

International

BRIEFLY



Dexter Scott King, left Vice President Al Gore, centre, and Coretta Scott King, widow of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., right, pay tribute to Dr Martin Luther King, Jr., at his crypt at the King Centre in Atlanta Monday. Others are unidentified.— AP/UNB photo

KSA denounces killing in Algeria:

Saudi Arabia has denounced a recent wave of massacres that killed more than 1,100 people in Algeria and offered help in trying to end six years of bloodshed in the north African country. Reuter reports from Dubai.

The official Saudi News Agency SPA said the Saudi cabinet, chaired by King Fahd, met on Monday night in Makkah where the monarch spends the last 19 days of the holy month of Ramadan every year.

Religious dispute claims 2 in India: Two people died of knife wounds Monday following a dispute between members of two Muslim sects in Western India, police said, AP reports from Bombay.

The trouble began Sunday when members of the Barelvi sect distributed pamphlets that challenged the Deobandi sect, considered the more orthodox of the two. Police said the two groups then argued over the start of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting.

Crimes in Rwandan Army on rise: Rwanda's army has sentenced at least half a dozen soldiers to death for murder and has publicly executed one in a bid to restore confidence and crumbling discipline, the chief army prosecutor said Monday. AP reports from Kigali.

Lt Col Andrew Rwigamba told The Associated Press that discipline was degenerating because soldiers were constantly on the move pursuing rebels who have stepped up attacks. On Monday, rebels ambushed a bus carrying brewery workers in north-western Rwanda, killing at least 34.

1 killed at King Day parade in US: Gunshots fired Monday during a holiday march honouring slain civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr. killed one man and wounded three young children, one of them critically, AP reports from Baton Rouge.

Police searched for at least one shooter, who was believed to be black, said Cpl. Don Kelly, a police spokesman. The motive was believed to be personal, not racial or political, he said. All the victims were black and the shooting may have been a result of a fight among the marchers, he said. Kelly described the aftermath of the shooting as "mass pandemonium." In the debris left by fleeing marchers was a picture of King, splattered with blood.

Yeltsin returns to Kremlin: After more than five weeks of seclusion, president Boris Yeltsin made a forceful return to the Kremlin on Monday that was clearly designed to show his government and the rest of the world that he's still in charge, AP reports from Moscow.

Conducting a marathon of meetings, Yeltsin upbraided his top deputies for failing to keep their promises and demanded better performances in the coming months. "A lot of work has piled up. Plenty of questions and problems have been created," a stern Yeltsin told Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin and his two top deputies. "We have your work cut out for you this year."

7 Pak journalists held: In an early morning raid on Tuesday police arrested seven Pakistani journalists and charged them with inciting anti-Shiite sentiments, officials said, AP reports from Lahore.

By midday, the Lahore High Court had granted bail to the seven employees of the daily Pakistan, a regional Urdu-language newspaper. The offending article published last Jan. 13 apparently said that Hasrat Ali, the son-in-law of Islam's prophet, Mohammed, and the man Shiites believe was the rightful heir to the prophet, was a drinker a serious crime in Islam.

Gunmen kill one in Lahore: Gunmen broke into the home of a Punjab lawmaker on Tuesday killing his father and critically wounding his sister, the authorities said, AP reports from Lahore.

The assailants, who wore masks, broke into the house of Man Abdul Hameed, a member of the Punjab provincial legislature in Narowal, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) south of the provincial capital of Lahore. No one took responsibility for the killing, but police suspect rival politicians. The attack was being investigated, the authorities said, but so far no arrests have been made.

Suharto to run for 7th term: Indonesian President Suharto formally accepted the presidential nomination of the ruling Golkar Party for a new five-year term yesterday, the party chairman said, AP reports from Jakarta.

Suharto accepts the responsibility and is willing to become nominated as president, party Chairman Harmoko said after a meeting with the 76-year-old leader who has rejected growing calls for him to retire.

Saddam's 6-month deadline to lift UN ban unacceptable : US

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 20: A six-month deadline set by Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein for the lifting of UN sanctions against Iraq is "unacceptable," US Ambassador Bill Richardson said Monday, reports AFP.

"That's unacceptable," Richardson told reporters here, referring to Saddam's threat to expel UN weapons inspectors unless sanctions are lifted in six months' time.

The Security Council has rejected it. It must be that he feels desperate," Richardson added.

Richardson made the statement as UN Special Commissioner Richard Butler held talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, aimed at securing full access for the inspectors verifying the dismantling of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

The most important development will be the result of Butler's trip, whether the UN inspectors get full, unconditional access, Richardson said.

Butler said Monday that he

would seek clarification from Aziz on the six-month deadline mentioned by Saddam.

He notably wanted to know whether "the clock starts ticking" from Saddam's speech on Saturday or started on November 20, as had initially been proposed by the Iraqi Parliament.

In any case, said Butler, setting a time limit was "a degree of arbitrariness that makes no practical sense."

AP says, arriving amid a new crisis, chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler rejected on Monday an Iraqi deadline for arms inspectors to finish their work and again accused Baghdad of concealing banned weapons material.

Butler also said that no sites in Iraq, including President Saddam Hussein's palaces, should remain off limits to his teams.

Noting that the inspectors' work "could be done quite quickly with full Iraqi cooperation," Butler refused to be held

to a deadline.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein said Saturday that he would suspend cooperation with the inspectors if they did not finish their work by May 20.

On Monday, Butler echoed the accusations of UN arms inspectors who say Iraq is concealing crucial documents and misleading the inspectors.

"There is a concealment programme in this country," he said.

The United Nations has repeatedly demanded that Iraq cooperate with its inspectors working to dismantle Iraqi programmes to build long-range missiles and chemical and biological weapons. The United States has not ruled out the use of military force.

The inspectors must complete their job before the UN Security Council will consider lifting the crushing economic sanctions it imposed after Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraq has said repeatedly that it has destroyed all of its weapons of mass destruction and is concealing nothing.

In November, Iraq threw Americans on the UN teams out of the country, accusing them of spying. The US beefed up its military forces in the area and Iraq agreed to let the inspectors back in under a Russian-brokered deal.

Butler's visit came a day after Iraqi officials, fearful that their confrontation with Butler's inspectors could lead to a US military strike, urged Iraqis to volunteer for weapons training.

Also Monday, about 5,000 Iraqis demonstrated in front of the inspectors' Baghdad headquarters, many chanting "Butler is an American agent" and "With our blood and souls we will defend you, Saddam." The demonstrators, led by government-sponsored trade unions, also burned American flags.

And Iraqi authorities organised a funeral procession in central Baghdad for 73 children they said died Monday from a lack of medical supplies.

New Bosnian Serb PM moves to consolidate his power

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Jan 20: The newly elected Bosnian Serb premier moved quickly Monday to consolidate his power, ordering the government moved to this northern stronghold and blocking the former leaders' funds, reports AP.

Premier Milorad Dodik convened his new Cabinet in Banja Luka, the stronghold of Western-backed President Biljana Plavšić, just one day after his election by a bare majority of the Bosnian Serbs legislature.

The Cabinet announced Parliament would meet in Banja Luka Saturday for the new government's swearing-in and the town would replace indicted war crimes suspect Radovan Karadžić's stronghold, Pale, as the territory's administrative capital.

It also decreed that all bank accounts of the former government and its ministries be frozen.

Aleksa Buha, who heads the pro-Karadžić faction in the Bosnian Serb Parliament, vowed his deputies would "not recognise any decisions" made by Dodik, calling the 39-year-old businessman's election a "coup."

Dodik was elected after Karadžić deputies walked out of

Parliament, which is nearly evenly split between them and their anti-Karadžić rivals.

In Washington, the US State Department welcomed Dodik's election.

"We expect that Prime Minister Dodik's new government will work actively to... address the serious problems facing the people of the Serb Republic as a result of the failed policies of the previous government," spokesman James P. Rubin said.

"We strongly support his call for an end to the corrupt and greedy practices of the Pale clique that have isolated the Serb Republic and impoverished its people, while enriching its leaders."

Support came from closer quarters as well. Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Marjanovic, a proxy for Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević, congratulated the new premier Monday on his election.

The Serb-controlled half of Bosnia has been divided by a bitter power struggle since last summer. Police and all other state institutions have split into factions loyal to Plavšić and Karadžić, who stepped down after two indictments by the UN war crimes tribunal.

US was aware of DPRK's submarine infiltration

SEOUL, Jan 20: US intelligence officials were tracking two North Korean submarines for at least three days before one of them ran aground off South Korea in 1996, a South Korean magazine reported Tuesday, reports AP.

Wolgan Chosun, a major monthly magazine, said it obtained the information from Robert C Kim, 57, a former US Navy computer specialist serving a nine-year sentence in Pennsylvania on espionage charges.

Kim, a US citizen since 1974, was arrested in 1996 on charges of spying for his native South Korea. He admitted in court that he had passed classified documents to a military attaché at the South Korean Embassy in Washington.

In two interviews with the magazine late last year, Kim said he was arrested three days after he had handed over data concerning the North Korean submarines to the South Korean attaché, Col. Park Dong-il.

On Sept. 18, 1996, a North Korean submarine was found stranded metres (yards) off South Korea's east coast. That touched off a massive manhunt for the 26 occupants of the submarine who came ashore.

The magazine did not say how the submarines were tracked, or by which US agency.

According to the magazine, Kim delivered the information to the attaché by phone, but it was not included in transcripts of their conversations released by US prosecutors during trial.

The North. Thirteen South Koreans were also killed during the 53-day manhunt, some by friendly fire.

The infiltration sent relations between North and South Korea plunging to their lowest level in years. The US government froze all dealings with North Korea until Pyongyang issued an apology two months later.

The magazine quoted Kim as saying that when the crippled North Korean submarine was discovered, the South Korean military attaché asked him for US intelligence data.

Kim told the magazine he checked the Navy's computer data and found that US intelligence was tracking two North Korean submarines operating in South Korean waters for at least three days, apparently without informing South Korea, a close ally.

The magazine quoted Kim as saying that almost simultaneously, the US intelligence was tracing another North Korean submarine operating off South Korea's south coast.

The magazine did not say how the submarines were tracked, or by which US agency.

According to the magazine, Kim delivered the information to the attaché by phone, but it was not included in transcripts of their conversations released by US prosecutors during trial.

JERUSALEM, Jan 20: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's talks with President Bill Clinton in Washington Tuesday will be "the last chance for the government to advance the peace process," 115 Israeli reserve officers, including senior generals, warned, reports AP.

"We call on the prime minister to continue on the path of peace outlined by Yitzhak Rabin (the prime minister assassinated in November 1995) and to carry out the Israeli army withdrawal from the West Bank in the accords," the officers said in an open letter to Netanyahu on Monday.

Signatories included General Tsvi Tzur, chief of staff from 1961 to 1964, and the former Israeli police chief, Yossef Nahmias.

The text of the letter is identical to one 350 officers sent to then prime minister Menachem Begin denouncing Jewish settlement in the occupied territories in 1978.

The 1978 letter led to the creation of the Israeli anti-settlement movement Peace Now.

Both letters warned against the choice of a greater Israel policy seeking the annexation

of the occupied territories and warned that any policy aimed at "keeping control over the Palestinian people can only put the democratic character of our country into question."

According to Peace Now, the total budget allocation for Jewish settlements in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and annexed East Jerusalem is around 350 million dollars, an increase of 20 million on last year.

AP adds: Arriving in the United States for what could be a difficult meeting with President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on the Palestinians to cancel their call for Israel's de-

struction. Netanyahu received a warm reception from evangelical Christians upon his arrival Monday evening. His meeting at the White House on Tuesday may not go as smoothly.

By all accounts, Netanyahu is bringing to Clinton a proposal for a modest pullback from the West Bank that likely falls short of the administration's expectations and is far less than Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat envisions.

Clinton said he had "high hopes" of reviving the Mideast peace process in separate meetings this week with the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. He assured Israel of his support and said the Palestinians also must make concessions to revive Mideast peacemaking.

Netanyahu, his voice hoarse, told a wildly enthusiastic Christian group Monday that "there is no peace with weakness."

The Rev. Jerry Falwell, a top US evangelical leader, keynoted the reception in a crowded hotel ballroom by declaring: "Israel loves America, and that's why I support Israel. I love democracy, and Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East."

Falwell, who also met separately with Netanyahu, said: "I accept the covenant of Abraham and I believe God blesses those who bless Israel."

E. Brandt Gustavson, president of the National Religious Broadcasters, assured Netanyahu that Christians "stand with the prime minister for an undivided Jerusalem."

Netanyahu assured the audience that he intends to preserve what has been achieved in Arab-Israeli peacemaking.

33 massacred in Algeria

ALGIERS, Jan 20: At least 33 people killed Monday in Algeria in attacks blamed on suspected Islamic extremists, newspapers reported today.

The victims included a group of five adolescents whose throats were slit and bodies mutilated, the paper Liberte said.

The news came as a visiting European Union delegation prepared for talks with government officials on how the EU can help stop a wave of massacres in this North African country.

Their mission was prompted by European concern over the massacres which, according to news reports, has left more than 1,500 people dead since the start of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan on December 30.

US behaving with world like a master: Khatami

TEHRAN, Jan 20: Iranian President Mohammed Khatami criticised the United States on Monday, saying Iranians do not need the United States to come close to us, reports AP.

"Today, the politicians of the United States are behaving with the world like a master," he said. "By no means will we be subjected to the pressure of any master."

Khatami's remarks contrast to his overture to the American people earlier this month, when he called for "dialogue and understanding."

That overture, unprecedented for an Iranian leader since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, has highlighted divisions between moderate and hardline factions within the government.

Sinn Fein won't withdraw from talks under any circumstances

LONDONDERRY, Jan 20: With three more deaths in two days straining the peace process in Northern Ireland, the IRA-allyed Sinn Fein party said Monday it will stay in the talks despite its unhappiness with the settlement proposed by the British and Irish governments, reports AP.

"Sinn Fein isn't going to withdraw from the talks under any circumstances," Martin McGuinness, the party's chief negotiator, said after a delegation led by party President Gerry Adams met with Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The meeting came hours after a Protestant shopkeeper was murdered by an Irish Republican Army splinter group in Northern Ireland, and a day after a pro-British group from the Protestant side murdered a Catholic man.

Missile sales to Iran halted

China's decision to help improve security in Gulf, says Cohen

BEIJING, Jan 20: China's pledges to halt sales of anti-ship cruise missiles to Iran will help improve security in the Gulf, although the Iranian threat remains, Defence Secretary William Cohen said Tuesday.

Cohen cited the reassurances by Defence Minister Chi Haotian on China's missile sales to Iran as one of several signs of concrete progress in improving relations.

"I am satisfied that there will not be any continuation of sales that would contribute to the insecurity to our troops in the region," Cohen said during a press conference winding up his three-day visit.

President Jiang Zemin, likewise, told Cohen his visit had helped move relations a step forward, state-run television reported. After meeting Jiang, Cohen left for Tokyo — the sixth stop of his seven-nation Asian tour.

China has long been a crucial weapons supplier to Iran and is suspected of aiding Iranian missile and nuclear weapons programmes, allegations Beijing has denied.

Cohen made a point of warning China that as a net oil importer it too could suffer if Iran used Chinese weapon technology to disrupt Gulf shipping.

Relations with Washington also would be set back, he said in a speech Monday to officers at the academy of Military Science, an elite