

International

BRIEFLY



Several thousand Palestinians marched in the Hebron city center Saturday, celebrating their new-found independence after 30 years of Israeli occupation. The Palestinian Authority, which took control of 80 per cent of Hebron on Friday after months of tortuous negotiations with Israel, is to hold a meeting in the city Sunday to celebrate the arrival of self-rule, said officials.

— AFP/UNB photo

Volcano's eruption eases in Jakarta: Activity at central Java's Mount Merapi volcano, which erupted Friday, has eased but a maximum level alert remained in force, an official said Sunday. AP reports from Jakarta.

High frequency volcanic tremors occurring 212 times an hour were threatening to cause lava accumulated on top of the volcano to crumble, said Parlin, a volcanology official in the city of Yogyakarta. Heavy rains could aggravate the situation, said Parlin who, like many Indonesians, uses one name.

7 neo-Nazis held in Denmark: Police arrested seven neo-Nazis and foiled what they said was an international terrorist scheme to send mail bombs. AP reports from Copenhagen.

One policeman was shot during a series of early-morning raids Saturday. Late Saturday night, a court remanded five of the defendants to custody for 27 days, 13 of which would be served in solitary confinement, according to Kjeld Christensen, a police duty officer. The other two were released but still face prosecution. Those jailed include Thomas Derry Nakaba — a 26-year-old neo-Nazi whose father is Japanese. He was charged with attempted murder in the shooting of the policeman, whose injuries were not life-threatening. The others were not identified.

Bus mishap claims 17 in Kenya: At least 17 people died and another 17 were injured when a passenger bus plunged into an oncoming lorry and a combine harvester near Nakuru, 160 kilometres (100 miles), west of Nairobi state radio reported on Saturday. AP reports from Nairobi.

The Obuya express bus was travelling from Nairobi to Isebania on the southwestern Kenya-Tanzania border on Friday night when the accident occurred.

Sixteen of the dead were killed on the spot. Seventeen other passengers were admitted to the nearby Nakuru district hospital, two in critical condition.

US priest held for drug dealing: An Episcopal priest was arrested as he smoked a crack pipe while typing his sermon, and was charged with dealing drugs from his church, police said. AP reports from New York.

Just three weeks earlier, the Rev. Chester LaRue had been hailed as a hero for fighting off two bandits. LaRue, 54, was charged with criminal sale and possession of cocaine after his arrest Friday at the rectory of St. John's Episcopal Church, said Police Officer Sonia Oquendo.

Ex-US Senator Tsongas dead: Former US Sen. Paul E. Tsongas, who rebounded from cancer to briefly become the Democratic front-runner for president in 1992, died Saturday of pneumonia. He was 55. AP reports from Boston.

Tsongas, who was hospitalised Jan. 3 with a liver problem related to his cancer treatments and later developed pneumonia, died at Brigham and Women's Hospital. The hospital said there was no evidence of a recurrence of cancer. "Paul Tsongas was a great American. He cared deeply about his beloved state of Massachusetts and about our country and its future," President Clinton said in a statement. "In a life devoted to public service, he set an unparalleled example of integrity, candor and commitment."

Iran offers to host Afghan talks: Iran has offered to host talks to secure peace in Afghanistan, an Iranian Foreign Ministry official was reported on Sunday as saying. Reuter reports from Tehran.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Pacific Affairs Alaeddin Boroujerdi said the warring parties expected to attend including the Islamic Taliban movement.

Necessary coordinations have been made in this regard but the exact dates have not been fixed yet," the English-language Tehran Times newspaper quoted Boroujerdi as saying.

US citizen hurt seriously Hutu militants attack Rwandan town: 6 killed

KIGALI, Jan 19: Hutu insurgents attacked Rwanda's third largest town, leaving six people dead and an American seriously wounded in the most serious rebel assault in more than two years, a senior UN official said Sunday, reports AP.

In an apparently coordinated operation, Hutu militants late Saturday and early Sunday attacked three locations in Ruhengeri, about 60 miles (96 kilometres) northwest of Kigali.

Two of the attacks were on aid agency compounds, said the UN official requesting anonymity.

"We have asked the army to send reinforcements to supply extra security for the agencies working up there," the UN official said. "We have told everyone to stay in their houses."

Three Rwandan staff died in the compound housing the French aid agencies Doctors of the World and Doctors without Borders and the British branch of Save the Children, said the

UN official. Three soldiers were killed when Rwandan troops responded to the attacks.

The American, who was hit by gunfire, had his leg amputated in an emergency operation early Sunday morning, said a US Embassy official who spoke on condition of anonymity. The man was to be evacuated later Sunday, the diplomat said.

The victim's name was withheld until next of kin could be notified, and it was not known for which organisation he was working. Several hundred Americans are among thousands of foreigners working in Rwanda with aid, news, and UN agencies.

Red alert in Pak cities amid fears of sectarian clashes

ISLAMABAD, Jan 19: Security forces in major Pakistani cities have been put on high alert as tension mounts following the bomb-blast killing of a militant Muslim faction chief in Lahore, officials said today, reports AP.

The remote-controlled bomb killed Ziaur Rehman Farooqi, patron-in-chief of an extremist Sunni Muslim group, Sipah-i-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), as he arrived amid tight security for a district court hearing Saturday.

Twenty-six people, including 19 police officers, were killed in the explosion.

Police said it was the most police deaths in any single incident in the country's history.

Farooqi, who was contesting elections in two constituencies in Punjab province died in-

stantly while his deputy Maulana Azam Tariq, was critically injured.

The incident sent a shock wave across the country, heightening fears of a spur in sectarian violence involving the majority Sunni and the minority Shi'ite sects, who differ on religious rituals.

Strikes shutdown the Punjab town of Jhang where the SSP is headquartered, and also Farooqi's home town of Samundari while shops and markets were closed in nearby Rawalpindi City where SSP activists staged protest rallies.

SSP workers also set ablaze an election office of Farooqi's rival candidate Fakhre Imam in Kabirwala town and blocked traffic in several other Punjab cities as they demanded the ar-

rest of the killers.

In Islamabad, police have been put on "red alert" and strict security measures have been adopted "to prevent sectarian violence and acts of terrorism" Raza Zia, chief of the capital police said.

Special guards are being organised for the security of political leaders and candidates contesting general elections due on February 3, he said.

Police contingents have been deployed around mosques and places of worship belonging to the two Muslim sects.

Administration officials said security had also been tightened around bus stands, airports and other public places in major cities and a ban had been imposed on pillion riding on motorcycles.

Jewish settlers asked to leave Hebron

HEBRON, West Bank, Jan 19: The head of Palestinian security in Hebron called on Jewish settlers to leave the West Bank city during celebrations Saturday for the launching of self-rule, reports AP.

"There is part of our city still bleeding and remains under the occupation. There are among us 400 settlers, 400 stones laying on our chests," said Jabril Rajoub, also head of Palestinian preventative security in the West Bank.

"These settlers, we say clearly and frankly, your place is not here," he told a crowd of several thousand at a celebration in front of Hebron's Town Hall.

"We are not against the Jews in this city, but these settlers must go," Rajoub said.

Settler spokesman Noam Arnon called the speech "a call to murder."

Iraq secretly trying to buy arms from UK cos

LONDON, Jan 19: Iraq is secretly trying to buy arms from British companies and is rebuilding factories to make Scud missiles, using British equipment, the Sunday-Times newspaper reported, says Reuter.

It said Iraqi agents had approached companies in London, Birmingham, Southampton and Reading and quoted the department of trade and industry as saying it had received reports of suspicious orders from several companies.

"The newspaper claimed Iraq was only a month away from being able to start work on Scud missiles."

Keith Bailey, chief Executive of Machine Toolmaker BSA Tools, was quoted as saying his company had been approached five or six times. "I referred all of those approaches to the department of trade and indus-

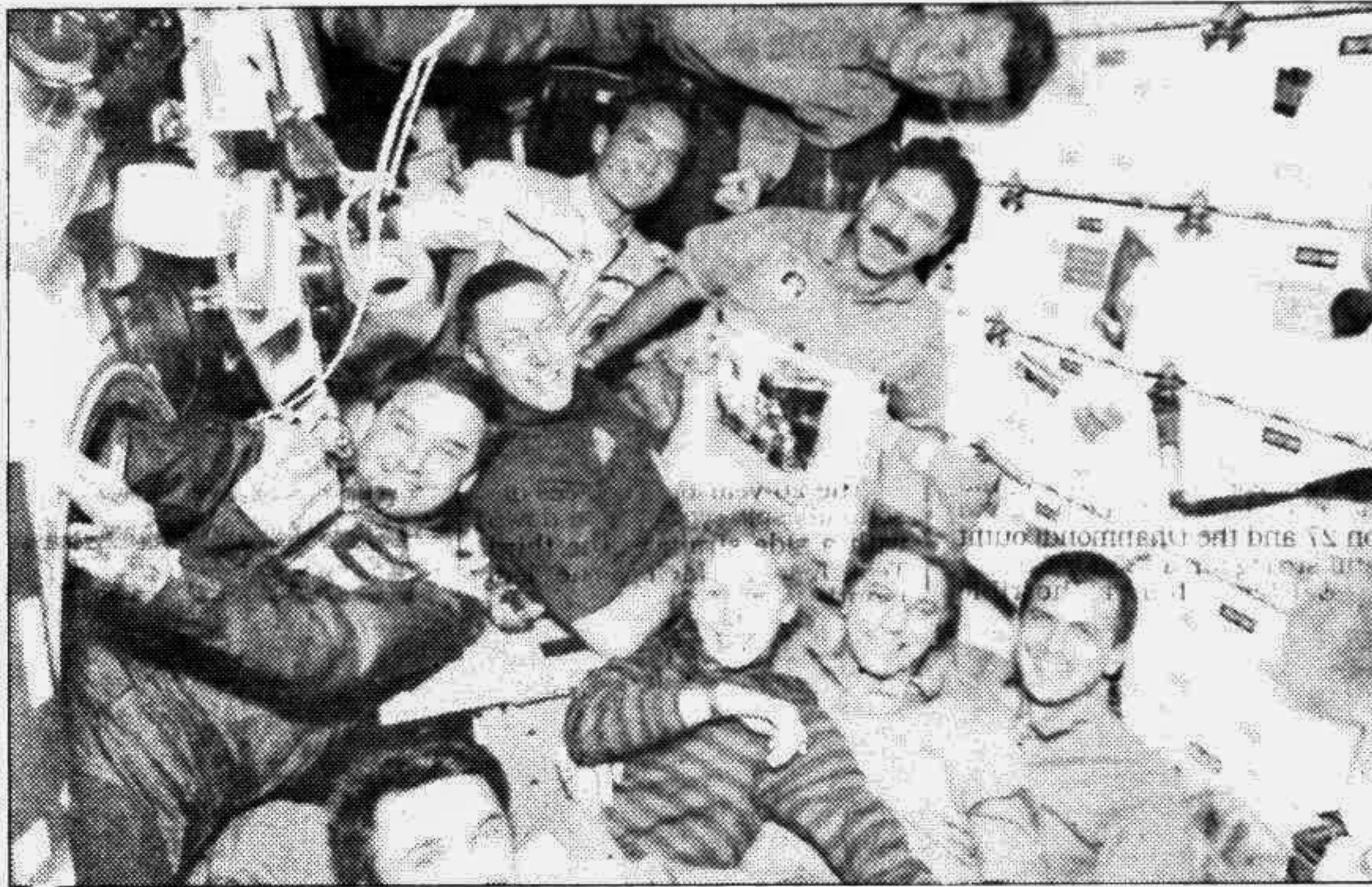
try," he said.

In October the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of ridding Baghdad of mass destruction weapons said Iraq was still hiding small but highly significant quantities of banned arms.

Iraq needs a clean bill of health from UNSCOM before the embargo on Iraqi oil exports can be lifted entirely. Iraq has been under crippling trade sanctions since its invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

An investigation last year cleared the British government of conniving in the late 1980s in the sale of arms-making equipment to Iraq and of trying to cover up evidence that may have led to three businessmen being wrongfully jailed in 1992.

The three executives of engineering firm Matrix Churchill were accused of illegally selling arms to Iraq.



The crew members of the US Space Shuttle Atlantis and the Russian Space Station Mir gather on the Shuttle's middeck Saturday for a group photo, as preparations are made for the Shuttle to undock Sunday.

— AFP/UNB photo

ROK Red Cross resumes aid for DPRK

SEOUL, Jan 19: South Korea's Red Cross society announced Sunday the resumption of aid for impoverished North Korea, following the communist country's apology for a bloody submarine infiltration, reports AP.

The \$153,000 worth of flour, winter socks, and other goods are expected to be sent later this week, the Red Cross said.

North Korea, hit by severe floods for two consecutive years, is suffering from a widespread food shortage.

International aid officials have predicted a shortfall of at least 2 million tons of grain, or 40 per cent of the volume needed to feed North Korea's population of 24 million.

But the Seoul government banned all aid following the September submarine infiltration by 26 North Korean agents.

Top MRTA demand refused Peruvian rebel leader won't meet with govt negotiators

LIMA, Jan 19: A rebel leader holding 73 hostages for more than a month said Saturday that he would not meet with government negotiators who refuse to discuss his top demand: freedom for jailed guerrillas, reports AP.

Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) leader Nestor Cerpa Cartolini said that he "regretted" statements by the government point man, Domingo Palermo, that the freedom of 440 Tupac Amaru rebels would not be discussed.

"We are ready to talk as we have been since taking his embassy," he said in a short statement.

In a press conference Friday, Domingo Palermo, the government's point man on the month-old crisis, firmly rejected the top MRTA demand.

"As is public knowledge, the Peruvian state will not free MRTA prisoners. I repeat, as is public knowledge, the Peruvian state will not free MRTA prisoners," Palermo said.

Reuter adds Peruvian police removed six journalists on Saturday from the roof of a building near the besieged residence of the Japanese ambassador in Lima, where Marxist rebels are holding 73 hostages.

Five photographers and a television cameraman, mostly from international news agencies, were ordered down from the vantage point they had manned in shifts, hauling up food by rope, for the 32 days since the siege began.

The order was signed by police gen Fernando Gamero Febres and obliged the journalists to come down "for strict reasons of security."

Sunni militants set on fire Iran's cultural centre in Lahore

LAHORE, Jan 19: A mob of 500 Sunni militants set on fire Sunday to avenge the bombing a day earlier at a Lahore courthouse that killed their leader and seriously wounded several of their followers, reports AP.

There were no injuries but the colonial-style building was completely gutted, according to eyewitnesses.

The mob railed against Iran accusing Tehran of supporting Pakistan's militant Shi'ite Muslims whom they blame for Saturday's powerful explosion that killed 25 people and wounded at least 100.

Among the dead was Zia-ur Rehman, a leader of the radical Sunni group. Police and journalists were also killed.

No one claimed responsibility for the bombing but supporters of the Sunni group Guardians of the Friends of the Prophet blamed rival Shi'ite Muslims.

The Sunni group often accuses Iran of arming and training militant Shi'ites, a charge Tehran has denied.

But in Lahore the mob vowed to force Pakistan to break ties with Iran.

Lankan troops swoop on Tigers

COLOMBO, Jan 19: Sri Lankan security forces launched a major search operation against Tamil Tiger guerrillas today, a day after rebels smashed a police post, killing 23 people, officials said, reports AP.

Troops were deployed to assist police in the Anuradhapur district where the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) overran a police post killing the 23 police, including two officers, officials said.

Government troops shot dead five Tiger rebels in two separate gun battles in the northern province on Saturday, the Defence Ministry said.

Tiger guerrillas are leading a drawn out campaign to establish an independent homeland in the north and east of the island, where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

More than 50,000 people have died in bitter fighting in the past 24 years.

Popularity of Clinton hit highest level

WASHINGTON, Jan 19: President Clinton's popularity has hit its highest level since early in his first term, according to a poll, but many Americans say they doubt he will rank high among presidents a century from now, reports AP.

Fifty-seven per cent of those questioned in the Newsweek poll said they liked the way Clinton is doing his job. That equaled the 57 per cent approval recorded in March 1993, Clinton's third month on the job.

Clinton, a Democrat, will be inaugurated for his second term on Monday. He easily defeated Republican challenger Bob Dole in the November election.

India to become the most populous nation by 2040

NEW DELHI, Jan 19: India's booming population will cross the one billion mark by the turn of the century and the country will become the most populous nation by 2040, an official said Saturday, reports AP.

Registrar General M Vijayannunni told reporters that the population in India had shot up to 949 million now from 846 million during the last census in 1991.

She said there would be 291 million Indians in urban areas by March 2001.

The United Nations of India (UNI) said the population growth rate was 50 per cent more than the desired level.

India's population increases by around 18 million — equivalent to an Australia — every year. Indian officials are worried over the constant rise although the average family size has fallen over the years.



Fireworks light the sky over the US Capitol and the Washington Monument yesterday in Washington DC as part of inauguration celebrations. The "Sharing the Light" fireworks display was set off from 10 locations across the city.

— AFP/UNB photo

Fearing sabotage on Republic Day Troops begin house to house search for rebels in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Jan 19: Indian troops launched a sweeping house-to-house search in the Kashmir capital today for Muslim separatists and arms ahead of the country's Republic Day which the rebels have vowed to sabotage, reports AP.

Hundreds of soldiers armed with machine guns and AK-47 assault rifles sealed off major commercial centres in tension wracked Srinagar, forcing shops to remain closed.

The streets of Lal Chowk, Residency Road, Maulana Azad Road, Regal Chowk, Abi Guzar and other major commercial districts were a deserted look.

Shops close on Fridays and normally do good business on Sundays.

Residents and police souffies said the soldiers entered scores of homes and ordered residents to come out despite a biting chill. Srinagar, a city of 800,000, has been under a blanket of snow for days.

Some Muslims in Abi Guzar alleged they were not allowed to go to mosques.

It was not immediately clear if the soldiers made any arrest or recovered any hidden weapon.

Today's crackdown is part of a massive cordon-and-search operation the troops launched

two weeks ago to arrest Muslim separatists and seize weapons ahead of India's republic day on January 26.

The day is usually marred by protests by Muslim militants fighting to end Indian rule over Kashmir, the country's only Muslim-majority state.

Muslim guerrillas have vowed this year also to sabotage the parade in the Bakshi sports stadium here.

Iran's 3rd Russian-made sub sails into waters

DUBAI, Jan 19: Iran's third Russian-made submarine has sailed into Iranian waters amid a substantial increase in Tehran's ability to threaten the world's main oil shipping lanes. Western military sources said today, reports AP.

The submarine arrived in Iranian waters last night (Saturday) near Bandar Abbas, in the Strait of Hormuz, a Western military source told AFP on condition he not be named.

Western military sources said the submarines have given Iran the ability to covertly,

Myanmar's top politician fails to meet supporters

YANGON, Jan 19: The military government said Sunday that a senior pro-democracy leader was blocked from meeting supporters at Yangon's holiest shrine to stop him from staging a political rally, says AP.

Tin Oo, vice chairman of the National League for Democracy led by Aung San Suu Kyi, had arrived at the gilded Shwedagon pagoda on Saturday to meet about 30 party supporters.

Reporters said that he was blocked from climbing stairs to the pagoda's terrace, where the supporters were gathered, by half a dozen police and soldiers and left after 15 minutes. He was not physically harmed.

A military intelligence statement Sunday said that "responsible pagoda trustees" did not believe assertions by Tin Oo that his intentions were "purely religious."

Tin Oo, 69, has taken an in-

creasingly high-profile role in rallying Suu Kyi's supporters, who have been prevented for five months from attending once-customary rallies outside her home.

Suu Kyi, 1991 winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, has been completely stymied from meeting large crowds since student protests in December, the most important unrest since the 1988 pro-democracy uprising was crushed by soldiers who gunned down thousands.

Occasional attempts to hold rallies have been made at a Yangon intersection. But Tin Oo's efforts to speak to supporters there Jan 11-12 were cut short by security officials.

The local ward people are very much distressed by the weekend gathering and decided not to allow such events from taking place in their ward," the statement said.

Cultural traditions abandoned at UNPF essay competition

VIENNA, Jan 19: Cultural traditions that usually prevent the young from speaking up were abandoned at an essay competition organised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF), reports IPS.

Contributors from 107 countries made clear what they wanted to hear about: sex, procreation, sexually transmitted diseases and the practice of parents marrying them off at an early age. More than 500 boys and girls provided a range of views on society's perceptions of gender, family planning and contraceptives.

"I have seen that in my society, discrimination begins from the first moment after birth," wrote Mushira Sadd Al-din Mahmud Zaidan, a 19-year-old female student of fine arts in Cairo, Egypt, whose essay was among 17 chosen from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Latin America as the best of the lot.

She found common ground with 18-year-old Carolina Leonar Ruiz Herrera from Guatemala in describing the

"gloom" that descends upon a family when the new born is a girl - and the happiness when it is a boy.

"When it's boy, everyone is very happy and there is the famous expression 'you won the lottery,' yet when it's a girl, people say with satisfaction but less fanfare 'now your home's little servant has been born,' wrote Ruiz Herrera in describing how the girl child is viewed in her and many countries.

Under the theme promoting responsible reproductive behaviour the competition was held just before the Second World Youth Forum last month in Vienna. The 17 — the youngest of whom is 14 while the eldest 23 — were given traveling scholarships to visit the Vienna youth forum.

The competition was organised to give voice to young people and assist the UNFPA in its work with youth — especially in the areas of sex education and information — a spokesman for the agency said in Vienna.

What emerges from reading of the essays is the clear conclu-

sion that young people are aware of problems and dangers related to lack of sex education, family planning and early marriages. Most participants are at a crucial, yet somewhat troublesome stage between childhood and adulthood. "Not as innocent as children, but also lack adult maturity and capacity for independent thinking," is how Quan Zhou, an 18-year student from China, describes this phase. And it is here that they say they badly need information about sex, and about all the (biological) changes that occur in their bodies as they enter the adulthood.

"I wondered once about my body and why these changes were happening," Hari Chimire, a 20-year-old journalist-youth worker in Nepal said. "No I know about these things, but between 12-18 we just were amazed... why these happened, how they happened," Ghimire told IPS.

In Nepal, for every 120 births one woman dies and 13 out of 100 children die before

reaching the age of five. "Like Mona, most of them don't know the danger of early pregnancy — the risk of birth complications and physical depletion," he wrote.

Lack of sex education, these young essayists agree, are reflected in the poor health conditions of mothers and children and of equal importance is their concern about child-hood pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS.

Like Ghimire, Jean Marie Nsamu, coordinator of the Young Christian Students (YCS) in Kampala, Uganda, also chose the agony of a young woman who has suffered due to AIDS to portray the consequences of 'traditions'.

Jane Lunzine, the tragedy-struck 'heroine' here, has already lost her husband who left her with a child, her elder brother and her step sister to the deadly disease which has ravaged Uganda. And while mourning the death of her step sister at her grave yard, Lunzine knows that she, too, had the disease and perhaps her rel-

atives will have come again to the cemetery soon, this time to bury her.

How did this fate befall her? Having dropped out of school at the age of 16, she, "like many village girls, could do nothing but seek a man for cohabiting. The final choice for marriage unfolded before her after sleeping with countless men during the search," writes the 23-year-old Nsamu. And, like her compatriots, men with money exploited her poverty by trading sex for money, he told IPS in an interview.

All through these tragedies, or perhaps just because of them, it appears that children are more aware of issues like contraceptives and family planning. However, as the essays suggest, their problem is lack of accurate information.

In one story Seema Chauhan, director of better life option at the Centre for Development and Population Activities, a Washington-based NGO describes the situation in many societies.

According to the story, a

young school girl, who had been going out with a boy for some time, did not want to have a child, but was handicapped by the lack of knowledge about contraceptives and family planning. She went to one of her teachers asking for advice.

The teacher was shocked at the request and declared she is not supposed to talk about such things. To do that, she supposedly told the young girl, a permission from the Education Ministry is needed. But the teacher did show one avenue: perhaps a doctor could help her out, the young girl was told. She then went to the doctor. The doctor was not shocked, but said the girl has to bring a letter from her parents declaring their consent their daughter getting such advice.

Strange as though it may sound, most of the youths want the sex education to start not at school, but at home. Parents should feel free to talk to children, insists Ghimire. If they don't then children will be victims.