

Several hurt in baton charge on Benazir's supporters

ISLAMABAD, Jan 30: Several people were injured Wednesday as police baton charged hundreds of supporters of deposed prime minister Benazir Bhutto, protesting a court rejection of her petition against dismissal, witnesses said, reports AFP.

The angry crowd, chanting slogans against the judiciary and the Pakistan president, pelted police with stones after the Supreme Court rejected Benazir's plea, they said. After the police retaliated with their batons, several people were rushed to hospital with head wounds, the witnesses said. The injured included a woman police constable hurt who had been hit by a stone, and a municipal councillor from Benazir's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in nearby Rawalpindi.

'Over 2,500 Ugandan troops in Zaire'

KINSHASA, Zaire, Jan 30: More than 2,500 Ugandan soldiers have crossed into eastern Zaire and are moving toward the eastern cities of Beni and Butembo to bolster rebel forces, a Zairian security official said Wednesday, reports AP.

The official, who is close to the Defense Ministry but refused to be identified further, said the troops were backed by tanks and armed with machine guns. The Hutus are among hundreds of thousands who fled Rwanda into Zaire after the 1994 Rwandan war, which ended when a Tutsi-led government took power. Zaire says Rwanda and Uganda back the mainly Tutsi rebels because of their own large Tutsi populations and a desire to wipe out the Hutus.

Iraq not moving troops to threaten Kuwait: US

WASHINGTON, Jan 30: There is no evidence that Saddam Hussein is staging new military maneuvers or moving troops to threaten Kuwait, US government spokesmen said Wednesday, reports AP.

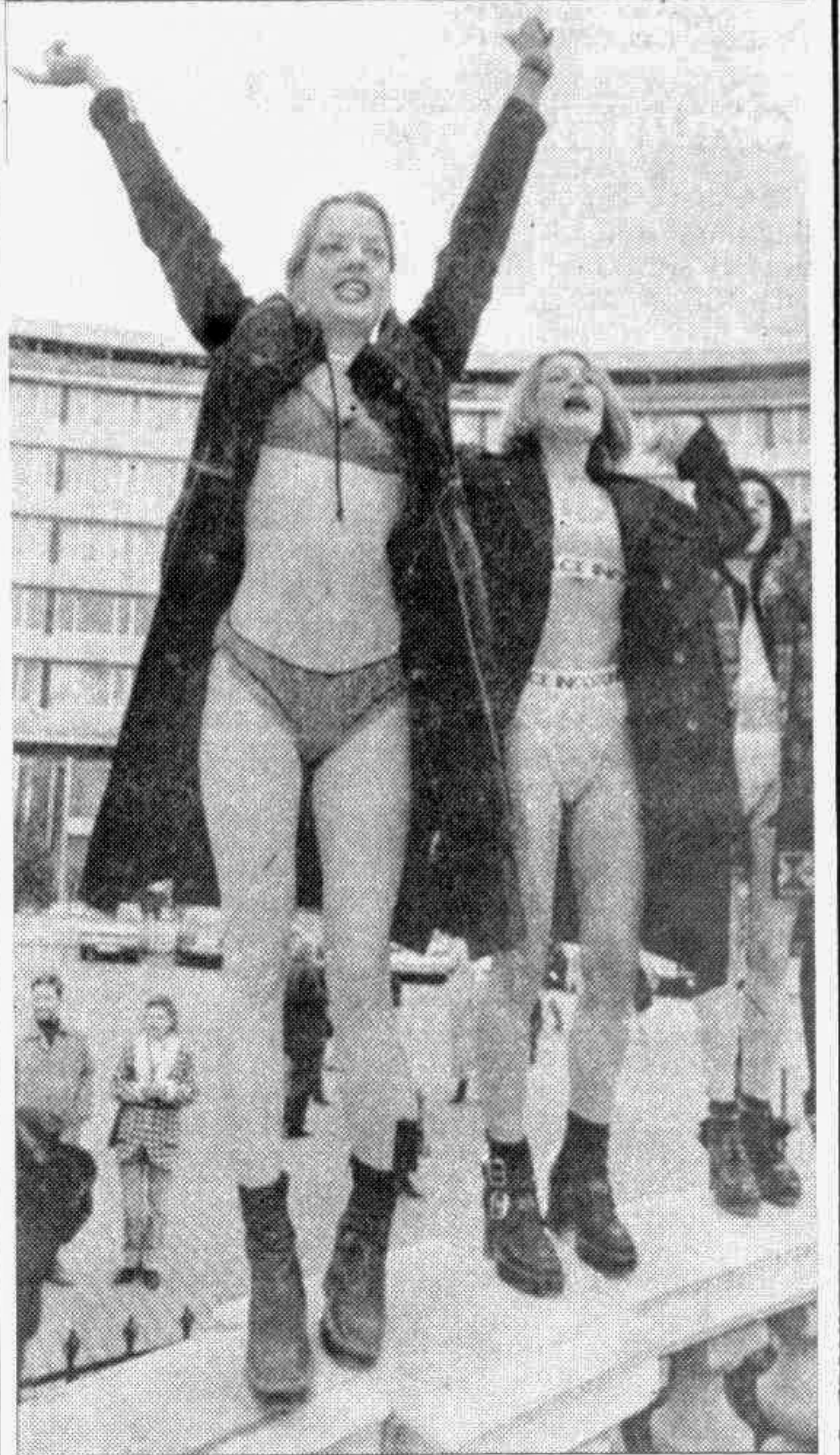
The spokesman were reacting to comments Tuesday by a senior US military officer that Saddam had ordered a number of training exercises for his troops and "comes in every morning and makes a decision" on whether to move toward Kuwait. White House spokesman Mike McCurry and State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said the United States was not aware of any offensive moves by the Iraqi leader.

Asked about the officer's assessment, David Johnson, spokesman for the National Security Council, told reporters at a White House briefing: "We don't view that as significantly different than what one would expect at this time of year." "But we've seen him try to get out of his box before, and we always remain vigilant and ready to put him back in it, if necessary."

Anne opens British consulate in Hong Kong

HONG KONG, Jan 30: Princess Anne on Thursday formally opened the consulate that will serve Britain when it ceases to be Hong Kong's colonial ruler in July to become just another foreign diplomatic presence under Chinese sovereignty, reports AP.

Off the Record



Bulgarian fashion models shout anti-government slogans outside the Parliament building in the centre of Sofia, Wednesday, as workers across Bulgaria staged brief strikes, heeding a call by labour unions to press demands for snap elections and prevent the ruling Socialists from forming a new government.

Int'l sanctions still in effect, UNSC warns Libya

UNITED NATIONS, Jan 30: The Security Council warned Libya on Wednesday that international sanctions barring flights to and from the country remain in effect despite a Libyan threat to defy the ban, reports AP.

Twins born 92 days apart!

CHICAGO: A Chicago area woman has made medical history by giving birth to twins born 92 days apart thanks to a special medical procedure and cooperation between two hospitals, officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

4 ME leaders to meet Clinton separately

WASHINGTON, Jan 30: Middle East leaders of Israel, the Palestinians, Egypt and Jordan will visit the United States and hold separate talks with President Bill Clinton in the next two months, the White House announced on Wednesday, reports Xinhua.

She does it to avenge her divorce

CAIRO: Rats devoured a newborn baby whose mother abandoned the infant in a cardboard box to "avenge" her divorce, the government daily Al-Ahram reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

Fossil fragments of monkey like animals found

BANGKOK: Fossil fragments of upper and lower jaws and teeth of a monkey-like animal have been found in southern Thailand, which researchers believe to be some of the earliest evidence of the evolution of higher primates, reports Xinhua.

Good news for bird-watchers

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil: A tiny acrobat inhabits the forest canopy of Brazil's vast cocoa plantations, and its discovery has left bird lovers elated — and alarmed, reports AP.



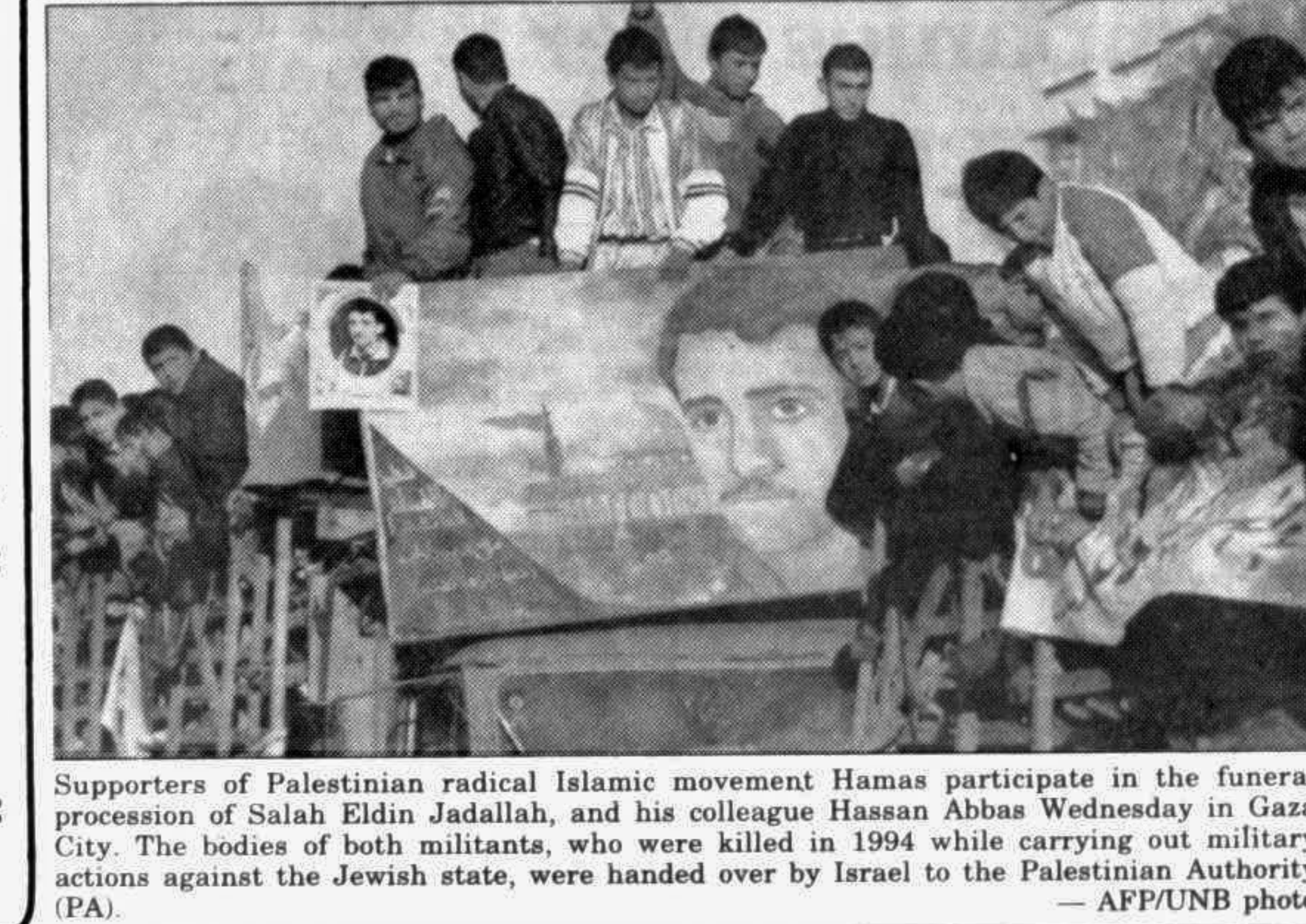
US President Bill Clinton (L) makes a point during a press conference as US Secretary of Defense William Cohen (C) and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General John Shalikashvili (R) watch at the Pentagon in Washington, DC Wednesday. Clinton told reporters he would not expand the mission of NATO-led forces in Bosnia to track down and arrest warcrimes suspects.

US firm files \$22.145 b claim for Marcos' riches hidden in HK

HONG KONG, Jan 30: A US firm filed today a \$22.145 billion US dollar claim for riches allegedly hidden in Hong Kong by disgraced former Philippine president Ferdinand Marcos in the territory's biggest ever claim, reports AFP.

The treasure hunter claimed the booty was stolen from him after he discovered it in a tunnel outside Baguio City in the Philippines in 1971. Roxas was then sent to jail where he later claimed to have been tortured. When released he found the tunnel had been looted.

During last year's trial, Marcos' US lawyer James Paul Linn argued the claims could not be backed up and Marcos' son testified he had never seen the secret cache. Marcos' wife Imelda who is now facing a prison sentence in the Philippines for corruption will have two weeks to present her defence.



Supporters of Palestinian radical Islamic movement Hamas participate in the funeral procession of Salah Eldin Jadallah, and his colleague Hassan Abbas Wednesday in Gaza City. The bodies of both militants, who were killed in 1994 while carrying out military actions against the Jewish state, were handed over by Israel to the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Indian Mig crashes in Himachal

An Indian Air Force Mig has crashed in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh, officials said yesterday, just over a week after another jet fighter was lost, AFP reports from New Delhi.

New gas field discovered in Brazil

Brazil's state-owned petroleum company Petrobras said yesterday it had discovered a new natural gas field in the northwestern state of Amazonas. Xinhua reports from Rio de Janeiro.

217 die of meningitis in Africa

At least 217 people have died of spinal meningitis over the past two months in Togo, Burkina Faso and Ghana, the regional office of the UN World Health Organisation (WHO) said Wednesday, reports AFP.

170 BC boat found in Norway

A dug-out oak boat dating from 170 BC has been found in the Glaama river northeast of Oslo, the oldest boat yet found in Norway, Norwegian maritime museum curator Johan Kloster said on Wednesday, reports AFP.

Corsican rebel group disbanded

The Corsican National Liberation Front — Historic Channel, the armed branch of a Corsican nationalist movement, said Wednesday it was disbanding, at a press conference given by hooded and armed men near Ajaccio, reliable sources said, reports AFP.

Eritrea-Yemen's dispute resolved

Eritrean President Isayas Afewerki said the dispute with Yemen over control for the Hanish Islands was "resolved", a government journal reported Wednesday, reports AFP.

Fujimori, Hashimoto to meet over hostage crisis

LIMA, Jan 30: President Alberto Fujimori will get a chance this weekend to personally reassure Japan's prime minister about his efforts to free 72 hostages held by leftist rebels in the Japanese ambassador's home, reports AP.

Israel denies agreement to withdraw to its '67 border with Syria

WASHINGTON, Jan 30: The United States and Israel disputed Wednesday a Syrian claim that Israel has agreed to withdraw to its 1967 border in a peace accord with Damascus, reports AP.

Israeli Ambassador Elisha Ben-Elissar accused Syria of spreading false reports to create the impression that Israel is reneging on an agreement left unsigned only because of a technical problem.

I wouldn't be standing here," he said. "There would be peace between Syria and Israel — and there isn't a peace treaty today." Protracted peace talks between Israel and Syria were halted almost a year ago. Ben-Elissar said Israel is eager to reopen the negotiations "anytime, anywhere and at any level."

In an interview to be published in the Journal of Palestine Studies, the Syrian diplomat said Israel agreed to withdraw to its border with Syria as it was before Israel captured the Golan Heights in the 1967 Six Day War.

Hezbollah kills 3 Israeli troops in S Lebanon

TYRE, Lebanon, Jan 30: Three Israeli soldiers were killed and a fourth wounded in a bomb attack claimed by the pro-Iranian guerrilla group Hezbollah in southern Lebanon overnight, a security source said today, reports AFP.

The source confirmed a claim by a Hezbollah spokesman that one of the group's commandos had set off a bomb at five past midnight (2205 GMT, Wednesday) as an Israeli patrol was driving along the Deir Serian road in the central part of Israel's self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon.