

Novelist Kobo Abe dead: Kobo Abe, one of Japan's most prominent authors and a major influence on postwar Japanese literature, died Friday at a Tokyo hospital, the hospital said. He was 68, AP from Tokyo says.

The hospital did not disclose his cause of death, but Kyodo News Service said he had entered the hospital on Wednesday after suffering a cerebral hemorrhage.

A novelist and playwright. Abe was best known for his portrayal of modern man's struggle against alienation and loss of identity in his 1962 novel "Woman in the Dunes."

His works often focused on the relationship between the hunter and the hunted and on the bleakness of modern urban

Gunmen kill one in Belfast: Gunmen shot a Protestant man to death Thursday evening in north Belfast and escaped in a car, police said, reports AP from

Three man drove up to the house at about 6 pm, but only two got out of the car, the Royal Ulster Constabulary said. The two entered the house, gunned down the 30-year-old Protestant man, then fled to waiting car and drove away, police said.

Press Association, the British national news agency, said the gunmen kicked the front door in before shooting the man, and that his girlfriend, who shared the house, was at home but not injured in the attack.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the killing, and police said the motive for the attack was unknown at present.

Anti-rightist rallies in Germany: Germans held anti-rightist demonstrations Thursday in dozens of towns in southern Baden-Wuerttemberg state, police said, reports AP from Frankfurt.

In Stuttgart, the state capital 95 miles (145 kilometres) southeast of Frankfurt, police said about 20,000 people gathcred at Stuttgart's town hall to protest violence against for-

Similar demonstrations, including torchlight parades organized by political parties and citizens groups, were reported in at least 50 other Baden-Wuerttemberg towns, police said.

Russian soldier killed in Croatia: A Russian soldier serving with United Nations forces in Croatia was killed by a mine blast, Radio Russia reported yesterday, says Reuter from London.

The soldier, who died in the explosion on Thursday, was the first Russian "blue helmet" to be killed in former Yugoslavia, according to the radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

19 Palestinians shot at in Gaza:

Israeli troops Thursday shot and wounded 19 Palestinians in the occupied territories, mostly in the Gaza strip, where a suspected collaborator was also found dead with a bullet in the head, Arab sources said, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

Hospital workers said 15 Palestinians were wounded in clashes with soldiers in Gaza city and the Jabalia refugee camp. Two others were shot in Nablus and another two in Jenin, both on the West Bank

The body of Maher Abu Zahed, 29, was found in the Gaza refugee camp of Nussetrat, according to the Palestinian press service. The suspected collaborator was kidnapped from his home by masked youths on Monday.

Israel responds to Arafat

PLO not a party to negotiations

JERUSALEM, Jan 22: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's office Friday said Israel still would boycott talks with the PLO and refuse it a direct role in Middle East peace negotiations, reports AP.

The statement was in response to a dramatic appeal by PLO Chiel Yasser Aralat on Israel television Thursday night for Israelis and Palestinians "to forge a brave peace." The statement was quoted by the national Itim news agency.

"The prime minister's position remains the same, by which the negotiations will be conducted only with the Palestinian peace talks delegation, and the PLO in Tunis is

not a party to the negotiations," the statement said. Arafat was interviewed by

telephone from his headquarters in Tunis, appearing with Israeli peace crusader Abie Nathan who flew to meet Arafat the day after the Israeli parliament abolished a law banning contacts with the PLO.

Nathan, also interviewed on the television, said Arafat wanted to meet with Rabin anywhere in the world."

The parliament's repeal Tuesday of a 1986 "anti-terror" amendment meant Israelis could no longer be prosecuted or jailed up to three years for meetings with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Afghan fighting takes 80 lives in a week

KUNDUZ, Afghanistan, Jan 22: About 80 people have died in a week of fighting between two Mujahideen factions and an Uzbek militia for control of the strategic northern Afghan town of Baglan, sources here said, reports AFP.

Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Masood's Jamiat-i-Islami and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, rivals in Kabul, have teamed up to fight the northern militia of General Abdul Rashid Dostam.

Dostam was close to the Sovict-installed regime of Najibullah that fell from power last year and was initially allied with Masood after the com-

A Jamiat leader in Kunduz, 50 kilometres (30 miles) north of Bagian, said Thursday that 80 fighters and civilians had died in the fighting.

forces had taken control of the town, but acknowledged that he thought "The fighting will last some weeks."

and shells were seen this week continuing to leave Kunduz for

habitants have already fled the

The majority of Baglan's in-



BAGHDAD: The UN inspection team arrives at their hotel in Baghdad Thursday. Iraq has now lifted the ban on UN flights and the inspectors are free to continue their destruction of - AFP/UNB photo Iraq's chemical weapons.

More UN arms inspectors fly to Iraq

MANAMA, Jan 22: More UN weapons inspectors flew to Iraq today on a UN aircraft to join colleagues who arrived there a day earlier, a UN official said, reports Reuter.

Doug Englund, Director of field operations for the United Nations inspection team, said 19 inspectors left Bahrain for Baghdad after mechanical problems delayed their departure by an hour.

"The plane left five minutes ago," England told Reuter by telephone.

It was the second mission to go to Baghdad since Iraq on Wednesday allowed UN personnel to fly in on United Nations aircraft.

The ban on UN flights was one of the reasons for four days of air raids on Iraq by the United States and its allies.

Young Japanese getting reluctant to marry

TOKYO, Jan 22: While Japan is going wild over the engagement of Crown Prince Naruhito and Masako Owada, young Japanese are becoming reluctant to marry, claiming it only leads to disappointment,

reports AFP. public opinion poll published last month by the prime minister's office revealed that 54 percent of young women questioned said they would rather stay single while only 13 percent said marriage made for happiness.

The anti-marriage sentiment, coupled with Japan's birth rate falling to among the world's lowest at 1.5 children on average for a woman capable of bearing offspring is worrying authorities. The Institute of Population Problems fears

the birth rate will drop to 1.3 within five years.

Japanese women are showing less and less respect for one of the most fundamental traditional tenants of Japanese society that the role for females is to dote on their husbands and rear children.

During a dinner with our division's staff, my boss suddenly asked me: What are you waiting for to get married? ' It's not his business," said Keiko, 29, under some pressure to give up her liberty as an office worker.

Sociologist Kiyoko Yos-hihiro, authoress of "Reasons Women don't want to have children," blames Japanese men for the female distllusionment with marriage.

Fighting continues despite truce accord

NATO to use force in Bosnia only for political solution

MONS, Belgium, Jan 22: NATO's Commander in Europe said on Thursday military pressure could be used in former Yugoslavía only in support of a political solution, not to force an end to the conflict, reports Reuter.

"We will use military forces to strengthen the political process as opposed to trying to find a military solution," US General John Shalikashvili told Reuters in an interview at supreme headquarters allied powers Europe.

"There is a strong commitment to make the political process work," he said.

Measures to tighten UN economic sanctions against Serbia and its tiny ally Montenegro or using warplanes to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia were examples, he said.

LONDON, Jan 22: Disag-

reements have surfaced be-

tween Russian and Ukraine

over ownership of nuclear

missiles based in Ukraine,

ahead of a summit today of the

Commonwealth of Inde-

pendent States (CIS), Russian

Defence Minister Pavel Gra-

chev said in an interview,

monitored here Thursday by

TASS News Agency, Grachev

said disagreements had also

arisen between Russia and

Kazakhstan on how to define

strategic nuclear forces and

these could hamper discussion

of strategic forces accords at

Friday's summit in Minsk,

Ukrainian-Russian dispute over

N-weapons ownership arose

Thursday at a meeting of

Defence Ministers from the

Russian television said the

In the interview with ITAR-

the BBC, reports AFP.

Belarus.

Asked whether more could be done to try to force an end to the fighting, such as attacking Serb artillery that is shelling Sarajevo, Shalikashvili said: "These sorts of things are extraordinarily difficult."

NATO has said it is willing to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia if the United Nations decides to do so an alliance warships have also been running a naval blockade in the Adriatic in support of UN sanc-

Fereanwhib fighting among Bosnia's Serbs, Croats and Muslims continued Thursday despite a ceasefire accord between Croat-Muslim allies and the approval of a peace formula by the self-styled Bosnian Serb parliament. In the Croat-Muslim battles,

Croatian artillery continued to pound the central Bosnian

Russia-Ukraine dispute over N-arms

will figure in CIS summit

four CIS states with nuclear

arms: Russian, Ukraine, Kaz-

Ukraine was still allowing

Russian technicians to carry

out safety inspections on nu-

clear weapons based on its

Russian television, Grachev

said all nuclear weapons on

CIS territory belonged to

Russia. 'The nuclear weapons

belong to Russia in accordance

with the Lisbon protocol," he

said. Under the 1992 Lisbon

protocol, Ukraine, Belarus and

Kazakhstan committed them-

selves to becoming nuclear-

Grachev said all nuclear

forces in the former Soviet

Union were subordinate to

Russia. He said it was paradox-

ical that Ukraine should con-

sider nuclear weapons based

In remarks broadcast by

Grachev said however that

akhstan and Belarus.

territory.

free states.

town of Gornji-Vakuf as Croats concentrated new forces around Vitez, 70 kilometers (45 miles) northwest of Sarajevo, Sarajevo radio said.

The Bosnian-Serbs' news agency SRNA meanwhile said heavy fighting between Serbs and Muslim forces loyal to Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic continued overnight Wednesday, hours after the Bosnian-Serb parliament agree to approve the international peace plan for the former Yugoslav republic.

In southern Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatian and Serbian forces clashed near Trebinje, 150 km (90 miles) southeast of Sarajevo, but no one was wounded, according to the

Meanwhile, UN mediator Lord Owen warned Bosnian-Serb leader Radovan Karadzte

on its territory as Ukrainian

property even though it had

have to be resolved between

bilateral accord between the

Ukrainian and Russian presi-

dents "Ukraine allows our ex-

perts access to the nuclear

systems located on its territory

in order to carry out servicing,

routine inspections and main-

ITAR-TASS also quoted

Grachev as saying that in defin-

ing strategic forces, Ukraine

and Kazakhstan disagreed with

a Russian proposal to include

not only missile complexes but

also nuclear arms deployed on

strategic bombers, missile at-

tack warning systems, anti-

missile defence systems, and

air desence systems.

tenances work and replace

ment of units and parts."

He said the issue would

Meanwhile, he said under a

renounced its nuclear status.

the various heads of state.

that his commitment to the peace plan must be uncondi-

Speaking in an interview to the BBC, Owen said: "When we come to the conference (resuming Saturday in Geneva), Dr. Karadzic will have to make it quite clear that this is an unconditional commitment to accept the nine principles" o the UN and EC-sponsored Geneva peace conference

spokesman Fred Eckhard said Owen and his co-chairman Cyrus Vance expected "a oneword answer" from Karadzic in accepting the peace plan without condition. Despite the Bosnian Serb

· parliament's approval of the peace formula, Karadzic continued insisting on Serbian self-determination, a demand that mediators have rejected.

Filipino govt, rebels start formal talks

MANILA, Jan 22: Representatives of President Fidel Ramos and mutinous soldiers who launched coup attempts against his predecessor, Corazon Aquino, opened formal negotiations Friday to end the military rebellion, reports AP.

Alfredo Tadiar, a law professor and chairman of the government panel, said the talks were meant to show "the will to overcome the pain, heal the wounds" of the conflict.

He said that "peace for our nation that is just and lasting shall crown our determined efforts to resolve our differences."

Brig Gen Edgardo Abenina, who headed the rebel panel, was among the jailed rebel officers Ramos had ordered released last December as part of a confidence-building measure to enhance the peace process.

15 hurt in Bogota car bomb blast

BOGOTA, Colombia, Jan 22: A powerful car bomb injured at least 15 people late Thursday and damaged banks and other buildings in an affluent section of the capital, police said, re-

blast in the capital in years, and came just three days after fugitive drug kingpin Pablo Escobar threatened in a letter to the nations' attorney general to renew a terrorism cam-

included several high-rise offices and banks, including a branch of Citibank.

claimed an estimated 20,000

lives including that of Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi. She

was assassinated in October

1984 by two Sikh bodyguards

out to revenge the destruction

of Amritsar's Golden temple in

an army operation to flush out

Sikh militants from the holiest

fuelling the Sikh campaign,

and training, arming and har-

bouring Sikh militants, but the

Indian authorities claim to

have recently sealed most of

the nearly 550-kilometer

(350-mile) Punjab-Pakistan

India accuses Pakistan of

shrine in Sikhdom.

Off the Record



BUDAPEST: Erzsebet Sara proudly presents her quadruplets at the SOTE 11 maternity clinic Thursday. Zsuzsa, Istvan, Aniko and Krisztian (I-r), born on December 8, 1992, are first the test-tube quadruplets in -AFP/UNB photo Hungary.

Hillary picked the wrong hat

NEW YORK: The work is in on Hillary Clinton's Inaugural Day wardrobe: loved her, hated the hat, reports AP.

Hatmakers and fashion critics blew their tops over the big. blue velour number that capped Hillary's outfit at Wednesday's festivities, particularly when she wore the hat indoors for a luncheon appearance. "It was terrible looking hat. No style, no pizazz, no

nothing," offered milliner Leo Marshall, president of Lenore Marshall Inc in Manhattan. "It didn't become her. She picked the wrong hat."

Agreed designer Cherie Jefferson-Lawrence: "She blew it

The hat was blue with the brim turned up in the front and turned down in the back, a satin band accented with a satin button. Hillary wore it with a large hat pin in the back.

The New York Daily News described it as "a cross between Paddington Bear's preferred headgear and... (the) mashedbrim fedora" worn by actor Leo Gorcey in the 1930s Bowery Boy movies about tough New York street youths.

Woman MP charged with assaulting cop

NEW DELHI: A woman MP charged with assaulting a constable who blocked her car from driving on to the route of Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's Motorcade has called the accusation a pack of lies, reports AFP.

Opposition MP Renuka Chowdhury slapped Head Constable Janki Ram and kicked him in the groin after he waved her car to a stop at an intersection in the city centre Wednesday night, police said.

Police said her car was entering a zone cordoned off to allow Rao's motorcade to drive to the airport. Police Commissioner MB Kaushal told the press Thursday that the policeman had to be hospitalised.

Chowdhury was charged with intimidating and assaulting a public servant on duty. The MP in a statement, denied the police version calling it

Charles-Parker intimate

LONDON: Seven out of 10 Britons questioned in a opinion poll published Friday say publication of an intimate conversation allegedly between Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles has caused great damage to the standing of the monarchy, reports AP. The International Communications and Marketing poll in

talks has damaged monarchy

the London tabloid the Daily Express said 46 per cent blame Charles for the breakup of his marriage to Princess Diana against 26 per cent who blame Diana and 7 per cent who blame Mrs Parker Bowles.

Prime Minister John Major announced the separation of Charles, 44, and Diana, 31, after 11 years of marriage on

On January 12, Lord McGregor, chairman of the watchdog Press Complaints Commission, said there was ample evidence that image-conscious Diana had manipulated newspapers to

put over her side of her unhappy marriage.

7 more killed in S African

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 22: Seven people died in scattered violence throughout the country, including three killed in renewed attacks on commuter trains near Johannesburg, po-

Chronic political violence has claimed thousands of black lives in recent years and hindered negotiations on replacmultiractal government.

curity forces instigate violence or deliberately fail to stop it in a bid to destabilize the black opposition.

munists ouster.

He said the Mujahideen

Trucks carrying rockets

PORT AU PRINCE: Viviane Sejour (L) wipes a tear moments after she was repatriated by the US Coast Guard cutter "Campbell" Thursday. The 163 Haitian refugees, who were administration.

intercepted at sea while sailing towards the US, are the first to be repatriated by the Clinton -AFP/UNB photo Delhi ready to declare victory in battle against Sikhs

gency all these years have been virtually eliminated," said D R Bhatti, an Inspector General of police. He said the remaining "small, shattered groups" of separatists are likely to be

army, which, moved into the state in November 1991 to help in laying ambushes and organising search operations.

ally accepted the surrender of the largest group of Sikh militants yet when 122 laid down their arms at a ceremony in the Punjab village of Doburji. Among the dozens of weapons turned in were a rocketlauncher and AK-47s inscribed

Among those who gave themselves up were two selfstyled lieutenant generals of separatist groups each carrying a price of 500,000 rupees (16,666 dollar) on their heads. A total of 473 Sikh militants

Gill said disenchantment among Sikhs in the country-

side was reflected in the growing number providing information to the police, leading to the arrests and deaths of According to police figures, Sikh militants killed 1,359

border. Pakistan denies involvement in the Sikh separatist

campaign, among the signs of an improving law and order situation was a trip to Punjab

this week by the US Ambassador to India, Thomas Pickering, who raised the possibilities of Indo-US joint ventures in the state.

Heavy turnout for local council elections in nearly 3,000 villages this week was seen as another indication that normalcy is returning to Punjab.

A number of governments and private groups have charged, however, that the gains in .restoring order in Punjab have been at the expense of human rights.

The US State Department, in its latest report on human rights violations said there were "significant abuses" in Punjab and other Indian states.

Thai, Myanmar accord to promote economic ties

BANGKOK, Jan 22: Thailand

has signed an agreement with Myanmar's military junta to form a joint commission to promote economic and trade cooperation, it was reported here today, says AFP. The accord was signed by

That Foreign Minister Prasong

Soonsiri and his Myanmar counterpart, Ohn Gyaw, here late Thursday. The Bangkok Post today

said Prasong inked the accord over the protests of That student, environmental, human rights and social activists groups who petitioned and demonstrated at his office before the signing.

violence

lice said Friday, reports AP.

ing white minority rule with a Much of the fighting stems from political rivalry, but black groups claim government se-

were fired and tens of thousands of deaths later, the Indian authorities are prepared to declare victory in the battle against Sikh separatists, reports AFP. Much of the credit for

AMRITSAR, India, Jan 22: A

Decade after the first shots

breaking back of the Sikh militant movement for a homeland called Khalistan, or land of the pure, in the northern state is being given to a strapping Sikh police officers nicknamed "Supercop". Kanwar Pal Singh Gill, 58,

took over as director general of the Punjab police two years ago and launched a relentless campaign to eliminate Sikh militants while at the same time croding their support in the countryside.

backed up by the army, claim a string of successes, uprooting Sikh separatists from most of their strongholds in the rich farming state known as India's An indication of the grow-

Since then the police,

ing confidence among the security forces was evident in the name given to the latest crackdown against the militants - "operation final assault," launched in December. We are fighting the last

vestiges of militancy in Punjab," Gill told a recent news conference, adding that the few surviving Sikh separatist leaders are on the run or have fled to the United Sates, Pakistan or Britain. The top seven militant out-

fits responsible for the insur-

cleared up in the "next couple of months". Gill said police had been boosted by deployment of the

On January 14, Gill person-

"only the pure shall rule."

gave themselves up to the Authorities during the last few months of 1992, the police

civilians and 249 policemen in 1992 while security forces shot dead 2,056 militants. The 10-year campaign has

It was the first major bomb

The car, packed with about 75 kgs (165 pounds) of explosives, was thrown more than 60 metres (200 feet) by the explosion. Damaged buildings