

Rebels say 'no compromise to independence'

US may send as many as 4000 troops to NATO forces in Kosovo

WASHINGTON, Feb 4: The United States may contribute as many as 4,000 troops to a NATO ground force in Kosovo if the warring sides reach a peace settlement, the chairman of the joint chief of staff said Wednesday, reports agencies.

His comments were the administration's most detailed public discussion yet of the options it faces in Kosovo, which US officials warn is on the verge of a dramatic escalation in fighting between Serbian forces and ethnic Albanian rebels.

up for discussion. A statement from Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist Party also favoured attendance, saying Yugoslavia and Serbia — the dominant Yugoslav republic — supported solving the Kosovo issue "through political means."

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council made no move Wednesday to respond to Yugoslavia's request for an urgent meeting on Kosovo to avert threatened NATO military strikes.

Canada, which holds the rotating council presidency, said further talks were expected Thursday. Western diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there had been no move even from Russia, Yugoslavia's closest friend on the council, to push for a meeting while the diplomatic moves are under way.

Benazir sacks 2 NWFP leaders from PPP

ISLAMABAD, Feb 4: Former premier Benazir Bhutto on Thursday removed two leaders of her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) for creating an internal split in the North West Frontier Province, the party said, reports AFP.

Military operation likely to result in victory for ECOMOG in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, Feb 4: A "decisive" military operation likely to result in final victory for West African ECOMOG troops in the war against rebels in Sierra Leone, is being prepared in the north of the country, converging military reports indicated late Wednesday, reports AFP.

help in training about 5,000 men recruited by Sierra Leone to beef up its current forces and form a proper army. In the interior of Sierra Leone, the towns of Bo in the south and Makani in the southwest were considered Wednesday night to have been "secured," according to ECOMOG.

Over 200 students jailed in Myanmar last month

BANGKOK, Feb 4: More than 200 Myanmar university students were sentenced to 14 years in prison each late last month, a group of exiled Myanmar lawyers said on Thursday, reports AP.

Kumaratunga orders probe into alleged vote fraud

COLOMBO, Feb 4: President Chandrika Kumaratunga Thursday ordered an investigation into alleged fraud in a recent provincial election, reports AP.

Military accused of arming opponents of independence in East Timor

DILI, Indonesia, Feb 4: East Timor's spiritual leader on Thursday accused the Indonesian military of arming groups that oppose independence in the long-disputed territory, reports AP.

nisms would resurface if Indonesian troops pull out. Tension has escalated in recent weeks, and hundreds of refugees have sought shelter in Dili and the East Timorese town of Suai, claiming harassment by armed men.

US-DPRK talks make progress

North Korea and the United States have made significant progress in talks on allowing access to a suspect underground site in the North, officials were quoted as saying yesterday, AFP says from Seoul.

Islamic law imposed in Chechnya: Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov on Wednesday imposed Islamic law in the breakaway republic giving in to pressure from opposition groups, AFP says from Grozny.

China jails dissident Wang Ce: China has jailed returned overseas dissident Wang Ce for four years for helping to endanger state security, the Hong Kong based Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said yesterday, AFP says from Beijing.

2 die in copter crash in ROK: A US Army helicopter carrying five soldiers crashed north of Seoul Thursday, killing two and injuring two others, the US military command said, AP reports from Seoul.

US envoy meets Taliban official: A senior US official met in Pakistan with a ranking Taliban official and reaffirmed the US view that suspected terrorist Osama bin Ladin should be expelled from Afghanistan, AP says from Washington.

After 22 yrs of rule Djibouti leader to step down: DJIBOUTI, Feb 4: Djibouti President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, 83, on Thursday announced that he would stand down in April after leading this tiny Horn of Africa nation for 22 years, reports AFP.



Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan, left, Olympic gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey, centre, and photographer and film director Gordon Parks pose at the Associated Black Charities annual Benefit Dinner Dance Wednesday in New York. The three were honoured at the event with 1999 Black History Maker awards.

Arafat keen to carry out stalled West Bank accord with Israel

WASHINGTON, Feb 4: Yasser Arafat affirmed Wednesday he intends to carry out the stalled West Bank accord with Israel as controversy enveloped the Palestinian leader's brief visit here, reports AP.

Arafat, in a brief exchange at the doorway of the State Department, did not say how he thought the process could be revived.

While Ruben disputed Israel's assertion he said that "with respect to other related issues of the revolving door, let me say that we do have concerns."

Anti-Catholic militants fear collapse of N Ireland peace deal

BELFAST, Feb 4: Anti-Catholic militants warned Wednesday they have smuggled in new weaponry in expectation that Northern Ireland's peace agreement could collapse, reports AP.

because both the IRA-allied Sinn Fein party and UVF-allied Progressive Unionist Party have members elected to Belfast's new legislative Assembly, from which a government is supposed to be drawn.

Violence claims 8 in Agartala

AGARTALA, Feb 4: Eight persons were killed, two severely injured, several more reported missing and at least 200 huts set on fire in violence by insurgents and irate mobs of Kanchanmala and neighbouring villages, about 12 km from here on Tuesday according to police, reports PTI.

Indian cleric warns of violence if Rushdie returns

NEW DELHI, Feb 4: A leading Indian Muslim cleric Thursday warned of nationwide protests and possible Hindu-Muslim violence if British writer Salman Rushdie returned to the country of his birth after being granted a visa.

Punishment of genocidal group's leaders Former Khmer Rouge leader slams efforts for trial

PHNOM PENH, Feb 4: Former Khmer Rouge chief Ieng Sary is attacking efforts to bring leaders of the genocidal group to trial, warning that Cambodia's newfound peace is being threatened by foreign powers with strategic interests in the country, reports AP.

Clinton's decry magazine feature on Chelsea

WASHINGTON, Feb 4: President Bill Clinton and his wife say they are "profoundly saddened" by a decision by People magazine's editors to feature a story about their daughter, Chelsea, on its cover, reports AP.

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Colombia's First Lady Nohora Puyana, right, visits earthquake survivor Marleny Canales and her son at a tent in southern Armenia, Wednesday. The government set up a tent city with a capacity of 2,600 people for survivors of last week's earthquake in the hopes of building a model for the city's recovery. Most of the survivors have refused to go the facility and preferred to make their own tents.