BREFLY



Five-year-old Islam, son of Ayman Razania, a member of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad group who was shot dead by Palestinian agents on February 3, holds a toy pistol siting by a poster of his father during a rally in the Jabaliya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on Friday. - AFP/UNB photo

Omani FM arrives in Doha: Oman's Foreign Minister Yussef ibn Alwi Abdullah arrived in Doha late Friday for a two-day visit, the Qatari state agency QNA announced without giving further details, AFP reports from Doha.

But a diplomat from the six nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) told AFP on condition of anonymity that the minister would try to contain recent differences between member countries

431 frozen to death in Moscow: At least 431 people have frozen to death in Moscow this winter, including 27 so far this month, the city's health

department said Friday, AP reports from Moscow. All of the victims were drunk, said the report, carried by the Interfax news agency. Homeless people accounted for 15 per cent of the victims.

Train mishap kills 3 in New Jersey: A train crowded with morning commuters went past a stop signal and slammed into another train heading in the opposite direction on Friday, killing at least three people and injuring more than 235 others in an accident just west of New York City, AP reports from Secaucus.

Both engineers and a passenger were killed, officials said. At least 73 people went to hospitals, and injuries to 16 people were considered severe, an emergency medical official said.

Ex-Soviet gen held for corruption:

Military police have arrested a former Soviet general suspected of selling off army assets ranging from precious metals to real estate while the Soviet Union was falling

apart. AP reports from Minsk. Maj Gen Oleg Kruglikov commanded the 25th arsenal of the Soviet strategic missile troops during the Soviet breakup, the ITAR-Tass news agency said.

58 die of malaria in Zimbabwe: Fifty-eight people died of malaria last month in Zimbabwe and another 46,000 have been infected by the disease, a jump of more than 100 per cent from the same period last

year, the government said Friday, AFP reports from Harare. Health minister Timothy Stamps said, "I anticipate that malaria cases will be extensive and the number of cases and fatalities will be higher than in the previous year.

RCA producer Pfeiffer dies: John Pfeiffer, who produced recordings by some of classical music's most famous artists, including Van Cliburn, Jascha Heifetz and Arturo Toscanini, died at work at age 75. AP reports from New York.

Pfeiffer died on Thursday of a heart attack while working and listening to music in his office, RCA spokeswoman Marilyn Egol said.

Blasts kill 3 in Grozny: Explosions killed three people and wounded seven Friday in the centre of Grozny where hundreds of Chechens were holding a peaceful pro-independence rally, the Interfax news agency reported, AFP says from Grozny.

There were conflicting reports about the number of explosions and casualties in the most serious incident in the city's main square since demonstrators demanding a Russian troops withdrawal began camping out there on Sunday. Interfax said the second of two blast hit the demonstrators, killing three and wounding seven. It said Russian authorities blamed Chechen separatists for the explosions.

7 shot dead in Nigeria: Police shot dead seven men who had been handcuffed and chained by the feet, saying they had tried to escape, the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reported, AFP says from Lagos. The seven, suspected of murder and armed robbery.

had been arrested by police in the northern state of Kaduna, the agency said, quoting the state's Deputy Police Chief. Muktar Ibrahim. The suspects had offered to take the police to their hideout and were on the way there when they tried to overcome their guards and escape, the reports said.

8 executed in Beijing: Authorities in Beijing have executed eight people convicted of murder, robbery, assault and other serious crimes, the newspaper Beijing Daily reported Saturday, AP reports from Beijing.

Wang Yongyuan, a farmer living in the city's suburbs, was executed by the Beijing No. I Intermediate People's Court on Friday for having beaten his girlfriend's father, brother and brother's girlfriend to death while they were sleeping last April, the newspaper said.

Floods cripple Jakarta: Floods caused by heavy rains virtually paralysed Jakarta on Saturday with thousands of people missing work and school as some sat stranded for hours in traffic jams, AP reports from Jakarta. The floods sweeping the capital city were triggered by heavy rain that fell from midnight and which forced the city of more than 10 million to abandon normal activity. Traffic congestion developed at almost every corner of the crowded metropolis. Thousands of shops were closed.

India, China discuss steps to maintain peace on border

BEIJING, Feb 10: Measures to implement the agreement on maintaining peace and tranquility along the line of actual control in border areas were discussed at the fourth meeting of Sino-Indian diplomatic and military expert group which ended here yesterday, reports PTI.

The Indian side was led by TCA Rangachari, joint secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, and the Chinese side by Vice-Foreign Minister

Tang Jiaxuan. the two sides discussed measures to maintain peace in

border areas. The Indian delegation was not available for comments.

As part of on-going joint working group meetings between the two countries, the expert group began its meeting on February 7.

The last round was held in New Delhi in August and the next one was late for March in Beijing. The current meeting was believed to be a preparatory for the next

round. The agreement on maintaining peace along the line of actual control was signed Xinhua news agency said in September 1993 when Premier PV Narasimha Rao visited China.

Threat to Dayton accord

Serbs cut high-level military contacts with NATO

SARAJEVO, Feb 10: Carrying out the most dire threat yet to Bosnia's shaky peace, Bosnian Serbs have cut highlevel military contacts with NATO to retaliate for the detention of two Serb officers. NATO officials said, reports

The cutoff of contacts disrupts everything from negotiations on prisoner exchanges to the demarcation of buffer zones, important elements of the peace agreement reached in Dayton, Ohio.

Richard Holbrooke, the US Assistant Secretary of State who brokered the peace deal, said on Friday the agreement would "unravel" if all contacts with Serbs were broken off. British Lt Gen Sir Michael Walker, the force's ground commander, called it an ominous sign" for peace.

"We have a number of liaison officers who are in the Bosnian Serb military, with whom we inevitably have contact, but in terms of the high-level strategic-type contact that we had with them, there is none," Walker told reporters at Sarajevo Airport. Holbrooke, who was on his way to the region to try to defuse the crisis, told reporters in Budapest, Hungary, that he did not expect

the Serbs to cut all contacts. "We will not tolerate the kind of threats coming out of the Bosnian Serbs," he told reporters at a stop in Budapest, Hungary. We have to make all parties comply with the Dayton agreement.

"We've never said it'd be easy. We anticipated this," he

Serbs had said they were ending contacts with the NATO-led force and the Bosnian government because the government was holding Gen Djordje Djukic and Col Aleksa Krsmanovic on suspicion of involvement in civilian massacres.

To press demands for the unconditional release of the two Serb officers, Bosnian Serb justice minister Marko Arsic said on Thursday that Muslims and Croats crossing into Serb territory would face

At least six other Serbs are in Bosnian government custody, some as potential witnesses to war crimes.

Gen John Shalikashvili. chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said he received assurances from Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic to free Serbs "against whom there is no evidence of participating in war crimes'

Shalikashvili, who met with Izetbegovic in Sarajevo. said he also requested that the International Committee of the Red Cross be allowed to visit the detainees. The two Serb officers

were arrested on January 30 after they made a wrong turn into government-held territory near Sarajevo. Serb anger grew when the

UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, Netherlands, said it wants the two men held until it decides whether to indict them for war crimes. Two news photographers

were detained on Thursday by Bosnian Serbs. One of them. Associated Press pho-

tographer Srdjan Ilic, was released on Friday. But the second, Hidajet Delic, remained in custody. Delic was accredited to the Bosnian government BH Press news agency but worked frequently for the

Even without the arrest of the Bosnian Serb officers, the danger of just such a conflict seemed almost to be built into the Bosnian peace agreement.

The accord stipulates that suspected war criminals in Bosnia should be brought to justice. Yet the accord depends on the cooperation of one key party - the Serbs whose top military commander, Gen Ratko Mladic, and top political leader, Radovan Karadzic, themselves have been indicted by the tribunal

Karadzic said the detentions by the Bosnian government violated the peace accord's free-movement provisions while the NATO-led force watched in "impotence and humiliation," the Belgrade-based Tanjug news agency said.

New US immigration law may encourage brain drain

WASHINGTON, Feb 10: America's new immigration law, expected to pass this year, is frankly aimed at encouraging brain drain from other countries to the United States, to compete effectively in the global market place.

The Chairman of the Congressional subcommittee on immigration. Lamar Smith, told reporters here today that his bill, with 120 Republican and Democratic co-sponsors, has been approved by the judiciary committee by a vote of 23 to

reports PTI.

The bill is also likely to increase the percentage of immigrants, admitted on the basis of needed skills and education, from 18 to 28 per cent, Smith said.

He said increasing the number of skilled immigrants would better ensure that they would become productive. self sustaining members of society rather than welfare recipients.

The new bills also seek to discourage immigration as far as possible by members of extended families, confining immigration mostly to the nuclear family-husband. Wife and children, and

professionals. An effort to restrict immigration by professionals had recently backfired as computer moghuls had protested vigorously. pointing out that computer

experts from countries like India were playing a major role in US software industry. The new bill will make sponsors legally and financially liable for the

immigrants, parents, sisters, brothers etc. Whom they sponsor at present the sponsors give

such an assurance but when the relatives turn 65, in many cases they apply for and get welfare assistance.

Smith cited statistics the department of labour indicating that immigration accounts for about 50 per cent of the decline in real wages of the lowest-skilled

The Congress and the immigration naturalisation service have recently launched a drive against illegal immigrants in the US a report of the Republican Policy Committee said that almost half of the nearly five million illegal aliens in the US use fraudulent documents to get jobs and benefits.

US Senate body seeks sanctions on China

WASHINGTON, Feb 10: US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jesse Helms on Friday urged President Bill Clinton to impose sanctions on China for transferring missile technology to Iran, reports Reuter.

"In the face of growing evidence regarding China's role in Iran's weapons drive, and the clear legal requirement that sanctions be levied against China for its missile sales to fran, I appeal to you to act decisively," Helms said in a letter to Clinton.

Helms, a North Carolina Republican, said he had learned that Iranian-Chinese missile cooperation and transfers were discussed at highlevel administration meetings this week.

"I am informed unofficially that there was virtually unanimous agreement that sufficient evidence exists to determine that China has knowingly exported missile technology control regime-controlled equipment and tech-

nology to Iran," Helms said. **US renews** appeal to extradite Khun Sa

WASHINGTON, Feb 10: The US State Department issued a fresh appeal to Myanmar on Friday to extradite drug lord Khun Sa, saying that the trafficker was responsible for a part of the flow of narcotics into the United States, reports AFP.

Spokesman Glyn Davies described Myanmar foreign minister Ohn Gyaw's refusal to extradite Khun Sa as a "negative development."

"We call on the government to deliver this man up because of his importance as a drug lord behind the flow of much of the narcotics in this country," he said.

Davies also addressed reports that Khun Sa, who for many years led an armed rebellion against Yangon in Myanmar Shan state, surrendered to authorities last month in exchange for guarantees that he not be extradited.

Rao, Sonia attend iftar party

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, Sonia Gandhhi and Lok Sabha Speaker Shivraj V Patil were among those who attended an iftary party hosted by the former railway minister CK Jaffer Sharief at his residence here Friday, reports

Among others who responded to Shariefs invitation were the former ministers, Madhavrao Scindia, Balram Jakahar Karnataka governor Kursheed Alam Khan, National Conference leader, Farooq Abdullah, minister, Rajesh Pilot, RK Dhawan and Sibtery Razi.

But when the prime minister came behind schedules most of the other dignitaries had already left. Rao was seen in a jovial mood taking to Sharief and exchanging plesasantries with the other guest.

BJP for abrogation of Article 370

JAMMU, Feb 10: BJP leader Kidar Nath Sahni has opposed Article 370 of the constitution which granted a special status to Jammu and Kashmir and has called for its abrogation, reports PTI.

Terming such a move as the best political package for Jammu and Kashmir, Sahni, told reporters here today that this would ensure justice and equal opportunities for people of the state and remove the feeling that they have a separate entity within the Indian union.

Opposing the national conference demand for pre-1953 status for the state, he said there should be no appeasement of any political party or individual



His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales meets with British soldiers stationed in Mrkonjic Grad, on Friday. Prince Charles visited Sarajevo and British Troops based in central Bosnia on the last day of his visit to Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina. - AFP/UNB photo

Top Afghan leaders meet to set up broad-based govt

eral top Afghan leaders held talks here Friday to hammer out a solution for the establishment of a broad-based government in Afghanistan, Pakistani and Afghan sources said, reports AFP.

Former Afghan president Sibghatullah Mojaddedi met with Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostam, who few into Islamabad Tuesday, they said.

Dostam, who commands considerable influence in several provinces in northern Afghanistan, also met with Ustad Mohaggig, Vice-President of the pro-lranian Shiite faction Hezb-i-Wahdat, and Sadeq Modabbari of Harkat-i-Islami, the sources said.

The Uzbek general earlier on Thursday discussed the Afghan situation with Pakistan government leaders and senior foreign office officials. Official Pakistani sources

rain have flooded parts of Oregon and Washington.

possibility of representatives of the Taliban Islamic militia ending the nearly four-year joining the talks among the key rivals of embattled Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, who remains in power in Kabul despite his two-year tenure ending in December 1994.

Diplomatic activity to resolve the Afghan conflict stepped up Thursday as Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Borujerdi arrived in Islamabad for talks with Pakistani officials and UN Special Envoy on Afghanistan Mahmoud Mestiri.

Mestiri also went to the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad to discuss peace prospects with former premier

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Afghan sources said that Hekmatyar, who heads his faction of Hezb-t-Islami, was also expected in Islamabad

here did not rule out the Saturday to join the intra-Afghan dialogue aimed at Afghan civil war.

The Taliban militia, besieging the Afghan capital Kabul for the past four months, wants to topple Rabbani and enforce Islamic law in the war torn country.

Dostam's National Islamic Movement and Hekamtyar's Hezb-i-Islami along with Shi ite Hezb-i-Wahdat and Mojaddedi's National Liberation Front are grouped in a four party opposition coalition, which also demands Rabbani's resignation to pave the way for transfer of power in Kabul.

Mojaddedi Thursday told Pakistan television that Rabbani was "not sincere" in transferring power. Rabbani says he will step down but he never said to whom he would transfer the power.

Off the Record

Ready for group sex on polls day!

MOSCOW: Vladimir Zhirinovsky, who launches his presidential campaign this weekend by throwing a lavish silver wedding bash for himself, said on Friday his party was a "virgin in white" ready

voters, reports Reuter. "Against the background of general political prostitution. the LDPR is a long-haired. meek-eyed virgin in white." said the ultra-nationalist who plies a risk line in sexual innuendo. "Forty million men will

for "group sex" with Russian

desert all those prostitutes and rush after the virgin LDPR. Let's have group sex on June 16," he told a news conference, referring to the date of the election. Zhirinovsky will lead his

wife Galina to the altar on Sunday, celebrating 25 years of marriage with a church

blessing and then treating Moscow's homeless to a" sea of Having spent a fortune worthy of a latter-day Tsar on

drink and food, he assured reporters that Sunday's grandstanding exercise would be worth turning up 'or. "There'll be loads of Vodka and sweets," he said

"There'll be enough for everyone and everyone will have a good time.

Porn sites remain despite decency act

SAN FRANCISCO: The day after President Clinton signed the Communications Decency Act, some Web sites still featured naked women and men doing things clearly

not meant for children's eyes, reports AP. The law, part of a historic bill that overhauls telecommunications in the United States, keeps indecent. material from being made available to minors on the Internet.

The Justice Department has agreed not to enforce the act before a Philadelphia court rules on a request for a temporary restraining order. A legal challenge also has

been filed in New York. In the interim, the small percentage of cyberspace devoted to indecent material looks little different than when the bill was signed a day earlier.

Pornographic sites still offer up obscene pictures and stories of incest and rape still wit to be read on the Internet bulletin board Usenet, where a new groups was formed Thursday night- alt (expletive) the

communications decency act. But some sexually oriented sites have tried to comply by setting up elaborate warning pages.

VCA On Line, for example, advertises the wares of one of the nation's larger purveyors of adult videos, and Web master Darren Roberts has gone to great lengths to announced that the site is for adults only.

The first screen offers buttons that lead straight to three major companies that sell programme allowing parents to block out objectionable material.

Formation of coalition govt

Turkish leaders yet to reach accord

ANKARA, Feb 10: Hopes of Party of Necmettin Erbakan. putting an end to Turkey's six-week political crisis dimmed on Friday as the three main party leaders continued to squabble over who should head a new government, reports AFP.

Mesut Yilmaz, the latest politician asked to form a government, told a news conference he may give up the task early next week if talks with a pro-Islamic party do not produce a surprise

He has already seen a coalition offer with the centre-right True Path Party rebuffed, and was pessimistic on the prospects of an

alliance with the Welfare

Yilmaz, head of the rightwing Motherland Party, said he would meet Erbakan for talks on Monday "to try to see if it is possible to form a coalition.

But he added: "After the legislative elections of December 24. Erbakan demonstrated flexibility but the attitude he has shown recently is a diversion from that line.

"I don't have a lot of hope for Monday's meeting. he went on, and accused the Welfare leader of "having praised the Iranian Islamic revolution" of 1979 during a reception at the Iranian Embassy in Ankara

World adding quarter-million people every 24 hrs

That means one in four, or

- AFP/UNB photo

BALTIMORE, Feb 10: If the human race does not quickly control the population explosion, nature may provide more brutal remedies such as starvation and disease, scientists said on

Cornell University ecologist David Pimental warned of grim consequences of overpopulation as he presented research at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) meeting.

Friday, reports Reuter.

"We're adding a quartermillion people every 24 hours," he said in an interview.

"And no one is really tak-

"It's not a big bang kind of problem, it's a gradual thing but that trickle is going to nickel and dime us to death." The report by Pimental

ing action about it," he added.

Private planes at the Chehalis-Centralia airport are swamped by floodwaters from the

swollen Skookumchuck River in southwestern Washington on Friday. Melting snow and

and his colleagues, entitled "Impact of Population Growth on Food Supplies and the Environment," said the earth could support about 2 billion people comfortably. By comfortably, the scien-

tists mean more modestly then the style to which most consumer-oriented Americans have become accustomed. The planet already has

nearly 6 billion people, and

the population is expected to

roughly double in 50 to 60

3 billion people, will be malnourished and vulnerable to disease. Pimental said. adding that grain supplies per person have dropped for the past 15 years. In addition, about one-third of cropland has been abandoned because of erosion since the middle of the century.

Fave Duchin, director of the Institute for Economic Analysis at New York Univer sity, said much of the world saw US-style consumption as a desirable goal, but this could be a recipe for ecological disaster.

She urged new anti pollution technologies, farm and to rethink basic assumptions about future lifestyles. "We need to create a set of stories around different kind

development strategies and

of possibilities, like a historian of the future." she said

Rockefeller University's Paul Cohen, the author of the new book How Many People can the Earth Support said that by some calculations there should be nearly 700 billion people on the planet 150 years from now

He said people could not have more children than needed to replace them selves. This is not an ideo logical slogan he said It is a hard fact

Although not every scientist shares these views and some even believe the planet can accommodate perhaps a trillion people, the experts at AAAS were not so sanguine

They said there simply would not be enough tood on a planet where I billion to 2 billion people were already malnourished

Not enough water talls from the sky said cohen China already has only about one-third as much farmland per person as most of the world and the world average in turn is only about half of what " takes for the minimal thet in the linted States and Europe, Pimental said