

International

# Ararat's messages to 3 states Break deadlock in ME peace process

**GAZA CITY, Feb 10:** PLO chief Yasser Arafat has appealed to the United States, Norway, and Russia to break the deadlock in negotiations with Israel ahead of fresh peace talks next week, reports AFP.

The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said Arafat sent messages to the leaders of the three countries on "the latest development in the peace process and the difficulties it faces."

He met the US, Russian and Norwegian consuls on Thursday night to press home his fears after a summit meeting with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin flopped.

Arafat also telephoned Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr

Mussa and complained in UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that Israel was not fulfilling the 1993 declaration of principles for autonomy.

Israel was "building new settlements in the occupied territories (and) postponing the redevelopment of troops enforcing the isolation of Jerusalem and carrying out collective punishment of the Palestinian population by sealing off the occupied territories."

However, Arafat adviser Ahmad Tibi today weakened claims by a PLO minister that peace efforts had hit a "real crisis."

"The negotiations have not stopped. We are still negotiating directly. There will be meetings next week," Tibi pointed out.

Israel rejected any talk of crisis, referring only of "differences."

The PLO chairman had stormed out of the summit on the border between Gaza and Israel after Rabin refused to end the closure of the occupied West Bank and Gaza, imposed after 21 people died in a suicide bombing on January 22.

Trailing badly in the opinion polls with 66 Israelis dead since Palestinian self-rule began last May, Rabin was on sure ground.

## India to reduce troops along border with China

**NEW DELHI, Feb 10:** India plans to reduce the number of troops along its border with China, with which it fought a brief war in 1962, the army chief was quoted yesterday as saying, reports AFP.

General Shankar Roy Choudhury told reporters Thursday that soldiers would be pulled back from the desolate Himalayan frontier to the Brahmaputra valley in the country's northeast, the Hindustan Times reported.

# Clinton, Kohl tell press in Washington Violence in Chechnya must stop

**WASHINGTON, Feb 10:** US President Bill Clinton and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl on Thursday voiced strong support for Russian President Boris Yeltsin despite the Chechnya crisis and promised not to surprise Russia in expanding NATO, reports Reuters.

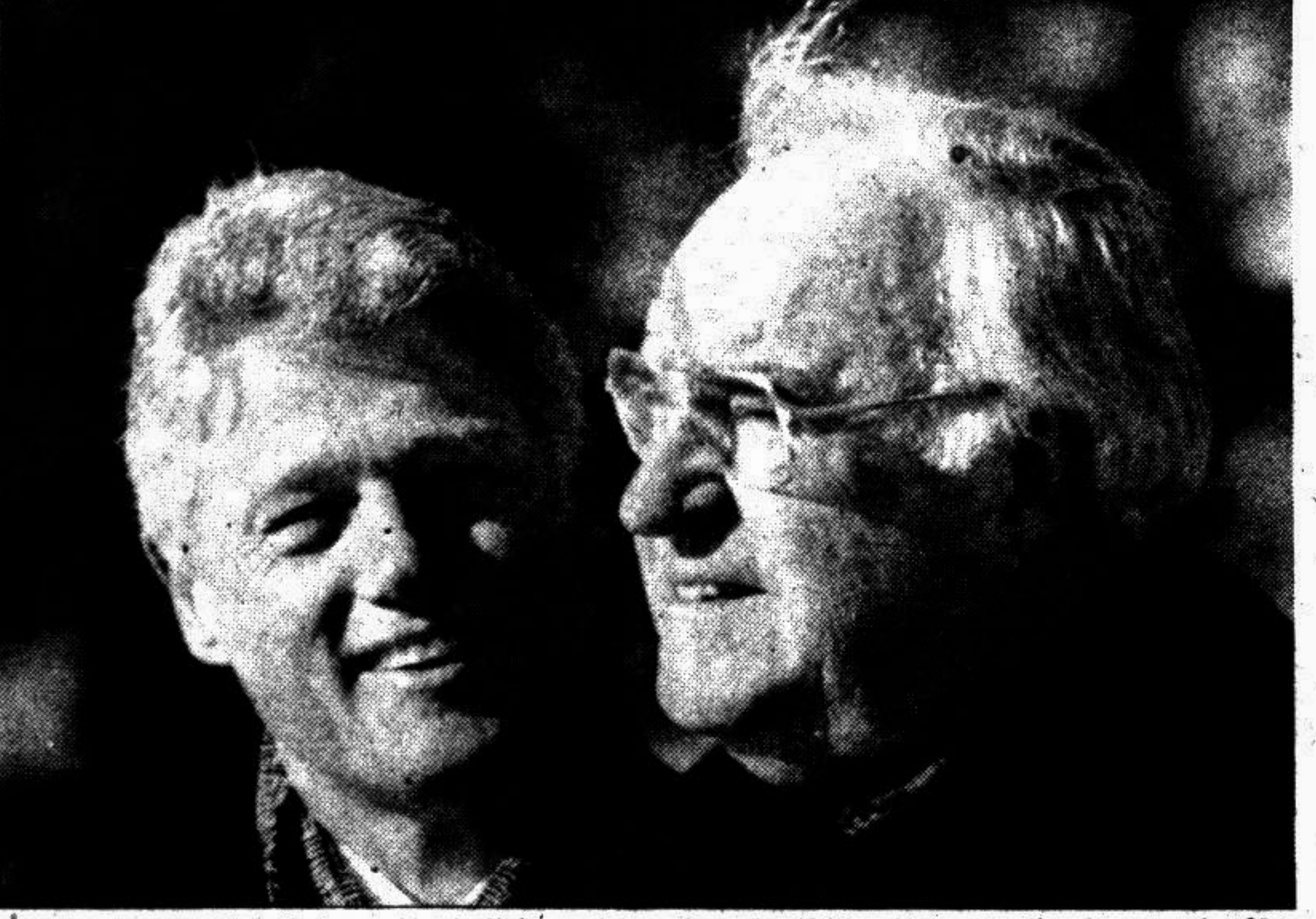
At a news conference after three hours of talks, Clinton and Kohl urged anew that violence in the breakaway Russian region of Chechnya must stop and peace negotiations begin. Clinton offered 20 million dollar in US humanitarian and refugee aid to help alleviate distress there.

Although they offered support for Yeltsin, they qualified it by saying they expect him not to slow down the pace of democratic and economic reform and to respect human rights.

"This friendship should also give us the right to tell him quite clearly that he must not

deceive our hopes, that although we do have a certain amount of understanding for certain setbacks occurring, still, reform must go on," Kohl said.

Clinton said he agreed but had confidence in Yeltsin because "every time he has given me his word he has done what he said he would do" — from withdrawing Russian troops from the Baltics to carrying out nuclear arms reduction accords.



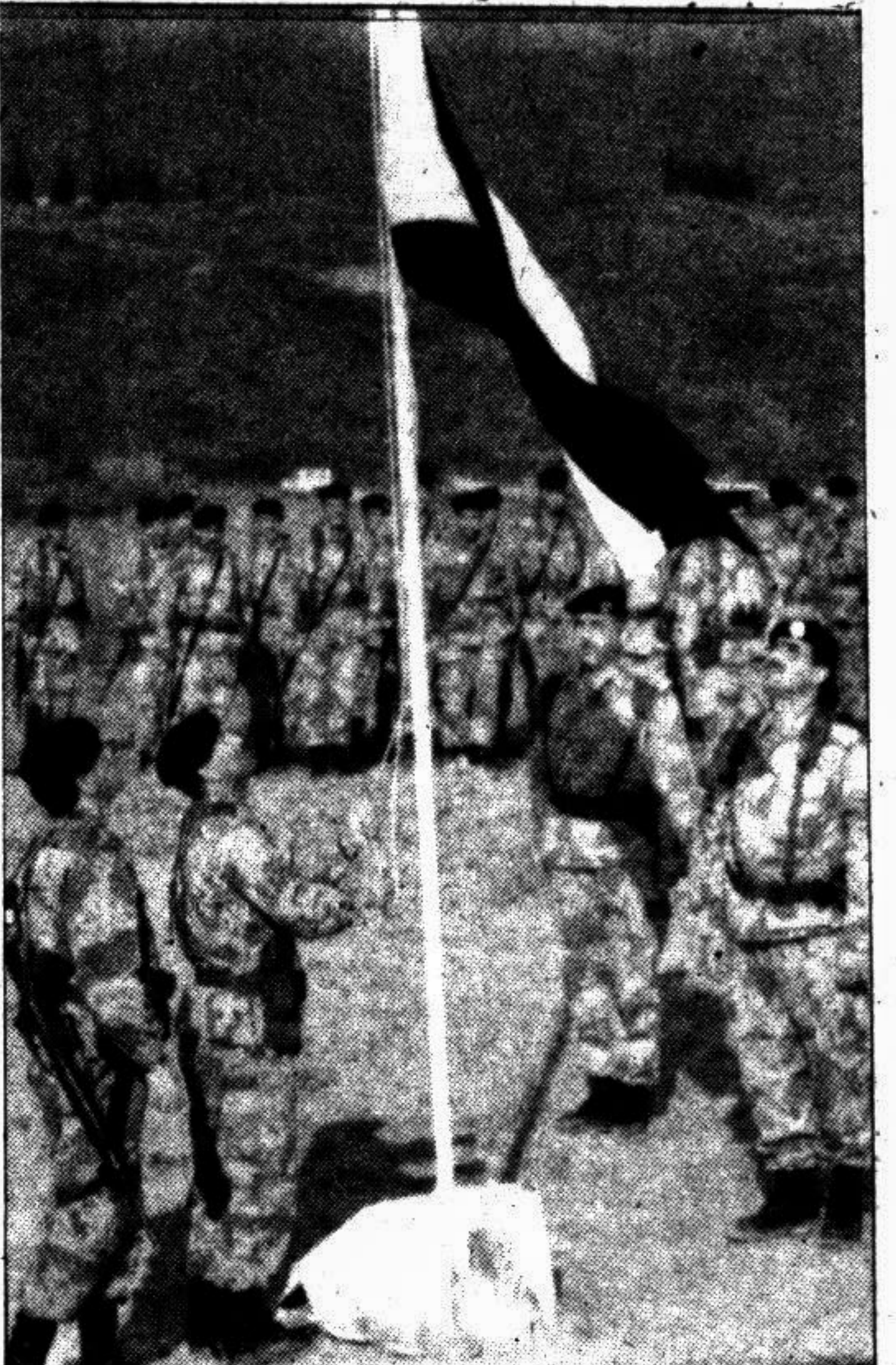
German (Chancellor Helmut Kohl (R)) is welcomed to the White House in Washington by US President Bill Clinton (L) on Thursday. — AFP photo

Kohl was on a one-day visit to Washington to discuss world affairs with his close ally Clinton and to visit Capital Hill to meet the new Republican leaders of Congress. He was later attending an official dinner with Clinton at the White House.

Yeltsin's grip on power — and his commitment to democracy — have been questioned within Russia and in the West because of the use of the military in Chechnya. The United States and Germany are investing hundreds of millions of dollars and marks to support the reform process.

"Help can only be extended if Russia stays on the course and continues the hard work of building democratic institutions and implementing market-oriented reforms," Clinton said.

He said he and Kohl had made clear to Yeltsin "our fears about the corrosive effect the conflict in Chechnya" can have on the reform process.



A Jordanian soldier raises his country's flag on Thursday in Baqura, 130 kms northwest of the capital Amman, after the completion of the Israeli withdrawal from at least 340 square kms of land it captured from Jordan in 1950 and 1968. — AFP photo

# BRIEFLY

**Quayle won't run for presidency:** Former Vice President Dan Quayle has decided not to enter the 1996 presidential race because of his difficulties raising enough money for a viable campaign, a senior adviser said Friday, reports AP from Washington.

Quayle made the decision late Wednesday night and planned to issue a statement Thursday, said Mark Goodin, who helped Quayle prepare for the possibility of a campaign.

**Russia expels 21 Chinese:** Russia on Friday expelled 21 Chinese citizens who were arrested without passports or with forged documents, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported, AP says from Khabarovsk.

Authorities have begun criminal proceedings against an additional 28 Chinese citizens for "serious offenses," said Col. Alexander Rosinsky, deputy head of the police department in this Far Eastern region.

**Quake toll now 35 in Colombia:** Thirty-five people were killed and 281 others injured in the earthquake that rocked central Colombia, authorities said on Thursday, AFP reports from Bogota.

Two persons were still listed as missing, the National Office for Disaster Prevention and Relief said in a statement.

The quake, which measured 6.4 on the open-ended Richter scale, struck the city of Pereira on Wednesday and the heart of Colombia's coffee-producing region, bursting water mains, crumbling walls and opening gaping fissures in buildings.

**ROK won't revise Constitution:** South Korea's ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) said on Friday it had no plan to revise the Constitution to let President Kim Young Sam run for a second term, Reuters reports from Seoul.

The irrevocable policy of the ruling camp is that we will not revise the Constitution, at least during the term of President Kim Young Sam, DLP spokesman Park Bum Jin said.

**Floods hit southern Iran:** The torrential rain has killed one person and hundreds of cattlehead in southern Iran, Tehran radio reported yesterday, Xinhua reports from Tehran.

The rain caused several rivers to overflow and many houses were damaged in the province of Bushehr, the radio said. It said tents and food had been rushed to the province. Floods also hit in the provinces of Fars and Boyer-Ahmad-Kohgiluyeh, north of Bushehr, but no death was reported.

**Italian TV staff killed in Somalia:** An Italian state television employee, Marcello Palmisano, was killed in an ambush in the strife-torn Somali capital Mogadishu yesterday, the Ansa news agency reported, AFP reports from Rome.

Palmisano was accompanying the special correspondent of the Tg2 news network who went to Mogadishu to cover the withdrawal of UN troops from the city riven by fighting between armed rival factions.

**Rabuka to face no-confidence:** Prime Minister Sitiiveni Rabuka's government will face a vote of no confidence over its dictatorial handling of issues which have divided its indigenous Fijian supporters, the opposition said Thursday, AP reports from Suva.

The President of the opposition Fijian Association Josevata Kanikamica, said the five parliamentary members of his party decided Thursday to bring a motion of no confidence in the next session, beginning Monday.

**Yeltsin sacks 2 ministers:** Russian President Boris Yeltsin sacked two deputy defence ministers today, one of them opposed to the military operation in Chechnya and the other being probed in a corruption investigation, Reuters reports from Moscow.

**Lankan Defence Secy resigns:** Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary resigned Friday in a move that is expected to strengthen President Chandrika Kumaratunga's control over the military, officials said, AP reports from Colombo.

Hamilton Wanasinghe, a former army chief, was appointed by the previous United National Party government as the top bureaucrat in the ministry.

**Earthquake jolts NZ:** An earthquake of magnitude 6.2 on the Richter scale has shaken a wide area of New Zealand's North Island but there were no reports of damage, radio New Zealand reported yesterday, AFP says from Auckland.

The quake was an aftershock to a magnitude seven quake which occurred on Monday, also causing no damage. The aftershock was felt for around 30 seconds at 1.45 pm (0045 GMT) and was centred near the epicentre of Monday's quake, about 125 kilometres (77 miles) east-southeast of East Cape.

**Blasts kill 8 in Russia:** Eight people were killed when grenades accidentally exploded as they were being disarmed by explosives experts, an interior Ministry spokesman said Thursday, AP reports from Khabarovsk, Russia.

Spokesman Vasily Panchenkov said the accident happened Wednesday as specialists were disarming some 200 obsolete stun grenades at a weapons testing ground near the city of Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East.

# Mortar barrage rattles Sarajevo

**SARAJEVO, Feb 10:** Bosnian Serb forces encircling Sarajevo unleashed a brief but jarring mortar barrage on the capital in the worst breach yet of a ceasefire that has held for six weeks across most of Bosnia, reports Reuters.

But the truce never took hold in the northwest Bihać enclave, where Bosnian government forces entrenched in the south and centre of the pocket were staving off attacks from the north by rebel Muslims and Serbs from Croatia.

The United Nations said the situation became particularly alarming on Thursday when the Bosnian Serbs attacked government forces around the mainly Muslim Bihać town, a UN designated safe area from the south.

On a positive note, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic said the time had come to end the war and he was ready to talk to the Muslim-led government.

The mortar barrage rattled Sarajevo in the early evening.

UN military spokeswoman Captain Miriam Souchaki said eight mortar rounds exploded in an unmanned trench along the front line that runs through Sarajevo's Jewish cemetery. There were no apparent casualties, she said.

A local Serb commander told the United Nations she

## Kim Jong may not attend birthday ceremony

**TOKYO, Feb 10:** North Korea's new leader Kim Jong Il may not attend a state ceremony planned for February in Pyongyang to celebrate his 53rd birthday, a Japanese news report said Friday, reports AP.

Kyodo News Service, in a dispatch from the North Korean capital, quoted an unidentified official as saying: "(Workers Party) Secretary Kim is a very modest person and will not attend the ceremony" next Thursday.

fired the mortars because government troops were digging trenches in violation of the January 1 ceasefire accord.

The government troops retreated after the Serbs gave them an ultimatum to pull back or risk attack, but the Serb commander apparently decided to blow up the freshly dug trench anyway, Souchaki said.

Lieutenant-Colonel Gary Coward of the UN peacekeeping force called the mortar attack a "major ceasefire violation."

Thousands of people, civilians as well as combatants, have been killed by shelling and sniper fire since the Bosnian Serbs laid siege to the city more than 1,000 days ago.

The truce, intended to last for four months and lead to full-scale peace talks, has brought tentative steps towards normalcy, with roads previously too dangerous to travel opened to civilians and trains again running to the battered suburbs.

But things took a turn for the worse when the main UN aid agency decided to suspend its today airlift into Sarajevo following the abduction of one of its local employees, an ethnic Serb, by mainly Muslim government forces.

The abduction of Svetlana Boskovic, 29 prompted fears the Serbs could retaliate by taking a hostage of their own from among Muslim employees of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The UNHCR employs dozens of local staff who in the line of duty have to cross into territory held by their ethnic foes.

Fighting has raged unabated in the Bihać enclave where Bosnian Serb forces launched a "calculated and deliberate" infantry and artillery attack on the Bihać town on Thursday, UN spokesman Paul Risley said.

UN observers counted 208 shells hitting the Vedro Polje and Kiloket area.



Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao (R) greets Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro (C) yesterday at Rashtrapathi Bhavan in New Delhi. Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma is seen on the left. — AFP photo

# Extradition of suspect in WTC bombing should boost Pak-US ties, say analysts

**ISLAMABAD, Feb 10:** Pakistan's extradition of an Iraqi suspect in the New York World Trade Center bombing should boost turbulent ties with Washington and ease its reputation as a bolt-hole for international terrorists, analysts said today, reports AFP.

Ramzi Ahmed Yusuf is the most threatening suspect ever detained in Pakistan. President Bill Clinton described the Iraqi national as "one of the most wanted terrorists in the world."

And Yusuf's extradition to the United States comes at a time when Islamabad's often difficult relations with Washington are slowly improving.

Terrorism and Pakistan's suspected nuclear arms programme have clouded ties for many years, but Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is to go to the United States in April, and US Secretary of Defence William Perry visited Islamabad last month.

Perry described Pakistan as "a moderate Islamic country," a debatable label but one that

Benazir would like for her nation.

But the United States is not the only country that has put pressure on Benazir.

Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt have all insisted that Islamabad step up pressure on Arabs in Pakistan.

Thousands of Arabs who took part in the Muslim-led Mujahedeen war against the Soviets in Afghanistan poured into Pakistan after the Soviet pull out in 1989. They had no hope of going home, where they were considered terrorists.

Arab veterans of Afghanistan, acting sometimes under the cover of non-governmental aid organisations in Afghanistan, have since been accused of financing terrorist operations.

And privately, diplomats complain that the Pakistani authorities have been lax about pursuing terrorists.

Pakistani officials say the Arabs, many of whom are in Peshawar, capital of the Northwest Frontier Province next to Afghanistan, cross the

leaky 1,300-kilometre long border as soon as pressure mounts. They return when the atmosphere calms. Drug traffickers have the same transient life.

Washington, threatened for several months in 1993 to put Pakistan on its list of terrorist states — mainly because of

## Ramzi Yousef's friend held

**ISLAMABAD, Feb 10:** Police have arrested a South African religious student who was a friend of Ramzi Yousef and escorted the bombing suspect to the hotel where he was captured, according to reports Friday, says AP.

The South African, Ishaque Parker, was picked up shortly after the Tuesday morning arrest of Yousef, said the News, an English language daily. Yousef was extradited to New York and pleaded innocent Thursday to charges of involvement in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

## Nepal won't allow 'Free Tibet Movement'

**KATMANDU, Feb 10:** Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari said yesterday his government will not allow the "Free Tibet Movement" to operate from Nepal, reports AP.

"We will not allow anyone to use our soil against our neighbors, China and India," Adhikari said at his first press conference since the Marxist government assumed power in Nepal in November.

Adhikari said: "I'm capable of resisting pressure from anybody and that is why we won't allow the Free Tibet Movement to operate from Nepal."

Nepal has a large Tibetan refugee community which fled Tibet in 1959. Unofficial estimates put their number around 20,000.

The Himalayan state of Nepal is situated between the Asian giants, India and China.

# Britain, Sinn Fein trying to get talks back on track

**BELFAST, Feb 10:** British officials and the IRA's political wing tried to get their talks back on track today after a suspected electronic bug and a mysterious bomb blew their six-month-old peace dialogue off course, reports Reuters.

The two sides said they were in contact to set a new date for talks after Sinn Fein suspended the latest round on Thursday when its security experts detected what they thought might be a bugging device in a room used by the group.

No date has been set for a resumption of the talks but British officials and Sinn Fein spokesmen said they were trying to set up a new date to keep up the peace momentum.

Britain denied allegations that it had planted any bug and officials suggested that a device picked up by a Sinn Fein security scanner may in fact have been a photocopying machine.

"I would like categorically

to state that any suggestion or inference that his room was in any way monitored by or on behalf of the British government is totally without foundation," British Northern Ireland Minister Michael Ancram said.

He would say no more while police searched the room at the Stormont assembly buildings where Britain and Sinn Fein have held five full sessions of exploratory talks to build on a six-month-old Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefire.

"I think that if the room is being electronically monitored, that is a matter of serious concern," Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams told a news conference.

"I think the entire proceeds needs to be conducted in a climate where both sides feel they can conduct their deliberations in a secure environment," Adams said.

The incident was seen as a setback that soured the atmosphere around the negotiations

# Off the Record

**A grand flop**

**TORONTO:** Canada's first major international men's conference flopped when only five people turned up and the deflated organiser left without paying the bill, the Canadian Press News Agency reported on Thursday, says Reuters.

"It's a grave embarrassment," sighed one of the participants David Shackleton slumped in a chair in a conference room full of empty tables prepared for 200 people.

The key note speaker, Hans Lehmann, had travelled from Geneva expecting to address crowds of red-blooded males at the International Men's Day convention.

More than 100 hotel rooms had been set aside, meeting rooms booked and press releases and speeches prepared.

The professor from Kansas City who organised the event, Tom Oaster, left without paying the bill. "I needed my blood pressure medication. I'll call to settle the bill," he told Canadian press in a telephone interview.

**The gift may be lost without training**

**WASHINGTON:** Some people are born with a magical sense of music, but without early training the gift may be lost, according to a scientist who studies the shape and size of the brain in the musically talented, reports AP.

Pictures of the brains of 30 classically trained musicians show that those who have perfect pitch — the ability to identify isolated musical notes they hear — have a greatly enlarged structure on the left side of the brain.

The researcher, Dr Gottfried Schlaug of Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, said Thursday that musicians in the study who lacked perfect pitch had a brain much like that of people who can't play a note.

But even the gifted had to start early to use what nature gave them.

"There is evidence that those with perfect pitch were exposed to music before the age of 7," said Schlaug. "If you

**'Ugly girl' rescued alive**

**TOKYO:** A female cat called "Busu" (ugly girl in Japanese) was rescued alive in the debris of a destroyed factory 21 days after the deadly earthquake struck Kobe, the Manichi Daily News said today, reports AP.

While workmen were clearing debris from the factory site Tuesday morning, they heard the weak mewling of a trapped cat, which was freed later in the day after iron plates and bars were cut away by an acetylene torch.

Her right paw must be amputated because it was crushed between a locker and a sewing machine. But Busu, who belongs to the owner of the factory, is old, the equivalent to almost 90 years in human terms.

So the rescue group will wait until she has fully recovered before performing the necessary surgery.

A dog had been found alive from under a collapsed house 18 days after the January 17 quake, which killed 5,296 people and injured 260,000. The tremor destroyed or badly damaged more than 100,000 houses and buildings and left about 280,000 people homeless.

Shock vomiting, diarrhea and trembling have been observed among pets which have survived.

"It's quite possible that they suffer mental and physical strain just like humans," said Masahiko Hatatani, a veterinarian in Kobe quoted by the newspaper.