

# Warm welcome to Yeltsin in Paris

VERSAILLES, France, Feb 6: President Francois Mitterrand on Wednesday sought to dispel the view that Boris Yeltsin was snubbed here last year when the Russian president was still under the shadow of Mikhail Gorbachev, reports AFP.

Speaking at a dinner amid the royal splendor of Versailles at the close of the first day of a three-day visit by Yeltsin, Mitterrand noted that he had met his guest this year as last — in his office in the Elysee palace.

"We had already met at Elysee last April in the office that you rediscovered today," Mitterrand said in a toast to Yeltsin at the Versailles grand Trausson Building, where the Russian leader and his wife Naina are staying.

The French leader later told journalists that he had "allowed myself this aside" to put an end to references in the media to Yeltsin's poor reception by French authorities last year.

Yeltsin appeared relaxed amid the dazzling surround-

ings, of what was once the home of France's "Sun King," Louis XIV, and peppered his speech with quotes from celebrated French writers.

Yeltsin hailed an accord which he was to sign Friday, the final day of his three-day visit here, as setting the stage for a "historically new step in relations between our two states."

The pact will be the first of its kind signed by Russia with a Western Country since it emerged from the collapsed Soviet Union at the end of last year.

Yeltsin thanked France for its aid to Russia and said an agreement in principle had been reached granting to Russia most of the French credits that had gone to the Soviet Union.

He said he France "understood that stability in Europe will depend largely on the success of the deep economic transformations undertaken in Russia and the other states of the Commonwealth of Independent States."

# Ghali rules out deployment of UN forces in Yugoslavia

BELOGRADE, Feb 6: European Community mediator Lord Carrington started a new peace mission to Yugoslavia but UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said major obstacles were blocking the deployment of peace-keeping troops, reports Reuter.

Carrington held talks with Yugoslav Army and Serbian leaders on Wednesday to try to revive an EC Peace Conference on Yugoslavia and help secure agreement on a United Nations peace plan, brokered by special envoy Cyrus Vance.

"I'm coming here...with some messages from Vance and more particularly, of course, to see whether I can push the peace conference forward and see whether or not we can get a move on," he told reporters after flying into Belgrade.

He began his three-day mission by holding talks with General Blagoje Adzic, the acting Yugoslav Defence Minister, and was due to meet Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. No details were available.

Today, he goes to the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro. He meets Croatian leaders on Friday.

Fighting in Croatia between Croatian militia and Serb irregular forces backed by the Yugoslav army has eased under a month old ceasefire.

But Carrington, a former British Foreign Secretary, faces a tough task.

Serbia, which wants to preserve Yugoslavia, has accused the EC of stoking the country's crisis by recognising Croatia as an independent state and

mistrusts EC mediation at the Peace Conference, which broke down last November.

Hopes of deploying 10,000 peace-keeping troops are also fading. In New York, Boutros-Ghali ruled out their immediate deployment because of objections by Croatia and leaders of its Serb-controlled enclave, Krajina.

"It is clear that the circumstances...do not permit me to recommend the deployment of a United Nations peace-keeping force at this time," Boutros-Ghali said in a written report to the Security Council.

Croatian leaders oppose proposals that would appear to allow Serbs to police areas they have seized in Croatia. They want to regain that land—equal to one-third of Croatian territory.

Krajina President Milan Babic says the UN plan would put local serges in danger because they would be disarmed and the Yugoslav army would have withdrawn from his region.

"Positions currently adopted by the government of Croatia and by the local leaders in what would be the Krajina United Nations protected area would, if maintained, constitute major obstacles," Boutros-Ghali said.

Diplomats say the EC Peace Conference is likely to resume only if the UN Peace Plan is approved. They say that if agreement on the UN Proposals is not reached soon, the fragile ceasefire could collapse.

More than 6,000 people have been killed so far in the seven months of fighting.

# Protestants kill five Catholics in Belfast

BELFAST, Feb 6: Protestant gunmen killed five Catholics and wounded nine others in a Belfast betting shop, plunging Northern Ireland into renewed despair over an apparently endless cycle of "tit-for-tat" sectarian shootings, reports Reuter.

Survivors of Wednesday's killings said the scene resembled a butcher's shop after two gunmen of the outlawed Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) sprayed customers with machine-gun fire. The UFF admitted responsibility in a media statement.

Twenty-six people have now died in the first five weeks of

the year, peace talks have been put on hold in the runup to the British general election and the province has been gripped by what Police Chief Hugh Annesley called "murder madness."

Ten people have died in the past 24 hours and Annesley, trying to calm fears on both sides of the sectarian divide, insisted: "It has not gone beyond control and it will not get beyond control."

He was speaking at the scene of the betting shop carnage in a Belfast Catholic neighbourhood.

# Queen Elizabeth pledges not to step down

LONDON, Feb 6: Queen Elizabeth II on Thursday marked the 40th anniversary of her accession, using the occasion to repeat her pledge never to step down, reports AP.

"It is a job for life," the 65-year-old queen says at one stage in a television documentary to be shown by the British Broadcasting Corporation Thursday night.

The text of the 110-minute programme was released in advance by the BBC. To make the programme a camera team followed the queen for a year as she went about her day-to-day life, work and leisure.

The show includes scenes of her addressing a joint session of US Congress last May 16 during a 10-day visit to the United States.

Then-Princess Elizabeth was acceded to the throne immediately on the death of her father King George VI from lung cancer on February 6, 1952.

She cut short a visit in Kenya with her husband Prince Philip and returned to London to be formally crowned in Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1953.

Britain and the queen observed the 40th anniversary of her accession without any special celebrations. She spent

Thursday quietly at Sandringham, her country estate 95 miles (150 kilometers) North of central London.

A lavish anniversary pageant for the queen is planned in London in October.

The Queen, an expert on horses and horse racing,

speaks during the BBC documentary about her role as monarch and her strong feelings for tradition.

However, she admits: "I do rather begrudge some of the hours that I have to do instead of being outdoors."

"Most people have a job for life and then they go home. In this existence, the job and the life go together. You can't really divide it up."

The abdication of her uncle King Edward VIII in 1936 to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson brought criticism on the monarchy, and the Queen has indicated several times in the past that she will never abdicate.

Her resolve puts her oldest son, 43-year-old Prince Charles, in a position similar to that of Queen Victoria's son Edward, Queen Elizabeth II's great-grandfather. He had to wait until he was 59 before acceding to the throne as King Edward VII on the death of his 81-year-old mother in 1901.



Forty years of reign: Queen Elizabeth (L) in 1952 and today.

# Hekmatyar rejects UN plan

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Feb 6: A hardline Afghan rebel leader rejected on Wednesday a UN plan for an assembly encompassing all sides in Afghanistan's 13-year conflict to negotiate peace measures, reports Reuter.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar of the Hezb-i-Islami told UN envoy Benon Sevan that the plan was a waste of time and would not yield any results, according to a guerrilla news service.

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali wants all sides to agree on 150 people representing the guerrillas, the Kabul government and neutral Afghans to negotiate the formation of an interim government to halt the war and hold elections.

Hekmatyar's party and other hardline groups refusing to sit with President Najibullah

and former King Zahir Shah describe the plan as an international conspiracy to deny them power.

"This assembly seems impracticable because three different parties are invited to it whereas none is ready to sit at a table with Najibullah or Zahir Shah," Hekmatyar told Sevan in their meeting in the north-western Pakistani town of Peshawar.

"Inviting three opposite sides to the proposed assembly was nothing more than wasting time as it could not bring any results," he was quoted as saying by the guerrilla news service.

Hekmatyar demanded that instead of the proposed assembly, Najibullah's government be replaced by an interim administration that should have no controversial

elements. "This should be followed by a ceasefire and elections."

Another hardline guerrilla party leader, Aburrah Rasul Sayyaf, has said he will not see Sevan, who acts as Boutros-Ghali's special representative on Afghanistan.

The radical groups reacted angrily when Pakistan, home to the main guerrilla groups and more than three million Afghan refugees, announced support for the UN plan.

Turkey fears new avalanche

GORMEC, Turkey, Feb 6: The Turkish authorities evacuated 500 people from two villages in the southeast of the country yesterday for fear of new avalanches, reports Reuter.

# 'Shoot on sight' ordered in Georgia

LONDON, Feb 6: The head of Georgia's ruling military council has warned supporters of ousted President Zviad Gamsakhurdia against demonstrating in the capital, and one report quoted him as saying troublemakers would be shot on sight, reports AFP.

Dzhaba Ioseliani said rallies and demonstrations in Tbilisi would no longer be permitted, Russian television said Wednesday, in a report monitored by the BBC.

Gamsakhurdia supporters should express their opinions without violating the current special regime, he was quoted as saying. Meanwhile, Moscow Radio, also monitored by the BBC, said rallies in support of Gamsakhurdia had continued in Tbilisi despite a ban.



Soha Tawil (now 28) during her graduation ceremony at Ramallah, West Bank. Soha (a convert to Islam) recently married PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (aged 63). —AFP photo

# Mobutu to remain as president, says US

WASHINGTON, Feb 6: The United States on Wednesday stuck by its position that Mobutu Sese Seko remain temporarily as President of Zaire, saying a transition to democracy in the crisis-torn African country cannot proceed without him, reports Reuter.

But testifying before a US senate subcommittee, Assistant Secretary of State Herman Cohen expressed optimism that a new joint effort by the United States, France and Belgium could break the political logjam in Zaire when the three governments present compromise proposals next week.

Washington blames Mobutu for the crisis in Zaire and has said he must "effectively give up power to someone else, preferably from the opposition, so that a transition to a free and fair election can take place," Cohen said.

But, he said that "we're not asking him to leave. We feel he

should remain as president so he can control the military force until there is an election at which point the people will decide."

"If Mobutu with his control of the security apparatus, including people who engage in covert operations, if he does not support a transition process, then it cannot succeed," he added.

Zaire's economy has been in ruins since army-led riots last year devastated the capital, Kinshasa, and provincial cities.

Democratic senator Paul Simon and Republican senator Nancy Kassebaum said they feared the US position gives Mobutu the ability to claim continued backing from the United States, a long-time ally, and strongly urged that he be forced into exile. I think that's an option that has to be considered at some point if what we're trying to do does not work," Cohen said.

Cohen said the situation continued to worsen.

# Off the Record

## Rally is really costly

MOSCOW: Demonstrators who want to march on Red Square or anywhere else in Moscow will have to pay the government for the cost of police protection and traffic disruptions, a city spokesman said Wednesday, reports AP.

Vasily Arkhipov, a member of the mayor's legal department, denied Russian news agency reports Tuesday that said city authorities had banned all but government-sponsored demonstrations.

The government merely wants to be reimbursed for the costs of crowd control and traffic supervision during demonstrations, Arkhipov said. And he added that rally organisers must first get the mayor's permission.

"Moscow can't afford more expenses simply because this or that group burns to speak out," Vice Mayor Yuri Luzhkov said.

The decision to charge demonstrators a fee was prompted by plans by several groups, both pro- and anti-government, to stage rallies over the weekend. The weekend demonstrations will be the last allowed for free, Arkhipov said.

The city agreed to allow demonstrators who favour Russia's move toward a market economy to gather on Manezh Square near the Kremlin on Saturday, and a group opposed to the reforms can meet at the Russian parliament building on Sunday.

## Most memorable kiss

CHICAGO: Americans think the most memorable kiss in film history is the one Rhett Butler planted on Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone With The Wind," according to a Gallup poll released Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Coming in second was the Burt Lancaster-Deborah Kerr smooch-in-the-surf in "From Here to Eternity," followed by the Ingrid Bergman-Humphrey Bogart embrace in "Casablanca."

The survey involved 1,012 adults and was commissioned by a lip gloss manufacturer. Only eight per cent of those surveyed said they keep their eyes open when they kiss.

## Prince and NPG top the top chart

NEW YORK: "Diamonds and Pearls" by Prince and NPG rose two steps to the top of the top singles record chart in the United States on Wednesday, reports AP.

The song displaced "Don't Let the Sun Go Down On Me" by George Michael/Elton John, which fell to second place in the Cash Box Magazine chart.

"Mysterious Ways" by U2 stepped into the third slot rising from fifth place, while "I Love Your Smile" by Chancie Rose from eighth place to fourth place.

Three newcomers are in the Top 10 this week. "I Can't Make You Love Me" by Bonnie Raitt moved from 13th place to eighth place. "To Be With You" by Mr. Big soared from 17th place to 9th place, and "There will Never Be Another Tonight" by Bryan Adams rose from 15th to 10th place.

## Cattle blood in human aid

WASHINGTON: A US company has been given a patent to develop a substitute for human haemoglobin from cattle blood, reports Reuter.

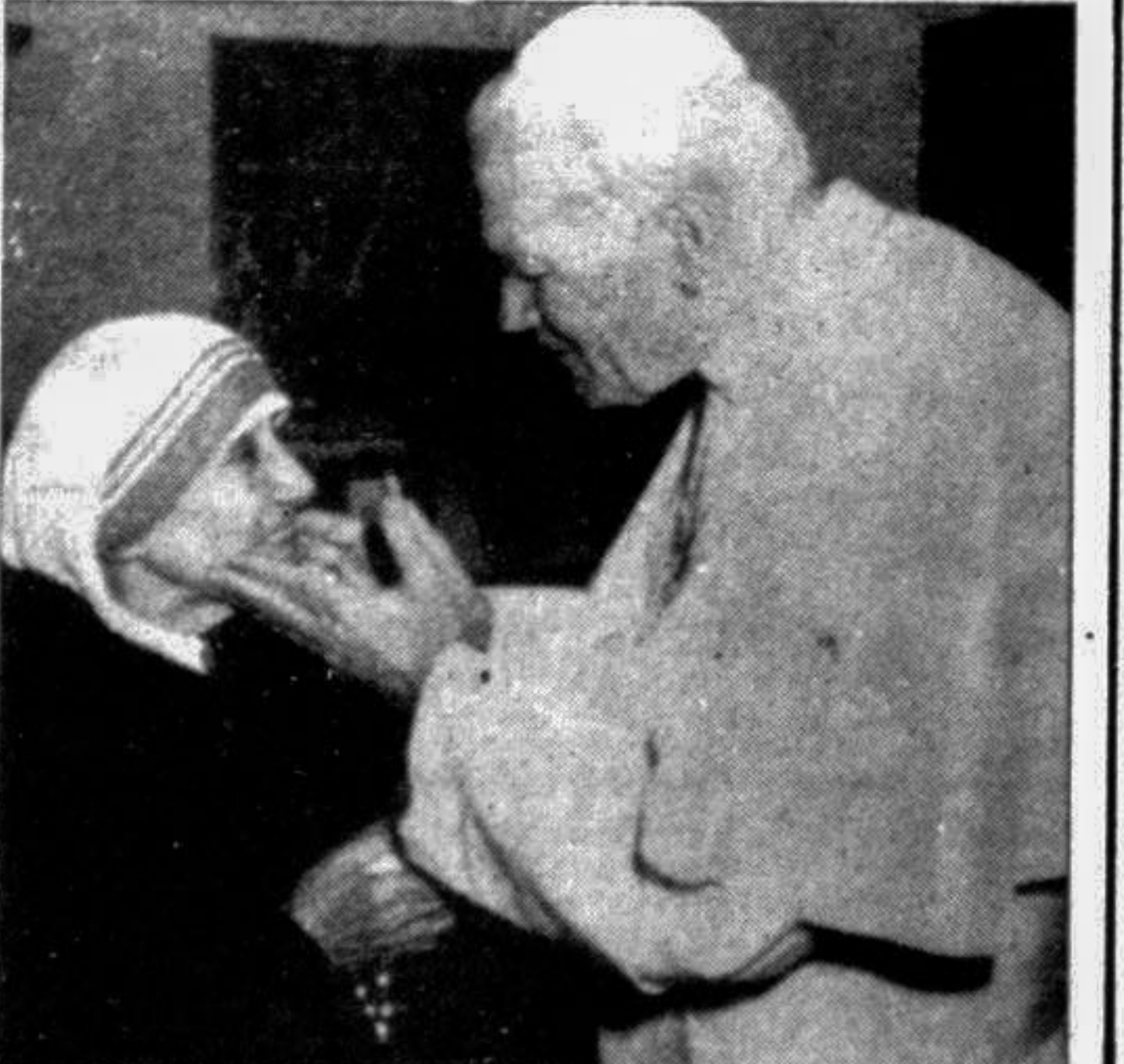
Boston-based Biopure said it planned to apply for permission to test the product on people this year.

The company reformulated its ultrapure haemoglobin after tests on humans last year produced what they termed adverse medical events and has been re-testing it on animals.

The product to be called haemopure is made from bovine haemoglobin.

It is really not fair to say it is a blood replacement, Biopure chairman Rausch said. The ultrapure haemoglobin does not contain human blood cells.

But he said it would be useful after large-scale accidents and surgery, reducing the need for transfusions of human blood products. It could also reduce the risk of diseases like AIDS.



Pope John Paul II caresses the face of Mother Teresa during a private audience at the Vatican. —AFP photo

# Destruction of former Soviet warheads to take time

WASHINGTON, Feb 6: All battlefield nuclear weapons in former Soviet republics are to be moved to Russia by July 1, but warhead destruction may not be completed by the end of the century without US help, a US diplomat said yesterday, reports Reuter.

Undersecretary of State Reginald Barcholomew told the Senate armed services committee he expected to complete proposals for the US help in a matter of days.

Barcholomew said whole categories of battlefield nu-

clear weapons, the ones most in danger of being stolen or diverted to Third World countries, have already been moved to Russia.

He and Secretary of State James Baker said at separate hearings that all remaining tactical, or battlefield, nuclear weapons are to be moved to Russian control by July 1.

Barcholomew said the three republics outside Russia that have long-range nuclear weapons want to eliminate or withdraw them — the Ukraine by 1994, Kazakhstan in seven

years and Belarus under a timetable yet to be worked out.

But he said Russian officials say they will have problems completing planned destruction of 18,000 of the total of about 30,000 long-range and battlefield nuclear warheads by an end of the century target without US help.

The Russian officials say the holdup is lack of enough special storage space for the plutonium and enriched uranium from the warheads that are to be destroyed.

US proposals being considered include ways to store the plutonium and turn the enriched uranium into fuel for nuclear power plants, Barcholomew said.

He said US officials are also considering proposals to supply special rail cars and containers for transporting nuclear weapons and coverings called kevlar blankets that protect weapons from gunfire while being transported.

Senate armed services committee chairman Sam Nunn, a Georgia democrat,

said he hoped the final US proposals will be carried out quickly by US and Russian technical experts, not get bogged down in long talks by arms control negotiators.

Senator John Warner, a Virginia republican, asked why the plutonium, enriched uranium and weapons cannot be stored in military storage complexes Russia already has.

Barcholomew and another diplomat said Russian officials told them that was impractical but would not elaborate.

# Three killed in Madrid blast

MADRID, Feb 6: Three people were killed and seven injured when a bomb blew up a military vehicle in the historic centre of downtown Madrid Thursday, police said, reports AP.

A municipal police official told Spanish National Radio (RNE) that a car driven by military personnel exploded around 8:30 am (0730 GMT) near the main military headquarters in the Spanish capital.

Many of the victims were military officers who died in car bomb attacks.

# BRIEFLY

**Fire kills 16 in China:** Sixteen people were killed when fire swept through a restaurant in China's southern Guangdong province on lunar new year's day on Tuesday, reports Reuter from Beijing.

Firemen in Zhongshan, in the Pearl river delta near Hong Kong, found 14 charred bodies when they shifted through the ruins of the restaurant after fighting the blaze for several hours on Tuesday night, a provincial newspaper reported.

Two people jumped to their deaths from the building that housed the restaurant, according to the Yangcheng evening news, seen in Beijing on Thursday.

**Earthquake strikes Alaska:** An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale struck the Aleutian Islands on Wednesday, officials reported. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries from the remote area, AP reports from Alaska.

The quake was centred in Nikolski, about 1,000 miles (1,600 kms) southwest of Anchorage, said Alec Medbery, a spokesman for the Alaska Tsunami Warning Centre in Palmer.

The Richter scale is a measure of ground motion as recorded on seismographs. Every increase of one number means a tenfold increase in magnitude. An earthquake of 5 on the Richter scale can cause considerable damage.

**Francis Birch dead:** Francis Birch, a co-designer of the atomic bomb whose later studies helped scientists interpret seismic waves from distant earthquakes, has died at age 88, reports AP from Cambridge.

Birch's wife, Barbara, said he died Friday in Cambridge of Prostate Cancer.

From 1942 to 1945, Birch held a Navy commission while working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in Los Alamos, N.M., where the atomic bomb was designed. He reached the rank of commander.

Mrs. Birch said her husband helped load the little Boy atomic bomb onto a B-29 bomber at Tinian Island before it was dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945.

He became a Physics professor at Harvard and then Sturges-Hooper Professor of Geology.

**2 Cubans sentenced to death:** Two Cubans accused of murdering three government agents during an attempt to flee the island were sentenced to death by the Havana Popular Tribunal on Wednesday, the Mexican news agency Notimex reported, AP says from Mexico City.

Luis Miguel Almeda Perez and Rene Salmeron Mendoza were sentenced to die by firing squad for their role as the leaders of a group of nine people who attempted to steal a boat and flee to the United States.

The group attempted to leave from Tarara, a children's camp on the coast near Havana, on Jan. 9, when four government agents surprised them. The group's arrest came just as three Cuban exiles from Miami were being put on a highly publicized trial for trying to enter the country to commit acts of terrorism.

**Slovenia's N-plant shut down:** Slovenia's nuclear power plant at Krsko shut down Wednesday because of a defect on one of its high pressure turbines, the Belgrade-based Tanjug news agency reported, says AP from Belgrade.

It said that the malfunction which has not caused major damage, was expected to be repaired within the next two days.

The 632 kilowatt station on the border with Croatia has been in operation since 1981 and has often been hit by malfunctioning incidents.

**US to continue arms embargo on Myanmar**

WASHINGTON, Feb 6: Better relations between the United States and Myanmar will depend on improvements by the Myanmar government in human rights, the US Ambassador-designate to Yangon said yesterday, reports Reuter.

Parker Borg said US relations with Myanmar have been strained since 1988 because of Myanmar's widely criticised human rights record and a lack of progress towards

democracy.

"I look forward to playing a role in improving relations. Any improvement, however, depends fundamentally on future actions by the government of Myanmar," Borg told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at his confirmation hearing.

"I don't expect you will receive a particularly warm welcome in Myanmar," Cranston told Borg.

Borg said the United States had no plans to resume its anti-narcotics assistance to Myanmar and would continue its arms embargo. He said China was still selling arms to Burma.

Borg said the United States would keep its military attaches in Myanmar.

Asia Watch, a human rights group, urged the United States to step up economic and diplomatic pressure on Myanmar including increased economic sanctions, and to discourage US companies from doing business there.

"The United States should place an urgent priority on developing broad international support for economic sanctions against Myanmar encompassing both aid and trade and investment," Mike Jendrzek of Asia Watch testified.

**Four Lankan troops killed**

COLOMBO, Feb 6: Tamil Tiger rebels ambushed an army night patrol, killing four soldiers and wounding three others, the military said Thursday, reports AP.

Wednesday night's incident was near the village of Kokkeliya, 7 kilometers (4 miles) northeast of Vavuniya, said Lt Col Chandrasiri at the military headquarters in Colombo. The region is about 225 kilometers (140 miles) northeast of Colombo.

An army officer was among the dead.

Troop reinforcements rushed to the area and inflicted heavy casualties on the fleeing rebels, Chandrasiri said.