Sarajevo.

Benazir arrives in Japan: Pakistani
Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto arrived in Japan yesterday for a four-day visit to meet with political and economic

leaders, AFP reports from Tokyo. Benazir is scheduled to have talks with her Japanese counterpart Ryutaro Hashimoto on Thursday, and Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko Friday. She is also to make a speech at a conference Friday sponsored by leading Japanese business groups and Pakistani government agencies to promote Japanese investment in Pakistan. She is scheduled to leave Japan on Saturday.

UK aid worker killed in Bosnia: A British aid worker in Bosnia was killed Tuesday when the truck she was driving in a convoy careered off a road,

Press Association reported, AP reports from London. Julie Jane Morrant from Surrey County in southern England died when the truck carrying fuel and school supplies went out of control and down an embankment, the British national news agency said. Morrant had been driving in a United Nations aid convoy near Podromanija for the International Rescue Committee, the agency said, quoting a statement from the International Red Cross in

Yeltsin meets Kuchma: Russian President Boris Yeltsin met Tuesday with his Ukrainian counterpart, Leonid Kuchma, to discuss improving relations between the two former Soviet republics. AP reports from

Moscow. Both presidents supported strengthening economic ties and signed an agreement to set up a joint economic cooperation commission to be co-chaired by their two prime ministers, news reports said. "This commission, which will seek to invigorate multifaceted cooperation between the two countries, can be compared to similar commissions Russia has set up with the United States and France.' Yeltsin's aid for international affairs Dmitry Ryurikov told the Interfax news agency.

4 killed in Thai chopper crash: Four Thai army officers were killed yesterday when their helicopter hit electricity cables and crashed, police said, Reuter reports from Bangkok.

The helicopter was on an early morning training flight near the town of Lopburi, 150 km (90 miles) north of Bangkok, and apparently hit the cables because of poor visibility police in the town said.

Rains kill 5 in Panama: Intense rains pounding Panama have left five people dead, six missing, and more than 1,000 homeless in January, rescue workers said. AP reports from Panama City.

Workers found the body of a man Tuesday who had been swept away Sunday when the Mamoni River overflowed in Chepo, 35 miles (55 kms) east of Panama City. Four crew members remain missing after their boat disappeared off the southwestern province of Los Santos. Six of Panama's nine provinces have been heavily hit by the rains.

Kobe victims mourn on anniversary: Earthquake victims lit candles and offered silent prayers before dawn Wednesday at the precise moment when a devastating quake struck one year ago. AP reports from

Residents of temporary housing in the western port city of Kobe held a solemn memorial service with a moment of silence at 5:46 am, marking the time when the 7.2 magnitude quake struck, killing more than 6,000 people.

About 1,500 people attended an overnight memorial concert, and about monks chanted prayers. Other commemorations scheduled included eulogies by those who had lost family members, speeches by several prominent politicians, offers of flowers and the reading aloud of child's essay on the quake.

2 Israeli troops killed in Hebron: Palestinian gunmen shot dead two Israeli soldiers near the West Bank town of Hebron, the army said today. Reuter

reports from Jerusalem. Pending notification of kin, military censors withheld for hours news that the army doctor and his driver were killed on Tuesday, allowing the media to say only that two Israelis were shot in an ambush. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the roadside attack, but the militant Hamas group had vowed to avenge the death by exploding cellular phone in Gaza 11 days ago of Palestinian bomb-maker Yehya Ayyash.

5 executed in Nigeria: A senior Nigerian police officer and four others were executed by firing squad for armed robbery in Ibadan, western Nigeria, a newspaper reported yesterday. Reuter reports from

Before he was executed on Tuesday, assistant commissioner Aliya Manza begged the Nigeria police for forgiveness, saying "I have dragged your good name in mud," the Ibadan-based Nigerian Tribune reported. The men were convicted of several armed robbery incidents by a tribunal last November.

The United States on Tuesday urged India not to deploy its medium-range Prithvi missile, warning that such a move would "create new ten-

County Jail.

CALCUTTA, Jan 17: The

West Bengal Chief Minister.

Jyoti Basu today predicted

another sweeping win for the

ruling left front in the forth-

coming assembly elections.

saying that party positions!

will remain the same, reports

the same position both in the

assembly and parliamentary

elections," the chief minister

told reporters before em-

planning for Madras to attend

the CPI-M central committee

Basu, however, admitted

that the CPI-M was weak in

two or three lok sabha con-

stituencies, but the opposi-

tion Congress (I) also faced a

problem that have hampered

the formation of a third front.

Basu hoped that all differ-

ences between political par-

ties will be sorted out soon.

Asked to comment on the

Asked whether the differ-

and politburo meeting begin-

ning Wednesday.

similar situation.

"We are going to maintain

sions" between India and Pakistan, reports Reuter. "We think that deployment of this medium range missile would go in the wrong direction and create new tensions, rather than to reduce tensions in what is arguably one of the most dangerous, least-stable areas of the world right now," defence department spokesman

WASHINGTON, Jan 17:

Ken Bacon told reporters. India defence officials said in New Delhi earlier on Tuesday that they would deploy the missile, which has been tested for a distance of 100 miles but can be extended to reach 150 miles (240 km).

"We are working very hard in the Indian subcontinent with both Pakistan and India to try to reduce tensions and to slow an arms build-up there," Bacon said. "So we would urge restraint on all sides, including India.

Washington urges Delhi not

to deploy Prithvi missile

In New Delhi, defence officials said the missile would be displayed at the republic day army parade on January 26, along with the Indianbuilt battle tank Arjun, which was officially unveiled by Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao last week.

The Prithvi is capable of delivering nuclear warheads. India, which previously tested a nuclear weapon, has denied recent reports that it might be preparing to conduct a new nuclear test.

The United States has warned that such a test would be destabilising for the

Suspected drug lord Juan Garcia Abrego (2nd R) is taken by FBI agents away from the

FBI office in Houston, Texas, after being processed after his arrival from Mexico City late

Monday. Abrego was taken to a federal detention facility in Hosuton then held at Harris

Jyoti Basu predicts another

sweeping win for left front

ences between Andhra Pra-

desh Chief Minister. Chan-

drababu Naidu and N T Rama

Rao will prevent them from

joining the third front, he

said "there is some problem.

Security around

Srinagar TV centre

tightened

SRINAGAR, Jan 17: Secu-

rity was beefed up around

state-run media installations

in this Kashmir summer cap-

ital Tuesday after Muslim

militants staged an abortive

did to blow up a television

relay centre, police said,

They said alert security

forces detected a bomb con-

cealed in a musical instru-

ment which was left outside

the government-run Door-

darshan television network's

reports AFP.

relay centre.

region and for nuclear arms control.

India has successfully tested the Prithvi missile 14 times so far. A 15th test launch scheduled for Tuesday was postponed for unexplained reasons.

"They were supposed to have the 15th test today of the Prithvi missile. I understand, however, that the test was cancelled for technical reasons," Bacon said.

Rao postponed a test launch of the Prithvi shortly before he visited the United States in May 1994, saying it could have sent the wrong signals to Washington.

But Rao has been under pressure from the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to take a stronger stand on defence ahead of general elections expected in

— AFP/UNB photo

I had a talk with them some

time back. It is time that ev-

pelled Congress (I) leader.

Arjun Sing joining the third

front, Basu said "such possi-

bilities are always there in

the airdropping of arms in

Purulia, the chief minister

said the centre though a par-

ticular agency had alerted the

Bihar government about such

a development, but it was

very surprising that the West

Bengal government was not

secretary had written a letter

to the union home secretary

in this regard, but no reply

cent statement by a Congress

(I) leader that the party will

secure 25 seats in the lok

sabha elections, Basu quipped

"I think them for leaving a

Commenting on the re-

He said the state chief

informed at all.

had come so far.

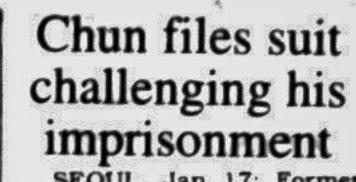
few seats for us.

Replying to a question on

politics."

On the possibility of ex-

erything is sorted out now."



SEOUL, Jan 17: Former President Chun Doo-Hwan today filed a suit challenging the law under which he was jailed on December 3, reports said, says AFP.

Yonhap news agency said Chun's lawyers filed the suit in the Seoul district criminal court, contending a law passed with the blessing of incumbent president Rim Young -Sam, was unconstitu-

In the suit, he said the constitution disallowed legis-

lation of retroactive laws. The special law under which Chun, 64, was jailed was passed by the national assembly shortly after his ar rest, paving the way for his indictment on mutiny char-

It abolished the statute of limitations on serious national crimes such as mutiny and treason.

Chun, who is hospitalised after staging a 27-day hunger strike to protest at his arrest, has been openly defiant and angry over the legal action against him, which has included a separate indictment on massive corruption charges.

Australia to ease visa procedures

CANBERRA, Jan 17: Australia, a country with some of the world's toughest controls on entry by foreigners, is developing a sophisticated system to issue visas almost instantly, immigration minister Nick Bolis said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Under the new system. which is expected to be trialled within six months. travel agents and airlines around the world will be able to get immigration clearance for tourists and business visitors at the same time as the traveller purchases their airline ticket," Bolkus said in a statement.

Foreign business people and governments frequently complain about Australia's lengthy and complicated visa procedures.

Under the new electronic travel authority (ETA) system, applications will be processed on the spot by computer.

Arrest warrants for 5 Rok ex-army generals sought

SEOUL, Jan 17: Prosecu-tors today south arrest warrants for five retired military generals charged with treason and mutiny in connection with a 1979 coup and the 1980 Kwangju massacre, the prosecutor's office said, reports AFP.

The five were accused of playing a key role in assisting ailed ex-president Chun Doo-Hwan in the coup, and in the massacre of pro-democracy protestors in Kwangju.

The warrants were the first sought in connection with the 1980 massacre in which some 200 died and 1,000 were wounded by official count when troops put down a civilian uprising.

Three of the five former junta, members are retired fourstar generals - Choi Sae-Chang. Yoo Hak-Seung. Hwang Yung-Si. The other two are retired one-star generals and Chun confidants Chang Sae-Dong and Lee Hak-Bong.

After Chun became president in 1980, the five wielded enormous power as lawmakers in the Korean Central Intelligence Agency and the Defence Ministry.

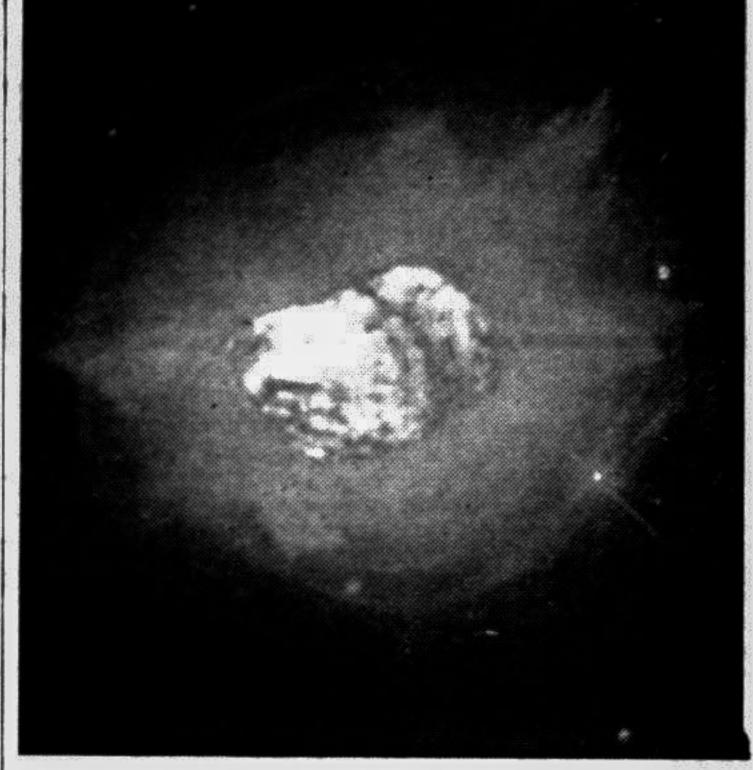
Duma opens its session

MOSCOW, Jan 17: Russia's newly elected parliament held its first session Tuesday with angry demonstrations and sharp criticism of President Boris Yeltsin for his handling of the hostage crisis in southern Russia, reports

But opinion was divided among legislators in the new State Duma, parliament's lower house, on whether to hold a no-confidence vote in Yeltsin's government.

The liberal Yabloko party. led by economist Grigory Yavlinsky, proposed such a vote for the Cabinet's "inability to lead the country.

"Yeltsin and "Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin are dangerous for the public both in their actions and their inactivity," Yabloko said in a statement Tuesday.



This photo taken by the NASA's Hubble space telescope and released on Tuesday shows nebula NGC 7027 detailing the process by which a star like the Sun dies. The nebula is a record of the star's final death throes. When a star like the Sun nears the end of its life, it expands to more than 50 times its original diameter, becoming a red giant star. Then its outer layers are ejected into space, exposing the small, extremely hot core of the star, which cools off to become a white dwarf. Stars like the Sun can live for up to 10 billion years before becoming a red giant. The actual ejection process takes only a few thousand years. AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Queen aware of Fergie's debt

LONDON: The Duchess of York, Queen Elizabeth II's daughter-in-law, has a bank overdraft of more than million pounds (1.5 million dollars), according to reports in the tabloid press here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The mass-circulation Sun claimed the queen is aware of "Fergie's" debt but is not willing to bail her out. The Duchess's lavish

spending - last year she had outgoings of more than double her income - has

caused concern for some time and has now led to the departure of two of her senior aides. The Sun said. But the former Sarah Ferguson — who separated from Prince Andrew four years ago — told the rightwing Daily Express that her finances are no one else's business.

"The truth is I am making financial cutbacks, huge ones," she said. "But the state of my financial acc unts is not anybody else's business. I don't know other people's financial accounts, why should they know mine?" Officials at the queen's bankers, coutts, are said to be getting very nervous" over the Duchess's account, according to The Sun.

He took the idea from James Bond

CANBERRA: An Australian teenager accidentally has burned down his family's home while trying to kill a spider with an insect spray which he had turned into a makeshift

flamethrower, reports AFP. The boy said he got the idea from a James Bond movie. Don Ramirez, 16, said he held a cigarette lighter to a can of insect spray after a few conventional bursts of spray

failed to kill a large spider in the house Tuesday. This ignited the flammable hydrocarbon propellant in

the spray can. The resulting fire set the house alight and burned a car parked outside. Ramirez's father, who tried to fight the fire with a garden house, was treated for burns.

Ramirez told the Canberra Times newspaper he had remembered the flamethrower technique from an old Bond movie.

Knesset formally okays West Bank accord

JERUSALEM, Jan 17: Israel's parliament formally approved the Israel-PLO accord extending autonomy in the West Bank and paving the way for Palestinian elections this weekend, reports AP.

Voting just before midnight Tuesday after 24 hours of debate, lawmakers passed legislation approving the accord by a 48-44 vote with one abstention.

The legislation, which recognises the jurisdiction of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority in parts of the West Bank and allows the Palestinians to hold their elections, comes just four days before Saturday's planned

About 1 million Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem have registered to vote for a leader and an 88-member national council to run the self-rule

The election is in line with the Israel-PLO accord signed in Washington in

September. The accord extended the Gaza-Jericho autonomy created in 1994 to most Arab-populated parts of the West Bank. Over the past two months Israeli troops have pulled out of six West Bank towns and hundreds of villages.

Authorities fear that Palestinian or Jewish extremists would try to disrupt the January 20 election.

Even as legislators were debating, two people were wounded when shots were fired at Israeli soldiers at a West Bank intersection north of Hebron, Israel radio said Tuesday night. Their condition was unknown.

Hebron is the only major Palestinian-populated area of the West Bank still under Israeli control. Israeli troops are to pull out of Hebron in March.

In Jerusalem, Mayor Ehud Olmert said he objected to the decision to allow the city's Arab residents to participate.

WASHINGTON, Jan 17: China is asking the United States to recall a military attache whom Chinese authori-

recall military attaches

ties detained - and later released — in southern China last week, the state department said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Spokesman Nicholas Burns said the Chinese government had requested that Assistant Air Force Attachee Bradley Gerdes be recalled by January 19. Burns said Gerdes was

travelling "on official business" and with the permission of the Chinese government when he was detained on January 11 in Saizi in Guangdong province. Gerdes was interrogated

for 19 hours but was released the following day and returned to Beijing on January

Ministry the same day "and southern China.

informed that the Chinese government was requesting (Gerdes') recall," Bruns said.

Hallford protested the Chinese action, saying it violated the Vienna convention prohibiting the arrest or detention of diplomats.

asked Japan to recall one of its military attaches, a day after taking similar action against a US military attacher, Kyodo news agency reported today. Quoting a diplomatic

source in Beijing, Kyodo said: "Chinese authorities want him (the attache) to return home to Japan."

Kyodo identified the attache as Kenji Maetani.

It said he was detained on January 11 along with US assistant air force attache Lieutenant-Colonel Bradley The US Charge D'Affaires Gerdes while the pair were in Beijing. Scott Hallford, was travelling together in a taxi in summoned to the Foreign Guangdong province in



UN High Commissioner for Refugees Sadako Ogata (C) is flanked by Carl Bildt (L) the Vice Chairman of the Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, and Daniel Spiegel, (R) the US Ambassador to the UN at the start of the International Meeting on Humanitarian Aid for refugees in the former Yugoslavia on Tuesday. AFP/UNB photo

Former Italian PM faces trial

MILAN. Italy, Jan 17: In the sharpest challenge yet to his political comeback, expremier Silvio Berlusconi faces trial Wednesday on charges of bribing tax inspectors reviewing the books of his media empire, reports

Berlusconi's courtroom appearance comes two days before his scheduled meeting with Italy's president.

Doing what he does best, Berlusconi on Tuesday made a jaunty television appearance and launched a sharp attack against the Milan prosecutors office, accusing them of a political vendetta. The office has led more than three years of corruption probes that brought down Italy's old political order.

Hamas urges Palestinians to boycott elections JENIN, West Bank, Jan candidate — Yehiya Ayyash." Jamal Khalil, a Hamas leader, told thousands of cheering

17: Leaders of the Muslim militant group Hamas said Tuesday they would consider their efforts successful if voter turnout in this weekend's Palestinian election falls below 50 per cent, reports AP.

The group, Yasser Arafat's chief political rival, has urged Palestinians to boycott the election. The group has harnessed the widespread anger at Israel over the assassination of Hamas bombmaker Yehiya Ayyash to draw tens of thousands of Palestinians to rallies designed to show strength before Saturday's

"Hamas is telling you to boycott the elections Hamas is running only one

Palestinians at an Ayyash memorial rally in this PLOruled town Wednesday.

The crowd chanted "God is great" and "Izzedine, Izzedine," in praise of Hamas' armed wing, Izzedine al Qassem. Some participants burned an Israeli flag.

The open calls for a boycott marked a hardening of Hamas' positions after the January 5 assassination of Ayyash, known as "The Engineer," who died when a booby-trapped cellular phone exploded near his car. The killing has been widely attributed to Israel. The assassination undercut an agreement Arafat had worked out with Hamas under which

the group, while not fielding candidates, had pledged not to urge voters to stay away.

Voter turnout will be the main measure of support for Arafat, since all factions opposed to the Israel-PLO peace agreement are not competing in the elections.

A large turnout will be considered an endorsement of Arafat's peacemaking with "We hope this is one mea-

sure by which the support for the peace process will become more popular. Everyone will feel that now this agreement gets support from the population," said Yoel Zinger, an attorney in the Israeli Foreign Ministry. He helped draft the autonomy agreements.

Jamal Mansour, a senior Hamas leader from the West Bank city of Nablus, said Tuesday he expected a low turnout because of what he said was widespread dislike of the autonomy agreement.

"If fewer than half the voters take part, it means the elections are failure," Mansour said at the rally. Slightly more than 1 million people registered to vote.

Other Hamas leaders were more cautious, saying strong attendance at Ayyash memorial railies was not a guarantee that the boycott would be widely observed. "The masses can change their opinions. said Sheikh Jamil Hamami, a

Hamas leader in Jerusalem. Some of those participating in Tuesday's rally said

they were not yet sure if they would vote.

"I am hesitant. The Palestinian Authority is telling us the elections are good for establishing a future state," said Ayman Abu Sitten, 29. "These people (Hamas) are telling us that the struggle must continue."

In other election-related developments Tuesday: - In Jerusalem, the city's

top PLO official, Faisal Husseini, said he expected Jewish extremists to try to disrupt voting in the disputed city. The city's police chief said he would deploy thousands of extra officers.

- US Vice President Al Gore stressed in a meeting with Arafat on Tuesday that the PLO must keep its promise to amend its char-

ter and revoke calls for the destruction of Israel. Under the terms of the latest Israel-PLO autonomy agreement, the PLO charter must be amended within two months of the Palestinian elections.

- The Central Election Commission said the ballots would be counted by hand. The panel said results on the presidential race between Arafat and his challenger. Samiha Khalil, were expected by Saturday evening, and the composition of the 88-seat autonomy would be known

by early Sunday. -Among hundreds of foreign observers will be a 40member delegation led by former US President Jimmy Carter and former Polish Prime Minister Hanna Su-

Separate jails for women prisoners in Pakistan ISLAMABAD, Jan 17: The

Pakistan government has bowed to international pressure and decided to provide separate jails for women prisoners, it was reported here today, says AFP.

At present women are housed in separate blocks in the same prisons as men. The decision has been

taken following continued in-

ternational pressure and domestic complaints about the "plight" of Pakistani women in jails, a local daily The News said. There have been genuine

complaints of women prisoners being molested and facing other problems," it said quoting interior secretary Ilyas Mohsin.