

Pro-govt gunmen suspected

45 villagers massacred in Mexico

ACTEAL, Mexico, Dec 24: A column of gunmen descended on an Indian village, opened fire with AK-47s and hunted down those who tried to flee, including terrified mothers with babies. In all, 45 people were killed in southern Mexico's worst violence since a leftist uprising four years ago, reports AP.

In a nationally broadcast address Tuesday, President Ernesto Zedillo called the massacre "an absurd criminal act." "There is no cause, no circumstance, that could justify this action," he said. Zedillo directed the federal attorney general and the national human rights commission to investigate.

New Bosnian Serb parliament to meet Dec 27

BELGRADE, Dec 24: Hardliners called an inaugural session of the Bosnian Serb Republic's newly elected parliament on the December 27 deadline set by international mediators, the Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.



Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad (L) called on Nepalese King Birendra at the Royal Palace in Kathmandu Tuesday. — AP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

2 sentenced to death in India: A judge sentenced two men to death for murdering four brothers during religious riots that swept India following the 1884 assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, newspapers reported Wednesday, AP reports from New Delhi.

2 N Koreans defect to ROK: South Korea's Foreign Ministry said yesterday that two North Korean defectors arrived in the country and more might follow, Reuter reports from Seoul.

IRA bomber freed for X-mas: The IRA bomber who nearly succeeded in assassinating former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 1984, is one of the paramilitary prisoners released temporarily for the Christmas holidays, AP reports from Belfast.

Air crash leaves 4 dead in US: A small plane plunged out of control into a cornfield, plowing a deep hole in the ground and killing two married couples heading home to Illinois from Florida, AP reports from Hampshire.



Suha Arafat, wife of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, with a doll representing Jesus while holding her daughter, Zahwa, Tuesday at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Yasser Arafat and his wife arrived in Bethlehem to participate in the Christmas celebrations. — AP/UNB photo

China blasts Hollywood for movies on Tibet

BEIJING, Dec 24: China warned Hollywood today that it would "never be forgiven" for a recent series of movies on Tibet, which attack Chinese rule, reports AFP.

Iran blamed for Luxor massacre

JERUSALEM, Dec 24: The new American ambassador to Israel says Iran was behind last month's massacre of 56 foreign tourists by Islamic militants in Egypt, an Israeli newspaper reported today, says AP.

'Carlos the Jackal' gets life term

PARIS, Dec 24: Former international terrorist "Carlos the Jackal" was sentenced to life imprisonment early today for a triple murder in Paris in 1975, reports AP.

Accused US spy allowed to leave Russia temporarily

WASHINGTON, Dec 24: An American telephone technician charged with spying in Russia has been allowed to return home for the holidays under an agreement with the Russian security service, the US State Department said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Clinton hopeful of progress in ME peace process in '98

WASHINGTON, Dec 24: President Bill Clinton said on Tuesday he was hopeful that there would be progress in the peace process both between Israel and the Palestinians and between Israel and Syria next year, reports Reuter.

Oklahoma bombing case Nichols convicted of conspiracy

DENVER, Dec 24: A jury convicted Terry Nichols of conspiracy and manslaughter in the Oklahoma City bombing, branding him the junior partner to Army buddy Timothy McVeigh in the deadliest act of terrorism on US soil, reports AP.

US likely to sell missiles to Israel

WASHINGTON, Dec 24: The US defence department on Tuesday announced the possible sale of 45 AGM142D air-to-ground missiles to Israel for 41 million US dollars, saying the deal would help improve Israel's security, reports Reuter.

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Off the Record

For holding wild party in wildlife sanctuary...

BANGKOK: Thailand's Cabinet has transferred a provincial governor for holding a wild party with hundreds of guests in a wildlife sanctuary, a government statement issued Wednesday said, reports AP.

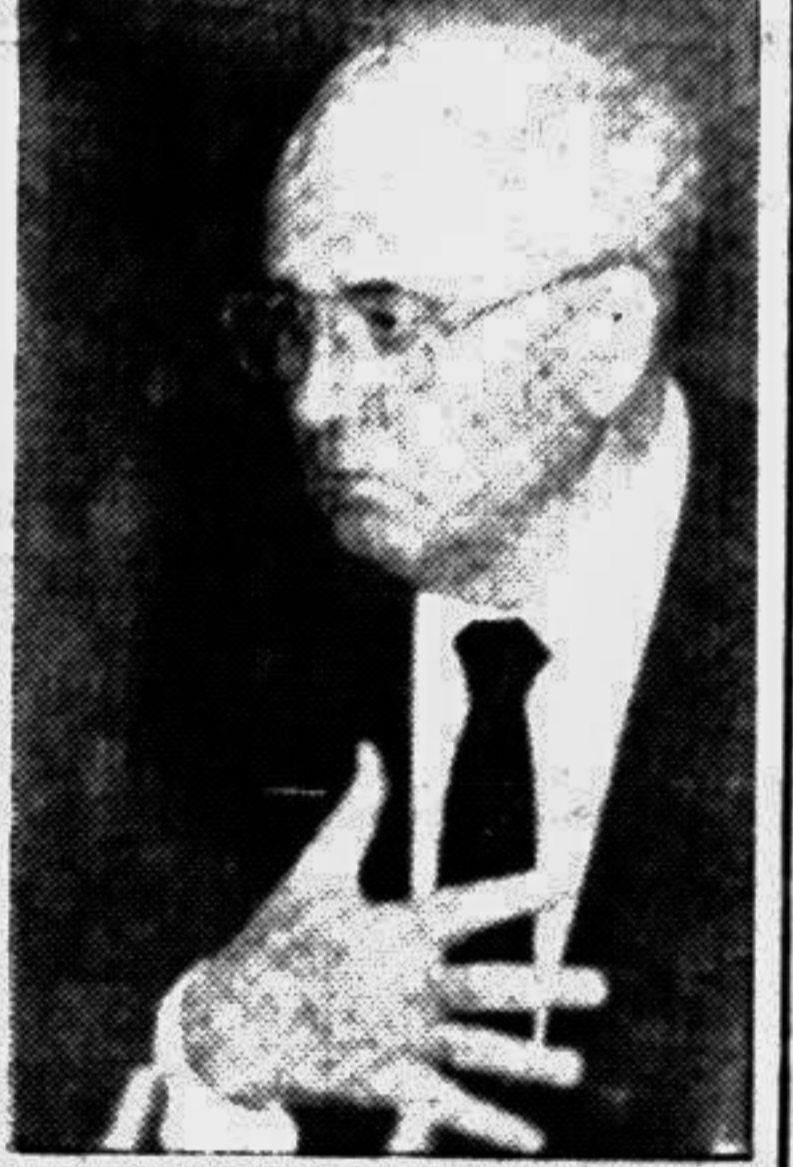
Hard labour for bigamy!

COLOMBO: A judge has issued an arrest warrant against a former presidential candidate living the United States after he was convicted of bigamy, officials said Wednesday, reports AP.

A poor advertising person?

MOSCOW: Mikhail Gorbachev couldn't sell his country on capitalism. Now he can't sell them on pizza, reports AP.

In the spot, Gorbachev is shown leading his granddaughter Anastasia into a Pizza Hut restaurant presumably located on red square.



Ousted Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, (L) meets with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Prime Minister House, Islamabad, Tuesday. Rabbani was flown from Mazar-e-Sharif, in northern Afghanistan, to Islamabad on Sharif's official aircraft. Rabbani said war is not the solution and called for negotiated end to the bloodletting that is ripping his homeland apart. — AP/UNB photo

China has been waging a campaign against Tibet's exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing accuses of seeking independence for the

The magic of her memory did not, however, melt the hearts of those who use landmines most — Russia, China, the United States and a number of smaller states with dicey borders did not join the club.

And a year-end crisis over weapons inspections in Iraq showed that Washington was finding it harder to sustain the international alliance against Iraq's Saddam Hussein that rallied to rescue Kuwait in 1991's Gulf War.



1997— The year of 'people's princess'

LONDON, Dec 24: In the hearts, minds and headlines of the world, this was the year of Princess Diana, reports Reuter.

His death in February at 93 denied him the sight of dream fulfilled — the end of British rule in Hong Kong at the stroke of midnight on June 30, with Diana's ex-husband Prince Charles completing the great imperial retreat that began with the independence of India and Pakistan 50 years before.