

## Indonesia riots

## New military chief installed as troops fear more trouble

JAKARTA, Feb 16: President Suharto installed a trusted former aide as Indonesia's new armed forces commander Monday as thousands of troops and police watched for more trouble after days of technically-charged unrest, reports AP. "The armed forces are fully in control and can manage the situation," said Gen Wiranto after he was sworn-in at Jakarta's state palace.

He warned that the 465,000-member military would act against those who try to threaten national stability.

Police in Jakarta have pledged to keep the capital free from politically-motivated protests ahead of a presidential election in March. They say agitators could be imprisoned for up to five years.

Five people, including at least two men shot by security personnel, were killed during three days of rioting on four islands amid the worst economic crisis in three decades.

Mobs on Java, Lombok, Sumatra and Sulawesi attacked and torched dozens of houses and shops owned by the ethnic Chinese minority they blame for soaring prices and growing unemployment.

Troops patrolled several towns and villages Monday.

Violence has been building over the past two months as hard times hit millions of poor, mainly Muslim, Indonesians.

The Chinese, who are mostly

Christians or Buddhists, dominate commerce but complain they are being made scapegoats for economic problems control. Wiranto, a four-star general, denied the economic crisis alone was the reason for the unrest. Instead he blamed "certain groups" for fomenting trouble and spreading rumours.

"People must consider rumours as garbage," he said. "Garbage is poisonous."

Violence has rocked more than a dozen centres. Nevertheless Wiranto said it hasn't yet been harmful to the nation's stability and security.

Suharto has governed for 32 years and is expected to win a seventh five-year term when an electoral college-like, 1,000-member assembly votes on the presidency in March.

Analysts have said his appointment of Wiranto as armed forces chief will help safeguard his position.

Wiranto, 50, established a trusted relationship with Suharto, 76, when he served as the president's adjutant, or military aide, between 1989 and 1993.

Unrest came as close as 80 kilometres (50 miles) to the capital during the weekend. Even so Jakarta remains calm in the lead-up to the election.

"Jakarta will always be secure and safe," the capital's police chief Maj Gen Hamami Nata said Sunday.

## International

## NZ sends commandos, planes for attack

## Clinton adminn setting stage for military attack on Iraq

WASHINGTON, Feb 16: Top Clinton administration officials say they see no answer to the diplomatic impasse with Iraq and are prepared to go to the nation to explain why a military strike may be necessary and unavoidable, reports AP.

Defence Secretary William Cohen said Sunday that the United States will accept no compromise that allows Iraq to limit UN weapons inspections.

"I have seen no proposal that would satisfy the basic objectives ... that is full, unrestricted access," he said on ABC television's "This Week."

UN representatives are in

Bahrain and Kuwait to coordinate policy.

Meanwhile a senior Republican senator said it's time for President Bill Clinton to set a deadline for Saddam Hussein to back down or face US military might.

Other lawmakers insisted Sunday that the president should not act without a vote of support from Congress, which is on vacation next week.

Another AP report adds New Zealand on Monday added its support to the Western nations ready to back military action against Iraq offering its elite commando unit and two search and rescue planes.

Prime Minister Jenny Shipley said the Cabinet had approved sending 20 Special Air Services troops for search and rescue operations and two Orion aircraft to the coalition forces led by the United States.

US President Bill Clinton phoned Shipley last week to ask for New Zealand to be part of the coalition against Saddam Hussein.

Close ally Australia has already promised about 250 personnel to the Iraq mission, including more than 100 elite SAS commandos.

New Zealand contributed two Hercules supply aircraft and two medical teams to the Gulf War in 1991.

President Bill Clinton's na-

tional security adviser, Sandy Berger, said he hoped the dispute could be settled peacefully, but not if it meant concessions to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

"We simply cannot let this man, who has used chemical weapons 10 times since 1983, have safe havens to redevelop his weapons of mass destruction," Berger said on NBC television's "Meet the Press."

The administration says a military strike could come at any time, although it would still like to get more open support from US allies and has yet to get a formal endorsement from Congress, which is in recess this week.

To raise national consciousness on the issue, Clinton will go to the Pentagon on Tuesday. Cohen, Berger and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright will hold a town-hall meeting in Columbus, Ohio, on Wednesday.

Sen Joseph Biden, a Delaware Democrat, said the United States has been promised logistical support for a military strike from at least 23 nations, compared with 37 backers during the 1991 Gulf War. But Russia, China and France remain opposed to the military option, and Clinton continued his telephone campaign Sunday, calling leaders in Austria, Belgium,

and rescue planes.

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President Bill Clinton's na-

## Narayanan first Indian president to cast vote

NEW DELHI, Feb 16: India's president broke from tradition and cast his vote Monday as the country went to the polls for the second time in two years, a local news agency reported, says AP.

President KR Narayanan and his wife Usha became the first Indian first couple to exercise their franchise, Press Trust of India reported. The Indian president usually does not vote in order to demonstrate the neutrality of his position.

"The President expressed his desire to vote. To the best of our knowledge and available records, he is the first president to vote," his press secretary TP Seetharam told PTI.

Elections are being held three years early because no party won a majority in the last Lok Sabha, or lower house of parliament in 1996 voting, and politicians could not agree on a minority or coalition government.

## Shan rebels kill 7 troops in Myanmar

MAE HONG SON, Thailand, Feb 16: At least seven Myanmar government soldiers were killed when Shan guerrillas staged a surprise attack on a military outpost in eastern Shan state, guerrilla sources said today, reports Reuter.

About 200 Shan State Army (SSA) guerrillas, who are fighting for autonomy for the Shan state from Yangon, hit the outpost about three kms (1.8 miles) from Ho Mong town last Thursday, the guerrillas and refugee sources told Reuters.

The SEA lost two guerrillas in the attack, they said.

Ho Mong was once a stronghold of opium warlord Khun Sa, who surrendered to the ruling Myanmar military government in early 1996.

## Lankan army shoring up defence line in Kilinochchi

KILINOCHCHI, Sri Lanka, Feb 16: Sri Lankan soldiers are hastily digging trenches and building sandbag bunkers to shore up defence lines in this strategic northern town following fierce fighting earlier this month, reports Reuter.

New defence lines are being constructed against occasional mortar thuds and bursts of automatic fire after a bloody battle left hundreds of soldiers and Tamil Tiger rebels dead and forced the military to withdraw from its frontlines south of Kilinochchi town.

"We were able to repulse a major attack. They (Tigers) could not achieve their aim," Brigadier Lohan Gunawardena, general officer commanding the army in the region, told journalists on a visit to Kilinochchi.

## Sanjay, Rhea tie the knot

MUMBAI, Feb 16: Film actor Sanjay Dutt married leading Model Rhea Pillai at the mahalaxmi Temple in south Mumbai Sunday, after a two year long courtship, reports PTI.

The stunning liaison between the macho star and the model, that was kept under wraps for sometime, became public after Rhea came to meet Sanjay regularly on sets of his under-production films.

The couple took the decision to tie the knot after attending a Valentine Day's party the previous night and went through the "saat pheras" early Sunday in presence of the temple pujari.

This is the second marriage for 38-year-old Sanjay, son of the charismatic veteran actor turned politician Sunil Dutt. Sanjay's first wife actress Richa Sharma died of cancer last year. His daughter Trishala is in New York with Richa's parents.

Actress Sharon Stone, 39, and San Francisco Examiner executive editor Phil Bronstein, 47, pose after their wedding ceremony on Saturday at her home in Beverly Hills, California.

## Thai daily reports

## Suu Kyi ready to share power with junta

The Nation characterised her statements regarding a possible coalition as a softening of her demands, and in a front-page headline declared "NLD ready to share power," says Suu Kyi.

But in every major speech since her release, Suu Kyi has called on the military government to work with the NLD in implementing democracy and forgoing national reconciliation.

There would be "no problem to sharing power," with military leaders, NLD vice chairman Tin Oo also said in a separate interview with The Nation.

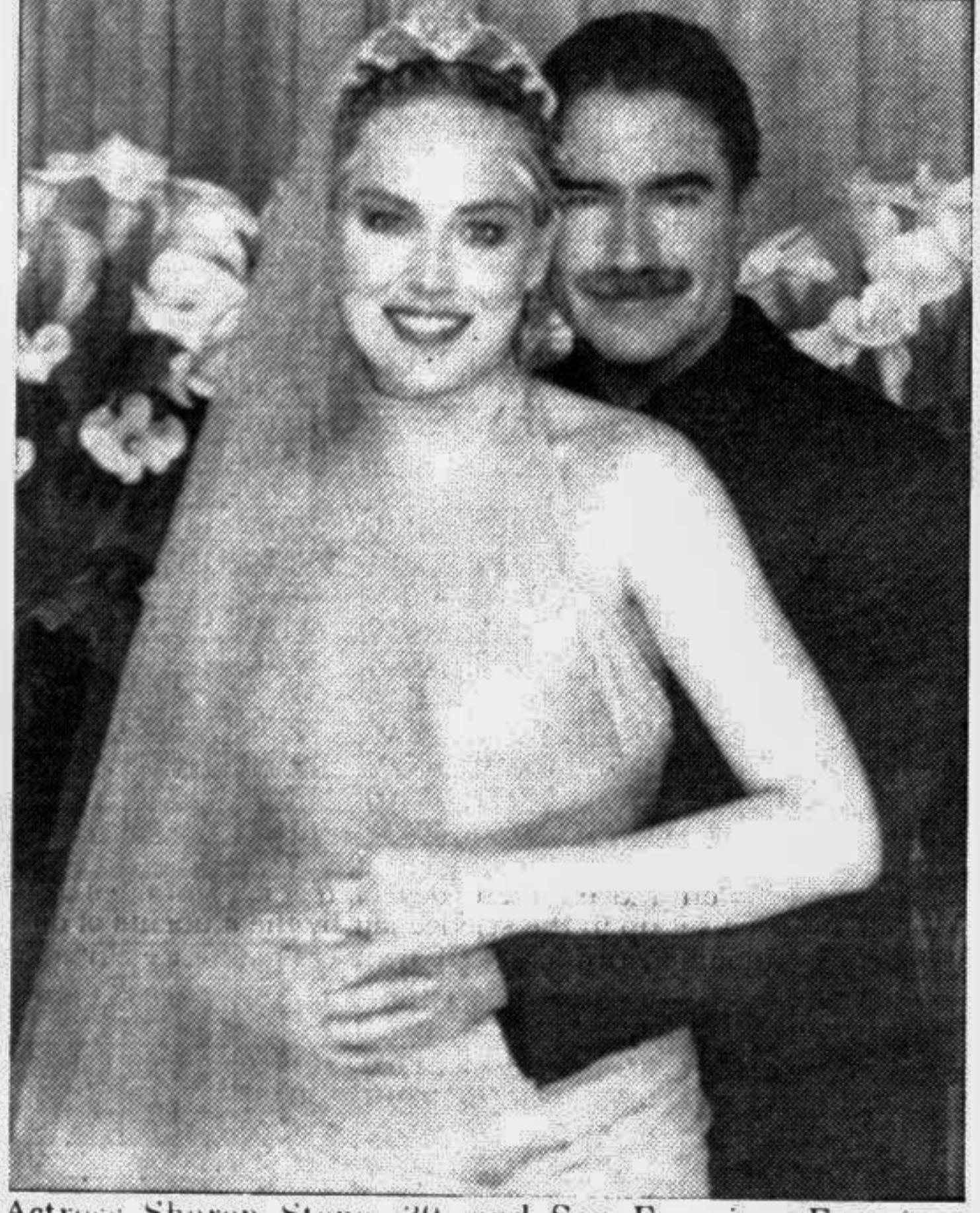
Suu Kyi has steadfastly refused to detail what compromise she and her party would accept from the government before both parties enter into talks.

The military has refused to open a dialogue, however, with either Suu Kyi or Tin Oo, instead attempting last year to begin talks with other NLD officials.

A genuine political dialogue involves equality, if they choose their own representatives and ours as well, that is not a dialogue on an equal basis. For that reason we will not accept this," Suu Kyi was quoted as saying by The Nation.

At a party congress held last September, NLD representatives reaffirmed a mandate

## Off the Record



Actress Sharon Stone, 39, and San Francisco Examiner executive editor Phil Bronstein, 47, pose after their wedding ceremony on Saturday at her home in Beverly Hills, California.

## Etiquette school for cab drivers

PHILADELPHIA: Philadelphia cabbies are taking classes to learn a little class, reports AP.

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, which oversees taxis, has been holding mandatory etiquette classes for Philadelphia's cab drivers since January. It's a sort of charm school that's meant to better prepare cab drivers for the job.

On the lesson plan are movies like "View from the Backseat." and lectures about keeping cars clean. The drivers are also schooled on how to dress — clean shirts with collars, pants, shoes and socks.

"We like drivers to think of themselves as business professionals doing a job," PUC enforcement officer Benes Lawrence told a class of a dozen men last week.

The city's 6,000 certified taxi drivers are required to take a one-day class. New drivers must take a three-day course.

## Happily reunited

BANGKOK: Mike and Susu, a celebrity couple in Thailand who had been separated for a year, have been reunited in a new home, says AP.

The orangutans, whose nearly human "marriage" drew a nationwide television audience in 1996, were moved to separate quarters in January 1997 after Susu gave birth to a son.

Mike was jealous of the attention showered on the infant and his handlers at the Lop Buri Zoo, north of Bangkok, feared he would harm the baby.

The Nation newspaper reported Sunday that Mike had regained his equilibrium and moved with his family to a new 1.5 million-baht (dlrs 30,000) ape house.

## Indian polls

## Voting gets off to slow start as weary voters fear another hung parliament

NEW DELHI, Feb 16: Maqbool Ahmed, a 65-year-old New Delhi resident, voted today with resignation in his heart, reports AFP.

India's polls, to elect the country's fifth government within two years, are widely expected to lead to another hung parliament.

"I do not see the point of this exercise if it throws up another hung parliament. We might as well sit at home," said Ahmed wearily, a chequered scarf around his head, after casting his ballot.

His mood seemed to be reflected in the slow start to balloting, although officials argued it would pick up later.

Most polling stations reported thin voter turnout during the first five hours of polling.

Praveen Sharma, an clean-shaven executive of a multinational firm dressed in dark blue suit, agreed it was "unfortunate" that no single party may get a majority.

At one east Delhi polling station, 178 of 1,050 eligible voters had turned up by midday, five hours into polling.

G Randha Krishnan, a 32-

## Nepal keenly observing Indian general elections

KATHMANDU, Feb 16: Though engulfed in its own political uncertainty, Nepal is keenly observing developments in the Indian general election, reports India Abroad News Service.

Nepali press and intelligentsia have welcomed the reference relations with this country in the election manifesto of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which most here expect to emerge as the single largest party and be in a better position to form the government in New Delhi.

The BJP has said that it will continue the best of ties with Nepal if it comes to power. One of the party's foreign policy objectives is "to maintain the unique warm and friendly relations with Nepal with which India has the closest cultural, religious and historical ties.

"We recognise in particular the great scope for increasing cooperation in the energy and environment related areas. A BJP government will seek to resolve all outstanding issues quickly," the BJP manifesto,

of bilateral relations as proposed by major Indian parties.

The Congress party's stand on Indo-Nepal relations too has been welcomed.

Professor T.N. Jaisawal of Tribhuvan University is confident that Indo-Nepal ties will not be hampered no matter which party comes to power in New Delhi, or in Kathmandu can go against Indo-Nepal relations, which are based on sound social, cultural, historical and economic foundations for memorial," he told India Abroad News Service.

What Indian political parties' manifestos say about Indo-Nepal relations have been widely carried in newspapers in this country. The People's Review (an English language weekly) Rising, Nepal. The Kathmandu Post, The Independent (English language dailies) and leading Nepali language publications have given extensive coverage to manifestos.

Risal, "India being a nuclear power will not disturb peace in South Asia. In case of Nepal, this matter will not have any negative impact," he added.



An Iraqi volunteer learns to use an anti-aircraft gun during a training session on the outskirts of Baghdad on Sunday, amid the arrival of a UN special commission sent by the UN Secretary General. Iraq is still facing the possibility of a US military attack.

— AP/UNB photo

## Modernisation treads cautiously on tradition in Bhutan

THIMPHU, Feb 16: Once every two years, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck climbs into his Land Cruiser and heads out to meet his people. Often, his four wives and some of his 10 children go along, but there's hardly any security, reports AP.

In dozens of local meetings during the ritual, the 42-year-old king of Bhutan and his ministers discuss the latest development plans and decide where to build a bridge, a clinic, a school.

Such people-to-government contact is possible in a small nation like Bhutan, with only 600,000 people. While political chaos afflicts its democratic neighbours — India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh — Bhutan's monarchy is a refuge of stability.

To the few visitors allowed in each year, this Buddhist kingdom high in the Himalayas is a magical land of legendary dragons, demons and deities. Its forests are vast and bountiful — and actually spreading. Its rivers are swift and clean. The crisp air is scented with pine.

The Bhutanese call their home Druk Yul — Land of the Thunder Dragon, a name derived from traditional stories that its branch of Mahayana, or Tibetan, Buddhism was conceived amid much thunder and lightning.

Amnesty International, the London-based human rights group, accused Bhutan of arresting and torturing dozens of pro-democracy activists, including Buddhist monks and teachers. A few years ago, Bhutan cracked down to stop

what it considered a flood of immigrants, raising concerns about human rights in the kingdom.

But the king remains widely admired. Even his harshest critics at the height of the immigration controversy did not call for an end to the monarchy, seeking only to limit its powers.

Thimphu, the capital of 40,000 people, has no neon signs, no traffic lights, no pizzerias or fast food chains. It has only one newspaper — a weekly.