

BRIEFLY

King Fahd improving: Crown Prince Abdullah told advisers Saturday that the health of his half-brother, King Fahd, is improving. AP reports from Riyadh. Information about the monarch's condition has been sketchy since he was hospitalised for a week in early November. US officials said he suffered a stroke and a team of American specialists was flown to Riyadh to treat him.

7 militants killed in Algiers: Algerian security forces killed five armed Islamic fundamentalists in a southwestern suburb in Algiers, the daily *Liberte* said yesterday. AFP reports from Algiers. It said the five had sought refuge in a flat overnight Friday in Diar El-Khedma where they were found by security forces.

40 Egyptians jailed in Israel: Forty Egyptians including convicted spy are being held in Israeli jails, the government weekly *Rose Al-Yussef* reported yesterday. AFP says from Cairo. Most of the prisoners are Bedouin tribesmen who crossed the border to buy arms or drugs which are cheaper in Israel, the paper said quoting Egyptian Foreign Ministry sources.

Attack on newsmen in Algeria: The editor-in-chief of an Algerian newspaper was wounded and an employee was fatally injured in a shooting Saturday near the paper's office in Algiers, another newspaper said. AFP reports from Algiers. Noureddine Guittoune, head of the newspaper *L'Independant*, and an archivist were rushed to hospital after the attack. The daily *Liberte* said in its edition due out Sunday.

Colombian prison director killed: Gunmen killed the director of a maximum-security prison late on Saturday near Colombia's southwest city of Cali, headquarters of the powerful Cali drug cartel, the *Caracol Radio Network* reported. Reuter says from Bogota. It said Marta Elena Sanchez, a lawyer who ran the Palmira Prison on the outskirts of Cali, was gunned down while driving in her car by four unidentified assassins.

50pc against Bosnia mission in US: Half of all Americans still disapprove the US mission in Bosnia, while 41 per cent support it, according to a CNN-Time magazine poll released Saturday. AFP reports from Washington. The poll figures, revealed just as President Bill Clinton pays a visit to US troops in the Balkans, show a slight rise in the number of those approving of the mission. Some 57 per cent were against, and 36 supported the mission, in December.

15 feared dead in Ahmadabad mishap: At least 15 persons were feared killed when the bus, in which they were travelling, collided with a truck over a bridge on the river Mahisagar in Kheda district in Ahmadabad, PTI reports from Ahmadabad. Police said that the bus was on its way to Godhra from Modasa when the accident took place. Senior police officials have rushed to the spot, police added.

Christopher ends ME mission: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher left Israel yesterday at the end of a four-day shuttle mission during which Israel and Syria agreed to expand their peace talks, an Israeli official said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem. Christopher said on Saturday he was confident the two sides could reach a peace deal this year after Israel and Syria agreed to send military experts to the talks set to resume on January 24.

Palestinian killed in West Bank: A Palestinian civilian was killed in the West Bank village of Yatta on Saturday during clashes between Palestinian police and unknown Arab gunmen, Palestinian sources said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem. Two police were injured and another civilian wounded during the fighting which followed the arrests of 15 Palestinians, including Yatta's former Mayor Ismail Abu Hmeid.

Forest fire rages in Argentina: A forest fire has destroyed more than 7,000 acres (2,800 hectares) of ancient forests in Andean Patagonia, home to several endangered species of animals, a National Park official said Saturday. AP reports from Bariloche, Argentina. The fire, which began Tuesday in Nahuel Huapi National Park, 1,100 miles (1,800 kilometres) southwest of Buenos Aires, swept a 1,000-year-old forest of lenga, the local species of sequoia. National Parks Administrator Felipe Lariviere told reporters.

Actress Denise Grey dies in Paris: Denise Grey, a theatre and cinema star whose movie career began when she was a teenager in 1913, died Saturday at her home in Paris. She was 99. AP reports from Paris. Grey, who retired from the stage only four years ago, was the dean of French actors. Towards the end of her career in the late 1980s and early 1990s, she embodied the role of the ideal grandmother, and was familiar to several generations of the French.

Equipment for N-reactors leaves for North Korea

SEOUL, Jan 14: The first ship carrying equipment for two nuclear power plants to replace North Korea's suspect nuclear reactor programme left Sunday for the reclusive communist state, maritime officials said, reports AP. The 1,042-ton Chinese freighter *Yanlong 4* left the southern port of Pusan Sunday morning after loading equipment to be used mainly for site surveys in the North for the planned reactors. It was the first Western-made gear to be shipped to the communist North since a 1994 nuclear deal in which Washington promised to build the reactors at an estimated cost of 4.5 billion dollars. The North pledged to freeze and eventually dismantle its current nuclear programme, suspected of harbouring a weapons development agenda. The shipment followed a December agreement in New York on the terms of building the modern light-water reactors, which will produce far less weapons-grade material than North Korea's existing Soviet-designed reactors. The load includes drilling and seismic testing gear and pumps and was expected to arrive in Rajin, a port on North Korea's northeast coast, on Tuesday. It will later be transported by truck to Simpo, a fishing village where the North wants to build the reactors.

US to formally ask Yangon to extradite Khun Sa

BANGKOK, Jan 14: Washington will formally ask Yangon to extradite reputed opium warlord Khun Sa to face drug trafficking charges in the United States, the Nation daily reported today, reports AFP. The request would be made in the form of a sealed diplomatic note to be handed to the Myanmar government in Yangon "in a week or two," the paper quoted an unnamed US official as saying. The official reportedly said referring to a recent agreement between Khun Sa and Myanmar.

Clinton ends ex-Y'slavia trip with call for lasting peace

SARAJEVO, Jan 14: President Bill Clinton ended a whirlwind trip to former Yugoslavia with calls for lasting peace, as tension ran high in some parts of Bosnia despite the presence of a US-led peace force, reports Reuter. Confrontations between Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces, erstwhile allies, continued during Clinton's tour. In Sarajevo, deemed to be dangerous for him to visit, peacekeepers struggled to ease panic among Serbs due to be handed over to enemy rule. "Choose peace, choose the future, open your arms: The United States extends its

Russia extends deadline for Chechens to free hostages

MOSCOW, Jan 14: The deadline for Chechen guerrillas to free all their hostages and surrender their weapons has been extended, the Federal Security Service (FSB) was quoted as saying by ITAR-Tass news agency today, reports AFP. The extension was made to avoid civilian casualties, the FSB said, as the original deadline expired at 10:00 am (0700 GMT) without signs of movement on either side. The FSB could not immediately confirm the report. Earlier, FSB chief Mikhail Barsukov left for Pervomaiskaya, the village in the southern Russian republic of Dagestan where the approximately 100 hostages were spending their sixth day in captivity. Barsukov was quoted by Interfax news agency as saying that security forces were ready for everything, including the use of force to free

the hostages, although the guerrillas' leader has vowed to resist "to the last bullet." Russian news agencies quoted Barsukov as saying that President Boris Yeltsin had taken personal control of the response to the crisis. Early today hundreds of Russian troops and a dozen tanks began moving into positions right outside the villages. Empty buses were also brought up, indicating that there were still hopes the hostages would be released. FSB spokesman Alexander Mikhailov said "an operation" was being prepared, but did not give details. Earlier report says, hundreds of Russian troops and a dozen tanks began moving early today in preparation to free scores of hostages being held by Chechen separatists, Russian security service spokesman Alexander Mikhailov said. Mikhailov, who gave no further details of the operation, was speaking after the Russian forces were seen moving towards the village of Pervomaiskaya in southern Dagestan where the separatists were holding out. The troops, who began moving shortly after 8:00 am (0500 GMT), were accompanied by half-a-dozen empty buses and four ambulances, while two helicopters overflew the village. Russian security chief Mikhail Barsukov on Saturday gave the rebels until 10 am (0700 GMT) to hand over the hostages and their weapons, in return for which he would guarantee their safe conduct back to neighbouring Chechnya. In Moscow on Sunday a security service spokesman told ITAR-Tass news agency the Chechens had not replied to the ultimatum by 7:00 am, and on the contrary had been



A group of Russian APCs moves to the village of Pervomaiskaya in Dagestan, where 250 Chechen fighters are still holding about 150 hostages, on Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

UK religious leaders attack proposed immigration bill

LONDON, Jan 14: Religious leaders on Saturday mounted a strong attack on proposed legislation aimed at curbing immigration which puts severe restrictions on the right of asylum in Britain, reports AFP. The Conservative government intends to cut off the right to social security benefit for asylum-seekers who are appealing against the rejection of their claims, on the grounds that most are deemed to be bogus. It has also drawn up a "white list" of countries, including Bulgaria, Cyprus, India, Ghana, Pakistan and Poland, where it says political persecution does not effectively exist. Saturday's meeting was addressed by leaders of the Anglican, Catholic and Jewish communities, which along with charities have been stockpiling food, blankets and other relief goods to help those deprived of benefit. The Anglican Bishop of Southwark, an area of London heavily populated by immigrants, described the proposed measures as "draconian."

Kuwait urged to buy missiles from Britain

BRITAIN, Jan 14: British Defence Secretary Michael Portillo said on Saturday he urged Kuwait leaders to buy missiles from Britain to equip their recently purchased French-made patrol boats, reports AFP. Portillo told reporters that the Sea Skua missile, produced by British Aerospace, were very effective in sinking Iraqi boats during the 1991 Gulf War. The British defence minister arrived earlier in the day for talks with the country's leaders on improving bilateral cooperation, the official Kuwaiti News Agency KUNA said. Portillo met the Emir, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, the Prime Minister, Sheikh Saad al-Abdallah al-Sabah, and other senior government ministers during his one-day mission. "Those of us who meet

regularly with the black and refugee communities, who will be most affected by all the new proposals, are conscious of their fear and anger," Rt Rev Roy Williamson said. "The appeals process for asylum-seekers will be sharply reduced, many will be homeless and penniless during its operation. There appears to be a serious race element here which cannot be ignored." Rt Rev Patrick d'Onoghue, the Catholic Bishop of Westminster said: "The effect of such a decision will be punitive and will mean the right of appeal is denied to the poorest of this disadvantaged group." The legislation has also come under fire from the local office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. UNHCR spokesman Ray Wilkinson said on Friday, "We are concerned with several aspects of the bill which could have the effect of penalising genuine asylum-seekers as well as illegal asylum-seekers." "We believe some aspects of the bill are focused on restricting access to the asylum process rather than actually helping applicants. This may make it difficult for genuine refugees to enter the process."

Turkey's Welfare Party fails to form coalition

ANKARA, Jan 14: Turkey's election-winning Islamic party again failed to form a coalition government after talks with a centre-right party Saturday, reports AP. Necmettin Erbakan, leader of the Welfare Party, was designated by President Suleyman Demirel on Tuesday to form a government. Welfare won the most Parliament seats in December 24 elections, but its 158 deputies fell well short of a majority in the 550-member Parliament. Erbakan met with Mesut Yilmaz, leader of the centre-right Motherland Party, for 2 1/2 hours Saturday, hoping to join forces with Motherlands 132 deputies. He said the militants had planned to assassinate top-level Palestinian leaders and carry out bombings near schools in Palestinian areas in a bid to undermine the peace process between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority. He said the militants had planned to assassinate top-level Palestinian leaders and carry out bombings near schools in Palestinian areas in a bid to undermine the peace process between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority. He said the militants had planned to assassinate top-level Palestinian leaders and carry out bombings near schools in Palestinian areas in a bid to undermine the peace process between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority.

Tanzania ready to mediate Yemen, Eritrea's dispute

DAR ES SALAAM, Jan 14: Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa Saturday reiterated calls for a peaceful settlement between Yemen and Eritrea over the disputed Red Sea Harnish Islands, reports Xinhua. In his meeting with the Eritrean Ambassador to Tanzania, Beyene Habte, Mkapa said it is the time now for economic development, not armed conflict. The Tanzanian president said his government is prepared to use its influence to mediate a peace agreement. He said the militants had planned to assassinate top-level Palestinian leaders and carry out bombings near schools in Palestinian areas in a bid to undermine the peace process between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority. He said the militants had planned to assassinate top-level Palestinian leaders and carry out bombings near schools in Palestinian areas in a bid to undermine the peace process between Israel and Yasser Arafat's Palestinian authority.

Off the Record

Monkey's frantic bid to journey by bus

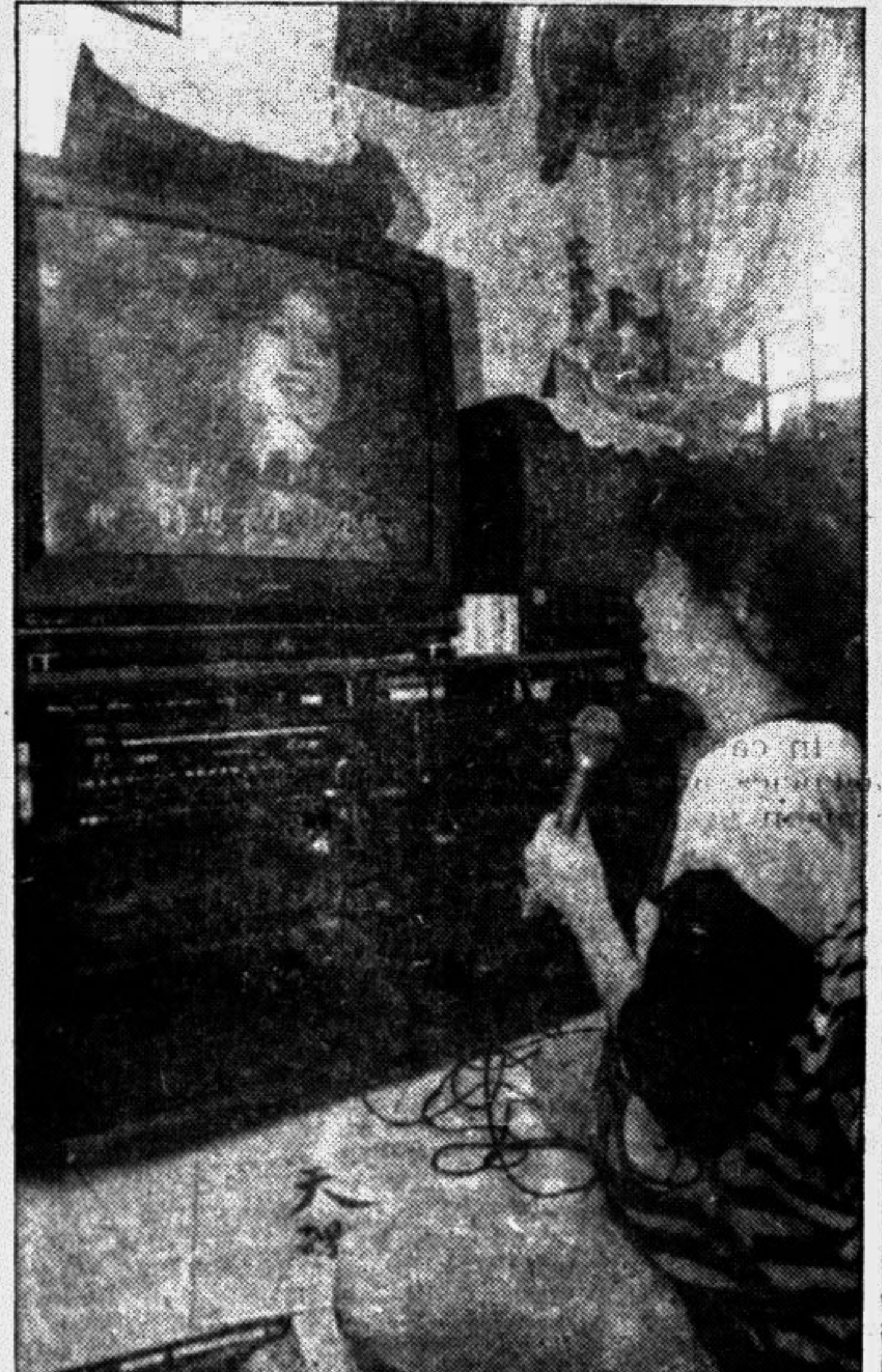
NEW DELHI: A monkey got into a crowded bus in the Indian capital, unfastened a passenger and attacked two more who tried to take a seat occupied by it, a newspaper reported Sunday, reports AFP. The monkey first sat on the head of a man and urinated but the fear-stricken victim and crew made no effort to shoot it away, the *Hindustan Times* said. It then attacked two other passengers who attempted to occupy a seat on which the animal was seated, thinking it was empty. The monkey fled when the driver ordered passengers to alight, the daily said.

Topless Di offered for sale

LONDON: A British tabloid said on Sunday that video film of Princess Diana sunbathing topless was being offered for sale to television stations, reports Reuter. The people newspaper said the two-minute film showed Diana beside a swimming pool in a white bathing costume rolled down to her waist. The video is thought to have been shot in the West Indies, it said. The estranged wife of heir-to-throne Prince Charles went for a post-Christmas break on the Caribbean island of Barbuda. One television executive quoted by the people said Princess Diana "looked terrific. She is not flaunting herself and is obviously unaware that the peeping tom is at work but she does show off a pretty stunning figure." "Diana comes into the picture slipping the costume back over her shoulders," he is quoted as saying.

Reduction in calorie intake extends lifespan

LONDON: Drastic reductions in calories intake could help us to live longer, according to a British expert on ageing, reports Reuter. Scientists were able to extend the lifespan of rodents in a laboratory experiment by as much as 42 per cent by restricting their feeding. "We have been able to take a rat which should live for about three years and see it live for around 4.5," Dr Brian Merry of the Institute of Human Ageing at the University of Liverpool told the Sunday Times. The rats were deprived of as much as 70 per cent of their normal calorie intake, but they were fed a nutritious diet and did not suffer starvation.



A Singapore resident Christina Lee sings along a Karaoke from a laser disc through the television on Sunday. From next month a Singapore studio, the world's first Karaoke channel will beam round-the-clock via satellite into millions of Asian homes, cashing in on the region's exploding TV advertising market. — AFP/UNB photo

India wants to produce, export Prithvi missile

NEW DELHI, Jan 14: India wants to mass-produce and export a controversial short-range missile in defiance of intense US pressure to scrap its missile programme, a newspaper reported today, reports AFP. The surface-to-surface *Prithvi* (Earth) missile, which has undergone several user trials, has been listed by the Defence Ministry as one of the many products designated for export, the *Times of India* said. The *Prithvi*, a battlefield support missile which can be fired with various one-tonne warheads including chemicals, figures in an export catalogue prepared by the Department of Defence Production and Supplies. Minister of State for Defence M Mallikarjun has said in the catalogue that it was published to show "Indian defence products available for export as a step towards projecting the defence export potential of our country." The *Prithvi*, which has a range of 250 kilometres (156 miles), has been designed and built by the Defence Research Development Organisation and produced by the state-run Bharat Dynamics Ltd. The *Times* said other export items listed in the catalogue, titled "Indian defence products," were the surface-to-air missile *Trishul* (Trident) and the anti-tank guided missiles *Milan-2* and *Konkurs*.



US President Bill Clinton (L) chats with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic (R) during a meeting at Tuzla airbase on Saturday. Clinton arrived in Bosnia for the first time to visit US troops deployed in the NATO-led IFOR operation. — AFP/UNB photo

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Mandela urges youth to embrace nat'l unity

JOHANNESBURG, Jan 14: South African President Nelson Mandela yesterday urged Afrikaner youth to shun separatism and embrace national unity, reports Xinhua. Mandela warned a white Afrikaner youth group of the danger of practising racism which he said belonged to the history. "The new generation of Afrikaner young leaders will have to show the genuine interests of Afrikaners cannot be promoted by narrow and exclusive ways," said the president.

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