

International



A windswept Princess Diana leaves her London health club after her morning workout on Wednesday, the day after a second member of her household staff resigned. Her chauffeur Steve Davis resigned on Wednesday, joining her private secretary Patrick Jephson and secretary Nicky Cockell. — AFP/UNB photo

US House okays new version of defence authorisation bill

WASHINGTON, Jan 25: Republicans in the House of Representatives passed a new version of the defence authorisation bill on Wednesday after removing a missile-defence provision and other proposals opposed by the Clinton administration, reports AP.

The White House, while encouraged by Republican concessions, was bothered that the bill retained a provision requiring discharge of service members with the AIDS-causing HIV virus. And a new obstacle arose in the Senate, where Democrats threatened to hold up the bill until Republican leaders promise to schedule a vote to ratify the START II nuclear arms-reduction treaty.

The House passed the 265-billion dollar measure by a 287-129 vote, and Senate action was expected before the weekend.

Lawmakers got mixed signals from the White House,

despite their agreement to strip out provisions objectionable to President Clinton. Principal among them was a plan to develop a national missile defence system by 2003, to limit the president's power to put troops under UN command and to require Clinton to seek congressional backing for even limited troop deployments.

A senior White House official said removal of "the three main issues that had led to the president's earlier vetoes," was good but other "second-tier issues" such as HIV remain. Clinton will consider the bill carefully when it reaches his desk, the officials said.

The bill adds 7 billion dollars to Clinton's defence budget and requires a 2.8 billion dollar increase over last year's defence bill. It contains a 2.4 per cent military pay raise and funding to expand the B-2 bomber fleet.

Unable to overturn Clinton's December veto Republicans reluctantly pulled the missile defence and UN command language and turned the small deployment measure into a non-binding suggestion.

Partisan Disagreement over missile defence held up completion of a bill that would normally have been passed by last October 1, the beginning of the federal fiscal year.

In vetoing the earlier bill, Clinton said no short-term ballistic missile threat exists against the United States that requires an expensive system by 2003.

Rep. Curt Weldon, chairman of the House National Security research subcommittee, said Republicans will pursue their missile defence goals in separate legislation.

"This is the beginning of what promises to be a war," Weldon said.

Another ex-ROK president to be asked to testify in court

SEOUL, Jan 25: Choi Kyuhah, South Korea's only surviving ex-president not in jail, would be asked to testify against two successors charged with bribery, insurrection and treason, prosecutors said Thursday, reports AP.

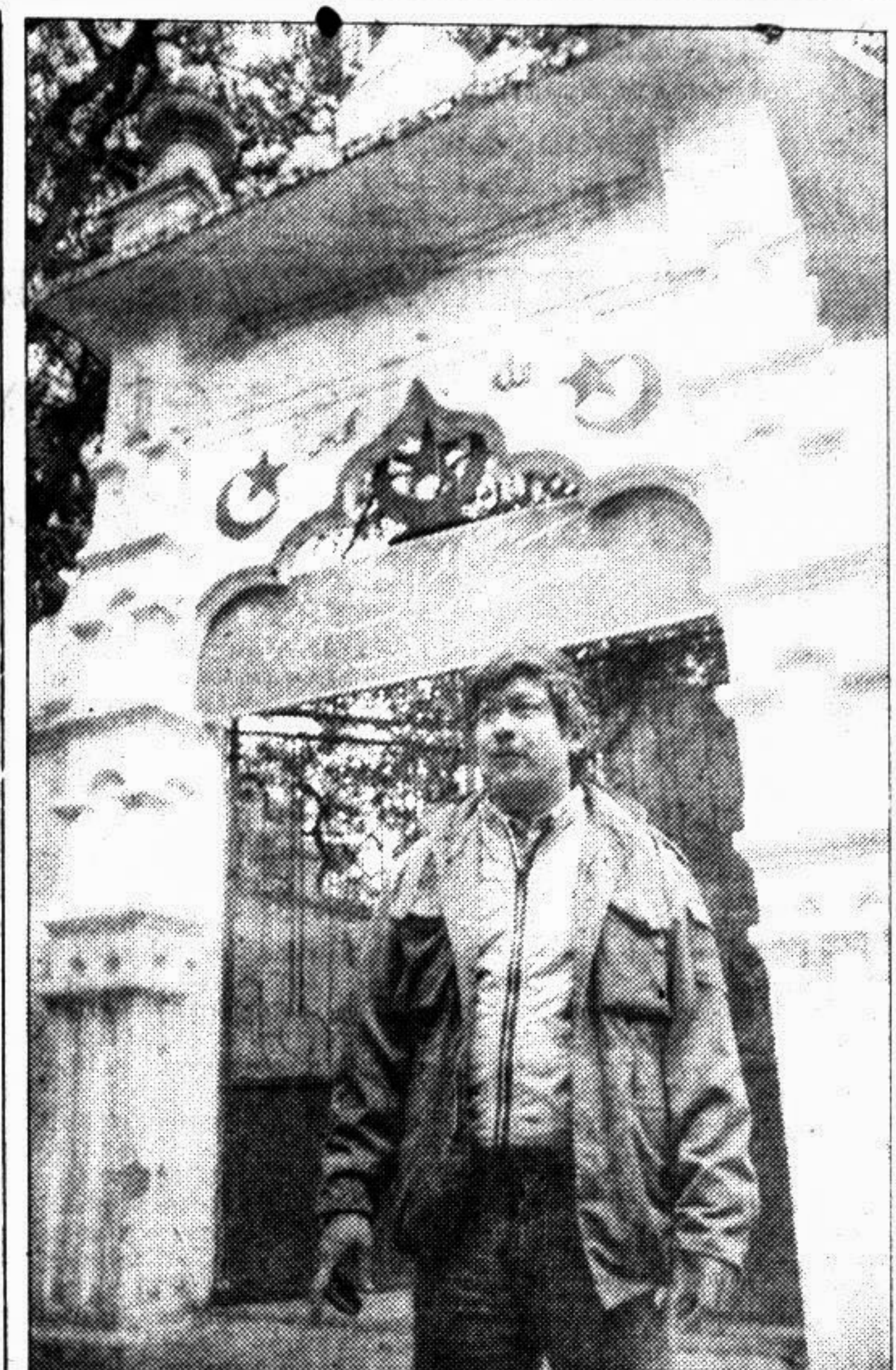
Choi's testimony, if given, would open a new dimension in a complex political drama that reached a new climax this week with the criminal indictment of two former military strongmen — Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo.

Choi, 76, was a caretaker leader for eight months after President Park Chung-hee was assassinated by his security chief in 1979. He was replaced by Chun, who came to power in a coup.

Prosecutors believe Choi's testimony is crucial to incriminating Chun and his longtime friend, Roh Tae-woo, who allegedly forced Choi to step down after the coup.

Choi so far has refused to testify against his two military-backed successors, citing presidential immunity.

But after failing to obtain his voluntary testimony, prosecutors say they now plan to subpoena him.



Doan Hong Cuong stands in front of the Muslim Guiding Light Mosque on Tuesday. Cuong is one of Hanoi's 10 Vietnamese Muslims, all related, who worship at the mosque, which stands out among the hundreds of Buddhist temples in the capital. — AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

**Wu, new Chinese envoy to UN:** Wu Jianmin, a former Foreign Ministry spokesman, has been appointed China's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva. Xinhua news agency said yesterday. AFP reports from Beijing.

Wu, 57, who speaks fluent English and French, left Beijing in 1994 to become ambassador at the Hague, Netherlands. He replaces Jin Yongjian, who has been at Geneva since 1992, said the agency which did not give any reason for the change.

**Iraq, Indonesia sign accord:** Indonesia and Iraq signed in Jakarta Wednesday an agreement on economic, scientific and technical cooperation. Xinhua reports from Jakarta.

The agreement constitutes an umbrella agreement in the framework of enhancing bilateral trade, direct investment and establishing relations and trade partnership between companies of the two countries, according to a press statement issued by the Indonesian Foreign Ministry.

**Clash leaves 5 killed in Yemen:** A clash on Wednesday between police and dock workers in the southern Yemeni port of Nashut killed five people and injured eight others during a dispute over a food shipment, witnesses said. AFP reports from Aden, Yemen.

The disagreement at the port on the Gulf of Aden over the unloading of food from a ship sparked an armed confrontation, witnesses there told AFP by telephone.

**51 newsmen killed in '95:** Fifty-one journalists were accidentally or intentionally killed while on the job in 1995, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported yesterday. AFP reports from New York.

Close to half of the slain journalists last year were in Algeria, the CPJ said. In addition to the 51 documented cases, CPJ said it investigated 10 killings of journalists that may have been linked to the victims' profession.

**Prisoners go on rampage in Greece:** About 90 Albanian prisoners went on a rampage at a Greek prison, burning mattresses and wrecking their cells, police said early yesterday. Reuter reports from Larissa, Greece.

**Taiwanese cabinet resigns**

**China has no military designs on Taiwan: US**

WASHINGTON, Jan 25: China seeks peaceful unification with Taiwan and has not warned the United States it is preparing for a missile attack on the island, the State Department said, reports AP.

While China is conducting military exercises offshore, "we judge that at present there is no imminent threat to the security of Taiwan," department spokesman Nicholas Burns said on Wednesday.

He said the exercises have been stepped up as Taiwan prepares for its first democratic presidential election in March. The United States is watching developments closely, Burns said.

Longstanding US policy is that an attempt by China to use force against Taiwan would be a matter of grave concern to the United States, Burns said, and officials in Beijing are reminded of that regularly.

A account published on Wednesday in The New York Times said China sent unusually explicit warnings to the Clinton administration that it had completed plans for a limited attack on Taiwan.

In a dispatch from Beijing, the report said the most pointed warning was conveyed to Washington three weeks ago by Chas. W Freeman Jr, a former Pentagon and State Department official and a China specialist. He informed Anthony Lake, the US national security adviser, that the People's Liberation Army had completed plans for an attack with conventional missiles, one strike a day for 30 days.

White House officials said Lake meets weekly with private individuals on a variety of foreign policy issues. The officials would neither confirm nor deny that Lake met with Freeman or that Freeman conveyed the message attributed to him by the Times.

2000 political activists held in Bahrain

MANAMA, Bahrain, Jan 25: At least 2,000 people have been arrested since political unrest erupted anew in Bahrain last week, a London-based opposition group claimed on Wednesday.

The politically bankrupt government... has unleashed its hatred against the peaceful Bahraini people," the Bahrain Freedom Movement said in a statement faxed to The Associated Press.

The group has in the past reported reasonably accurately on the violence, which first erupted in December 1994. But some of its figures on casualties and arrests have been exaggerated.

The government said it arrested 174 "elements active in inciting and executing the unrest that flared last Thursday in villages around Manama, capital of this central Gulf island state.

It is the latest wave of political unrest over the last 13 months in Bahrain, a key regional financial centre and base for naval forces of the United States.

After ebbing throughout last summer, the unrest began boiling again several weeks ago.

An Interior Ministry official, who was not identified, said authorities have photos and other evidence linking the suspects to the latest unrest.

On Monday, the government reported cars and buildings had been burned, but listed only eight arrests. They included Sheikh Abdul Ameer al-Jamri, a 57-year-old Muslim Shiite cleric and an outspoken critic of the government.

The protesters are demanding the restoration of an elected parliament suspended in 1975, freedom of speech and the release of hundreds of protesters detained by authorities during last year's violence.

The ruling Al Khalifa family has been looking for an excuse for all these oppressive measures," the London opposition group said. Al-Jamri's son, Mansour, is a prominent member.

"They replayed their broken record and blamed Iran for inciting the popular uprising," the statement said.

Bahrain's army has threatened to intervene, and the government has warned that martial law would be imposed if the trouble does not stop.

Bahrain's partners in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council, a security and political alliance, say they are prepared to help the government deal with the protests.

Tigers attack police post: 3 killed

COLOMBO, Jan 25: Tamil Tiger guerrillas attacked a police post in eastern Sri Lanka today, killing three constables and one civilian by stander, defence sources said, reports AFP.

Gunmen from the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the policemen in the eastern town of Eravur and escaped before reinforcements could be rushed in, the sources said.

"One policeman escaped with injuries," a military official said. "Police had fired back but we don't have details of any Tiger casualties."

The LTTE is leading a guerrilla campaign for a homeland in the island's northern and eastern regions where the Tamil minority of two million is concentrated. More than 50,000 people have died in the 23-year-old struggle.

Blast claims 3 peacekeepers in Sarajevo

Sarajevo promises to cooperate with int'l war crimes tribunal

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Jan 25: Serbia on Wednesday promised better cooperation with the international war crimes tribunal, but remained firm in refusing to extradite potential war criminals, reports AP.

Uros Kljkovic, Serb-led Yugoslavia's justice minister, told reporters that the opening of an office of the tribunal in Belgrade, the Serbian and Yugoslav capital, could be expected soon.

But he reiterated the official Serbian stand that the country's constitution does not allow extradition of Serbs indicted by the tribunal, located in The Hague, Netherlands.

Kljkovic's comments came after a meeting with Antonio Cassese, the head of the tribunal. Cassese refused to speak to reporters during his two-day stay in Belgrade to seek better cooperation from Serbia with the court.

Cassese's visit followed intense US pressure on Serbia's powerful president, Slobodan Milosevic, to help uncover war crimes and mass grave sites in Serb-held parts of Bosnia, which experts fear contain the remains of thousands of victims massacred by Bosnian Serbs.

Serbian authorities have refused to hand over suspected Bosnian Serb war criminals who often visit Belgrade. Chief among them are the Bosnian Serb military commander, Gen Ratko Mladic, and the Bosnian Serb political leader, Radovan Karadzic.

Another report from Sarajevo adds: An explosion rocked a compound housing NATO troops from Italy and Portugal on Wednesday, killing at least three soldiers and wounding seven.

The blast, which was initially ruled accidental, killed one Italian and two Portuguese soldiers, said Italian Lt Col Salvatore Iacono. Six Italians and one soldier from Portugal were injured, he said.

The blast was not a bomb or from any "aggressive action," said British Maj Simon Haselock. NATO sources said early indications suggested some ammunition exploded.

The blast occurred about 8:30 pm (1930 GMT) in a Sarajevo stadium.

Off the Record

**Too young to get married**

KAHRAMANMARAS, Turkey: A court Wednesday refused to release an 18-year-old Turkish waiter arrested after wedding a 13-year-old British girl two weeks ago, reports AP.

The couple, Sarah Cooke of Braintree, Essex, and Musa Komeagac of this southeastern Turkish city, were wed by an Islamic clergyman. Their marriage is not legally recognised.

Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, commenting on the case in a television interview, said the couple was too young to get married.

"In fact, I was young myself, only 17, when I got married. But being a mother myself now I feel they are too young," she told Channel D, a private television channel.

The choice is yours, love her or hate her

BUENOS AIRES: Madonna says Argentines can love her or hate her. Either way, it helps her relate to her latest screen character, former first lady Eva Peron, reports AP.

"Many people see Eva Peron as either a saint or the incarnation of Satan. That means I definitely can identify with her," Madonna said in an interview with Caras magazine.

The casting of Madonna, criticised by some for her flimsy outfits and suggestive stage antics, in the film version of 'Evita' has outraged many Argentines, including the president.

Madonna said she delved into history books to get a true idea of Evita, who died of cancer at the age of 33 in 1952.



6 more killed in Karachi violence

KARACHI, Pakistan, Jan 25: At least six people, including a policeman, were killed in overnight violence in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi, police said today, reports Reuter.

Police said one policeman and five others had been killed in districts central and east, raising the death toll for January to 92.

Karachi is the scene of a long-running conflict between Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government and security forces and the ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement.

Last year, more than 1,950 people died in ethnic, sectarian, and political violence in Karachi.



Izeta Omeragic (L) is in tears as she embraces her sister Sadika Hajruli late Tuesday in Sarajevo. Sadika Hajruli, a Muslim woman in her 50s was released after a determined campaign by the International Committee of the Red Cross after spending nearly four years in a cellar as the prisoner of a Serb family that wanted to trade her for their imprisoned daughter. "I've just come out of hell," said Hajruli. — AFP/UNB photo

France made 'formidable killing machine' during Algerian war

PARIS, Jan 25: France created a "formidable killing machine" during the Algerian war, eliminating hundreds of supporters of Algerian independence, a former senior secret service official has disclosed, reports AFP.

More than 40 years after France's last colonial war, Constantin Melnik who was responsible for secret operations under the then Gaullist prime minister Michel Debre, has lifted the veil on crimes committed on the name of the state but which have never been acknowledged officially.

"Neither the CIA nor the Mossad, nor even the KGB had as well-trained and as large a force capable of committing innumerable murders abroad," Melnik told the Nouvel Observateur magazine in an interview following the publication of a fictional book on the same subject entitled "Death was their mission."

He said the first stage of the elimination process consisted of selecting the target. This was done by himself and two other men, Debre and Jacques Foccard who represented general Charles De Gaulle.

They drew up a list "a sheet of paper with names and crosses in front of the selected targets" and it was Melnik who had the job of handing it on to the boss of the SDCE, the secret service, general Paul Grossin, for execution, he said.

To track down and eliminate the targets, the SDCE was given an action squad composed of 1,000 para-troops. Hundreds of secret missions were carried out involving murders, car bombs and the sinking of ships carrying arms, Melnik said.

Before 1959, one unit had already killed the leader of the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) Ait Acheche in Bonn and an arms dealer called Marcel Lepold in Geneva.

For 1960 alone, he said 135 people were killed as part of "operation homo" which was carried out by two officers and their teams.

On one occasion, an arms trafficker called Georges Puchert was killed in a car-bomb explosion in Frankfurt prompting a protest from the then West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer. One commando also failed in an attempt to kill a German arms dealer.

In Paris, a number of FLN leaders were assassinated, Melnik said. And in an abortive attempt to kill Taieb Boulharouf another FLN militant in Rome, a child was killed looking for a ball under a car which exploded.

Three lawyers working for the FLN, named Oussedik, Abadallah and Ould Aoudia, were put on the hit list but only Ould Aoudia was killed on May 21, 1959. The others escaped.

Melnik also said De Gaulle's representative had put forward the name of lawyer Jacques Verges—the same who in later years was to defend the ex-Nazi Klaus Barbie—for elimination. But the SDCE refused because "it was out of the question to kill French nationals."

In order to shake off suspicion that France was responsible for the killings, the SDCE pretended that they had been claimed by mysterious pro-French groups called "red hand" or "Catena" or by a so-called Algerian anti-independence movement, the Faad.

According to Melnik, a purge took place in the SDCE after Algeria became independent in 1962 because a large number of agents refused to fight against the terrorist OAS secret army organisation opposed to De Gaulle and Algerian independence.

"We must lift he veil on this period," said Melnik who in the preface to his book queries whether "the time

Brotherhood hopes to set up world Islamic state within 30 yrs

CAIRO, Jan 25: The Muslim Brotherhood, Egypt's most important fundamentalist group, hopes to establish a world Islamic state within the next 30 years, its new leader said in an interview published on Wednesday, reports AFP.

"Our goal is to establish an international Islamic state, we hope to achieve this goal within the next 30 years," Mustapha Mashur told the Arab daily Al-Hayat.

"We are working to establish a world Islamic nation before the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Brotherhood," which was established in 1928, Mashur said.

He said such a timeframe was not unrealistic, since "communism fell after only about 70 years and the Zionist enemy has been trying to establish a state for almost a century and still does not feel settled."

Afghans march thru' Kabul streets against siege

ISLAMABAD, Jan 25: People disabled by war marched through the streets of the Afghan capital Kabul on Wednesday to protest against a rebel siege blockading land routes to the city, the official Kabul radio said, reports Reuter.

The broadcast monitored in Islamabad, said the protesters submitted a memorandum to the United Nations office in Kabul at the end of their march.

It called for opening all routes to the capital, a ceasefire and settlement of difference between rival faction by talks.

All major opposition factions have rejected an offer for a ceasefire made by the embattled government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani on Sunday at the start of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

Prices of essential commodities have risen sharply in Kabul because of the blockade of supply routes to the city.

But Kabul radio quoted witnesses as saying on Wednesday that the highway to the eastern town of Jalalabad, closed last week by factional fighting was now open.

Meanwhile the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) said on Wednesday it would send 180,000 tonnes of food aid to war shattered Afghanistan in 1996.

A WFP statement issued in Islamabad said the organisation had already transported 2,700 tonnes of wheat to the besieged Afghan capital Kabul in the first week of January to respond to a winter emergency there. "Currently this food is reaching 207,000 beneficiaries, or one-fifth of the city's population," it said.

In 1995, food aid transported and distributed by WFP reached more than 1.5 million beneficiaries on a monthly basis, reaching nearly four million in the year, the statement said. It did not give the size of 1995 WFP food aid to Afghanistan.

Di appoints new press adviser

LONDON, Jan 25: Britain's Princess Diana appointed a new part-time press adviser on Wednesday to bolster her staff which have been severely depleted by a string of resignations, reports Reuter.

Jane Atkinson, a 48-year-old mother of three, will be handling day-to-day coverage for the estranged wife of heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles.

"I will be working very closely with the princess, her office at St James palace and with the Buckingham Palace press office," Atkinson said in a statement.

The appointment of relative unknown Atkinson, who was recruited through a London public relations agency comes at a crucial time.