

Iraq calls for Arab summit to oppose US war threats

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq called on the Arabs to hold an emergency summit against US threats to unleash war and mocked alleged proof Washington says it will put before the world Wednesday that Baghdad has banned weapons.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell is to present to the United Nations on Wednesday what the administration considers is proof that Iraq possesses weapons of mass destruction and is deceiving weapons inspectors who have failed to turn up anything of real significance since resuming their work on November 27.



Nepal's Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand speaks at the inauguration of a two-day international conference on HIV/AIDS on Monday in Kathmandu.

South Asian conference on AIDS begins

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand said Monday the speed at which HIV and AIDS were engulfing the world was worrying, as he inaugurated a conference aimed at boosting the fight against the disease in South Asia.



Palestinian youths throw stones at an Israeli tank in the West Bank town of Hebron on Sunday. The Israeli army started the demolition of 22 illegal Palestinian houses and stables, most of them still under construction, in the southern part of this autonomous West Bank town, Israeli and Palestinian security officials said.

Opposition declares end of strike in Venezuela

AFP, Caracas

The Venezuelan opposition late Sunday officially declared an end to a 63-day general strike that has crippled the economy, but said a poll of voters' desire to see President Hugo Chavez's mandate cut had been an "overwhelming" success.

Shuttle disaster probe on in several fronts

REUTERS, Johnson Space Center

As Americans mourned the seven astronauts killed when space shuttle Columbia broke up in the skies over Texas, the search to find out what destroyed NASA's oldest shuttle continued across the thick forests where some of the fiery debris crashed to earth.

focusing initially on a sharp heat spike along Columbia's left side and an unusually sharp corrective maneuver recorded just before the vehicle disintegrated.

flight control system was countering that drag by trying to command the vehicle to roll to the right-hand side. ... Soon after, we had loss of signal.

Sharon, rival Mitzna hold coalition talks

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon met Labour Party leader Amram Mitzna on Monday for the first time since Israel's election to try to persuade his main political rival to join the broad coalition government he hopes to form.

Mitzna has been a fierce critic of Sharon's tough security stance. He advocates dismantling Jewish settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Palestinians want for a state, and unconditionally resuming peace talks.

Cambodian FM in Thailand to mend ties

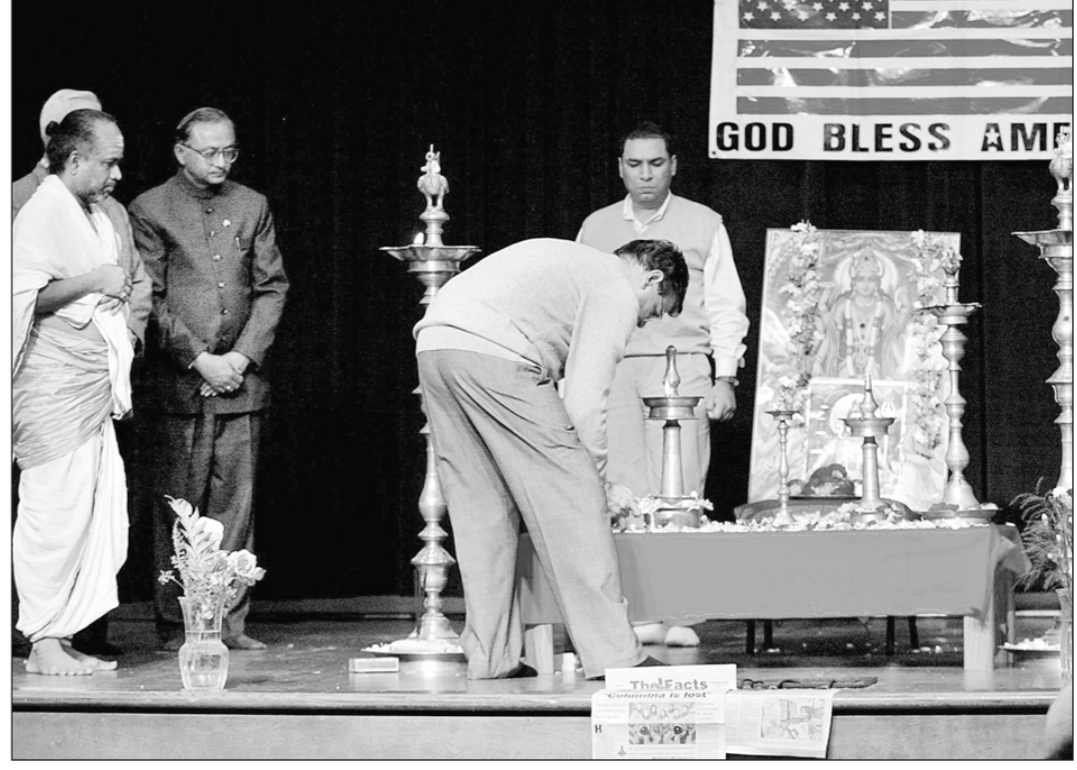
THE NATION/ ANN, Bangkok

Thailand would provide full security and safety for visiting Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Nam Hong who began his two-day visit on Monday to mend damaged relations with Thailand after the anti-Thai riot.

Saudi Arabia to limit number of foreigners to 20 pc of nationals

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia, striving to create more jobs for nationals, decided on Sunday to lower the number of foreigners in the kingdom to a maximum of 20 percent of its indigenous population within the next decade.

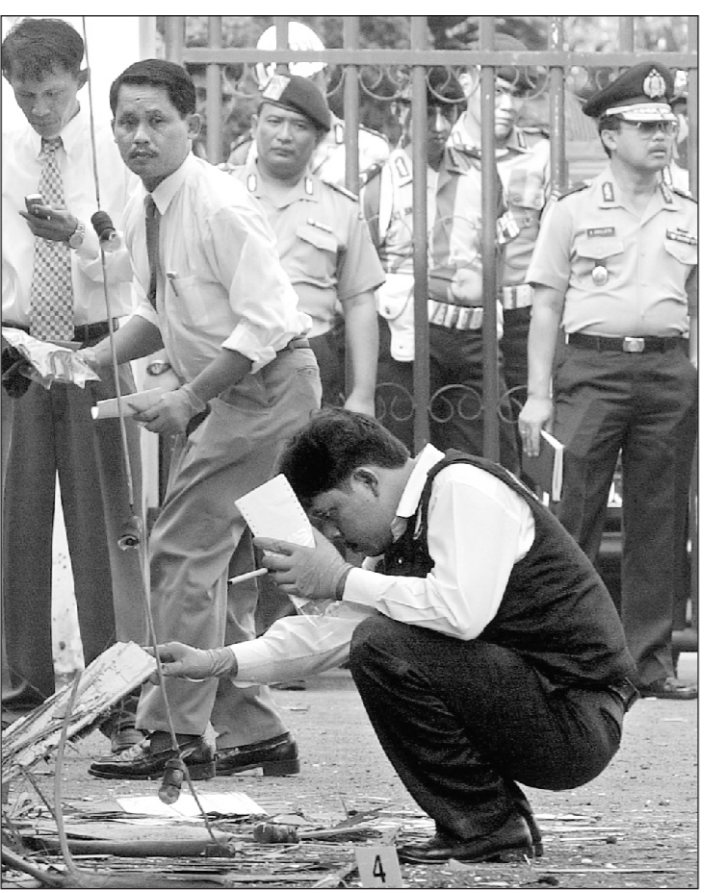


B.L. Chawla (R front), father of Indian born astronaut Kalpana Chawla, lights a candle as he mourns her death at a memorial ceremony at the Sri Meenakshi temple in Houston, Texas on Sunday.

Blast rocks Indonesian police HQ

REUTERS, Jakarta

A bomb blast rocked Indonesia's national police headquarters early on Monday, causing some damage but no casualties, and eliciting a promise by the country's top cop to improve security.



Police look at fragments from a bomb explosion at the site of the National Police Headquarters buildings, in Jakarta on Monday. An explosion damaged the compound of the Indonesian national police headquarters.

N Korea demands talks

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea's official media said on Monday the communist state's troops were in full combat readiness in case of US aggression, amid signs of rising tensions over the nuclear crisis on the Korean peninsula.

Party newspaper weighed in with a warning that the crisis would worsen unless Washington accepted Pyongyang's demand for talks and a non-aggression pact.

India begins rediscovery of Central Asia

THE STATESMAN/ ANN, New Delhi

India has begun a rediscovery of the Central Asian republics, over a decade after they emerged as independent states, when the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, of which they were part, collapsed.

Lanka seeks end to war on Independence Day

AFP, Colombo

President Chandrika Kumaratunga urged Sri Lanka Monday to reflect on an end to decades of ethnic bloodshed as the island prepared to mark its 55th anniversary of independence from Britain.

"I wish to make a special appeal to the LTTE: Please do not recruit children for armed conflict."