

King Hussein of Jordan kisses the black stone incurved in the Kaaba, the cube in the centre of Great Mosque of holy city of Makkah where he performed the Omra (small pilgrimage) on Sunday before meeting with Saudi officials. - AFP/UNB photo

21 die in Pak bus mishap: Atruck slammed into a loaded passenger bus in central Pakistan Monday, killing at least 21 people and wounding five others. AP reports from Islamabad.

The crash occurred near the isolated town of Sadiqabad, in Pakistan's central Punjab province near the Indian border, state-run Pakistan Television reported.

3 army officials to die in Moscow: Three senior military figures accused of trying to overthrow Azerbaijan's President Gueidar Aliyev in October 1994 were sentenced to death by the Supreme Court in Baku Monday, Interfax News Agency reported, AFP reports from Moscow.

Former National Security Minister Nariman Imranov and former Deputy Defence Minister Alikram Gummatov would be executed by firing squad in due course, interfax

Gunman kills HR lawyer in Manila: Crusading journalist and human rights lawyer Ferdinand Reyes was shot dead by a long gunman in his office in the southern Philippines, local newspapers said yesterday, Reuter reports from Manila.

Reyes. Editor of the Weekly Press Freedom, was writing in his office when a man barged in and shot him in the back of the head, the Manila Times said of the killing on Monday in Dipolog City, 725 kms (426 miles) south of Manila.

Ex-ROK PM joins ruling NKP:
Former South Korean Prime Minister Lee Hong-Koo yesterday joined South Korea's embattled ruling party to bolster its chances in April's crucial parliamentary elections.

AFP reports from Seoul. Lee became the second former premier in a month to throw his weight behind President Kim Young-Sam's New Korea Party (NKP), which has been plagued by defections in the wake of the country's slush fund scandals.

16 criminals executed in China: Sixteen men convicted of murder, rape, fraud and other crimes have been executed in the biggest mass execution ever in China's free-wheeling Shenzhen special economic zone, Hong Kong Press reports said yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

All were shot in the back of the neck, the traditional Chinese execution method, following a public rally in the city, which borders Hong Kong.

Italian journalist Barbato dies: Andrea Barbato, the journalist who covered John F Kennedy's assassination and the first steps on the moon for Italian television, died of heart failure Monday. He was 61, AP reports from Rome.

During a career that began at age 22. Barbato worked both as the anchorman for several news programmes of state-owned broadcaster RAI and as a reporter, foreign correspondent and editor for several Italian newspapers.

9 die as ferry sinks in China: Nine people were killed and 30 were missing after a ferry sank in strong winds off eastern China, news report said

Tuesday. AP reports from Beijing. The wooden vessel went down in the East China sea off Zhejiang province. The China Daily said nine bodies were recovered and 30 people were missing and believed dead. Rescue operations continued, but there was little hope survivors would be found, the report said.

Gas poisoning kills 19 in China: Gas poisoning has killed 19 people in the last month in Shanghai in the latest of a series of accidents that highlight poor safety standards, AP reports from Beijing. Since 1988, more than 26,000 families have applied for official permission to install gas water heaters, but some 400,000 actually have installed them on their own, the official newspaper Liberation Daily reported Tuesday.

Haitian plane crash kills 9: A small plane from the Haiti Air Express Airline crashed and burst into flames Monday near the Port-Au-Prince airport shortly after take-off, killing nine of the 14 people aboard. officials said, AFP reports from Port-au-Prince.

The five survivors suffered injuries, they said. Airport officials told AFP the crew was made up of a French national and a Belgian, they were both reported among the fatali-

15 die in Jakarta floods: At least 15 people have died in massive Jakarta flooding which affected more than half a million residents, leaving the capital still crippled yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.

ties, according to a source close to the airline.

"The number of people dead up until yesterday morning was 15," Taufik, an official from the Jakarta regional government emergency prevention, told AFP. Taufik said that while water levels had diminished throughout the city, some areas were still covered by as much as one meter (three feet) of water.

### Chandrika urged to form probe body

## Tamil lawmakers accuse army of massacring civilians

COLOMBO, Feb 13: Tamil lawmakers on Tuesday accused the military of massacring 24 Tamil civilians and urged President Chandrika Kumaratunga to appoint a commission to investigate. reports AP.

About 30 Tamil civilians also were wounded Sunday night and Monday morning in Kumarapuram village in the eastern Trincomalee district. where Tamil rebels and soldiers were fighting.

A local police official first said that soldiers defending a military post from a Tamil guerilla attack had fired shells that struck a nearby rice paddy, killing 24 farm-

Subsequent reports from Tamil witnesses and rebels said many of the civilians were killed by soldiers who went berserk and attacked village homes after defending their post Sunday night. The area is 220 kilometres (135 miles) northeast of Colombo.

An official at a nearby hos-

Arafat takes oath

as president

leader Yasser Arafat took the

oath of office Monday as pres-

ident of the Palestinian Au-

thority in a solitary ceremony

that emphasised his grip on

Quran, the Muslim holy book, Arafat pledged to "fulfill the

national hope" of the Pales-

the "White House," a recently

refurbished two-story build-

ing in downtown Gaza City

where the Palestinian council

elected January 20 will meet.

The 88 council members are

scheduled to convene for the

first time late next week,

following the end of the Mus-

lim fasting month of Ra-

British, Irish

leaders promise

to salvage peace

process

and Irish leaders promised to

try to salvage the tattered

Northern Ireland peace pro-

cess but insisted that before

talks can move forward the

IRA must reinstate the 17

months ceasefire it ended

with a bomb in London, re-

Army bomb that killed two

people and caused damaged

estimated at 150 million

pounds (230 million) left the

peace process as shattered as

the dozen high rise buildings

it destroyed in the capital's

John Major addressing the

nation in a televised speech

said the IRA and its political

wing Sinn Fein must re-

themselves unequivocally to

peace, and reinstate the

ceasefire can they have a

voice and a stake in Northern

Three Russian

servicemen shot

dead in Grozny

Three Russian servicemen

were reported shot dead at a

checkpoint in the capital of

rebel Chechnya on Monday

and the two sides in the

southern regions' conflict

indicated peace could be

some way off, reports Reuter.

it even harder for people to

enter and leave the capital

Grozny but gunmen killed

three and wounded two In-

terior Ministry troops at a

checkpoint, according to an

independent NTO television

on the scene minutes later

and its car was caught in

crossfire which killed the

driver and slightly injured a

soon as heard the firing.

Then another two shots rang

out. I turned to the drive and

he was all covered in blood a

crew member who was not

We all crunched down as

crew member.

hurt said.

NTO said its crew arrived

Russian troops have made

GROZNY, Russia, Feb 13:

Ireland's future he said.

Only when they commit

nounce violence.

British Prime Minister

Docklands financial district.

Friday's Irish Republican

ports Reuter.

LONDON, Feb 13: British

The ceremony was held in

With his right hand on the

power, reports AP.

tinian people.

madan.

GAZA CITY, Feb 13: PLO

of the injured were hit by shells, but others had gunshot wounds. He spoke on condition of anonymity in a telephone interview.

Tamil rebels have been fighting for a homeland in northern and eastern Sri Lanka for 12 years, and at least 40,000 people have been killed, some in massacres blamed on soldiers or rebels.

confirmed for the first time that 24 Tamil civilians were killed in Kumarapuram, but denied once again that soldiers had played any role in the killings. The military statement in Colombo, the capital, said the

On Tuesday, the military

Tamil civilians "were shot dead by unknown persons and investigations are being conducted by the police" to determine who did it.

In a letter to President Kumaratunga on Tuesday. A Thangathurai, a Tamil lawmaker in the area. blamed

"Army (soldiers) and Sinhalese (Paramilitary) guards descended on the village and ran amok, braking into homes, firing indiscriminately, killing and causing serious injury," he said in the letter, a copy of which was shown to reporters.

M Chandrakumar, a lawmaker of the Eelam People's Democratic Party from the northern Jaffna district, also sent a letter to the president. It said. "The security forces attacked innocent villagers with guns and sharp weapons and brutally killed about 30 people, including infants and expectant mothers. My party condemns the brutal murders committed by the secu-

rity forces." A Sri Lankan military spokesman said on Monday that Tamil rebels had attacked the military post in the area on Sunday evening. killing two soldiers and a 12-

year-old child. On Tuesday, Tamil tiger

rebels claimed that the soldiers then entered the village in trucks, ordered villagers to gather in one spot and attacked them with knives. machetes and swords.

"The entire, population of the village is living in a state of fear," the rebels said in a statement from their London

In his letter to Kumaratunga. Thangathurai of the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front party, demanded a commission of inquiry headed by a Supreme Court judge.

"This type of killing of unarmed, helpless civilians by the armed forces should be strongly condemned and those responsible severely punished," he said.

The Tamil rebels see a homeland as the only way minority Tamils can escape what they regard as discrimination by the Sinhalese majority, which controls the government and military.

### 22 killed as Tajik rebels attack govt convoy

DUSHANBE. Tajikistan, Feb 13: Seventeen Tajik government soldiers and five civilians were killed when guerillas ambushed a government convoy headed for a restive, mountainous region of Tajikistan, officials said Monday, reports AP.

Tajik presidential spokesman Zafar Saidov, speaking to the ITAR-Tass news agency, blamed Muslim opposition militants for the hours-long clash Sunday night in the Komsomolabad region, northeast of the Tajik capital Dushanbe.

Tajik officials said up to 100 rebel fighters participated in the attack, using recoilless artillery pieces. grenade launchers and machine-guns, Seven people who were in the convoy were seized by the militants, they

The Tajik Foreign Ministry called on the international community Monday to denounce "the Islamic opposition and countries that render it direct or indirect material, financial and military support," the Interfax news agency reported.

The main highway linking Dushanbe with the restive

eastern Tajik region of Gorno-Badakshan runs through Komosomolabad, the site of the clash.

The convoy was carrying supplies to government troops in Gorno-Badakshan. There has been heavy government-opposition fighting recently on the edges of the region around the city of

Tavildara. The government last week sent reinforcements to the area. On Monday, it reported sporadic clashes, but said army units were controlling key positions.

Tajikistan's hard-line government took power in 1993 after defeating a loose coalition of Islamic and democratic forces. Many Islamic fighters fled across the border to Afghanistan or into Tajikistan's soaring mountains to continue their war.

Russia has 25,000 troops in this poor former Soviet republic to prop up the government and help it fend off opposition guerillas.

The government and the opposition have been engaged in UN-mediated negotiations.

### Off the Record

### Deal with drug dealers

RIO DE JANEIRO: Reports Monday said pop superstar Michael Jackson paid drug traffickers for permission to film a music video in a city slum, reports AP.

Jackson filmed for six hours Sunday in Rio's Dona Marta, a jumble of shacks. open sewage ditches and maze-like alleys. The scenes were for the video of his song 'They Don't Care About

Rio newspapers said Jackson's production crew had paid protection money to a cocaine kingpin known as Marcinho VP, who controls the drug trade in Dona Marta. "Trafficker Co-Produces

Clip," blared the headline of Rio's Jornal do Brasil.

"Traffickers Control Michael's Security, the Globo newspaper said on its front page.

Filmmaker Spike Lee, who directed the scenes. admitted that producers had paid "somebody" for permission. Fifty Dona Marta residents were hired at dirs 70 each to protect Lee and Jackson, who also received security of 80 police officers. "We had to get permission from somebody to shoot

there," Lee said in a televised interview Monday "So once we got permission, whether they were drug deale s or not, I don't know.

Rio's police chief, Holio Luz, called Lee a "chump" for paying protection. "Police would do it for free," he said.

### The greatest purpose of condoms

PARIS: In a report contradicting Vatican doctrine, the French Bishops Conference said Monday that the use of condoms is "necessary" in preventing the spread of AIDS, reports AP.

"Many competent doctors affirm that a condom of good quality is currently the only method of prevention. In that respect, it is necessary," says the 235-page report. "Those responsible for public health, legitimately

worried about the spread of AIDS and the cost of treating it, support the use of condoms," the report said.

"The Church, suspected of being totally opposed to their use, sees itself accused of working in favour death," it

A spokesman for the bishops conference said in a telephone interview that the report reflects the official

policy of the French Catholic Church. The Rev Albert Rouet, bishop of Poitier, later elaborated on the report.

"We said what other bishops had said before us: When an adult, as mature as one can be in this domain, considers he can't do without sexual relations and there is a danger. it's better he use that condom, that's obvious," he told Europe 1 radio.

# caucus in Iowa DES MOINES, Iowa, Feb front runner, reports AP.

Former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander ran third, hoping that would be enough to give his longshot campaign a fresh start in the upcoming stretch of primaries likely to settle the Republican nomination.

field, early results suggested a disappointing night for publishing heir Steve Forbes and a potentially fatal showing for Texas Sen Phil Gramm. Forbes set records by

spending more than 4 million dollars on television advertising in Iowa

## Republican

penchant for arts and movies.

litically stable, but once you

get into the inside, it's not

that simple. There are

anonymous leaflets and let-

ters criticising the party.

There are groups forming to

try to push those demands,"

cut its support for its foreign

missions so drastically that

the Zambia embassy had to

smuggle rhinoceros horns

and even run a taxi business

with a used Japanese bus to

help pay its meager ex-

Bob Dole wins

Hyun said the North has

Hyun said.

penses.

"The North may seem po-

13: Bob Dole won Iowa's Republican presidential caucuses Monday night, but he shared the spotlight with conservative commentator Pat Buchanan who emerged from a nine-man field and threatened to challenge Dole's standing as Republican

As lowa handicapped the

### Communist comeback makes Moscow's elite anxious this fall? Should the writers

MOSCOW, Feb 13: A glossy magazine for Russian businessmen is about to hit newsstands with an article. only half tongue-in-cheek, on "how to flee," reports AP.

A banker with ties to the Kremlin and savings in Switzerland talks, only halfjokingly, about liquidating his Russian holdings in case he has to make a quick getaway abroad.

And a Western diplomat hears the same semi-serious question posed by more and more of Russia's liberal elite: "If things go bad, will you get us out of here. Four months before presi-

dential elections, a distinct queasiness is settling over the wealthy and the intellectual circles of Moscow and St Petersburg. Communists are riding a wave of popular support, while the pro-reform camp is divided.

Could the country house bought last year be taken back by a Communist state

at feisly newspapers and television networks be looking for real estate in Spain? Most Russians, including

wealthy ones, are waiting to see what happens before they get seriously worried. Many say the Communists — if they could win the presidency in June - wouldn't really be able to turn back the clock on democratic and free-market reforms

But would they try? Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov gives disturbing

Zyuganov, who polls show would be a strong candidate for president, tells Western businessmen that he backs limited private enterprise and would make Russia a more stable, profitable place for their money.

But to other audiences

#### Zyuganov is anti-Western and anti-free market, favouring a return to state subsidies and state control.

#### Italian govt, opposition closer to agreement

ROME, Feb 13: Chances appeared better for an agreement on a new government Monday after two key political foes seemed to move closer on the need for sweeping chances on the way

Italy is governed, reports AP. The possible easing of tensions could be the break needed for Premier-designate Antonio Maccanico to form Italy's 55th postwar

government. Talks on Cabinet posts have been stalled by disputes over the pace and direction of reforms to Italy's troubled political structure. The main issue is whether to seek a French-style system with a more powerful, directly elected president.

### 103 nominations submitted for this year's Nobel Peace Prize OSLO, Norway, Feb 13: deadline were still arriving in

The US president, a Chinese dissident. Russian activists and a Kurdish Parliamentarian are among the 103 people and organisations nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, reports AP.

In keeping with the prize committee's tradition of secrecy, the nonvoting Secretary. Geir Lundestad, refused comment Monday on the names of candidates. However, names of some

candidates become public. usually because those making the nominations announce them. Lundestad would say only

that 82 individuals and 21 organisations had been nominated as of Monday, but proposals postmarked by the January 31 nomination

Oslo and still could be included.

"It will probably end up at the normal level, of 120 to 130," he said. Lundestad said this year's said cash award would be 7.4 million Swedish Kronor, or about 1 million

The Oslo-based Norwegian Nobel Committee never reveals the names of candidates, partly to protect those struggling against oppressive regimes.

This year, known candiinclude President Clinton and Richard Holbrooke, a US assistant secretary of state, for their efforts to bring peace to Bosnia. Former US President Jimmy Carter has been nominated several years running, for his

worldwide peace efforts. Imprisoned Chinese dissident and human rights activist Wei Jingsheng also re-

ceived multiple nominations.

caucus.

Anti-nuclear activist Joseph Rotblat, who shared last year's peace prize with the Pugwash group, has suggested Mordechai Vanunu, an Israeli nuclear technician imprisoned since 1986 for revealing secrets about the country's atomic weapons se-

Others include Kosovo's President Ibrahim Rugova; Hermod Lannu, a 100-year old Dane nominated for his lifelong efforts to promote international solidarity; and Maha Ghosananda, a Bhuddist Monk, for his efforts to bring peace to Cambodia.

The five-member commit-

tee will have its first meeting on February 28 to begin the process of picking a winner. to be announced in mid-October. Lundestad said the date had not been set.

- AFP/UNB photo

Republican presidential hopeful US Senator Bob Dole

flashes a thumbs up at a victory party in Des Moines,

Iowa on Monday. Dole won the most votes in the Iowa

The award is always presented in Oslo on December 10, the anniversary of the death of Alfred Nobel, a Swede who invented dynamite and endowed five Nobel prizes in his 1895 will. Prizes in literature,

physics, chemistry and physiology or medicine are awarded on the same day in Stockholm, Sweden, Also awarded is the Nobel Prize in economics endowed separately founded in 1969.

AFP adds: Groups or individuals such as universities. former peace prize laureates. the five-member Norwegian

Nobel Committee, and memhers of the World Court in the Hague.

Others include a Cambo dian monk who has led two walks for peace. Maha Ghosananda, and Ibrahim Rugova, the President of Kosovo, an Albian majority region of Serbia. Among the organisations

nominated are the committee of mothers of Russian soldiers, nominated for the first time, the aid group medicines sans frontiers (doctors without borders) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

Last year, the prize was won by Britain's Joseph Rot blat and his Pugwash movement for nuclear disarma

#### The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo, in contrast to the other Nobel prizes which are awarded in Stock-The award's creator

Swedish scientist and discoverer Alfred Nobel, wrote in his will in 1895 that Norway was to be included in his initiative, as Norway was joined with Sweden in a union until 1905.

This years peace prize laureate will receive the record sum of 74 million Swedish kronor (1.05 million dollars), up from last years 7.2 million kronor (1.02 mil hon doilars!

The winner will receive the prize in Oslo as tradition dictates on December 10 the anniversary of the death of Alfred Noble in San Remo

#### Niger rulers vow to hold polls by year end NIAMEY, Niger, Feb 13.

Niger's military government promised Monday to hold elections by the end of the year to return the country to civilian rule, reports AP The decision came less

than a month after Col. Batte Mainassara Ibrahim ousted Niger's first democratically elected president and de clared himself leader of a new ruling council Mainassara said he staged

the coup to end political squabbling that had led to a parliamentary deadlock for more than a year and he promised a quick return to civilian rule



EU Administrator Hans Koschnick (L) shows 'crossed fingers' as he along with Ejup Ganic (C), Vice-President of the Bosnian-Croat Federation, and NATO Secretary General Javier Solana (R) tours the Muslim part of the divided city of Mostar on Monday. Solana arrived in the city earlier yesterday for a brief visit to meet with the EU administration after the violent clashes in Mostar last week. - AFP/UNB photo

## North Koreans losing faith in communist regime'

a "hand-to-mouth basis, turning some elite members of the closed, communist society against its leadership, a

North Korean diplomat said on Tuesday, reports AP. Hyun Sung 11, 36, a third secretary at the North Korean Embassy in Zambia, ar-1 rived here in January, following his wife and a North Korean intelligence agent who

had defected two weeks ear-The three spoke at a news conference on Tuesday, giving a rare insight into the thinking of some of the North's elite groups. They

SEOUL, Feb 13: North Ko- were children of high-rank- ficials, who see Kim as a porea's economy is surviving on ing Communist Party officials. litical novice with a strange "We didn't see a future for the country. The word from home got worse and worse recently. The country is sur-

viving on a hand-to-mouth basis." Hyun said. Kim Jong II, son and heir of longtime ruler Kim II Sung, is leading the North following his father's July 1994 death. He is believed in firm control. But speculation has persisted over possible unrest, especially after last summer's massive flood dam-

Hyun said discontent with Kim is growing among midranking intelligentsia and of-