

# Iran-Contra scandal Weinberger may be called to testify against Bush

WASHINGTON, Dec 29: Caspar Weinberger could be called to testify against President George Bush, who pardoned him and five others last week for their involvement in the Iran-Contra affair, according to sources, reports AP.

Spectral prosecutor Lawrence Walsh who said following the Christmas even pardon that Bush was now a subject of the six-year probe because he may have "illegally withheld documents," said Monday he would return to Washington soon from his home in Oklahoma but did not elaborate on his plans.

## Rao rules out mid-term polls

BANGALORE, Dec 29: The Prime Minister, PV Narasimha Rao, today ruled out the holding of mid-term polls now saying he did not see any reason for ordering it, reports PTI.

He told reporters at the airport here, on his way to New Delhi from Tirupati, that there was no political or any other compulsion to hold the polls.

Sources close to the investigation said Walsh was likely to call to former Defence Secretary and former CIA official Duane Clarridge to testify before a federal grand jury. Both men had been indicted on charges of lying to congress about their knowledge of the arms-for-hostages deal with Iran from which funds were diverted to Nicaraguan rebels. Before they were pardoned, both men were awaiting trial and therefore could not be called as witnesses before the grand jury.

The sources speaking on condition of anonymity said prosecutor would question Weinberger on notes he took in 1985-86, particularly those form meetings attended by then - vice president Bush. Those notes did not surface until 1990 and it would be the first opportunity investigators would have to question Weinberger about them.

The special prosecutor's office has harshly criticized the pardons saying they were used to hide what Walsh has called Bush's misconduct in failing to produce his own notes on the affair.

Bush has insisted he knew nothing about the plot until after the scheme became public in November 1986.

# Ghali warns of military intervention in Bosnia

GENEVA, Dec 29: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali on Monday warned Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic of the threat of international military intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina, reports AP.

Also, according to a letter seen Monday by The Associated Press, President Bush warned Serbian leaders Sarajevo and the buildup of troops and weapons on a strategic mountain overlooking the besieged city.

Dragoslav Rancic, a spokesman for Cosic, said the UN, chief appealed to Cosic to use his "authority, his influence," to appeal to Serb forces in Bosnia to end the bloodshed. Meanwhile Croatian President Franjo Tudjman predicted the Bosnian war would escalate into an international conflict if Islamic nations came to the help of their Bosnian counterparts and Russian fighters intervened on behalf of the Serbs.

The warnings came amid a flurry of diplomacy at the UN European headquarters in Geneva. UN chief Boutros-Ghali held separate meeting with Cosic and Tudjman. He later held talks with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic and was expected to voice concern about recent Bosnian mortar attacks on UN headquarters in

that the United States would use military force to keep the civil war in former Yugoslavia from spreading to a tense Serb province.

Bush's letter to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and Gen Zivota Panic,

Yugoslavia's military chief of staff, was sent last week, said a source close to the Yugoslav government.

The letter said "in the event of conflict in the Kosovo caused by Serbian action, the United States will be prepared to employ military force against the Serbians in the Kosovo and in Serbia proper."

Cosic downplayed the threat but said the Serb-dominated federation would defend itself if attacked.

Cosic and Tudjman held face-to-face talks on the Bosnian bloodshed and on problems outstanding from last year's war between Serb-dominated Yugoslavia and Croatia.

Rancic said Boutros-Ghali told Cosic a "warning that there might be military intervention in Bosnia if it goes on like this."

"Our interpretation of this warning is that Boutros-Ghali is apparently under enormous pressure and wanted Cosic to know this," Rancic told The AP.

Boutros-Ghali and international peace mediators Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen have ap-

pealed for more time to allow the four-month-old peace talks in Geneva to find a political settlement.

The United States is increasing pressure for action against Serb military flights. US Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger said Sunday that he expected a UN Security Council resolution to enforce the air ban to be adopted by the end of the week.

Croatian President Tudjman told a news conference that he urged a political solution to the Bosnian war "at any cost."

"There is a realistic danger that this war might spill over and assume undesirable scale which could threaten global peace," he said.

"Many Islamic countries, along with sending Mujahedeen warriors are also prepared to offer help to the Muslims in personnel and in weapons," he said.

Hopes at the UN-EC sponsored peace talks in Geneva rest on a planned face-to-face meeting Jan 2 among the political and military leaders of the three warring factions.



# Lebanon bars UN envoy from visiting no man's land

MARJ AZ-ZOHOUR, Lebanon, Dec 29: Lebanon barred a UN envoy on Monday from passing through its territory to visit more than 400 Palestinians trapped in a freezing south Lebanon no man's land, reports Reuter.

It said UN Assistant-Secretary General James Jonah, due in Beirut from Israel today could only reach the 415 Palestinians expelled by the Jewish state through Israeli lines.

In their makeshift camp, the deportees fought against the worst cold gripping the region since they were dumped in no man's land between Israeli and Lebanese lines to days ago.

"It's a total stalemate," said

Bernard Pfefferle, chief delegate in Lebanon of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). They won't survive the winter out there like this."

Asked if the government would allow Jonah to reach the camp through its territory, Prime Minister Rafik Al-Hariri told Reuters in Beirut. "He has to go through Israeli territory."

Israel told Jonah on Sunday it would not back down on the mass expulsions. He was sent to investigate the deportations, condemned by the UN Security Council which demands the safe return of the deportees.

Asked if troops at the last Lebanese checkpoint before no man's land would stop Jonah

visiting the deportees, Hariri said. "I don't think he will go if he does not have our authority and we won't give him our authority. I will not allow him in."

Hariri said the same applied to Bernard Kouchner, French Minister for Humanitarian Affairs, and a French medical team who had been expected to fly to Beirut to visit the deportees.

"We don't see any reason why we have to change our position," Hariri added. Lebanon holds the deportees are Israel's responsibility and it must be forced to take them back.

Before the Lebanese ban was announced, the deportees said they were waiting to show the envoy their suffering.

# Sikhs planned to kill Rajiv, Rahul

NEW DELHI, Dec 29: Sikh terrorists in Britain had planned to assassinate former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and his son, Rahul, using poisoned gloves, a news agency reported Tuesday quoting a government document, reports AP.

An intelligence report had warned police last year that guerrillas of Babbar Khalsa International were planning to kill Gandhi and other top politicians opposed to Sikh separatism. Press Trust of India said.

Gandhi was killed when a suspected Tamil Tiger guerrilla detonated explosives strapped to her body. The Tigers denied killing Gandhi, but police investigation has blamed the Sri Lanka-based guerrilla outfit.



MOGADISHU: Howa Mohammed Ali, 25, sits in a supplementary feeding centre here on Monday after arriving four months ago from her village in the country side. She like many of those severely affected by the famine, is suffering from tuberculosis which is difficult to treat and is the cause of many fatalities among adults. — AFP/UNB photo

# 500 demonstrators arrested in Kenya

NAIROBI, Dec 29: Kenyan police arrested 500 opposition supporters and beat many of them up when they broke up a demonstration in the central town of Najuru, a major opposition party said Monday, reports AP.

The Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) Kenya made the claim in a memorandum presented to international election observers in Nairobi on the eve of Kenyas first multi-party election in 26 years.

Nakuru residents contacted by telephone confirmed that fighting had broken out between police and demonstrators on Sunday, but said they were unaware of mass arrests by the police.

Rafia Odinga, son of FORD-Kenya leader Oginga Odinga, said 500 party supporters had been arrested as they staged a peaceful demonstration. He called for their immediate release.

"It is doubtless the intention is to keep them in custody at least until the voting period is over, since they are FORD-Kenya supporters and will thus be unable to vote," Odinga said.

The election observers, from the United States, the Commonwealth and the European Community, made no statement after receiving FORD-Kenya's memorandum. Odinga said the party's par-

liamentary candidate in Nakuru, John Kamangara, had reported that several supporters had been "severely beaten up, many were injured and a number were admitted to various hospitals."

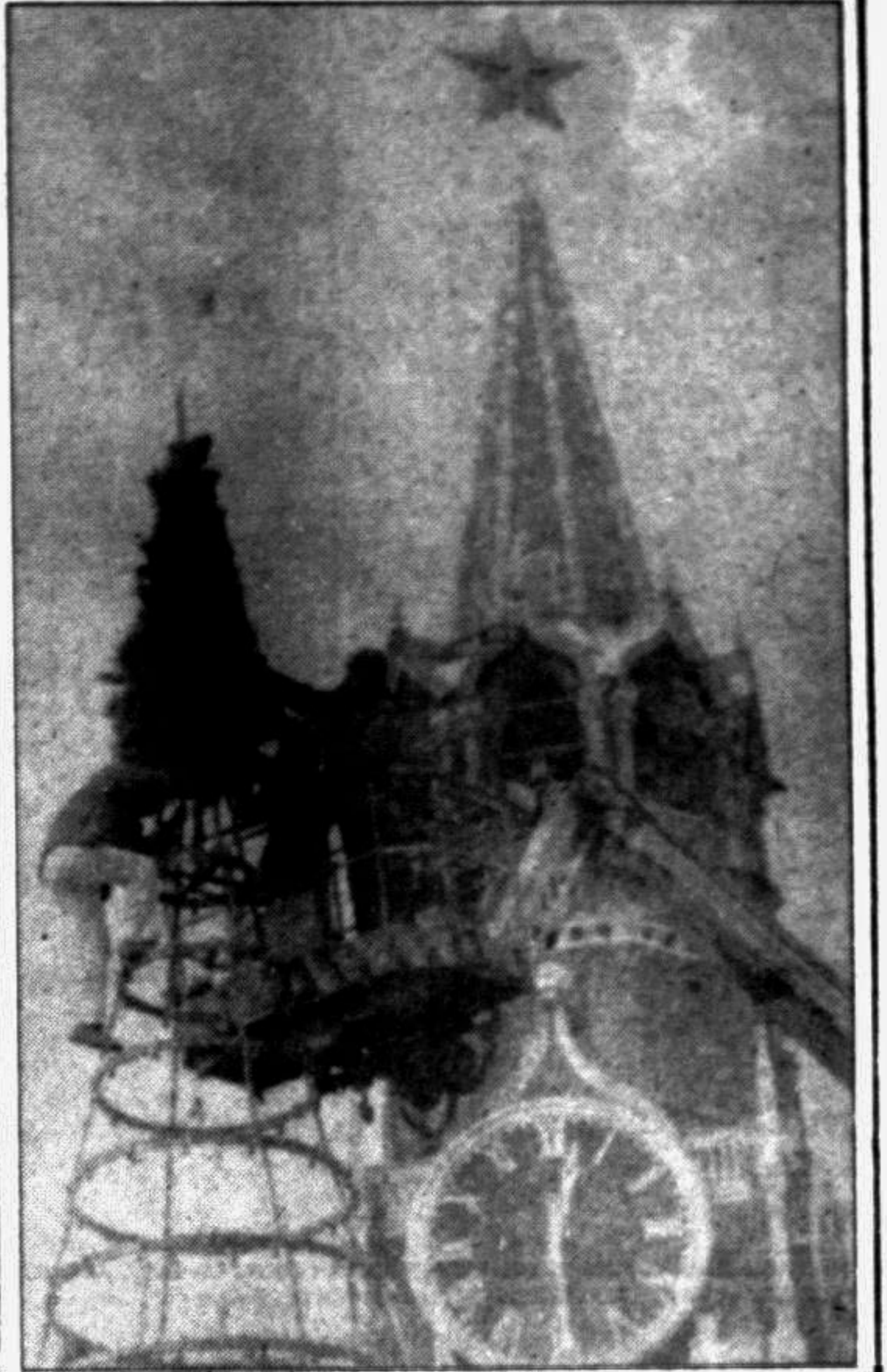
Opposition leaders and several western diplomats have expressed concern about alleged election abuses by the government of President Daniel Arap Moi and his ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU).

Violence and allegations of dirty tricks by the government have marred the campaign for today's presidential and parliamentary elections, being held a year after Moi reluctantly legalised opposition parties under massive western pressure.

**Khmer Rouge forces kill 14 Vietnamese**  
PHNOM PENH, Dec 29: Fourteen Vietnamese were killed and 14 wounded when Khmer Rouge forces attacked a village in Cambodia's Kompong Chhnang Province, a United Nations spokesman said today, reports Reuter.

The Khmer Rouge, ousted from power in 1979 by invading Vietnamese forces has accused Hanoi of keeping its troops in Cambodia and attempting to colonise the country.

# Off the Record



MOSCOW: A group of workers attach plastic branches to a metal Christmas tree outside the Kremlin on Red Square, December 27. The tree donated by the United States and built on Red Square, is to be a center piece of the New Year's Eve celebration for Moscow children. For the first time since the October 1917 Russian Revolution people will celebrate new year on Red Square. — AFP/UNB photo

## 'Joy killing' spree

DAYTON, Ohio: Police believe five people slain in four days in Ohio were victims of gunmen on a "joy killing" spree, reports AP.

The killers were "like a shark: once they tasted blood, they couldn't stop," said sergeant George Hammann.

The killings "started-out as robberies, but it became easier and we think it turned into joy killing," he said.

Three people were shot dead and two were injured during robberies from Thursday to Saturday. One woman died after being shot seven times as she stood at a pay phone.

The latest victims, a man and a 16-year-old girl, were found lying in a former landfill on Sunday. They had been shot in the head.

Police believe all five deaths are connected but refuse to discuss the link.

Two youths and two adults were arrested on Saturday after allegedly being caught stalling from the car of one of the victims. His house had also been ransacked.

## She bit off and swallowed his tongue

SEOUL: Police today detained a barmaid who bit off and swallowed the tongue of a man who kissed her, a Seoul police officer said, reports Reuter.

The 37-year-old woman, identified only as Kim, bit the tongue off a musician who works in the same bar, the officer said.

"I was drunk at that time. I bit off his tongue in my wild-derment as he suddenly leaped on me and kissed me," the officer quoted Kim as telling police.

The woman, pleading leniency, said she had swallowed only part of the tongue, the officer said.

"We will not formally charge her as the man does not want her to be punished," he said.

# USSR lost 9m soldiers during World War II

MOSCOW, Dec 29: A new book based on previously secret data says the Soviet Union lost nearly 9 million soldiers during World War II, a news agency reported Monday, reports AP.

The book, called "Unclassified," has just been published by Voentdat, the Russian Military Publishers, the Interfax news service reported. The book presents a statistical study of the Soviet losses in combat operations, wars and armed conflicts between 1918 and 1989.

The Russian Defence Ministry's press service noted that until recently, such data

had been regarded as "sensitive" and therefore kept secret, the news agency reported.

According to the study, the total losses of the Red Army, the border guards and the interior troops in World War II — including the Far Eastern campaign against Japan — were 8,668,400 servicemen, Interfax reported.

Of these, the losses of the Red Army and Navy amounted to 8,509,300 people, the losses of the interior troops amounted to 97,700 people, and the losses of the border guards and the NKVD secret service comprised 61,400 people.

# BRIEFLY

**Guenter Grass to quit SPD:** Guenter Grass, one of Germany's foremost writers and longtime militant of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), said Monday he gave up his party membership in a protest at the restriction of Germany's liberal asylum laws, reports AP from Berlin.

The SPD, Germany's biggest opposition party, last month massive approved a controversial plan to scale back the right of asylum in Germany.

The vote, needed to amend the German constitution, endorsed a painful U-turn performed by the party leadership in August, under pressure from public opinion and accusations from conservative Chancellor Helmut Kohl that the SPD was sabotaging attempts to defuse a social crisis.

**Ukraine's minister arrested:** Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Leonid Steshenko and two of his aides have been arrested on corruption charges stemming from the illegal export of strategic goods, including oil, Interfax news agency reported Monday, says AP from Moscow.

In addition to the minister, security services arrested Andrei Pogrebniak, deputy head of the Foreign Economic Policy Department at the Foreign Trade Ministry and Vitaly Kalga, head of the Foreign Trade Development Fund, Interfax said quoting the Kiev News newspaper.

The arrests follow an investigation into why the ministry delivered 13 export licences for oil products after the government had banned such exports in September.

**Nine executed in ROK:** Nine people who had been convicted of murder, rape and other charges were executed on Tuesday, reports AP from Seoul.

The Ministry of Justice said it was the first capital punishment carried out this year. Seven were executed in Seoul and two in the southeastern city of Taegu, all by hanging, it said.

Among the executed were Chang Hyo-sang, 65, convicted of murder and murder attempt, and Kim Young-ho, 34, murder and rape. The ministry said the executions reduced the number on death row to 50.

South Korea does not have a high crime rate, but the government hands out death sentences for "antisocial crimes," such as murder and habitual rape.

**Sikh militant commits suicide:** A hard-core Sikh militant wanted by police for some 800 slayings connected with a bloody separatist campaign in Punjab killed himself on Monday to avoid arrest, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AP from Delhi.

Dharma Singh Kashitwal killed himself instantly by taking cyanide when surprised by a party of security forces in Punjab's Amritsar district, police were quoted as saying.

Police said Kashitwal, a self-styled commander of the Babbar Khalsa, one of the half a dozen hard-core Sikh militant groups involved in the secessionist campaign in the northern state, was responsible for the slayings of some 500 civilians and 300 security forces personnel.

Police had announced a reward of 1.5 million rupees (50,000 dollars) for anyone providing information leading to his arrest.

**Quake jolts Pakistan:** An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter Scale jolted northwestern parts of Pakistan on Monday, but no loss of life or property was immediately reported, says AP from Peshawar.

The official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) said tremors were felt at 1:46 pm (0846 GMT). The quake's epicentre was located 950 kilometres (590 miles) southwest of Peshawar, the agency said.

# Bush arrives in Somalia tomorrow

MOGADISHU, Dec 29: US President George Bush arrives Thursday in Somalia, where he will spend new year's eve meeting with US troops here and visiting feeding centres for the country's starving, a marine spokesman said Monday, reports AP.

Colonel Fred Peck said Bush was scheduled to arrive in Mogadishu at 12:45 pm (09:45 GMT) Thursday go to the US embassy and then visit a relief site some 20 kilometres (12 miles) out of the city.

Bush will spend the night aboard the USS Tripoli anchored offshore, said Peck, then fly to the inland Bush town of Baidoa to visit an orphanage.

# Asian countries show increasing democratic maturity

HONG KONG, Dec 29: While economic prosperity led to political reform in parts of Asia in 1992, democratic aspirations in many countries continued to run up hard against conflicting interests, reports AP.

Thailand, the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan significantly reinforced democracy through important elections that were credible despite some abuses.

Thailand's rapid transition from military dictatorship to democracy was costly—leaving an official estimate of 52 people dead in a clampdown on protest against the appointment as premier of a non-elected general.

However, pro-democracy parties won new elections in September, putting parties supporting the military—behind numerous coups since 1932—into opposition. In December, South Korea

and Taiwan held land mark polls, in which, as in Thailand, substantial middle-class involvement reflected newly affluent citizens, important role in pushing the countries towards democracy.

South Korea voted in its first president from a non-military background for 31 years, while the people of Taiwan for the first time elected their entire parliament following 1991's forced retirement of elderly ruling party MPs who had held seats won in China since 1949.

Despite abuses, both campaigns demonstrated increasing democratic maturity with the toning down of confrontational rhetoric in favour of focusing on economic and social issues.

Taiwan's main opposition party played down previous calls for independence from China and made substantial

gains, ushering in an era of two-party politics for the island.

The Philippines' presidential and congressional elections in May marked the first orderly handover of power in the country in nearly three decades.

Despite this, Singapore's elder statesman Lee Kuan Yew criticized the failure of the free press and free wheeling US style political system developed since the 1986 overthrow of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos to bring the country out of economic crisis.

Many Filipinos expressed anger at Lee's comments that the country needed more discipline and less democracy, but businessmen support his vision of "neo-authoritarianism," the mix of strict political control and a vibrant state-managed economy practised so successfully in Singapore.

Asia's remaining totalitarian governments are certainly trying to ignore demands for greater representation as their developing market economies create new levers of power outside the ruling party's grasp.

Beijing launched an all-out offensive to prevent the success of efforts to broaden democracy in Hong Kong before the British colony reverts to China in 1997, fearing this will create similar demands at home and threaten its central control.

The Communist Party clamped down in China, leaving little room for parallel political or human rights reform as it went for bust economically this year.

Its communist neighbour Vietnam paid lip-service to democracy with national assembly elections in July that for the first time allowed in-

dependent candidates. But rigorous screening of applicants meant only two made it onto their local ballots and neither was elected.

Myanmar's Military Junta also made efforts—including releasing almost 2,000 political prisoners, revoking sweeping martial law powers and organising a constitutional convention for January—to appear to be loosening its political grip.

But, with democracy movement leader Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest since 1989 and hundreds more political prisoners in detention, diplomats say the Junta remains firmly in control.

Indonesia held parliamentary elections in June, but they did little to foster democracy—with predictable results emerging from a strictly supervised campaign tipped in

favour of the ruling Golkar Party.

Meanwhile, Khmer Rouge refusal to cooperate with the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) jeopardised the country's chances of peace or democracy, which is also threatened by Phnom Penh government intimidation and assassination of members of some 20 newly created opposition parties.

The UNTAC chief has said he will not allow planned May elections to go ahead in current violent atmosphere.

In an effort to bring a degree of democracy to Afghanistan after nine months of the ethnic blood letting since the Mujahedeen victory over the Najibullah's Soviet-backed regime, the government has called a Shooro, or Grand Assembly, to elect a new president and parliamentary council.

# 10 Sikh militants killed in encounters

AMRITSAR, Dec 29: Ten militants including three Lt Generals and two Area Commanders were killed in three encounters in Amritsar region since last night, police said, reports PTI.

The chief of the Tarn Taran police district, Ajit Singh, said five militants, three of them identified as two Lt-Gens of Khalistan commando force—Panjwar, Gurbachan Singh, Gursawk Singh and Area Commander Ninder Singh were killed in an encounter with security forces near Manke village today morning.

Ajit Singh said Gurbachan Singh was responsible for three hundred killings, Gursawk Singh for two hundred killings and Ninder Singh for about one hundred killings.