### Netanyahu may agree to Palestinian state with limitations on sovereignty

JERUSALEM, Dec 20: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would accept the creation a Palestinian state, but with severe limitations on its sovereignty, a top aide said in an interview published Friday. reports AP.

"The point is that you can call it anything you want. You can call it autonomy plus or you can call it a state minus," said David Bar-Illan in an interview with the English language daily. The Jerusalem Post.

Bar-Illan's comments came as Israel prepared its policy for talks on the final status of Palestinian-run territory. It further sharpened Netanyahu's position on what Israel would ultimately offer the Palestinians.

The issue of statehood for the Palestinians is critical and the Arab perception that Israel's new hard-line government was unwilling to accept such statehood was one of the main reasons behind the current worsening of tensions in the region.

The prime minister recently indicated that he would support a state-like entity for the Palestinians similar to a commonwealth like Puerto Rico or a state with shared sovereignty like Andorra.

Bar-Illan said that Netanyahu's policy was similar to that of the former left-wing government of Prime Minster Shimon Peres, who had endorsed the idea of a federation between the Palestinians and neighboring Jordan.

However, Peres' Labor Party had dropped its official opposition to a Palestinian state. while Netanyahu's Likud Party insists on restricting Palestinian sovereignty.

What Netanyahu is talking about is limited sovereignty and actually the Labor Party was talking about limited sovereignty too," said Bar-Illan.

He said that the difference was that under the Netanyahu government a Palestinian state would be truly demilitarised, in contrast to the Labor government which did not enforce limitations on weaponry.

He also said that Israel has no plans to expand Jewish settlements territorially but could triple the number of Jewish settlers living among two million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

### Fujimori rejects demands by rebels

## Peruvian rebels free 4 hostages

LIMA, Dec 20: Communist rebels freed four hostages from an embassy residence Thursday, including one man in a wheelchair, while Peru's government prepared for negotiations to free hundreds more amid a welter of conflicting advice, reports AP.

Red Cross workers passed through police lines to ferry fruit, bread, ham and cheese to the 375 men, who were still being held Thursday night as the standoff passed the 48-hour mark.

The Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, late in the afternoon, released four Peruvian men for medical reasons, Red Cross spokesman Steven Anderson said.

The hostages are from at least 28 countries. Seven are Americans, according to one American's wife, who was released earlier with all the other women captives.

On Thursday, Peru's President Alberto Fujimori assured nine national leaders, including President Clinton, that his government was seeking "a prompt solution to this crisis with the principal objective of preserving the health and life of

those held." It was the Peruvian leader's first pronouncement on the

two-day-old crisis. The letter's text was released by the Foreign Ministry, which said similar letters were sent Thursday to the leaders of Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, South Korea, Paraguay, Uruguay, Canada, Spain and the United States.

After nightfall, there were reports that authorities shut off power in the neighbourhood. darkening a four-square block area. However, an AP reporter on the scene said some lights in the neighbourhood were on. Peruvian television footage showed lights on in the ambassador's residence. There was no immediate explanation for the reported blackout.

At one point earlier Thursday, what sounded like a gunshot was heard in the compound. There was no explanation for it.

Another AP report says. President Alberto Fujimori rejected demands by leftist rebels that their jailed comrades be freed as a condition for the release of about 375 hostages being held at the Japanese ambassador's residence.

The president's Council of Ministers approved the measure earlier in the day on Thursday, but didn't disclose it for hours. A one-page statement was faxed to local media early

Friday morning. It stated in part that the Council approved "the proposal of the president of the republic to not accept the notion of putting in liberty any terrorist imprisoned in a Peruvian penitentiary."

The measure was Fujimori's first direct public reaction to the crisis, set off last Tuesday

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council on Thursday strongly condemned the seizure of hostages at the residence of the Japanese ambassador in Lima as an assault against the international community as a whole.

In another show of solidarity with the Peruvian government, outgoing Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali expressed his "profound concern" over the incident. UN officials said some United Nations employees were among the hostages but refused to give details, citing security.

Another report says, Japan announced Friday that it was stepping up security at some of its embassies around the world because of the attack by leftist rebels on its ambassador's residence in Peru.

The government also said it was not yet seeking a direct role in negotiations with the guerrillas who are holding hundreds of hostages at the residence in Lima. including Japan's ambassador.

Meanwhile, Peru's leader assured President Clinton and other world leaders Thursday that his "principal objective" in trying to free seized diplomats was getting them out of rebel hands unharmed.

President Alberto Fujimori made the vow in letters sent to the US president and the leaders of eight other countries with diplomats held hostage at the Japanese ambassador's residence.

"I want to assure your excellency that I am permanently and continuously engaged with my team in obtaining a prompt solution to this crisis with the principal objective of preserving the health and life of those held," Fujimori wrote.

Japan bars

bureaucrats

from taking

gifts

TOKYO. Dec 20: Reacting to a

bribery scandal that ensnared

top health ministry officials.

Japan's government on Friday forbade bureaucrats to accept

gifts or favors from business

people whom they regulate, re-

the favors Japanese business-

men traditionally shower on

bureaucrats to win goodwill:

dinners at exclusive restau-

rants, free rounds of golf, jun-

About the only thing offi-

Prime Minister Ryutaro

cials are still allowed to receive

Hashimoto urged his ministers

to make all efforts to "achieve

results," top government

spokesman Seiroku Kajiyama

who break the rules will be

worked out by each ministry or

agency later, a spokesman of

Fulci upset over

threats against UN

personnel in

Tajikistan

To protest mistreatment of UN

observers in Tajikistan, the Se-

curity Council president said

Thursday he would ask the

country's ambassador what is

being done to prevent the ha-

UN personnel have been sub-

jected to death threats, said

council President Francesco

Paolo Fulci. "They line them up

against the wall as if they're go-

ing to be executed. And then at

the last moment they don't do

rassment, reports AP.

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 20:

the Management and Coordi-

Punishments for officials

told a regular news conference.

The ban covers just about all

ports AP.

kets abroad.

is a cup of hot tea.

nation Agency said.



This January 09, 1996 file photo shows US citizen Lori Berenson during her presentation to the press by the Peruvian anti-terrorist authorities in Lima, after her sentencing to life imprisonment for helping rent a safe house for the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA). Peruvian intelligence sources said Wednesday the guerillas wanted Berenson released - AFP/UNB photo

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Rafsanjani arrives in Turkey: Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Thursday arrived for a four-day visit to Turkey aimed at bolstering economic ties, AFP reports from Ankara.

Rafsanjani, accompanied by a delegation of some 200 people, including the Foreign Affairs and Petroleum Ministers, Ali Akbar Velayati and Golam Reza Agazadeh-Khoi, was welcomed on arrival by President Suleyman Demirel. The visit by the Iranian head of state, his third since 1991, is likely to irritate Turkey's western partners, specially the United States.

11 killed in Taipei fire: Three pre-dawn fires in homes around Taiwan left 11 people dead

Thursday, police said. AP reports from Taipei. They said the worst, started by a joss stick, killed a woman and her four children in Chiayi, 194 kilometres (120 miles) south of the capital, Taipei. A fire caused by a gas cooker killed four people including an 11-year-old girl in Taiwan's second largest city. Kaohsiung, and a woman and her 9-year-old niece in the port city of Keelung died inhaling smoke from a fire caused by faulty wiring, police said. Deadly fires are a plague in Taiwan, where safety consciousness lags behind rapid urban and industrial expansion. Public outcry over fires can lead to political repercussions and mayors losing their jobs.

Ghali to return home in Jan: Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the outgoing UN secretary general, will return home to Egypt in January to write books, his

spokesman said Thursday. AFP reports from United Nations. "He is returning to Egypt and will write two books," one on the Camp David peace treaty between Israel and Egypt, and another on the United Nations, said spokesman Ahmad Fawzi. Boutros-Ghali: 74. served as UN chief for five years. He will hand over the reins of the world body December 31 to Ghana's Kofi Annan, who was his Urider Secretary for peacekeeping operations, and leave New York January 1.

Elephant kills 5 in Bihar: A wild elephant trampled five people to death in the eastern Indian state of Bihar, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported yesterday. AFP says from New Delhi.

The elephant, which had got cut off from a group of four other elephants, strayed into the village of Sardula Thursday night and killed four people sleeping under a Haystack, the news agency said. Three others were injured. The animal then killed a farmer in the village of Pals and also damaged crops and houses.

Madras seeks int'l help to clean rivers: The civic body in the southern city of Madras plans to seek international help to clean up its rivers and canals that are choked with sludge, a newspaper reported Friday, AP reports from New Delhi

About 65 kilometres (40 miles) of canals and rivers that meander through Madras, now renamed Chennai, are clogged with sludge and industrial and household wastes, the Financial Express newspaper reported.

China welcomes US-Japan

military link

WASHINGTON, Dec 20: All

East Asian countries — even

China - welcome the US-Japanese alliance as a deterrent

against Japanese military

resurgence, Japan's ambassador

China expressed concern

to the United States said.

this year about US-Japanese

military ties, but despite this,

"China in a way welcomes the

close Japan-US relations in-

cluding the Japan-US security

treaty," Ambassador Kunihiko

Saito told an audience of inter-

national lawyers and strate-

Japan's military heyday con-

tinues to be heard in Asian and

allied countries that battled

Japanese feel "there is no

Imperial Japan in World War !!,

but seldom from Japanese offi-

such possibility" of a militarist

revival "but... because of this

wariness. I think all countries

in East Asia, including China

welcome the close Japan-US se-

curity relationship." Saito said

at a speech-and-question ses-

Negative comment about

gists on Thursday.

reports AP.

Serbian nationalist and opposition leader Vuk Draskovic holds a traditional Orthodox Christmas Slava cake during anti-government demonstrations in Belgrade Thursday. - AFP/UNB photo

### Milosevic's aides threaten crackdown against unrest

KRUSEVAC, Yugoslavia, Dec 20: President Slobodan Milosevic's aides are warning of a possible crackdown against swelling unrest, and orchestrating rallies denouncing the United States and Germany as "dark powers" behind the tumult, reports AP.

Anti-government protesters numbering 250,000 filled the streets of Belgrade on Thursday. the largest turnout since the daily demonstrations began five weeks ago. Opposition orgamizers appealed to Milosevic not to divide Serbs by painting his foes as traitors - saving that could lead to civil war

They are pitting people one against the other, declared opposition leader Zoran Djindjic We have been watching the

regime's attempt to trigger civil war with horror and disbelief. The protests began last month after courts and election commissions controlled by

Milosevic annulled opposition victories in local elections Nov A delegation of the trans-Atlantic Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe led by former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Conzalez is to

arrive in Belgrade on Friday to review the election results Yugoslav Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic indicated Thursday that Milosevic would not oppose new local elections

if the OSCE delegation recommends them.

The opposition wants the original results reinstated, believing that Milosevic's control of the media and election commissions would make the new elections unfair.

In contrast to the opposition. Milosevic's supporters seemed scarce and slow to mobilize — roughly 3,000 die-hard Communists, most of them elderly, were bused in from villages to a 20-minute rally Thursday in the town of Kruse vac 90 miles southeast of Bel

Pro-Milosevic rallies so far have been held in provincial cities, but Djindjic said he was concerned the Serbian leader may soon try to organize one in the capital, thus increasing the risk of a clash between opposing protesters.

> Forty-four UN military observers are monitoring a truce in Tajikistan between the government and the opposition. who have been embroiled in civil war since 1992. There have been periodic cease-fire violations Tigers kill 11

## in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, Dec 20: Tamil tiger guerillas today ambushed an army convoy in north-eastern Sri Lanka, killing 10 soldiers and a civilian, local officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fired rocket propelled grenades and automatic weapons at the convoy of armoured vehicles in the district of Anuradhapura, officials

'A civilian woman who was travelling with the troops was also killed," a local official said, adding that it was routine for the military to provide armed escort to civilians in the

The tigers also destroyed three military vehicles and escaped with a motorcycle of the - AFP/UNB photo | security forces, officials said.

### Off the Record

#### Unforgivable error

BANGKOK, Dec 20. A That woman nearly blinded herself when she mistook a tube of super glue for eyedrops. The Bangkok Post reported Friday, says AFP

The orange vendor from the central That province of Panum Thani, outside of Bangkok, was rushed to hospital after drop-

ping glue into both eyes on Tuesday. "I realised that I had put in the super glue only after I dropped it in the second eye," she told the Post. The drop spread in my eyes and it was burning hot. By the time I reached the hospital could not open either of my eyes

Doctors managed to save her sight by washing out her eyes with oil and water, the report said

#### Netanyahu studying Arabic!

JERUSALEM: Benjamin Netanyahu Israel's hardline prime minister, wants to communicate better with the Arab world. reports AP. Netanyahu is studying Arabic at home with the help of

videotapes, his spokesman, David Bar Illan, said Thursday. Arabic is "a language he regrets not knowing." But Him said "He has expressed disapproval of the fact that too lew Israeli

Jews know Arabic. Bar-Illan said Israel's Educational TV has given Netanyahu the first four in a series of videot pes of its Arabic language

The spokesman acknowledged that Netanyahu, known for his fluent American accented English, might not have a lot of time to work on his Arabic

"I presume that if he ever gets a inneute to do anything about it, he will try to study." Bar Illan said.

#### VCR-Americans favourite invention?

CAMBRIDGE. Massachusetts The internal combustion engine? Satellite communication? The Internet? reports AP

Nope. When asked in an MIT survey to name the invention that has made life easier. Americans picked the videocassette recorder. "Years ago, difficulties in programming VCRs were so

widespread it was a staple of comedians routines, but Americans now embrace the technology, said Lester Thurow, professor of management and economies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology The survey of 1,008 adults was conducted in November by the

Lemelson-MIT Prize Board, which administers the world's largest award for uncommon and tower her Eighty per cent of the respondents and the VCR but

simplified their daily lives. Computers and cellular phones tied for second with 50 per cent and voice mani and pagers tied for third with 38 per cent.

More than a quarter of those polled said the Internet made their lives more convenient. But 12 per cent cited the Internet as the No I invention that has anoth Americans' lives more complicated.

#### Minister says

### Islamabad may raise defence budget

ISLAMABAD, Dec 20: Pak istan's Defence Minister Shahid Hamid Thursday said Islamabad might increase its defence budget in view of threats from rival India, reports AFP.

reducing the defence budget. Hamid said, adding that the country spends 26 per cent of its 14.2-billion-dollar national budget on defence. The minister, speaking with

Force War College in Karachi. said if possible Pakistan would make "appropriate increases to cater to any threat from across the border Pakistan's traditional rival

three wars since independence from British rule in 1947, reportedly augmented defence ex penditures by about 300 mil lion dollars recently

din Shaikh last week expressed

serious concern over the 'substantial increase. Hannd said: "we will get to-

"We have no intentions of

reporters at the Pakistan Air

India, with whom it has fought

Foreign secretary Najmud-

gether with the ministry of finance to see the possibility of

getting additional finances However, he described the situation on the border as satislactory. He said l'akistan de sires improved relations with India but added: "Unless the core issue of Kashmir is there.

relations with India cannot be

normal "Two of the India Pakistan wars were fought over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, which is home to a predominantly Muslim popu

Pakistan has called for a UN sponsored plebiscite to resolve the issue, but New Delhi rejects the proposal, arguing that the state is an integral part of India.

The India controlled portion of Kashmir has been rocked since 1989.

### donate 2 pc of profits to poor

JAKARTA, Dec 20: President Suharto, in a decree released by the state secretariat today, or dered wealthy Indonesian individuals and companies to donate two per cent of their profits to the poor, reports Reuter.

In the order dated December 4. Suharto, said individuals and companies with net annual earnings of over 100 million rupiah (42,000 dollar) must make the donations, the order was effective for the current 1996 tax year.

Analyst Christianto Wibisono, Director of the Indonesian Business Data Centre. said more than 11,000 individuals and companies would be affected.

#### Suharto's call to Rao era erodes credibility of Cong(I), democratic polity of India US unlikely to change policy The paper's editorial, under NEW DELHI, Dec 20: P V But it added that Rao had beshown any moral sense, which

Russian President Boris Yeltsin rocks with pop musicians at a campaign rally concert.

Yeltsin's energetic stumping, defying rumours of deteriorating health, won him re-elec-

tion a week later, but also sealed his candidacy for multiple heart bypass surgery by au-

Narasimha Rao, who could have gone down in history as one of India's great prime ministers, wrecked his reputation with a desperate, futile attempt to cling on to power following corruption allegations, newspapers said today, reports AFP.

sion of the American Bar Asso-

ciation's national security

Japanese military spending is

growing at a time when the end

of the Cold War has prompted

much of the world to trim.

Tokyo wants "to make our de-

answer to a question.

fence forces more effective, and

modern and so on..." he said in

A comparison of 1995 de-

fence budgets ranked the United

States first, at dirs 262 billion,

followed by Russia at dirs 80

billion. Japan about dlrs 42

billion and China about dirs 7

The world can expect grow-

ing readiness of Japan to send

military forces abroad because

Japanese are beginning to real-

enough, Saito said.

ize that financial support is not

Recent opinion polls show

that 60-70 per cent of the

Japanese public supports the

presence of the 45,000 US mili-

tary personnel in Japan Saito

He also acknowledged that

Rao, forced to give up his last post within the Congress (I) Party when he quit as parliamentary chief Wednesday after becoming involved in a series of corruption trials, was roundly condemned for his inglorious

The Hindustan Times said Rao's dogged refusal to go until given an ultimatum by his party had overshadowed his achievements in introducing historic economic reforms during his reign as prime minister between 1991 and 1996.

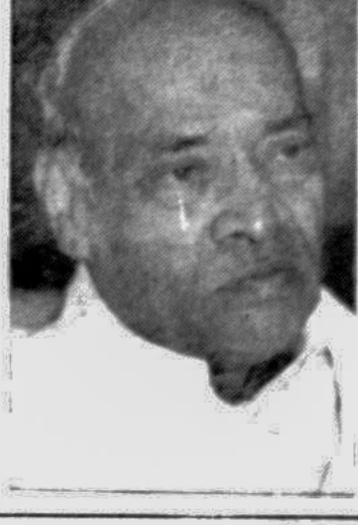
the headline "out at last," said: "It took a major surgical exercise ... to separate Narasimha Rao from his chair.

tumn.

It added: "Tragically enough, the manner of Narasimha Rao's departure from political and party offices has more or less obliterated what could have been assessed by history as one of the best prime ministerial performances this country has

"As the launcher of the most comprehensive economic reform programmes, he has earned his place in India's chequered history.

The Asian Age agreed, saying: "the ignominy of the past few days may not do proper justice to the career of a man who had his share of achievements while in office."



come "vengeful" after consolidating his position at the head of the party and "turned dictatorial and distant," saying: "between 1993 and 1996 he did more to destroy the Congress than any opposition force had done in many a decade." Most agreed Rao's resigna-

tion should have come earlier in the year when the Congress. which has dominated Indian politics for half a century since independence, was routed in general elections. They also said his involve-

ment in three ongoing corrup-tion trials, had helped ruin his reputation. The statesman, though acknowledging his success in

"setting the economy on its feet,

"If Narasimha Rao had

could not forgive him morally.

all politicians so singularly lack, he may have been a great prime minister. His promise went up in a smoke of corrup-

The Hindu also felt that the taint of scandal around Rao, embroiled as he was in cases involving cheating, forgery and buying off MPs, all of which had contributed immensely to the loss of credibility for the Congress," would never be washed away.

It added: "The Rao era had come to symbolise corruption at high places, eroding the credibility of not only the party but of the democratic polity as a

Many newspapers also homed in on Rao's failure to act in when hindu fundamentalists destroyed the 16th-century

Babri Mosque at Ayodhya in 1992, which led to rioting that left around 2,000 dead in sectarian riots. Only the tribune felt the 75-

year-old veteran politician should not be judged by the manner of his exit.

It accepted Rao 'did himself a grave disservice by playing for time and appearing the prover-bial limpet but argued this ill-

advised last stand against the collective will of the party he has spent a life time serving must not be allowed to detract from a larger appreciation of It said he may have been a "boring and uninspiring" leader but argued: 'Rao changed the face of the India he inherited in

1991. "Narasimha Rao blunde-

#### change policy on Iran WASHINGTON, Dec 20: Call-

ing Iran 'a dangerous force on the world scene," US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Thursday he sees no basis for any change in the US policy of seeking to contain Iran, reports AP. Speaking at a year-end news conference. Christopher reaf-

dialogue with Iran. But he ruled out a policy change because of fran's sponsorship of terrorism, its at-

tempt to acquire weapons of mass destruction and its efforts to undermine the peace process. The future of the relationship, he said, "is in the hands of

firmed US readiness to open a

red into his greatest achie-