

International

Delhi won't give up nuclear options: Rao

India clashes head-on with US over nuclear test ban treaty

GENEVA, Jan 26: India clashed head-on with the United States on Thursday during international talks on a global nuclear test ban treaty, with New Delhi demanding that it be linked to a timetable for elimination of nuclear arsenals, reports AFP.

India's representative at the conference, Arundhati Ghose, also said the situation would be "untenable" if a test ban treaty contained any exceptions that would allow a state to continue to develop nuclear weapons.

The United States and other Western countries have already refused to tie their hands by accepting any link between a test ban and total nuclear disarmament.

John Holm, head of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, warned when the latest talks opened on Tuesday that insistence on such a link would put a test ban treaty at risk.

"Today's threat to a test ban wears a benign face," he said. "It masquerades as even

deeper devotion to arms control."

Holm warned against an eventual pact being "twisted into a mishapen and ineffectual pry-bar for other goals."

India's demand for a "zero option" treaty, banning all nuclear blasts, goes against China, which claims the right to conduct explosions for "peaceful purposes."

The opening days of the current negotiations, which group 38 countries and have been going on since 1994, should make it clear where participating states now stand.

Diplomats said the positions of both China and Russia were still ambiguous, but participants generally agree that failure to agree this year would sink the chances of a comprehensive test ban.

Britain, Russia and the United States are meanwhile operating a moratorium, France says it will sign a treaty once its last test of the current series, expected imminently, is over, while

China has given no indication of its intentions.

The United States and Pakistan have openly voiced suspicions that India is preparing a second nuclear test — its first dates back to 1974 — but New Delhi has denied any such intent.

Another report from New Delhi adds: Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao on Thursday said India was not going to give up its nuclear options and was not lagging behind Pakistan in security matters, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported.

"We are not going to forsake our nuclear options," Rao told a convention of ruling Congress (I) Party workers in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh.

Rao said Pakistan had been acquiring new and sophisticated aircraft and arms but India was not interested in getting into the arms race in the sub-continent.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since the two countries were parti-

tioned in 1947 and neither country is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

A week ago, the United States warned that India would face severe economic sanctions if it conducted a nuclear test. India conducted its first and only nuclear test in 1974 and has denied any plans to conduct others.

"Today (Friday) (Republic Day) you will see the might of the main battle tank Arjun and the light combat aircraft, the Prototype of which had rolled out recently. In whatever manner you look at it we are not lagging behind Pakistan," Rao said.

The international security environment has changed with the end of the Cold War and disintegration of the former Soviet Union.

"The Soviet Union on which India depended heavily in the past, in respect of security measures, could not itself protect its integrity," Rao was quoted as saying by PTI.

Russia to join Council of Europe

STRASBOURG, France, Jan 26: Russia is to join the Council of Europe in a boost for President Boris Yeltsin, but the 38-nation group expects a struggle to get Moscow to embrace its human rights ideals, reports Reuter.

In a landmark vote confirming the end of the Cold War, the Council's parliamentary assembly voted 164-35 for Russian membership on Thursday despite savage criticism of Moscow's military crackdown in Chechnya.

Moscow will accede to the Council, set up in 1949 to help safeguard democracy and human rights, in February or March following ratification by member governments, which is seen as a formality.

"With Russian membership, the council will become a truly Pan-European institution," said Iren Fischer, the German president of the assembly.

And then the hard part will begin.

"We're placing very much confidence in Russia, but they know their problems too," Fischer said.

As a member, Russia's obligations will include ratification within a year of conventions guaranteeing human rights, protecting minorities and outlawing torture.

Parliamentarians also voted to urge Russia to end executions from the day of accession rather than within three years originally planned, the official deadline for it to abolish the death penalty under European conventions.

And they agreed to set up a committee to monitor Russian military actions in Chechnya, likely to be anathema to Yeltsin, who has received a personal endorsement from the Council's vote. He is widely expected to seek re-election in June.

The vote is a relief for Yeltsin from mounting criticism because of many thousands of people killed, wounded or displaced since Russian tanks and troops moved into the mostly Muslim region of Chechnya in December 1994.

The text of the Council's report admitted badly that Russia did not fulfil Council criteria.



Two architects of the first atomic bomb, Noble Peace prize winner Prof Joseph Rotblat (R), 87, from the United Kingdom and Australia's Sir Mark Oliphant, 95, reunite for the Australian government's commission into nuclear weapons on Thursday in Canberra. The two men who worked together on the "Manhattan Project" fifty years ago have spent 40 years working towards the elimination of nuclear weapons. — AFP/UNB photo

13 drown in Pak boat capsizes: At least 13 people were drowned when a boat capsized in the Chenab river in the central Pakistani province of Punjab, state radio said yesterday. Reuter reports from Islamabad.

It said four bodies had been recovered after the accident on Thursday near the city of Multan and rescuers were searching for the others. It had no details on how many people were on the boat or the size of the boat, but one survivor said it had been overloaded.

US to sell fighter jets to Thailand: The United States plans to sell eight McDonnell Douglas Corp (md.n) F/A-18 fighter jets to Thailand for 578 million dollar the defence department told Congress on Thursday, Reuter reports from Washington.

The package of advanced F-18 "C" and "D" model jets, including four spare engines and five harpoon air-to-surface missiles, requires approval by Congress because of its size.

Polish PM to resign: Talks to save Poland's leftist coalition deadlocked on a replacement for Prime Minister Jozef Oleksy, who announced he will resign under accusations that he spied for Moscow, AP reports from Warsaw.

The presidential press office said on Thursday that Oleksy has informed President Aleksander Kwasniewski of his intention to resign. He did not say when, Oleksy, 49, said Wednesday on national television that he would step down so he could fight to clear his name after the Warsaw military prosecutor opened an investigation into the spying allegations.

Clinton urged to join APEC meet: Eager to maintain the momentum of Pacific Rim free trade reform, Prime Minister Paul Keating has reportedly urged US President Bill Clinton to attend the next Asian-Pacific Economic Co-operation leaders' summit in the Philippines in November — regardless of who wins the presidential election to be held just before it, AP reports from Canberra.

The election will be held on November 5 ahead of the annual regional meeting at Subic Bay in the Philippines during the fourth week of that month.

3 children killed in shootout in US: Three children were killed and a fourth wounded on Thursday in a shootout between their father and sheriff's deputies in the Mojave desert, a sheriff's spokesman said, Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

Jim Bryant of the San Bernardino county sheriff's department said the father was also wounded in the exchange of gunfire and had been taken into custody. He had no further details of the incident in the small community of landers, some 100 miles (160 km) east of Los Angeles.

Landmine kills two in Iran: A landmine planted in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war was killed an Iranian military officer and a policeman, the official news agency IRNA said on Thursday, Reuter reports from Tehran.

It said a funeral was held in the western city of Kermanshah for army Major Mohsen Jamshidi and police lieutenant Seddiq Assadi who were killed last week when they stepped on the mine near the Iraqi border. Scores of villagers and shepherds are killed or injured each year by mines or other explosives left over from the war.

Flu epidemic kills 78 in Hungary: A flu epidemic sweeping Hungary has killed 78 people, health officials said on Thursday, AP reports from Budapest.

So far, more than 260,000 people were registered with the flu and 78 have died of related complications in the first five weeks of the epidemic, said Dr. Ilona Straub, department head of the Public Health Office.

UN marks 200 yrs of vaccines: It started 200 years ago when an English physician noticed a milkmaid didn't get smallpox. It has led to the eradication of the dreaded disease and could mean the end of polio and other scourges, AP reports from United Nations.

UNICEF on Thursday marked the 200th year since the discovery of vaccines with ceremonies praising Edward Jenner, the doctor credited with discovering the first one.

Japan won't cut number of US troops: Ikeda

TOKYO, Jan 26: Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda today ruled out cutting the number of US troops stationed in Japan in the near future as the security situation in Asia is unlikely to improve soon, reports AFP.

Both the United States and Japan share the view that the scale of US troops should naturally be changed if the security situation in the region drastically changes, Ikeda told reporters.

"But I don't think the situation will turn for the better or the US military presence reduced in the near future," Ikeda added.

The rape of a 12-year-old Japanese schoolgirl last September in Okinawa, allegedly by three US servicemen, triggered outrage in the southernmost island and elsewhere in Japan, bolstering calls for a US troop reduction.



Vineed Narain (R), a journalist who braved death threats to spearhead a crusade that exposed India's most sweeping corruption scandal, is seated at his office beside his guru Navayogendra Swami on Thursday in New Delhi. Narain, 40, said he would have given up fighting tiring court battles to reveal the names of politicians and bureaucrats who allegedly took bribes from a shady businessman but for his guru. — AFP/UNB photo

Phoolan vows to commit suicide

BOMBAY, Jan 26: Indian "Bandit Queen" Phoolan Devi has threatened to commit suicide outside the house of a top movie star to protest the screening of a film about her life as an outlaw, a newspaper here reported Thursday, says AFP.

The mass circulation newspaper Sanja Jansatta said Devi had sent a facsimile to movie star Amitabh Bachchan in which she threatened to set herself on fire outside his home here, if the film is shown in Bombay.

The film, "Bandit Queen," is being distributed by the Bombay-based Amitabh Bachchan Corp. Ltd.

Devi has voiced objections to several scenes in the biographical film, including one in which she is shown being paraded in the nude by high-caste Hindu villagers and later raped, the newspaper said.

US warship passes thru Taiwan Strait

TAIPEI, Jan 26: A US aircraft carrier passed through the straits dividing Taiwan and China last month in the first American naval presence in the sensitive area in 17 years, newspapers reported on Friday, reports AP.

The United Daily News quoted unidentified military sources as saying USS Nimitz, escorted by four navy vessels, passed through the Taiwan Strait December 19 after diverting from a planned course due to adverse weather.

The China Times said the flagship of the US Seventh Fleet sailing near the island at a time of heightened tension between Taiwan and China was "extremely politically significant."

The reports said China, viewing the action as a display of US military power in its waters, had protested to Washington.

Maharashtra govt bans probe into role of police in '92 riot

BOMBAY, Jan 26: India has long been famous for bogging down investigations in tape. But now the Hindu nationalist government of the state of Maharashtra has gone a step further, disbanding an official inquiry into the role of police and politicians in the rioting that killed at least 1,000 people three years ago, reports AP.

Almost 65 per cent of those killed in the riots were Muslims, human rights organisations say. Muslims comprise 15 per cent of Bombay's 12 million population.

Many Muslim riot victims said police refused to protect them and even attacked them.

Chief Minister Manohar Joshi, whose Shiv Sena party has been accused of instigating the violence, said earlier this week that the probe was scrapped because a High Court judge was taking too long to release his findings.

But the decision has attracted widespread criticism, with Amnesty International, which conducted its own investigation, saying in London that it sends "a powerful message to police officers that whatever they do, they will not be accountable."

Several Bombay-based human rights groups supported Amnesty's demand that the inquiry be reopened and the Samajwadi (Socialist) Party staged a demonstration to dramatise its protest.

The parties in power are guilty of organising the violence and they are trying to escape punishment," said Julio Ribeiro, former Bombay city police commissioner. Joshi's party, which came

Off the Record

The last Czar appears!

MOSCOW: A man identifying himself as Grand Duke Nicholas injected some colour into Russia's dead-serious presidential race Wednesday by claiming to be the hitherto unknown grandson of Russia's last Czar, reports AP.

Not only that, he insisted, but Alexei — the only son of Nicholas II and his own father — miraculously escaped the Bolshevik firing squad in 1918 and lived until 1965 in a quiet town on the Volga.

Dressed in a black naval uniform adorned with Soviet-era stars and imperial crowns, Nicholas entered a news conference at the Russian Academy of Sciences to the strains of the Czarist anthem. Journalists were ordered to stand and to address him as Your Imperial Highness.

The obscure 53-year-old called himself a man of science. But he would not elaborate on his studies, and the academy did not explain why it granted him the podium.

Nicholas said the proof for his "irrefutable" claims was in "a bank safe in a neutral country."

Like his famous father, he said, he suffered from hemophilia himself, having trouble with his left leg until he "somehow got well" when he turned 40.

Calling for the restoration of the monarchy, Nicholas said he probably would run for president in June. It wasn't clear how he planned to gather the million signatures required.

The Czar's family was murdered in captivity by the Bolsheviks in July 1918. The remains of Alexei and his sister Anastasia have never been found, leading to ungrounded speculation that they escaped and inspiring numerous royal claimants over the years.

Woman becomes pregnant while in coma

NEW YORK, Jan 26: A 29-year-old woman who has been in a coma for 10 years is pregnant after being raped, and her parents want to continue her pregnancy, The New York Times said Thursday, reports AP.

The daily said a full-term pregnancy should result in a birth. "It was a very difficult decision, because nobody could predict the future, her capacity to survive a pregnancy, her capacity to deliver a child," said John Parinello, a lawyer acting as the family's spokesman.

The paper said the woman is uncommunicative and does not appear aware of her surroundings but responds to certain stimuli and can feel pain. She breathes without the assistance of machines but is fed by a tube.

She has been in the Brighton nursing home, North of New York City, since 1985, when a sudden swerve off the road thrust her car into a tree and sent her into a coma that has not lifted since.

In late December last year, nursing home staff noticed that her belly was growing and found she was pregnant.

Her parents opposed a termination of the pregnancy, citing their Roman Catholic faith and that of their daughter, who attended catholic schools, and who, according to a friend interviewed by the New York Times, "was always pretty pro-life."

The nursing home said in a statement it employees were shocked by the incident. "Unfortunately, nursing homes cannot provide full time surveillance of our premises to prevent unforeseeable criminal acts."

Fighting leaves 14 dead in Lanka

COLOMBO, Jan 26: Fighting between Tamil Tiger guerrillas and security forces has left at least 14 people dead in 24 hours in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, the military said today, reports AP.

The army ambushed a group of guerrillas from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the northern peninsula of Jaffna late Thursday, killing five rebels, the military said in a statement.

"Troops recovered five terrorist dead bodies, three automatic rifles and a radio set," the statement said adding that four soldiers were wounded in the brief

confrontation.

In another incident Tamil Tiger guerrillas ambushed a police patrol in eastern Sri Lanka, killing two commandos and three civilians, defence source said today, reports AP.

Gunmen from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the police vehicle in Bakkliella late Thursday and escaped before police reinforcements could be rushed in, the sources said.

The attack came within hours of an LTTE raid on a police post in neighbouring Batticaloa district where three policemen and a civilian were killed.

Kim's son wins libel suit

SEOUL, South Korea, Jan 26: President Kim Young-sam's son won a libel suit Friday against South Korea's best-known anti-government newspaper for a report that alleged he raised secret funds for his father's 1992 election campaign, reports AP.

The liberal Han-Kyoreh Shimun newspaper, claiming court procedures were unfair, immediately announced it will appeal.

In a ruling that came after 24 court hearings often marred by allegations of political influence, the Seoul District Civil Court ordered the newspaper to pay 400 million won (dhs 520,000) in compensation and publish a front-page correction.

Kim Hyun-chul, the president's second son, filed the suit, seeking dhs 2.6 million

Hong Kong's transfer to China enters final phase

BEIJING, Jan 26: China's plans for recovering Hong Kong in 1997 entered the final stage Friday with the establishment of a powerful committee that will set up the colony's new government, reports AP.

The establishment of the Preparatory Committee for Hong Kong means that "China's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong is in sight," the official Xinhua News Agency said.

President Jiang Zemin said the re-unification of Hong Kong was the first step in the "Great cause of re-unification."

China still must recover Macao and "last of all, Taiwan," Jiang said. If Hong Kong's recovery goes smoothly, there is a good prospect for full re-unification, he said.

The Preparatory Committee, a group of 150 mainland and Hong Kong businessmen, officials, academics and other prominent figures, was formally established during a morning ceremony at the Great Hall of the People attended by China's top leaders.

It was scheduled to hold its first meetings Friday and Saturday.

One of its main tasks will be to choose 400 people who will recommend to Beijing who should take Gov. Chris Patten's place when China takes over on July 1, 1997.

The new chief executive will be chosen later this year, they Xinhua News Agency reported. The chief executive will nominate Hong Kong's major officials for appointment by Beijing.

The Preparatory Committee also will help work out how to replace Hong Kong's current elected legislature, which Beijing plans to disband in 1997 because of electoral reforms introduced by Patten against China's wishes.

Beijing selected the members of the Preparatory Committee last month, excluding Hong Kong's largest political party, the Democrats, who have championed human rights and democracy.

The director of the Preparatory Committee is Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

The Portuguese colony of Macao is scheduled to return to Chinese control in 1999.

Beijing views Taiwan as a renegade province. Chinese leaders say their goal is eventual peaceful re-unification, but have not ruled out using force if Taiwan declares independence.



Chinese President Jiang Zemin (sitting 2nd L) applauds as he stands to address the 150 members Hong Kong Preparatory Committee (PC) and senior government leaders including NPC Chairman Qiao Shi (sitting L) and Premier Li Peng (sitting 2nd R) following the formal establishment of the PC, in the Great Hall of the People on Friday. — AFP/UNB photo

Carter criticises US foreign policy

ATLANTA, Jan 26: Former President Jimmy Carter criticised his country Thursday, calling it racist in foreign affairs and childish in domestic ones, reports AP.

In his first lecture after a four year hiatus from teaching at Emory University, Carter said racism is behind the recent sending of US troops to civil war-torn Bosnia in Europe, but not to African countries with similar problems.

"We concentrate our effort and our troops on Bosnia, and we don't pay any attention to Liberia and Rwanda and Burundi and Sudan because they're African countries. They're black people and we concentrate our efforts on white people in Europe," Carter told about 60 international students. "This is a tragedy."