WB withdrawal agreement being drafted

Israel, PA on verge of accord over autonomy to Hebron

TEL AVIV. Jan 13 Israel and the Palestinians appeared on the verge of agreement Monday over plans to expand Palestiman autonomy to Hebron and West Bank rural areas after an intense push by Jordan's King Hussein and a US envoy. reports AP.

In a key compromise, Palestinians leader Yasser Arafat told Hussein he would agree to a US proposal to allow Israel to prolong its West Bank pullout by several moths to mid-1998. Palestinian officials said.

Meanwhile, Israel and the Palestinians began drafting an agreement Monday under which Israel would withdraw troops from West Bank rural areas in three stages, ending in

The emerging accord also sets the stage for a long-overdue Israeli troop pullback in Hebron. It came after an intense push by Jordan's King Hussein

and US envoy Dennis Ross. In a key compromise. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat told Hussein he would agree to a US proposal to allow Israel to prolong its West Bank pullout which originally was to be completed by September

Arafat agreed to the compromise after being assured by Ross that the United States would guarantee the Israeli withdrawal in a separate document, to be attached to the agreement.

Hussein flew by helicopter from Gaza to Tel Aviv late Sunday to present the proposal to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who accepted it.

After meeting Hussein. Netanyahu, said only, 'We can envision the end of the negotiation in sight." Hussein said he was "confident that everything will move in the right direc-

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators, along with Ross, met Monday morning at a Jerusalem hotel to try and draft the agreement.

Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erakat was cautious when asked whether the elusive agreement on Hebron and the West Bank troop pullback could finally be concluded Monday.

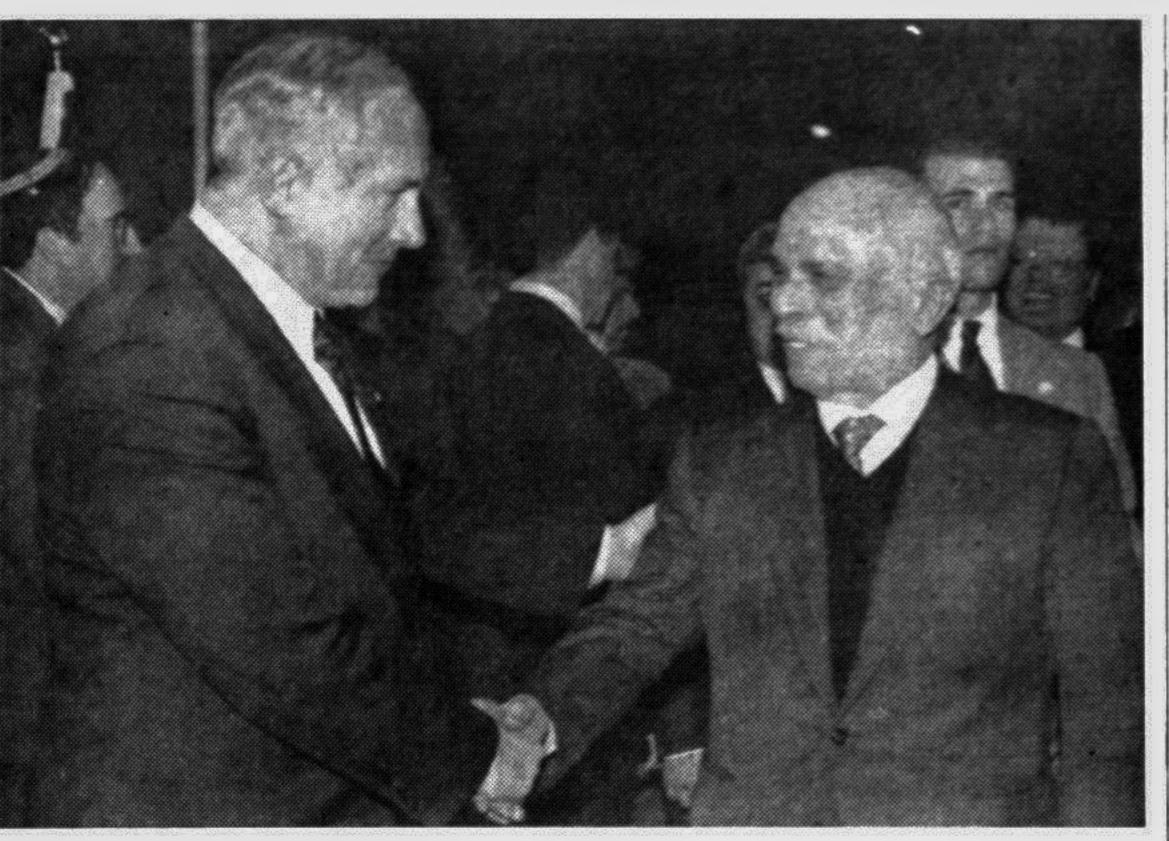
"There are some problems that remain to be resolve," Erakat told The Associated Press. The remaining sticking points include a timetable for the release of Palestinian security prisoners and security arrangements for a Palestinian

Erakat said that once the draft was completed Netanyahu and Arafat would meet to approve the agreement. Netanyahu was sharply criticised Monday by hard-lin-

ers in his Cabinet, and at least seven ministers in his 18member Cabinet were expected to vote against the accord Cabinet approval is not legally required, but it would be difficult for Netanyahu to proceed without the support of a majority of his ministers.

Transportation Minister Yitzhak Levy said Netanyahu was following in the footsteps of his dovish predecessor, Shimon Peres, who negotiated the accords that led to Palestinian self-rule and set the stage for a further Israeli troop

"The difference between the Peres deal and the Netanyahu deal is only 11 months," said Levy of the National Religious Party, a junior partner in Netanyahu's ruling coalition and a patron of the Jewish settlement movement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.



King Hussein of Jordan (R) shakes hands with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Sunday in Tel Aviv, where he arrived from the Gaza Strip after meeting with Palestinian - AFP/UNB photo leader Yasser Arafat,

Tariq Aziz arrives in Jordan: Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz arrived Sunday en route to

France on the first such visit since Iraq resumed partial oil exports last month under a deal with the United Nations, AP reports from Amman.

A French foreign ministry spokesman in Paris said Aziz was due in the French capital Monday for talks with Prime Minister Alain Juppe and Foreign Minister Herve De Charette, Iraqi oil exports resumed for the first time since 1990 where United Nations imposed crippling sanctions on Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait. Iraq is allowed to export dlrs 2 billion worth of oil over a six-month period to buy badly needed food and medicine for its 20 million people.

Gas blast kills 2 in Baroda: Two workers were killed and another injured when a gas boiler exploded in the Sarabhai Chemical Plant in Baroda, Sunday police said PTI reports from Baroda.

The victims were identified as Sukitu Mayak and Ghan-

The cause of the blast was yet to be ascertained, police said The general manager of the company, BR Pandya said the specification and design of the boiler had been cleared by the boiler inspector.

Heavy rains claim 3 in Greece: Three men were dead on Sunday and three women were missing in torrential rains in southern Greece and Crete, regional

authorities said, AFP reports from Athons A 70-year-old man drowned in a bus caught in floodwaters in southern Greece when a bridge collapsed in Solomos. 30 kilometres (18 miles) from Corinth. Another passenger in the bus was missing as well as a woman in a car also caught in the floodwaters.

Gunmen kill 8 in Mexico: Eight Mexicans were gunned down in an ambush in the mountains of the volatile southwestern state of Guerrero, authorities said on Sunday, Reuter reports from Acapulco.

The attack occurred on Saturday in the remote town of San Bartolo in the municipality of San Miguel Totolapan, an area of heavily armed guerillas and drug traffickers. San Miguel Totolapan Mayor Egdy Julian Gomez said troops were in the town and investigators on their way to examine the bodies.

Chopper crash kills 2 in Japan:

Japanese tourist and an American pilot were killed while three other Japanese tourists were seriously injured in a helicopter crash in Saipan over the weekend, a Foreign Ministry



Actress Brooke Shields poses with her People's Choice Award for "Favorite Female in a New Series" Sunday while backstage during the telecast of the awards programme. Shields stars in the situation comedy "Suddenly Susan." - Reuter/UNB photo

finances.

Afghan leaders to meet for talks to end war

Battle between Bodo

rivals leaves 9 dead

ISLAMABAD, Jan 13: A close aide to Afghanistan's Taliban militia chief. Mulla Mohammed Omar, arrived here on Sunday for talks with rival faction leaders aimed at ending the war in Afghanistan, diplomatic sources said, reports

The talks, under UN auspices, will begin Monday and will be attended by the ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbani's representative. Engineer Eshaq, northern warlord Abdul Rashid Dostam's envoy, General Mohammed Painda, and the Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat faction leader, Rasul Talib, Afghan diplomats here said. The Afghan Embassy in Is-

lamabad is controlled by the Taliban Islamic militia, which

GUWAHATI, India, Jan 13:

Nine people were killed Monday

in a battle between rival mili-

tant groups of the Bodo tribe in

northeastern India, in the

worst single incidents since

their feud erupted last year, po-

lice said, reports AP.

tion in the war between the

long-established Bodo Security

Force and the new Bodoland

Liberation Tiger Force, which

are fighting for control of the

movement for a separate state

said a unit of the Bodo Security

Force raided the village of

Mohkuli controlled by their ri-

vals early Monday morning.

The village is about 70 kilome-

tres (40 miles) north of the As-

nine rebels of the Tiger force

were killed and the attackers

Monday, unidentified gunmen

attacked a hotel in the town of

North Lakhimpur, about 400

kilometres (240 miles) north-

east of Guwhati, killing the ho-

tel owner and his police body-

guard, police in the state capital

was not immediately clear. But

that corner of Assam has been

The reason for the attack

In the gun battle that ensued,

In an unrelated incident

sam state capital of Guwhati.

escaped, police said.

Early reports reaching police

in India.

The battle marked an escala

has gained control of twothirds of Afghanistan since emerging from Koranic schools in Pakistan two years ago.

The movement seized Kabul on September 27 and sent Rabbani and his top commander Ahmad Shah Masood fleeing to the north of the country. Fighting has been raging since

The deposed government's forces were later joined by Dostam's Uzbek militia in an anti-Taliban alliance.

Wakil Ahmed Mutawakkal, Omar's senior advisor, will lead the Taliban delegation, which includes Afghan ambassador to Islamabad Mullah Masoom and another Taliban diplomat, Abdul Wahab, the sources said.

an area of activity for another

militant group, the United Lib-

Force claimed responsibility

for the worst attack on a civil-

ian target recorded last year,

detoriating remote-controlled

bombs on a New Delhi-bound

train that killed at least 34 peo-

to have been behind two other

bombs in the last week of De-

cember aimed at disrupting

road and rail traffic to Assam,

A government report re-

leased last week said the Bodo

separatist movement claimed

227 lives last year in clashes

with Indian security forces or

people were killed by the vari-

ous insurgent groups in Assam,

an ethnically mixed state that

is the center of India's tea and

The violent campaign for a

separate state began 10 years

ago, but worsened after India

signed an agreement with the

Bodos in 1993 for a self-govern-

ing council. The Bodo leaders

who signed the accord later re-

nounced it, claiming the council

was ineffective and excluded

large tracts of Bodo territory.

oil producing industries.

Altogether, nearly 1,000

the gateway to India's seven iso-

lated northeastern states.

acts of terrorism.

The same group also claimed

Two weeks ago, the Tiger

eration Front of Assam.

Sudan mobilises troops as rebels attack border towns

CAIRO, Jan 13: Sudanese President Omar el-Bashir on Monday called for a mobilisation of the army and civilian militia after rebel forces attacked towns on the Sudan-

Ethiopia border, reports AP. Egypt's Middle East News Agency said a statement issued by the palace early in the morning said the forces must "defend... the homeland and deter the enemies of Islam and humanity.

The statement used the phrase "jihad," which means holy war.

The mobilisation came after rebels of John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army on Sunday attacked the Sudanese towns of Kurmuk and Qasan near the Ethiopian border, apparently wresting control from the Sudanese army.

The two towns are about 600 kilometres (360 miles) southeast of the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

A statement issued early Monday by the Sudanese armed forces' general command ac cused Ethiopia of fighting with the Sudanese opposition. MENA said. It said the fighting for the

towns Sunday involved "different kinds of artillery" fired from inside Ethiopian territory and lasted for six hours, died down then resumed for another four hours.

There were no immediate reports of casualties from the remote region.

MENA said state-run Sudan

television interrupted its regu lar programme to broadcast the statement from the military and accompanied it with patriotic songs.

The Sudanese rebels appar ently managed to occupy a large swath around the border towns in Blue Nile state, MENA said.

Sudan has an active mili tary force of about 89,000 and paramilitary units known as the Popular Defence Force of about 15,000 men. The militia's reserve is about 60,000 strong.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army has been fighting since 1983 to try to win autonomy for the South's Christians and animists from the Islamic North. More than 1.3 million people have died in the fighting and resulting famines.

unidentified reporter who

recorded and distributed the

conversation unethical and

dishonorable. But he added that

"happily, we maintain other,

channels of communication

that are absolutely private. "I'll

500 hostages when they

celebrate the birthday of the

Japanese emperor. They have

released most of their captives

stormed a cocktail party held to

The rebels took more than

uranium deposits

nificant concentrations of the mineral-0.55 per cent uranium oxide I and E negligible amounts of thorium oxide-were discovered in a radioactive quart rock by the Hyderabad -based atomic minerals division of the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

cavities in the rock in the Palnad sub-basin of the northern

Peru govt blames rebels for scuttling direct talks broadcasts Sunday, calling the the government, the rebels, the

LIMA, Jan 13: Hopes for the first real progress in weeks in Peru's hostage crisis crumbled when the guerillas demanded that the government produce a plan to free hundreds of jailed comrades, reports AP.

The Tupac Amaru guerillas have been firm in that key demand since taking over the residence of the Japanese ambassador December 17, and President Alberto Fujimori just as firmly says he will not give

The rebels and government negotiator Domingo Palermo had tentatively agreed to meet on Sunday. But Palermo said no meeting was held after the rebels, in a message sent via the Red Cross, insisted that he "bring a proposal for the liberation of the (Tupac Amaru) pris-

He quoted the guerillas as saying that "otherwise it is preferable that the meeting not take place" - because there would be nothing to discuss.

Speaking at a news conference. Palermo said he sent back a proposal to from a commission to help negotiate a settlement to free the 74 hostages.

The panel would be composed of representatives from

Catholic Church. It would agree on a place for negotiations and an agenda which would include "all themes identified in previous contacts," Palermo said. "This proposal has as its intent the peaceful solution that

Red Cross and the Roman

we all desire." Palermo said at the end of a long day during which key church and Red Cross officials shuttled in and out of the embassy residence. It wasn't clear whether that

included the freeing of rebel prisoners. Palermo, whose only face-to-face contact with the rebels inside the residence came December 31, did not take reporters' questions. The Vatican on Sunday

named the archbishop of Ayacucho, Juan Luis Cipriani, a key player in the negotiations so far, as its representative to any peace commission that might be formed, Palermo said.

In a lighthearted, two-way radio conversation Friday Palermo and rebel leader Nestor Cerpa had agreed to meet over the weekend. The conversation was recorded and broadcast by local news media.

Palermo criticised the

in batches, some large, some

Stone eater!

HONG KONG: Deng Chiyong, 22, feels sick if he does not get his daily dish of stones to eat, according to a Chinese news report Monday, reports AFP. The inhabitant of Zhidong in the southern province of

Hunan eats up to 50 stones a day from a supply used to make roads, the China News Service said.

He acquired the habit after suffering an epileptic seizure at

the age of 10 while tending to the family's goats. To diminish the pain, he swallowed pebbles on the ground and his ailment

US envoy in Cyprus to defuse missile crisis LARNACA, Cyprus, Jan 13: A arated by a UN buffer zone.

senior US envoy has begun efforts to avert a conflict on this divided Mediterranean island, following the Cyprus government's decision to buy Russian anti-aircraft missiles, reports Upon his arrival Sunday,

Carey Cavanaugh called for restraint as he arrived in Cyprus to help defuse roiling tensions sparked by the weapons. "We are at a critical point, the political situation has

worsened, tensions and prospects for conflict are rising, Turkey has threatened military action to block the missiles

from reaching Cyprus, a

Mediterranean island split into

Greek and Turkish sectors sep-

Turkey could spark a war. The United States, which opposed Cyprus plan to deploy the Russian S-300 missile sys-

tem, has urged Turkey to tone down its belligerent statements. Cavanaugh blamed Cyprus and Turkey for creating the crisis, which could involve Turkey's NATO ally and rival, Greece.

The United States believes the recent decision to acquire Russian missiles is a mistake, a step down the wrong path. So too has been the Turkish response threatening action, he

"Let me make this perfectly clear: there can be no justification for military action.

Ship with N-waste processed in France heads for Japan double-hulled ship was safe. But CHERBOURGH, France, Jan

13: A ship carrying 20 tons of highly radioactive nuclear waste reprocessed in France left reports AP.

radioactive symbols on the pavement and put up signs reading "No more reprocessing" and "France is not a nuclear garbage

But the British ship Pacific Teal left port at 7 am (0600 GMT), its two-month itinerary to be announced Tuesday by the French state-owned nuclear processing company Cogema and Japanese electric power companies that produce the

Cogema officials insisted the

New Zealand demanded to know the route, and whether it would pass through the country's 200-mile exclusive eco-

glass blocks of reprocessed waste weighing 1,100 pounds each, originally from a Japanese nuclear power plant.

shipment was taken by train talist group Greenpeace said.

were safely transported from Cherbourg to Japan. Greenpeace and countries along potential routes protested, some banning the ships from their waters.

Greece says any action by for Japan early Monday despite protests by environmentalists, nomic zone. The shipment consists of 40 In a final protest, Greenpeace activists spray-painted white

Under cover of secrecy, the

Friday from nearby the Cogema processing factory at La Hague to Cherbourg, the environmen-In previous shipments since 1992, blocks of vitrified waste

Lepers in Titagarh see Mother Teresa as their saviour

TITAGARH, Calcutta, Jan 13: Nearly 1,200 lepers once banished from Indian society have found comfort and peace in this small town by running an industry dedicated to their "saint of the gutters" Mother Teresa, reports AFP.

The lepers some of them ravaged by their affliction, and their families have developed a weaving centre aimed at supporting the order of the Nobel Peace Prize laureate who they see as their saviour.

"We pray for Mother Teresa two times a day because she is the roof over our heads, said Katrina, a 45 year-old leper who has been an inmate for 16

Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity started working in Titagarh in 1952 and established the centre, which it still

"She is our god who looks after our well being everyday. If she dies who will take care of us." She said as she sat at one of the 50 looms which produce 6,000 blue trimmed sarees a year for the nuns of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Char-

ity Orden. The centre also produces all the bed and table linen used in 600 homes, centres and hospices run by her in 129 countries as well as the furniture used in the order's Calcutta headquarters.

Sisters of the order will arrive at the headquarters this week to decide if ailing Mother Teresa should stay on as head of the order she founded 50 years

While insiders say that the fragile missionary would be

forced to relinquish her leadership, many residents of her centre at Titagarh will be dismayed to see her step down.

The white and blue-tiled institution, built on the site where a shanty town for lepers stood for two centuries, is manned exclusively by lepers and their relatives - down to the fingerless watch guards who are un-

able to do any other work. Its residents say the 86-yearold nun gave them a unique chance of living a life in which they are not reviled by society and believe that she watches over them.

real mother — somebody who gave these people hope beyond hope, when everybody else rejected them," said Brother Vinod, who heads the complex set on nine acres and sand-

"She is the incarnation of a

wiched between railway tracks and a garbage dump.

"For them it is an oasis in a cruel world which said they were invalids and less than humanbeings," Brother Vinod said in this small town 35 kilometres (22 miles) from Calcutta.

"As mother Teresa puts it, their suffering is five-fold mental, physical, financial, socio and spiritual." Brother Vinod, who has

served three terms as head of the centre named after Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of peace and non-violence who personally ministered to lepers to rid society of its prejudices, said a sea-change had occurred in society over the years. "In 1958, an inmate went out

to drink tea and had boiling hot

water poured on him by the tea-

shop owner," he explained. "Now our children go to local schools and our residents go to town for a meal or to watch

films, just like you and me," he

Shibdhari Das, a guard at one of the centre's many gates said locals treated him and his fellow-workers with respect.

... We do our duty overtime, so there has never been any crime of any sort against us Brother Anand, a priest who

visits the centre every year, said it felt more like a self-contained village than an institution, boasting ponds, a creche and its own fish and poultry. "Everything that is used here

is made here including artifi-

cial hands and feet and special

rubber shoes. They are made by

the people who use them," he

"The only outsiders who come here regularly are doctors for operations and social workers who come to teach the children and sometimes council the workers," he said,

Each day at Titagarh starts early with residents joining in an eclectic prayer which draws passages from the Bible, the Muslim Quran and the ancient Hindu text of the Bhagwad Gita, Anand said.

But Mungheri a severely mutilated inmate who found refuge in Titagarh after being kicked out of her home by her husband, said she only knew one prayer.

"It is something Mother Teresa told me many years ago. She said simple, God loves

The Princess of Wales, Diana, smiles at London's

Heathrow Airport late on Sunday before boarding a plane - AFP/UNB photo for a Red Cross mission to Angola.

nataka that if Italy could have 74 governments in 76 years. there was no reason to worry if Indian governments do not complete their terms. Some of Deve Gowda's United Front allies say his gov-

ernment, sworn in on June 1 last year following inconclusive elections, would not survive its five-year term. "Coalition politics will continue in India." Deve Gowda told

Coalition politics

to continue in

India: Gowda

Gowda, who has led a fragile 13party alliance for seven months, said on Sunday that the country would continue to have coalition governments in

the near future, reports Reuter.

(PTI) quoted Deve Gowda as

telling a public rally in his

southern home state of Kar-

The Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI Jan 13 Indian Prime Minister HD Deve

the rally, adding that the period of single-party rule in India was The United Front coalition government is shored up by the

Congress Party.

8 soldiers die as tractor blows up in Sri Lanka COLOMBO, Jan 13: At least

eight government soldiers were killed when an army tractor was blown up by a Tamil rebel landmine in Sri Lanka's north on Sunday, military officials said, reports Reuter. Ten soldiers were wounded

in the mine explosion at Kachchai, in the northern Jaffna Peninsula, 320 km (200 miles) north of the capital Colombo, the official said on Monday. In continued violence in the

north over the weekend, the rebels killed five soldiers in a pre-dawn raid on Sunday against army defences at Chettikulam in the Vavuniya district, 240 km (150 miles) north of Colombo.

Scientists locate in Andhra Pradesh NEW DELHI, Jan 13: Atomic

scientists have located uranium deposits in northern parts of the Cuddapah Basin of Andhra Pradesh, reports PTI. The deposits containing sig-

The main wanium-bearing minerals in the Rock are pitchblendel conffinite and others associated with sulphides of copper, lead and iron, a report in "Current Science" says.

The uranium-bearing minerals occur along fractures and Cuddapah Basin.

Off the Record

Deng has eaten the stones, on top of his two bowls of rice a day, and has remained healthy with no visible signs of problems to his heart or stomach, the report said.

got better.