

BRIEFLY



French Prime Minister Alain Juppe (R) shakes hand with chairman of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat while exchanging documents they just signed concerning a Franco-Palestinian protocol worth 77.5 millions French francs on Monday in Paris. Arafat and delegates from 40 countries will attend a meeting Tuesday in the French capital to discuss financial aid to the new Palestinian territories. - AFP/UNB photo

British foreign secy in Beijing: British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind arrived in Beijing yesterday for a three-day visit that will focus tightly on the transfer of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. AFP reports from Beijing.

Rifkind's visit — the first by a British Foreign Secretary since July 1993 — comes amid a gradual warming in Sino-British ties that nosedived some three years ago over Hong Kong governor Chris Patten's decision to introduce democratic reforms in the colony, in the face of stiff Chinese opposition.

Walesa going back to his old job: Former Polish President Lech Walesa is going back to his old job as an electrician at the Gdansk dockyards, chairman of the Solidarity Trade Union Jerzy Borowczak said Monday. AFP reports from Warsaw.

He told AFP that Walesa had told him last Thursday of his intention to take up his former job at the end of March. It was from his position at the dockyards that Walesa emerged in 1980 as leader of Solidarity, which ultimately brought on the collapse of Poland's communist regime in 1989. Walesa's spokesman, Marek Karpinski, said the former president had always been an employee of the dockyards and had taken unpaid holiday leave to become president.

2 US women murdered in Guatemala: Two American women were murdered near Guatemala's picturesque lake Atitlan, police said Monday. AFP reports from Guatemala.

The bodies of Luchinda Bousquet, 50 and Ann Jahern, 25, were found late Sunday on the mountain lake's Panajachel Beach, said Solola police officer Julio Mendez.

Nigeria detains UK journalist: A British journalist working for the Financial Times of London has been arrested in Nigeria's volatile Ogoniland, his newspaper said on Monday. Reuter reports from Lagos.

It said in a statement circulated in Lagos that Paul Adams, the Financial Times correspondent in Lagos since 1993, had been detained since Thursday by Nigeria's state security service. There has been no official comment on Adams' detention.

Saudi FM arrives in Jordan: Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal arrived yesterday in the highest-level visit to Jordan since the two countries split over Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. Reuter reports from Amman.

The much-heralded 25-hour trip could pave the way for a Saudi-Jordanian summit to formally seal a rapprochement between the neighbouring kingdoms.

8 lakh Somalis migrate for drought: A six-months-old drought has driven an estimated 800,000 Somali nomads to migrate from northwestern Somalia to areas bordering Ethiopia, said a report reaching in Nairobi yesterday. Xinhua reports from Nairobi.

The report from the Djibouti-based horn of Africa development agency said the drought, centred in the Sol and Sanaag regions, has so far killed an estimated 500,000 heads of cattle. Sol and Sanaag were also the centre of a severe drought in 1974 when 140,000 people were moved from the region with the help of a Soviet airlift to southern Somalia.

New wave of blasts rock Corsica: A new wave of suspected separatist bombings rocked the French Mediterranean island of Corsica late on Monday night but there were no casualties, police said. Reuter reports from Ajaccio Corsica.

They said as many as 20 bombs exploded between 11.15 pm and midnight (between 2215 and 2300 GMT), causing only minor damage. Other bombs were defused before they could detonate.

Rain claims 9 in Brazil: Driving rains that pounded hilly Rio De Janeiro were blamed for at least nine deaths, mostly people whose home was swept away in a mudslide, civil defence officials said Monday. AFP reports from Rio De Janeiro.

Authorities said six people were killed early Monday when their house was destroyed by a mudslide in the northern neighbourhood of La Penha, a couple was electrocuted in a separate northern district and another man was buried alive as his shack was collapsed by a crushing wave of mud and stone.

2 Pakistanis to face court-martial: Two Pakistani peacekeepers accused of raping a peasant woman will be court-martialed for having sex with prostitutes, the UN military mission said Monday. AP reports from Port-Au-Prince.

Spokesman Eric Falt said a UN investigation had found no proof of rape but showed the soldiers had been consorting with prostitutes. "The Pakistani authorities will hold the court-martial. Resorting to prostitutes is against both military rules and Islamic law," Falt said.

Algerian troops kill 12 militants

PARIS, Jan 9: Algerian troops have killed 12 Muslim guerrillas in a siege in the southern town of Laghouat, Algerian state radio reported on Monday, says Reuter.

The radio said security forces, including the army, had been laying siege to an area of the town, 320 km south of the capital Algiers, since Wednesday and had killed 12 rebels.

Firemen and doctors were tending to "citizens harmed in this operation," the radio added without elaborating.

"In order to prevent the criminal gang from escaping, the operation is carried out in very tight conditions," the radio said.

Laghouat is used as a transit town by militants head in to northeastern provinces.

Mitterrand was a campaigner for united Europe

PARIS, Jan 8: Former French President Francois Mitterrand, who died Tuesday at the age of 79 nearly eight months after completing a record 14 years as head of state, swept to power in 1981 as standard-bearer of a united left that included a revived Socialist Party and the communists, reports AFP.

France's most remarkable Post-War politician after General Charles De Gaulle, Mitterrand demonstrated that a Socialist alternative was possible after the more than 30 years of right wing rule that followed the Nazi occupation in World War II and the trauma of defeat in colonial wars in Indo-China and Algeria.

In the euphoria of victory over incumbent President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Mitterrand abolished the

death penalty, cut the working week, decentralised government and freed the media from a Gaullist straitjacket.

It was the payoff for 35 years of dogged political work by a consummate politician who always came back to fight another day after his reverses.

Unlike De Gaulle, quick to resign office when he felt the country had disavowed him, Mitterrand hung on to the end, although he was severely weakened by prostate cancer.

Also, his powers and political influence were much diminished by a right-wing landslide in legislative elections in March 1993 which left the Socialists in tatters.

Revelations about his pre-war right-wing activism and his work for the World War II Vichy government further tarnished Mitterrand's image.

Socialists were particu-

larly dismayed by the revelation that Mitterrand kept up friendly relations with Vichy police chief Rene Bousquet, who organised the deportation to Nazi death camps of thousands of Jews, right into the 1980s.

Bousquet was murdered by a self-published in 1993 shortly before he was to go on trial for crimes against humanity.

By his clever tactics, Mitterrand won re-election for a second seven-year term in 1988 against neo-Gaullist Jacques Chirac with a remarkable 54.02 per cent of the vote, winning himself the nickname "god".

But in the March, 1993 legislative, the Socialist Party which he had built up into France's largest single party, was reduced to a shadow in the National Assembly. And Mitterrand

was forced into two years of unequal power-sharing with the conservative Prime Minister Edouard Balladur.

programme that put most French banks and several large companies under state control.

During his first term, under pressure from the markets which forced three franc devaluations, he had already reversed many aspects of socialist policies in the economic field. At the same time, the socialists were hit by corruption scandals which came close to Mitterrand himself, after one of his close friends was implicated.

In foreign affairs, there was little to distinguish his policies from those of De Gaulle or the rest of the right and he kept the alliance with Germany as his key foreign policy plank.

But he did move France closer to NATO (North Atlantic Treaty organisation) and sent troops to fight alongside the Americans and

the British to drive the Iraqis out of Kuwait in January, 1991.

As for former Yugoslavia, Mitterrand and the French military took the leading role in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

During his presidency, France played an active part in the drive for a united Europe and Mitterrand campaigned strongly for ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, calling a referendum in which the "yes" vote narrowly won.

Mitterrand was born on October 26, 1916, in the historic town of Jarnac in the Charente department of western France. He was fifth of eight children and his father was a railway station-master at nearby Angoulême before inheriting a profitable vinegar distillery.

ISLAMABAD, Jan 9: Eight people were killed and 23 injured in a rocket attack on the Afghan capital on Monday. Government-controlled Kabul radio reported, reports Reuter.

The radio, monitored in Islamabad, said the rebel Islamic Taliban militia had fired 77 rockets into residential areas of Kabul.

Taliban officials could not immediately be contacted for comment.

Kabul radio, which speaks for President Burhanuddin Rabbani's administration, said government jets had bombed Taliban positions south of Kabul after the rocket attack, but gave no details of casualties or damage.

The Taliban have besieged Kabul since early October, threatening to capture the city, overthrow Rabbani and install strict Islamic law throughout Afghanistan.

Suu Kyi accused of damaging chances of talks with junta

YANGON, Jan 9: Aung San Suu Kyi may have damaged her chances of forging a dialogue with the Myanmar's junta by encouraging "external pressure" to be brought against the military, the official media said today, reports AFP.

A commentary in the state-controlled media said the prodemocracy leader had failed to understand the "spirit" of the Burmese, especially that of the military.

"The worst thing she could have done was to encourage external pressure to bear upon the military, which traditionally has always had a very low tolerance for such methods," it said.

The commentary, written under the pseudonym of "The

Septre," has appeared in serialised form over several days.

The commentary argues that it was "negative external pressure" that prolonged Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest and is now blocking her efforts to open a dialogue with the military government.

She was free from six year's house arrest in Yangon last July.

"It she had remained quietly patient after her release, the dialogue she desires so much would have already been in progress," the commentary said.

It said Myanmar's military leaders have shown their friendship and sympathy by meeting Aung San Suu Kyi



twice on equal terms while she was under house arrest in an attempt to solve exist-

ing political problems.

"Even now she fails to anticipate that the military leadership, well aware of their responsibilities, may yet be contemplating such a dialogue... and foolishly goes on to antagonise them with her strident demands and invectives," it said.

This will once again hurt the military's pride and "raise its hackles," it said.

The state run media did not say what it meant by "external pressure."

But many nations continue to boycott Myanmar because of its human rights record, and Aung San Suu Kyi has urged wealthy nations not to resume aid to Yangon simply because she has been released from house arrest.

China severs ties with Senegal

BEIJING, Jan 9: China said today that it had severed diplomatic ties with Senegal, after the West African country established diplomatic relations with Taiwan, reports Reuter.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Chan Jian told reporters that Senegal's decision to have ties with Taiwan was "erroneous" and that China had broken ties with Senegal as of January 9, 1996.

Taiwan announced last Wednesday that it had established ties with Senegal, bringing to 31 the number of countries that recognise Taipei. Senegal is the 10th African country to recognise Taiwan and the second in the past six months, after Gambia.



Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (L) welcomes at his office in Zagreb, US Robert Gallucci (C), responsible for following up civilian aspects of the Dayton peace accords, on Monday while US ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith (R), looks on. -AFP/UNB photo

Senegal wants Taiwan to help its economic development, including new oil resources in the south, while Taiwan hopes Senegal can help its relations in West Africa.

Iran seizes sat TV equipment

TEHRAN, Jan 9: Iranian police raided 110 houses in Tehran and seized banned satellite television equipment used to watch "corrupting" Western programmes, a local newspaper said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The Daily Kayhan said police had obtained court orders to search the houses last week after screening neighbourhoods in east Tehran to pinpoint violators.

Last April Iran ordered all satellite television equipment to be dismantled after banning them earlier last year to combat what it termed a Western cultural invasion.

Residents said some of the estimated 250,000 dish owners had in the past few months put them back up on the roof, often camouflaging them as air conditioners and other equipment.

Under the ban, illegal users of satellite dishes face fines of three million rials (1,000 dollar) at the official exchange rate and confiscation of the equipment.

3 Indian army personnel killed in Kashmir

TOKYO, Jan 9: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has said Kashmir is a flash point and Pakistan's relations with India will remain strained unless the issue is resolved in accordance with the United Nations resolutions, reports PTI.

Extreme tension exists between Pakistan and India and a plebiscite should determine the future of the disputed territory, she told the Japan Times.

The security situation in South Asia is deteriorating on account of a number of factors like India's missile programme and arms build-up and non-adherence to the UN resolutions, she told the daily in an interview published today, ahead of her four-day official visit to Japan beginning on January 17.

The two countries (India

Ties to remain strained unless Kashmir issue resolved : Benazir

and Pakistan) need to reach agreement on Kashmir arms control and other issues to create an atmosphere conducive to security in South Asia.

Benazir said Pakistan intends to promote a tension-free climate in the region and has made specific proposals to promote nuclear non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament.

A few days ago, the Pakistani premier told Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun that India must restrain to avoid tragedy in South Asia.

AFP adds from Jammu: Three security personnel were killed and two militants seriously injured in a gunbattle in the troubled state of Kashmir, an official spokesman said today.

Federal troops raided a hide-out in Janjalwar area of

Thatri in Doda district, the spokesman said. "These militants are responsible for the killing of 15 Hindus on January 5," he said.

"In the firefight that ensued three security personnel were killed and two militants were seriously injured," the spokesman said.

The state government rushed additional troops to the area, he said.

Muslim separatists shot dead 15 Hindu men last Friday in the village of Barasala in Doda district in southern Kashmir, after dragging them from their homes at gunpoint.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attack. More than 12,000 people have died since 1989 in Kashmir, the cause of two wars between neighbours India and Pakistan which dispute its ownership.

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Kim admits wrongdoing

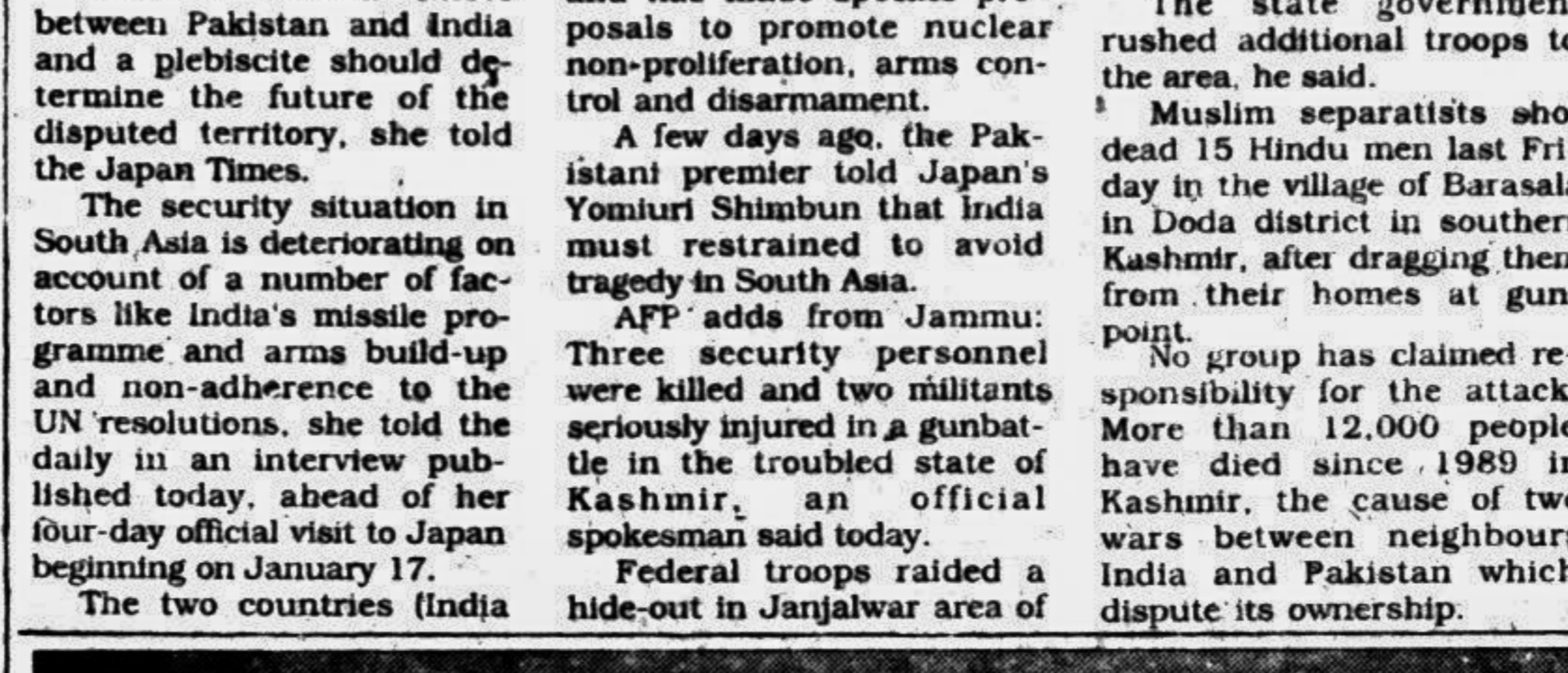
SEOUL, Jan 9: South Korean President Kim Young-Sam today admitted wrongdoing in connection with support he received before assuming office in 1992, reports Reuter.

In a New Year address he said: "No politician including myself could have avoided such wrong practices as these."

But Kim repeated earlier denials of taking dirty money.

Former President Roh Tae Woo is on trial for corruption after admitting he amassed a \$54 million dollar slush fund during his term in office. Roh's predecessor, Chun Doo-Hwan is expected to be indicted on similar charges soon.

South Koreans had been anxiously awaiting Kim's address, hoping he would clear up doubts about whether he took money from Roh to help fund his 1992 election campaign.



British Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind (R) and Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten, react as they face unfriendly grilling from Hong Kong's Legislative Council on Monday. The questions included visa-free travel to Britain by Hong Kong people after 1997, citizenship rights for Hong Kong people holding British National Overseas (BNO) passport and settlement of Vietnamese boatpeople. -AFP/UNB photo

US blizzard death toll rises to 41

NEW YORK, Jan 9: The powerful blizzard that buried airports, roads and buildings in snow and killed at least 41 people in the northeastern United States left millions of people on Tuesday with laborious task of digging out, reports Reuter.

The winter storm dubbed the "blizzard of '96" closed six major airports and moved governors in eight states to declared states of emergency as temperatures dropped and snow driven by fiercely cold winds blew across the region.

A record 30 inches (75 cm) fell in Philadelphia and more than 20 inches (50 cm) accumulated in New York's Central Park, according to the National Weather Service's with higher amounts in other parts of the city. Meteorologists said the storm ranked among the top three blizzards in New York

city.

On Tuesday authorities in three major cities — New York, Philadelphia and Boston — said schools would remain closed for a second day. They encouraged people to leave vehicles at home and use public transport, and said airports would not be in full service until Tuesday afternoon because of the huge snowdrifts that had accumulated on runways.

"I want citizens to go to work if possible, but take mass transit, don't go out and clog up the roads," Boston Mayor Tom Menino said on Cable News Network.

In Washington, where the blizzard had foiled an attempt to reopen the federal government after a partial three-week shutdown over budget arguments between President Bill Clinton and the Republican-led Congress,

Off the Record

Killer gene for heart disorder identified

NEW YORK: A newly identified gene has been linked to about 55 per cent of cases of an inherited heart disorder that can kill young, otherwise healthy people, reports AP.

It's the third gene to be found for the inherited form of the illness known as "long QT syndrome," which affects an estimated 20,000 Americans and is thought to cause 50 to 200 deaths a year.

People with the disorder have an increased risk for episodes in which their heart races at 300 to 400 beats a minute, too fast to pump blood effectively. These episodes lead to fainting and sometimes death. QT is simply a label for a measure of the time it takes for the heart to get set for its next beat.

Finding the third gene will help in diagnosis, said researcher Dr Mark Keating.

While the inherited condition is rare, knowing the three genes that cause it also suggests a possible strategy for treating a more common problem of abnormal heartbeat, called ventricular tachyarrhythmias, which kills some 300,000 to 400,000 Americans a year, Keating said.

Most of those cases are caused by heart attacks, but an unknown number of people get a non-inherited form of long QT syndrome as a side-effect of certain medications or from other causes, Keating said.

The three genes tell heart cells how to make structures called ion channels that regulate heartbeat. The genes cause trouble when defective. So maybe channel malfunctions that don't come from gene defects cause other cases of ventricular tachyarrhythmias, Keating said.

Weirdo demands to speak to queen

LONDON: A tabloid newspaper Tuesday reported that a man said to be stalking Britain's Princess Anne had travelled to Buckingham Palace and demanded to speak to Queen Elizabeth, reports Reuter.

"I must see the queen. I want to ask her why she leaked my letters to the press," The Sun quoted 52-year-old Jim Quinn as telling a policeman on duty outside the palace.

Quinn's son Philip says his father's personality changed after a road crash in 1992, and he divorced his wife after 28 years of marriage after becoming fixated with the princess, the queen's second child.

But he says the man dubbed "Princess Anne's stalker" and a "royal weirdo" by the Sun is a gentleness person who has never shown aggression to other members of his family.

The Sun said Quinn on Monday caught a coach from his home in Bristol to London some 110 miles (176 km) away and then made his way to the palace.

"I have come here today to get an answer. I must know where these lies about me are coming from," he told the policeman.

The Sun said it had questioned Quinn over bizarre letters he allegedly wrote to the queen accusing her of abusing the princess. He told a Sun reporter: "My letter to the queen is threatening, but she threatened me."

Police have expressed concern about Quinn, who has been turning up regularly at the princess's engagements. On Monday, police issued photographs of Quinn, a blond-haired man with a military bearing and a weatherbeaten face.

Princess Anne, who is president of the Save the Children Fund charity, is one of the most respected members of the royal family.

4,000 Khun Sa men surrender arms to Myanmar junta

BANGKOK, Jan 9: More than 4,000 troops loyal to opium warlord Khun Sa handed over an arsenal of aging but deadly weapons when they surrendered to Myanmar soldiers, Myanmar's state-run television reported late Monday, says AP.

It was the Burmese media's first mention of the occupation of Khun Sa's mountain headquarters, Ho Mong, and the surrender of his ethnic Shan soldiers who waged a decades-long war against the government in Yangon.

The official broadcast showed Burmese generals shaking hands with Shan leaders as government troops looked on from behind stacks of weapons turned in by their former enemies.

Announcers said that 4,431 members of Khun Sa's Mung Tai Army, or MTA, surrendered in Ho Mong, a small city in the jungled, lawless Golden Triangle, where Myanmar borders Laos and Thailand. They turned over more than 3,400 weapons, the broadcast said.

Khun Sa did not appear on television and the broadcast made no mention of him. Some soldiers, unhappy that he decided to end his fight against the Burmese, have reportedly said Khun Sa is negotiating an amnesty for himself.

Government forces occupied Ho Mong, 400 kilometres (250 miles) northeast of Yangon, without a struggle last week, after Khun Sa invited them in to negotiate.

The broadcast showed piles of AK-47 rifles, machine guns, rockets, mortars, surface-to-air missiles and anti-aircraft guns that once belonged to the MTA.