

International

Wahid talks tough against coup

JAKARTA Jan 17: Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid today warned against any attempts by the military to topple his government...

Indonesian military not to challenge Wahid's authority amid speculation some generals angered by efforts to prosecute them for human rights abuses...

Asked to comment on Holbrooke's warning to the Indonesian military, Wahid, a moderate Muslim scholar, said Indonesia "respects the United States."

A Japanese news report said Sunday that Wahid planned to sack cabinet minister General Wiranto -- a powerful former armed forces chief -- from his Cabinet where he serves as coordinating minister of politics and security...



Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (C) is flanked by Coordinating Minister for the Economy, Finance and Industry, Kwick Kian Gie (L) and Finance Minister Bambang Sudibyo, as he bursts into laughter at a journalist's question during a press conference at the presidential palace in Jakarta yesterday.

Tribal protest in India snaps links with '7-Sisters'

GUWAHATI, India, Jan 17: A general strike by a radical group of tribal students today cut off rail and road links between seven remote far-eastern states and the rest of India...

Musharraf in China to discuss security issues

BEIJING, Jan 17: Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf arrived here today for a two-day visit to China expected to focus on regional security issues, reports AFP.

"My visit to China is a reaffirmation of our close and fraternal ties," Musharraf extended greetings and best wishes on behalf of the Pakistani people to the people of China for a prosperous new year and new century.

First artificial eye for blind man

NEW YORK, Jan 17: A blind man can read large letters and navigate around big objects by using a tiny camera wired directly to his brain, the first artificial eye to provide useful vision, a researcher reports AP.

Richard Normann, who studies artificial vision at the University of Utah, said he's encouraged by how much Jerry can do. He said Dobelle's report suggests that, someday, even limited signals to the brain will let blind people do relatively complicated visual tasks.

When Dr Dobelle provides additional details on his methodology that establishes this result, we may be there," Heeterds said after reading Dobelle's report.

The electrodes stimulate certain brain cells, making Jerry perceive the specks of light. The shifting patterns as Jerry scans across a scene tell him where light areas meet dark ones, letting him find the black cap on the white wall, for example.



Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf (L) shakes hands with Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji prior to a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. Musharraf is in Beijing for a two-day visit for discussions with Chinese leaders, his first international visit outside the Arab world since seizing power in October.

Fresh sectarian violence flares in Spice Islands

JAKARTA, Jan 17: Clashes between Muslims and Christians claimed the lives of another three people in eastern Indonesia's Maluku Islands, the military said today, despite a warning from Jakarta of tough action to halt the violence, reports AFP.

Hayat said the mob was angered by press reports of the slaughter of Muslims in Halmahera island in the past week, by their Christian rivals there.

Pakistan calls for Kashmir talks

NEW DELHI, Jan 17: Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf said in remarks published today that only talks on disputed Kashmir could improve ties with India currently at their 'lowest' level, reports AP.

Musharraf also denied New Delhi's allegations that his country was involved in the recent hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane and said the hijackers were not in Pakistan.

Musharraf said the South Asian region was fraught with tension, especially along the disputed Kashmir frontier.

Blasts rock customs bldg in Moscow

MOSCOW, Jan 17: Two explosions early today rocked the customs department building in Moscow. Interfax news agency quoted police as saying, reports AFP.

BRIEFLY

Volcano erupts in Guatemala: Authorities here put three villages on red alert and began evacuations after the Pacaya volcano, 25 km south of here began to erupt late Sunday, AFP reports from Guatemala City.

Pak religious parties rally against signing of CTBT

ISLAMABAD, Jan 17: Pakistan's right wing religious parties warned the military-led government not to sign the global test ban treaty and one cleric issued a fatwa or edict threatening an uprising if the treaty is signed, newspapers reported Monday, says AP.

The edict is part of a large campaign by religious groups in Pakistan to stop the military government from signing on to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Former Lankan Tamil leader returns to India

COLOMBO, Jan 17: A former Tamil rebel leader who returned from nine years in exile last year has gone back to India after being expelled by his party for supporting the government, the party said Monday, reports AP.

He gave no details of the casualties sustained by either side in the clashes.



Relatives, locals and central government officials pray for the victims of the 1995 Kobe earthquake during a memorial ceremony in Kobe, western Japan yesterday. The ceremony marked the fifth anniversary of the quake which left 6,432 people dead.

Japan remembers Kobe quake victims

TOKYO, Jan 17: Heads bowed, Japanese relatives holding lanterns gathered in silence on a hill top above Kobe at 5.46 a.m. today to remember the 6,432 victims of the killer earthquake that struck exactly five years before, reports AFP.



Socialist Ricardo Lagos celebrates in Santiago after accepting victory in the second round of presidential elections Sunday. Lagos will govern for six years beginning in March 2000.

Lagos elected Chilean president

SANTIAGO, Jan 17: Ricardo Lagos was elected Chile's first socialist president since Salvador Allende, narrowly defeating a conservative rival in a runoff election that focused more on the country's economic future than on its violent past, reports AP.

Russia pounds Chechen positions Council of Europe calls for truce

NAZRAN, Russia, Jan 17: Russia blasted rebel Chechen positions today in the besieged capital, Grozny, as it stepped up its drive towards the city center, brushing aside the Council of Europe's pleas for a ceasefire.

Delegation chief Lord Russell-Johnson of Britain Sunday called for an immediate end to hostilities in the republic, warning the conflict could lead to Russia's suspension from the 41-nation human rights and democracy body.

On Tuesday, the delegation will fly to the troubled North Caucasus for talks with local leaders, including Ingushetia's President Ruslan Aushev, a sharp critic of Moscow's policies in the region.

Five Israelis hurt in bomb attack

HADERA, Israel, Jan 17: Five Israelis were wounded today in a bomb attack in this northern town that officials said could be the work of terrorists trying to derail the Middle East peace process, reports AP.