

BRIEFLY



Mother dolphin Mancha Africa with her newborn son, Zoe, at the Madrid Zoo aquarium on Tuesday. The zoo hopes that little Zoe (Life), born four days ago, will survive in captivity. His brother died shortly after birth. — AFP/UNB photo

Boukary Adji new PM in Niger: Niger's new military leadership on Tuesday named Boukary Adji, who served as Finance minister under former military leader major-general Seyni Kountche, as the new prime minister. Reuter reports from Niamey. Boukary is currently deputy governor at the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) in Dakar.

UN peacekeeper shot dead in Haiti: A UN police officer from West Africa was shot and killed by Haitian gunmen in a nighttime ambush in suburban Port-au-Prince, the UN mission reported Tuesday. AP reports from Port-Au-Prince. Monday night's attack was the first fatal attack reported on UN peacekeepers in Haiti. Police Sgt. Francois Denis Gbetie, 36, of Benin and another policeman from Benin were attacked as they drove in a UN vehicle through suburban Delmas at about 10:30 PM (0330 GMT Tuesday). UN spokesman Eric Falt said.

Mestiri arrives in Kabul: United Nations special envoy Mahmoud Mestiri arrived in the besieged Afghan capital Kabul on Tuesday for a second visit this month and began talks with government officials, the official Kabul radio said. Reuter reports from Islamabad. The broadcast monitored in Islamabad, said Mestiri met Ahmad Shah Masood, top military commander of embattled President Burhanuddin Rabbani, after arriving from Pakistan. But it gave no details of the talks, held a day after jets of opposition Taliban Islamic militia bombed areas in central Kabul.

Iraqi wins King Faisal Prize: An Iraqi was among the eight winners of Saudi Arabia's King Faisal Prize for services to Islam, research and literature for 1996, organisers announced Tuesday. AFP reports from Riyadh. Akram Dhia Ahmadal-Umari will receive 200,000 dollars for his work in the field of Islamic research, the president of the prize committee, Prince Khaled Al-Faisal, told a press conference.

Ex-Buddhist monk to die in Thailand: A former Buddhist monk was sentenced to death yesterday for murdering a British woman and asked for the sentence to be carried out immediately at the scene of the crime. Reuter reports from Kanchinaburi, Thailand. A provincial court sentenced 21-year-old Yodcharit Srephun to death a day after a brief trial in which the former monk pleaded guilty to the December murder of Johanne Masheder, 23, from Cheshire county.

Quake shakes western Turkey: A moderate earthquake shook this western coastal city Tuesday, but there were no reports of damage or injuries, AP reports from Izmir, Turkey. The epicenter of the quake, which had a preliminary magnitude of 4.5, was 55 kilometers (30 miles) west of the city. Istanbul's Kandilli observatory said, Turkey's Aegean and Mediterranean coastal areas and the entire eastern region sit atop an earthquake-prone belt known as the Anatolian fault.

Ex-AP correspondent Edlin dies: John Edlin, a former Associated Press correspondent who covered Africa for decades and opened The AP's first bureau in Rhodesia, died Tuesday following a stroke, AP reports from Johannesburg. Edlin, 50, was receiving treatment in Johannesburg after collapsing in Dakar, Senegal.

Israel draws record tourism in '95: Israel drew a record 2.21 million tourists last year, a 20 per cent increase over the previous year, the Tourism Ministry said Tuesday. AP reports from Jerusalem. About 1.7 million tourists arrived by air, the ministry said. Peace with neighbouring Jordan, which was achieved in late 1993, caused a 62 per cent increase in the number of tourists entering by land, to 315,000. Twenty per cent of the tourists were Americans. Britain and Germany each accounted for 10 per cent, France for 8 per cent and the former Soviet republics for 5 per cent.

Mass grave unearthed in Austria: Construction workers have unearthed what appears to be a mass grave containing the remains of Holocaust victims at the site of a controversial hydropower project, state television reported Tuesday. AP reports from Vienna. Two trenches filled with skeletons were discovered during earth-moving work for the power plant near Lambach, about 220 kilometres (140 miles) west of Vienna.

Chirac promises to compensate Polynesia

PARIS, Jan 31: French President Jacques Chirac promised 990 million francs (198 million dollars) per year over ten years to French Polynesia Tuesday to compensate for closing nuclear testing sites, reports AP.

Gaston Flosse, president of the French Polynesian government, said the shutdown of the Pacific Test Sites in Mururoa and Fangataufa represents a "serious economic problem" for French Polynesia.

The test centres in both sites will be converted in coming months to "scientific observation sites," said French Defence Minister Charles Millon.

60pc of European working women main financial contributors

LONDON, Jan 31: Nearly 60 per cent of working women in Europe are major financial contributors to their families — an indicator of the growing economic impact of women over the last decade — an opinion poll in five countries suggested Tuesday, reports AP.

A similar poll in the United States last year found that 55 per cent of working women said they contribute half or more of their household's income. But despite the growing evidence that women are becoming the "new providers," men are still perceived as the main breadwinners. According to the polls, only about 15 per cent of men and women in Europe recognised the substantial contribution of women. The European study,

3 ROK gov't MPs arrested over 1979 coup

SEOUL, Jan 31: Three generals-turned government party legislators were put under formal arrest Wednesday for alleged involvement in a coup 16 years ago, reports AP.

Arrest warrants for Chung Ho-yong, Huh Hwa-pyong and Huh Sam-soo were issued by a Seoul district judge shortly after midnight. They were immediately put into jail.

That brought to 11 the total number of former army generals who face legal action for the 1979 coup that brought two of them Chun Doo-hwan and Roh Tae-woo, to power.

The three denied any wrongdoing when they helped organise the coup which they said was unavoidable to prevent social unrest following the assassination of President Park Chung-hee by his intelligence chief.

"I am a scapegoat, and all facts will be known at the court," said Chung, a retired four-star general who served as army chief of staff under the Chun administration.

Cow's milk to prevent AIDS!

NEW YORK, Jan 31: Researchers said on Tuesday they had discovered a compound derived from cow's milk that stops the transmission of the AIDS virus, a finding they hope could be used to develop a cheap means of preventing spread of the disease, reports Reuter.

Scientists at the New York Blood Centre said they found in laboratory experiments that a chemically modified version of a protein found in cow's milk blocks HIV transmission in human cells. The compound could eventually be formulated into a foam or cream applied topically before sex to provide a barrier against infection, they said.

It could be used with condoms for additional protection and also be a source of protection for women which does not require the cooperation of the male partner.

But at least a year of further studies, including tests in monkeys, is needed before initial tests of the compound can be started in humans, said Dr Robert Neurath, head of the Blood Centre's laboratory of biochemical virology who led the study.

African countries to sign accord to make N-free continent

CAIRO, Jan 31: African countries are to sign a treaty here in April to create a nuclear free continent, a senior Egyptian Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday, reports AP.

Sayed Kassim Al-Masri said African foreign ministers would sign the treaty in the first half of April, at a ceremony in Cairo also attended by foreign ministers of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. The treaty was approved at the last summit of the organisation of African Unity in June 1995.

Ramos loses support over anti-terrorism law

MANILA, Jan 31: President Fidel Ramos lost the support Wednesday of a political party and at least 12 labour groups over proposed anti-terrorism measures which critics say could stifle dissent, reports AP.

Sen. Gloria Arroyo said the Laban party, the majority party under former President Corazon Aquino, decided to break with the two-party coalition supporting Ramos because of the government's insistence on the tough measures.

"The anti-terrorism bill is against the principles which were the basis of the coalition," Mrs. Arroyo said. "The bill is against civil liberties."

Some other Laban members, however, said they would wait to make a final decision on a break with Lakas, the other party in the coalition.

Hawala scandal: Rao may face investigation

NEW DELHI, Jan 31: The Indian Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the country's top investigating agency to look into all political leaders who are suspected to have received bribes and kickbacks from illegal dealers in foreign currencies, reports AP.

The court order means that Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao, whose name figures in India's latest corruption scandal, can now be investigated.

Earlier this month police filed charges against seven leading politicians and three ministers in Rao's Cabinet accused of illegal money transactions.

The case has erupted into a major political scandal just as election campaigning heats up. All main parties were involved, which could neutralise its political fallout.

But it could personally affect some of India's most prominent personalities, including those who promised to campaign on an anti-corruption platform.

Two of the politicians charged are Rao's main political foes, Hindu nationalist party Bharatiya Janata's top leader Lal Krishna Advani is making a big push to win the elections. The other politician, Argun Singh, quit Rao's Cabinet and party after accusing him of inefficiency and corruption.

Apart from Advani, the Central Bureau of Investigation also filed charges against Devi Lal, a former deputy prime minister; and Yashwanth Sinha, a former finance minister. If convicted, they face up to five years in jail.

The politicians and 18 lower-ranking bureaucrats who are already being prosecuted, allegedly received a total of 600 million rupees (17 million dollars) in bribes from a family of powerful industrialists, said a spokesman for the Bureau. The spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity said the politicians received money from an industrial family headed by S K Jain for showing favours to promote their business. The charges stem from a complicated case involving illegal money transfers from India. All foreign currency transactions require government permission. Operators in the black market typically offer higher rates than banks for US and British currencies, but charge a hefty commission for converting Indian rupees into those currencies. The illegal transaction, known as Hawala in Hindi language, is often the vehicle for smuggling illegally obtained wealth to banks or investments outside India.



Palestinian President Yasser Arafat (R) is handed over a statue of former Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme during the Olof-Palme-Prize awarding ceremony in Stockholm on Tuesday. The award was presented to Arafat by former Swedish Foreign Minister Sten Andersson (L). — AFP/UNB photo

Tehran test fires new anti-ship missile

WASHINGTON, Jan 31: Iran has test-fired a new low-flying missile designed to attack ships, adding to its potential for disrupting the Persian Gulf, the commander of US naval forces in the Gulf said Tuesday, reports AP.

Vice Adm Scott Redd, commander of the Gulf-based US 5th Fleet, said Iran also expanded its network of anti-aircraft and other missiles based on land and is likely to add a third Russian-made submarine to its fleet this year.

Taken as a whole, Redd said, these developments point to an increasingly advanced Iranian naval capability but leave unclear whether Iran's leaders intend to try to choke off the vital oil lanes of the Persian Gulf.

At this stage Iran's naval forces are no match for the

US Navy. The United States has 14,000 sailors and aviators in the area, including Redd's 35-ship fleet, based at Bahrain, which normally includes an aircraft carrier.

Geoffrey Kemp, a former national security aide to President Reagan and now a Middle East expert at the Nixon Center for Peace and Freedom, said Iran realises that attacking US forces would be tantamount to committing suicide.

"What they're trying to do is show that they have a substantial interest in the region and that if push comes to shove they are capable of giving us a bloody nose," Kemp said in an interview.

Asked about containing Iran's navy, Redd said: "Yes, we can handle it. But the bottom line is, it's getting tougher."

Arafat wants Sweden to act as mediator

STOCKHOLM, Jan 31: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat said Tuesday he wanted Sweden to act as a mediator in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the future of Jerusalem, the Swedish Radio station Ekoredaktion reported, says AFP.

Arafat said that former Swedish foreign minister Sten Andersson would be one of the mediators in any talks on Jerusalem and the return of Palestinian refugees.

"We are in need of your help, I say it bluntly and openly," Arafat said after meeting with Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson.

Andersson currently heads an employment programme in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Carlsson's diplomatic advisor Lars Danielsson would not confirm or deny Arafat's statement.

Off the Record

Tabloids were right about them

LONDON: Here's an EXCLUSIVE SHOCKER: The rags were RIGHT about the royals ALL ALONG!, reports AP. Prince Charles and Princess Diana are "drifting apart," declared the Sun in 1989. Diana is a "compulsive food binger!" proclaimed the News of the World in 1987. The Prince of Wales was caught "canoodling" with an old flame, the Princes had won an army officer's heart, and the dream marriage was over. British tabloids bared in ensuing years.

"Ridiculous," sneered the royals and their defenders. It was all "tittle-tattle" and idle speculation by the "gutter press." The final score: snooty royalists zero, sleazy tabloids five. Make that six, if Buckingham Palace makes the Waleses divorce plans official, as the British press recently predicted. The announcement would be a final vindication for the so-called Royal Rata Pack — tabloid reporters who spent years exposing royal troubles, only to be snubbed in British media awards, lampooned as fiction writers in London's broadsheet papers (called the "qualities") and lambasted by government officials calling for a crackdown on tabloid excesses.

Now, Britain is taking its tabloids more seriously. "By God, didn't the Royal Rata Pack do us proud in telling us what was going on?" wrote former political reporter Alan Cochrane in a mea culpa magazine essay in the Spectator. Carole Mille, a London tea-shop manager, says she, too, used to assume that stories like the one about Diana talking to a suitor who called her "Squidgy" were true. Now, perusing the Daily Mail's latest Di story, she says, "I think there's lots of things they don't tell you that are even juicier."

Indeed, tabloids spend a royal fortune keeping their reporters close to the royal couple. Flying first class or chartering planes, they have tracked Charles and Diana across Alpine ski slopes and Caribbean beaches, sometimes posing as tourists to observe for hours the couple's body language. The rat pack once spent a week on a yacht and a helicopter, searching the Mediterranean for the royal couple, only to discover the pair had been seen somewhere else.

Tacky private-eye methods occasionally get the tabs in trouble with the industry's Press Complaints Commission. Last year, Rupert Murdoch conceded the News of the World went "over the top" when it ran a photograph of Princess Diana's sister-in-law entering a "booze and bulimia clinic." The monarchy has won court battles against papers for running a photo of Diana in her gym, publishing a former footman's secrets and appropriating the royal Christmas-card photo.

But the palace hasn't gone to court in eons to dispute published facts. And in recent years, much of the skinny has come straight from the royals or their cronies, rather than from "downstairs" staff spilling the beans over pints at the Bag O'Nails pub. Richard Kay of the Daily Mail recalls that paparazzi once caught him in a car with Diana after an intermediary said the Princess wanted to meet with him. Mr Whitaker of the Daily Mirror says he has quoted Prince Charles anonymously as "a friend of the Prince." Says Peter Bond of the Daily Star: "This is a bloody joke in many ways. These people use the press."

The tabloids 10 million-plus readers do get a slightly skewed view of British issues. On Jan. 14, while other papers were writing about education reform, the People led with "Topless Diana in TV Shock!" The following Sunday, the News of the World bickered highway reform and splashed "Di's Midnight Tryst with a Hunk in Black" on its front page.

80 pc of Pakistanis in favour of N-test if India carries out more

ISLAMABAD, Jan 31: Eighty per cent of Pakistanis think the country should conduct a nuclear test if India carries out another one, according to an opinion poll published here today, reports AFP.

Two-thirds of respondents said they felt there is a "high or modest" chance that a war may soon break out between the two South Asian neighbours.

In the event of a war, India's nuclear capability remains a matter of "great concern" in Pakistan where 56 per cent believe that India will use its nuclear weapons in any future conflict with Pakistan, the pollsters concluded.

The findings were based

on an opinion poll conducted by Gallup Pakistan, an affiliate of Gallup International, for the Jang group of newspapers.

The study was compiled from the roughly 1,000 households in urban areas of all four provinces of the country, including a cross-section of people from various incomes, educational and linguistic backgrounds, ages.

The news daily, which is part of the Jang group, concluded from the poll that support for the country's nuclear programme is still as high as in previous years.

Some 75 per cent of the sampled population said they were strongly in favour of possessing nuclear weapons

Pakistan to repulse Indian attack on Kashmiris: Aseff

ISLAMABAD, Jan 31: Pakistan does not want an escalation of tension with India but will act to counter any new attack on civilians in Kashmir, Pakistani Foreign Minister Aseff Ahmad Ali said.

"If civilians are hit we will have to take whatever action is necessary," Ali said in an interview with AFP and the French daily Le Monde here Tuesday.

A rocket attack on a mosque last Friday that killed 20 people in the border village of Kahuta on Pakistani side in Kashmir has been blamed by Islamabad on India, which has denied the accusation.

Terming the surge in tensions as an "extremely negative development" Ali dismissed apprehensions that India could use the situation to mount a strike on Pakistani territory "they are not such fools to do such an adventure," Ali said adding

they know our capability."

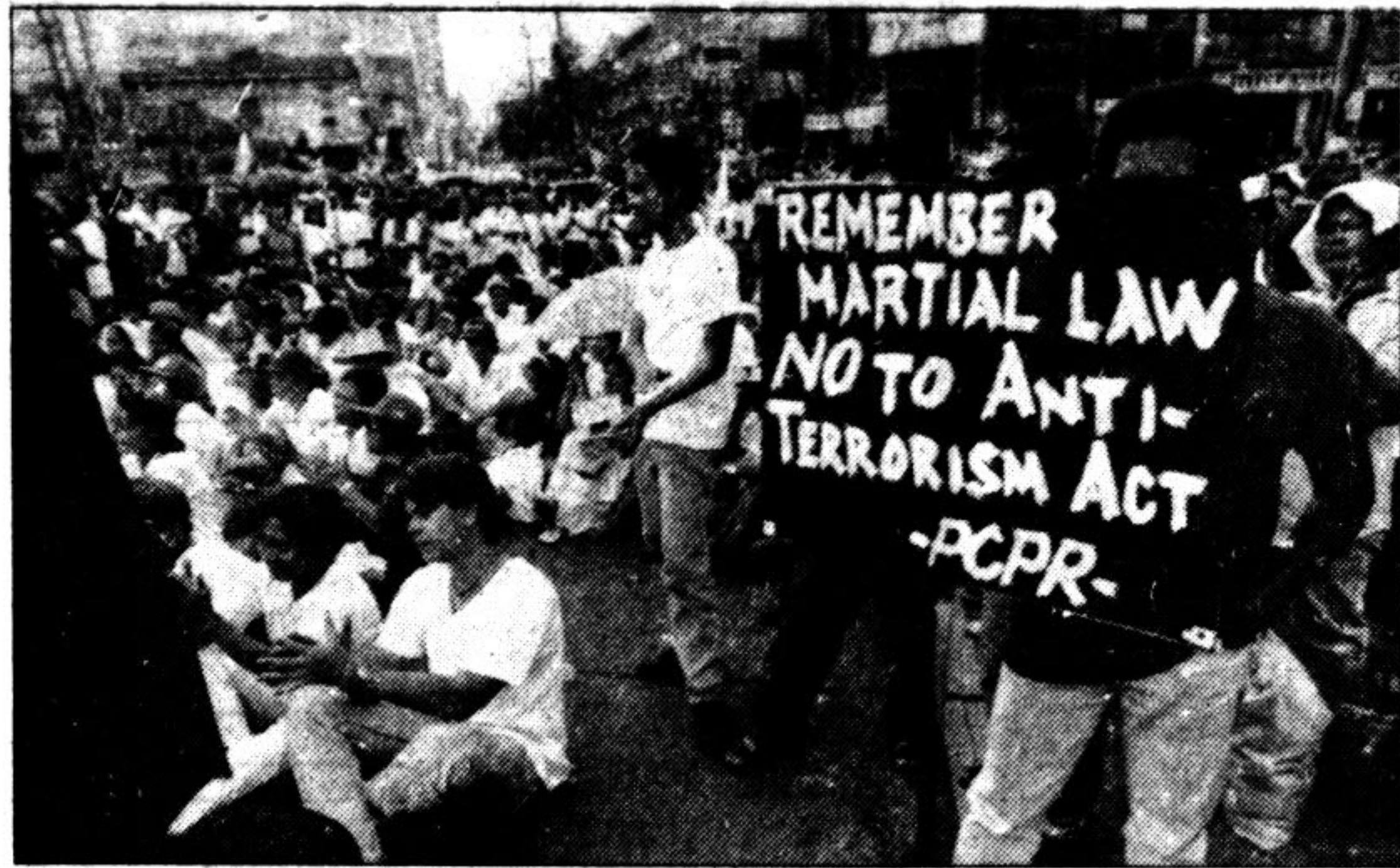
Both nations locked in a nearly half century dispute over Kashmir the catalyst for two of their three wars since independence in 1947 — are believed to possess a "nuclear capability but deny possessing the atomic bomb."

Ali warned India against lifting what he called nuclear ambiguity in South Asia a reference to uncertainty over the degree of nuclear advancement by the two rivals.

A nuclear test by India will be a great setback... if India makes such a stupid step Indian nuclear ambiguity will be broken... there will be an immense sense of insecurity for Pakistan.

If India makes a nuclear test then Pakistan may be a very sad day for the world.

Ali accused India of "interfering heavily in Afghanistan, saying Pakistan had 'proof' that India has provided Kabul with military equipment.



Some 1,000 anti-government demonstrators rally near Malacanang Palace to denounce proposed anti-terrorist law on Tuesday. Earlier President Fidel Ramos urged Congress to pass the anti-terrorist law which would safeguard civil liberties and amid charges he was plotting to impose a military dictatorship. — AFP/UNB photo

Flogging as punishment goes in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Jan 31: The Pakistani senate Tuesday adopted a bill which seeks to abolish flogging as a punishment, although it will remain for cases tried under the country's Islamic laws, reports AP.

Minister of State for Law and Justice Raza Rabbani told the House before passage of the bill that the Islamic hudud laws which provide for flogging for offences such as rape and drinking cannot be changed.

The abolition of the punishment of whipping will now go to the National Assembly for its consideration and will be enforced after passage through the Lower House. Rabbani told AFP.