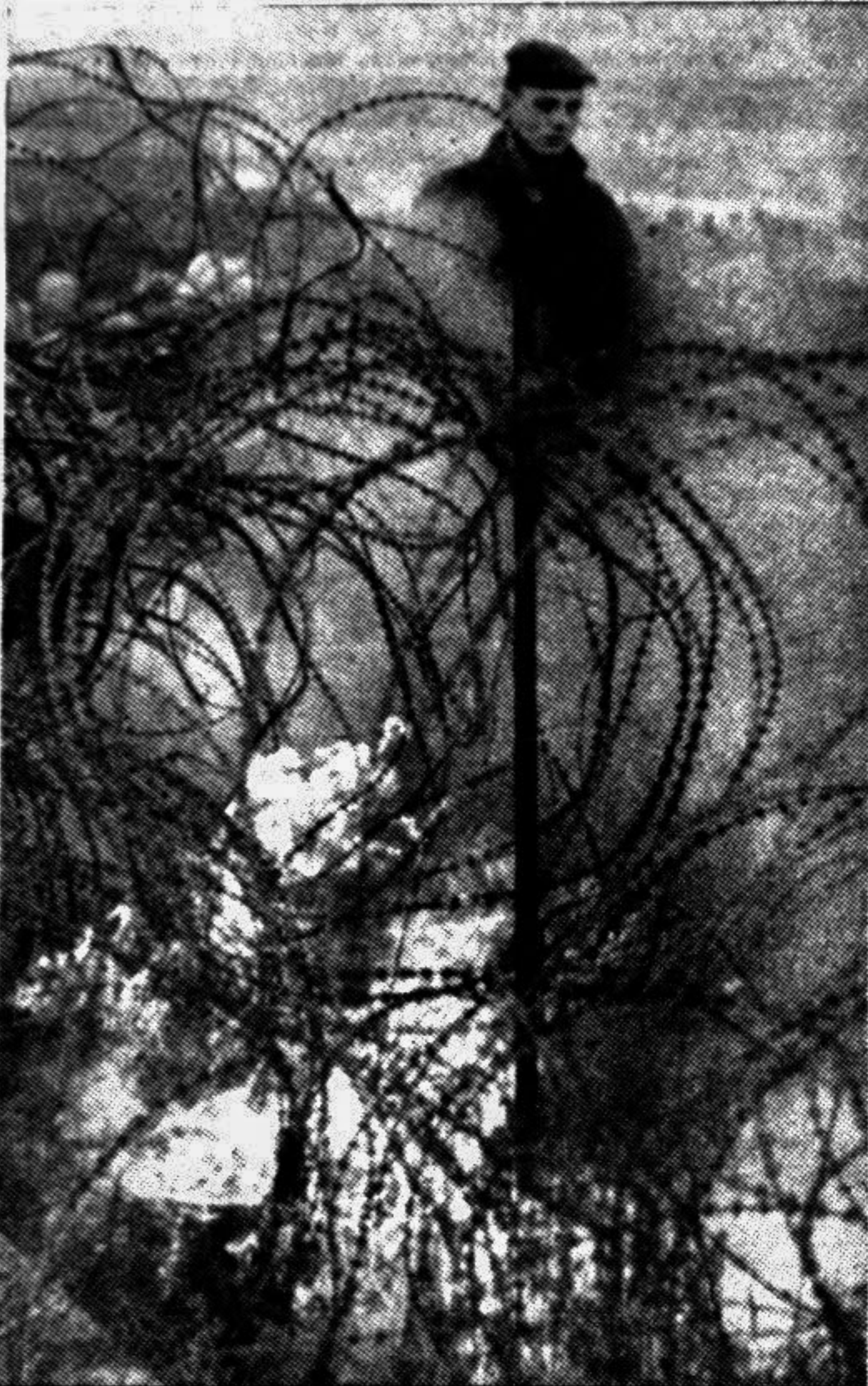


BRIEFLY



A French IFOR soldier walks past a barbed wire outside his base in Sarajevo on Tuesday as a fire cleans up garbage stuck in the wire. Bosnian government and Bosnian Serb soldiers in the Bosnian capital must withdraw by next week behind a one kilometre line of separation in Sarajevo. — AFP/UNB photo

US N-sub in South Korea: A US nuclear-powered submarine arrived in South Korea yesterday demonstrating continued strong ties at a time of increasing concern over North Korea. A South Korean Defence Ministry spokesman said, Reuter says from Seoul. The submarine of the US seventh fleet is equipped with missiles capable of hitting targets inland as well as weapons to attack vessels, he said.

Dini asks parliament to keep him: Prime Minister Lamberto Dini asked parliament Tuesday to keep him and his caretaker government in office and avoid legislative elections in the next six months while Italy presides the European Union, AFP reports from Rome.

The government awaits the decision of the parliament and hopes the Chamber will avoid a government crisis with no solution, Dini said at the start of a debate on the future of his team of technocrats.

Paula Jones may sue Clinton: A federal appeals court ruled Tuesday that a woman who has charged President Bill Clinton with sexual harassment can sue him while he is still in the White House, AFP reports from Washington.

The president's attorney immediately denounced the decision and vowed to fight the suit by Paula Jones all the way to the supreme court. The three judge panel in Missouri said in overturning a previous ruling that a sitting president is not immune from civil suit for his unofficial acts.

8 PKK men killed in Turkey: Turkish security forces have killed eight separatist Kurdish rebels in two clashes in eastern and southern Turkey, officials said Tuesday, AFP reports from Ankara.

Five rebels from the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) were killed in a clash with government troops Tuesday in the central-eastern province of Sivas, the Anatolia news agency quoted officials from the office of the Sivas governor as saying. Three other PKK members were killed in another clash in the southeastern province of Sirnak Monday the state television TRT-1 quoted local security officials as saying.

Kim pays tribute to Mitterrand: South Korean President Kim Young-sam paid his respects Wednesday to the former French President Francois Mitterrand at the French Embassy in Seoul, AP reports from Seoul.

Kim bowed his head in a moment of silence in front of a table adorned with white funeral flowers set up in the embassy. "Former President Mitterrand was a great politician and a great person," Kim said.

Serb rocket kills 1 in Sarajevo: A rocket propelled grenade killed a woman tram passenger in Sarajevo on Tuesday and Bosnia angrily accused Serb leaders of trying to destroy peace, at least six people were wounded, Reuter reports from Sarajevo.

The grenade launched from a separatist Serb position set off a heavy firefight between the assailants and French peacekeepers, NATO said. Hours later the Serbs denied responsibility for what NATO branded a serious breach of the peace process.

7 militants held in Philippines: Police have arrested seven Muslim extremists who were being trained for bombing missions in the southern Philippines, a senior police officer said Wednesday, AP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines.

Regional police director Orville Gabuna said the suspects were carrying papers identifying them as members of the Abu Sayyaf Group, the most radical of the three main Muslim rebel groups in the south. The identification papers were issued by another rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, which was training the men, to prevent a clash between their followers, Gabuna said.

BBC's Arabic service uncertain: The future of the BBC's Arabic language television service is uncertain because its coverage of the threatened deportation of a Saudi dissident living in London was repeatedly censored by the Saudi-owned satellite station in Rome, The Guardian reported Wednesday, AFP reports from London.

The paper said the blackout of BBC news coverage to the Middle East—which began on Friday and continued over the weekend whenever the Al-Masari case was discussed—is regarded by the BBC as a breach of contract by its partner, Orbit Communications, owned by Saudi Prince Khalid Bin Abdullah, a cousin of King Fahd.

Zaire plane crash toll now 300: Three hundred people died in the plane crash at Ndolo airport near Kinshasa Zairean national radio reported Tuesday citing the office of the city's governor, AFP reports from Kinshasa.

The accident happened Monday when a Russian built Antonov 32 failed to gain height on take off and ploughed into the vast open air Simbaziika market situated at the end of the runway, engulfing it in flames. Aid and medical agencies earlier put the death toll at 260.

35 hurt as bldg collapsed in Spain: A senior citizens centre collapsed Tuesday after an explosion apparently caused by a gas leak, leaving at least 35 people injured, authorities said, AP reports from Madrid.

About sixty people were believed to be inside the one-story, pre-fabricated building in a southern Madrid neighbourhood when it collapsed about 7:30 pm (1830 GMT). Madrid mayor Jose Maria Alvarez del Manzano said investigators thought an underground gas leak from a recently installed natural gas system in the area had caused the accident.

Measured response if India goes for 2nd N-test: Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Jan 10: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said yesterday Pakistan would have a considered and measured response if India detonated its second nuclear device, reports Xinhua.

The prime minister made the remarks here yesterday when she met a group of Japanese journalists, according to the official Associated Press of Pakistan.

She added that but it will be absolutely tragic for the subcontinent with India actually detonating its nuclear test.

It was reported that India, who tested its first nuclear bomb in 1974, is planning the second test in the near future.

She said, 'some people say that perhaps India wants to detonate this test to see whether Pakistan actually had

the knowledge and the capacity to convert its knowledge into a nuclear reality." "By taking a decision, we have to take all these facts into consideration. But I hope time will never come when we will make such a decision."

The prime minister expressed her confidence that the world opinion will convince the Indian leadership that "we are at the brink of 21st century and we should better enter the century with peace."

"I will, therefore, place importance on the stated position of the Indian authorities that there will be no test," said the prime minister.

Asked about the claim opposition leader Nawaz Sharif had in the past the Pakistan past that Pakistan possessed

a nuclear device, Benazir said, "I think this was not the viewpoint of Nawaz Sharif when he was the prime minister."

Pakistan, Benazir said, has never denied that it has certain knowledge. But because they believe in non-proliferation, they have never turned or used this knowledge into creating a nuclear device, said the prime minister.

"It is our policy today to continue on the path of non-proliferation."

"By doing so, we will not make devices, not to detonate devices, not to export any nuclear technology and

we have shown tremendous responsibility and restraint."

Benazir said during her scheduled four-day official visit to discuss the security matters with the Japanese

prime minister, including threat of nuclear proliferation and the threat of missile race.

AFP adds: Armed men attacked a convoy carrying Pakistani opposition leader Nawaz Sharif in southern Sindh province, wounding around 30 people, but Sharif was unhurt, reports said today.

The attack took place on Tuesday while Sharif and members of his Pakistan Muslim League were travelling to a political meeting in Hala, opposition sources said.

The attackers also used iron bars and bamboo poles to damage Sharif's vehicle.

The Muslim League accused Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her husband, Asif Zardari, who is a political figure in the province, of being behind what it termed an "assassination attempt."

Iraq appeals to unblock funds to finance Hajj

BAGHDAD, Jan 10: Iraq appealed Tuesday for part of its funds frozen in the Arab Gulf to be unblocked to finance the annual pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia, the official news agency INA said, reports AFP.

Foreign Minister Mohammad said Al-Sahhaf sent requests to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Arab League and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), the agency said.

"Iraq has the right to secure the unblocking of 50 million dollar from its assets frozen in banks in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), to be able to finance the pilgrimage of Iraqis to Makkah as well as to print copies of the Quran, the Muslim holy book," Sahhaf wrote.

Son, brother of Chun summoned

SEOUL, Jan 10: Seoul prosecutors, digging into allegations that ex-president Chun Doo-hwan skimmed off even more money than his predecessor Roh Tae-woo, today summoned his son and brother for questioning, reports Reuter.

Chun's son Jae-Kuk and his younger brother Kyung-Hwan were told to arrive for questioning tomorrow, the domestic Yonhap news agency said.

The would be questioned over allegations that they helped Chun launder some of his alleged ill-gotten wealth, it said.

"We have questioned about ten of Chun's relatives so far and now we plan to call in his son and brother so we can finish up the investigation," the agency quoted a prosecution official as saying.

Prosecution officials were not available for comment.

BJP's dream won't come true, says Arjun Singh

VIDISHA (MP), Jan 10: Bharatiya Janata Party's dream of coming to power at the centre would never be translated into reality, the working president of the breakaway group of the Congress-I, Arjun Singh said yesterday, reports PTI.

The BJP would not gain anything by the ideological differences in the Congress-I, he told reporters here.

Singh said that his party had not made any move for entering into alliances with other political parties. The working president said unity between his party and the Congress-I can take place only if a serious initiative was made for it. "Till now no serious initiative has been made in this direction", he added.

Singh claimed that by the time the Lok Sabha elections were held his group would appear as the only party with credibility before the people.

Budget talks suspend till Jan 17 Clinton vetoes welfare overhaul bill

WASHINGTON, Jan 10: President Clinton, just as he promised, has vetoed a Republican plan to overhaul the United States' primary welfare programmes and end the federal guarantee of aid to poor, reports AP.

Clinton complained in his veto message that the Republican bill "does too little to move people from welfare to work," but said he was willing to work with Congress on a new version "to enact real, bipartisan reform."

The House and Senate passed the bill the week before Christmas, but by margins less than the two-thirds

majorities needed to override Clinton's veto.

But Clinton waited until two weeks of White House talks with Republicans over ending federal deficits by the year 2002 and simultaneously cutting taxes broke down Tuesday to formally reject the welfare bill.

The sweeping rewrite of the nation's 60-year-old federal welfare system would have replaced federal guarantees to family assistance programmes with grants that could be used by the states to fashion their own welfare plans.

The bill also would have

capped the total amount of federal funding for welfare over the next seven years, with an estimated savings of 58 billion dls.

AFP adds: Budget talks between the Democratic White House and congressional Republican leaders, suspended on Tuesday, will resume on January 17, a White House official said.

Confirming a statement made earlier by President Bill Clinton, his Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, said talks were tentatively scheduled to reconvene next Wednesday, January 17 in the morning.

Benazir, Velayati talk Afghan conflict, investment projects

ISLAMABAD, Jan 10: Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, on a surprise visit to Pakistan to discuss the Afghan conflict and investment projects, met Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto today, officials said, reports Reuter.

There was no immediate word on the outcome of the talks. Velayati, who met Foreign Minister Asif Ahmad Ali after arriving on Tuesday, was also due to meet President Farooq Leghari.

Tehran radio said on Tuesday that Velayati wanted to discuss joint investment projects, including a proposed gas pipeline, as well as Afghanistan.

Iran has been playing an active diplomatic role in Afghanistan, where embattled

President Burhanuddin Rabbani is under pressure from opposition factions to step down.

Tehran has been concerned about the rise of the Taliban Islamic militia that seeks to overthrow Rabbani. Iranian media have accused Pakistan of setting up the militia and Saudi Arabia of funding it. Both countries deny the charges.

Another report says, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati held talks with Pakistani official on the Afghan conflict on Tuesday soon after arriving for a two day visit, Pakistani official said, reports Reuter.

They said Velayati and Pakistani Foreign Minister Asif Ahmad Ali also dis-

cussed bilateral relations and the regional situation.

No details of the talks were immediately available.

Earlier, the state run Tehran Radio said Velayati and Pakistani officials would also review joint investment projects such as a gas pipeline between the two countries.

Tehran has been concerned about the rise of Afghanistan's Taliban Islamic militia that seeks to overthrow President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Iranian media have accused Pakistan of setting up the militia and Saudi Arabia of funding it. Both countries deny the charges.

The taliban accuses Iran of backing Rabbani and said last week that it had rejected a Tehran offer for mediation.



Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao (C) unveils a homemade battle tank for the Indian Army Tuesday amid tight security. Defence experts say the Arjun tank is on par with the best of its kind in the world. — AFP/UNB photo

Rao orders production of India's first indigenous tank

NEW DELHI, Jan 10: Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao ordered production of India's first indigenous built Main Battle Tank (MBT) on Tuesday, indicating that any future war with Pakistan could still be fought along conventional lines despite the alleged nuclear capabilities of the two countries, reports Reuter.

Senior defence officials told Reuters that the state-of-the-art "Arjun," named after a mythical Hindu warrior, and unveiled by Rao at an impressive army ceremony, would eventually compete with western counterparts on the international arms market.

"In modern warfare, sophistication, accuracy, ability—all these count a good deal these days," Rao said, addressing top military officials and defence experts from the tanks cupola.

"We need to have the tank as early as possible, because we cannot afford to be without this tank for too long," Rao said.

Armoured firepower played a crucial role in two of the three wars India and Pakistan have fought since their independence from Britain in 1947. Their last war in 1971 led to the dismemberment of Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh, from eastern flank.

Pakistan, a former member of the now defunct US-led central treaty organisation, has been more accustomed to western defence equipment including the American Patton Tanks it used effectively in its 1965 war with India.

India, the main non-communist ally of the former Soviet Union, had been relying equally heavily on equipment supplied by Moscow, includ-

ing T-72 tanks.

Rao, whose tenure saw the demise of the Soviet Union, said importing badly needed equipment had now become uncertain.

"It is not quite certain that you would go on getting these sophisticated equipments from other countries whenever you want them," he said.

"It is quite possible that when you need it most the taps may be turned off."

Indian Army Chief Shankar Rao Chowdhury echoed similar concerns.

"The Indian army needs a main battle tank," he said. "Models of such tanks available throughout the world, are either prohibitively expensive or will not be made available to us."

Defence officials said the MBT was required by the army to operate in the desert state of Rajasthan and the northern Punjab state, both bordering Pakistan, where it was tested for two years under gruelling conditions.

"It is far, far superior to anything that Pakistan has," said M Natarajan, director of the Arjun project.

India and Pakistan are under western pressure not to turn their theoretical nuclear capabilities into actual weapons.

India has denied recent reports that it plans to explode a nuclear device as second test since 1974.

Defence officials in both countries seek to play down western fears that their dispute over the Himalayan region of Kashmir, where Muslim separatists are fighting Indian rule, could flare up into a nuclear conflict.

Appointment of Primakov as FM Yeltsin signals end of pro-western foreign policy

MOSCOW, Jan 10: President Boris Yeltsin implicitly has signalled the end of a foreign policy judged too pro-western by conservatives, by appointing a Soviet-era apparatchik as foreign minister just six months before crucial presidential elections, reports AFP.

Yeltsin named Yevgeny Primakov, a veteran spy chief on Tuesday, to succeed Andrei Kozyrev who quit last week after five years in office.

For western leaders, Kozyrev personified a new policy of cooperation with the west but for that very reason he was disliked by the communists and Russian ultra-nationalists.

Primakov on the other hand is the "bete noire" of the Americans, according to one diplomat, because of his style and attitudes reminiscent of the Soviet-era.

"President Yeltsin held a whole series of consultations before taking a decision and he appointed Primakov at the suggestion of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin," said Yeltsin's spokesman Sergie Medvedev.

By replacing the flamboyant Kozyrev with the dour 66-year-old Primakov, Yeltsin has signalled his acknowledgement of the outcome of recent legislative polls won by the communists and the nationalists.

Off the Record

She prefers twins to politics

WEST MEMPHIS, Arkansas: Republican Blanche Lambert Lincoln, pregnant with twins, said Tuesday she won't seek re-election because juggling the demands of two babies and her congressional job would be too difficult, reports AP.

The babies are due in early July. Had she been expecting only one child, the Democrat said, she would have sought a third term.

"I envisioned boarding a plane twice a week with an infant, a diaper bag and briefcase," Mrs. Lincoln said. "But when we learned we were having twins, we quickly realised that we are presented with an unusual situation. This particular job isn't very family-friendly."

Her husband, Dr. Stephen Reece Lincoln, is a fertility specialist practicing in Memphis.

Mrs. Lincoln, 35, said she might consider returning to public life when the children are older.

Right dialling!

SAN FRANCISCO: A prisoner who escaped from a California jail was caught by police after he dialled emergency number 911 by mistake, officials said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Tonga national Malu Mafua, 27, escaped from a San Mateo county facility last Friday but was caught one day later when he dialed 911 instead of 411 from a pay phone, drawing officers to the scene.

A call to 911 alerts police to an emergency. Officers responding to the call knew something was wary when they saw Mafua wearing a shirt that read "property of the San Mateo County Jail."

Officials said he escaped after learning the immigration and naturalisation service planned to deport him to Tonga.

Mafua, who was serving a six-month sentence for assault, was arraigned on Tuesday on a felony escape charge.

Woman in coma to give birth!

ROCHESTER, New York: A woman comatose since a 1985 car crash was raped at a nursing home and is five months pregnant, her family's lawyer said Tuesday. The family wants her to give birth, a source said, reports AP.

The 29-year-old woman, a quadriplegic whose identity was withheld, occasionally opens her eyes and make guttural sounds but does not speak, said the lawyer, John Parrinello.

As to whether she is conscious of her surroundings, I don't know if anybody will ever reach that conclusion," Parrinello said.

She was moved last February to Westfall Healthcare Center, which houses about 65 people with severe physical injuries or behavioral problems as well as about 80 elderly.

Observers slam Israel for travel bans on candidates

JERUSALEM, Jan 10: The head of an international group monitoring the January 20 Palestinian elections criticised Israel on Tuesday for imposing travel restrictions on Palestinian candidates, reports AP.

Carl Lidbom, former justice minister of Sweden and head of 300 European Union observers, said Israeli measures hindered campaign workers and politicians from moving from one area to another, especially from the West Bank to Jerusalem.

"The holding of these elections has been agreed at the highest political level, so the means to implement that political decision in good faith must be found," Lidbom told reporters. He said it was not acceptable "to use security regulations as a pretext for hindering the election campaign."

Lidbom has also been critical of the Palestinian

Authority's organisation of the vote, and on Tuesday urged it to refrain from intimidating journalists and allow better media access to opposition candidates.

The Jerusalem district is made up of about 40 Arab villages and neighbourhoods in the city's eastern sector and in surrounding areas of the West Bank.

West Bank residents need special permits to travel to Jerusalem, and most of those permits have been suspended temporarily because of an Israeli security alert. Islamic militants have blamed Israel and vowed revenge for last week's assassination of Yehiya Ayyash, the alleged mastermind of suicide bombings that claimed 55 victims.

Shlomo Dror, spokesman for Israel's outgoing West Bank military government, said candidates from outside Jerusalem did not need to reach the city.

Bosnian govt urges NATO to punish Serb rebels

SARAJEVO, Jan 10: Bosnian government officials urged NATO troops to punish Serb rebels after a grenade slammed into a Sarajevo streetcar, killing one man and wounding at least 19 others, reports AP.

Tuesday's attack was the worst cease-fire violation since an Oct 12 truce by Bosnia's warring factions, which signed a US-brokered peace agreement Dec 14.

Meanwhile, the White House announced Tuesday that President Clinton would travel to Bosnia this weekend to visit American peacekeeping troops who are part of the 60,000-member NATO-led force enforcing the peace accord.

The attack may have been designed to test the resolve of troops that replaced UN forces in the Bosnian capital three weeks ago. It also marked modest celebrations marking the end of one of the few UN successes of the Bosnian war—the longest aid airlift in history.

Maj Peter Bulloch, a spokesman for the NATO-led Implementation Force, or IFOR, confirmed that the lethal grenade was fired from a Serb-held position above the central city.

"The firing came from within Grbavica," a Serb-held suburb, Bulloch said.

The Bosnian Serb news agency, SRNA, denied Serbs were to blame. It cited sources close to rebel leader Radovan Karadzic.

American soldiers travelling in a passing vehicle at the time escaped injury by sheer luck. Their four-seat unarmored Humvee was hit by a fragment of the grenade as it exploded, NATO spokesman Maj Simon Haselock said late Tuesday.

The 12-inch (30-centimetre) section, including the grenade's entire tail fin, embedded itself in the left-hand front splash guard of the vehicle, Haselock said. The vehicle was returned to base. He provided no other details.