

International

Wiranto must resign: Wahid

Jakarta military chiefs blamed for atrocities in E Timor



Former Indonesian armed forces chief General Wiranto gestures during a press conference at his office in Jakarta yesterday. Wiranto defended his role in East Timor and gave no indication he was prepared to resign from the cabinet.

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 1: UN and Indonesian human rights investigators blame Jakarta's military chiefs for last year's terror campaign in East Timor...

powerful post of political affairs and security minister in Wahid's Cabinet. Human rights activists and pro-independence leaders have repeatedly blamed the Indonesian military...

The five UN investigators called for the United Nations to establish an international human rights tribunal to prosecute those responsible. Santa Piedad, a Costa Rican congresswoman who headed the team of UN investigators...

President Wahid's call for Wiranto's resignation and Indonesian Attorney General M. Darusman's announcement that state prosecutors would investigate allegations in the Indonesian commission's report...

439 exposed to radiation in Japan N-accident

TOKYO, Feb 1: Japan raised its estimate of how many people were exposed to radiation in the country's worst nuclear accident to 439 from 70, officials said today, reports Reuters. September's accident, which killed one person, was triggered when workers put nearly eight times the proper amount of condensed uranium into a mixing tank...

China slams US for seeking domination over world

BEIJING, Feb 1: China today slammed a White House report on US global leadership objectives in the next century saying it was tantamount to a manifesto for world domination, reports AFP. 'To lead the world' is the same thing as seeking global hegemony, so this report is the same thing as a manifesto...

The US House of Representatives prepared to vote Tuesday on the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, which will allow for close ties between the US and Taiwan military leaders. China has strongly warned the bill would undermine relations between Beijing and Washington.

China has a plan to 'forge' international political and economic order which includes the freedom of movement of its 'soft forces' and its position that the UN, WTO and other international organisations should completely serve the US.

Buckingham Palace to open ballroom to tourists

LONDON, Feb 1: Buckingham Palace will open its royal ballroom, the centre of state entertaining, to the public for the first time in August, a palace spokesman said today, reports Reuters. The palace's largest room - created in the mid-19th century for Britain's Queen Victoria - will be part of the state rooms tour during the two months when the building is open to the public from August 6.

Clinton, Mitchell nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

OSLO, Feb 1: US President Bill Clinton and American peace envoy to Ireland George Mitchell were among those nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize as the deadline nears on Monday, reports AP. Clinton was nominated for at least the fifth straight year, this time by two Norwegian parliamentarians, Vidar Kleppe, of the right-wing Party of Progress and Steinar Bastesen, an independent.

Clinton is president of the world's most powerful nation and throughout his presidential term has been a guarantor and friend of peace. A news release from the legislators said they said he was a key player in ending war and conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and defends human rights worldwide.

Syria must shun violence to work out peace deal: Barak

JERUSALEM, Feb 1: Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, mulling retaliation for the bloody Lebanese guerilla attack against Israeli troops in months, said Syria must curb the violence to give their troubled peace process a chance, reports Reuters. Barak summoned his security cabinet late on Monday to discuss possible military responses to the deaths of three soldiers in a Hizbollah attack on an Israeli outpost in the zone Israel occupies in south Lebanon, officials said.

Israel has maintained a military presence since 1978. Israeli army chiefs, frustrated by government restraint, urged Barak at the meeting to authorise a retaliatory blitz. They arrived armed with maps highlighting possible attack sites, Ha'aretz newspaper said today.

foundered over Syria's demand Israel commit itself to ceding the Golan Heights, captured in the 1967 Middle East war. Deputy Defence Minister Ephraim Sneh brushed aside charges action by Israel could further sour Syrian-Israeli relations. 'What will destroy the negotiations with Syria is not what the army will do... (It is) sitting with the Syrians in West Virginia and talking peace while in south Lebanon and northern Israel fire and try to wounds us,' he told Israeli radio.



A wounded Israeli soldier on a stretcher and another, walking next to him (2nd R) are evacuated by helicopter to the Rambam hospital in Haifa on Monday. The two were among four soldiers wounded during clashes with Hezbollah in south Lebanon. Three other Israeli troops were killed when their unit at Izziyyeh in the central sector of the occupied border strip was struck by the militant group.

UN force begins assuming control for E Timor

BAUCAU, East Timor, Feb 1: The Australian-led international force began handing over responsibility for security to a UN peacekeeping force in east Timor with an emotional ceremony in the territory's second largest city, reports AP. 'The emergency is over, the job of the international force is done,' Maj. Gen. Peter Cosgrove told the soldiers of a Thai battalion based in Baucau, 140 kilometers east of the capital Dili.

Opposition calls for media boycott in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 1: Opposition leaders Tuesday called for a boycott of government-backed media and set out to sign the nation's longest protest message poking fun at a favourite pastime of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, reports AP. Mahathir, Asia's longest-serving ruler, has built for Malaysia the world's tallest skyscrapers, Asia's largest shopping mall and a string of other structural superlatives in his quest to instill national pride.

Leaders of opposition groups from the Alternative Front coalition and supporters gathered on a field on the outskirts of the capital, Kuala Lumpur, on Tuesday. They signed protest messages against three pro-government publications on a 350-foot-long (106-meter) scroll of white cloth. The politicians said the feat should be entered in the Guinness Book of World Records but conceded the attempt was a tongue-in-cheek jab at the Mahathir-induced, record-setting mania that has swept the Southeast Asian nation.

Multilateral peace talks on ME begins in Moscow

MOSCOW, Feb 1: A new round of multilateral peace talks on the Middle East opened in Moscow today following a nearly four-year break, the ITAR-TASS news agency said, reports AFP. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, whose government co-chairs the forum with Russia, was in the Moscow for the meeting, which was being held in one of the capital's big hotels. Israeli foreign Minister David Levy and senior officials from four Arab states - Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia - were also due to attend. The Arab representatives met Monday to coordinate their positions.

EU threatens to cut ties with Austria

LISBON (Portugal), Feb 1: The European Union has given Vienna notice that an anti-immigration party's inclusion in Austria's next government will bring a severing of political links with its other 14 member states, reports AP. Governments of 14 member states will not promote or accept any bilateral official contacts at political level with an Austrian government integrating the EPO, said an EU statement issued in Lisbon on Monday, referring to Austria's far-right Freedom Party.

Taliban will resist US bid to hand over Laden

ISLAMABAD, Feb 1: Afghanistan's ruling Taliban will resist US pressure to hand over suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden, a top leader of the hardline militia was quoted as saying today, reports AFP. Mullah Mohammad Rabbani, head of the Taliban council of ministers, arrived here Monday on an official visit for talks with Pakistani leaders which he said were aimed at strengthening bilateral relations. The News daily quoted Rabbani as saying the Taliban government was 'ready to endure even more economic sanctions but would not yield to any undue demand by the US and its Western allies.'

cause of UN aviation and financial sanctions imposed in November after the Islamic militia refused to hand over Bin Laden. He said the US-sponsored sanctions had neither exposed the Afghans to hunger nor dampened their determination to pursue their Islamic policies. 'We accept only those sanctions imposed by Allah. The UN sanctions are unacceptable as we have done nothing wrong,' he said. Bin Laden, a billionaire Saudi dissident believed to be living in Afghanistan, is wanted by the US to stand trial for allegedly masterminding the August 7, 1998 twin bombings of American embassies in East Africa, in which 224 people were killed. The Taliban, which controls most of Afghanistan, has rejected allegations against Bin Laden, saying the accusers failed to provide any evidence he was involved in terrorism. They say Bin Laden is living under restrictions with no access to communications and cannot launch any activities, against a foreign country from Afghan soil.

BRIEFLY Endeavour launch put off: NASA has decided to postpone for several days the launch of the Endeavour space shuttle... 6 rebels killed in Philippines: Six extremist Muslim guerillas were killed and eight soldiers wounded early Tuesday in a clash in the southern Philippines island of Jolo...

India to buy 300 tanks from Russia MOSCOW, Feb 1: India is to buy at least 300 T-90S tanks from Russia, Interfax news agency reported Monday quoting officials at the Chelyabinsk factory that produces them, reports AFP.

Food bug can cause arthritis: Study WASHINGTON, Feb 1: Researchers said on Monday they had found more evidence that bacteria can cause arthritis - in this case, Salmonella, which causes food poisoning. They found that immune system cells that fight bacteria also sometimes attack normal cells that resemble a bacterial protein, reports Reuters.

Key report on N Ireland disarmament submitted

BELFAST, Feb 1: Canadian General John de Chastelain has handed over a key report on paramilitary disarmament in Northern Ireland to the British and Irish governments, sources close to the British government said today, reports AFP. The report, delivered shortly after the deadline of midnight on Monday, is believed to show little or no progress by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) on shedding its vast arsenal of weapons, and could plunge the peace process into fresh crisis.

However, Peter Mandelson, the British minister responsible for Northern Ireland, could decide his best option is to suspend the executive, putting it on ice until a new deal can be hammered out. Mandelson was to travel to Dublin later today for talks with the new Irish Foreign Minister Brian Cowen, officials said. Northern Ireland has suffered 30 years of sectarian violence between pro-British rule unionists and republicans, who want a united Ireland. But with the power-sharing government set up in early December and the main paramilitary groups on cease-fire - and in discussions with de Chastelain's international disarmament commission - hopes had risen of a permanent peace settlement.