

## International

## BRIEFLY

**3 Azeri coup-plotters sentenced:** Azerbaijan's Supreme Court Tuesday sentenced three men accused of attempting to overthrow the government to heavy jail terms, Interfax News Agency reported. AFP reports from Moscow.

The three Azerbaijanis, arrested a year ago, were alleged to have aided former Prime Minister Suret Husseinov in an abortive coup attempt in October 1994. One of the three, Ilgar Safikhanov, is the former head of the Interpol office in Azerbaijan. Interfax said. He was arrested in Russia and extradited to Baku.

**Edn minister resigns in Ecuador:** Ecuador's education minister Sandra Correa resigned on Tuesday hours before congress was expected to impeach her for alleged plagiarism in compiling her law doctorate, Reuters reports from Quito.

Correa was one of the most unpopular ministers in the 6-month-old government of President Abdala Bucaram. Her position became untenable after the central university took away her doctorate because she could not disprove plagiarism. "I resign irrevocably and I will not go to congress this afternoon," she told a news conference at which she blasted the Ecuadorean media for "lending itself to political manipulation."

**7 shot dead in Siberia:** Seven people, all dead from gunshot wounds to their heads, were found Tuesday in a country settlement near this western Siberian town, officials said. AP reports from Surout.

District administration officials described the shooting as the gravest crime in the region over the past 18 months, the ITAR-Tass news agency said. Police believe that some of those killed could have been involved in a violent clash between rival criminal groups. The victims also included three settlement guards, who were shot point-blank and apparently had nothing to do with the mob, the report said.

## 50,000 gather in Belgrade against Milosevic

BELGRADE, Jan 29: Hundreds of riot police blocked the streets of Belgrade as an estimated 50,000 people gathered in the city centre for a 70th straight day of protests against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, reports AP.

But unlike recent days that have turned violent, police did not intervene in Tuesday

## Yeltsin opposes quitting int'l sanctions against Iraq

MOSCOW, Jan 29: President Boris Yeltsin on Tuesday criticised Russian parliament's calls to unilaterally quit international sanctions against Iraq, a spokesman said, reports AP.

In a letter sent to the lower house of parliament, Yeltsin noted that a draft bill on relations with Iraq, passed in December, contradicts Russia's constitution and its international obligations, presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said.

The passage of the federal law on Russia unilaterally stopping its participation in the international sanctions against Iraq... would mean a violation of Russia's obligations under the UN charter," Yastrzhembsky said.

The move would put Russia in opposition to the world community and significantly limit its ability to influence the process of overcoming the consequences of the Gulf crisis, Yastrzhembsky said.

The international sanctions against Iraq were imposed by the United Nations Security Council after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

## Clinton urges Syria, Israel to resume peace talks

WASHINGTON, Jan 29: President Bill Clinton Tuesday urged Israel and Syria to resume their negotiations and said this will be "a major focus" in his planned talks with Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian leaders, reports AP.

"There will never be a comprehensive peace in the Middle East until we receive this matter with Syria, between Syria and Israel," Clinton said at a White House press conference.

He stressed that it was up to the Israeli and Syrian governments to relaunch the negotiations, interrupted for over a year.

"When both parties want to make peace, no matter how far apart they seem, we find a way to get there," said Clinton. "If they're not sure it's time to make peace, no matter how close it seems to an outsider, we don't seem to be able to bridge the gap," he continued.

Clinton confirmed that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, King Hussein of Jordan and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak would be coming to Washington in the coming months.

The White House said that Clinton would hold bilateral talks and that there would be no summit involving all five leaders.

The dates of the visits have yet to be announced.

Clinton once again praised the agreement reached last week between Netanyahu and Arafat on the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Hebron and on a timetable for the army's withdrawal from rural areas on the West Bank.

## Prithvi-250 to be tested shortly

NEW DELHI, Jan 29: The deadly Prithvi-250 surface to air and two other shorter range missiles will be tested shortly, defence sources said Tuesday, reports PTI.

Prithvi-250, being developed for the Indian Air Force is likely to enter the final phase of trial runs from Chandipur on sea near Balasore in Orissa.

Even though the window for the time frame of testing 'Prithvi-250, has not been finalised it may take place anytime in the next three months.

The authorities at the interim test range near Balasore have already issued a notification for eviction of about 600 people from villages near the tests site.

The sources said anti-tank 'Nag' and surface to air 'Akash' missiles were likely to be tested between February and April this year. 'Akash' and 'Nag' would undergo user trial by armed forces after the test flights.

**Rebels kill 6 cops in Colombia**

BOGOTA, Jan 29: Leftist guerrillas overran a town in a remote region of northwest Colombia early on Tuesday, killing six policemen and taking three medical workers prisoner, a police spokesman said, reports Reuters.

## Russian opposition hails Chechen elections

# Maskhadov ready for talks with Moscow within reasonable limits

GROZNY, Jan 29: Chechnya's president-elect sounded a note of conciliation with Moscow after his victory, saying he is ready to negotiate over his republic's ultimate political status, reports AP.

But Aslan Maskhadov, a firm advocate of Chechen independence, cautioned that he will only compromise within reasonable limits.

Maskhadov, the separatist military chief who negotiated a triumphant end to the war with Russia, insists the Chechnya already has won its freedom.

Moscow says it will not tolerate secession, and President Boris Yeltsin made clear Tuesday that Chechnya must remain part of Russia.

Russian newspapers took a wait-and-see attitude Wednesday to the election results, some expressing relief that a man seen as pragmatic and calm had won.

"Moscow is ready to recognise any president when it's not (Shamil) Basayev," wrote Moskovsky Komsomol, referring to the guerrilla commander who finished a distant second in Monday's election.

Rossiyskiye Vesti, the government newspaper said in a front-page headline: "A new headache for politicians and old troubles and hopes for an ordinary man."

After a 20-month guerilla war that led to the humiliating withdrawal of Russian troops, Chechens clearly feel they are in a strong negotiating position. But Moscow is certain to place political, diplomatic and economic pressure on Chechnya, which can expect a struggle to win recognition from the international community.

In a 16-man presidential race, Maskhadov won 65 per cent of the vote with almost all of the ballots counted his chief of staff said. Unofficial results showed the closest challenger, fellow rebel fighter Shamil Basayev, with less than 30 per cent of the vote.

Official results are expected later in the week.

Maskhadov in a news conference at his campaign headquarters in Grozny, welcomed his rivals into his administration. Basayev, whom Moscow considers a terrorist for his

1995 hostage-taking in a southern Russian town, was not planning to take a government post, an aide said.

Maskhadov, a former Soviet army officer, also said he wants to make Chechnya an Islamic state and plans to demand war compensation from Russia.

But he acknowledged that Chechnya, which had only 1.2 million people before the war and has fewer now, will need strong economic links with Russia regardless of whether it achieve independence.

"If the Russians finally realize that they've tried every single method and that the only thing that's left is direct talks, then we are prepared for this," Maskhadov said.

The Russians pulled their last troops from Chechnya less than a month ago, and there is little they can do now to control internal affairs in the southern territory. Chechen separatists have been running the republic since a peace deal negotiated by Maskhadov ended the war in August but postponed a decision on its political status for five years.

In Moscow, Yeltsin stood firm against Chechen independence. Presidential spokesman Sergei Yastrzhembsky said the outcome provides hope for productive negotiations "in determining the status of the Chechen Republic within the Russian federation."

Russian officials and politicians, including the opposition Communists, also voiced hope for a constructive dialogue with Maskhadov.

AFP adds: Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov on Tuesday appeared satisfied by the election of Aslan Maskhadov as the new Chechen president.

The Russian opposition leader described the victory in Monday's Chechnya presidential elections as a moderate politician a soldier who knows the Russian situation well and understands that without Russia Chechnya would not be viable.

Referring to impending talks with the Chechen leadership Zyuganov added "We are going to support a dialogue with him."

## 'Benazir's political wounds are deeper than when she lost power in '90'

KARACHI, Jan 29: Benazir Bhutto is in the throes of a hectic election campaign, aiming to regain the premiership that she was twice forced out of and shows no sign of buckling down under pressure, reports AP.

"She is living up to her reputation as a political fighter, more aggressive when hurt, like a wounded tigress," said Rashid Rajar, editor of the Independent Daily, Sindhi.

But this time political wounds are deeper than when she lost the office in 1990," said Rajar, whose Sindhi language daily is published from Hyderabad, a major city in Sindh, Benazir's home province and bastion in southern Pakistan.

Rifts have weakened her party after her November 5 dismissal by President Farooq Ahmed Leghari on charges of corruption and misuse of a political challenge arose from within the Bhutto family.

Newspapers have been reporting a spate of corruption scandals, mainly involving her jailed husband, Asif Ali Zardari, former investment minister in her cabinet.

He is charged with involvement in the killing of Bhutto's politically estranged brother, Murtaza, who died in a police shootout in Karachi on September 20 while Benazir was in power.

Murtaza's widow, Lebanese-born Ghinva, is campaigning for the February 3 elections on an anti-Benazir platform that is seen to be cutting into the former premier's stronghold in Sindh.

In Punjab, the largest and politically dominant province, Benazir's arch foe, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is widely seen to be the front runner, at the head of his Pakistan Muslim League.

Despite the odds, Benazir is



Deposed prime minister of Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto (R) chats with her mother Nusrat Bhutto during an election rally in her own constituency in Larkana, some 520 kilometers from Karachi, Tuesday. Nusrat appealed the people to vote for her daughter in her first public appearance since the death of her son Murtaza Bhutto.

keeping her chin up, drawing large crowds turn to her rallies in cities and towns, urging people to back her "battle for democracy."

"People are with me. They have confidence in me," she said at a public meeting in Rawalpindi, Punjab.

She is constantly on the move, by road or by helicopter addressing four to five rallies a day.

Her speeches in Sindhi and Urdu languages are marked by fiery rhetoric and much waving of hands.

"Your sister has come before you. The biggest court is of the masses and I am before you. Be-

nazir told a gathering of farmers in Sindh.

"Leghari though he could keep me away from the electoral process, but come Leghari and see that people even today love Benazir," she said.

"I am not afraid of death, death is in God's hand."

She stood up to military dictator Muhammad Zia Ul Haq after he toppled her father Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1977 and sent him to the gallows two years later.

After the dismissal of her first government in 1990 Benazir kept her party intact, bouncing back in the 1993 elec-

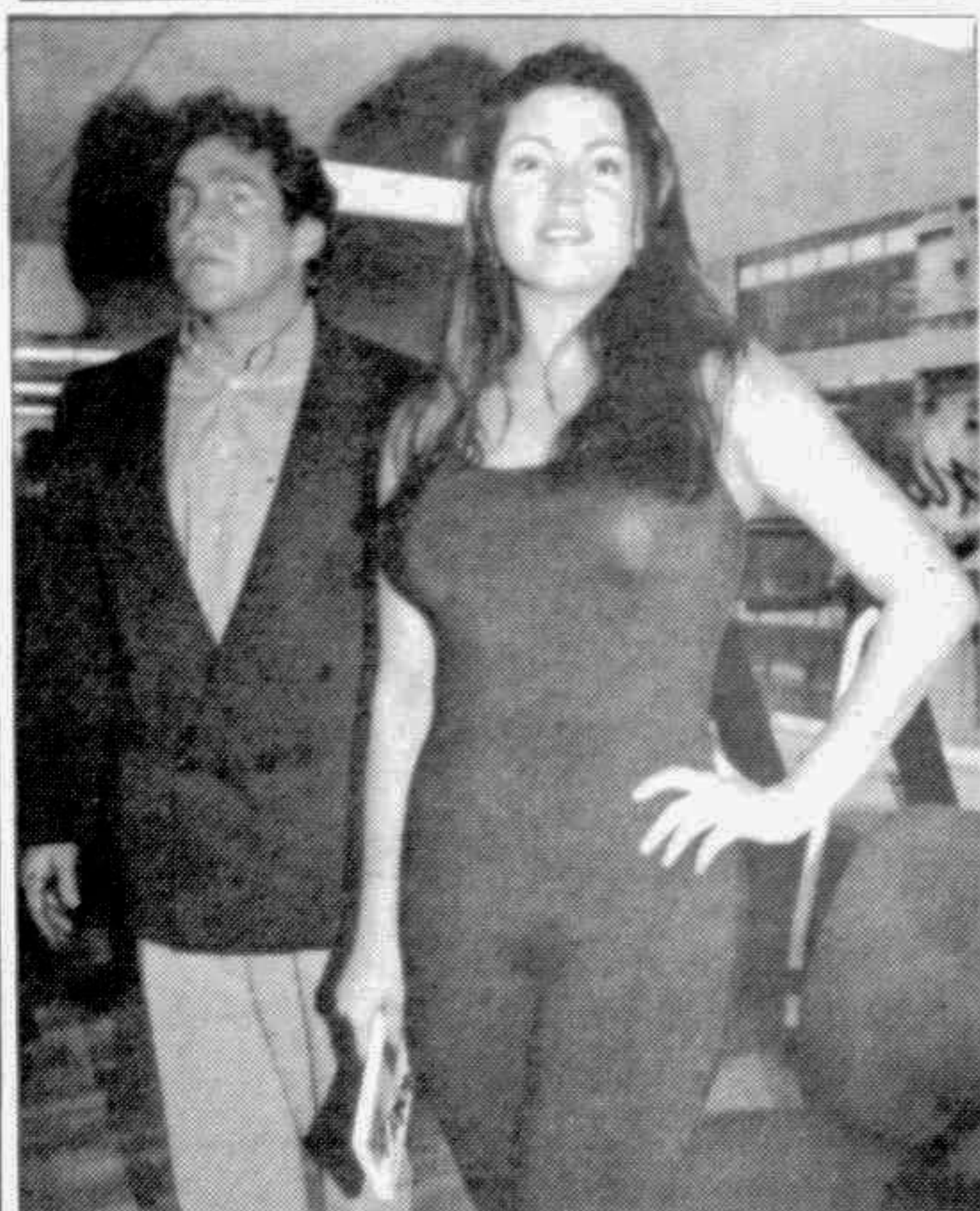
tions when she defeated Nawaz Sharif.

Benazir is an iron lady, like Aung San Suu Kyi, said party activist Latif Mughal referring to the Burmese pro-democracy crusader.

However, observers do not rate her chances highly.

"Everything depends on how many seats and votes she can get from Sindh and Punjab provinces, said political analyst M B Nagvi. "If her vote-bank declines in two provinces there would be no chance for her to come back to the centre no matter what strategy she adopts today," he added.

## Off the Record



Miss Universe, Venezuela's Alicia Machado, poses for photographers before beginning her daily workout routine with personal fitness trainer Edward Jackowski (L) Tuesday in New York. The 19 year-old Machado has come under pressure for gaining weight since winning the 1996 Miss Universe pageant. She claims to have lost five pounds in three days. — AFP/UNB photo

## Di's wedding dress to be put on public display

LONDON: Princess Diana is to give her wedding dress to London's Victoria and Albert Museum to be put on permanent public display, according to a news report Wednesday, reports AP.

The London newspaper The Daily Telegraph said the 35-year-old princess, one of the world's best dressed women, also plans to auction 65 of her evening gowns to raise funds for charities.

It said the sale, which it said is expected to take place at Christie's auctioneers in London in June, will likely raise more than 1 million pounds (dhs 1.61 million) for some of her favourite causes, such as AIDS and cancer research.

The stunning, richly embroidered, puff-sleeved wedding dress, made by couturiers David and Elizabeth Emanuel for her marriage to Prince Charles at St Paul's Cathedral on July 29, 1981, is expected to go on show at the Victoria and Albert this summer, the paper said. Charles and Diana divorced in August last year.

## Apple of discord

NEW DELHI: A teenager allegedly slit the throat of his seven-year-old cousin after an argument over an apple, a newspaper reported Wednesday, reports AP.

The Indian Express, quoting police sources, said they believed the 16-year-old carried out the killing because the younger child had given him away to their aunt for eating an apple without her permission.

The police said the teenager took his cousin out of the house on Monday in the south west of Delhi, promising to buy him sweets, before allegedly cutting his throat. He has since disappeared.

## Because she gave birth to a 6th daughter

TEHRAN: An Iranian man has refused to admit his wife back to their house after learning that she gave birth to a sixth daughter in hospital, a newspaper reported Tuesday, reports AP.

The man made good on threats he made before her delivery that he would not allow her to come back if the baby happened to be a girl, said the woman, identified by her first name Firuzeh.

She told a court in the northeastern city of Mashad where she filed a suit against her husband for breaking their marriage vow that he had refused to visit her at the hospital after learning about the newborn's sex.

My father had to pay the hospital bills and after being released I went straight to my father's house," she said quoted by Gods newspaper.

## Islamic leaders renew claim Israel digging beneath Al Aqsa Mosque

JERUSALEM, Jan 29: Islamic leaders raised new accusations Tuesday that Israel is digging beneath the Al Aqsa mosque, undermining Islam's third holiest site, reports AP.

"They are now digging a tunnel from the southeastern edge of the mosque toward the west," Sheikh Raed Salah of the Islamic Movement in Israel said at a news conference. "This is very dangerous."

Similar accusations in September sparked Israeli-Palestinian clashes that killed 79 people. But those riots came amid widespread Palestinian anger at Israeli foot-dragging on peace. There has been more trust in recent weeks since Israel withdrew troops from Hebron and committed to more West Bank pullouts.

Israeli officials said no excavations were underway near the mosque and that ancient water tunnels that do not go under the mosque compound were simply being cleaned in preparation for being opened to tourists.

Gidon Ami, chief Jerusalem archaeologist for the Israel Antiquities Authority, said the work had been going on since 1994 with the tacit approval of the Islamic Trust, which administers the mosque.

"They have been notified of every step in this project," he said. "Nothing has been done without their unofficial cooperation."

The Islamic Trust, which is funded by Jordan but reports to Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, did not join in the Islamic Movement's allegations. The two groups have been jockeying for power over Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem.

Waqf director Adnan Husseini did say, however, that Israel had been making excavations near the mosque and "making unjustified changes." "We asked them to stop," unfortunately they did not," he



A Taliban gunman sits on a truck-mounted ZU 23 MM anti-aircraft cannon in front of Ahmed Shah Masood's guest house in Jabul Seraj in this recent picture. The Taliban have also captured Guilbahr on the entrance to Panjsher Valley stronghold of Masood. — AFP/UNB photo

## Saddam puts his wife under house arrest

WASHINGTON, Jan 29: Iraqi president Saddam Hussein has put his wife under house arrest and his eldest son is semi-paralysed from gunshot wounds suffered in an attack last month, senior US military officer said Tuesday, reports AP.

"I think it's very interesting that Saddam has just put his wife under house arrest," he said. The officer, who asked not to be identified, said her arrest was learned "from a good source."

Saddam's eldest son Uday was semi-paralysed from bullet wounds in an attack December 12 in Baghdad.

"Uday has been hit very, very hard and has one or two bullets left in his spine and is somewhat paralyzed," he told reporters.

Rolf Ekeus, the UN envoy in charge of disarming Iraq, reported that Uday also had developed gangrene and was in danger of losing his leg, the officer said.

Most of the 19 appointments, however, served under Annan's predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who was vetoed for a second term by the United States for allegedly being sluggish on promoting reform.

Many of the key positions went to nationals of developed countries with few going to citizens of Africa or Latin America, Annan said.

UN spokesman Fred Eckhard said the decisions were taken based on the "need to bring new talent into the organisation... the need to recognise performance by promoting staff," and "the need to retain competent and experienced

people to maintain continuity," Eckhard, who was formally appointed as spokesman, described the changes as "only the first step" and said other changes would be made during the year.

The changes announced Tuesday do not involve positions, such as directors of independent UN agencies, which require approval by the 185-member General Assembly.

American Joseph Connor, widely respected in Washington, was reappointed undersecretary-general for administration and management, effectively the UN chief financial officer.

The United States considers Connor's role crucial in reforming and downsizing the United Nations.

Apart from Connor, one post went to an American. Gillian Sorensen was named assistant

secretary-general for external relations. UN officials said she would try to enhance the UN image among the public, especially in the United States where the organisation is not held in high regard.

Annan asked 23 senior UN officials to submit resignations after he was elected last month. Those whose resignations were accepted include Rosario Green of Mexico, special adviser on women's affairs; Ismat Kitani of Iraq, special adviser; Jean-Claude Milleron of France, head of the Department of Economic and Social Information; Joseph Reed of the United States, special representative for public affairs; and Yukio Takasu, controller.

Bernard Miyet, 50, a veteran French diplomat and a French representative to the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, was named head of UN peacekeeping. Annan's

old post.

Kieran Prendergast of Britain was appointed head of the Department of Political Affairs. Prendergast succeeds another Briton, Marrack Goulding, and most recently served most recently as Britain's ambassador to Turkey. He was also British high commissioner to Kenya.

No woman was appointed to an undersecretary-general post. Eckhard said Annan was considering choosing a woman as a deputy secretary-general. Angela King of Jamaica was named special adviser on women's affairs.

Among those reappointed were Nitin Desai of India and Jin Yonghuan of China, both as undersecretaries-general. Yasushi Akashi of Japan was reappointed head of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

## LTTE's land mines kill 8

COLOMBO, Jan 29: Tamil rebels detonated two remote-controlled land mines in northern Sri Lanka Wednesday, killing at least seven civilians and one soldier, a military spokesman said, reports AP.

The explosions occurred while the troops were searching for rebel mines and booby traps near the Punalai causeway 300 kilometers (200 miles) north of Colombo, the Sri Lanka capital, said Maj. DAR Ranawaka, the military spokesman.

The civilians were waiting to cross the causeway that links Jaffna Peninsula with Kays Island. Five soldiers and two civilians were injured in the attack, said Ranawaka.

On Tuesday, six civilians were killed when their vehicle triggered a land mine in northeastern Sri Lanka, officials said. Those killed included two children at Kudapokuna village in Polonnaruwa district, about 190 kilometers (120 miles) northeast of Colombo.

The rebels fired gun shots at police, delaying the rescue of the wounded, said the officials who cannot be identified under briefing rules.