Nigerian junta rules out early handover of power.

BRIFFLY

The Interfax news agency said the parliament voted 70-

than 60 journalists were killed around the world in 1995.

to a report released Thursday. AP reports from Brussels.

many of them victims of assassination in Algeria, according

"What is certain beyond doubt is that 1995 has been an-

other tragic year for media freedom," the International

Federation of Journalists said in its annual report on news

Rafsanjani's mother dies: The

mother of Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani

died on Thursday at the age of 90, the official news agency

100 kilometres (60 miles) south of Tehran, after Friday

Mauritius opposition wins polls:

The main opposition alliance in the Indian Ocean island of

Mauritius won 65.2 per cent of all votes cast at Wednes-

day's parliamentary elections, final results from the Na-

tional Electoral Commission showed on Friday, Reuter re-

and Paul Berenger captured 65.2 per cent of 556.297 bal-

lots cast while the governing coalition of Prime Minister

Algerian TV director killed: The

production director of an Algerian public television station

has been assassinated, apparently by militants who have

Authorities said the body of Mohammed Belkacem. 46.

been targeting journalists, police said Thursday, AP re-

was found just one kilometre (1/2 mile) from the spot

where he was kidnapped Wednesday in the eastern Algiers

suburb of Baraki by three armed men. Belkacem's throat

60pc Japanese want new govt:

Sixty per cent of Japanese voters want a new government

to replace the tripartite coalition led by Prime Minister

Tomichi Murayama, according to a poll published Friday.

Uzbek PM replaced: The Uzbek parlia-

ment on Thursday dismissed Prime Minister Ab-

dulkhoshim Mutalov and named Utkir Sultanov a former

foreign trade minister, to replace him, the Interfax news

dent Islam Karimov indicated to parliament that the gov-

Smoking banned in Beijing: The

capital of the world's largest producer and consumer of to-

bacco on Thursday banned smoking in public places. AP

The standing committee of the Beijing People's

Congress passed the no-smoking law, which is to go into

effect on May 15, 1996, the official Xinhua News Agency

Georgians mark Stalin's birthday:

About 1,000 people nostalgic for communist times marked

the 116th anniversary of Josef Stalin's birth with a rally in

the Soviet dictator's birthplace, the small mountain town

ered for speeches, communist songs and Stalin films in

the Rustaveli theatre in central Tbilisi, the capital of the

3 executed in Japan: A man convicted of

kidnapping and murdering a female university student was

hanged Thursday, as were two other convicted murders.

central Japan, said Akiko Takada, a member of a group op-

posing the death penalty. She said the group received the

Shuji Kimura, 45, was executed at a prison in Nagoya

About 500 people, mostly silver-haired veterans, gath-

ernment needed a fresh approach to the economy.

No reason for Mutalov's removal was given, but Presi-

and Sunday, of whom 69 per cent responded.

agency said. AP reports from Tashkent.

of Gori, AP reports from Tbilist, Georgia.

activist groups said. AP reports from Tokyo.

information from Kimura's family.

The Yomiuri Shimbun polled 3,000 voters on Saturday

Sir Anerood Jugnauth won just 19.7 per cent of the vote.

The commission said the alliance of Navin Ramgoolam

prayers at the University of Tehran, the agency said.

Hajie Khanom Mahbibi Hashemi will be buried at Qom

reporters killed while on assignment or for their views.

24 in favour in the government presented by Skele.

nation, AP reports from Riga, Latvia.

IRNA said, AFP reports from Tehran.

ports from Port Louis.

ports from Algiers.

AFP reports from Tokyo.

reports from Beijing.

former Soviet republic.

reported.

was slashed.

LAGOS, Nigeria, Dec 22: An aide to Nigeria's military ruler Thursday ruled out negotiations on a early handover of power, declaring that the junta will rule for three more years, reports AP.

His comments came a week after hundreds of politicians held a summit to decide how best to motivate Gen Sani Abacha, who took power in a November 1993 coup, to quickly hand power to a civilian government.

Abacha drew more international condemnation last month for executing nine political activists, including playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa. last month.

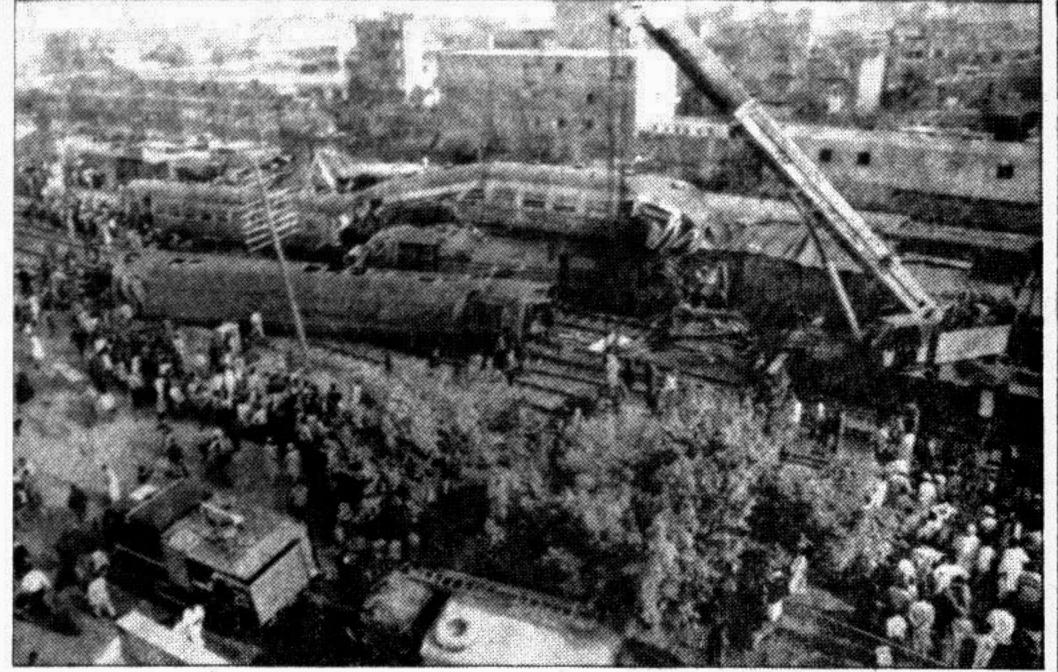
The summit, sponsored by an opposition coalition, agreed to enter talks with the government in an effort to persuade Abacha to leave

office. In addition, the Commonwealth on Wednesday decided to send a five-nation mission to Nigeria next month of encourage democratic reforms.

But Abacha aide Lazarus Unaogu, speaking Thursday in the capital Abuja, said there was no chance the military government will step down anytime soon.

"We have no intention of entering into any discussion with anyone over our handover programme," said Unaogu, Special Duties Minister in Abacha's government. Abacha earlier this year bowed to pressure and said a civilian government would take over in October 1998.

Unaogu said Thursday that péople should accept the three-year transition as a



Overall view of train crash site in Badrshein, some 20 kilometres outside Cairo, on Thursday after two trains smashed into each other that killed 75 people and left 150 others injured. — AFP/UNB photo

UNSC condemns Serbs for mass killings, HR abuses

Latvian MPs approve new govt: Legislators in Latvia on Thursday approved a new govern-UNITED NATIONS. Dec ment presented by Prime Minister-designate Andris 22: The Security Council Skele, ending weeks of political uncertainty in the Baltic condemned Bosnian Serbs "in the strongest possible terms" for mass killings and other human rights abuses and demanded they cooper-60 journalists killed in '95: More ate with an international court established to prose-

> In a separate, unanimous resolution, the 15 member council on Thursday also authorised the United Nations to send 2,000 civilian police to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the largest such force ever deployed by the United Nations.

cute war criminals, reports

Most of the police will be stationed in areas of Sarajevo to be returned by Bosnian Serbs to the Muslim-led government under the December 17 peace agreement signed in Paris.

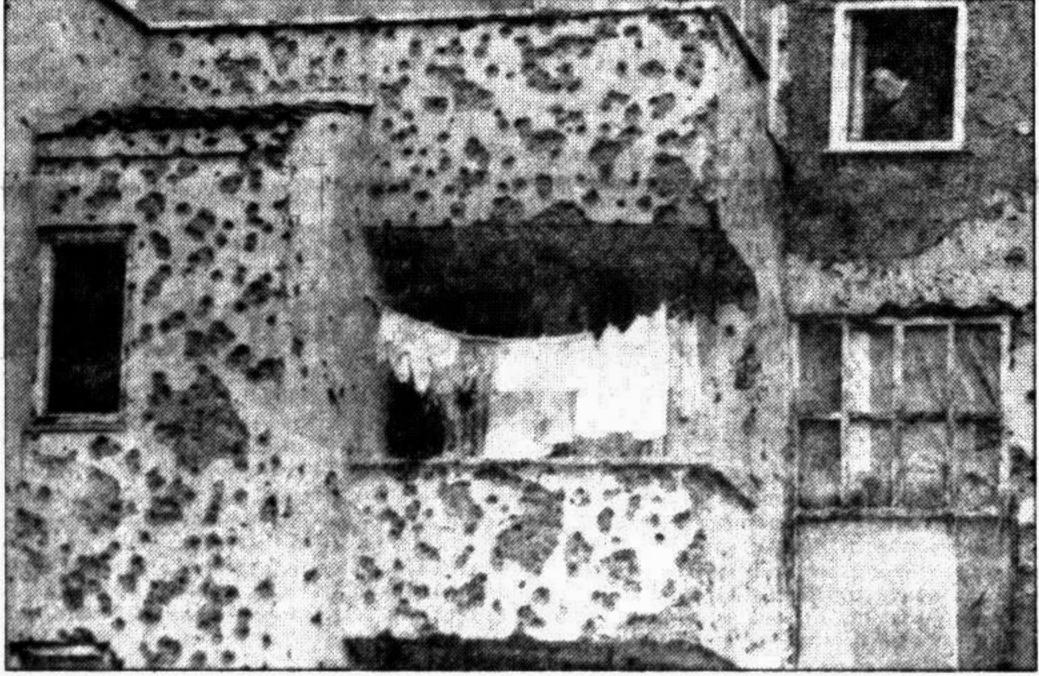
Russia, a traditional ally of the Serbs, joined the 14 other council members in approving the human rights resolution, which also condemned Bosnian Croats for burning and looting in areas they must turn over to Bosnian Serbs.

But Russian Ambassador Sergey Lavrov complained that the resolution was not specific enough in identifying the Croats for human rights violations. Only one of the resolution's 18 paragraphs cited Croat violations. Rather than mention "Croats", the paragraph referred to abuses by "HVO forces", using the Serb Croatian initials for the Croat Self Defence Force.

Lavrov, who also Serves as council president, said Russia "firmly condemns any violation of human rights no matter by whom and where perpetrated." But he added "We cannot bypass and remain silent and close our eyes to the other parties."

The resolution followed a report by Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, which found evidence of mass killings of civilians, systematic rape and wholesale detentions in UN-protected towns of Srebrenica and Zepa which Bosnian Serbs overran last July.

In the resolution, which was approved unanimously. the council condemned "in the strongest possible terms the violations of international law and of human rights by Bosnian Serb and paramilitary forces" not only in Srebrenica and Zepa but also in the Serb-held towns of Banja Luka and Sanski Most.



A resident tries to fix up a window of his flat in his bullet-riddled building in the eastern district of Mostar, Southern Bosnia on Thursday, as a result of the bloody clashes between Croats and Bosnians in 1993 and 1994 AFP/UNB photo

Israeli troops leave Bethlehem

Hamas refuses to participate in Palestinian polls

CAIRO. Dec 22: After four days of negotiations, the militant group Hamas refused PLO pleas to participate in next month's Palestinian elections and end attacks on israelis, reports AP.

PLO chairman Yasser Arafat had been under heavy pressure from Israel to restrain Hamas from violence that could jeopardise the peace process.

Arafat underscored the failure of the talks on Thursday by abruptly cancelling a planned session with Hamas negotiators and leaving Cairo, after meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak

However, Hamas did pledge it would not block the

January 20 Palestinian elections, which will seat an 82member council to govern areas from which the Israeli army is withdrawing. Hamas said it would not urge supporters to boycott the vote. according to a communique issued by negotiators late Thursday.

Hamas also agreed "not to do anything that will embarrass the Palestinian Authority," the appointed body governing the autonomous areas pending next month's elections. PLO officials inter preted that part of the communique as an indirect commitment against vio lence, which Hamas insisted no such pledge was given.

AFP adds: Israeli soldiers evacuated Bethlehem on Thursday, leaving the Biblical birthplace of Jesus to celebrating Palestinian police and thousands of dancing residents in time for Christmas.

As the last Israel border troops left the town without major incident, thousands of people celebrated in Manger Square, dancing and singing while fireworks lit the night

The sounds of bells ringing in the church of the nativity vied with automatic rifle shots fired into the air by jubilant Palestinian policemen as the Palestinian flag was raised above the newly abandoned police station.

Hurriyat Confce alleges 100 custodial deaths

SRINAGAR, Dec 22: A proindependence group in Kashmir on Thursday alleged that at least 100 civilians have been killed in the last two months while in custody of security forces battling the Muslim insurrection in the northern state, reports AP.

The allegation by the Hurriyat Conference - which was denied by the government - came on a day when 11 people, mostly militants, were killed in gun battles with security forces in Jammu-Kashmir.

Omer Farooq, who heads the Conference, an umbrella group of 32 pro-independence organisations, told reporters in state capital Srinagar that at least 100 houses of civilians have been burnt down in the last two months by security forces and former militants.

Dissident Wei appeals against 14-yr prison term

BEIJING, Dec 22: China's best-known dissident Wei Jingsheng appealed today against a 14-year prison term for conspiring to subvert the government, a court spokeswoman said, reports Reuter.

'Wei Jingsheng appealed today," the spokeswoman said by telephone. She declined to say when the Beijing Higher People's Court would hear Wei's appeal.

Wei, 45, a 1995 Nobel Peace Prize nominee widely regarded as the father of China's modern democracy movement, was convicted on December 12 and sentenced to 14 years in prison for conspiring to subvert the government.

The Beijing number one Intermediate People's Court convicted Wei of financing China's struggling democracy movement, whose very existence is seen by the state as seditious because it questions the Communist Party's absolute rule.

US for imposing oil embargo on Libya

WASHINGTON, Dec 22: The White House called on Thursday for a possible oil embargo against Libya to force the handover of two Libyans accused of bombing a Pan Am jetliner over Scotland in 1988, reports AFP.

"To this day the perpetrators of this savage act remain free, sheltered by Libya in defiance of the will of the international community", said a White House statement on the anniversary of the bombing which killed 170 people over Lockerbie, Scotland.

"Current UN sanctions have not resulted in the outcome we all seek - the handover of the two suspects in the bombing", it said.

Iraq in danger of catastrophe, says King Hussein

AMMAN. Dec 22: King Hussein of Jordan said on Thursday that Iraq was in danger of a catastrophe and urged its fragmented opposition groups to unite to prevent the country's disintegration, reports Reuter.

"I do not see any window of hope.... the result I see is a catastrophe in Iraq in front of us and will harm others if we do not work towards avoiding it in one way or another. King Hussein told Jordanian senior editors at a televised meeting.

" Our duty is to preven the tearing apart of Iraq or our loss of Iraq or its disintegration," he said. King Hussein said he was

urging Iraq's fragmented opposition to unite to help save their country before it was too late.

would not pose a constitu-

tional crisis for Charles but

church leaders, like Arch

Deacon of York George

Austin, warned him about

having a relationship outside

Sharif blames Benazir for confrontation

ISLAMABAD, Dec 22: Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif on Thursday blamed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto for the unabated confrontation in the politicalsystem and the country's economic decline, reports

"From day one the government has been on the war path against the opposition." the former prime minister said in a speech to the National Assembly.

Law and Justice Minister Nabi Dad Khan termed Sharif's blistering attack "disappointing" and vowed that the Benazir administration would complete its five-

Sharif, rejecting Benazir's offer for talks, reiterated his demand for mid-term polls.

"The present crisis has

pushed us far beyond the stage of talks for which the prime minister has extended

an invitation," he said. "The crisis demands that we should go back to the people to seek a new man-

date," he said. He urged Benazir's to ac cept mid-term elections at then set up a committee consultation with the oppos tion to prepare a package for constitutional reforms an other measures to remed the current ills.

The committee should of liberate on issues such as th eradication of corruption forming a permanent watch dog commission to check th misuse of political influence ensuring the independend of the judiciary and ending floor crossing in parliament

Off the Record



US actors David Paymer (L) and Faye Dunaway announced on Thursday nominations in the film category for the 53rd Annual Golden Globe Awards on Thursday in Beverly Hills, California. The film, "Sense and Sensibility" won six nominations for Golden Globe Awards, considered a precursor to the Academy Awards. The Golden Globe Awards, will be presented 2 January 1996 by the Hollywood Foreign Press AFP/UNB photo Association.

To illustrate scandals

LONDON: Opposition leader Tony Blair on Thursday ordered the scrapping of his Labour Party's Christmas card, which carried an illustration of a condom and a topless woman saying "spank me," reports AFP.

The card was supposed to poke fun at scandals that have occurred within the ruling Conservative Party, and contained a spoof version of the song "Twelve Days of Christmas" - listing twelve months of failure, eleven chickens running, the high court losses, nine whipless wonders, eight per cent on fuel and seven sleazy scandals.

To illustrate the scandals, the card, unveiled at a Labour function at Westminster, showed a bra, underwear, a whip and hotel bills as well as the condom and the naked

Blair said the card, designed by Labour's advertising agency, showed a lapse in good taste.

Ekeus shows evidence of Iragi violations of UN bar monitoring Iraq's activities

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 22: The chief UN weapons inspector on Thursday showed reporters a missile guidance device pulled from an Iraqi river, evidence that Iraq may still be violating a UN arms ban, reports AP.

The demonstration followed a closed meeting of the UN Security Council where Rolf Ekeus discussed his latest report on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

"We have no shred of evidence that they have destroyed their missile warheads for biological weapons," he said. "The same goes, of course, for the chemical agents."

However. Ekeus said Iraq did not appear to be an immediate threat to stability in the Mideast. "We think we have good control and are he said.

The United Nations ha refused to lift crippling eco nomic sanctions imposed after Irag's 1990 invasion Kuwait until Baghdad has full discloses details of its m clear, biological and chemical

warfare programmes. Ekeus said his comments to the council focused on the recent seizure in Jordan high-grade missile comp nents bound for Iraq.

He said there were indcations the material was for use in a long-range missie programme.

Iraq has denied the claim saying the reports were attempt to undermine its

forts to end the sanctions. Ekeus held up a missie gyroscope - a mud-colored

cylinder the size of a softbal

Governor, 30 others killed in Burundi

BUJUMBURA, Dec 22: Gunmen in separate incidents killed more than 30 people near Burundi's capital and assassinated the governor of a northern province state-run radio said today. reports Reuter.

Burundi radio said " armed gangs" — wording reserved by Burundian officials to described hardline Hutu guerillas - killed more than 30 people in Mukmike commune southeast of Burundi on Thursday.

It said the attackers. who came from neighbouring communities, burned down some 50 houses at Rukina Hill and stole more than 70 cows, most of which were later recovered

Prince Charles is resigned to becoming king without a queen but Princess Diana does not appear ready to make

a snap decision on a speedy divorce, reports Reuter. Eager to quash speculation that has plunged the tarnished monarchy into crisis. Charles vowed on Thursday he would not remarry if Diana

That could spell the end of his relationship with divorcee Camilla Parker Bowles, the love of his life. One churchman even told the heir to the throne. "Be celibac if you want to be

agreed to a permanent apart

the House of Windsor plunged into disrepute by the

antics of its warring young royals, wrote to Charles and Diana telling them divorce would be best after months of their using the media for a public slanging match.



She felt driven to act after Diana gave a frank television Queen Elizabeth, seeing interview in which she admitted to adultery, ques tioned Charles suitability as

king and labelled royal courtiers "the enemy

Diana's bluntness brought to a head a situation she had not wanted and friends said she was devastated by news of the queen's letter being leaked to the tabloid press.

Royals' disunity damaging British monarchy, nat'l unity

For Diana had said in that interview: "I don't want a divorce but we need clarity on the situation. I await my husband's decision on which way we are going to go

He stated his position within hours, backing his mother's call for an end to the 14-year old marriage Diana's confidants feit she

would agree too - but no speedy decision was likely as the lawyers involved on both sides were away on holiday until the New Year

Diana will want unlimited

agree to a clean beak settlement of 15 million pounds (23.07 million dollars). Separated since 1992, they could under British law be divorced within three months. Prime Minister John Ma-

access to her sons. Princes

William and Harry. She may

jor faces a delicate task playing honest broker to the sparring royals.

It is he who will help define the future role of Diana, who sees herself as a caring "queen of hearts" and wants to be a roving ambassador for Britain.

Some cabinet ministers and diplomats are lukewarm about such a role but none doubts her media pulling power and commitment to a string of charitable causes. Experts insist divorce

tion crisis of 1936 when Ed ward VIII was forced to stepdown to marry divorcee Wal-

marriage with Parker Bowles

Divorce, unlike the abdica

way to stop the rot this time. Constitutional expert Lord St John of Fawsley said: "It was clear that things were going to go on getting worse. The display of disunity in the royal family was damaging

lis Simpson, is seen as the

monarchy ' But Diana, a masterly media manipulator who knows that whatever happens she will always be mother of the future king, has issued a

national unity as well as the

stark warning. In that television inter view, the once demure young bridge said of her determined new self: "She won't go quietly. That is the problem. I will fight to the end as I have a role to fulfil and I have got two children to

bring up

Chun to face corruption charges SEOUL. Dec 22: Form

President Chun Doo-hwan, iail for allegedly mastermine ing a 1979 coup, will also face corruption charges for amassing a slush fund of millions of dollars, a prosecutor said Friday, reports AP. Senior prosecutor Kim

Sung-ho said the sum could

match the amount stashed away by Chun's successo Roh Tae-woo, who is on trik for taking bribes and amas ing dirs 650 million during his 1988-93 term. His (Chun's) secret fund

was a bit less than that b Roh's, but when inflation factors are considered, the amount may be larger than that of Roh in terms of value," Kim told reporters.