with ROK

SEOUL, Jan 27. North Korea on Friday rejected an anti-unification Seoul proposal to open a government-level dialogue to discuss the future of the divided peninsula, a South Korean report said, says AP.

On Wednesday, South Korea proposed to its northern communist rival that government delegates meet to open an inter-Korea dialogue, cut off since 1993 because of nuclear disputes.

The north's response, a commentary in North Korea's official communist party newspaper, Rodong Sinmun was broadcast by Radio Pyongyang and monitored by Naewoe Press.