charge on Benazir's supporters

ISLAMABAD, Jan 30: Several people were injured Wednesday as police baton charged hundreds of supporters of deposed prime minister Benazir Bhutto, protesting a court rejection of her petition against dismissal, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The angry crowd, chanting slogans against the judiciary and the Pakistan president, pelted police with stones after the Supreme Court rejected Benazir's plea, they said.

After the police retaliated with their batons, several people were rushed to hospital with head wounds, the witnesses

The injured included a woman police constable hurt who had been hit by a stone, and a municipal counsellor from Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in nearby Rawalpindi.

Hundreds of PPP workers and supporters had gathered outside the court hours before its verdict which upheld President Farooq Ahmed Leghari's November 5 dismissal of Benazir's three-year government on charges of corruption and

misrule. The crowd, including women who squatted on the main road blocking traffic, chanted slogans against Leghari and called Benazir innocent as they referred to her as "prime minis-

Myanmar destroys huge drugs

YANGON, Jan 30: Myanmar authorities, at a ceremony here today, set ablaze more than 1.384 kilograms of narcotic drugs including 424 kilograms of heroin and 766 kilograms of opium, reports Xinhua.

At the 11th destruction ceremony, held by the Myanmar Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC), also destroyed were 1,354 liters of phensedyl and other chemicals.

Several hurt in baton Iraq not moving troops to threaten Kuwait: US

WASHINGTON, Jan 30: There is no evidence that Saddam Hussein is staging new military maneuvers or moving troops to threaten Kuwait, US government spokesmen said Wednesday, reports AP.

The spokesmen were reacting to comments Tuesday by a senior US military officer that Saddam had ordered a number of training exercises for his troops and "comes in every morning and makes a decision" on whether to move toward Kuwait.

White House spokesman Mike McCurry and State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the United States was not aware of any offensive moves by the Iraqi leader.

But Burns said that given Saddam's past record of aggression against his neighbours, he "had to be put on notice that we are watching him. The message is don't mistake our resolve."

The officer, who spoke on condition of anonymity Tuesday, said Saddam also had put his wife under house arrest. That was echoed Wednesday by

Iraqi dissidents in Jordan, who said the move came because the wife opposed Saddam's plan to forgive the killers of his two sons-in-law as a way to reunite in place after a recent purge. his feuding clan.

Since the Gulf War, Saddam's regime has increasingly relied on a dwindling inner circle of close family members.

The killers belong to his clan. The dissidents said Saddam was particularly anxious to end rifts in his family after the assassination attempt on his son Uday who was wounded in a grenade and machine-gun attack as he drove through Baghdad on December 12.

Uday was shown on television Wednesday in his hospital bed receiving senior government officials. Reports originating outside Iraq suggested Uday may be paralysed or be suffering from gangrene. Television footage, like the one on Wednesday night, has never shown him moving his back or

In Tuesday's comments at the Pentagon, the US military officer, speaking on condition

of anonymity, said Iraq's air and ground forces have maintained a rapid pace of training over several weeks, presumably to educate new commanders put

He called Saddam "irrational" and said he could "drive his commanders ... to go south' toward Kuwait.

Asked whether by their various statements Americans weren't trying to demonise the Iraqi leader, Burns said, "We don't need to demonise him. He is a demon and he has done it to himself. ... He has become something quite dark in the landscape of the Middle East."

Asked about the officer's assessment, David Johnson, spokesman for the National Security Council, told reporters at a White House briefing: "We don't view that as significantly different than what one would expect at this time of year."

"But we've seen him try to get out of his box before, and we always remain vigilant and ready to put him back in it, if neces-

Anne opens British consulate in Hong Kong

HONG KONG, Jan 30: Princess Anne on Thursday formally opened the consulate that will serve Britain when it ceases to be Hong Kong's colonial ruler in July to become just another foreign diplomatic presence under Chinese sovereignty, reports AP.

The presence of Anne, Queen Elizabeth II's daughter, highlighted the elegiac nature of the event, moving almost unnoticed through a Hong Kong whose eyes are fixed on the incoming, post-colonial regime.

Anne is likely to be last high-ranking royal to visit Hong Kong before her brother, Prince Charles, officiates at the July 1 handover.

The nine-story, granitewalled complex of the consulate and attached British Council overlooks Victoria Harbor. named for the monarch who reigned when Britain seized

Hong Kong from China in 1841. Once Britain's trading gateway to China, the harbor is now one of the main outlets for China's industrial boom.

Int'l sanctions still in effect, UNSC warns Libya

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 30: The Security Council warned Libya on Wednesday that international sanctions barring flights to and from the country remain in effect despite a Libyan threat to defy the ban. reports AP.

Libya announced Jan 17 that it was ready to ignore the sanctions after approving a request by Chicago millionaire Steve Fossett to fly through Libyan airspace as part of a failed quest to become the first balloonist to circle the globe nonstop. In its unanimous statement

the 15-member council noted that the sanctions do not ban overflights of Libyan territory, indicating that Libya's attempt to link its statement to the Fossett request was irrelevant. Three days after Libya's an-

nouncement, a Libyan jet landed in Accra, Ghana, and left soon afterward. Ghana's deputy foreign minister, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, said the Boeing 727 was allowed to land because the pilot said he was low on fuel. The council said it noted

Libya's announcement "with concern" and any attempt to resume regular international air service would violate the sanc-

The statement reminded the 185 UN member states that they are required by international law to uphold the ban.

The council banned air travel to and from Libya in 1992 to pressure Libyan leader Col Moammar Gadhafi to hand over two Libyans wanted in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland. The blast killed 270 people.

4 ME leaders to meet Clinton separately

WASHINGTON. Jan 30: Middle East leaders of Israel the Palestinians, Egypt and Jordan will visit the United States and hold separate talks with President Bill Clinton in the next two months, the White House announced on

Wednesday, reports Xinhua. White House Press Secretary Mike McCurry said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will come to Washington on Feb 13, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat will make his visit on March 3. They will be followed by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak coming on March 10 and King Hussein of Jordan on

March 18 McCurry said the visits were separate because there was no dramatic development in the peace process that would make a summit of the leaders

necessary "With each of these leaders we can have a somewhat more comprehensive dialogue outside the emergency context of dealing with a specific event that requires immediate focus and attention," he said.

McCurry said the upcoming separate talks is intended to push the Middle East peace forward.

"These are all visits in which we will explore not only the bilateral regional concerns we have with these leaders but also seek to deepen and strengthen the Middle East peace process as we search for a just. comprehensive and lasting peace in the region," he said.

Off the Record



Bulgarian fashion models shout anti-government slogans outside the Parliament building in the centre of Sofia, Wednesday, as workers across Bulgaria staged brief strikes, heeding a call by labour unions to press demands for snap elections and prevent the ruling Socialists from - AFP/UNB photo forming a new government.

Twins born 92 days apart!

CHICAGO: A Chicago area woman has made medical history by giving birth to twins born 92 days apart thanks to a special medical procedure and cooperation between two hospitals, officials said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Thirty-five-year-old Janet Pasaye from the nearby town of Palatine went into labour Sunday at a hospital in Hoffman Estates, 75 kilometres (45 miles) from here and gave birth to a healthy Jacob weighing 2.8 kilos (six pounds, one ounce), hospital staff said.

Last October 26, Pasaye had gone into early labour halfway through her pregnancy and given birth to Johua, who weighed only 600 grams (one pound, five ounces) at a hospital nurse, and now weighs approximately 1.8 kilo (four pounds).

"He has had minor surgery (a laser operation to prevent the detaching of the retina on one eye) but he is going to come home

in a couple of weeks." his mother said. She and Jacob were released from the Hoffman Estates Hospital Wednesday.

She does it to avenge her divorce

CAIRO: Rats devoured a newborn baby whose mother abandoned the infant in a cardboard box to "avenge" her divorce, the government daily Al-Ahram reported Wednesday, reports AFP. Hassna Ahmad Mustafa, 30, abandoned the week-old baby

girl, "in a show of revenge because her husband had divorced her two weeks earlier," Al -Ahram said. The woman, who lived in a hut in the Manial Shiha district

of Cairo, placed the newborn in a cardboard box, went out looking for some dinner and never came back for the infant. it

Fossil fragments of monkey like animals found

BANGKOK: Fossil fragments of upper and lower jaws and teeth of a monkey-like animal have been found in southern Thailand, which researchers believe to be some of the earliest evidence of the evolution of higher primates, reports Xinhua.

The medium-sized monkey-like creatures weighing about six and seven kilograms are believed to have lived about 40 million years ago in what is now southern Thailand. The fossils were found in a coal mine in Krabi province by

Thai and French researchers, who have named the creature siamopithecus eocaenus, or "dawn are from Thailand." according to a Bangkok Post report quoting the Nature News The latest findings and their dating are likely to trigger off a

new round of debate, as researchers in the world are not in agreement about the origins of anthropoids, which comprise monkeys, apes and humans.

Good news for bird-watchers

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil: A tiny acrobat inhabits the forest canopy of Brazil's vast cocoa plantations, and its discovery has left bird lovers elated - and alarmed, reports AP

"It's Acrobatornis fonsecai, a bird previously unknown to science. For bird-watchers, it was like winning the lottery only one other new bird genus has been found in Brazil in the past decade.

But the rapid destruction of what is thought to be the bird's only habitat has ornithologists worried that its discovery may soon be followed by its extinction. "If something isn't done, if the government doesn't buy the

land and create a reserve, the acrobat will be extinct within 10 University of Rio de Janeiro and one of the discoverers.

years," said Jose Fernando Pacheco, a researcher at the Federal

Israel denies agreement to withdraw to its '67 border with Syria

'Over 2,500 Ugandan troops in Zaire'

KINSHASA, Zaire, Jan 30: More than 2,500 Ugandan soldiers have crossed into eastern Zaire and are moving toward the eastern cities of Beni and Butembo to bolster rebel forces, a Zairian security official said

Wednesday, reports AP. The official, who is close to the Defense Ministry but refused to identified further, said the troops were backed by tanks and armed with machine guns.

In eastern Zaire, meanwhile, United Nations sources, speaking on condition of anonymity. said rebels had taken the town of Lilumba, 160 kilometres (about 100 miles) south of Uvira, near the Burundian bor-

If true, the claim would mark an important military victory and bring to seven the number of cities seized by Laurent Kabila's army since it began its invasion in September. The Zaire government claims to have retaken one of those cities — Walikale — but the rebels

Janeiro.

in the entire Amazonia.

reports from Brazzaville.

Wednesday, AFP reports from Oslo.

fairly common in Scandinavia.

BRIFIE

Indian Mig crashes in Himachal:

An Indian Air Force Mig has crashed in the northern state of

Himachal Pradesh, officials said yesterday, just over a week

Wednesday in the Kangra district of the state, the officials said.

No reasons were given for the crash. A Mig-29 caught fire and

January 21, killing its pilot. The jet was on a rout in a flight.

crashed into a stone quarry near the western city of Pune on

New gas field discovered in Brazil:

Brazil's state-owned petroleum company Petrobras said

yesterday it had discovered a new natural gas field in the

northwestern state of Amazonas. Xinhua reports from Rio de

Rio Uruci, where Brazil's biggest natural gas reserve is located,

is estimated to have reserves of 5 billion cubic metres of gas.

The newly found deposit, according to a document released by

Petrobras, account for 6 per cent of the total potential reserves

217 die of meningitis in Africa: At

least 217 people have died of spinal meningitis over the past two

months in Togo, Burkina Faso and Ghana, the regional office of

the UN World Health Organisation (WHO) said Wednesday. AFP

said in a statement, adding that the figure was based on reports

from the three governments received at the WHO regional office

here on Monday. The first cases were reported from Togo, from

170 BC boat found in Norway: A dug-

out oak boat dating from 170 BC has been found in the Glaama

river northeast of Oslo, the oldest boat yet found in Norway.

Norwegian maritime museum curator Johan Kloster said on

inches) wide and 45 centimetres (18 inches) high ."but the end of

the boat is in bad shape so we think that it was actually longer."

Kloster told AFP. Ancient dug-out boats, similar to canoes, are

Corsican rebel group disbanded:
The Corsican National Liberation Front — Historic Channel,

the armed branch of a Corsican nationalist movement, said

Wednesday it was disbanding, at a press conference given by

hooded and armed men near Ajaccio, reliable sources said, AFP

termination (MPA). The Historic Channel appeared in 1991 but

Eritrea-Yemen's dispute resolved:

Eritrean President Issayas Afeworki said the dispute with

Yemen over control for the Hanish Islands was "resolved", a

government journal reported Wednesday, AFP says from As-

The group is the armed wing of the Movement for Self-De-

The boat measures 9.75 meters (32 feet), is 75 centimetres (30

where the disease spread to Burkina Faso and Ghana.

At least 1, 571 people have been affected by the epidemic, who

The new field, 42 kilometres from the mining province of

The pilot bailed out after his Mig-21 plane crashed on

after another jet fighter was lost, AFP reports from New Delhi.

There was no way to independently confirm the latest Zairian claims. Zaire's government has frequently accused Ugandan soldiers, as well as those from Rwanda, of fighting alongside rebels. The official Wednesday also accused Rwanda of stationing soldiers in rebel-held Goma in preparation for an attack on Hutu mili-

tants in the region. The Hutus are among hundreds of thousands who fled Rwanda into Zaire after the 1994 Rwandan war, which ended when a Tutsi-led government took power. Zaire says Rwanda and Uganda back the mainly Tutsi rebels because of their own large Tutsi populations and a desire to wipe out

the Hutus. The security official denied that foreigners seen in uniform alongside Zairian soldiers in the city of Kisangani, the base of the offensive, are mercenar-

US President Bill Clinton (L) makes a point during a press conference as US Secretary of Defence William Cohen (C) and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General John Shalikashvili (R) watch at the Pentagon in Washington, DC Wednesday. Clinton told reporters he would not expand the mission of NATO-led forces in Bosnia to track down and arrest - AFP/UNB photo warcrimes suspects.

US firm files \$ 22.145 b claim for Marcos' riches hidden in HK

HONG BONG, Jan BO A US dress is on the 34th floor Pacific Allanta, Georgia US dollar claim for riches al- Golden Buddha was awarded During last year trial Marlegedly hidden in Hong Kong by disgraced former Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos in the territory's biggest ever

US-based Golden Buddha Corp, filed the writ at the Supreme Court to order money allegedly the proceeds of the sale of a precious statue to be seized and handed over to the

claim, reports AFP.

corporation. The firm claims the money from the sale was deposited by Marcos in secret accounts in

the territory. firm's solicitors Allen and Oberry, whose registered ad-

The writ was filed by the

the sum by a Hawaiian Court last July when a jury found Marcos had stolen a gem-filled statues found by Filipino treasure Huter Rogelio Roxas.

The treasure hunter claimed the booty was stolen from him after he discovered it in a tunnel outside Bagiuo City in the Philippines in 1971. Roxas was then sent to jail

where he later claimed to have been tortured. When released he found the tunnel had been looted.

Before his death in 1993. Roxas handed over his claim to

the riches to a group of investors who formed the Golden

cos' US lawyer James Paul Linn argued the claims could not be backed up and Marcos' son testified he had never seen the secret cache. Marcos' wife Imelda who is

now facing a prison sentence in the Philippines for corruption will have two weeks to present her defence. Should she fail to do so the

plaintiff can ask the Supreme Court for a summary judgement according to local laws. The former first lady is at

present banned from travelling outside the Philippines pending the hearing of an appeal against a jail sentence for corruption.



Supporters of Palestinian radical Islamic movement Hamas participate in the funeral procession of Salah Eldin Jadallah, and his colleague Hassan Abbas Wednesday in Gaza City. The bodies of both militants, who were killed in 1994 while carrying out military actions against the Jewish state, were handed over by Israel to the Palestinian Authority - AFP/UNB photo (PA)

Fujimori, Hashimoto

had not claimed an attack for the past two years.

to meet over

reports from Ajaccio.

hostage crisis LIMA, Jan 30: President Alberto Fujimori will get a chance this weekend to personally reassure Japan's prime minister about his efforts to free 72 hostages held by leftist rebels in the Japanese ambassador's home, reports

Fujimori and Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto will meet in Toronto on Saturday, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien announced. Canada was chosen for the summit because of its

mediation role in the crisis. Fujimori spoke with Hashimoto by telephone Tuesday night about the standoff, which began Dec 17 when leftist Tupac Amaru rebels shot their way into a party at the diplomatic compound

WASHINGTON, Jan 30: The United States and Israel disputed Wednesday a Syrian claim that Israel has agreed to withdraw to its 1967 border in

a peace accord with Damascus. reports AP. Israeli Ambassador Eliahu Ben-Elissar accused Syria of spreading false reports to create the impression that Israel is reneging on an agreement left unsigned only because of a technical problem.

"There is no agreement whatsoever," he said, adding that Israel was ready to reopen peace talks with Syria immediately, anywhere.

US State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns. while avoiding criticism of Syria, concurred. "The simplest thing for me to say is, if there had been an Israeli-Syrian agreement on the Golan in 1995

wouldn't be standing here," he said. There would be peace between Syria and Israel - and there isn't a peace treaty today." Protracted peace talks between Israel and Syria were halted almost a year ago. Ben-

Elissar said Israel is eager to reopen the negotiations "anytime, anywhere and at any level," preferably between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Syrian President Hafez Assad.

"If this seems too difficult for Syria, let's start at a different level," the Israeli diplomat In Jerusalem, Netanyahu urged Syria to return to the bar-

gaining table. It would be to their benefit, he said. "Syria will benefit a lot economically, because the Syrian economy is not leaping forward," Netanyahu told the newspaper Haaretz. "There are certain things, such as joint ventures, in which Syria can only make progress with an open approach. Netanyahu's coordinator on

security issues with Syria, Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai, said last week that he expected talks to resume in the spring.

On Wednesday, Syrian Vice President Abdel-Halim Khaddam, visiting the United Arab Emirates, was quoted by Emirates News Agency as calling Mordechai's prediction "propaganda aimed at deceiving international public opinion.

Ben-Elissar's denial that previous Labour governments had come to terms with Syria on a land-for-peace arrangement conflicts with an account by Syria's chief negotiator, Walid Moualem.

In an interview to be published in the Journal of Palestine Studies, the Syrian diplomat said Israel agreed to withdraw to its border with Syria as it was before Israel captured the Golan Heights in the 1967 Six Day War. Syrian gunners had used the plateau to lob shells at Israel's Galilee region below.

Moualem was quoted by The Washington Post as saying in the Journal interview that Israel had made a commitment binding on the current Likud government, much more conservative than recent labour Cabinets.

"We negotiated the details of the withdrawal element for almost a year, until July 1994, when we finalised the agreement on full withdrawal." the Syrian diplomat wrote.

That Israel's Labour governments offered to relinquish

the border hills in exchange for full peace was clear at the time and publicly confirmed then by Itamar Rabinovich, Israel's chief negotiator under the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and his successor. Shimon

Negotiations bogged down over security arrangements along the border. "Netanyahu wants to disre-

gard the work of the last four years," Moualem wrote. "If we accept the precedent of going back to square one every time there is a change of government, we will never reach agreement.

The Israeli prime minister is due in Washington February 12 for a meeting the next day with US President Bill Clinton. On March 3. Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will be at the White House, followed March 10

by president Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and March 18 by Jordan's King Hussein. Netanyahu agreed this

month to yield control of most of the West Bank city of Hebron and rural areas to the Palestinians despite his skepticism about land-for-peace schemes.

Clinton intends to use the Hebron accord as a road map for pursuing agreements with Syria and Lebanon. Success would depend on Assad's willingness to come to terms with Israel and on whether Netanyahu would surrender the land the Syrian leader demands as his price.

Sandy Berger, Clinton's national security assistant, said Wednesday the president intends to find out whether there was more than a hope for peace on the two sides.

Hezbollah kills 3 Israeli troops in S Lebanon TYRE, Lebanon, Jan 30:

Three Israeli soldiers were killed and a fourth wounded in a bomb attack claimed by the pro-Iranian guerilla group Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon overnight, a security source said today, reports AFP. The source confirmed a claim by a Hezbollah

group's commandos had set off a bomb at five past midnight (2205 GMT, Wednesday) as an Israeli patrol was driving along the Deir Serian road in the central part of Israel's self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon. With this attack, Hezbollah

spokesman that one of the

has now killed four Israeli soldiers and wounded 15 since the beginning of the year in southern Lebanon.