

BRIEFLY

Sihanouk to visit China: Cambodia's King Norodom Sihanouk will fly to Beijing said at the weekend, Reuter reports from Phnom Penh.

Sihanouk, in an address on state television, said on Sunday he would travel to China as part of routine treatment.

Taiwan receives 20 US made tanks: Taiwan's army on Sunday received 20 US-made M60-A3 tanks that had been used in the 1991 Gulf War, a radio station reported, AP reports from Taipei.

Taiwan's Broadcasting Corporation of China, owned by the ruling Nationalist Party, said the tanks, produced by General Dynamics Corp. of St Louis, Missouri, were the first batch of 160 such tanks Taiwan has bought from the United States. The military has said the tanks were priced at 15 million Taiwan dollars (US \$5,550) each.

7 militants killed in Philippines: Seven suspected Muslim extremists who kidnapped 19 people, including four American citizens, last week were killed in a battle in the southern Philippines Sunday, an army general said, AP reports from Cotabato City, Philippines.

Three of the kidnappers were captured and five others were believed to have been wounded, he said. Army troops, aided by helicopter gunships, pinned down the suspects near Kibbe village in the town of Lake Sebu, said Brig. Gen. Raul Urgello, commanding officer of the 601st Infantry Brigade.

Myanmar military leader in China: The leader of the military council that runs Myanmar arrived in China Sunday night for a six-day visit to strengthen already solid political, military and trade ties, AP reports from Beijing.

Underscoring the importance of his trip, Gen. Than Shwe brought along a 40-member delegation packed with other high-ranking officials, including Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, Secretary of the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

Abkhaz rebels kill 8 Georgians: Eight Georgian civilians were killed by Abkhaz separatists in a village on the border between Abkhazia and Georgia, the Georgian presidency was quoted by ITAR-Tass news agency as saying Sunday, AFP reports from Moscow.

The three man Abkhaz commando unit burst into Shesheleti in the Gali region on Friday killing six members of one family and two of their neighbours, the presidential press service said.

Colombian rebels kill 9 soldiers: Rebels opened fire on a military post in north Colombia early Sunday, killing nine soldiers, the army said, AP reports from Bogota.

The attack occurred in a mountainous area near San Onofre, about 340 miles (550 kilometres) north of the capital, Bogota. Officials blamed the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, a leftist rebel group with thousands of fighters that has been operating for decades.

Rain leaves 4 dead in Brazil: Heavy rain left four people dead in southeastern Brazil on Sunday the latest casualties of persistent bad weather that has killed at least 20 people in the past few days local television reported, Reuter reports from Rio-de Janeiro.

Jose Benedito Dos Santos his wife and his daughter died when a landslide crushed their shack home in a shanty town in Capinas Sao Paulo state Globo said.

Christopher postpones Paris tour: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher has postponed his Monday departure for a Paris conference due to heavy snowfall in the Washington area, State Department officials said on Sunday, Reuter reports from Washington.

Christopher was to have left on Monday morning for the conference, which will group donor countries contributing to the establishment of Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza. The officials said he would now not leave earlier than Monday evening.

Turkish prisoners free 6 hostages: Renegade prisoners released six guards Sunday and negotiated with government officials over the fate of 23 others taken hostage during riots at two prisons, AP reports from Istanbul.



President of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat flash the V-sign during his speech in front of thousands of Palestinian supporters in Dura, south of the West Bank on Sunday. It is Arafat's first visit in Dura since Israeli troops pulled out last December.

— AFP/UNB photo

US marine's car kills 3 Japanese in Okinawa

TOKYO, Jan 8: A car driven by a US Marine ran on to a sidewalk and killed three local residents on their way home from church in Okinawa Sunday, Japanese police said, reports AP.

Sentiment against US military bases has been running high on the southern Japanese island following the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl in September. In a trial now underway, one US serviceman has admitted to the rape, and two others have acknowledged assisting in the girl's abduction.

Tadashi Kohagura of the Okinawa Police said a car driven by Lori A Padilla, 20, veered on to a sidewalk in Chutan, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) north of Naha, Okinawa's capital.

International

US offers \$ 300m package of arms, equipment to Jordan

AMMAN, Jan 8: The United States offered a 300 million dollar package of weapons and equipment to Jordan on Sunday that included 16 F-16 fighter bombers and 50 tanks and said the kingdom was the linchpin of security in the Middle East, reports Reuter.

US Defence Secretary William Perry said the package offered to King Hussein who signed a peace treaty with Israel in October 1994. Involved equipment both to expand and upgrade Jordan's fighting ability.

The king told a news conference held in a tent beside his Amman palace "the offer has been made and it has been accepted with deep appreciation."

King Hussein, who is now on better terms with Israel than with almost any Arab country, had lobbied with Israeli support for modernisation of a force using mainly 1960, equipment.

"I made a proposal to him that will include M 60-A 3 tanks, night vision devices, a squadron of F-16s — a total of 16 including 12 F-16AS and four F-16BS" Perry said after talks with King Hussein.

These planes will be upgraded to modern capability it will include training spare parts and all logistics support necessary, the secretary said.

Perry refused to put a price on the package, but US defence official said privately that it would total 300 million for the fighters 50 M60, AC-130 military cargo plane and helicopters.

The officials said the United States would give some used equipment to Jordan outright and foreign sales "credits" could be used by Jordan over several years to pay for the rest.

We see Jordan as the linchpin in the security of the Middle East, Perry said. In addition, Jordan is a long

time friend and ally of the United States and particularly cooperation between our two defence departments is strong and becoming stronger.

Western military sources who had expressed doubts about Jordan's need and unaided ability to maintain F-16s said earlier the details for the US funding for the equipment were still being worked out.

All the equipment was described as "off the shelf" which meant it was fully serviceable used equipment that would be available for transfer to Jordan in the next few months.

The contents of the military package reflect a compromise between Jordan's initial request for an arsenal of state of the art weapons systems and western military views that Jordan needed less prestigious equipment.

While the F-16s — a mainstay of Israel air force — will

be a highly visible symbol of Jordan's role since making peace with Israel much of the assistance will be in the form of simple items such as trucks spare part and training.

Jordan had requested M16 tanks the main battle tanks of the United States which is made under licence in Egypt, but western experts said it was expensive to operate for a small, poor country like Jordan.

Since making peace with Israel King Hussein had repeatedly promised new weapons to his army which has been a mainstay of his Hashemite dynasty's rule for more than seven decades.

They have been a force for stability and now they are a force for peace and progress towards comprehensive peace in this region, the king said in praise of his army and they are "committed to the defence of all our achievements so far.

Karachi blast death toll rises to 8

KARACHI, Jan 8: The death toll from the bomb blast on a bus in Pakistan's troubled city of Karachi rose today to eight, with 30 wounded, official sources said, reports AP.

The blast went off during Sunday's rush hour in southern Karachi, a part of the city that has so far been spared from the violence that has left 1,800 dead in the past year. The main hotels and international companies are in the district.

The time bomb ripped off part of the roof of the bus which was on a route between the airport and the city centre.

The attack, which has not yet been claimed, will increase pressure on Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto over the terrorism problem.

US willing to station troops on Golan

JERUSALEM, Jan 8: Defence Secretary William Perry said today the United States would be willing to station troops on the Golan Heights to guarantee a peace treaty between Israel and Syria, reports Reuter.

"If the peace agreement between Israel and Syria is reached... and if that calls for a peace monitoring force in the Golan Heights and if both Israel and Syria request the US to participate in that, we are prepared to do that," Perry told reporters in Jerusalem.

Perry arrived in Israel today and spoke after meeting Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

Israeli and Syrian negotiators, meeting near Washington over the last two weeks, said they had held their best round of US-brokered peace talks in four years of negotiations.

The talks have been stuck on the future of the Golan Heights captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war. Damascus wants back all of the heights, Israel wants a commitment to "full peace" including open borders, trade and diplomatic relations.

Arzu leading in Guatemala polls

GUATEMALA CITY, Jan 8: Right-wing candidate Alvaro Arzu drew ahead in Guatemala's presidential elections on Sunday with 54 per cent of the vote, early official results showed, reports Reuter.

The Supreme Electoral Tribunal said Arzu of the pro-business National Advancement Party (PAN) overturned the early lead of his populist rival Alfonso Portillo as votes poured in from his urban Guatemala City stronghold.

Authorities did not say what percentage of the vote had been counted, but with further results expected from Portillo's rural strongholds the trend could yet be reversed again in what has proved a tight run second-round race.



Spanish Implementation Force (IFOR) soldiers patrol the confrontation line between east and west Mostar, the divided southern Bosnian city said to "calm but tense" on Sunday after a series of gunfire exchange between Muslims and Croats that have caused tension to rise in the divided city.

— AFP/UNB photo

Khun Sa signs peace accord with Myanmar Junta

BANGKOK, Jan 8: Myanmar's opium warlord Khun Sa and senior Myanmar army officers raised glasses of whiskey to toast a peace agreement ending the veteran rebel's war with the government, one of his aides said today, reports Reuter.

About 1,000 fighters from Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) took part in the peace ceremony on Sunday at the drug lord's headquarters in the hills of northeastern Myanmar's Shan state. About 20 senior Burmese army officers and government officials arrived in Ho Mong by helicopter several hours before the signing, an MTA officer said.

The highlight of the ceremony was the handing over of MTA weapons to the government side, including a cache of surface-to-air missiles, said the officer. He

was speaking to Reuters in a telephone interview from the Thai-Myanmar border.

The peace agreement was worked out in December and Myanmar government troops began moving unopposed into Ho Mong and other Khun Sa strongholds in Shan state at the beginning of this month.

The pact is expected to turn the MTA into a local government militia but Khun Sa's fate remains unclear.

"Khun Sa said he would put out a statement to all Shan people soon, announcing the conditions of the agreement," said the MTA officer, who declined to be identified.

He said the Myanmar troops in Ho Mong did not appear to be preparing to arrest the drug lord.

They were drinking whiskey together after the cere-

mony. I don't think they're going to arrest him," the officer said.

The United States last week announced a 2 million dollars reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the drug baron and said it was Myanmar's duty to see he was brought to justice and handed over to US authorities.

Khun Sa was indicted on drugs charges in a New York court in December 1989 after a lengthy investigation relating to the seizure at Bangkok Port of 1.05 tonnes of heroin.

Myanmar government officials have said Khun Sa will not be sent to the United States but will be put on trial in Yangon.

"There will be no extradition to the United States," one Myanmar official told Reuters at the weekend.

UK seeks Pak help to combat drugs, 'bogus' immigrants

ISLAMABAD, Jan 8: British Home (Interior) Secretary Michael Howard said today he was seeking Pakistan's co-operation in turning back a tide of drugs and "bogus" immigrants and asylum-seekers, reports Reuter.

Howard, on a three day visit to Pakistan, said he would focus on the narcotics trade and immigrations in talks with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Interior Minister Naseerullah Babar and anti narcotics chief Major General Salahuddin Tirmizi.

"I shall be stressing... the importance of the two governments working together to deal with the problem of drugs, which we both face... and which countries can't tackle in isolation from each other," Howard told Reuters in an interview.

"I hope we'll be able to identify ways in which we can

make progress," he added.

The British minister set fire to tonnes of seized heroin and hashish on Sunday at Attock Fort, west of Islamabad, some of it smuggled from neighbouring Afghanistan and some grown or refined in Pakistan's semi-autonomous tribal areas on the border.

Howard, speaking at the visa section of the British High Commission, said "Bosu asylum-seekers and bogus immigrants" were the target of his tough new immigration bill in Britain.

"It doesn't in any way affect the right of people to come to Britain. Anyone who is entitled to come to Britain today will be entitled to come to Britain once the law has been passed."

"But the truth is that the British taxpayer is paying over 200 million pounds

(310 million dollars) a year for benefits which go to asylum seekers, only four per cent of whom are found to be genuine refugees, and that's something that we've got to tackle," Howard declared.

The High Commission in Islamabad runs Britain's biggest visa section in the world, with 35 British based staff and 26 entry clearance officers processing 35,000 visit visa and 7,000 immigration visa applications a year.

The immigration official, who asked not to be named, said 75 to 20 per cent of applicants received visas for a six month visit and about 70 per cent of applicants for immigration, mainly people who wanted to join families in Britain, were successful.

"The problem is how to sort out the bogus from the genuine," he said. "It's stressful and difficult work."

Army launch manhunt for killers

Strike paralyses Kashmir for 2nd successive day

JAMMU, India, Jan 8: A two-day general strike called by India's main opposition party and a militant Hindu group paralysed the troubled state of Kashmir for the second successive day, police said today, reports AP.

The main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) and the Hindu nationalist Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army) said the strike was organised to protest the massacre of 15 Hindus by suspected Muslim militants on Friday.

In Jammu, the Hindu-dominated winter capital of Kashmir, BJP activists smashed windows of buses while shops, businesses, government offices and schools were shut, police said.

Police used batons and fired tear-gas shells at rampaging BJP activists, injuring 15 of them, witnesses said.

The responsibility for any retaliation by Hindus will lie solely with the government," BJP state president Vaid Bishnu Dutt said.

Hundreds of soldiers and paramilitary troops stepped up a hunt meanwhile for the Muslim separatist militants suspected of carrying out the massacre in the mountainous southern Kashmir district of Doda, police said.

AP adds: More than 10,000 soldiers on Sunday combed the forests and ravines in a mountainous province of northern India to hunt for armed gunmen who shot and killed 15 Hindu men after separating them from Muslims, an official said.

Police said the attackers were Muslim separatists, but no rebel group has claimed responsibility for the killings. The manhunt would continue until the killers were found, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Hundreds of activists of the Hindu nationalist party held a noisy demonstration in front of the governor's residence in Jammu, the state's winter capital.

Off the Record

Less supportive of casual sex, more liberal to marijuana

WASHINGTON: First-year students in US colleges are voicing dwindling support for casual sex and legal abortion, a survey says. But they have more liberal views on marijuana, with support for legalisation reaching a 15-year high, reports AP.

Support for keeping abortion legal rose steadily in the late 1980s, according to the University of California's annual freshmen survey. But in the 1995 survey, it declined for the third straight year, to 58 per cent.

In 1987, 52 per cent of the freshmen responding to the survey supported casual sex. Now, 43 per cent say it's OK for two people to have sex even if they've only known each other a short time.

"There are more diseases and stuff. And I just don't think people want to sleep with the first person they meet. They want to get to know them better," said Dennise Ledesma, an 18-year-old freshman at California State University-Los Angeles.

Among US college freshmen, the belief that homosexual relationships should be prohibited has declined from a high of 53 per cent in 1987 to an all-time low of 30.6 per cent. And support for legalising marijuana has risen to nearly 34 per cent — double the 17 per cent who held that view in 1989.

"It's so abundant. It's no big deal because everybody is using it," said Jason Zavada, a 19-year-old freshman at the University of Kentucky who supports legalisation. "We don't see all the bad it's causing. It's an insane policy to treat people like criminals for using something that comes from the earth."

'Free Willy' gets warm welcome

NEWPORT: Keiko the whale, the ailing star of the "Free Willy" movies, got a warm welcome Sunday as he journeyed to the new home built for him with 7 million dollars in donations from around the world, reports AP.

A shipping company, touting its biggest delivery ever, arranged for a chartered C-130 cargo plane to carry Keiko in a giant water-filled container. Because of the 42,000-pound (19,000-kilo) cargo, the plane had to make refuelling stops in Monterey, Mexico, and Phoenix.

People lined the highway to wave goodbye earlier Sunday as Keiko was hoisted into his container tank at the Reino Aventura amusement park in Mexico City, then driven by truck to the airport.

More crowds, in their cars and minivans, lined the streets in Newport as Keiko was moved from the airport to the custom-built, 2 million-gallon (8-million-liter) tank where he will live at the Oregon Coast Aquarium. About 330 media representatives from around the world were on hand.

Marlene and Roger Shipley brought their four children to see the 7,000-pound (3,100-kilo) film star.

"The kids have both movies and they watch them continuously," Mrs Shipley said. "They talked their dad into bringing them down for this."

The whale, who has performed for the past 10 years in a small tank at a Mexico City amusement park, made the 8 1/2-hour flight without any serious problems.

Asia-Pacific region urged to pay more attention to arms control

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8: Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed urged the Asia-Pacific region today to pay more attention to arms control, including nuclear weapons, reports Reuter.

"I think we in the Pacific must address the issue of arms control more seriously," he said at a conference of Asia Pacific experts and officials, including three US senators.

Mahathir said the Pacific region "more than any other needs to implement the provisions of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty more vigorously."

"Three of the five declared nuclear powers are in the Pacific. A fourth tests here," Mahathir said, referring to French nuclear arms testing the South Pacific.

Newly industrialising countries such as Malaysia,

whose military capabilities were relatively low to begin with, are racing to catch up with each other and acquire new technology.

"We cannot deny these states the right to enhance their capabilities," Mahathir said.

But the hard selling of more and more sophisticated arms to one country would lead to the others wanting similar hardware.

Malaysia has been rapidly modernising its armed forces.

Defence Minister Syed Hamid Albar said last month Malaysia was in the market for three regiments of main battle tanks.

It is expected soon to award a contract for 27 patrol boats worth 2 billion dollars and take delivery of two British-made frigates.

Major urges IRA to halt series of murders

LONDON, Jan 8: British Prime Minister John Major on Sunday challenged Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, to call a halt to a series of murders and beatings that have cast a cloud over the Northern Ireland peace process, reports Reuters.

Sinn Fein has refused to condemn the killings, which have been claimed by an anti-drugs gang that the security forces say is a front for the outlawed Irish Republican Army.

Interviewed on BBC television, Major said the fact that punishment attacks "miraculously" stopped during US President Bill Clinton's visit to Britain and Ireland last month showed that they were "centrally directed."

US warplanes routinely monitoring Iraqi installations

AMMAN, Jan 8: US warplanes based in the Mideast routinely target Iraqi defence installations as they fly scores of missions each day over the southern third of the country, defence officials said Sunday, reports AP.

"That's what gets Saddam Hussein's attention," Defence Secretary William Perry said, referring to the tactic's impact on the Iraqi leader. "He can't ignore it. He sees it every day."

Details of the missions provided by senior military officers indicate that what has been billed as a "deny flight" mission in southern Iraq is more closely geared toward attacking ground targets in the event of an Iraqi invasion.

In addition to patrolling the skies for Iraqi warplanes, Air Force and Navy jets also

lock onto Iraqi targets in what amount to dry runs for war.

"Our pilots, our air crews fly against targets they would be expected to pursue in our contingency plans," said Air Force Maj. Gen. Carl Franklin, commander of Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia.

We do so with the intent of having our force visible to the Iraqi regime so that there is no doubt in their minds as to our resolve."

Despite the weakened state of the Iraqi military since its defeat in the Persian Gulf War, Franklin said, "We see Saddam as a threat today and we see that threat for the foreseeable future."

In a day of visits with US military personnel in Saudi Arabia before flying to Jordan, Perry got a classified briefing on this little-known

aspect of the US mission over southern Iraq.

Later in the Jordanian capital, Perry announced a deal to provide the Jordanian military with 16 F-16 fighters, the training to use them, an unspecified number of M-60A3 tanks and night-vision equipment.

Jordan's King Hussein said the US offer had been accepted "with deep gratitude."

Perry said the United States views Jordan as a "linchpin of security in the Middle East." Other Arab nations may follow Jordan's lead in seeking to normalize relations with Israel, he said.

"If we can reach a comprehensive peace settlement in the Mideast it will undoubtedly be because of the example set by Jordan," Perry said.

Both Perry and Hussein said they are optimistic about the outcome of peace talks between Israel and Syria. "We are for peace, progress and prosperity," Hussein said at a joint news conference at his Raghadan Palace.

Earlier, explaining the US missions over Iraq, a senior officer who spoke on condition of anonymity said the targets could include anti-aircraft missile sites, military command and communication centres, and railway junctions that would be critical to supplying an Iraqi invasion.

The pilots fly in what is known as a "kill box" pattern around possible targets doing everything they would do in wartime except dropping their weapons.

"You ... go fly these parameters and anything that moves, you go take care of it," the officer said.

They'll go fly that mission and execute against a target."

The officer pointed out that under UN mandates developed after the Gulf War, southern Iraq is a "no-drive" zone as well as a no-fly zone. In the wake of threatening moves by Iraqi forces in October 1994, pilots are especially alert for signs of advancing armoured columns. If they spotted one in the restricted zone, they could attack the column.

US Air Force F-16s and F-15Es as well as Navy A-6s and British Tornados are the main ground attack aircraft.

"It's enough to blunt any attack and stop it cold in its tracks," the officer said.

The idea, according to Perry, is not provocation but deterrence.