

### Talks on US balance-budget adjourned till Friday

WASHINGTON, Dec 23: President Clinton and his chief Republican adversaries discussed their budget clash at the White House, and reported making progress. But all they acknowledged agreeing on was to meet again next Friday, reports AP.

As a result, there was no end in sight to the week-long federal shutdown. Congress sought to blunt some of its sharpest edges, shipping Clinton legislation that would get benefit checks moving to veterans and many poor people on welfare.

And with that, most lawmakers prepared to leave town for a curtailed Christmas recess, with no votes expected until at least next Wednesday.

Participants, speaking on condition of anonymity, said no new offers were presented in the discussions Friday, but that the tone was positive. Staff aides were told to list options for finding savings in Medicare, Medicaid

and other major programme that negotiators could consider in meetings next Friday.

"Things are going well," House Majority Leader Dick Armey, said in the House chamber after the longer than two hour White House session involving Clinton, U.S House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, and other congressional leaders and administration officials.

A written statement from Clinton and the bipartisan leaders was equally vague. It described "good meetings" and said staff would "clarify options" so congressional budget writers and White House aides could meet next week, followed by another session between Clinton and the Republican leaders.

With negotiations more than a month old, there was agreement that the budget should be balanced by 2002.



Bombay police with sniffer dog, search on Friday the interior of a Russian make civil aircraft AN-26, suspected to have air dropped a large quantity of arms and ammunition in West Bengal on Monday. The plane was forced to land by the Indian Air Force at a Bombay airport, as it was on its way to Karachi. — AFP/UNB photo

### Taliban down govt jet

ISLAMABAD, Dec 23: Taliban gunners shot down a government jet while it was bombing their positions south of the Afghan capital, a Taliban spokesman here said today, reports AFP.

The plane crashed near Maidan Shahr, some 25 kilometres (15 miles) from Kabul on Thursday, Mullah Malang said, adding that he had no information about the fate of the pilot.

The Taliban claim could not be independently confirmed.

The government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani has accused the Taliban, who are besieging Kabul with the aim of toppling Rabbani, of targeting civilians if frequent rocket attacks on the capital.

Malang denied this and said the Taliban had been hitting only military targets.

He said military activity around Kabul was currently at a low level because of the bitter cold and snow.



Soha Arafat, wife of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and her daughter Zahwa arrive to visit Bethlehem on Friday. Israeli troops withdrew from Bethlehem on Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

### Military tightens grip on power in North Red alert in DPRK against ROK, US troops' provocation

SEOUL, Dec 23: North Korea has warned its armed forces to be on a state of "red alert" against possible provocations by the South Korean and US troops, the North's mouthpiece Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) said today, reports AFP.

The KCNA dispatch, monitored in Seoul and in Tokyo, quoted Vice-Marshal Jo Myong-rok, director of the Korean People's Army political department "appealing to officers and men... to be on 'red alert' with a high degree of revolutionary vigilance."

"The present situation prompts the officers and men of our People's Army and our people to be on maximum alert," it said, adding

that if "the enemy dare unleash a new war in this land" North Koreans would fight to the finish.

Belligerent rhetoric has been high on both sides of the demilitarised zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas in the past month, with the South's President Kim Young-Sam also warning of possible military provocations from the North.

Kim's government has said it is monitoring the North's military movements near the DMZ, though most military experts here discount them as any more than winter training manoeuvres.

Pyeongyang in the past week has lashed out at an ex-

ercise slated for January in the sea off the Korean Peninsula by the US aircraft carrier enterprise.

AP adds from Washington: North Korea's military is tightening its grip on power and assuming more police functions, suggesting the communist regime fears of food riots or other civil unrest, a US defence official said Friday, reports AP.

The official, who discussed US intelligence assessments of recent events in North Korea on condition he not be identified, said the growing influence of the military coincides with worsening economic and social conditions there.



People mill around a residential house in downtown Ranawari which was destroyed in a fierce encounter between Indian security forces and Kashmiri militants on Friday. Two of the militants were killed in the fire-fight which lasted for 12 hours. — AFP/UNB photo

### Rebels repulse rly station attack Chechens threaten Russia with radiation attack

MOSCOW, Dec 23: Russia's independent NTV television on Friday interviewed the most notorious of Chechnya's rebel fighters, who displayed what he said was a container of a radioactive substance and threatened to blow it up somewhere in Russia, reports AP.

Last month, the rebel commander Shamil Basayev made a similar threat and, to back it up, revealed the location of one such container in his possession.

The container unearthed by NTV's correspondents in a Moscow park contained cesium 137, a radioactive iso-

tope used in cancer research and radiation therapy.

It was emitting radiation, but experts said it wasn't dangerous unless a person stood close to it for a long time.

On Friday, Basayev said his fighters could blow up such containers to spread radiation over a large area. Interviewed at his base in Chechnya's snowy mountains he displayed one green container, claiming he had many others.

"We can blow it up in the water, or in the air to spread radiation," Basayev, clad in combat fatigues and a black

### Kabul denies link Reward offered for Peshawar blast suspects

PESHAWAR, Dec 23: A car bomb that reduced an entire city block to cinders has claimed at least 31 lives, and the death toll may reach 50 by the time rescuers claw through the ruins of a large department store, police and hospital officials said Friday, reports AP.

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto offered a one million rupee (30,000 dollars) reward for information leading to the arrest of the culprits.

As well Saturday has been declared a day of mourning in the Northwest Frontier Province, where Peshawar is located.

Reuters adds: The Afghan government denied on Friday that it had any responsibility for a car bomb that killed 36 people and wounded more than 100 in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar.

### Di still holding trump card of her next move

LONDON, Dec 23: Princess Diana now holds the trump card in her failed marriage, reports AP.

If she doesn't want a quickie divorce, Prince Charles will have to wait for two more years. And her closest confidante in the press says she's determined there will be no divorce until her future status is assured.

As the royal family gathers for a traditional Christmas at the Sandringham estate in Norfolk, Diana leaves two big questions unanswered: Where will she spend the holidays and how will she respond to the queen's request for a rapid divorce from the heir to the throne?

Queen Elizabeth II and Charles have already laid their cards on the table.

### Lankan forces discover rebel bomb factory

COLOMBO, Dec 23: Security forces shot dead at least one Tamil Tiger guerrilla and discovered an abandoned rebel munitions factory in northern Sri Lanka during a clearing operation, the military said today, reports AFP.

A small group of rebels from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were located at Suthumalai in the Jaffna Peninsula, triggering a fire fight on Friday, the military said in a statement.

It said there were no casualties among government troops but that further clearing operations were continuing while the army discovered an abandoned bomb manufacturing facility in the same area.

### Off the Record Bad news for Eve

WASHINGTON: Bad news for Eve: A new report disputes the theory that one genetic mother of us all lived 200,000 years ago in Africa, arguing that there had to be some 100,000 "Eves" existing much earlier in time, reports Reuter.

The report in Friday's edition of the journal Science that our earliest genetic forbears existed perhaps 60 million years ago, long before human beings walked the earth, contradicts the "mitochondrial Eve" theory advanced eight years ago.

Scientists at the University of California at Berkeley said then that all people descended from one African woman, basing their finding on tracking of mutations in an original molecule of DNA, the genetic blueprint contained in every living thing.

In every DNA molecule, there are some 6 billion bits of information. Most of these bits are in the molecule's heart, or nucleus, but about 15,000 of them are outside the nucleus, in an area called the mitochondrion. This mitochondrial DNA is passed only from mothers to children, and the Berkeley team used this to find the woman they say gave all current humans this part of her DNA which mutated down through the ages.

They theorised that she lived 100,000 to 200,000 years ago and while she was not the only woman to have children then, her genes were the only ones that endured to the present day.

But Francisco Ayala, a professor of biological sciences at the University of California at Irvine, used mathematical models to argue that this could not have happened.

"I find the ancestral molecule for an important piece of DNA that deals with the immune system," he said in a telephone interview. "That molecule existed 60 million years ago, about when the dinosaurs became extinct, before the origination of modern monkeys, let alone humans."

Ayala, the author of the study being published in Science, calculated that for all the variants of this immune system gene to have survived until now would have required a population of at least 100,000.

### Tragic!

SINGAPORE: A Dutch woman trying to save her dogs died after being knocked down by a Malaysia-bound train here, Singapore police and press reports said Saturday, reports AFP.

A police spokesman identified the woman as Nelleke Maria Andrea, 36. Her two dogs also died.

Andrea, a physiotherapist who used to jog along the railway tracks near Singapore's Commonwealth drive, was struggling to pull her dogs off the tracks as the train approached Friday morning, The Straits Times said.

The train sounded the whistle and slowed but could not stop in time, it said.

"My mother saw her squatting by the side of the track struggling with the dogs, which were not moving, just before the train hit her," the newspaper quoted Mimi Suriati Misbah, a resident of a nearby apartment block, as saying.

"She didn't scream. She loved her dogs so much she couldn't let go," Misbah said.

### Yemen, Eritrea each set out terms for ending dispute

SANAA, Dec 23: Yemen and Eritrea each set out their conditions on Friday for ending a dispute over a strategic Red Sea island captured by Eritrean forces after an armed attack a week ago, reports AFP.

Sanaa has demanded the withdrawal of all Eritrean forces from the island of Hanish al-Kabir, captured on Monday after three days of fighting in which nine soldiers died.

As a further precondition to any talks, the Yemeni government has also called for the release of all 180 Yemeni prisoners.

But Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki rejected the demands by his Yemeni counterpart Ali Abdallah Saleh out of hand on Friday.

Instead he demanded that both sides withdraw their troops from the Hanish archipelago of nine islands ahead of international arbitration.

If both countries agree in principle to withdraw their forces from the Hanish archipelago, a neutral mediating body acceptable to both parties should be established until such time that a lasting solution is found to the dispute through international arbitration," he said in a statement.

Sanaa spelled out its position to Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfun who has undertaken to mediate between the two sides.

## BRIEFLY

**Japan marks Akihito's birthday:** Japan's Emperor Akihito marked his 62nd birthday by greeting thousands of well-wishers Saturday at the Imperial palace grounds in central Tokyo, AP reports from Tokyo.

Many waved small Japanese flags as they shouted "banzai" (long life) to the monarch, who waved back from behind a bullet-proof glass window.

**Ghali plans to visit Haiti in Feb:** Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali plans to go to Haiti for the February 7 inauguration of the country's new president, sources at the United Nations said on Friday, Reuter reports from United Nations.

The Secretary-General was last in the Caribbean nation in April when a US-led force handed over command of peacekeeping operations to the United Nations.

**US Senate for no change in START II:** The US Senate on Friday agreed not to make any changes in the Strategic Arms Reduction II Treaty with Russia, but put off a final vote on ratification of the agreement, Reuter reports from Washington.

The 1993 treaty calls for the United States and Russia to mutually reduce its nuclear missile and heavy bomber force over the next nine years.

**Quake hits Indonesia:** An earthquake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale hit Indonesia's remote Irian Jaya province but there were no reports of damage or casualties, official at the meteorology and geophysics office said yesterday, Reuter reports from Jakarta.

The official told Reuters from Irian's capital Jayapura that the quake, the second in less than a week, struck at 0926 GMT on Friday and was only felt in the capital.

**5 Indonesian climbers die:** Preparation for cold weather conditions were to blame for the deaths of five mountain climbers who died on Mount Bawakaraeng in South Sulawesi, police said, AP reports from Jakarta.

The climbers, aged 19 to 22, were part of a group of seven that were reported missing Wednesday. Their bodies were recovered in three separate locations around the mountain in Gowa district, 1,450 kilometers (906 miles) northeast of Jakarta, the official Antara news agency reported Saturday.

**US-Japan jt wargame begins Jan 25:** US and Japanese military staffs will use computer simulated war situations to conduct a joint exercise January 25 to February 2, the US Defence Department said on Friday, Reuter reports from Washington.

"Computer simulations will be used to train the staffs to solve the operations, intelligence, logistics and communications challenges of joint and bilateral combat operations," it said.

**French FM pledges support for PLO:** French Foreign Minister Herve De Charette pledged his country's financial support for the development of Palestinian-ruled areas in a meeting with PLO leader Yasser Arafat in Gaza on Friday, Reuter says from Gaza.

"I am here to help the development of the territories and especially the development of Gaza," De Charette told reporters, without giving details.

**Yeltsin to visit China in March:** Russian President Boris Yeltsin will visit China in March in his first foreign trip since suffering a heart attack on October 26, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said on Friday, AFP reports from Moscow.

Yeltsin, Chinese President Jiang Zemin and presidents of neighbouring Central Asian countries will sign a document on building trust between their countries, Kozyrev was quoted as saying by Interfax.

**7 more executed in China:** China has executed seven farmers for robbing motorists and passengers along highways, Xinhua news agency said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

**13 trapped in Colombian mine:** An explosion tore through a coal mine in southwest Colombia on Friday, leaving 13 miners trapped more than 4,900 feet (1,500 metres) underground, Colombian television said, Reuter reports from Bogota.

A report on the CM and news programme said the blast in Valle Del Cauca province occurred at about 6 pm est (2300 GMT).

### Beant Singh murder: 2 top suspects held

NEW DELHI, Dec 23: India has arrested two prime suspects in connection with the car bomb assassination in August of Beant Singh, Chief Minister of the northern state of Punjab, the United News of India (UNI) said today, reports Reuter.

The news agency said police arrested fugitives Jagtar Singh Hawara and Balwant Singh on Friday in two different towns of Punjab and recovered 12 kg (26 lb) of the lethal rock explosive from Balwant Singh.

The daylight assassination of Beant Singh, who became Chief Minister of Punjab in elections held in 1992,

### Traumas to remain in Bosnians' minds despite peace bid

TUZLA, Dec 23: "Destroyed buildings can be repaired," Dr. Kasim Brigic said, sadly shaking his head, "but the human damage, the impact on people's minds, will never go away," reports AP.

Brigic runs the Kreka psychiatric hospital, a shabby, three-story building where doctors in crisp white do their best for 112 patients lodged in medieval conditions.

"We could use 400 beds, not to speak of recreation and dining space," he said. "And it is going to get worse. I'm afraid the next three years will be terrible."

Doctors in Tuzla are

starting to see what they expected: During the war, people were forced to keep themselves together. But as they relax, with new peace, many are falling apart.

At Kreka, patients are mixed — military and civilian. Some relive nightmares in horrifying Technicolor. Others can no longer function rationally, worn down by too many blows to the spirit.

The hospital, which had 60 patients during the war, escaped being hit by artillery shells during Bosnia's 3 and a half year long war. Afterward, it doubled its capacity with help from the Red Cross.

Only the most serious cases are admitted, and 70

per cent are regarded as "permanent." People who should be hospitalised are left at home with relatives and whatever medication the doctors can spare.

In one of the scarce beds, Husein Ramic, 50, stares dully at the yellowed walls, seldom talking to the 20 listless patients who share the room.

Before 1992, Ramic was an easy going builder, who worked in Germany, the Czech Republic and Egypt. When war started, he was given a gun and sent to the front. A trench near Vis was his last post.

"In July, my brother was wounded, and then I was

hit," he said. "I came to and, 15 minutes later, they told me my son, Hasor, was killed near me, by the same shell. He was 27."

Ramic's leg and head wound healed. His brother is fine. But he and his wife suffer severe, lasting depression. Hasor was their only child.

In a neighbouring bed, Muhamed Begic, 33, finished a crossword puzzle. He showed visitors the cassette he recorded, signing and playing guitar.

Begic joined the elite Liberation Brigade to fight for Bosnia in May 1992. He described how his best friend died next to him, but he

seemed to bear no obvious scars. Then someone mentioned his kids.

Later, Dr. Brigic explained that Begic's Croat wife left him during the war, taking their 10-year-old son and younger daughter to Pula, far up the Croatian coast, where he may never see them again.

One of the patients roomed with the war casualties because there was no other space for him. He murdered his wife and now recalls the crime in vivid and grotesque paintings.

Doctors make occasional rounds in white smocks labeled "Hotel Dieu" and "Assistance Publique" gifts

### Peres' security tightened amid death threats

JERUSALEM, Dec 23: Security for Prime Minister Shimon Peres has been tightened after a steady flow of warnings about possible attempts on his life, reports AP.

The Jerusalem Post daily, citing a senior official in the Shin Bet security service, reported Friday that Peres was feared to be a target for right wing extremists upset that Rabin's death did not stop the Israel-PLO peace process.

An amateur video of Yitzhak Rabin's November 4 assassination at a Tel Aviv peace rally showed that Peres himself could also have been killed.