for polls victory

WASHINGTON, Feb 5: The United States on Tuesday congratulated former Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif on his electoral victory and pledged to work with him to improve bilateral ties, reports AFP.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) won at least 134 seats in the 217-member National Assembly, while Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) had only secured a dismal 17 seats as counting continued.

"Should he (Sharif) indeed form the next government of Pakistan, the United States government will work with him cooperatively to strengthen our relationship with Pakistan," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

Despite accusations from at least one party of vote-rigging. the State Department said international observers did not notice any significant irregularities.

Sharif, an industrialist, said his top priority would be to create a climate to attract foreign investment and has called for a review of Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan.

The State Department spokesman asserted that the United States has a "continued interest in strengthening cooperation" with Pakistan to en- ternal affair of Pakistan."

bassy said.

ting Hinggo Maguo.

reported.

hance stability in South Asia. PTI adds: India Tuesday welcomed the "positive" response of Pakistan prime minister-in waiting, Nawaz Sharif to India's offer of resuming dialogue

stalled since January, 1994. Sharif, in a pre-election interview, is reported to have stated that if returned to power, he would take steps for the resumption of bilateral dialogue with India at the political level.

"We have seen press reports of positive signal by Nawaz Sharif, and if the reports are correct that Pakistan wishes to resume dialogue with India at the political level, we welcome it because we always wanted a dialogue," an External Affairs Ministry spokesman told re-

porters in New Delhi. India had made a specific offer to resume talks at the foreign secretaries level with Pakistan when Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda had sent a letter to the then prime minister Be-

nazir Bhutto. "We are still awaiting a response and hope that the new government in Islamabad will give a positive reply," he added.

Replying to questions about the outcome of elections in Pakistan, he said "we don't wish to make any value judgment on the elections since it is an in-

BUIFELY

Top Russian chopper designer dies:

Mark Vainberg, who played a leading role in the development of

military and civilian helicopters, has died at age 59, officials

after he was admitted with acute heart pain, according to a

spokeswoman for the Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant, which he

headed. Vainberg has had a history of heart trouble, said the

US military team in Cambodia: A

United States military team has arrived in Cambodia to con-

duct a search and recovery operations for the remains of Amer-

ican servicemen missing since the Vietnam War, the US Em-

searching this week in the northeastern province of Kratie and

later move on to six other provinces, the embassy said, adding

that Cambodian military officials would be assisting. The op-

eration is expected to last 32 days and "plans to investigate as

many as five cases an recover as many as two cases," the em-

2 US sailors held in Japan: Two Ameri-

can sailors were arrested Wednesday for allegedly assaulting a

Japanese man after he saw them trying to break into a car in

sailors as seaman William Eugene Plummer, 20, and seaman

Carl Russell Albee, 20. Both were assigned to the USS German-

town at the US Navy's Sasebo base. Their hometowns were not

immediately available. The police arrest report said the two were trying to steal a tool kit form a car parked behind a hospital on the night of Nov. 20, 1996, when they were seen by the vic-

China 5th popular tourist destination:

China has become the fifth most popular tourist destination in

the world, receiving more than 26 million visitors in 1996, an

foreign visitors in 1997, continuing the trend that helped China

to displace Britain as the world's No 5 destination, after France,

the United States, Spain and Italy, the newspaper China Daily

Sanford Meisner dies: Sanford Meisner, an

actor, director and innovative teacher whose students included

Gregory Peck, Grace Kelly and Robert Duvall, has died. He was

Chinese tourism officials predict more than 40 million

official report said Wednesday, AP reports from Beijing.

Police in Nagasaki prefecture, or state, identified the two

The 18-member team, which arrived Monday, will begin

bassy said yesterday, AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

southern Japan, police said, AP reports from Tokyo.

Vainberg died at a Moscow hospital on Monday immediately

said Tuesday, AP reports from Moscow.

spokeswoman, who didn't want to be identified.

US, India greet Sharif 73 Israeli troops die as 2 choppers collide

TEL AVIV. Feb 5: All 73 Israeli soldiers on board were killed when two helicopters packed with troops and ammunition collided over the Israeli-Lebanon border, Army Chief of Staff Amnon Shahak said to-

day, reports AFP. "I have the great sadness to announce 73 dead in the collision of two helicopters" on Tuesday, Shakah said at a press conference in Tel Aviv.

"This is the worst accident in the history of the army," he

Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai told the press conference he had named an independent commission of inquiry into the accident to be headed by David Ivry, a former air force chief and long-time director general of the Defence Min-

General Eitan Ben-Eliyahu, head of the air force, said the two helicopters, a version of the US-made Sikorsky, had landed in northern Israel to pick up troops to be carried into Israel's occupied buffer zone in southern Lebanon.

The collision occurred as the two aircraft were crossing the Israeli-Lebanese border, he said. There were no survivors.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced a high-level investigation into a mid-air collision between two Israeli army helicopters Tuesday which left 73

soldiers dead. "The chief of staff and the defence minister have opened an investigation into the causes and circumstances of this terrible accident," Netanyahu said in a brief address on national

television. "All the people of Israel are with the families of those killed, these soldiers were all our sons," he said.

"I pray that this kind of catastrophe will never happen again," he said. Netanyahu's office announced earlier that because of the accident he postponed a trip to Jordan for talks with King Hussein that was scheduled for today.

The two Yasur-type troop carriers collided in heavy fog over northern Israel as they were flying to the Israeli-occupied buffer zone in Southern Lebanon, army officials said.

Another report says, Lebanese Shi'ites living in areas controlled by Hezbollah guerillas fired shots into the air to rejoice at Tuesday's mid-air

crash between two Israeli helicopter which killed 73 soldiers. News of the accident, the worst catastrophe in Israeli military history, was announced by Muezzins from

mosques across villages in South Lebanon near Israel's self-declared "security zone." "God has responded to the wish of Muslims because it is the night of destiny," said one Muezzin, referring to a key

Muslim religious event towards

the end of the holy fasting

month of Ramadan.

"We asked that they throw themselves against each other and that the winds destroy their planes, and God has heard us," the caller to Muslim prayers

said. In the town of Baalbek. Hezbollah stronghold in eastern Lebanon, news of the crash was greeted by automatic weapon fire which lasted around half an hour. In some villages, sweets were distributed as a sign of joy.

Hezbollah television Al Manar was the first to announce the accident and was subsequently inundated with telephone calls from viewers offering their congratulations.

damaged and blocked roads in the area and that relief workers were busy pulling bodies from underneath the rubble. Tajik gunmen seize 5 UN

Strong quake

kills 38 in

Iran

TEHRAN, Feb 5: Two power

ful earthquakes struck several

villages in northeastern Iran

90. Iranian television reported.

by the two quakes, the Islamic

the villages of Quchan, Es-

GMT). Forty minutes later,

magnitude-6.1 quake hit the

area, IRNA and Iranian televi-

IRNA said 35 people were

killed and hundreds injured.

Twelve villages in the Kho-

says AP.

sion said.

ital Tehran.

the two quakes.

figures.

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5: Tajik gunmen seized five members of a UN peacekeeping mission Tuesday to press their demand for free passage from Afghanistan into Tajikistan, a UN spokesman said, reports

workers

The UN workers, an Austrian, two Swiss, a Briton and a Tajik interpreter, were taken hostage as they drove in two vehicles between the town o Garm and Dushanbe, the Tajik capital, spokesman Fred Eckhard said.

"The UN has demanded their immediate release," he said. "The group is demanding safe and free passage of its members from Afghanistan into Tajik-

The UN mission is in radio contact with the observers, with the government and with Afghan commander Ahmed Shah Massoud, who helped secure the release of a group of hostages taken in December, Eckhard said.

The kidnappers were from the same group that detained those 23 people, including seven UN military observers, in December, Eckhard said. Their leader. Bakhram Saidov, is believed to be an ally of warlord Rezvon Sadirov, who switched his loyalty to the government

Clinton vows to expand NATO by 1999

WASHINGTON, Feb 5: President Bill Clinton Tuesday called on a joint session of Congress to support expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to include former Soviet bloc nations by 1999, re-

ports AFP. "We must expand NATO by 1999, so that countries that were once our adversaries can become our allies." Clinton said in remarks prepared for delivery in his annual state of the

union address. The United States will push for NATO's eastward expansion "at the special NATO summit this summer," when it will also seek to "strengthen NATO's

partnership for peace with nonmember allies," he said. "And we must build a stable partnership between NATO and a democratic Russia," Clinton added, calling on Congress to support efforts "to help build. for the first time, and undi-

Pentagon accuses Iraq of hiding 25 ballistic missiles

vided, democratic Europe."

WASHINGTON, Feb 5: The Pentagon accused Iraq Tuesday of hiding as many as 25 ballistic missiles in violation of UN resolutions, and warned Washington was prepared to defend US forces in the region, reports

The Pentagon believes Iraq possesses," an operational scud missile capability of 18 to 25 missiles, and some of those have been hidden," said Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Ba-

"Obviously I can't describe what our future actions will be. but we've shown time and time again we are prepared to protect US forces, prepared to protect our interests in the Gulf," he

He said no "abnormal" changes in US force levels in the Gulf were underway, but he noted that an estimated 20,000 US military personnel are in

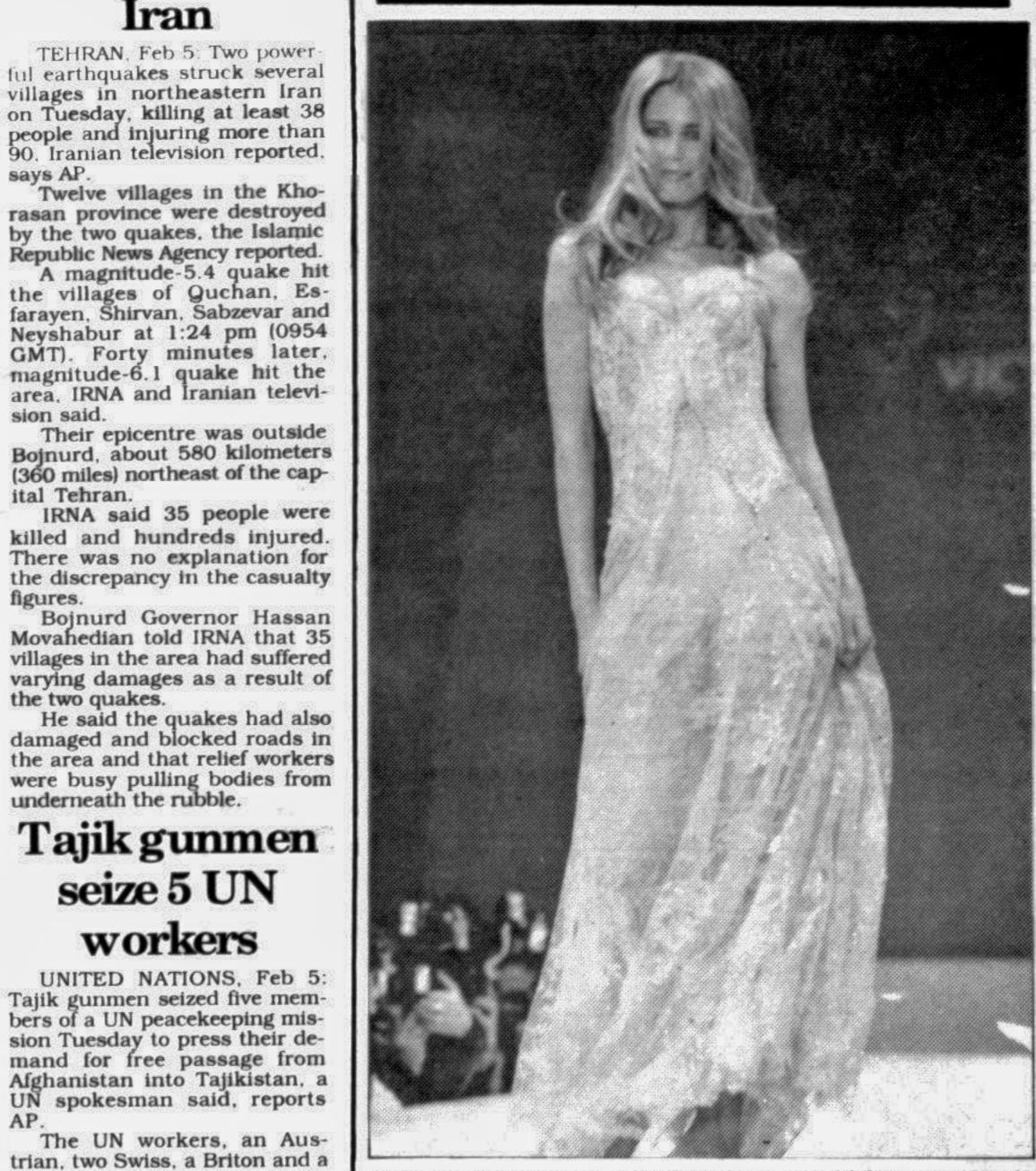
the region, about half of them aboard US warships in the Gulf. Rolf Ekeus, the UN official in charge of disarming Iraq. plans to visit Baghdad February

20 to discuss the hidden missiles with Iraqi Prime Minister Tareq Aziz, UN officials said Ekeus has said that he be-

lieved there were between six and 16 missiles hidden in Iraq but suspected this assessment was too low following his meet-

ing the 1991 Gulf war, Iraq must eliminate its weapons of mass destruction and long range missiles before the oil embargo can be lifted.

Off the Record



Supermodel Claudia Schiffer wears a gold lame swimsuit with gold lace and a lace long skirt during the Victoria's Secret 1997 Spring Revelations Fashion Show in New - AFP/UNB photo York Tuesday.

White House an 'awe-inspiring' place to live for Hillary

WASHINGTON: It's home to more than one mouse. And the place "can be a little creepy." But Hillary Rodham Clinton says the White House is still an "awe-inspiring" place to live, reports

The first lady of the United States, appearing on "The Rosie O'Donnell Show" Monday, assured O'Donnell that the White House curbs its rodent population with "humane" traps. "Until we get really tired of them. And then: It's nuke them," Mrs Clinton said, with a laugh. "I mean, it's whatever you can do." On a serious note, she said her time in the White House has

been all but overwhelming. "It is really awe-inspring to walk through the White House, especially at night," she said. "You just feel like you're summoning up the spirits of all the people who've lived there and worked there and walked through the halls there."

"It's neat - can be a little creepy," Mrs Clinton said. "You know, they think there's a ghost."
She also sang a duet with O'Donnell in the segment taped last week in New York was broud at a small itres son week

Moderate drinking good for health!

DALLAS: A drink or two a day may put a spring in your step. Researchers have linked moderate drinking by men with a onethird lower risk of arterial disease that squeezes blood flow to the legs, reports AP.

The alcohol apparently helps keep arteries open by increasing levels of the "good cholesterol" in the blood. The findings echo those of previous studies suggesting that moderate drinking reduces the risk of circulatory disease in the brain and heart.

Many doctors, however, are uneasy with the notion that drinking can be good for your health.

"This is not a situation where if a little is good, more is better," said the study's lead author, Dr Charles H Hennekens of Harvard Medical School. "Nondrinkers shouldn't start drinking and occasional drinkers shouldn't increase their alcohol intake.

The findings were published in Tuesday's issue of Circulation, a journal of the American Heart Association.

3 cousins of Saddam placed under house arrest of their lather, has been con-

NICOSIA, Feb 5: Three cousins of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein have been placed under house arrest, an Iraqi source in the region said Tuesday, only days after reports that Saddam's first wife and two daughters were also under house arrest, reports AFP.

The three cousins were named by the sources as General Abed Hassan al-Majid, Lieutenant General Maher Abed al-Rashid and Fadel Salfih al-Azawi.

General Abed Hassan al-Majid had complained about the assassination in February last year of two of Saddam's sonsin-law, Hussein Kamel Hassan and Saddam Kamel Hassan.

The pair were killed along with their brother Hakem and father Kamel Hassan al-Majid after first defecting to Jordan and then being persuaded to return to Iraq.

General Abed, the assassinated pair's uncle and brother

fined to his farm in Kasba al-Hueijah between Kirkuk and Saddam's home town, Tikrit, said the sources. The general, who had been

the assistant director of the intelligence service, had acted as an intermediary between the Iraqi president and Hussein Kamel Hassan, who along with his brother and their wives had defected.

The general last visited them in Amman in January 1996, a month before they voluntarily returned to Iraq and were slain.

Saddam's cousin Lieutenant General Maher Abed al-Rasid, who is the former father-in-law of Saddam's son Quesay, has been put under house arrest in

Alam north of Tikrit.

Quesay broke with Al-

Rashid's daughter, who now lives with her father. The lieutenant general is considered a hero of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq

Milosevic ready to recognise opposition victories

moving to quell the biggest threat yet to his authoritarian regime, said Tuesday he was prepared to acknowledge opposition victories in disputed elections, reports AFP.

now. One opposition leader, Vuk

Draskovic, said his forces would press on for deep reform on a range of issues like the state strong hold on the media. Another, Zoran Djindjic,

the real key to ending the crisis, and called for another demonstration Wednesday. The state-run Tanjug news agency said Milosevic sent a let-

ter to Prime Minister Mirko Marjanovic asking him to present to Parliament a bill proclaiming as "final" the opposition wins confirmed by a mission of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

That group sent a fact-finding mission to Serbia in late December and concluded that in 14 cities and towns where the government annulled opposition victories in November 17 municipal voting, among them Belgrade, the opposition had in

Gunmen attack HR team in Rwanda: 4 killed

KIGALI, Feb 5: Gunmen ambushed a UN human rights team Tuesday in a Hutu stronghold in southwestern Rwanda, killing four people in the third attack on international aid workers in recent weeks, reports AP.

91, AP reports from Sherman Oaks.

Two human rights monitors, a Briton and a Cambodian, and two Rwandan local employees were shot dead. A fifth person, an interpreter, was wounded. In Geneva, UN High Com-

missioner for Human Rights Jose Ayala Lasso condemned the killings and ordered monitors working in the western part of the country to evacuate to Kigali. There are 139 UN human rights monitors in Rwanda, about half of them in the field.

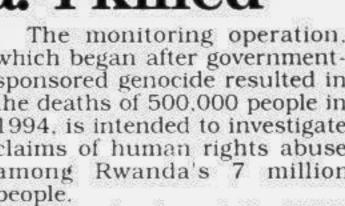
"These deaths demonstrate once again the urgent need to work in order to ensure respect for human rights and to establish in Rwanda a climate of peaceful relations among all communities." he said.

which began after governmentsponsored genocide resulted in the deaths of 500,000 people in 1994, is intended to investigate claims of human rights abuse among Rwanda's 7 million

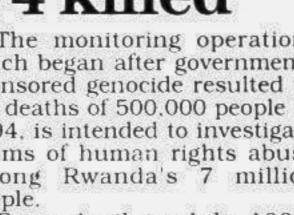
gangs organised by the extremist Hutu government engaged in the bloody slaughter of minority Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus who supported dia-

Kofi Annan was said to be shocked by the killings. His spokesman said all those attacked had been traveling in

The Briton and the Cambodian were carrying out a routine human rights investigation near Karengera, 180 miles (290 kms) southwest of Kigali when fired on by unidentified as-



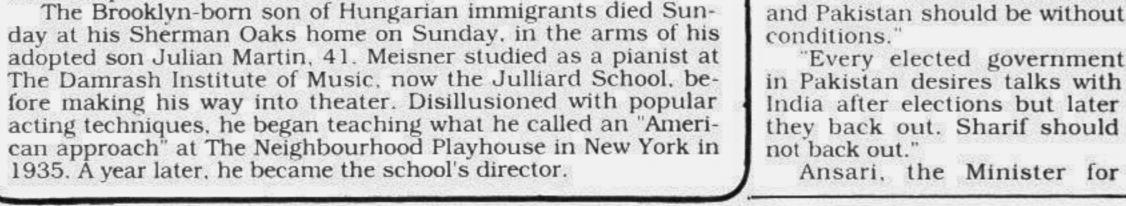
sailants, officials said.



From April to July 1994,

logue rather than conflict. At the United Nations in New York, Secretary-General

clearly marked UN vehicles.



NEW DELHI, Feb 5: Pakistan's newly-elected government should not use the Kashmir issue to shun talks with India, a leading politician said

career.

here today, reports AFP. Moulvi Iftikar Hussain Ansari, a Muslim minister in the Kashmir state government, said newly-elected Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif should live up to his pledge of seeking dialogue with India. He said "talks between India and Pakistan should be without

conditions. "Every elected government in Pakistan desires talks with India after elections but later they back out. Sharif should not back out.'

Housing and Development and a leader of a fundamentalist Muslim group, said negotiations between the two South Asian arch rivals should have begun long ago.

Former prime minister Benazir Bhutto (L) along with her mother Begum Nusrat Bhutto

'New Pak govt shouldn't use Kashmir

issue to shun talks with India'

leaves Islamabad airport Tuesday. Benazir faces the worst-ever polls defeat of her political

"It is a bit late that they have decided to start a political dialogue. They should have thought about it earlier," he

Sharif was elected Prime Minister of Pakistan on Tuesday in a landslide victory in which his party crushed that of former premier Benazir Bhutto.

The Kashmir region has been wracked by a Muslim separatist rebellion against Indian rule since 1989, leaving around 17,000 people dead. India and Pakistan have fought two wars

over the Himalayan region since their independence from Britain in 1947. An official spokesman of the

- AFP /UNB photo

Kashmir government also called for the start to a dialogue between the two rival neigh-He added: "Pakistan should

understand the futility of the gun culture and stop abetting terrorism in Kashmir." The current Kashmir state government was elected last

year after seven years of central rule from New Delhi. The polls were boycotted by

Muslim separatist militants who claimed they were a sham. India regularly accuses Pakistan of supplying arms to

Kashmir's separatist militants.



Iraqi President Saddam Hussain (L) visits his eldest son Uday February 4 in a Baghdad hospital where he is being treated following an attempt on his life in December. The 33year-old Uday is partially paralysed and reportedly needs an operation on his spine.

Egypt seeks to replace lost great library of Alexandria

ALEXANDRIA. Egypt, Feb 5: The Great Library of Alexandria, the fabled seat of ancient learning that was consumed by fire centuries ago, is rising again, reports AP.

Egypt's government hopes the new library will become a leading research center in the region and spark a revival of this faded Mediterranean city.

"The old library was a beacon for Alexandria, and it radiated all over the world," said Mohsen Zahran, the project director. "We want the new library to be a modern-day beacon for cultural and social and eco-

nomic development. More than 2,200 years ago. the Great Library boasted a collection of a half-million manuscripts. Scholars there created geometry, charted the stars, made a map of the known world that served for centuries and came up with the idea of

"leap year." The Ptolemy dynasty, which ruled the city after its founding by Alexander the Great in 332 BC., was said to be so ardent in finding new texts for the library that it confiscated the books of

everyone arriving at the port. Work started in January on the superstructure of its replacement a huge, circular, glass-and-concrete building to be known by the historical

name Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The dlrs 174 million project is being built with backing from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and other institutions and countries. It is expected to open at the end of 1998 with a modest

collection of 200,000 titles. Eventually, it could hold 8 million books focusing on the Mediterranean, North Africa and the Arab world.

It also will have a science museum, an institute of calligraphy, a school for librarians and a special room for preserving the precious few papyrus manuscripts surviving from ancient times.

No one knows the exact location of the old library, except that it was part of the Royal Court of the Ptolemys. They ruled Egypt from the death of Alexander in 323 BC until the reign of Queen Cleopatra, which ended in 30 BC.

The new library, by accident, turns out to be on just those grounds, archaeologists say. Construction crews found a garden of the Royal Court while laying the foundation for the new 13-story library. The building was designed by

the Norwegian firm Snohetta to

look like a rising sun as a sym-

bol of hope for this city of 4 mil-

lion people. But some Alexandrians believe the money being put into the library is misdirected.

Mohammed Awad, an architect who heads a group seeking to preserve the city's historic sites, worries that Egypt doesn't have the resources to develop a great library.

"It's nice to think big, but what are the realities of the situation?" he asks. They haven't yet raised all the money they need for construction. And where are the funds going to come from to build and operate the collection?" He argues a more important

and trade institutions back to the city. "Alexander the Great's vision was for Alexandria to have an international role, and it can have it again, "Awad says. The Macedonian con-

project is drawing financial

queror's successor, Ptolemy Soter, is usually credited with building the Great Library. But scholars still debate how the building came to its fiery end. Some say the early Christians burned it in their 4th

century campaign against pa-

ganism. Others blame the

— AFP photo

Arabs, who conquered Egypt in the name of Islam in the 7th century. Mostafa el-Abbadi, an Egyptian professor of classics, points at Cleopatra and Julius Caesar. He says Caesar helped Cleopatra in her war with her younger brother in 48 BC by

The new library should be less vulnerable. It is to have the latest technology in fire detection and extinguishing systems.

burning the brother's ships in Alexandria's port and speculates the fire spread to the li-

ing with Aziz in December. Under UN resolutions end-

BELGRADE, Feb 5: Serbian in the disputed city Assem. Blies. He also said reforms were President Slobodan Milosevic

But opposition parties which have staged 11 straight weeks of massive protests against Eastern Europe's last communiststyle strongman said their ral lies would continue, at least for

said the pro-democracy rallies would continue until the oppo-

fact won fair and square. sition had actually taken over