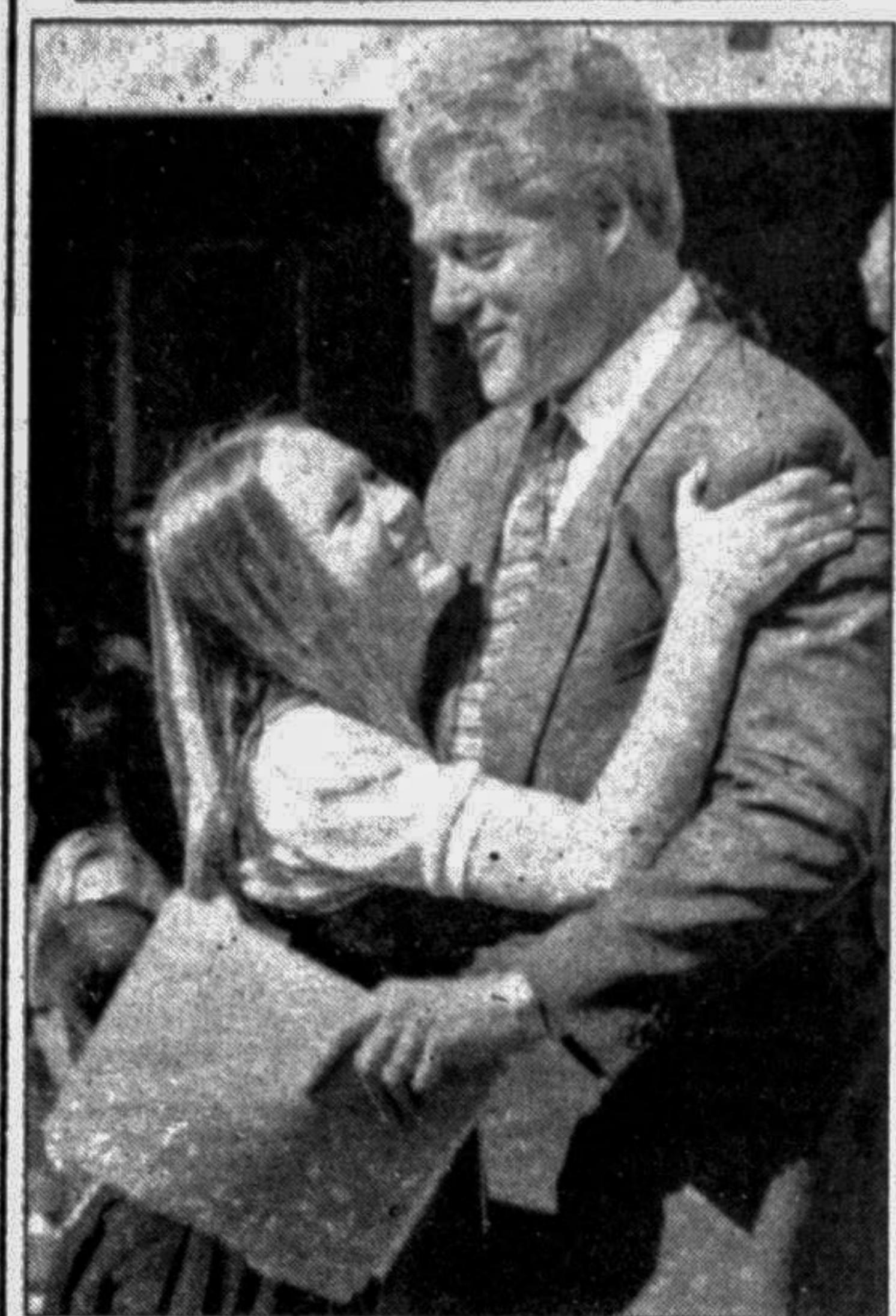


## BRIEFLY



US President Bill Clinton hugs eighth grader Melissa Machit after she introduced him on Saturday at the Jackie Robinson Academy in Long Beach, California. Clinton spoke to students and educators and reaffirmed his support for school uniforms. — AFP/UNB photo

**24 killed in Pak bus plunge:** An overcrowded passenger bus plunged into a canal south of the Pakistani capital, killing as many as 24 people, a newspaper reported Sunday. AP reports from Islamabad.

The accident happened late Saturday when the bus driver lost control of his vehicle while swerving to avoid an oncoming car, the English-language newspaper. The News reported. Rescue workers said they saved 40 people, but were able to recover the bodies of only three victims.

**Indian bus mishap death toll now 30:** A passenger bus collided with a truck and burst into flames Saturday, killing 30 people and critically injuring 25 others in a southern Indian town, a news report said. AP reports from New Delhi.

Fire engines took more than three hours to put out the blaze after the vehicles collided on a narrow road bridge near Sular town, 2,400 kilometers (1,500 miles) south of New Delhi, United News of India news agency said. The bus went up in flames so quickly that few people could jump out of the vehicle safely, it said.

**Farrakhan returns home:** Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan has returned to Chicago after an 18-nation trip during which he made statements angering US officials, AP reports from Chicago.

Farrakhan arrived at O'Hare International Airport on a chartered flight Saturday morning. He did not talk to reporters, who were kept more than one-quarter a mile away and behind a fence. He got into a limousine and left; his large entourage boarded other vehicles. Farrakhan was scheduled to speak Sunday about his trip to supporters and journalists at a Nation of Islam convention.

**Filipinos observe 10 yrs of democracy:** Filipinos celebrated 10 years of democracy Sunday, but with deepening divisions instead of unity and protest instead of joy, AP reports from Manila.

The four days of church-supported peaceful "people power" demonstrations which forced the late President Ferdinand Marcos into exile on Feb. 25, 1986, became a model for pro-democracy movements around the world. Corazon Aquino, the widow of an assassinated opposition leader, was catapulted into the presidency and restored democratic institutions.

**7 Christians shot dead in Egypt:** Suspected Muslim militants shot dead seven Christians in an ambush on a farm in southern Egypt late on Saturday, security sources said, Reuter reports from Assuit, Egypt.

They said the attack took place on a farm called Ezbet El-Aqbat in Bedari village in Assuit province, about 380 kms (236 miles) south of Cairo. Two other Christians were hurt in the attack, the sources said. Security officials in Assuit believe the gunmen were members of the militant Al-Gama'a Al-Islamiya (Islamic group), which has targeted Egyptian Christians, policemen and foreign tourists as part of an anti-government campaign aimed at installing a strict Islamic state in Egypt.

**Hussein to undergo ear surgery:** King Hussein said Saturday he will undergo surgery on his right ear drum, a malady that has kept him from his favourite hobby: piloting his private jet, AP reports from Amman.

Hussein, 60, made the announcement to Jordanians in an emotional letter read by an announcer over state-run Jordan Television. He provided no other details, but his private physician, Maj Gen Samir Farraj, said the monarch will undergo surgery for the perforation of the ear drum, a case whose medical name is Tympano Plasty.

**Quakes hit northeast of Tokyo:** A pair of moderate earthquakes hit an area northeast of Tokyo Sunday, but there were no reports of injuries or damage, AP reports from Tokyo.

A 3.8-magnitude quake centered in the Pacific Ocean off Ibaraki prefecture (state), struck at 5:58 am (2058 GMT), the Central Meteorological Agency said. It was followed at 6:38 am (2138 GMT) by a 4.3-magnitude quake, also centered in the Pacific off Ibaraki, the agency said.

**1 killed as US Navy jet crashes:** A Navy jet crashed into the ocean during a carrier exercise, killing one crew member and injuring two others, the Navy said. A fourth crew member was missing, AP reports from San Diego.

Palestinian legislative council opens on March 7

GAZA, Feb 25: The Palestinian legislative council will be inaugurated on March 7, seven weeks after historic Palestinian elections, a Palestinian official said on Saturday.

President Yasser Arafat will call the elected council to convene on March 7 and a number of world and Arab notables are invited to attend the inauguration of the council," said Marwan Karanfani, former Arafat spokesman and elected council member.

Arafat was sworn in as Palestinian President earlier this month, after his landslide victory in the first Palestinian elections on January 20, for the head of an interim government.

## "Saddam's sons-in-law victims of cruelty of Iraqi leadership"

DUBAI, Feb 25: From poison to mystery car accidents and daylight shootings, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has honed violence and cruelty into a ruthless weapon to crush opposition and keep an iron-fisted grip on power, reports AFP.

The Iraqi opposition believes Saddam's two sons-in-law General Hussein Kamel Hassan and Colonel Saddam Kamel were just the latest in a long line of people to fall victim to a regime which stands accused of widespread massacres and executions.

The official Iraqi version is that the brothers were killed on Friday in a shootout by other clan members who wanted to restore the family's honour after the two returned from a six month defection to Jordan.

But the story does not wash

with many who have fled themselves from the repression of the Iraqi leadership.

According to our information 250 people have been poisoned with lithium, of whom 103 have died. Others have been mown down by cars or thrown out of the windows of their apartments," said Ghani Jawad, the head of the Human Rights Office within the opposition Iraqi National Congress (INC).

Even before Saddam became president in 1979, he was Iraq's strongman after his Pan-Arab Baath Party seized power in 1968 and set his sights on those who represented any possible threat — from Kurds seeking autonomy to political opponents.

In 1971 a founder of the Shite party Al-Dawa, Abdel Saber Dehki, was dissolved in acid after being arrested and

tortured, said Mohammed Abd al-Jabbar, another leader from the INC, an opposition umbrella group.

In May 1970 Saddam tried to assassinate Kurdish leader Mustapha Brazeni in a failed booby-trapped car attack.

Saddam reportedly filmed the execution.

The same year a former foreign minister was gunned down in broad daylight as he was paying his water bill.

In 1980 in the run-up to the Iraq-Iran war, the Ayatollah Mohammad Baqer Al-Sadr, the most influential of the Shite Muslim clerics, died under torture just a few hours after a meeting with Saddam.

The president had asked him to withdraw a religious decree or *fatwa* banning membership of the Baath Party, but the cleric refused. His sister Bint Al-Huda died with him, Jawad added.

As Saddam took power in 1979 he unleashed a purge of the Baath Party where a deputy prime minister and three ministers were executed by other members of the government.

In 1983 the whole family of the Shite opposition figure Mohammad Baqer Al-Hakim who lived in Iran was arrested and threatened with death one by one if they did not stop his activities. Some 16 people including if of his brothers were executed.

There was international outrage in 1988 when 5,000 Kurdish villagers in Halabja in northern Iraq were massacred in a chemical attack.

Between 1987 and 1990, the Iraqi armed swept through Kurdistan, razing hundreds of villages and gassing others in a bid to force Kurds to leave their home.

The Iraqi leadership has also been blamed of trying to squeeze thousands of Shites out of their homelands in the marshes in southeastern Iraq.

After the eight-year war with Iran, former defence

minister Adnan Khairallah was killed in a helicopter "accident" in 1989. A cousin of the president and brother of his first wife Sajida, he made the mistake of saying he orchestrated the victory over Iran.

In 1988, in the middle of a cabinet meeting, Saddam himself killed a minister who had opposed the use of chemical weapons against the Kurds.

Saddam's grip even extends abroad where opposition figures have been hunted down by Iraqi secret services and assassinated during exile in Europe and other Arab countries.

Last year a former chairman of Iraq's Medical Association, Doctor Raji Takriti, a man in his seventies who had been living in Amman, returned to Baghdad on the president's request.

## LTTE mounts fresh attack on army camp : 1 killed

COLOMBO, Feb 25: Tamil Tiger guerrillas mounted a fresh attack against an army camp in eastern Sri Lanka today, killing one soldier and wounding at least six others, officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) launched a dawn assault against the Kinayadi Camp which had come under a similar raid three days ago.

The LTTE in a statement from its London office said 14 of their fighters were killed in the earlier attack, but officials put the death toll at 20 and said there were no casualties among the security forces because they were well prepared.

## International

## No-confidence motion against Rao in parliament today

NEW DELHI, Feb 25: The Indian opposition will table a no-confidence motion aimed at unseating Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao over a raging bribery scandal when parliament opens its budget session Monday, reports AFP.

A regional opposition party said Sunday it will try to vote out Rao's nearly five-year-old government over the country's worst scandal, and the other opposition parties said they might back the ouster move.

Opposition leaders said they expected the two-week session, the last before parliamentary polls expected in April, to be stormy as they would go all out to nail Rao over the scandal and a variety of other issues.

Although Rao's Congress (I) party has a slight majority in parliament, the opposition hopes disaffection in the ruling group triggered by the scandal may induce some of its MPs to abstain during the no-trust move.

"The government faces a serious credibility crisis," Kr-

ishan Lal Sharma, spokesman for the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party), told the news agency. "It will be a very stormy session."

He said MPs from BJP, the second largest group in parliament after the Congress, would decide Sunday or Monday whether it should back the Telugu Desam Party's motion or initiate own anti-Rao strategy.

There is a strong possibility that some members from the ruling party can vote against the government," Sharma said. "In the case the government will be facing a very serious situation." The Telugu Desam's no-trust vote is expected to get the support of communists and the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party).

Indian politics has been in turmoil since federal detectives began pressing charges last month against powerful politicians over the scandal in which a New Delhi business-

man paid huge bribes over the years in return for favours.

The bribe takers include leaders of almost every political party with the exception of the communists. The businessman maintained details of the payments in coded diaries which have been seized.

The scandal has led to the resignations of seven ministers from Rao's government, fueling serious discontent in the Congress ahead of elections that are expected to result in a hung parliament.

Congress sources said some of the former ministers who quit under pressure from Rao, the 74-year-old party president, had turned against him, several more party leaders face prosecution in the case.

BJP president Lal Krishna Advani has resigned from parliament while the party's chief minister of New Delhi city, Madan Lal Khurana quit last week after being named in the scandal.

The Congress is, however, confident of overcoming the opposition challenge.

The Prime Minister is sufficiently strong to meet any threat," said party spokesman Vithal Gadgil. "There is no danger to the government."

The Indian parliament meets every February to pass the country's federal budget. But this year Finance Minister Manmohan Singh will only present limited budget because of the impending elections.

Opposition leaders said the session, which will end on March 12, will also see acrimonious debates over mounting corruption, Kashmir and issues related to national security, including Pakistan's support to Indian insurgents.

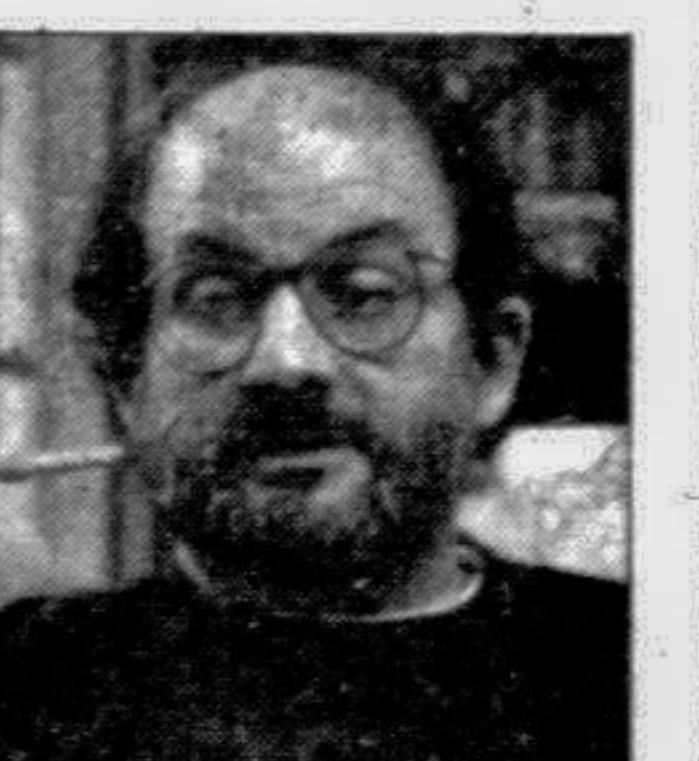
"The PM is himself to blame for all his troubles," said the BJP's Sharma. "Ranvir Paswan of the centrist Janata Dal said: "The scandal's reverberations will be certainly felt in parliament."

## Off the Record

### Ready to celebrate 7 yrs of deadly fatwa

NEW YORK: Author Salman Rushdie is ready to "warily celebrate" another anniversary: Seven years of living under a death sentence imposed by the Iranian government over his book, "The Satanic Verses," reports AP.

"I have tried to emerge from the shadows to which I was, for a time, confined," Rushdie writes in the March 11 issue of The Nation magazine. "To go on writing and live more openly are my ways of showing that I have not been intimidated."



In February 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini announced the fatwa against Rushdie, claiming "The Satanic Verses" was blasphemous. A multi-million-dollar bounty was placed on Rushdie's head, and the author dropped out of sight.

But in recent months, Rushdie says, he has visited a dozen countries. At each stop, he found "an atmosphere of wary support in dodging the fatwa."

### 1453 Kashmiri militants in jails

### Indo-Pak troops trade gunfire on Kashmir border

JAMMU (India), Feb 25: Indian and Pakistani troops traded heavy gunfire on their disputed Kashmir border overnight after a 48-hour lull, but no one was injured, defence officials said today, reports AFP.

Pakistani soldiers opened fire at two Indian posts in the R S Pura sector, 25 kms from this summer capital of Kashmir state, the officials said here.

The Pakistanis used medium and light machine guns, an official said. "They fired more than 3,000 rounds. We retaliated with equal force."

The gun battle lasted an hour, sources in the border security force said. No one was injured in the firing.

Indian officials said the Pakistanis began shooting

after suspecting that Indian authorities were laying a fence along the winding frontier of Kashmir, a Himalayan state whose ownership is disputed by both countries.

Skirmishes between Indian and Pakistani troops on the Kashmir frontier are common and often last for days.

PTI adds: The Jammu and Kashmir government has already apprehended a large number of Kashmiri militants, who are languishing in different jails and interrogation centres within and outside the state.

An official spokesman told PTI that only 1453 Kashmiri militants were presently lodged in jails and other interrogation centres.

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### Chun goes on trial today

SEOUL, South Korea, Feb 25: Former President Chun Doo-hwan goes on trial Monday on corruption charges, with many politicians holding their breath over whether he will name those who allegedly received his political payouts, reports AP.

Chun, president from 1980 to 1988, is the second ex-president to face punishment for alleged wrong-doing in office. His handpicked successor and army friend, Roh Tae-woo, is already standing trial on similar charges.

They also may stand trial together in March on mutiny and treason charges arising from the 1979 coup that brought them to power and a 1980 military crackdown that killed or wounded hundreds of pro-democracy protesters.

Also going on trial with Chun Monday are five close aides, including chief bodyguard Ahn Hyun-tae, who allegedly helped him amass the largest slush fund in South Korean history — dols 900 million. Roh's slush fund was estimated at dols 650 million.

Chun is charged with colluding at least dols 275 million in bribes from businessmen seeking lucrative government contracts. Prosecutors were expected to grill him about where he spent the money.

They earlier quoted Chun as confessing that he paid out dols 110 million from 1990 until last October to hundreds of politicians and journalists in an attempt to engineer a political comeback.

Chun reportedly planned to place some of his followers in the National Assembly in elections in April and later form his own party.

The so-called "Chun Doo-hwan List" could have an explosive impact. Aides hinted that the ex-president could selectively name those he believes have betrayed him.

Many of Chun's followers are running in the upcoming parliamentary elections, which are crucial to President Kim Young-sam's efforts to govern effectively during the remainder of his five-year term, which ends in early 1998.

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