

Netanyahu tells Clinton

Jerusalem to remain under Israel's sovereignty

WASHINGTON, Feb 15: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday he told President Bill Clinton he would do everything necessary to ensure that Jerusalem remains undivided and under Israeli sovereignty, reports AFP.

"Jerusalem is our capital. It has been our capital for 3,000 years. It's been no one else's capital," Netanyahu said in an address to The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank.

"We will continue to build it, to develop it, make it grow for Jews and Arabs alike," he said.

Netanyahu said he reiterated his position on Jerusalem in

talks with Clinton on Thursday and with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"We will do everything that is necessary to ensure the united and undivided nature of Jerusalem under Israel's sovereignty," he said.

Israel captured east Jerusalem from Jordan in 1967 and quickly annexed it as part of its "eternal capital." Palestinians want to make east Jerusalem the capital of a future independent state.

The United States has refrained from recognising Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and maintains that the issue must be settled in final negotiations

beginning next month between Israel and the Palestinians.

Netanyahu said he told US leaders that Israel will continue to provide "complete, free and unfettered access" to Jerusalem for worshippers of all three faiths.

But he categorically stated that he will not allow "a Berlin Wall" to be erected in the city.

Another report adds: The political leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) Musa Abu Marzuk, warned Israel on Friday he would refuse to cooperate if extradited from his US prison.

"I will not accept being questioned by the Israeli internal

security service (Shin Beth). I will not reply to a single question and I will not even disclose my identity. I will only speak to Israeli judges," said Marzuk in an interview with The Yediot Aharonot daily.

The paper said Abu Marzuk also made veiled threats that Hamas would launch a new spate of anti-Israeli attacks inside the Jewish state.

"I think that Israel will demand my extradition, even if there is nothing (of substance) in the 1,000 page dossier given to the Americans. The Israelis should therefore, look to the future," said Abu Marzuk.

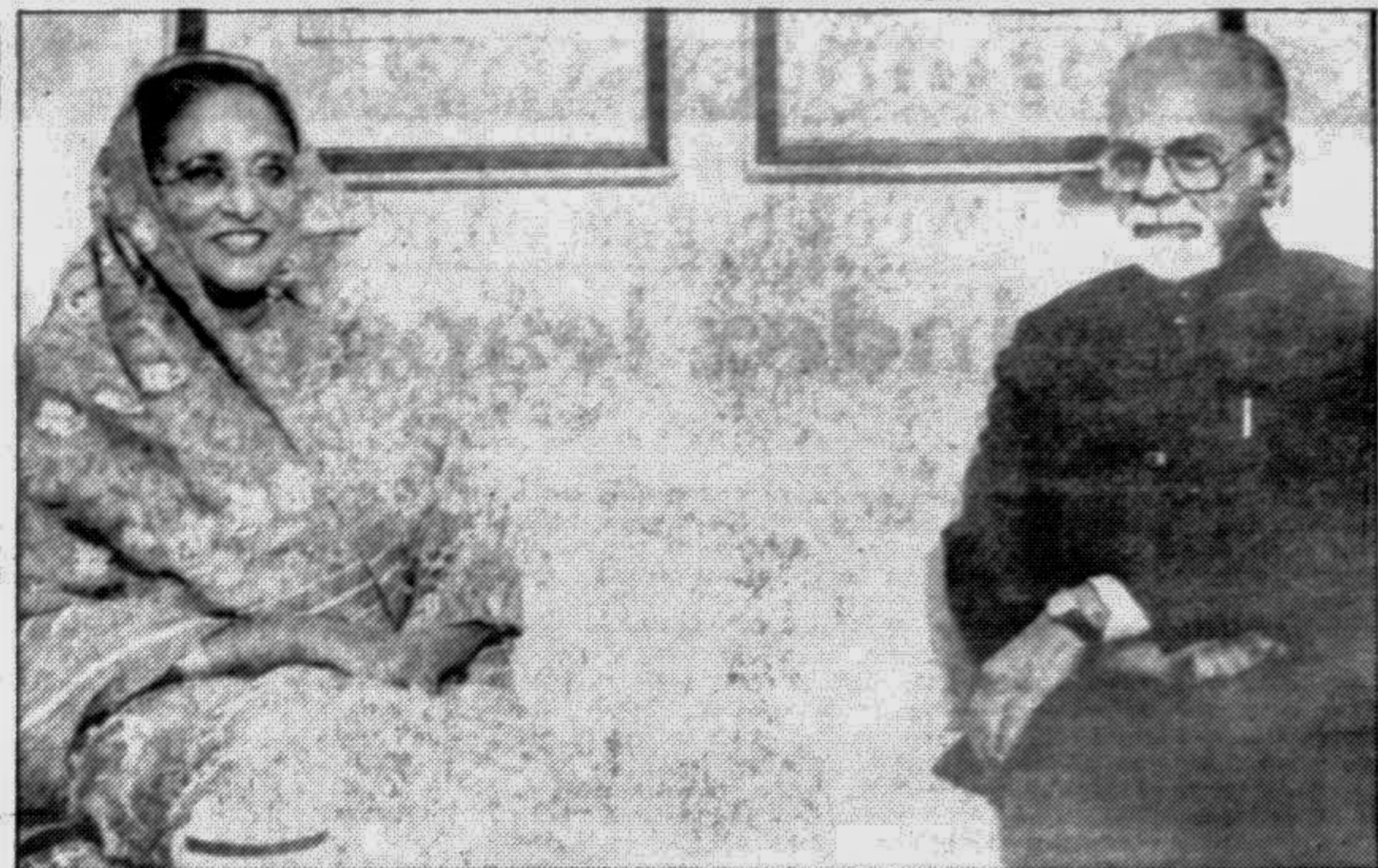
Tajik rebels resume talks with negotiators

DUSHANBE, Feb 15: Talks resumed early today with a group of Tajik rebels holding 11 hostages including eight UN workers after a planned handover stalled during the night, a Tajik government official told AFP.

A swap between the hostages and a group of rebels loyal to the hostilities was called off shortly after beginning late Friday.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Vitaly Ignatenko who was taking a leading role in the negotiations said the operation had to be halted because of the night and the impossibility under these conditions to complete the operation in total security. ITAR-Tass news agency reported.

Ignatenko had already made two telephone calls from Moscow to the rebels in eastern Tajikistan early today, ITAR-Tass reported.



Indian Foreign Minister I K Gujral called on Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Hotel Taj Palace in New Delhi on Friday. — PID photo

BRIEFLY

3 Christians killed in Egypt:

Three Christians have been found shot dead in southern Egypt despite increased police patrols in the area after gunmen stormed into a church this week and killed nine people. AP reports from Assiut.

The bodies of Farag Awad, 65, his son, Samir, 35, and William Bishara Ibrahim, 32, were found Thursday night in a field about 240 kilometres (145 miles) south of Cairo, the interior ministry said Friday. Police were searching for the attackers in the village of El-Zuheir in Minya province. Police stationed armored vehicles around churches and increased patrols in southern Egypt after gunmen burst into the Mar Girgis Church in El-Fiqriya on Wednesday and killed nine people at a charity meeting. El-Fiqriya is near El-Zuheir.

DPRK delegation arrives in China: A North Korean delegation arrived in Beijing yesterday but it was unclear if the group planned to discuss the apparent defection of a senior North Korean official inside the South Korean embassy in Beijing. Reuters reports from Beijing.

The identities of the North Koreans were not known. The embassy declined to comment. A Reuters reporter at Beijing International Airport witnessed the delegation arrive and board a vehicle belonging to the North Korean embassy.

US frees 53 Chinese detainees: Fifty-three Chinese nationals jailed by the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service since 1993 are being released, the Clinton administration announced. AP reports from Washington.

The aliens had been awaiting decisions on their requests for political asylum since the freighter trying to smuggle them into the United States ran aground off New York City in June 1993. Ten of the 277 passengers aboard the Golden Venture died trying to swim ashore. Many of the survivors asked for political asylum from China's policy of one child per family after being taken into custody by the INS. They claimed their opposition to forced abortion and forced sterilisation as grounds for permission to stay in the United States.

Brazilian plane crash kills 1: A Brazilian jetliner crashed after hitting trees during a landing at an Amazon airport Friday, killing the co-pilot and injuring four people. AP reports from Rio de Janeiro.

The Varig Boeing 737 hit the tops of trees near the runway at the Carajás airport, 110 miles (176 kilometres) north of Rio de Janeiro, said Emiliano Araújo Leao, superintendent of the Carajás airport. The co-pilot, Jose Aparecida de Oliveira, 36, died later from his injuries at a local hospital. The pilot and three passengers were hurt but reportedly in good condition. Leao said.

Bulgarian govt bans ex-ministers: Bulgaria's interim government Friday banned several ministers of the ousted Socialist led administration from leaving the country, the Interior Ministry announced. AFP reports from Sofia.

The announcement broadcast on radio, did not name the ministers but said it was to stem the flow of money precious objects and sensitive information. Bulgaria's interim government took power Wednesday and is due to stay there until after early general elections on April 19.

Asian — European FMs open talks to forge political links

SINGAPORE, Feb 15: Twenty five European and Asian nations opened a day of talks Saturday, keen to forge stronger economic and political links and sidestep persistent disputes over human rights, reports AP.

The Japanese, South Korean and Chinese foreign ministers joined their opposites of the 15-member European Union and seven Association of Southeast Asian Nations who ended separate negotiations on Friday.

The EU and ASEAN sides issued a long to-do list of their own: more joint ventures, fewer trade barriers, common industrial norms and standards, better cooperation in the fight against drugs and crime.

Adding Japan, China and South Korea to the debate on Saturday was an effort to widen economic, but above all political ties between the two regions as a whole.

Asia's relations with Europe never have been as strong as its ties to the United States, and both European and Asian politicians are eager to improve them.

In a draft statement, to be issued after Saturday's talks, the two sides committed themselves to cooperate more in the fight against drugs, crime and environmental pollution.

They also pledged joint support for Kofi Annan, the new United Nations secretary general, and his efforts to reform the UN and to bring about a new world order.

One irritant in the Europe-Asia relationship is human rights and European tendencies to press Asians on the issue at length.

The problem with Europeans, Singapore's foreign minister explained Friday after the two-day ASEAN-EU negotiations, is that they want a prenuptial agreement of human rights before marrying their trade partners.

1m illegal workers still in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 15: When Malaysia is resorting to harsher punitive measures to flush out numerous illegal immigrants, many more are sneaking in to seek their fortune in this flourishing country, reports Xinhua.

The illegal immigrants are slipping into Malaysia as the country with a population of about 20 million is facing a serious shortage of workers resulting from the rapid economic development over the past few years.

There are still about one million illegal foreign workers in the country even after a nationwide exercise to register and legalize illegal from mid August to December 31 last year and a follow-up voluntary repatriation programme which allowed them to surrender before January 31 to be deported to their respective homeland, according to official estimates which put the total foreign workers (including legal) at more than two million.

The illegal in the country are

mainly from Indonesia, Bangladesh, India and Myanmar, who are mostly involved in the fields of plantations, services, construction and manufacturing.

Already, the illegal are an ugly dimension of Malaysia's rapid economic development illustrated by the increasing violent crimes perpetrated by them, apart from taking over lucrative jobs of locals and bringing social ills.

Furthermore, the Malaysian authorities are worried that the presence of two million foreign workers along with the illegal immigrants is posing a threat to the nation's security and stability.

To rid the nation of this burgeoning problem, the Malaysian government is now waging an all-out war against the illegal. It is meting out harsher punishment to those bringing in and harboring illegals and has launched a massive crackdown against illegal immigrants.

Russia needs \$550m for refugees Yeltsin sets up committee to draft treaty with Chechnya

MOSCOW, Feb 15: President Boris Yeltsin has set up a committee to draft a treaty defining relations between Russia and the Chechen republic, reports AFP.

It will be chaired by Security Council chief, Ivan Rybkin, the presidency's press service said.

Vice-Chairman will be Sergei Shakhrai, Yeltsin's representative on the constitutional court.

The other six members include businessman Boris Beresovsky, currently Security Council Deputy Secretary-General and Justice Minister Valentin Kovalev.

The committee is to report

back by March 31.

Meanwhile Russian authorities estimate at 3,000 billion rubles (\$550 million dollars) the sum needed to compensate refugees from Chechnya in 1997, according to Deputy Finance Minister Vladimir Sheredov quoted by ITAR-Tass news agency.

But Sheredov said "the 1997 budget provides for only 200 billion rubles (\$38 million dollars) for this purpose."

The Russian government is working on a new system for paying compensation to refugees from the Chechen conflict.

Deng's health worsens suddenly

BEIJING, Feb 15: The health of China's ailing patriarch Deng Xiaoping has worsened suddenly in the past few days, French businessmen said here today quoting sources close to Deng, reports AFP.

The 92-year-old paramount leader's health declined sharply Thursday afternoon, the businessmen said after a meeting with members of Deng's entourage.

The report came as a Hong Kong-based Apple Daily newspaper quoted sources as saying that Deng had been hospitalised in Beijing after suffering a massive stroke earlier in the week preceded by another mild stroke.

Prominent French citizens hold rally against govt's anti-immigration law

PARIS, Feb 15: Several hundred French university lecturers, researchers and human rights activists on Friday joined a campaign against the conservative government's anti-immigration laws, perceived as racist, reports AFP.

Danielle Mitterrand, wife of the late socialist president Francois Mitterrand, film director Jean-Luc Godard, doctors and lawyers also signed the petition calling for civil disobedience against a bill by Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debré to tighten up already draconian immigration laws.

Earlier this week 160 writers, and 60 film directors and artists, including director Bertrand Tavernier and singer Jacques Higelin, said they were all guilty of having given lodging to illegal immigrants and demanded to be prosecuted. They also called on fellow-citizens to practise civil disobedience.

The Debré Bill, due soon for a second reading in the lower house of parliament, the national assembly, tightens up a 1993 law and will oblige French nationals lodging immigrants to declare their arrival and departure to authorities.

Off the Record

Eat less, live longer

SEATTLE: Eat less, live longer.

This sad rule has long been known to be true for lab rats. But now scientists are beginning to show that higher animals perhaps even people also may live longer and better if they stop eating before they feel full, reports AP.

The theory is that lowering calories resets the body's metabolism so it operates more efficiently.

"It's like driving your car at a slower speed," said Dr George

Both. Car engines typically last longer at 50 mph (80 kph) than at 80 mph (130 kph).

For 60 years, researchers have observed that holding back on food significantly extends the lives of various kinds of bugs, worms and rodents in the laboratory. But proving the same is true for people is next to impossible. No one would voluntarily go on a carefully controlled low-calorie diet for many decades, and such a study would be too expensive and difficult, anyway.

So for the past 10 years researchers from the National Institute on Aging in Bethesda, Maryland, have been doing this experiment on the closest thing to people they can find — rhesus and squirrel monkeys.

It turns into a day for weddings

LAS VEGAS: The bride was six months pregnant, her ex-husband gave her away and the minister peeked at his notes to remember the couple's names, reports AP.

Ten minutes and 45 mins later, Al and Rachel Clinansmith were married.

Abandoning churches and a long guest list, thousands of brides and grooms eager for a quickie marriage ceremony flocked to Las Vegas wedding chapels Friday on Valentine's Day, the national holiday for love.

Most endured a 2-to-3 hour wait at the Clark County Marriage License Bureau before heading to one of the city's 50 wedding chapels, where nuptials are done in assembly-line fashion all day. Some take no more than two minutes.

Hundreds more waited in line at the Little White Chapel, which advertises 45 mins weddings and 25 mins drive-up ceremonies. Celebrities such as Michael Jordan and Joan Collins have said "I do" there.

At least 250 wedding were scheduled Friday. Some brides wore white gowns, other couples simply wore jeans. One couple wore T-shirts identifying themselves as "Bride" and "Groom."

Love is all in your head

SEATTLE: Lucky hearts could be quickened by the latest news from the psychology lab — love ain't so grand, it's just another way to perpetuate the species, reports AP.

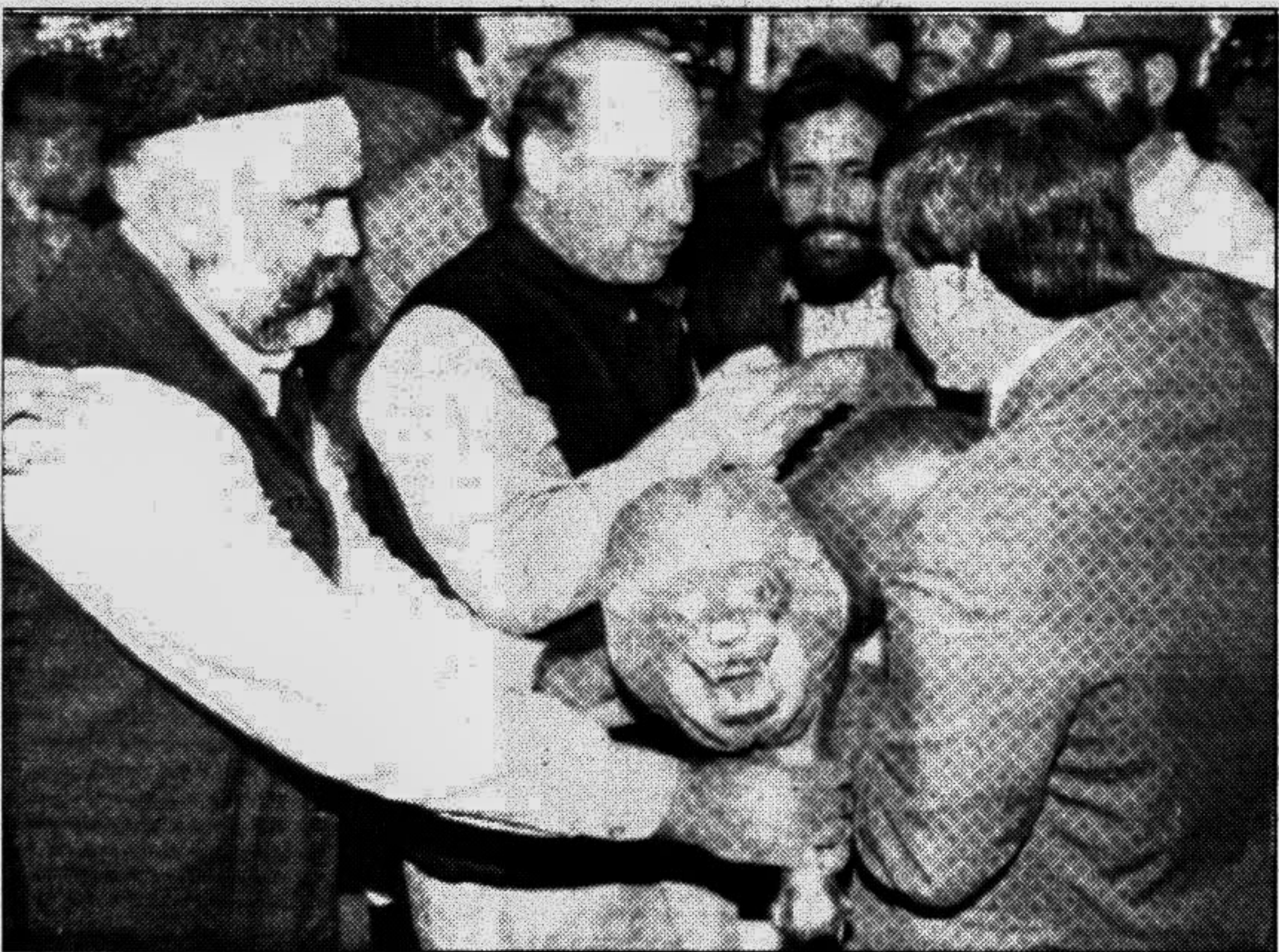
From an evolutionary perspective, the experience of love — the swooning, the fawning, the gushing — is just nature's way of getting people to mate efficiently. But taking that point of view, scientists are learning quite a bit about what love is, how it happens and even why it can be so unpleasant.

"It's a bad design for modern living," said Helen Fisher, an anthropology professor at New Jersey's Rutgers University. "But it was probably an efficient design to take advantage of mating opportunities in our evolutionary past."

Fisher is doing brain scans of people in love to see if the emotion has specific neurological roots.

"We have begun putting infatuated people in a functional magnetic resonance imaging machine," she reported Friday at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

That research hasn't yielded anything other than giggles yet, but it looks promising.



Nawaz Sharif (C), leader of the Pakistan Muslim League party (PML), is presented a gold-plated model of a lion, the PML election symbol, at a meeting of the newly elected PML party deputies in Islamabad Friday. The PML, which won general elections on February 3, named its leader Sharif as Prime Minister. — Reuters/UNB photo

'US must press China to uphold promised freedom to HK'

WASHINGTON, Feb 15: The United States has "fundamental interests" in Hong Kong and must press China to uphold promised freedoms to the booming port after its coming handover from British to Chinese rule, a top congressional policy maker for Asia said Friday, reports AP.

American "interests will be seriously undermined if the reversion does not go well," said Rep. Douglas Bereuter, chairman of the House of Representatives subcommittee on Asian-Pacific affairs. "This is perhaps... (Congress) most significant policy issue in Asia" of the year.

"Simply put, the United States must do all it can to ensure that the Chinese live up to both the letter and spirit of their 1984 agreement" with Britain for Hong Kong's June 30 reversion.

The pact concluded in Beijing by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher guaranteed Hong Kong at least a half century of economic and political autonomy in all areas except defence and foreign relations.

Opposing across-the-board cuts in US foreign spending, Bereuter said "I will work with others to ensure that we allocate the resources necessary to promote our interests abroad."

The Nebraska Republican said he agrees with a finding of the private Council on Foreign Relations that US spending cuts of nearly 20 per cent on international relations since the 1980s "have adversely affected our ability to protect and promote our economic, diplomatic and strategic interests abroad."

Such statements put Bereuter at odds with other Republicans determined to slash spending not only for foreign aid but also general overseas operations.

Bereuter, who visited Hong Kong last month, raised concerns about Hong Kong's future in speeches Friday to the Washington Roundtable for the Asian Press and to a Pacific Basin business conference.

He also unveiled details of his newly pending House resolution that declares free press and information "essential rights of the Hong Kong people," and says denial of an elected

legislature would violate the agreement with Britain.

The draft resolution would urge Beijing's Hong Kong Preparatory Committee to reconsider recent decisions described as "a serious threat to the Hong Kong people's continued enjoyment of their freedom of association, speech and other essential human rights."

They have "long enjoyed essential rights and freedoms" enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights," well before Britain "belatedly" enacted legal guarantees, it says.

Controversial actions of the new Chinese-picked committee included dismissal of legislators chosen in 1995 in what the resolution called Hong Kong's "first fully democratic" election.

Whether China can be brought into the World Trade Organization and forced "to comply with international trade norms is perhaps one of the most important American foreign policy issues for the 21st Century," Bereuter said.



Peruvian couple Jessica and John Zanzi (R) kiss after being pronounced husband and wife along with 71 other couples who married Friday Valentine's Day. The joint ceremony took place in a nearby city district and 72 couples were married in solidarity with the 72 hostages being held in the besieged Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima since December 17. — Reuters/UNB photo

Book on Nehru's 'perversion' stings Indian intelligentsia

NEW DELHI, Feb 15: A book depicting India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru as a man with homosexual tendencies has stung India's conservative intelligentsia, reports AFP.

Indian academics and biographers have sided with historians to ridicule Californian Professor Stanley Wolpert for his latest book *Tryst with destiny*.

It is a study in absurdity, said KVS Rama Sarna, Editor of The National Herald, a Nehru-founded newspaper. "what Wolpert claims did not reflect in Nehru's adult life, as many women were attracted to him."

If Nehru had homosexual tendencies then they should have continued... the book is horrible.

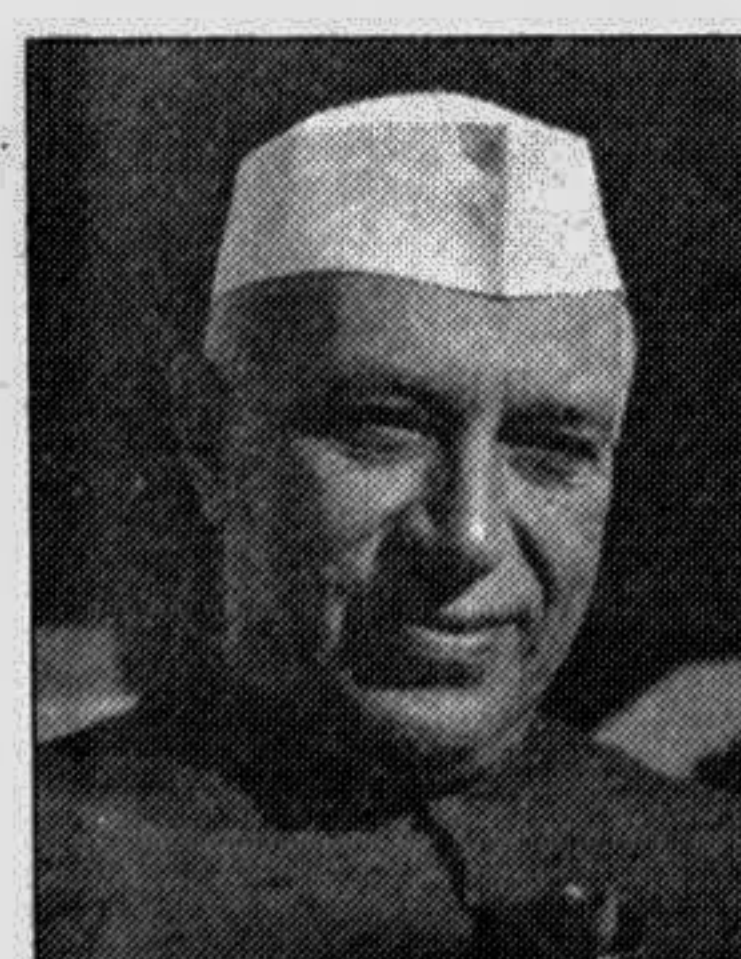
Nehru became Prime Minister

on India's independence on August 15, 1947 and retained the post until his death 17 years later. He was succeeded by daughter Indira Gandhi and after her assassination by his grandson Rajiv Gandhi, who was killed by a bomber in 1991.

Wolpert suggests Nehru developed an early attachment to a French tutor in 1902, a friendship with a Briton eight years later in Norway, as well as referring to other supposed homosexual liaisons during his time at Cambridge University.

The biographer also mentions Nehru's alleged affair with the wife of British Viceroy of India the late Lord Louis Mountbatten.

Later the book blames him for the partition of the subcontinent, which led to the birth of Pakistan in 1947 after hundreds of thousands died in ethnic violence.



But it is the allegations of homosexuality that appear to have most ranked historians in India.

"The book is stupid and third rate — nothing in it is true, said So. Gopal, Nehru's official biographer.

Ravindra Kumar, head of the Nehru Museum and a renowned historian said in his decades of research on Nehru he never came across evidence of homosexuality.

"Nehru was a very normal healthy man. In my research on him I have never come across such a disgusting suggestion, Kumar said.

L. Diwan, Curator of Nehru Memorial Fund, shrugged off Wolpert as an untrained biographer saying his credentials were suspect.

No one can maintain long leadership unless one's personal integrity is beyond reproach, he said.

Wolpert's biography, however, has found an ally in Ashok Rao Kavi a leading gay rights activist, and Sobha De, India's most read sex writer.

As long as Nehru did not rape anybody, he committed no crime. His sexual relations were one to one. The libel tradition in India is an illegitimate child of Victorian prudery and Marxist puritanism Kavi said.

"The qualities of the man do not diminish just because he was a homosexual... I consider Nehru was a great man, and him being a homosexual added to his refinements."

Sobha De added: This book has cast Nehru in a new light. It does not shock or surprise me.

It is time we should realise our leaders are not saints and we should stop treating them like saints she said.

Italy approves draft law giving immigrants right to vote

ROME, Feb 15: Italy's centre-left government approved a draft law Friday that gives more immigrants the right to vote but toughens measures to combat illegal immigration, reports AFP.

The bill gives immigrants who have been living legally in Italy for at least six years the right to vote and stand in local elections but not in higher elections and makes schooling compulsory for their children.

However, it also cracks down on illegal immigrants or those considered as dangerous, ensuring they are expelled quickly.

Italy has some 150,000 illegal immigrants according to official figures.

Peru hostage crisis Govt, rebels begin second session of preliminary talks

LIMA, Feb 15: Peru's government negotiator and a representative of the rebels holding 72 hostages in Japan's embassy Tuesday began a second session of preliminary talks Friday, reports AFP.

A white sedan flying the Red Cross flag whisked the Tupac Amaru rebels number two leader Rolu Rojas to the same private home where he already met with government negotiator Domingo Palermo on Tuesday.

The house is just across the street from the embassy residence. Palermo had been directed to arrange the talks after the first meeting Tuesday.

On hand were mediators in-

cluding Fujimori friend Ayacucho archbishop Juan Luis Cipriani and Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent, Japan's observer, Ambassador Tetsuke Terada and Red Cross official Michel Minnig.

Top rebel leader Nestor Cerna again remained inside the diplomatic compound.

Tupac Amaru (MRTA) rebels seized the mansion December 17 seeking to negotiate freedom for some 440 of their jailed comrades.

AP adds: When guerrillas seized Japan's diplomatic residence, he was so little known that it took anti-terrorist squads two weeks to identify him.