

## Militants attack village: 36 massacred

# Blast kills 21 in Algiers

ALGIERS, Algeria, Jan 20: Five years into a bloody insurgency that has killed more than 60,000 people since 1992, Algeria convulsed anew in a week-end of violence that claimed at least 57 lives, reports AP.

A car bomb outside a cafe in the heart of Algiers killed at least 21 people and wounded 60 others Sunday night. 30 of them seriously. It exploded just hours after armed men attacked a village, decapitating some of their victims in a massacre of 36 people.

"It's carnage," said one man helping at the scene of the car bomb. The street was littered with bodies covered by sheets borrowed from nearby residents.

Another explosion was reported Sunday near Reghaia, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) east of Algiers, residents said. There were reports of injuries and damage, but no immediate details.

Government security forces, speaking on condition of

anonymity, said Sunday might have been even more bloody had they not managed to dis-mantle at least six other car bombs placed around the capital.

One had been set to explode near the bustling Belcourt market in the heart of Algiers, not far from where the cafe car bomb exploded, the officials said.

The bomb exploded just after 8 p.m. Sunday in downtown Algiers, and it was powerful enough to be heard across the capital. In an official casualty toll issued late Sunday night, the government said 21 people were killed and 30 of the wounded were seriously hurt, five gravely.

Stunned by the scope of the attack, several hundred local residents spontaneously walked to nearby hospitals and clinics to give blood.

Witnesses said the bomb exploded in front of a cafe next to the Le Musset cinema in the heart of Belcourt just as local

residents were breaking their daily fast for the holy month of Ramadan. Ambulances and police cars converged on the area, and authorities sealed off the area.

Witnesses said the force of the blast caused heavy damage to shops and other buildings.

In Bent-Slimane, a small village 70 kilometres (45 miles) south of Algiers, an armed group killed 36 people in bloodshed that lasted for several hours, security forces said. The official APS news agency said some of the victims were decapitated.

It was unclear whether the massacre occurred late Saturday or early Sunday. No one immediately claimed responsibility for either attack, but suspicion fell on Islamic radicals fighting to overthrow the government and install strict Koranic rule.

Algeria's insurgency began in January 1992.

## By-polls defeat may force Major to declare early election

LONDON, Jan 20: A poll showing British Prime Minister John Major's ruling Conservatives will be defeated in a crucial by-election could force him to push forward the date of the general election. The Sun newspaper said today, reports Reuters.

The country's top-selling tabloid said a Mori poll shows the opposition Labour Party, which is widely tipped to win the general election that Major must call by May, will win the Wirral South constituency in northern England with a 16-point swing.

"No government has held office after suffering a swing of more than five per cent in the last by-election," the newspaper said.

Major must choose a date for the by-election following the death of Conservative member of parliament Barry Porter last year. Porter won the seat in 1992 with a majority of 8,123.

# 55 Pak women to contest Feb 3 polls, but focus likely to be on Bhutto dynasty

KARACHI, Jan 20: Around 55 women are running in Pakistan's elections next month, but interest is likely to focus on the members of the Bhutto dynasty who share the political legacy of their influential family, reports AFP.

Prominent male members of the Bhutto family have met violent deaths, leaving behind widows and daughter to protect the political future of a family riven by rivalry.

Deposed premier Benazir Bhutto, veteran of three election campaigns, faces a stiff challenge from Ghinva, the widow of Benazir's slain brother Murtaza Bhutto.

Lebanese-born Ghinva was pushed into the political spotlight after Murtaza — a political foe of his sister Benazir — and seven of his colleagues were killed in a police shootout last September in Karachi.

Ghinva 30, now heads her slain husband's party and has

fielded candidates against Benazir's Pakistan People's Party. Ghinva critical of Benazir as was Murtaza before his death is herself contesting against her mother-in-law Nusrat Bhutto for a national assembly seat in the Benazir's ancestral hometown of Larkana.

"It is a family tussle," says Azra Abbas a well known poetess.

"In a country like ours, women can cash in on the bodies of their relatives but end up doing what male rulers do, she said, expressing disappointment with the performance of successive governments.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir and Murtaza's father was overthrown as prime minister in a military coup in 1977 and hanged in 1979 after being convicted for murder in a controversial trial.

Oxford educated Benazir Bhutto became the Muslim na-

tions first woman prime minister in 1988 but her government was dismissed in 1990 for alleged corruption and misuse.

Re-elected in 1993 Benazir is now struggling to regain her political fortunes after the dismissal of her second government by President Farooq Ahmed Leghari in November on similar charges.

Benazir's husband Asif Ali Zardari is in jail pending trial for Murtaza's murder.

The Bhutto women's political struggle has not impressed some women's rights activists.

How much difference have they made for the improvement of the living conditions of women, asks Hilda Saeed a member of the Womens Action Forum.

I cannot even think of any women politicians who have stood up for suppressed or oppressed women, she said.

According to her most women politicians had shat-

tered our dreams. "No one of them stood against victimisation of women and the general isolation of women in our society, she added.

Former premier Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League and former cricket star-turned-politician Imran Khan's Movement for Justice and other parties have also fielded women candidates.

In Pakistan's tribal areas where they have been given the vote for the first time women have been told by tribal leaders not to vote as they think this will hurt their 'honour and dignity.'

But I see hope, whenever women try to participate in the election process," said school teacher Shamsa Najam.

Twenty seats for women were reserved in the national assembly until the practice was abandoned in 1990.

## BRIEFLY



Chechen separatist commander Shamil Basayev, who headed the Chechen troops in the Budenovsk hostage taking, speaks to supporters during a pre-election campaign in the city of Shelkovskaya, Saturday, at the Russian-Chechen border. The presidential elections in Chechnya are scheduled for January 27th.

— AFP/UNB photo

**Qatar, Bahrain to sign accord:** Qatar and Bahrain will sign an agreement at week's end in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, to improve ties frayed by escalations over a decades-long dispute, the Qatari Foreign Minister announced Sunday night. AFP reports from Doha.

"Qatar and Bahrain will sign in Jeddah at week's end the text of an agreement" to bolster ties between the two members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Sheikh Hamad bin Jasssem bin Jabr al-Thani told reporters after a meeting of the foreign ministers of the other four GCC states — Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

**Atlantis undocks from Mir:** With cries of "see you guys," the Atlantis astronauts hugged the three men on the Russian space station Mir goodbye, then sealed the hatches and flew away. AP reports from Cape Canaveral.

Shuttle Atlantis undocked slowly and gently from Mir Sunday night after five days of joined flight, as the spacecraft soared more than 240 miles (384 kilometres) above Russia.

**NATO Secy Gen meets Russian FM:** NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov began talks Monday on resolving tension over the Western alliance's plans to expand in to eastern Europe despite Russian opposition. AP reports from Moscow.

The goal of the visit by the general secretary is to start working out a new relationship with Russia before a NATO summit in Madrid in July at which some of Russia's former allies of the defunct Warsaw Pact are expected to be invited to join.

## 'English Patient', 'Evita', Madonna, Tom Cruise, 'X-Files' big winners

# Golden Globe awards announced

BEVERLY HILLS, Jan 20: The Golden Globes for drama had a definite foreign tone with winners "The English Patient" as best picture, England's Brenda Blethyn as top actress for "Secrets and Lies" and Australia's Geoffrey Rush for "Shine," reports AP.

"Evita" was a triple winner — as best musical or comedy movie, best musical-comedy actress for its star Madonna and best original song for "You Must Love Me."

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association also bestowed honours on "The People vs. Larry Flynt," with awards to director Milos Forman and writers Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski.

The Golden Globe for best foreign language film went to the Czech Republic's "Kolya."

The Golden Globes, which often presage the Oscars, launch Hollywood's movie awards season.

"I have been so incredibly blessed in this past year," a grateful Madonna, who also had her first baby last year, said in accepting her Golden Globe. "Making this picture has been a great experience artistically and spiritually. I will

never forget it."

Tom Cruise, the sports agent of "Jerry Maguire," was the musical or comedy actor winner.

Blethyn, the mother of a black daughter she never knew in "Secrets and Lies," was virtually unknown to American audiences before.

"I'm so happy to be in the building much less standing up here," she said in accepting her award.

Rush, who played the mentally troubled piano virtuoso of "Shine," was a hugely popular winner with the stellar Beverly Hilton Hotel audience, which gave him an unusual standing ovation.

"I'm very proud to be part of a film that has taken such a vulnerable, peculiar and very human character and placed him at the heart of a film," Rush said.

Cruise, like Madonna a popular winner with the dinner crowd, began by acknowledging the other nominees, then paid tribute to his fellow actor Cuba Gooding Jr., who played the athlete Maguire managed.

He added his thanks to his parents for their "insightful generosity" and to his wife Nicole Kidman for her "warmth

and all the love and support she gave me."

Forman was picked best motion picture director for "The People vs. Larry Flynt." Mel Gibson, last year's director winner for "Braveheart," handed Forman the trophy.

"Last time I got a cigar from Mel, this is better," Forman told the audience during the nationally televised 34th Hollywood Foreign Press Association presentations.

When screenwriters Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski were announced winners for "The People vs. Larry Flynt" about the pornography publisher's battles against censorship, the hugged Larry Flynt, who sat nearby in his gold-plated wheelchair.

Bacall waved her Golden Globe aloft to hoots of joy as the audience rose to its feet.

"I'm in a state of shock," she said. "This is the first time I've been nominated for an award in

## House-to-house search continues Strike cripples Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Jan 20: A one-day strike called by Muslim separatist militants brought large areas of the troubled state of Kashmir to a standstill today, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The militants called for the shutdown to protest against alleged violence by Indian troops against civilians in the Himalayan state.

Schools, banks, shops and government buildings in Srinagar, which has a population of 800,000, were closed today, while the roads were virtually empty of traffic. Several other towns were also affected.

The strike was called by the Freedom Conference, an umbrella group of Muslim break-away groups calling for independence or merger with Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Indian troops continued to conduct house-to-house searches in the run-up to

the country's Republic Day on January 26.

Paramilitary and army personnel launched the searches two weeks ago. Kashmir Home Minister Ali Mohammed Sagar said the operation would continue until Republic Day, which Muslim militants have vowed to sabotage.

Monday's strike was the second in this month. The previous stoppage was called in protest against India's refusal to hold a UN-sponsored referendum to decide the future of the territory.

Around 17,000 people have died in separatist-linked violence in Kashmir since 1989.

India accuses Pakistan, which disputes Kashmir's ownership, of backing the rebels. Islamabad denies the charge but offers diplomatic support to the campaign.

## 'Milosevic preparing for civil war in Kosovo'

BELGRADE, Jan 20: Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic is preparing for a civil war in the Kosovo region of Serbia in order to save his troubled regime, the Serbian opposition charged on Sunday, reports AFP.

Speaking to a crowd of over 20,000 people gathered in the centre of Belgrade, Vuk Draskovic, one of the leaders of the opposition together coalition, accused Milosevic of playing his "last card."

"Milosevic is trying to play his last card by preparing civil war in Kosovo (a southern province in Serbia) without caring about the consequences and the expected bloodbath," he said.

Kosovo, which has a predominantly ethnic Albanian population but has been ruled from Belgrade since 1989, has regularly called for independence.

The province has witnessed a series of attacks since the start of the year. Three Albanians have been killed in the last ten days. An unknown organisation has claimed responsibility for the deaths of two of them, accusing them of "collaborating" with Belgrade.

**Opposition's 10-day ultimatum to Milosevic**

Meanwhile Serbian Opposition Leader Vuk Draskovic set President Slobodan Milosevic a ten-day deadline for recognising all opposition victories in last year's municipal elections in an interview published in Rennes Monday.

A "social explosion" was the probable outcome of a continued refusal by Milosevic to bow to popular pressure to recognise all the opposition wins in the November 17 polls, Draskovic told "Ouest-France," France's biggest-selling daily newspaper.

## Tajik peace talks end with accord on key issues

TEHRAN, Jan 20: The two-week long inter-Tajik peace talks wound up here yesterday with both parties signing an agreement on several major issues to guarantee a lasting peace in the Republic of Tajikistan, reports Xinhua.

Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati told reporters after the negotiations that the peace talks in Tehran succeeded in preparing the ground for signing the final document on national reconciliation in the next round of talks in Tehran or Moscow in a few weeks time.

He voiced Iran's readiness to make every endeavour to help restore a just and lasting peace in Tajikistan, Iran's official

news agency IRNA reported.

The IRNA said, representatives of the Tajik government and the United Islamic Opposition reached an agreement on repatriation of Tajik refugees, declaration of general amnesty by the two sides and the procedure for forming a central commission for the upcoming general elections.

About 700,000 people were displaced as a result of the civil war, but most of them have now returned home.

The report said that the two sides also agreed on holding plebiscite during the transitional period, the quota of the opposition in the commission and restructuring the Tajik administration system.

## 320,000 cut off or trapped Blizzard kills 36 in China

BEIJING, Jan 20: Some 320,000 people are cut off or trapped and 36 have been confirmed dead in the most violent snow storms in northwest China for three decades, the official China daily said today, reports AFP.

Two bodies had been uncovered in the past few days, while four people remain missing and 18 seriously injured. A total of 23 counties in Xinjiang have been struck by blizzard, which first hit the autonomous region in late December.

The snow is up to two meters (seven feet) deep in mountain areas and 40 centimetres (1.5 feet) in plain areas.

## Hashimoto for closer ties with Asia

TOKYO, Jan 20: Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto called Monday for deeper cooperation and dialogue with Asian neighbours, while seeking to further strengthen his country's ties with United States, reports AFP.

"For Japan's diplomacy, it is extremely important that the Asia-Pacific region maintains political stability and economic development based on open regional cooperation," he said in a policy speech to parliament.

Hashimoto said Japan hoped to intensify cooperation with Asia to jointly tackle global problems such as population, food, energy and the environment.

## Off the Record

### Hillary opposes sex for people under 21

PARIS: First Lady Hillary Clinton said today on French television that divorce is too easy in the United States and that she opposed sex for young people under the age of 21, reports AFP.

Interviewed by star presenter Anne Sinclair on the privately owned TF1 channel, Hillary said she was not opposed to divorce in every instance, but added that "divorce is too easy" and that "parents don't try to stay together for their children" or "they have ideals of marriage which are not realistic and therefore break up the marriage and the children suffer."

The First Lady also said her "ideal would be that young people not have sex before they are 21." She added that in the United States, there were "so much loose attitudes and behaviors without any responsibility" which led to "a very high rate of teenage pregnancy" and "a very high rate of sexually transmitted diseases."

Speaking on the eve of Bill Clinton's investiture,

she said that scandals affecting the presidential couple "have no basis in evidence or fact," referring to the Whitewater real estate affair and the lawsuit for sexual harassment brought by Paula Jones against the president.

Hillary Clinton said there was "a lot of politics in all these scandals" and that "there are very strong interests in our country who are politically opposed to my husband's policy and so they continue to say things and make charges."

Hillary ruled out standing for president herself one day saying "I don't think I would be interested."

She added: "But I do think there will be a woman president in the next 10 or 20 years. I hope sooner instead of later."



## Lankan air force jet missing over Indian Ocean

COLOMBO, Jan 20: A Sri Lankan air force reconnaissance plane hunting for Tamil Tiger guerrilla ships is missing over the Indian Ocean and presumed to have crashed, air force officials said Monday, reports AP.

The Chinese-built Y-12, plane, with a crew of three, was last seen on Friday. The force officer had only enough fuel to keep it in the air until 8 a.m. (0200 GMT Monday), officials said. Radio contact was lost at about 0530 a.m. (2330 GMT Sunday).

The plane, which took off from an airfield near Colombo to hunt for guerrilla arms-smugglers, reported that it was descending to take a close look at a ship in the Gulf of Mannar, an arm of the Indian Ocean, when contact was lost.

The pilot, Flight Lt. R. Nanayakkara, had not reported any problems, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The area is about 130 kilometres (80 miles) from the island's west coast.

There was no immediate comment from the guerrillas, who have used missiles to down several planes in the last two years.

## Arafat offers conciliatory gesture to settlers

# Hebron deal 'blueprint' for peace with PLO: Netanyahu

WASHINGTON, Jan 20: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday the deal signed on Hebron last week represents a "blueprint" for peace with Palestinians based on the principle of reciprocity, reports AFP.

In an interview with Fox television, Netanyahu said a key to the agreement signed with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat is the idea of reciprocity, meaning the PLO pledges to fulfil its commitments, including annulling its charter calling for the destruction of Israel.

"I think now we have a blueprint for how to proceed on peace with Palestinians," he said. "We have to end a situation of one-way giving by Israel and one-way receiving by the Palestinians. We fulfil our commitments and they fulfil theirs."

Under the pact signed last week between the Israelis and Palestinians, Israeli troops withdrew from Friday from some 80 per cent of the city except the enclaves where Jewish settlers

live surrounded by 120,000 Palestinians.

Netanyahu said the Hebron agreement balances "the Palestinians' need for self-government and our needs to protect ourselves."

Asked about Arafat's suggestion of dual sovereignty for Jerusalem, Netanyahu said, "he can seek all he wants but we're not going to redive Jerusalem. We're not going to erect a Berlin Wall in the centre of that city again."

The prime minister said any final agreement will be "negotiated and not imposed by one side or the other."

Speaking with CNN, Netanyahu praised Arafat for his handling of the recent talks.

"I do want to say that I also was struck by the fact that his tone was different, that he talked in Hebron about, in fact, accommodation with the Israelis, Jewish residents of Hebron," he said of Arafat. "And I think that's a very good move."

In a separate interview with ABC, the Israeli Prime Minister

"I have a number of ideas, and I think yes, the process will resume," he said, adding that the talks should have no preconditions.

AP adds: Yasser Arafat returned to Hebron triumphantly, blowing kisses to elated Palestinians and offering a conciliatory gesture to Israeli settlers during his first visit to the West Bank city in three decades.

"With this Hebron deal, we have signed peace with all the Israeli people. This is something new," he said Sunday from the balcony of Hebron's new Palestinian police station, formerly the Israeli military headquarters.

Arafat, whose government took control of four-fifths of Hebron on Friday, had not been in the city since 1965, when he organised guerrilla cells to fight Israel. Now, he controls 80 per cent of it under an accord that keeps 20 per cent of the city in Israeli hands.

"said he believed talks with Syria would resume and that he had several ideas.