

Pak anti-corruption drive 20 more detained

ISLAMABAD, Dec 27 : Pakistani authorities have arrested 20 people including top business men in a second wave of a crackdown against corruption and bank loan defaulters, officials said today, reports AFP.

Most of the arrests were made in the industrial city of Faisalabad, they said.

The official Associated Press of Pakistan said a "big business tycoon" and at least three jewellers were among those arrested on Sunday. It did not reveal their names.

Some 26 people were arrested last month in a crackdown initiated soon after army chief General Pervez Musharraf seized power after toppling Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a military coup in October.

Musharraf has said his priority is to rid the country of corruption.

The military ruler has set up special anti-corruption courts across the country to try cases of financial irregularities and punish wilful loan defaulters.

A small group among the Pakistani elite has outstanding loans worth 211 billion rupees

(about 4.2 billion dollars), a third of the national budget. Most of the loans were obtained from the country's commercial banks with little or no collateral.

Officials have said the campaign has so far recovered around 10 billion rupees.

Basu inaugurates 'Millennium park'

CALCUTTA, Dec 27 : West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu yesterday urged the centre to cooperate with the state government by releasing adequate funds under "Mega city project" to help expedite various development programmes, reports PTI.

Inaugurating "the Millennium park," an initiative under "Calcutta Riverfront Beautification project," on both the banks of Ganga between Rabindra Setu and Vidyasagar Setu, Basu reminded once again how the centre's indifferent attitude in releasing funds for various projects in the state had delayed their implementation.



Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee (C), Sonia Gandhi (R), leader of India's main opposition party, and Home Minister L.K. Advani attend an emergency meeting at Vajpayee's residence in New Delhi yesterday. Indian opposition leaders warned the government against compromising national interests in dealing with the hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane by Muslim militants.

— AFP photo

BRIEFLY

Portillo wins Guatemalan polls

Right-wing challenger Alfonso Portillo won Guatemala's presidential election on Sunday, defeating the candidate of the ruling Party of National Advancement (PNA), Oscar Berger, AFP reports from Guatemala City.

Portillo, 48, of the Guatemalan Republican Front (FRG) founded by former dictator Efraim Rios Montt, won 68.29 per cent of the ballots in the second round vote to 31.7 per cent for Oscar Berger, according to official results based on returns from 97.58 per cent of polling stations.

Russia launches military sat. Russia successfully launched a military satellite Sunday from the Baikonur space centre in Kazakhstan, the forces' press service reported, AFP says from Moscow.

The defence ministry satellite, put into orbit by a "Cyclone" series rocket.

Banana bandit gets life term. A British man who held up two stores armed only with a banana has been jailed for life. The Times reported Monday, AFP reports from London.

A jury in Lewes, southeast England, refused to consider the fruit's lack of firepower, or the fact that the 'banana bandit' only got away with 136 pounds (217 euros/dollars), as extenuating circumstances.

Vietnam, China to sign treaty. Vietnam and China will sign an historic treaty on land border demarcations this week, the Vietnamese foreign ministry said on Monday, AFP reports from Hanoi.

Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan will travel to Hanoi where he will sign the document with his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Manh Cam on Thursday, the ministry said.

Land disputes brew anew between ROK, Japan

SEOUL, Dec 27 : Territorial disputes have erupted again over rocky islets claimed by both Seoul and Tokyo after Japanese nationals registered addresses on the islands, officials said today, reports AFP.

South Korea's foreign ministry said it had sent a letter to Tokyo, complaining about a group of Japanese registering permanent addresses on the islets of Tokdo, also known as Takeshima in Japan.

We called for the immediate cancellation of the Japanese registration," a ministry official told AFP. "It is a violation of our sovereign rights over the islands."

The islets are located halfway between Japan and South Korea and claimed by both, although Tokdo is now

under South Korea's control with coastguards stationed there.

South Koreans and Japanese have two types of addresses -- a permanent address from the place where their family roots originate and a temporary address where they really reside.

The Seoul government gave no details but local dailies said Seoul had urged Tokyo to stop Japanese residents in Shimane Prefecture reportedly registering their permanent addresses on the islands.

The Japanese foreign ministry has said it could not prevent its people from changing addresses "within its territory," the Chosun Ilbo newspaper said.

France mops up after storm

PARIS, Dec 27 : France mopped up today after a record-breaking storm lashed the country, killing at least 31 people before wreaking more havoc and leaving at least 26 dead in Germany and Switzerland, reports AFP.

With some 1.5 million homes still without power, Jean-Pierre Bourdier, a director of the national company Electricité de France (EDF), said: "We have never seen this before, never.... We have never had so many clients cut off at the same time."

France's western coast, and northern and eastern regions were particularly hard hit by

the high winds, which were recorded Sunday at 173 km per hour at Orly airport south of Paris.

Elsewhere, gusts of over 200 km per hour were reported.

In France, at least 13 lives were claimed by trees uprooted by the hurricane-force winds. Falling masonry and road accidents were responsible for other casualties.

EDF mobilised some 6,000 people Monday to deal with power outages across the country. "This morning we estimate around a million and a half homes were without power, mainly in eastern France," said Bourdier.

Hijack drama to further strain Indo-Pak ties: Experts

NEW DELHI, Dec 27 : The hijack drama involving an Indian plane seized by Muslim militants demanding the release of a jailed Pakistani cleric will further strain already fragile Indo-Pakistani ties, experts said today, reports AFP.

They said the latest incident to mark some 50 years of mutual hostility and suspicion will impact relations between the arch-rivals, who have fought three wars and engaged in a two-month conflict in the disputed state of Kashmir early this year.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdus Sattar on Sunday said the hijacking of the Indian Airlines passenger plane on

Christmas Eve might be an Indian intelligence plot and that some of the pilot's actions were suspicious.

The possibility can no longer be ignored that the incident involves a preconceived design by a foreign intelligence organisation," Sattar said, adding that the incident was similar to the hijacking of an Indian airliner to Lahore, Pakistan, in 1971.

After the 1971 hijack, India banned Pakistani planes from flying over its territory to reach the former East Pakistan. A war erupted soon, leading to the splitting of Pakistan and the emergence of its eastern wing as an independent Bangladesh.

"Deposed prime minister Nawaz Sharif and the current military ruler General Pervez Musharraf were lying to each other throughout," he said.

Fighting leaves 41 dead on both sides in Lanka

COLOMBO, Dec 27 : Government forces and Tamil Tiger rebels were locked in combat in northern Sri Lanka today with at least 41 killed and many more wounded on both sides, officials said, reports AFP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas ambushed a police patrol in the north of the country Monday by detonating a claymore mine and killed three constables, officials said.

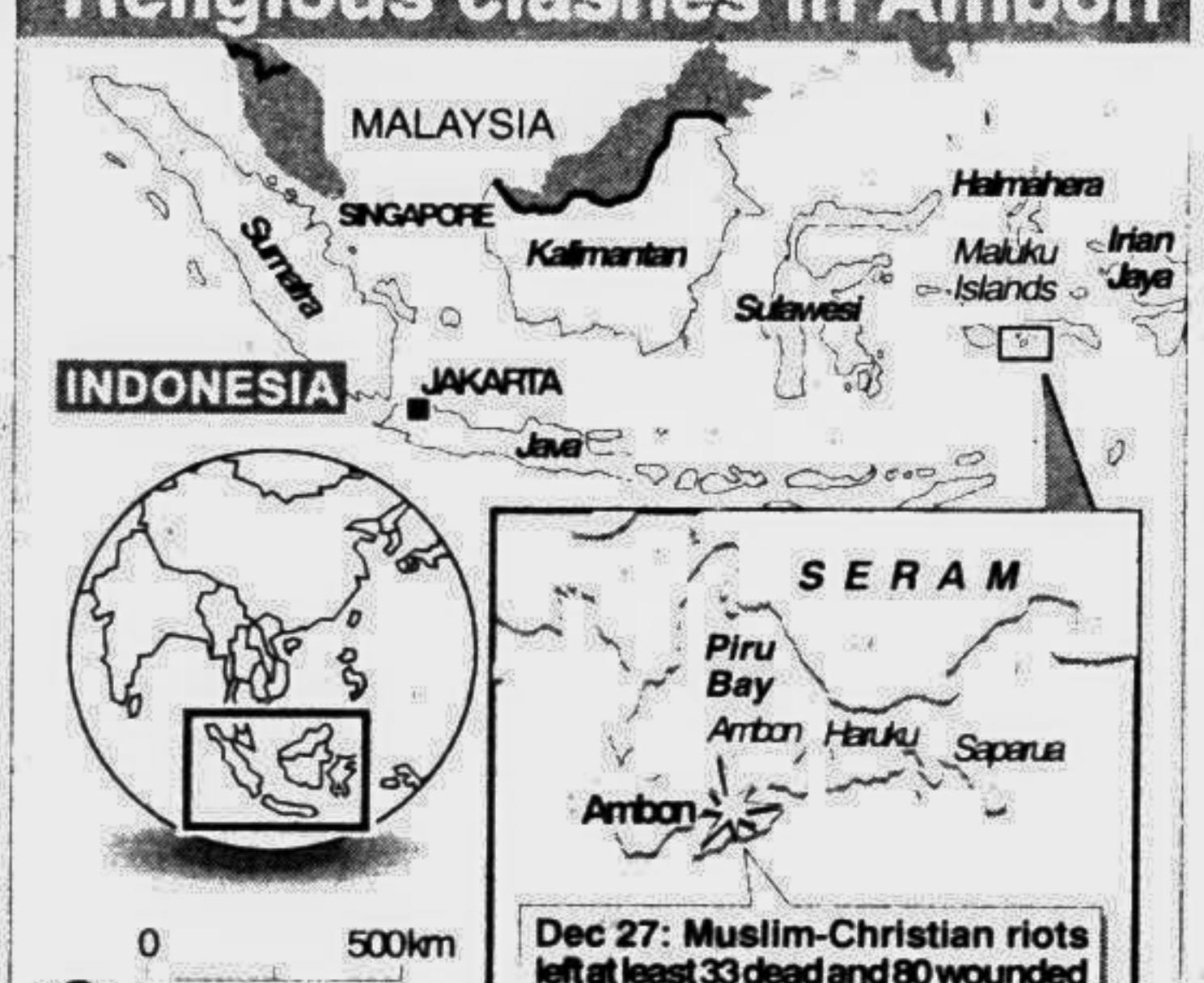
The ambush came as the LTTE said over its clandestine Voice of Tigers radio that troops carried out a "commando" raid on their location at Umayalpura on Sunday.

Rebel radio monitored in the northern town of Vavuniya, 260 km north of here, said 18 rebels were killed and many more wounded.

Military sources said 20 government troops were also killed in the clashes, but the defence ministry here said they could not confirm the report.

Tiger guerrillas are leading a drawn out campaign for independence in the island's northern and eastern regions. More than 55,000 people have been killed in the past 27 years.

Religious clashes in Ambon



BCIC International Tender Notice

বিমানাইনির পথ শিখায়নে জাতীয় অগ্রগতির প্রতীক

The Managing Director, Jamuna Fertilizer Company Ltd, Tarakandi, Sarishabari, Jamalpur hereby invites sealed tender on C&F(C), Chittagong basis under any suitable financial source in two envelope system for import of 250 MT Linear Low Density Polythene Pellets (LLDPE) against Tender Enquiry No JFCL/FP/FP/1.81/276 dt 5-12-99. The tender will be received simultaneously at BCIC Bhaban, Dhaka and JFCL Office, Tarakandi, Jamalpur up to 11:00 AM on 26-1-2000 and will be opened on the same day thereafter. Tender documents containing detailed terms and conditions will be available on payment of Tk 500/- (non-refundable) in cash from the office of the (i) Controller of Accounts, BCIC 30-31, Diluksha C/A, Dhaka (ii) BCIC Branch Office, 6, Agrabad C/A, Chittagong and (iii) Jamuna Fertilizer Company Ltd, on all working days. The management reserves the right to accept or to reject any or all tender without assigning any reason thereof. No tender documents will be sold on the date of opening of tender.

Md Abdur Razzaque
Addl Chief Manager (Pur)
For Managing Director.

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G-2168

International

Pakistan accuses India of staging hijack

ISLAMABAD, Dec 27 : Pakistan's foreign minister on Sunday accused India of staging the hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight to malign Pakistan's new military government, reports AP.

Since the army ousted Pakistan's elected government on Oct 12, India has tried with little success to isolate Pakistan internationally, Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar told reporters.

"Perhaps they are disappointed at the failure of their efforts. Pakistan has normal contact with most countries of the world," he said. "Perhaps the government of India manufactured another incident in pursuit of their aim of maligning Pakistan internationally."

The Indian Airlines plane was hijacked Friday after it left Nepal, embarking on a terrifying odyssey across South Asia and the Middle East until Saturday, when it landed in Kan-

dahar in southern Afghanistan.

On Saturday, the hijackers finally issued their demands, calling for the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, a Pakistani activist in the disputed region of Kashmir who has been in an Indian jail since 1994, and several other Kashmiri militants being held in Indian prisons.

The possibility can no longer be ignored that the (hijacking) incident involves a preconceived design by a foreign intelligence organisation," said Sattar, in apparent reference to neighboring India's secret service.

India accuses Pakistan of arming and financing Muslim militants spearheading a secessionist movement on its territory. Pakistan denies the charge.

India's Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh has said the five hijackers arrived in Nepal

aboard a Pakistan International Airlines flight from the southern Pakistani port city of Karachi.

But Sattar said Pakistan had checked the PIA flight manifest, ruling out that possibility.

At a meeting of his Cabinet's security committee, meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee criticised the mishandling of the hijack crisis, the Indian Express reported Sunday.

The premier said that while the plane circle Amritsar for 40 minutes before it was allowed to land, no one experienced in hostage situations was on hand to talk to the negotiators and no action was taken to block the runway.

A specially trained anti-terrorist squad of 50 commandos, which is supposed to be on 30-minute call at all times, was not summoned until too late, reports said.

Taliban ultimatum to hijackers

Surrender or quit Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, Dec 27 : Afghanistan's ruling Taliban today warned the hijackers of an Indian airliner parked at Kandahar airport to surrender or quit Afghanistan, the Afghan Islamic Press said, reported AP.

"We have sent a message through the control tower to the hijackers to either surrender themselves and the aircraft to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan or leave," Agha Tayyab, a spokesman for Taliban chief Mullah Mohammad Omar told the Pakistan-based private news service.

"We are waiting for the hijackers' response," Tayyab said. He said the Taliban had been trying to secure the safe release of some 160 passengers and crew since the aircraft landed in southern Afghan city of Kandahar on Saturday.

"We will further continue our efforts," he said.

Meanwhile, Taliban also ordered the hijackers to free their 160 hostages or leave the country.

The ultimatum came as India sent a senior diplomat into

the plane and engineers have been sent from Kabul to fix an electrical problem.

The Afghan militia served breakfast early Monday to the 160 passengers and crew on board the Airbus, which was still parked on the runway at Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan.

UN coordinator for Afghanistan Erick de Mul helped secure the release of one sick passenger Sunday after hour-long talks with the hijackers.

De Mul was still at Kandahar on Monday, UN sources insisted, even though the Taliban said he had already returned to Pakistan.

The United Nations has stressed it cannot negotiate hostage releases and is limiting its mission to humanitarian concerns.

Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmad Mutawakel said the plane's pilot had reported some "technical snags."

"When these problems are solved, we will definitely solve the plane to leave," he said.

The Taliban have refueled



Israel to build 5000 new homes for settlers in WB

JERUSALEM, Dec 27 : The Israeli military administration in the West Bank has given the go-ahead for construction of more than 5,000 new homes for Jewish settlers in the territory, Israeli public radio reported today, says AFP.

During the past two months, the administration issued 2,757 construction permits, gave preliminary approval for the building of an additional 2,139 housing units and authorised the installation of 85 mobile homes for the settlers, it said.

Some of the mobile homes are destined for unauthorised settlement outposts which were recently evacuated under an agreement between Prime Minister Ehud Barak and the West Bank settlers' council, it said.

Ephraim Sneh, the deputy defence minister who is responsible for providing final authorisation for new settlement construction, was quoted by the radio as denying knowledge of the new plans.

The anti-settlement movement Peace Now denounced the reported West bank expansion plans, saying Barak was pursuing the hardline policies of his right-wing predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority

141-143, Motijheel Commercial Area, Dhaka-1000

Employment Notice

Applications are invited from bona fide Bangladeshi nationals for appointment to the following vacant posts in the Conservancy and Pilotage Department of the BIWTA Authority on purely temporary basis (may be made permanent after getting the clearance from the Ministry of Establishment).

Serial No	Name of post	Pay scale	Age	Educational qualifications
1	Assistant Director (C&P)	4300-7740/-	21-40	Intermediate passed with 4 years experience of cadetship in ship and 2nd class Inland Water Certificate or Chief Petty Officer in Seamen Section of Bangladesh Navy (HET/SSC). Candidates must complete certificate of Inland Water during apprenticeship or should have service as junior river surveyor for 8 years.
2	Radio Officer/ Wireless Officer	3400-6625/-	21-35	SSC or equivalent examination passed. Retired army officer in the concerned section who has obtained class I certificate in handling wireless.