

N-test ban treaty issue India, China come under pressure at UN confce

GENEVA, Feb 2: China and India came under pressure on Thursday at the UN disarmament Conference after Sweden accused them of blocking the conclusion of a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) by the end of the year, reports AFP.

Egypt and Japan also took China to task for being the only country with a policy of continued nuclear testing, following France's announcement this week that it will resume its test series in the South Pacific was over.

Speaking at a plenary session, Swedish Foreign Minister Lena Hjelm-Wallén urged China to follow France's example and stop its nuclear test programme in the deserts of its northeastern Xinjiang region.

China should renounce all nuclear testing once the proposed treaty — which has been under negotiation among 38 countries for the past two years — is signed, Hjelm-Wallén said.

Beijing wants to reserve the right to pursue what it calls peaceful tests after the treaty is signed. It also wants

to be able to continue military tests until the day the treaty takes effect — a period that negotiators say would last three years or more.

Turning to India — which has atomic know-how, but officially not the bomb — the Swedish minister rejected conditions raised by New Delhi which, she said, would make the treaty "hostage" to its preferences.

"If a country puts new matters in this process, it will jeopardise it," she told a press conference later.

India wants to link implementation of the treaty to a timetable committing the know nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — to eliminating their nuclear weapons.

"The treaty will be put at stake," Hjelm-Wallén said, if such compromises are adopted.

She said countries taking part in the talks should come to an agreement by the end of June, so that the treaty can be presented to the UN General Assembly in September.

Delhi to keep an 'open option' on testing Agni India to deploy Prithvi into army defying US criticism

NEW DELHI, Feb 2: India will deploy a home-made surface-to-surface missile into its army following a successful test, criticised by Washington as a "mistake", to foil militarisation moves by arch-rival Pakistan, reports AFP.

The Times of India daily today quoted top defence officials as saying that the "Prithvi" (earth) missile, which can carry a one-tonne conventional or nuclear warhead, would be inducted into the army, the world's fourth largest.

Between 15 and 30 missiles have already been prepared for induction into the army while as a fresh programme to test the longer-range variant for the air force has been put into motion," the newspaper said.

Prithvi, which has a range of 150 kilometres (93 miles) to 250 kilometres (155 miles) was successfully fired for the 15th time on January 27 sparking sharp reactions from Islamabad and Washington.

Nicholas Burns, US State Department spokesman, said on Thursday the Prithvi test "will not lead to what India and Pakistan both want — which is stability in South Asia."

"We believe strongly it is not in India's or Pakistan's interest for either of them to deploy such technologies," Burns told a news conference in Washington.

Islamabad also criticised the test saying it was clear that Pakistan was the intended target, given the missile's range.

Indian officials, who attended a meeting here late Thursday chaired by Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, said Delhi would keep an "open option" on testing a ballistic missile named "Agni" or fire.

The Agni can carry a conventional or nuclear warhead over some 2,500 kilometres (1,560 miles).

"The counter-measures to Pakistan's weapons' acquisition programme will also include keeping open the nuclear option," The Times said but did not give further details.

"It appears that the United States and China are collaborating to arm Pakistan," a top defence official said, recalling reports of transfer of nuclear technology by Beijing and a US senate amendment allowing the sale of military equipment worth 368 million dollars to Pakistan.

The newspaper said India also planned to acquire 100 Russian-made long-range Sukhoi-30MK jets, T-72s and T-80 tanks and sophisticated airborne early warning control systems to strengthen security.

The Prithvi, one of five missiles being developed by India under its integrated guided missile programme launched with an initial budget of 800 million dollars in 1983, can be fitted with a chemical payload or a small nuclear warhead.

Turkey threatens Greece with war

ANKARA, Feb 2: Turkey would go to war if Greece tries to push its territorial waters beyond the current 12-mile limit, Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said on Thursday, reports AFP.

"If the territorial waters of Greece are taken to 12 miles, this is a cause of war," Ciller told a meeting of her True Path Party.

Her remarks came after US mediation this week defused a crisis over a group of rocky islets in the Aegean Sea that are claimed by Turkey and Greece, which are both members of NATO.

The Greek Parliament last year endorsed legislation which emphasised Athens' right to extend its territorial waters, but the law has not put it into effect.

Turkey has stated since 1987 that if Greece extended its territorial waters, Turkish ships would no longer be able to sail in the Aegean without having to enter Greek waters.

Ankara has therefore threatened Greece with war to deter it from extending its territorial waters.

9 can't alone change PLO charter: Arafat

GAZA, Feb 2: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said on Thursday he did not have the power alone to change the PLO Charter calling for the destruction of Israel, reports Reuter.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said peace moves with the PLO would be halted unless the Charter, adopted more than 30 years ago, was changed.

"I haven't the ability to do it all," Arafat said when asked by reporters about changing the Charter.

He said he would take the matter to the Palestinian National Council (PNC) as soon as the parliament-in-exile met.

Arafat pledged in a September accord with Israel to amend the Charter within two months after Palestinians convene their legislative council, elected in a historic poll on January 20.

Arafat was chosen to head the council's executive body. On Tuesday, Arafat aide Ahmed Tibi said the Charter would be changed but it might happen later than promised.

Peres said he would allow

PNC members in exile, including PLO guerrilla chiefs opposite to the current peace process.

A Palestinian official said on Thursday the PLO planned to convene its executive committee next week to discuss Israel's demand for the change in the charter.

Meanwhile, Israel again banned Palestinian from PLO-ruled Gaza from entering Jerusalem before Friday prayers during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan and said the entry of West Bank residents would be restricted.



Taiwan successfully tests air-to-air missiles

TAIPEI, Feb 2: In a significant boost to its defences, Taiwan has successfully tested its home-made air-to-air missile, Taiwan Television reported on Friday, reports AP.

It quoted unidentified military officials as saying that a military-run defence technology centre tested Sky Sword II, an improvement on a 1987 model, in southern Taiwan last month.

Nine of the 10 missiles hit targets, it added.

The air force has decided to buy 400 such missiles from the military-run Chungshan Science and Technology Institute and install them in locally made Indigenous Defensive Fighters and 150 F-16 jets to be delivered by the United States later this year, the report said.

Israel is among the countries that helped develop the missile, making Taiwan one of the few countries capable of producing such hardware, it added.

The military refused

comment on the report.

The missile has a range of over 40 kilometres (25 miles), much longer than Taiwan's other air-to-air missiles, said Cheng Chi-wen, chief editor of the monthly Defence International magazine.

China has threatened to use force to recover the island it regards as a renegade province, and Taiwan is seeking to accumulate foreign and home-made weapons to deter an attack.

An earlier report says Beijing's military threats are cutting both ways among Taiwanese, reducing support for independence as well as for reunification with China, says an opinion poll published on Thursday.

Support for reunification, the official doctrine of both rival governments, has fallen from 20 per cent to 15 since China launched a series of missile tests off Taiwanese waters last summer, said the poll by the China Times newspaper.



US President Bill Clinton (R) says his farewell to French President Jacques Chirac, while Mrs. Chirac (2nd L) and Mrs. Clinton speak in the background on Thursday at the White House after a state dinner in honour of the French President. Chirac departed for Chicago late Thursday continue his visit to the US. — AFP/UNB photo

Chun's trial to be postponed till Feb 26

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 2: The bribery trial of former President Chun Doo-hwan, scheduled to open Monday, will be postponed until Feb 26 for health reasons, court officials said Friday, reports AP.

The decision came after prosecutors recommended a delay, citing a doctor's report that Chun still needs about two more weeks to recover from a long hunger strike he staged in December.

The defendant is suffering from gastroenteritis, headache, high-blood pressure, persistent anemia and occasional diarrhoea, "the court's report said."

Although he has recovered considerably from the hunger strike, the 65-year-old Chun, a former general, still cannot sit for more than 30 minutes at a time or stand for more than 10 minutes, it said.

Soon after he was arrested December 3 on bribery charges, Chun staged a 26-day hunger strike to protest alleged political persecution. Finally, unable to take even water, he was transferred from prison to a hospital.

Violence claims 2 in Karachi Islamabad renews call for talks with MQM

KARACHI, Pakistan, Feb 2: At least two people were killed in violence in the Pakistani industrial port city of Karachi on Thursday as the government renewed its call for talks to the opposition ethnic Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM), reports Reuter.

Police said at least two people were killed in violence in districts south and central.

Law Minister Nabi Dad Khan told reporters that he would contact the MQM on Saturday for resuming the stalled peace talks to restore peace in Karachi, Pakistan's commercial hub.

"Our doors are open for talks," he said, adding: "Strikes would not achieve anything."

MQM has staged some 26 strikes in Karachi in 1995 to protest against what it called extra-judicial killings of its activists by security agencies.

"Strikes are a futile exer-

cise," Khan said. "Negotiations across the table could provide solutions to problems."

Thursday's deaths raised this year's toll from Karachi violence to 105. The 1995 death toll was 1,950.

Kabul to pay \$16 m for blast in Pak embassy

ISLAMABAD, Feb 2: The Afghan government has agreed to pay 15.3 million dollars in compensation to Islamabad for the destruction of the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul by a mob last September, a Pakistani Foreign Office spokesman said Thursday, according to AFP.

The Afghan government also conveyed its deep regret for the incident, the spokesman said.

BRIEFLY

- 9 indicted in Greek ship hijack:** Six Turks and three Russians were indicted Thursday for hijacking a ferry and holding some 200 people hostage last month. AP reports from Istanbul.
- The defendants were being kept in a high-security prison in Istanbul following the court's decision. No date was immediately set for start of trial. If convicted they face a minimum of nine years in prison.
- 400 frozen to death in Moscow this yr:** An estimated 400 people have frozen to death in Moscow so far this winter, a city health official said Thursday, AP reports from Moscow.
- All of the victims were drunk, the spokesman told the Interfax news agency. Hundreds of people die each year during the Russian winter as a result of hypothermia and drunkenness, which leaves them incapable of seeking shelter from the cold.
- 38 executed in China:** Thirty-eight Chinese criminals, ranging from murderers to drug traffickers, were executed in southwestern China's Yunnan province ahead of Lunar New Year celebrations, it was reported yesterday, AFP says from Hong Kong.
- The convicts, whose crimes involved murder, armed robbery, manslaughter and drug trafficking, were executed in three groups in Kunming over the past three days in order "to maintain social stability" during the three-day holiday, which starts February 19, the China-backed Ta Kung Pao daily said.
- Blast kills 10 in Vietnam:** The people were killed and 17 injured when a Vietnam war era shell exploded in the southern province of Song Be, the Vietnam news agency paper Tin Tuc Bui Chieu reported yesterday, AFP says from Hanoi.
- The accident occurred January 25 in Binh Long district as a group of peasants were trying to defuse the unexploded shell found in the courtyard of a house, the paper said.
- Malaysian troops to go to Bosnia in May:** More than 1,500 Malaysian soldiers will go to Bosnia in May to help with the international peacekeeping force there, an official said Thursday, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.
- Defence Minister Syed Hamid Albar said the contingent of 1,533 soldiers will come from the Royal Malay Regiment and would join British troops in Mrkonje Grad and Kljuc about 130 km (80 miles) from Split. They would replace a Malaysian mission returning in May, he told reporters.
- 2 die as train derailed in Los Angeles:** Two people were killed when a freight train carrying hazardous chemicals derailed and caught fire about 60 miles (80 km) east of Los Angeles on Thursday, officials said, Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

KSA channelled \$300m worth of arms to Bosnian Muslims

WASHINGTON, Feb 2: Saudia Arabia channelled 300 million dollars worth of arms to the Bosnian Muslims over a three-year period in a secret programme which enjoyed tacit US cooperation, the Washington Post reported today, says AFP.

Quoting a US official with direct knowledge of the programme, as well as a Saudi official, pointed out that this programme was in direct violation of a UN embargo which the United States had pledged to comply with a senior White House official denied the report as "preposterous and insulting."

The newspaper added that this aid came in addition to Saudi humanitarian aid to Bosnia, around 500 million

dollars over the past three years.

A Saudi official quoted by the Washington Post said that this Bosnian arms programme was similar to a programme set up to back Muslim rebels battling Soviet troops in Afghanistan during the 1980s. This operation was not officially supported by the United States.

But, in contrast with Afghanistan, the Saudi official said, Washington did not finance the secret arms programme for Bosnia.

"The US role was more than just turning a blind eye to what was going on... it was consent combined with Stealth cooperation."

"American knowledge began under Bush and became

much greater under Clinton," he was quoted by the newspaper as saying.

The White House spokesman said: "Whatever the Saudis claim to have done was not in concert with US with our approval."

AP adds: Outgoing Foreign Minister Muhamed Sacirbey warned Thursday that US pressure on Bosnia to abandon its ties to Iran could backfire on the West, reports AP.

Sacirbey also criticized the United States and its allies for not doing enough to establish the whereabouts of thousands of men missing since the Serbs took the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica last July.



Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski (R) poses with former communist Wlodzimirz Cimoszewicz (L) after confirming him as Poland's new Prime Minister to succeed Jozef Oleksy, who resigned after being accused of spying for Moscow, and asking Cimoszewicz to form a new government on Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

US urges its citizens to leave Sudan

CAIRO, Feb 2: The United States on Thursday urged American citizens to leave Sudan as US diplomats prepared to evacuate because of increased worries over security, reports AP.

The move came a day after the UN Security Council passed a resolution calling on Sudan to stop supporting international terrorism and hand over three men wanted in last year's assassination attempt against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

The US State Department said the evacuation of the 25 diplomats and guards was ordered because of "the continuing concern for the safety of American officials in Sudan," whose Islamic regime has been accused by Washington of supporting terrorists.

Off the Record

- Cybersex partner via computer!**
- SOMERVILLE, New Jersey: A man filing for divorce accused his wife of carrying on a "virtual" affair with a cybersex partner via computer, reports AP.
- Diane Goydan's relationship with the man apparently was not consummated, but her husband, John Goydan of Bridgewater, claimed the pair had planned a real trip this weekend at a New Hampshire bed and breakfast.
- Goydan filed divorce papers January 23 that included dozens of e-mail exchanges some sexually explicit between his wife and a married man she met on America Online. The man, whose on-line name was "The Weasel", was identified in court papers only as Ray from North Carolina.
- Goydan is now seeking custody of the couple's two children, ages 3 and 7.
- Goydan's lawyer, Richard Hurley, said Mrs. Goydan apparently believe the e-mail messages could not be retrieved, but her husband was able to pull them off the computer and store them on a disk.
- That raises some privacy concerns, such as what rights spouses have to each other's communications, said David Banisar, spokesman for the Electronic Privacy Information Center in Washington.
- "If it's a shared computer, then the spouse has equal rights to get on it and share what's on it," Banisar said.
- But if the husband gained access to her e-mail on line, that could violate her privacy rights, similar to a husband tapping his wife's telephone.
- "It's still pretty undefined in the law," Banisar said.
- It pushes back the earliest known time of galaxies**
- PASADENA, California: The known universe just got a new member with the discovery of a faint galaxy some 14 billion light years away, near the constellation virgo, reports Reuter.
- The as-yet-unnamed galaxy became the most distant one known to mankind and pushes back the earliest known time when galaxies formed to just one billion years after the "big bang," which created the universe, scientists said.
- The galaxy, as seen now, is a neophyte in astronomy terms, perhaps just a few tens of millions of years old, according to astronomers at the California Institute of Technology who stumbled across it by accident. But since it takes 14 billion years for light from the galaxy to reach earth, there was no telling whether the galaxy still exists.
- The scientists discovered the galaxy while observing a quasar that happened to lie almost directly behind the galaxy, which silhouetted it in its light. The discovery was reported in the January 20 issue of astrophysical journal letters.
- Electric method may prove safer than X-rays for dental disease**
- LONDON, Feb 2: Patients who feel a visit to the dentist's office is bad enough with its jabs and drills may soon face electric shocks as well researchers reported on Thursday, reports Reuter.
- They said their new electric method could prove more reliable and safer than X-rays.
- Chris Longbottom a dental researcher at Scotland's Dundee University, was experimenting with the idea that teeth with cavities conduct electricity better than solid teeth.
- Early attempts to measure decay with electricity failed. But Longbottom teamed up with Peter Bruce, a chemist at St Andrew's University, who was working with Lithium batteries, commonly used in portable computers and cameras.
- Rebels attack UN convoy in Liberia**
- MONROVIA, Feb 2: Rebels attacked a United Nations convoy outside the capital, but nobody was injured, UN officials said on Thursday, reports AP.
- The attack came on Wednesday on the main highway linking Monrovia to Tubmanburg 50 miles to the northwest. One bullet shattered the windshield of a vehicle, and another bullet was lodged in the back seat of a second vehicle.
- The United Nations has an 82-member observer mission in Liberia, and on Monday the Security Council voted to extend the mission until May 31.
- The observers are supposed to oversee implementation of a 1995 peace accord.

Govt offers reward to destroy Khmer tanks

PHNOM PENH, Feb 2: The government is offering a \$10,000 reward to any of its soldiers who can destroy a Khmer Rouge tank, a military official said Thursday, reports AP.

A military report Wednesday said the Khmer Rouge used tanks to stage off an assault on the city of Pailin by 20,000 government troops.

Pailin is a stronghold of the Marxist Khmer Rouge, who ruled the country in a grisly reign of terror from 1975 to 1978 and who since then have fought a guerrilla war against a Vietnamese-installed government and the current elected government.

The government began its annual dry season offensive against the Khmer Rouge two weeks ago.

Lanka blast: Govt vows to eliminate Tamil rebels

COLOMBO, Feb 2: Using everything from small shovels to huge earthmovers, soldiers and construction workers found 13 more bodies in the scarred landscape of downtown Colombo, and the government vowed to "eliminate" the Tamil rebels it blamed for the attack, reports AP.

At least 73 people were killed and 1,400 injured Wednesday when a suicide squad rammed a truck packed with explosives into Sri Lanka's central bank.

The attack, one of the worst in Sri Lanka's 12-year war with the rebels, ignited towering fires in the capital's business and tourist districts. Seven injured people died overnight in the hospital, and nearly 100 others were still in critical condition Thursday night.

As darkness fell on Colombo's blackened skyline, floodlights illuminated the devastation. Rescue teams dug into piles of rubble with the determination of worker ants. Some used heavy machinery and some simple shovels, but all said they did not expect to find more survivors.

Heavily armed soldiers kept large crowds at bay. Some onlookers were distraught, believing that a family member was still buried under the shattered glass, twisted steel beams and slabs of concrete.

The attack came in desperation, said President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who claimed the Tamil Tiger rebels had suffering military setbacks and realised that other Tamils backed her plan to decentralise and give them

limited autonomy.

"This unfortunate incident has once again reminded us that the threat to Sri Lankan society by terrorism must be firmly dealt with," she said in a statement. Terrorists "must be eliminated."

The separatists are fighting for a homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, hundreds of miles (kilometers) away from Colombo, a port city in the south.

The Tamils say they are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and the military. More than 40,000 people have died in the war.

Kumaratunga came to power in 1994, vowing to hold peace talks with the rebels and end the war, but those talks failed last year and the fighting intensified in December, government

troops captured Jaffna City, the rebels' stronghold in the north.

Wednesday's bomb left a crater eight feet (2.4 meters) deep and shattered windows of buildings hundreds of yards (metres) away. The driver of the truck was killed, but two others were arrested shortly afterwards.

Investigators, interrogating those suspects Thursday, were trying to piece together the operation.

Police said the truck left Monday from Vavunia, a northern front-line town and took more than a day to reach Colombo, normally a five-hour trip.

It parked overnight Tuesday in a Tamil neighbourhood of Colombo, and left Wednesday morning for the business district with explosives concealed under bags of rice

hulls.

Police have identified the suspects only as Ragu and Dharma Ruben from the northern rebel-held town of Kilinochchi, and the dead driver as Raj.

Detectives raided a house in northern Colombo they believe the bombers had used and arrested several other people Thursday, but refused to identify them.

Of the 1,400 civilians wounded — most of whom worked in the state bank — 1,000 remained hospitalised and nearly 100 were listed in critical condition, sub-inspector Lal Gunawardene told The Associated Press.

Dozens of despairing relatives scanned lists of dead and injured at the city's main hospital in Colombo, where heavily bandaged patients sat on gurneys in crowded corri-

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