

A young boy looks up at a Chechen fighter shouldering his Kalashnikov machine-gun in Novogroznenskoye on Thursday. The commander of Russian troops deployed in the troubled southern republic of Chechnya has announced Saturday a complete change of Russian policy in Chechnya, according to the Interfax agency.

- AFP/UNB photo

2 Islamic Jihad men killed in Gaza: Palestinian police shot and killed two Islamic Jihad militants in a Gaza City refugee camp on Saturday, AP reports from Gaza City.

Police said they killed the two men while trying to arrest a third man, Riyadh Abu Hashish, at Hashish's home in the Shati refugee camp. They said the two were killed after one of them started shooting at police. Police said after the shootout, they found a cache of hand grenades and weapons.

NASA director resigns: The Director of the NASA space shuttle programme former astronaut Bryan O'Connor, has abruptly resigned amid a controversial re-organisation of the shuttle programme, AFP reports from Washington.

O'Connor, 49, has headed the programme since May 1994. In a surprise announcement Friday, he said in a brief statement that he was leaving the agency "to pursue other interests.

5 killed in Manila blast: Five people. including a two-year-old boy were killed yesterday when a grenade accidentally exploded in a suburb north of Manila, police said. AFP says from Manila.

Four men in their twenties on a drinking spree in Makatipo town in Caloocan city died when they handled a grenade given to them by two-year-old Jonathan Morales, said Caloocan police chief senior superintendent Francisco Villaroman.

Violence claims 22 in Algiers: Twenty civilians were assassinated in Algiers in a single day, including two women whose throats were cut in a popular neighbourhood, the daily paper El Watan said Saturday, AFP reports from Algiers.

The paper, citing "reliable sources," said 10 other civilians were also abducted on the same day, Wednesday.

Ancient artifacts seized in Italy: Police have confiscated more than 2.000 artifacts. including ancient jewelry. Roman statues and columns.

that were displayed in two villas, AP reports from Rome. Treasury police, who made the seizure, on Saturday showed reporters photos of the artifacts arranged on shelves in the villas as if they were in two private museums. Under Italian law, all ancient finds, like capitals. vases and sarcophaghi, are property of the state and must be shown to authorities.

US actress held on drug charge: American actress and rapper Queen Latifah was arrested on drug and weapons charges on Saturday after officers stopped her for speeding and a allegedly found marijuana and a loaded pistol in her car, Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

California highway patrol spokesman Gary Goldenberg said officers stopped the actress, whose real name is Dana Owens, at 6:25 am (1125 GMT) driving 75 miles (120 km) per hour,

6 die in Indian road mishap: sk persons were killed and 22 others injured when a lorry carrying labourers overturned Saturday while taking a curve near Ramagad mines about 70 km from Bellary, PTI reports from Bellary.

5 killed in Indonesian train mishap: Five people were killed and eight others were injured when a passenger train collided with a locomotive on the southern part of Sumatra island, the official Antara news agency reported yesterday, Reuter says from Jakarta.

It said the Bukit Sulap passenger train linking Kertapati and Lubuk Linggau, 200 km (125 miles) to its southwest. crashed into the locomotive on Saturday near the town of Muara Enim.

Japan again urges China to stop nuclear testing

Japan had again urged China to stop its huclear weapons testing programme and Japanese concerns about the weapons would be reflected in a 250 nation Asia-Europe summit meeting in March, a Japanese official said, reports Shimanouchi said. Reuter.

said the international community was moving towards nuclear disarmament and that Japan was hoping for an early conclusion, and signing states are ready to. of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty." Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ken Shimanouchi told reporters late on Saturday.

Yukihiko Ikeda met his Chinese counterpart Qian Qichen for talks earlier on

PHUKET, Thailand, Feb 4: Saturday after a meeting of 10 East Asian foreign ministers preparing for a March 1-2 summit in Bangkok with the 15 leaders of the European Union.

"Ikeda called on China to stop its nuclear testing."

China has defended its Foreign Minister Ikeda testing programme, saying it conducts far fewer tests than other nuclear powers and it will agree to a comprehensive test ban when other

"Foreign Minister Qian reiterated China's position on these issues.'

The Asia-Europe summit, the first between the two re-Japanese Foreign Minister gions, will focus on economic cooperation but political and security issues also will be discussed.

Chandrika pledges to carry out peace plan

COLOMBO, Feb 4: President Chandrika Kumaratunga, in a national-day ceremony on Sunday, sobered by a devastating terrorist attack. pledged to do whatever necessary to carry out her plan for peace with Sri Lanka's rebellious Tamil minority, reports AP.

Fearing another attack. crowds were kept away from the ceremony at Indepen-dence Square, and the public was left to watch it on state television.

Instead of cheerful citizens, the hall where the president spoke was filled with hundreds of soldiers in civilian clothes, government officials and the diplomatic corps. Roads were closed for miles around, and thousands of heavily armed police lined the streets.

"We will continue our efforts to solve the ethnic question through peaceful means. But we shall not hesitate to undertake every action which is required to implement our programme for peace, said Mrs Kumaratunga.

Last Wednesday, a suicide bomber shattered the capital's business district with a truck bomb aimed at the Central Bank. By Sunday, 78 bodies were recovered. Seven people were still missing and believed buried under the

Police said two surviving assailants admitted in interrogation they belonged to the Tamil Tigers, who are waging a 12-year war for Tamil independence in the north and east of the country. Nearly

40,000 people have been killed since 1983.

Two weeks ago, Mrs. Kumaratunga submitted to Parliament her plan for constitutional reform that would decentralize power and make Sri Lanka a federation of strong provinces, including one region dominated by Tamils. The plan must be approved by a two-thirds majority in parliament and by a national referendum.

The rebels have rejected the proposals. Clad in a bright pink sari.

the president raised the Sri Lankan flag and listened to a police choir sing the national anthem, followed by a tradi tional song of blessing.

Earlier AFP adds: Sri Lanka has escalated a hunt for potential Tamil Tiger suicide bombers after a Kamikaze-style truck bomb devastated Colombo's financial hub, killing and wounding nearly 15,500 people.

Police are on the alert for more such strikes by the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) whose

stricide squad known as the Black Tigers has carried out a series of spectacular attacks during the past nine years.

We have made progress in the investigations and two suicide bombers are already in custody."

Intelligence authorities had warned that there could be up to 30 men and women of the Black Tiger squad in Colombo waiting to be activated by the rebel leadership operating from somewhere in the island's embattled north-



Military commanders salute beside Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga (R. during a 21-gun salute at Independence Square on Sunday in Colombo as Sri Lanka marks 48 years of independence from British Colonial rule. The celebration takes place only four days after a suicide bomb attack by Tamil rebels which destroyed Colombo's financial district. - AFP/UNB photo

Tajik parliament | to try to avert bloodshed

DUSHANBE, Feb 4: The parliament in the Central Asian state of Tajikistan said it would meet today to try to avert bloodshed after two mutinous military warlords demanded the dismissal of government ministers, reports Reuter.

Their rebellion risked erupting into a conflict that could derail efforts to end three years of fighting between rival political, religious and ethnic groups in the former Soviet republic.

Armed pro-government supporters gathered at e Dushanbe stadium, ready to move if necessary against the rebel warlords who seized two towns in what President Imomali Rakhmonov described as an attempted military coup.

Crackdown on 'sex tourism' in Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil, Feb 4: With the annual Carnival celebration approaching. the Brazilian Justice Ministry has declared war against foreign tourists who come in search of prostitutes, reports

The Justice Ministry has asked the embassies of Germany, France, Italy and Argentina to denounce travel agents in their countries who advertise "sexual tourism" in

"The country wants to abolish this type of tourism. Justice Ministry cabinet chief Jose Gregori told the daily Jornal do Brasil on Saturday. "The government simply will not tolerate this activity.

The government advised all Brazilian states that advertising cannot exploit women as sex objects.

5,000 Rwandan refugees return home

KIGALI, Rwanda, Feb 4: More than 5,000 Rwandan refugees have returned home under a programme the United Nations hopes will be a model for repatriating the tens of thousands of people left homeless by the 1994 genocide, reports AP.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees said the Ntamba refugee camp in northern Burundi was closed after highly successful visits by Kwandan omciais who answered questions and appealed to refugees to return home.

The agency hopes similar visits will convince 1.8 million other Rwandan refugees to return home after 18 months in exile.

Opposition shoots down govt bid for early polls in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: A meeting of Indian parties to discuss elections in Kashmir ended in a deadlock with leftists and others shooting down government plans for early polls in the strife-torn state, officials said on Sunday, reports AFP.

The Communist Party of india and its Marxist allies sided with Kashmir's Regional National Conference Party at the two-day meet, which ended overnight, to oppose plans for early elections, they said.

Home Minister S B Chavan said the final decision would be taken by Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, whose ruling Congress (I) Party has called for Kashmir polls ahead of general elections this year.

"There has been a seachang in the situation in Kashmir," Chavan told the allparty meeting on Saturday night, asserting that Muslim militancy in strife-torn Kashmir was on the wane. Officials said leftist and

conference leaders at the meeting demanded a political package for Kashmiris before the unveiling of dates for the polls in the state in a bid to cool down the anti-Indian rebellion there. "The political package

should then be ratified by parliament to create a sense of confidence among the people of the state," said Yusuf Tarigami, who led a Communist Party of India (Marxist) delegation to the meeting.

nounced only after parliament has ratified it" Tarigami added, but did not say if the government agreed to extend political concessions to the people in Kashmir, which is under federal rule since

Farooq Abdullah, conference leader and a former state chief minister, said the package should specify the quantum of autonomy the government was ready to give to the Kashmiris before ordering the legislative polls.

Representatives of Hindus driven out from Kashmir by the Muslim insurgency also opposed the government's plans for immediate elections saying the present situation in Kashmir had little room "Elections should be an- for fair and free balloting.

Off the Record

Vice-versa

CHEL YABINSK: A 30-year-old man is in a coma after being bitten by a rabid fox while he was beating it to death with a stick, the ITAR-Tass news agency said Saturday, reports AP.

The report said the man wanted to make a fox-fur collar for his coat.

He spotted the wild fox near his home in village of Pogorelka in the Urals region of Chelyabinsk in November.

the report said. With the help of neighbours, he beat it to death. But before it died, the fox bit him on the finger, the report

ITAR-Tass said the man went to the local medical centre to have the bite treated but was not given anti-rabies medication. The man, who was not identified, is now in a

coma with a fatal case of rabies. Regional health officials have gone on television to warn people to avoid wild animals and wild foxes are being shot on sight, the report added.

'Master off switch' to control sleep

WASHINGTON: In a finding that may hold out hope for insomniacs, scientists have found a master "off" switch deep in the brain that helps to control sleep, reports Reuter.

The discovery will be a boon for researchers, eager to understand sleep disorders and to develop drugs that will produce a natural, refreshing sleep. Dr Clifford Saper, a researcher at Beth Israel Hospital in Boston, said in a telephone interview on Thursday

"It would be wonderful to have a natural-patterned normal sleep, without the druggy hangover," he said. The research by Saper and colleagues at Harvard Medi-

cal School appears in Friday's edition of the journal The "switch" is a cluster of neurons, probably no bigger than a pinhead, in the hypothalamus at the core of the brain. That is the part of the brain known to control sleeping, eating, drinking and sexual behaviour - "all the fun

stuff," said Saper. That cluster of cells, found very close to cells that control the circadian rhythm or "body clock," sends direct messages to three other sets of nerve cells, which in turn control the three brain chemicals, called neurotransmit-

tors, that are involved in arousal. Those neurotransmittors are histamine, thought to stimulate wakefulness: norepinephrine, which increases excitement and raised blood pressure and serotonin, involved in sleep and sensory perception. The "masterswitch" simultaneously deactivate all three arousal

Firm to head for video clip to Rio slum

RIO DE JANEIRO: Despite angering some Brazilian officials, pop star Michael Jackson has no plans to halt the filming of a controversial video clip, reports AP.

Jackson's press agent. Lee Solters, told Saturday's O Globo newspaper that Jackson is unfazed by the controversy and plans to head to a Rio slum this week for the filming. Some officials are concerned the video will hurt Brazil's image abroad.

Jackson was scheduled to arrive Tuesday together with filmmaker Spike Lee who will direct the clip for the song "They Don't Care About Us."

"His visit is just to place Rio as a city of problems, of poverty," said Gov Marcello Alencar. "We are trying to recover Rio's image, and this could be devastating

But Rio Mayor Cesar Maia said on Saturday he disagreed with Alencar. 'I personally signed papers allowing Jackson to film here. And I invited him to be a guest of 'he city at this year's carnival festivities; Rio awaits Jackson with open arms."

Scenes are to be shot in the hillside slum of Dona Marta, a violent area controlled by cocaine traffickers. About one-fifth of Rio's 6 million people live in slums. called "favelas."

"Michael Jackson is wanting to exploit misery for his own profit," protested Ronaldo Cezar Coelho, the state secretary of commerce, industry and tourism. "We are not trying to hide Rio's problems, but the clip Panders to a stereotype and could hurt a campaign to attract foreign in-

Arafat urges donors for more aid

There can be no peace while Palestinians starving'

DAVOS, Switzerland, Feb 4: There can be no peace in the Middle East while Palestinians are starving, PLO leader Yasser Arafat warned

Israel Saturday, reports AP. "You can't have one partner receiving the prize of peace and another partner paying the price of peace," he told a meeting of business

and political leaders at the World Economic Forum. Fresh from elections that confirmed him as the new president of the Palestinian

Authority, Arafat said that the

closure of the Israeli-Palestinian border had cost the authority hundreds of millions of dollars.

This is a real disaster for us. All the donations of the donors have not covered until now the losses from the closures," he said.

Closures bar thousands of Palestinians, who make their living as labourers inside Israel, from entering. The Palestinians have no real economy of their own and depend greatly on mental

jobs inside Israel. in the last 15 months. Arafat said, the closure of Gaza and the West Bank continued for 247 days with losses every day of more than dlrs 6 million.

Israel restrictions on imports and exports with other countries was also hurting the economy, he said.

Sound economic base was necessary to turn the area into a region of peace and prosperity, he urged.



Some of the world's top supermodels - including Helena Christiansen (2nd L) and Naomi Campbell (1st R) line up in Dublin after a fashion show late on Saturday at the Point Theatre which was hoping to raise 300,000 for children's charities — including one which aids victims of Russia's Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Ciller formally ends attempt to form govt

ANKARA, Feb 4: Prime Minister Tansu Ciller on Saturday formally acknowledged she had failed to convince her centre-right rival to form a government with her to shut an anti-Western Islamic party out of power, reports

She informed President Suleyman Demirel, who had already said on Friday that he would now ask her archrival. former Premier Mesut Yilmaz, to try his hand. Yilmaz was summoned to the presidential palace for an early evening meeting Saturday.

Despite earlier pledges not to form a partnership with the Islamic Welfare

party, Yilmaz has adopted a softened line towards the movement, which became Turkey's biggest party in parliament in elections December 24. However, Welfare, led by

lamic activities, fell far short of capturing enough seats to put together a government by Welfare won 158 seats: Ciller's True Path, 135, and Motherland, led by Yilmaz,

Necmettin Erbakan, who was

once jailed for his pro-Is-

took 133 out of a total of 550

Yilmaz said he had turned down Ciller's offer to form a government together.

Guinean president invites mutinous troops for talks

CONAKRY, Feb 4: The president of the West African state of Guinea invited mutinous soldiers for peace talks today after bloody clashes triggered by a pay dispute turned into what he denounced as a coup attempt, reports Reuter.

State radio said President Lansana Conte and the mainly Muslim country's armed forces, of which he is commander in chief, agreed on Saturday that all soldiers should rejoin their units under a peace deal.

Witnesses reported sporadic firing after the broadcast but said fighting had subsided. Dissident soldiers earlier shelled Conte's headquarters in the Palais Des Nations and set it ablaze - AFP/UNB photo | during more than 12 hours of

Medical sources said up to 40 people might have been killed and dozens wounded in battles pitting mutinous soldiers against Conte loyalists or during widespread looting. The sources said many of the dead were civil-

"People of Guinea, the Guinean armed forces have just held negotiations in the famous Alpha Yaya camp with general President Lansana Conte," a radio announcer

"The negotiations have led to an agreement. All soldiers must immediately return to their respective units."

Witnesses described the situation as tense and con-

Clinton for buying more B-2 bombers

WASHINGTON, Feb 4: President Bill Clinton has ordered his aides to take a new look at buying additional B-2 bombers despite the Pentagon's opposition to more of the expensive Stealth planes, the Washington Post reported in its Sunday editions, reports Reuter.

the aircraft is made. Quoting unidentified White House officials, the Post said the president had

The newspaper said the action was certain to boost hopes in California and other key electoral states where

years, reports AFP.

not already decided to seek more than the 20 bombers already ordered. conditions it sets for the ex-

UN, Iraq meet tomorrow to find way for oil exports UNITED NATIONS, Feb 4: port of the oil and the distribution of revenue.

Iraq and the United Nations meeting here from Tuesday are to try to find a way of implementing Security Council resolution 986, which would allow Baghdad to resume limited oil exports for the first time in almost six

The resolution was adopted on April 14, 1995 to allow Iraq to raise money purely for humanitarian supplies for its people.

But Iraq has repeatedly rebuffed the offer on the grounds that it infringes its sovereignty through the

The United Nations insists that no amendments are possible to the points of the resolution, which are as follows: The Security Council is

"convinced of the need as a temporary measure to provide for the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people" until Baghdad meets Gulf War ceasefire resolutions. It is "convinced also of the

need for equitable distribution of humanitarian relief to all segments of the Iraqi population throughout the country."

The resolution authorises

Iraq to export one billion dollars of oil per quarter under strict conditions.

Each proposed purchase of Iraqi oil must be approved by the unsanctions committee, and the money is to be paid into an escrow account opened by the UN Secretary General.

Turkey will receive payment in the form of Iraqi oil and related products for allowing the crude to be exported vià a pipeline between Kirkuk in Iraq and Yumurtalik in Turkey. The resolution will be

implemented for a period of

180 days, after which it may

be renewed, and will be thoroughly reviewed by the Security Council every 90

The UN sanctions committee will supervise the sale of oil, most of which will be exported via the Kirkuk-Yumartalik pipeline and the rest via Iraq's Mina Al-Bakr oil terminal on the Gulf. Independent inspectors will check that the purchase price of the Iraqi oil is fair. The revenue generated by

oil sales, paid into the UN

escrow account, " shall be

used to meet the humanitar-

ian needs of the Iraqi popula-

The resolution asks UN Secretary General Boutros Boulros Ghali to use the money to finance the export to Iraq of medicine, health supplies, food and other essertial civilian supplies. Each export of goods has to be at the request of the Iraqi government

Iraq must effectively guarantee their (the goods) equitable distribution on the basis of a plan submitted to and approved by the Secretary General' in advance

Between 130 million and 150 million dollars will be paid each quarter to the UN humanitarian programme in

Iraq " in order to ensure an equitable distribution of humanitarian relief to all segments of the Iraqi popula-A percentage of the oil

Kurdish controlled northern

revenue will also go to a UN compensation fund for vic tims of Iraq's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait and to finance the activities of UN experts monitoring Iraqi disarmament

The Security Council stresses that nothing in this resolution should be construed "as infringing the sovereignty or territorial integrity of Iraq

4 more killed in Karachi violence KARACHI, Pakistan, Feb 4:

At least four people were killed in ethnic and political violence in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi, police said today, reports Reuter. They said the victims, in-

cluding a 10-year-old boy were killed in separate incidents on Saturday in different districts. Karachi is the scene of a

long-running conflict pitting Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government and security forces against the opposition ethnic Mohajir Qaumi Movement.