

## BRIEFLY



Iraqi President Saddam Hussein delivers on Saturday a nationwide address on the Army Day, asserting that Iraq will continue to cooperate with the United Nations. The UN Security Council has decided Friday to maintain international sanctions against Iraq for failing to comply with UN resolutions in place for more than five years, following the Gulf War.

— AFP/UNB Photo

**Perry in Riyadh:** US Secretary of Defence William Perry arrived late Saturday in Riyadh from Muscat on a 24 hour visit due to be dominated by questions of security in the Gulf. AFP reports from Riyadh.

Perry was due to meet Crown Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz for the first time since King Fahd handed over power to him on January 1.

**5 Iranians to die for spying:** Five Iranians were sentenced to death in Iran after being found guilty of spying for the United States and Iraq. Iranian radio reported Saturday. Reuter reports from Nicosia.

"Five Iranians, convicted of spying for the US government and the Iraqi Baathist regime, were sentenced to death Saturday the Islamic revolutionary court," said the radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

**31 drown as ship sinks in Vietnam:** Thirty-one people drowned when a ship carrying woodcutters to a forest sank in the Ria river in central Vietnam, a hospital source said yesterday. AFP reports from Hanoi.

The ship, which was carrying 100 people, went down Thursday in Hatinh province near a dam, the hospital source in Ky Anh district said by telephone. The cause of the accident was not known.

**Guatemalans go to polls:** Guatemalans went to the polls yesterday to pick one of two right leaning candidates for president, but worries of possible fraud prompted calls from US lawmakers to send an international observer team. AFP reports from Guatemala City.

Some 3.7 million residents were eligible to vote. Sunday, but high absenteeism was predicted in the runoff election between Alfonso Portillo of the rightist Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) and fellow rightist and front runner Alvaro Arzu of the National Vanguard Party (PAN).

**10 poisoned to death in Sindh:** At least 10 people died and another 110 fainted after taking food served at a funeral held in a village in the southern Sindh province of Pakistan. Xinhua reports from Islamabad.

The Associated Press of Pakistan reported Friday soon after taking some rice and curry served at the funeral on Thursday night, people began vomiting and some fell unconscious.

**2 Americans die in Plane crash:** At least two Americans died in the crash of a small plane near Puerto Trujillo on the Atlantic coast of Honduras. The Honduran air force said Saturday. AFP reports from Tegucigalpa.

The fate of a third American on board the Cessna was unknown. The plane disappeared on Wednesday and was located Friday in dense forest 24 kilometers (15 miles) south of Puerto Trujillo, according to Honduran air force General Oscar Serrylon.

**US, DPRK teams to meet in Hawaii:** A US delegation led by the chief of the Pentagon's office for missing servicemen will meet with North Korean officials next week to discuss repatriation of remains of US servicemen missing from the Korean war. The Pentagon said Friday. AP reports from Washington.

The meetings in Honolulu on January 10-12 are part of the US government's attempts to get North Korean approval for joint search teams to find and return US servicemen's remains. Talks in recent years have been snagged on North Korea's demands for financial compensation and its refusal to permit US experts to participate in the excavation and transport of remains from the 1950-53 war.

**Arafat marks Greek Orthodox Christmas**

**BETHLEHEM, West Bank:** Jan 7: Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat marked the Greek Orthodox Christmas on Saturday by going to midnight mass in the Church of the Nativity here where just two weeks ago he attended a Christmas Eve Catholic religious service, reports AFP.

Arafat who is president of the autonomous Palestinian authority was among the congregation of around 500 Christians and Muslims who follow the religious service celebrated by the Greek Patriarch Diodoros I.

## International

# Strike protesting massacre of 15 Hindus cripples Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Jan 7: A spontaneous protest strike today shut down parts of the Indian state of Kashmir to denounce the massacre of 15 Hindus by suspected Muslim separatists two days ago, police said, reports AFP.

All shops were closed and vehicles stayed off the roads in the mountainous district of Doda, where gunmen killed the 15 men at the tiny village of Barsala after dragging them from their homes late Friday.

The protest brought life to a halt in the region of some 50,000 people, police sources said in Jammu, the winter capital of Kashmir, the country's only Muslim-majority state.

The killers, who were armed with AK-47 assault rifles and grenades, entered the sleepy village, rounded up the victims, took them to an open field and sprayed them with bullets, police and witnesses said.

The attackers stole cash and jewellery from several homes and set ablaze two government schools in the village before fleeing.

No one claimed responsibility for the massacre, but police sources said they suspected the Laskar-i-Toaba group, which Indian officials say consists mostly of Afghan mercenaries.

Hundreds of Islamic mercenaries, mainly Afghans, are fighting Indian troops in Kashmir on the side of the local Muslim militants. Many foreign mercenaries are known to be active in the mountains of Doda, north of here.

News of the mass killings reached the authorities only Saturday, triggering widespread criticism of the police. The victims were buried on Saturday, and the adminis-

tration said on Sunday it had launched a massive manhunt for the killers.

Police said paramilitary forces were combing the hilly area.

It was the deadliest attack against Hindus, India's major community, in Kashmir since 14 of them were dragged from a bus in Doda district and shot dead by unidentified gunmen on August 14, 1993.

A Muslim separatist campaign in Kashmir has claimed more than 12,000 lives by official count since 1989. India accuses Pakistan of arming and training the militants. Islamabad denies the charge.

Earlier report says, Muslim separatist militants killed 15 Hindu men after dragging them out of their homes in a

village in southern Kashmir overnight, police said on Saturday.

The 15 men aged between 16 and 65 were killed late Friday in the village of Barsala in Doda district, 190 kilometers (118 miles) south of Srinagar, a police spokesman said.

AP adds: Suspected Kashmiri separatist rebels raided a village in northern Jammu-Kashmir state, woke up people and shot and killed 15 Hindu men after separating them from Muslim villagers, police said on Saturday.

About 20 armed men stormed Barsala, a hillside village of few hundred people 176 kilometers (110 miles) from Jammu on Friday night and shook awake the sleep-

ing residents, a police official said.

The assailants then ordered Muslims to step aside, marched 15 Hindus, including a 16-year-old boy, to a nearby forest and shot them from close range, killing them instantaneously, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The attackers fled on foot to the surrounding forests after looting cash and jewelry from the villagers and setting fire to two school buildings.

No rebel group has claimed responsibility for the killing. Police said the attackers were Muslim rebels but did not immediately disclose which of the half a dozen armed bands they sus-

pected.

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Kashmiris mourn on Saturday, the death of six foreign mercenaries belonging to the Pan-Islamic group, Harkat-Ul-Ansar. The six were killed in a fierce 12-hours long encounter in Zainakote Friday.

— AFP/UNB photo

## LTTE blames air force for bombing 2 forest reserves

COLOMBO, Jan 7: The Sri Lankan Air Force bombed two forest reserves in the north of the country causing "ecological damage," Tamil Tiger guerrillas said in a statement today, reports AFP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said a Pucca ground attack aircraft and two Chinese-built Supersonic planes repeatedly bombed Chundikulam and Piramanthanaru areas on Friday.

"Exact details of the damage have not been assessed yet," the LTTE said in the statement sent here from its London office.

A military spokesman here was unaware of the air raids but said security forces bombed only targets identified as LTTE facilities.

"The terrorists have cut down a lot of trees in the jungles to build bunkers and have so far killed more than two dozen elephants who used to stray into Tiger jungles, particularly in the east," the spokesman said.

The LTTE said, the air force was also dropping "barrel bombs," a locally made incendiary device.

**Hamas leader Ayyash laid to rest in Gaza**

GAZA Jan 7: More than 100,000 Palestinians on Saturday buried master bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash in one of the largest funerals to take place in PLO ruled Gaza Strip, reports Reuter.

Hamas leaders and Palestinian self-rule authority officials led the mourners estimated by reporters to exceed 100,000 in a 90-minute march behind Ayyash's coffin from Gaza City's Palestinian mosque to a cemetery on the outskirts of town.

Ayyash, known as the "Engineer" was said by Israel to be the brains behind a wave of suicide bomb attacks against the Jewish state that killed nearly 80 people, he was killed on Friday apparently by a booby-trapped cellular telephone.

Hamas accused Israel of assassinating Ayyash and vowed revenge. Israeli ministers neither confirmed or denied Israel's responsibility but expressed satisfaction he was dead.

likely successor, Ryutaro Hashimoto, the combative trade minister sometimes depicted in cartoons as a Samurai warrior.

Hashimoto's selection would bring the conservative Liberal Democratic Party back to power 2 and a half years after a historic election defeat.

Japan remains much as the Liberal Democrats left it: mired in recession and generally disillusioned with government.

The Liberal Democrats lost elections in July 1993 in large part because of outrage about incessant corruption.

The party handed over power

## Int'l confce calls for sanctions against Myanmar junta

NEW DELHI, Jan 7: An international conference on Myanmar concluded here Saturday with a call for worldwide sanctions against the ruling military junta to restore democracy and human rights in the country, reports AFP.

The three-day international convention for the restoration of democracy in Myanmar also demanded the "flow of free information both from and into Myanmar."

"Exact details of the damage have not been assessed yet," the LTTE said in the statement sent here from its London office.

"We condemn the continuing human rights violations in Myanmar and the total denial of democracy and fundamental rights which are a threat to regional and international security," a statement said.

"All governments and freedom-loving people should find practical way to help restore democracy and free political prisoners, it said, appealing to international financial institutions to "resist"

aiding the present regime.

The conventions also called for the boycott of goods made by multinationals such as the US firm PepsiCo which has set up shop in Myanmar and the end to any "constructive engagement" with the government.

Indian politician George Fernandes, a leader of the Santa (equality) Party and chief organiser of the event, moved a resolution condemning the so-called national convention set up by the military junta.

The national constitution approved by the national convention was used by the Myanmar military's State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to legitimise its rule. So the constitution is illegal," he said.

The meeting appealed to international bodies, particularly the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, to intervene for the uplift of refugees living unsegregated camps in foreign countries.

It also demanded an "immediate end to forced slave labour involving women and children" and the total denial of rights to ethnic minorities such as the Karens and Arakanese.

**Russia, China to sign N-cooperation accord**

MOSCOW, Jan 7: Russia and China are to sign a major civilian nuclear cooperation accord including guidelines for converting military nuclear industries. Russian Atomic Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov said on Saturday,

Mikhailov told Interfax news agency the accord would provide for closer cooperation in thermonuclear fusion projects, uranium mining and processing and nuclear waste recycling.

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**Premadasa's bed fetches Rs 25000**

COLOMBO: A bed used by Sri Lanka's assassinated President Ranasinghe Premadasa sold for a disappointing 25,000 rupees (just under 500 dollars) Sunday at the first ever auction at the presidential household, reports AP.

The floor price for the wooden double bed with a twin mattress was set at 20,000 rupees but the government expected much more at the auction, officials said.

About 50 items used by Premadasa and his predecessor Junius Jayewardene went under the hammer following a directive by President Chandrika Kumaratunga to get rid of excess furniture, officials said.

**Big UN food convoy drives into besieged Kabul**

KABUL, Jan 7: A big UN food convoy drove into the besieged Afghan capital, Kabul, on Saturday after a four-day journey from Pakistan, UN officials said, reports Reuter.

Workers unloaded more than 2,600 tonnes of wheat flour and wheat from 93 trucks, hired from an Afghan haulage firm by the World Food Programme (WFP), destined for hungry residents.

"This is the largest convoy that the United Nations has been able to get into Kabul," said a WFP official. "There's not even been this many trucks for Sarajevo."

The convoy had to negotiate a pot-holed road from Peshawar in Pakistan to reach Kabul via the eastern city of Jalalabad, the only supply route still open to the capital.

Four other routes are controlled by factions opposed to the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

The WFP supplies up to 20 per cent of Kabul's food needs and hopes to bring in up to 1,000 tonnes of food each month.

UN officials said another convoy of nine vehicles carrying urgently needed medical supplies was on its way to Kabul after being held up en route for several days.

**Arafat marks Greek Orthodox Christmas**

TOKYO, Jan 7: Resigning Prime Minister Tomio Murayama leaves Japan in much the same shape as when he took office — hungry for strong leadership, reports AP.

Murayama led Japan through its most tumultuous years in decades — the year of the Kobe earthquake, the doomsday cult attack on the Tokyo subway and the painful 50th anniversary of World War II's end.

Yet during his 18 months as Japan's premier, the mild-mannered Murayama was often criticised as weak and vacillating. So when he declared Friday that he had enough, there was hope among Japanese for a more dynamic government.

The Liberal Democrats lost elections in July 1993 in large part because of outrage about incessant corruption.

The party handed over power

that August to the first non-

likely successor, Ryutaro Hashimoto, the combative trade minister sometimes depicted in cartoons as a Samurai warrior.

Hashimoto's selection would bring the conservative Liberal Democratic Party back to power 2 and a half years after a historic election defeat.

While Murayama made the most complete acknowledgement of the country's war role, he was forced by conservative opposition to do it in a separate news conference — seeming more a contrite private citizen rather than a head of government.

And Hashimoto, despite the bravado he has displayed in tough trade talks with the United States, could be trapped by the same forces.

If he tries to keep the current three-party coalition, it'll be the same as Mu-

rayama," Iizuka said. "But I don't think Hashimoto will be like that in the longer term."

Hashimoto, 58, is the son of a Cabinet minister and a legislator himself since 1964. He earned a reputation as a tough opponent of US trade policies last summer when he successfully faced down American demands that Japan guarantee US makers of autos and auto parts a share of the Japanese market.

Recently he has tried to project a more pro-US image.

Murayama's resignation is effective Monday, along with those of his Cabinet. Parliament is to convene Thursday to elect a new prime minister, and because the coalition holds a majority, Hashimoto's selection is assured.

**TV documentary may 'poison' Sino-UK ties**

LONDON, Jan 7: China has warned that a British television documentary alleging that thousands of children have died in state orphanages will "poison" bilateral relations, the Observer newspaper reported today, says AFP.

It cited Liu Jianchao, first secretary at the Chinese Embassy in London, as saying "it will poison the atmosphere between China and Britain. It is a very bad move, very detrimental."

