

International

PLO demands timetable for Israeli pullout from rural areas in WB

BRIEFLY

3 heroin labs raided in Pakistan: Pakistan troops backed by armoured personnel carriers raided three heroin laboratories in a remote tribal area bordering Afghanistan on Saturday, an official said.

It was a big, successful operation with the element of surprise. Sherzada Khan, the political agent for the Khyber agency in northwestern Pakistan, told Reuters. He said about 1,000 paramilitary troops of the Khyber rifles militia had taken part in the raid, launched at 2 a.m. (2100 GMT Friday), in the Toda Mela area, 37 km (23 miles) southwest of the city of Peshawar.

Road mishap kills 4 in ROK: At least four people were killed and 33 others injured yesterday when a truck jumped over a concrete curb dividing a provincial highway and ran into a tourist bus, police said.

There were no foreign casualties in the accident, which took place early yesterday near Kyongju, some 400 kilometers (240 miles) southeast of Seoul. Police reported four deaths at the scene — the truck's driver and three people from the tourist bus, which was carrying mainly elderly holiday makers.

Blast kills Israeli soldier in Lebanon: A roadside bomb killed an Israeli soldier Saturday and Israeli shelling following the attack wounded six civilians, including a 14-year-old boy, security officials said.

The Israeli shelling appeared to be in retaliation for the attack on an Israeli patrol in which one soldier was killed and another wounded. An Israeli flechette shell slammed into the village of Kfar Tibnit after the attack, spraying shrapnel and wounding six civilians.

Yeltsin-Chirac to meet in 97: French President Jacques Chirac and Russian President Boris Yeltsin will meet in Moscow in early 1997, the Interfax news agency said Saturday.

It said the two leaders spoke on the telephone Saturday and Chirac accepted Yeltsin's invitation to visit Moscow. The report said the French leader would make a brief working visit to the Russian capital early in 1997.

Govt-rebel sign accord in Guatemala: An Agreement signed Saturday in Stockholm by the Guatemalan government and majority Maya rebels will sharply reduce the power of the military that have long repressed non-whites in Guatemala.

Tellingly, the 19 points in the agreed-upon constitutional reform between the government and rebels defines this Central American nation as a "multi ethnic plural cultural and multi lingual" society. It is the first time since Spaniards arrived in 1524 and enslaved the ethnic Maya that Guatemala will recognise indigenous culture, languages, religious practices and lands as equal to those of the ruling class, mostly descended from Spanish immigrants.

Egyptian FM says ME peace process must be saved, protected

CAIRO, Dec 8: Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa has said the Middle East peace process, described by Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat as "saved and protected", reports Reuters.

Moussa spoke to reporters late on Saturday after separate meetings in Cairo with Arafat and the European Union's Middle East envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos.

The Foreign Minister said he briefed Arafat and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak about his talks last week in Lisbon with Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We had a long discussion about the situation in order to save the peace process and push it forward," Moussa said.

"There are a lot of points that have to be tackled — the important thing is that the peace process has to be saved and protected. Peace talks between Israelis



Villagers from Cuarto Pueblo, Guatemala, Saturday carry caskets with the exhumed remains of over 300 people who were massacred by soldiers in 1982 as part of an anti guerrilla campaign. The victims relatives have asked that the peace agreement, that will be signed December 29 not include amnesty for the soldiers involved in the killings.

Summit of American states calls for war against poverty

SANTA CRUZ DE LA SIERRA, Bolivia, Dec 8: Heads of state from around the Americas concluded a summit on sustainable development by calling for an all-out war against poverty to assure protection of the world's habitats and economic growth, reports AP.

JERUSALEM, Dec 8: The agreement on an Israeli troop withdrawal in Hebron is complete, but the signing is being delayed by a dispute with the Palestinians over a further Israeli withdrawal in the West Bank, Israel radio reported Sunday.

However, Israel army radio said the two sides still disagree over the security arrangements for the Israeli withdrawal in Hebron.

The Palestinians are demanding a timetable for an Israeli withdrawal from rural areas in the West Bank. This was promised by the previous Israeli government in the interim agreements on Palestinian autonomy, signed in Oslo, Norway.

The Palestinians say they do not trust Netanyahu to carry out the further withdrawal, and their suspicions have been

Indo-Nepal journalists' confce begins

KATHMANDU, Dec 8: The first ever conference of journalists from Nepal and India has expressed concern over deteriorating standard of journalism in both the countries and recommended a code of conduct for media institutions in South Asia, reports PTI.

The two-day conference attended by more than 55 journalists from the two countries noted that media professionals have an important role to play in solving the problems through objective reporting on issues of public concern.

The journalists affirmed their firm commitment to upholding the universal values of freedom of expression and free flow of information.

It was suggested in the conference organised by the Editors Society of Nepal with cooperation of Nepal-India B P Koirala Foundation that a media exchange programme be initiated between the two countries, with the Indian journalists institutes assisting in the professional training of the Nepal media persons.

Rebels surround last govt-held town in E Zaire

BENI, Zaire, Dec 8: Zairian rebels surrounded the last town held by government troops in eastern Zaire, local residents and hospital workers said, reports AP.

A Zairian rebel officer in Beni, who refused to give his name, said his forces were on the outskirts of Beni, 100 miles (160 kms) north.

Hundreds of troops fighting under the banner of the Alliance of Democratic Forces for Liberation (Congo-Zaire) headed from Beni, near the Ugandan border, to Bunia Saturday morning.

In Kinshasa, Information Minister Boguo Makeli said turmoil in Bunia had left 10 people dead.

Truckloads of young local fighters allied with the rebels also set out toward Bunia singing battle songs and raising clenched fists in the air. The young warriors are called mayimayi or "powerful water" in Swahili, from the potion they believe will protect them from harm.



United States Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky (L) greets Singapore's Communications Minister Mah Bow Tan (R) beside Yeo Cheow Tong Singapore's Minister for Trade and Industry Sunday one day before the opening of the first World Trade Organisation ministerial meeting. Despite steadfast Asian opposition, negotiators for the United States are expected to continue their efforts to pry open the 550-billion dollar global telecoms market during the inaugural WTO meeting from Today to December 13.

Trade unions threaten to go on strike against Milosevic

BELGRADE, Dec 8: Trade unions threatened to go on strike, escalating daily demonstrations against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, reports AP.

The coalition had asked the court to overturn government action annulling vote results in 46 municipal districts where coalition candidates posted victories.

The court late Saturday issued rulings on five of those cases, rejecting demands to dismiss the annulments, said Milica Nedeljkovic, a coalition observer at Belgrade's Electoral Commission.

She said in an interview over independent Radio B 92 that results of the first five decisions were delivered to the electoral commission.

The commission tentatively set a news conference for Sunday, apparently to formally announce the court decisions.

Polish nobel laureate condemns world's indifference to suffering

STOCKHOLM, Dec 8: Whatever we might think of the world's terrifying vastness, its indifference to suffering and our own precarious position within it — the world nonetheless is "astounding," Nobel Prize-winning Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska said Saturday, reports AP.

Speaking before 500 people in the Great Hall of the Swedish Academy, Ms. Szymborska swung from subtle humor to weighty themes to give her view of "our clamorous times."

"Bureaucrats and bus passengers respond with a touch of incredulity and alarm when they find out that they're dealing with a poet," she said, delivering her Nobel Prize lecture in Polish.

Though the 73-year-old poet drew laughs with that light-hearted remark, she turned serious later during her 20-minute talk in Stockholm.

"The world — whatever we might think when terrified by its vastness and our own impotence, or embittered by its indifference to individual suffering

South Africa to host next int'l energy confce

GOA, India, Dec 8: South Africa was chosen Sunday to host next year's International Energy Conference, meaning the problems of developing countries will continue to be a major focus of talks between oil producers and consumers, reports AP.

The summit marks this city's debut as an international meeting centre. Thirty years ago, Santa Cruz had a population of 35,000. Today, it has 700,000 residents, one of the continent's most modern airports and thriving agro-industrial and hydrocarbon industries.

The summit grew out of the 1994 Summit of the Americas, in which leaders from throughout the Western Hemisphere met in Miami.

Off the Record

Russian bad boy to make his film debut?

MOSCOW: Audiences have roared at his campaign-trail antics, wept at his poor-boy pathos, trembled at his saber-rattling tirades. But that was just real life. Are they ready for Vladimir Zhirinovsky. The Movie? reports AP.

Ready or not, Russian viewers are about to see Vladimir Zhirinovsky the ultranationalist bad boy of Russian politics, make his film debut.

The flamboyant member of parliament and three-time presidential contender in starring in a made-for-TV movie along with Hitler, Stalin and Lenin — or at least actors made up to look like them.

"I hate all these people here," Zhirinovsky screamed gleefully to reporters. "They rouse my hatred! It's an inspiration to be with them."

Zhirinovskiy plays a police inspector in 'Shipof Doubles,' which also features look-alikes for Madonna, Michael Jackson and Margaret Thatcher.

To make a hotpot soup

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong chef admitted before a magistrate that he slaughtered his friend's cat to make a hotpot soup, a newspaper reported Sunday, reports Reuters.

Lam Yui-Tin, 39, told the judge that cat soup would keep him strong during winter. The South China Morning Post reported. The chef, who was fined (259 US dollar) for unlawfully slaughtering a domestic cat for food, was stopped only after a neighbour spotted him burning far off the butchered animal.

But the royal society for the prevention of cruelty to animals in Hong Kong slammed the sentence as too lenient and not enough of a deterrent.

Surrogate granny gives birth to baby girl

LONDON: Britain's first "surrogate grandmother" has given birth to a baby girl for her own daughter who was unable to bear children, the family announced Saturday, reports AP.

Caitlin Langston was born Thursday at Darlington Memorial Hospital in northern England and weighed five pounds, 3 ounces (2.6 kg), the family said.

Edith Jones, 51, was implanted with embryos created from eggs from her daughter Suzanne and sperm from Suzanne's husband, Chris Langston.

The first such case in which a woman served as a surrogate for her daughter was reported in South Africa in 1987. In that case, the surrogate gave birth to triplets.

Tajik opposition leader was on board Taliban forces down plane

KABUL, Dec 8: Taliban jet fighters intercepted a UN aircraft carrying a rebel leader from Tajikistan on Saturday, and forced it to land at a military air base in Western Afghanistan, reports AP.

"They didn't get the proper permission and we were within our rights to force them to land after it entered Afghanistan," said Abdul Niazi, a Taliban spokesman in the Afghan capital, several hundred kilometers (miles) east of Shindand Air Base, where the aircraft was forced to land.

Niazi said Tajikistan's opposition leader Syed Abdullo Nuri was on board the aircraft, along with eight other people, some of whom were Iranians. All the passengers and crew were unharmed.

There were some unconfirmed reports that the Taliban would release the aircraft and passengers on Sunday.

Nuri was on his way to Kunduz in northern Afghanistan to attend peace talks with Tajik-

istan's beleaguered president Emomali Rakhmanov to try to end that country's bitter civil war, said Akbar Torahjanzada, a spokesman for Nuri in Kabul.

The peace talks were to be held on Monday, he said.

Niazi said the UN aircraft which had left Mashhad in neighbouring Iran was forced to land after it entered Afghanistan's air space over western Herat without first getting permission.

Herat is controlled by the Taliban, while northern Kunduz is ruled by an anti-Taliban alliance, that includes northern warlord Rashid Dostum and ousted Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani, who is an ethnic Tajik.

Taliban analysts said that Rabbani, who is currently in Iran, may have been on the aircraft, which is why it was intercepted.

While Iran has denied helping the anti-Taliban forces, Tehran also has condemned the Taliban's harsh version of Islamic law.

Bosnian army begins to destroy surplus arms

SARAJEVO, Dec 8: The mainly Muslim Bosnian army has begun destroying its surplus weapons, in accordance with accords setting ceilings on the various classes of weapons in Bosnia, Croatia and the rump Yugoslavia, a Bosnian army commander said Saturday, reports AP.

"Fifty-one mortars of various calibres, seven cannons and two tanks will be destroyed over the next few days in the barracks of the Bosnian army 5th corps," General Atif Dudakovic said on Bosnian radio.

The 5th army corps is stationed in the Bihać region of northwestern Bosnian and played a key role in the victorious offensive of Autumn 1995 against the Bosnian Serbs.

"We began on Friday with the destruction of six mortars and I think that we will have finished destroying all the weapons within about 20 days," he said, adding, "All these weapons were captured from the Bosnian Serb forces."

Signatories to the arms limitation accords, namely: Croatia Yugoslavia and the two entities making up post-war Bosnia — The Republika SRPSKA and the Muslim Croat Federation, undertook to destroy 40 per cent of their surplus weaponry by January 1, 1997.



Cuban Minister of the Armed Forces Raul Castro (C), his brother and Cuban President Fidel Castro (R) and Cuban Commander Juan Almeida (L) appear after Raul delivered a speech to honour Cuban independence fighter Antonio Maceo Saturday at Maceo's mausoleum in Havana. The occasion of the speech was the 100th anniversary of Maceo's death, who died fighting the Spanish.

— AFP/UNB photo