

International

**Japan urged to help stop repression on E Timorese**

TOKYO, Jan 6: Nobel Peace Prize winner Jose Ramos-Horta urged Tokyo Monday to use "its enormous influence" to press the Indonesian government to stop mistreating East Timorese, reports AP.

The exiled resistance leader, in Japan for a seven-day visit, was targeting the meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and Indonesian President Suharto, set for Friday.

Japan has gained the "moral authority to speak out against tyranny that exists in Asia and elsewhere," Ramos-Horta said, referring to its aid to developing nations and efforts toward world peace.

Stressing he was not demanding that Japan resort to economic sanctions against Indonesia, Ramos-Horta asked Hashimoto to show support to the same extent that US President Bill Clinton has pressed Indonesia to peacefully resolve its internal conflict with East Timor.

Japan has repeatedly expressed concern about East Timor but has not accused Indonesia of human rights violations as has Clinton.

Holding up snapshots of youngsters with bullet wounds and scars, Ramos-Horta said many people in East Timor

were being abused by Indonesian troops.

"These are only a sample of those who managed to escape," said Ramos-Horta, who won the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize with Bishop Carlos Belo.

Both have been campaigning for a peaceful settlement to Indonesia's attempts to crush the independence movement in East Timor, a former Portuguese colony.

"I can only appeal to the Japanese government to use its enormous influence on Indonesia to release all prisoners, to stop torture, to stop shooting young people," Ramos-Horta told reporters.

Ramos-Horta, who lives in Australia, has requested a meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihiko Ikeda during his visit ending Sunday. But ministry officials say Ikeda's schedule is tight because of the hostage crisis in Peru.

The Japanese ambassador to Peru and Japanese businessmen are among the 74 people still held captive by Tupac Amaru guerrillas at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima since the December 17 takeover.

Ramos-Horta urged the rebels to release the hostages immediately.

**Pope urges MRTA rebels to free hostages**

LIMA, Jan 6: The 19-day stand off between the Peruvian government and Marxist guerrillas holding 74 VIP hostages looked farther than ever from a solution on Sunday despite fervent prayers at home and abroad for a bloodless end, reports Reuter.

Pope John Paul II, in an apparent appeal to the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) rebels, urged kidnappers and hostage-takers to free their captives as a "gesture of humanity."

"The mercy of Christ, born of human weakness, urges hostage-takers to fulfil this gesture of humanity — free these people," the Pope told pilgrims in St Peter's Square at his regular Sunday address.

From tiny Andean Churches to large city congregations, Peruvians prayed and held vigils for the captives.

"I have faith that everything is going to change," chanted Rosary-bearing nuns outside the besieged Japanese residence, while inside Catholic bishop Juan Luis Cipriani gave mass to the captive men.

**Indian civil aviation denies reports on air collision**

NEW DELHI, India, Jan 6: India's top civil aviation official denied reports that two Indian airlines narrowly averted a mid-air collision over New Delhi, insisting Monday that a pilot misinterpreted the incident, reports AP.

Airport officials had said earlier Sunday that an Airbus A320 of Indian Airlines and an Air-India Boeing 747 came within 300 metres (328 yards) of each other Saturday evening as they approached New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport from Bombay.

"They had maintained a vertical separation throughout," said H.S. Khola, the director-general of civil aviation. He said the two aircraft were never closer in altitude than 2,000 feet from each other.

Khola said the pilot of the Indian Airlines aircraft had misunderstood the data and reported a near miss to Civil Aviation Minister C.M. Ibrahim, who happened to be on his flight.

**US trying to move N-material out of Georgia**

WASHINGTON, Jan 6: The United States is trying to move a cache of nuclear material out of the ex-Soviet Republic of Georgia to keep it away from the wrong hands, a US official said Sunday, reports AP.

But the official declined comment on reports of a diplomatic impasse with Moscow over efforts to protect the stockpile from Iranian agents, arms traffickers of rebels of the breakaway Russian Republic of Chechnya.

The New York Times said Sunday that Washington has yet to persuade Russia to take control of the material languishing in an obsolete and vulnerable reactor outside the Georgian capital of Tbilisi.

The facility, virtually unguarded in the early 1990s when war raged in Georgia, houses an estimated 9.5 pounds (4.3 kilograms) of highly enriched uranium and two pounds (0.9 kilograms) of spent nuclear fuel, the Times said.

**Major begins his campaign for re-election**

LONDON, Jan 6: British Prime Minister John Major, resolving to stay cool, calm and elected in 1997, promised to get closer to the public, concentrate on the issues and run a clean campaign as he opened his bid to win re-election, reports Reuter.

In his first interview in the New Year, Major said on Sunday his campaign for the election, due by May, will not be negative but he warned that private talks between the main opposition Labour Party and minority Liberal Democrats were profoundly dangerous.

"I've made it clear we're going to concentrate on the issues. What the other parties do is up to them, but if they choose to operate from the gutter that's a matter for them," he said in the BBC television interview with Sir David Frost.

**Arab League vows to fight terrorism**

TUNIS, Jan 6: Interior ministers from the 22-member Arab League vowed Sunday to battle terrorism together as they wound up their 14th annual conference here Sunday, reports AP.

The ministers issued an official statement at the end of the two-day meeting, promising a "common strategy to fight" terrorism and to set up "a solid base of efficient cooperation" between Arab states to battle the purveyors of violence.

The agreement aims to increase cooperation between Arab states in the fight against terrorism, in particular violence linked to Islamic militancy.

**Indian minister urges CPI-M to join UF govt**

NEW DELHI, Jan 6: An Indian minister has urged the country's dominant Communist Party to join the government, newspapers reported today, says AP.

Human Resources Development Minister SR Bommai said that the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) should reverse its decision to stay outside from the seven-party coalition government.

"I am optimistic they will join the government," he said, referring to CPI-M leader Jyoti Basu's recent admission that his party had committed a "historic blunder" by refusing last year to head the coalition.

However the CPI-M, which supports the United Front government of parliament, denied his party was planning to topple the government but ordered Deve Gowda to tone up the administration.

"Unless we are confident that we can face the elections, we will not withdraw support. That may take two to three years," newspapers quoted Pawar as telling a private television channel.

Bommai's invitation to the CPI-M followed increasing hostility against the seven-month-old government by the

Congress (I) Party, whose support is crucial to the centre-left coalition.

On Sunday, two Congress members of parliament urged party president Sitaram Kesri to stop propping up the government, saying Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda was taking the Congress for granted.

"We are supporting the United Front government even without a continuous political dialogue," Vayalar Ravi and V. Narayanswamy said in a joint statement. "How long can this situation continue?"

"How long can we close our eyes towards (our party's) humiliation?"

Sharad Pawar, who heads the Congress in the lower house of parliament, denied his party was planning to topple the government but ordered Deve Gowda to tone up the administration.

"Unless we are confident that we can face the elections, we will not withdraw support. That may take two to three years," newspapers quoted Pawar as telling a private television channel.

"If we withdraw support, it will lead to instability. We don't want the economy to suffer."

But Pawar blasted the government over its sloppily attitude towards free-market reforms, adding: "They do not seem to be sure of what they are doing. Economic confidence has gone down, production is down. They must follow our economic policies."

Deve Gowda took office in June last year following a hung parliament. The Congress decision to back the coalition from the outside was taken by then-party president PV Narasimha Rao.

The Congress has hardened its stance against the government since Kesri replaced Rao, first as party president in September and last month as leader of the party's parliamentary group.

Deve Gowda admitted for the first time over the weekend that he was heading a shaky government, telling a public meeting in the northern town of Nagina that "vested interests" were trying to undermine his coalition.

**Jl calls for boycott of upcoming Pak polls**

LAHORE, Pakistan, Jan 6: Gazi Hussain Ahmed, chief of Pakistan's main Islamic fundamentalist party Sunday called for a boycott of upcoming general elections as thousands of his followers staged a peaceful sit-in here, witnesses said, reports AFP.

"Display banners outside your homes saying 'No vote please' and convince other people also to discourage candidates in a similar manner," said Ahmed whose Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) Party has already decided to boycott the February 3 polls.

He told the rally that elections would be meaningless without JI participation.

Witnesses said thousands of JI followers were present at the rally where he demanded that the current interim government of Pakistan to ensure previous rulers account for their actions ahead of the elections.

"The time is not far off when we will rule and will take to task people who have plundered this nation," Ahmed said.

Stressing that the JI was not asking for postponing the elections, he said his movement was for accountability of the corrupt politicians.

Ahmed criticised the care-

taker government's slow pace in bringing corrupt politicians to book and lashed out at two former premiers, Nawaz Sharif and his key opponent Benazir Bhutto for their "failure" to do any thing good for common man.

**5 ex-ministers of RPP decide to support Deuba**

KATHMANDU, Jan 6: Five former ministers who last month helped spark a political crisis in Nepal by deserting the government said today they had changed their minds and would now support Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, reports Reuter.

The five members of the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) were among seven ministers who quit Deuba's government in early December, throwing the Himalayan kingdom into political disarray.

Deuba subsequently narrowly survived a no-confidence motion and he now says that with the help of his RPP partners, he will confirm his majority in parliament.

**10 rebel soldiers killed**  
**French, pro-govt troops take control of Bangui**

BANGUI, Jan 6: French troops and troops loyal to the president of the Central African Republic were in control of this capital Sunday after a day of fierce fighting in which at least 10 rebel soldiers died, French officers here said, reports AP.

Heavily-armed French forces and troops who have sworn allegiance to President Ange-Felix Patasse patrolled the streets of Bangui late Sunday, after taking control of a number of buildings and districts held since mid-November by the rebels.

French troops launched a fierce assault in the early hours of Sunday against positions held by rebels opposing Patasse. They took control of the rebels' command post in the suburb of Petevo and the Kasai military barracks at Ouango, east of the city, Colonel Henri Plessier said.

The French also seized the police station occupied by the rebels when they began their mutiny on November 15 and several other strategic points, including a petrol depot, a brewery and the National Broadcasting Station.

The rebellion was the third within a year and motivated by both pay arrears and ethnic politics, African specialists say.

Most of the rebels of the Yokoma ethnic group, Yokoma residents of areas taken from the rebels Sunday were fleeing the districts, fearing reprisals against them by troops loyal to Patasse.

In Bangui, Plessier said there were no losses on the French side and said only two rebel soldiers had been killed.

However Paris said the French attack had killed 10 rebel soldiers in the assault.



An Afghan employee of the United Nations WHO office in Kabul examines the wreck of a vehicle destroyed in the bombing raid by anti-Taliban jets Sunday, in which five civilians were killed and 15 others wounded. — AFP/UNB photo

**Chechens shift attention to polls as Russian troops leave**

MOSCOW, Jan 6: With all the Russian troops had gone from Chechnya, the region's top presidential contenders are now focused on January 27 elections and the prospect of greater autonomy for the breakaway southern republic, reports AP.

But Russia, which completed its troop withdrawal Sunday, insists that the end of its military role does not mean that Chechnya is free to go its own way politically.

While the war in Chechnya is over, the battle over its political future is just beginning.

Russia announced Sunday that they had completed its troop pullout, part of a peace deal signed in August between Moscow and Chechen separatists after 20 months of brutal fighting.

"I'm authorised to state that

not a single Interior Ministry or Defence Ministry soldier remains in Chechnya as of today," Interior Ministry spokesman Lt. Gen. Pavel Maslov told the Interfax news agency.

The Russian ministries of interior and defence were believed to have had more than 30,000 troops in Chechnya when they began withdrawing several months ago.

Many Interior Ministry units are now stationed in nearby regions in southern Russia, where they are poorly fed and housed, according to Russian news reports.

Viktor Ilyukhin, a hard-line Communist lawyer in Moscow, said the troop pullout was "rash, shot-sighted and unprepared." The withdrawal,

combined with the coming election, "will further distance this republic from Russia," he told the Interfax news agency.

In Chechnya, meanwhile, 16 presidential candidates are running in the January 27 poll which will also include parliamentary elections.

All the leading candidates favor independence for Chechnya, though Moscow insists the territory will remain part of Russia, and the August peace deal puts off the question of Chechnya's political status for five years.

Still, the election is virtually certain to increase Chechnya's autonomy and many feel that the republic's new leaders could begin pushing for independence in the near future.



Janet Mills (L) age 52, whose face is scared by a rare form of skin cancer known as mycosis, appeared at a press conference with her husband, Dave Mills (R), in Darwin December 13. Mills became the second person to die by legally sanctioned euthanasia when she self-administered a lethal dose of drugs using Dr Nitschke's computerised "death machine" on Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

**Off the Record**

**"No force can stop Hasnat from marrying Di"**

LONDON: Who better to mend Princes Diana's broken heart than a cardiac surgeon? reports AFP.

So reports the Sunday Mirror newspaper, which this weekend names Hasnat Khan as the Pakistani doctor who has caught the fancy of the former Mrs Prince of Wales.

"She has a very soft spot for Hasnat and is deeply in love with him, the tabloid quotes Khan's uncle Ashfaq Ahmed Khan, as saying.

The feeling is apparently mutual. "If Diana really wants him, there's no force in the world that will prevent Hasnat from marrying her," he added.

Khan reportedly first disclosed his passion for Diana, who divorced Britain's heir apparent Prince Charles in August, in Point De Vue, the French Bible for fans of aristocracy.

The magazine is owned by Sir James Goldsmith, the Franco-British tycoon whose daughter Gemina wife of former Pakistani cricket star Imran Khan, is a close friend of Diana.

Uncle Khan said Diana and Hasnat — known to his pals as "Natty" — meet regularly with the princes having invited the doctor over to her apartments in London's Kensington Palace for dinner.

"In some ways, Hasnat and Diana are very similar," he said, adding: "She's not a snob like some members of the royal family. Diana has not been affected by their way of life and has a very deep love for Hasnat."

**Space monkeys to return to earth today**

MOSCOW: Two macaque monkeys sent into space late last year are due to return to Earth Today, officials said Sunday, reports AP.

The monkeys will return in a capsule from the Bion-11 satellite, which is expected to land at 8:04 am Moscow time (0504 GMT) at a site 130 kilometres (80 miles) northwest of Kustanal in Kazakhstan, according to the press service of the Russian Space Forces.

The monkeys will be checked in a mobile medical laboratory shortly after the landing, and will then be flown to Moscow, where they will remain under observation, said the report, cited by the Interfax news agency.



The magazine is owned by Sir James Goldsmith, the Franco-British tycoon whose daughter Gemina wife of former Pakistani cricket star Imran Khan, is a close friend of Diana. Uncle Khan said Diana and Hasnat — known to his pals as "Natty" — meet regularly with the princes having invited the doctor over to her apartments in London's Kensington Palace for dinner.

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**BRIEFLY**

**Bus mishap claims 15 in Pakistan:** A passenger bus collided head on with a transport truck, killing 15 people and wounding 12 others, according to news reports Monday, AP says from Islamabad.

The bus was en route to the eastern Punjab city of Lahore on Sunday when it smashed into the truck while overtaking another vehicle, local newspapers reported.

The drivers of both vehicles apparently fled the scene.

**Farrakhan arrives in Libya:** US black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan arrived in the Libyan capital Sunday. Libyan state television reported, less than a week after Libya executed eight people it said were US spies, AFP reports from Tripoli.

Farrakhan, a controversial figure in the United States, had paid a visit to Libya in September where he met Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi and received the 1996 "Gaddafi price for human rights," which comes with 250,000 dollars.

**33 drown in China:** At least 33 people died when an overloaded passenger boat collided with a freighter in fog and sank in a river in southwest China, a Shanghai newspaper reported Monday, AP says from Beijing.

Thirty-three bodies have been recovered since the accident occurred Friday on the Tuojiang River in Sichuan province, the Wen Hui Bao reported. The boat was built for 42 passengers, but was carrying more than 60 along with more than 500 pounds (225 kilograms) of oranges, the report said. Two women were recovering in a hospital. The report did not say whether others had been rescued or were missing. The captains of both vessels have been detained for investigation, it said.

**Ramos orders arrest of legislator:** Philippines President Fidel Ramos yesterday personally ordered the arrest of a legislator who has evaded arrest for nearly two weeks after being charged with the statutory rape of an 11-year-old girl, Reuter reports from Manila.

"The authorities concerned had better capture, arrest and jail him," Ramos told reporters, adding he was dismayed at the police failure to locate congressman Romeo Jalosjos, a member of the president's ruling coalition.

**Sweden's prince Bertil dies:** Sweden's Prince Bertil, uncle of King Carl XVI Gustaf, died in Stockholm Sunday, aged 84, the Royal Palace announced, AFP reports from Stockholm.

Bertil had renounced the Swedish throne for a British commoner. He was the third son of King Gustaf VI Adolf, great grandfather of Carl XVI Gustaf. He "passed away in peace and calm," at his home the Villa Solback at 4:05 pm (1505 GMT) after suddenly falling ill over the weekend, the palace said.

**King Fahd holds talks with Hariri:** Saudi King Fahd held talks in Riyadh Sunday with Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Hariri on bilateral relations and recent developments in the Arab and Muslim worlds, the official Saudi news agency SPA said, AFP reports from Riyadh.

The news agency gave no further details on the talks or how long Hariri would be in Saudi Arabia.

**Yangon campuses remain closed as holiday ends**

YANGON, Jan 6: Universities rocked last month by the most serious student unrest in years remained closed Monday as most of Myanmar's campuses reopened after the Christmas holiday, reports AP.

The military government said last week that campuses that were at the heart of a series of demonstrations in early December would remain closed indefinitely.

They include three university campuses and the medical school in the capital, and the university in Mandalay, the country's second city. Thousands of students sent home to the provinces in December to defuse the unrest will remain there.

Some Yangon high schools that were closed December 11 along with the universities, because they are near the campuses, reopened Monday, ending nearly a month's enforced holiday.

The series of demonstrations by hundreds of students in early December marked the biggest street unrest against the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council since the pro-democracy uprising of 1988, when troops gunned down thousands of protesters.

The demonstrators this time were demanding an independent students union, an end to police brutality against students, and greater freedom and respect for human rights.

**Some Bosnians to become refugees again at home**

SARAJEVO, Jan 6: Nirmala Tadzic returned to Bosnia after four years in Germany, but she soon faces the prospect of being a refugee again, this time in her own country, reports AP.

When war broke out in Bosnia in 1992, Serbs expelled her family from their home in the northern town of Kozarac, and they fled to Germany. Now that the war is over, Germany is sending Bosnian refugees home even though many, like the Tadzic family, have no home left.

Refugees like Nirmala, 24, are frightened.

"Someone pulled the carpet from under my feet in 1992, and as soon as I established myself again, someone is again pulling the carpet from under my feet," Nirmala said.

Bosnia remains divided, and

Kozarac is in the Serb half of the country. All 27,000 Muslims living in the area were expelled in 1992. Most of their houses were looted and burned to ensure they never came back, and many people were taken to Serb detention camps.

Her hometown now is a hiding place for a dozen Serbs indicted for war crimes and run by the people who expelled her family. The Serbs have refused to allow Muslims to return, defying a key provision of the Dayton peace agreement. In any case, Nirmala prefers not to return.

"I don't want to go to Kozarac," Nirmala said. "Even if the Serbs let me go home, wherever I would go, I would probably find a skeleton of someone I knew."

Nihad Berbic, 25, a refugee from Sarajevo. During the war, the two shared a relationship, the same refugee destiny. But now, Nihad has returned to his home in Nirmala cannot.

Nihad brought Nirmala to Sarajevo for a three-week visit, but although it is her country and everyone speaks her language, she said she still feels like a refugee.

"Everybody I was introduced to asked me if I will return to Bosnia, too," she said, before returning to Germany to an uncertain future. "I just say 'where to?' I'm from Kozarac." And all you hear then is, "Oh, sorry."

Nirmala's life changed on May 23, 1992, when a siren blared at noon signalling the Bosnian Serb takeover of Kozarac. She and her family were taken to a camp, then eventually reached Germany with the help of friends.

In Frankfurt, Nirmala got a job, found an apartment and made new friends. But that is about to end.

"From the day the siren went off, I never had control over my life again," she said. "Eventually, the Germans will send us to Bosnia and I will end up being a refugee again."

With the war over, Germany wants the more than 300,000 Bosnian refugees it is sheltering to go home. The Bosnian and German governments signed a pact in November to begin repatriations, although they are not expected to begin in earnest until spring.

The young Muslims who left Kozarac agree with her, she said. But many older refugees, including her father, Hamid Tadzic, 50, want to return no matter what.

Visiting Sarajevo has been painful for Nirmala.

Nihad showed her his former high school, pictures of himself as a child, and mementos of his youth.

"I have nothing to show him," she said sadly. Pictures from her childhood were burned along with her house and school.

Nihad asked Nirmala to stay with him in Sarajevo, but he lives with his parents and brother in a two-room apartment and is unemployed.

"These are our best years," Nirmala said. "I don't like to think about it, because I reach the bottom often and then say, 'I'm lucky I'm alive — or I'm not. I don't know.'"