

BRIEFLY



Five baby brown bears, two males and three females, rest at the Amneville Zoological park, eastern France on Friday. The five-day old bears weigh 350 g. Although it is not rare for bears to be born in captivity, quintuplets are exceptional. The babies' mother Micha, 180 kg, is reported to be doing fine. — AFP photo

US marine team in Kobe: A contingent of US Marines flew in Sunday to help the victims of a devastating earthquake in this western port city, setting up tents in city parks. AP reports from Kobe. "It felt real good ... to do our part to help out," said Gunnery Sgt. Stephen Ruvio of Brooklyn, with the 3rd Marine Division based in Okinawa.

Palestinian shot dead in WB: Israeli troops shot and fatally wounded a Palestinian on Saturday during a clash near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. Palestinian sources said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem. Palestinians named the dead man as Ahmed Mahmoud Hamad, 20. They said he was shot during a clash near Qalandiyah refugee camp between Israeli troops and Palestinians throwing stones. He died shortly afterwards in hospital.

3 die in Canada as jet hits truck: A jumbo jet collided with a de-icing truck at Mirabel International Airport on Saturday, killing three men who were working on the plane from the truck's elevated platform. AP reports from Montreal. The three worked for Canadian Airlines International. Their identities were not immediately released. The men were de-icing a Boeing 747 jetliner operated by Royal Air Maroc when the truck was hit, knocking them off the platform. The plane's engines were idling while the three worked.

US soldier killed in exercise: A combat training exercise turned deadly when 22 soldiers from Fort Benning, Georgia, apparently fell while rappelling out of a helicopter about 50 feet (15 metres) above ground. AP reports from Fort Polk, Louisiana. One soldier was killed and the 21 others were injured in the accident late on Friday. The soldiers, members of the 75th Ranger Regiment, were jumping off a hovering MH-47 Chinook helicopter using a procedure known as fast-roping.

Iraqi writer held in UAE: Security forces in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have arrested a prominent member of the Iraqi Islamic opposition at his Abu Dhabi home, a London-based human rights association said on Saturday. AFP reports from Nicolas. Sheikh Abdel Munim Al Ali, a lawyer and writer, was arrested on Monday, four days after returning from the United States where he took part in an annual Muslim youth conference. Liberty said in a statement to AFP in Cyprus.

Quake hits Tokyo islands: A minor earthquake rocked a chain of small islands off Tokyo on Sunday, registering 3.7 on the Richter scale, but there were no reports of damage or casualties. AFP says from Tokyo. The national meteorological agency said the epicentre of the quake, which occurred at 1:42 pm (0442 GMT), was located near the island of Miyakejima, some 180 kilometres (100 miles) south of Tokyo.

5 Cuban refugees flee Panama camp: American soldiers searched on Saturday for five Cuban boat people who fled refugee camps in the US controlled canal zone, officials said. AP reports from Panama City. The five slipped out of the camps on Friday in what could be the first escape since riots last month that left two refugees dead and 221 American soldiers and 28 Cubans injured.

Kidnapped French released: A French aid worker was released by kidnappers in Mogadishu after five weeks in captivity and was flown to the Kenyan capital Nairobi, aid officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Nairobi. They said 24-year-old Rudy Marq was released at the UN World Food Programme (WFP) residence compound in southern Mogadishu on Saturday evening and was in good health.

Flash floods in Argentina: Over 1,000 people were evacuated from their homes in the northern Argentine town of Posadas after torrential rains swelled the Parana river, the private DYN news agency reported on Saturday. Reuter says from Buenos Aires. While the sun broke through the clouds in the afternoon, the evacuees, among them many children, were sheltered in buildings belonging to a local railway, under the supervision of civil defence officials.

Tengiz on hunger strike: Georgia's jailed warlord, Tengiz Kitovani, went on a hunger strike to demand release from prison while authorities on Sunday announced the detention of his former subordinate suspected of corruption. AP reports from Tbilisi. Kitovani, the country's former defence minister, was jailed earlier this month after leading hundreds of armed supporters in a march on Abkhazia, a breakaway Georgian province.

22 killed in Mexico truck plunge: A truck carrying religious pilgrims plunged off a highway into a 22-metre (72-foot) ravine, killing at least 22 people and injuring 10 others, police said on Saturday. AP reports from Oaxaca. The travellers were returning from a pilgrimage to a shrine in the village of Juquila on Friday when the truck in which they were riding ran off the road south of Oaxaca. Highway policeman Juan Hernandez said.

Lenin's death anniversary
MOSCOW, Jan 22: Several thousand Communists met on Saturday on the 71st anniversary of Vladimir Lenin's death, and their leader declared that they want to be back in the USSR, reports AP. Nostalgia for the days of the Soviet founder ran strong at the congress of the Russian Communist Party, whose members took a special break to walk to Red Square and lay flowers at his tomb. "He took a country torn apart by the war and left it united and strong with a good, stable ruble."

Mayors from 50 countries invited Sarajevo to observe '1000 days under gun'

SARAJEVO, Jan 22: Sarajevo authorities have invited mayors from nearly 50 countries to come and see for themselves how people here are coping with a Serb siege that has filled the cemeteries and all but wrecked this once vibrant capital, reports AFP. City officials have asked 350 mayors and international figures to attend a four-day programme from January 26 to 29 to mark a thousand days under the gun. While many Bosnians contend the 1,000th day came and went last December 31, with the siege beginning on April 5, 1992, the Municipal Government says it started on May 2, that year when the last train left Sarajevo. Asim Metiljevic, spokesman for the city, said 1996 people have already confirmed their attendance but preferred not to disclose the names just yet.

Among the dignitaries invited are former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former President Jimmy Carter, US Senate majority leader Robert Dole, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, Actress Vanessa Redgrave and Author Susan Sontag. Our primary goal is to have all these people see and feel the real situation that has lasted for 1,000 days here, said Metiljevic. "We want them to see our cemeteries and the ruined infrastructure and cultural buildings and then tell the truth to the world." The invitees have the option of staying at the Holiday Inn, where they will pay their own way or with Sarajevo families — where they will doubtless experience the spotty heating power shortage and restricted menus that residents here now take for granted. Metiljevic said a third of those who have so far agreed to come want to stay in private homes adding that there has been no shortage of Sarajevoans willing to have a guest for the occasion. Volunteer families will get no financial assistance from the city. Although bakeries will be asked to increase their output of daily bread. The four-day programme includes tours, panel discussion and simultaneous prayers said in a mosque, the Roman Catholic Cathedral an Orthodox church and a temple. For Metiljevic the prayers will be the core experience, attesting to Sarajevo's centuries old commitment to tolerance and diversity. At one point visitors will have the option of visiting the village of Hrasnica on Mt. Igman south of here. But to get there they will have to make their way — as Sarajevoans do — through a tunnel two metres (yards) high and a meters wide that passes under part of the airport. The road leading to Hrasnica is still closed to most automobile traffic, as it remains in range of Serb guns. On January 28 there is to be a ceremony at Sarajevo city hall where a proclamation will be signed that among other things — will appeal for the siege to be lifted. The city is currently enjoying a respite from Serb shelling and sniping, thanks largely to a cessation of hostilities and that took effect on January 1. The mayors and dignitaries expected here next week will be flown in from the Croatian capital Zagreb aboard UN aircraft.

Egypt risking collision with US on NPT

CAIRO, Jan 22: Egypt is treading a dangerous path by linking its continued membership of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to Israeli adherence, risking a head-on collision with its main aid donor the United States, reports AFP. In a war of words between Israel and Egypt in the past few weeks, President Hosni Mubarak threatened not to renew Cairo's signature of the treaty if Israel did not commit itself to joining. The NPT was adopted in 1970 by 109 states and comes up for renewal in April in New York. Israel has refused to sign it and has never acknowledged possessing nuclear weapons. Although Western experts say the Jewish state has about 200 nuclear warheads. Mubarak said he would find it "hard as an Egyptian citizen to accept to sign the treaty without Israel signing it," adding he was accountable to public opinion. But General Moustafa el-Sisi, an Egyptian strategic studies expert, told AFP, Egypt's choices were "very limited." Many countries had "an interest in backing the US position, which favours an indefinite extension" of the treaty, he said, adding that individual countries could not choose whether or not to sign. However, if the NPT were extended indefinitely and Israel still refused to sign, Egypt would have "no alternative but to announce it was suspending its adherence to the treaty." The former Egyptian army officer said that would trigger head-on clash with the United States. Such a decision "could cost our country dearly and it must be carefully calculated, for it risks bringing in its wake a suspension of US aid to Egypt and pressure from the International Monetary Fund," Dessuki stressed. Mubarak could find himself in an awkward position, for Egypt is the main beneficiary of US foreign aid after Israel, receiving 2.1 billion dollars a year, of which 1.2 billion is military aid.

"Suu Kyi would be detained until new constitution"

BANGKOK, Jan 22: Myanmar's ruling junta has scuttled "a great opportunity to redeem itself in the eyes of the world" by delaying, perhaps for years, the release of dissident leader Aung San Suu Kyi an opposition coalition said today, reports AFP. The National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), in a statement obtained here, also called for a renewed democratic struggle in response to the continued house arrest of the Nobel Peace Prize winner. The NCGUB move followed a statement by Thai Foreign Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to reporters here Wednesday that the Myanmar authorities had told him they would detain Aung San Suu Kyi until a new constitution was in place. Such a condition would likely delay by several years the release of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner and symbol of Myanmar's democratic movement. Many Myanmar-watchers had interpreted two publicised meetings between junta leaders and Aung Sang Suu Kyi, the most recent of which took place in October, as a sign of her imminent release. Referring to the latest junta stance, the NCGUB said Sunday that "the move by the SLORC came as no surprise to us."

Rebuilding of Kobe to cost \$ 100 b

KOBE, Japan, Jan 22: The bill for rebuilding Kobe after its murderous earthquake will top 10 trillion yen (100 billion dollars), the local governor predicted today, reports AFP. Toshitami Kaihara, governor of Hyogo prefecture which includes Kobe, said damage to buildings would cost 4.26 trillion yen and rebuilding port facilities another 1.04 trillion yen. The governor said the prefecture would need 300 billion yen to reconstruct railways and 160 billion yen for demolished elevated highways and cracked roads. The January 17 earthquake killed 5,000 people and destroyed 2,000 buildings and paralysed public services.

Saddam employs a double to avoid assassination

LONDON, Jan 22: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein employs a double to avoid being assassinated during public appearances, the Sunday Times reported, says AFP. The paper said the double whose real name was Fawaz El-Omari had been given plastic surgery to make him look even more like a Iraqi leader. The Sunday Times carried on its front page a photograph widely published two years ago purporting to show Saddam bathing in the Tigris river. The legend underneath the photo said "Guess who? No, it's not Saddam Hussein." The first confirmation of what had previously only been suspected comes from an army officer who was himself forced to act as the double for Uday, the Iraqi dictator's brutal eldest son, the Sunday Times said. Latif Yahia acted as Uday's double for four years before managing to escape from Iraq and flee to Vienna where he obtained political asylum, the report said. Yahia was quoted as saying that Saddam's first double was killed in 1984 when a car-bomb exploded as the double was travelling in a car from Baghdad to Tikrit. Saddam's birthplace. Yahia identified the president's new double and explained that El Emari had his plastic surgery done in Yugoslavia. He said it was El Emari who was photographed bathing in the Tigris on July 26 1992 and not the Iraqi president.

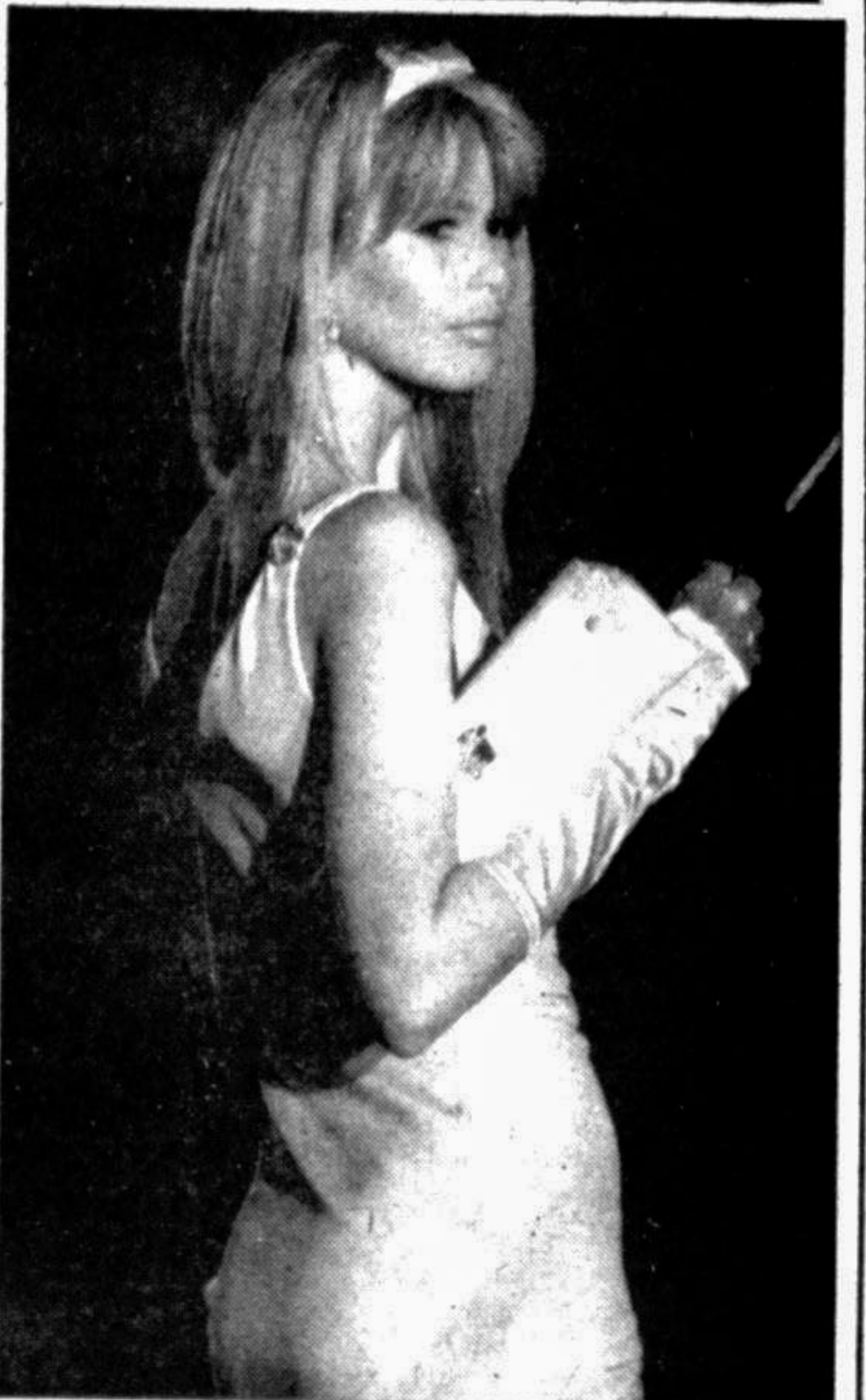


Smoke drifts on Saturday around Grozny's presidential palace taken by Russian troops on Thursday. Russian forces are trying to capture Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev, still holed up in Grozny, and demanding unconditional surrender from separatist soldiers. — AFP photo

Kashmir avalanche: Probe into deaths of 125 ordered

JAMMU, Jan 22: The state government has ordered an inquiry into the circumstances, which led to the death of 125 people and forced hundreds of others trapped by an avalanche to spend horrifying days inside a tunnel, officials said Sunday, reports AP. The investigation by officials of the Jammu Kashmir state government will also probe into allegations of delayed relief. The inquiry was ordered by Jammu Kashmir Chief Secretary Ashok Kumar on Saturday. Kumar told reporters that the inquiry team will also try to find out if there was any negligence on the part of official agencies which manage traffic on the single lane mountain road. Late Saturday, Indian soldiers rescued 40 of the 48 people, the last batch of passengers who had taken shelter in the 2.8 kilometres (1.7 mile) long Jawahar Tunnel since the highway on the Himalayan foothills. Rescue of the remaining eight was to resume at daylight Sunday. At least 125 people had been killed in the storm that triggered off the avalanche Monday, state officials said. But Indian news agencies put the death toll at 140 and said 130 people were still missing. More than 4,500 people have been rescued so far.

Off the Record



Top model Claudia Shiffer shows a clinging peach-pastel cocktail dress with sherbet-yellow gloves as the Gianni Versace Atelier presented its "Couture-Style" 1995 collection in Paris on Saturday. Versace's emphasis for next summer is on closely-matched "perfect" tones and flowing fabrics. — AFP photo

'Quake Kobe' a dream come true!

KOBE: There was at least one happy person in Kobe on Sunday, reports Reuter. For Masaaki Hamada, 50, Kobe's killer quake is a dream come true. "I'd say that since the quake my quality of life has increased by around 70 percent," said Hamada, who for the last 11 years has lived on the streets of central Kobe after falling ill and losing his job. Hamada said the quake was a stroke of luck for him and the rest of Kobe's long-term homeless. "It's great since the quake I get two meals, breakfast and dinner every day, and a place to stay," said Hamada. He is staying at Kobe's grand town hall, which escaped Japan's biggest quake in 70 years. For the 300,000 made homeless by last Tuesday's quake, the town hall is the place to be because its water, gas and electricity supplies were restored within hours of the quake. The rest of the city had to wait until Saturday for electricity supplies to be switched back on much of the city remains without water and gas.

America's elite in nude

NEW HAVEN, Connecticut: A collection of nude photographs of America's elite that may include first lady Hillary Clinton and former President George Bush has been closed to public view after its existence was publicised, reports AFP. The New York Times magazine on January 15 disclosed that the Smithsonian Institution, which runs a variety of museums, had a collection of nude photographs taken of students at America's most elite institutions. The pictures were first taken as "posture" photographs in the early 1900s. Researcher W.H. Sheldon continued the practice from the 1940s to 1960s as part of a now-discredited study of the relationship between intelligence and body shape.

It's Di-Hewitt again

LONDON: A former housekeeper for the prince and princess of Wales inferred in the news of the World Today that Princess Diana had slept with her "friend" Major James Hewitt several times while Prince Charles was away from home, reports AFP. According to the newspaper, Wendy Berry worked for the prince for nine years and kept a diary of the comings and goings at the Waleses' home at Highgrove in southwest England with the intention of selling her story. Berry was quoted as saying that when Hewitt stayed at Highgrove, Diana's bed sheets always looked untouched. However, in Hewitt's room a few yards from the princess, she said the sheets looked "like a battlefield" and it was "quite obvious that two people had slept in them." Berry also described several meetings at Highgrove between Charles and his long-time intimate friend Camilla Parker Bowles. After the prince broke his arm playing polo, Camilla came to see him twice a day. "Charles would always kiss her firmly on the lips when they met," Berry was quoted as saying.

Twins in 95 days

NEW ORLEANS, Louisiana: A New Orleans woman has given birth to twins 95 days apart and in different years, setting a record for the longest period in which babies in a multiple pregnancy survived, reports AFP. Timothy keys was born 15 weeks premature on October 15, but doctors were able to keep Celeste in her mother's womb until full term and she was born Wednesday. Doctor Jay Goldsmith, one of the mother's doctors at Ochsner Foundation Hospital, said the twins would probably joke about the age difference ten years from now. Timothy was born in 1994 and Celeste in 1995. A Canadian woman pregnant with triplets had a caesarean delivery 99 days after the first child was born but only the third baby survived.

Golden Globes movie awards announced

for Philadelphia" and went on to win the Academy Awards as best actor. The animated box-office hit "The Lion King" won for best comedy or musical picture, while Hugh Grant and Jamie Lee Curtis picked up trophies for best comedy performances. Curtis, the would-be spy of "True Lies," came to the stage of the International Ballroom at the Beverly Hilton Hotel and thanked director James Cameron for "letting me hang from a helicopter on my 35th birthday." "Farinelli," a Belgian-made movie about a famous castrated

soprano, won best foreign language film in the Golden Globes, the awards ceremony of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association. Quentin Tarantino received a Golden Globe for his screenplay for "Pulp Fiction." "Forrest Gump" and "Pulp Fiction" are the top contenders for best picture at the Academy Awards. The Golden Globes is traditionally the first major awards show of the season and often a bellwether of the Oscars. Dianne Wiest, who played the flamboyant Broadway actress in Woody Allen's "Bullets Over Broadway," won best supporting actress in a drama. Martin Landau, who played horror star Bela Lugosi in "Ed Wood," got best supporting actor. Sophia Loren won a standing ovation as she was honoured with the Cecil B. DeMille Award for service to filmmaking. It was presented by Charlton Heston, her co-star in "El Cid," and Robert Altman, her director from the recent "Ready to Wear." In the television awards, the Fox Television science fiction series "The X-Files," Dennis Franz of ABC's "N.Y.P.D.

54 Joanne Woodward was named best actress in a television movie for "Breathing Lesson — A Hallmark Hall of Fame Presentation." The comedy series award was a tie between "Frasier" and "Mad About You," both of NBC. Tim Allen of ABC's "Home Improvement" and Helen Hunt of "Mad About You" took won best comedy actors. "The Burning Season," the HBO drama about the murder of Brazilian rubber-tapper Chico Mendes, who best made-for-television movie, and its star, the late Raul Julia, won best actor in a television movie. Julia died October 24 after a stroke in New York at

'Indo-Russia defence ties back on track'

NEW DELHI, Jan 22: India today said its defence cooperation with Russia was "firmly back on track" and that the target of doubling bilateral trade this year as compared to 1991 was "eminently achievable," reports PTI. The stage of uncertainties in Indo-Russia defence ties following the disintegration of the Soviet defence production complex and decentralisation within the Russian defence industry is now over, said the Minister of State for External Affairs, R.L. Bhatia.