

## International

## Senate okays televised trial deposition by Lewinsky

WASHINGTON, Feb 5: Weary from the all-consuming presidential impeachment trial, US senators are moving briskly to end the proceedings, reports AP. In a bipartisan vote Thursday, Senators rejected a request by the Republican prosecutors to force Monica Lewinsky to testify live before the US Senate. Instead, they agreed to permit the showing of portions of videotaped testimony she gave this week to prosecutors.

Parts of her recorded deposition are to be played at the nationally televised trial session on Saturday. Clinton is on trial after being formally accused by the US House of Representatives to perjure and obstruction of justice for trying to conceal his affair with Ms Lewinsky, a former White House intern. Republicans hold a 55-45 majority in the Senate, and it is virtually certain that they won't be able to muster the 67 votes needed to convict Clinton and remove him from office.

Senate Republicans had considered a proposal to find Clinton guilty of wrongdoing without removing him from office, but retreated from the plan on Thursday.

With their decisions Thursday, the senators moved to bring the trial to a conclusion by the end of next week. "I do think it's time we get to a vote and we move on" to other issues, said Republican Majority Leader Trent Lott.

Under the Senate's decision Thursday, prosecutors and

White House lawyers will have up to three hours each to make presentations, including portions of videotaped depositions on Saturday. In addition to Ms Lewinsky, lawyers questioned presidential friend Vernon Jordan and White House aide Sidney Blumenthal earlier this week and recorded the proceedings.

An effort by the Republican prosecutors from the House of Representatives to call Ms Lewinsky for live questioning was rejected, 70-30, with 25 of the Senate's 55 Republicans joining the 45 Democrats in opposition.

"Today's vote rejecting the House managers' request for live witnesses indicates the Senate appears ready to bring this trial to a conclusion," said White House spokesman Joe Lockhart.

Judy Smith, a spokeswoman for Ms Lewinsky, said the former White House intern "and her family are pleased that she does not have to go through the painful and humiliating ordeal of having to testify on the floor of the Senate."

Thursday's session unfolded as the White House formally rejected a request from Senate Republicans for Clinton to submit to a sworn deposition.

The vote against calling Ms Lewinsky was a rebuff to Rep. Henry Hyde and other House prosecutors, who had pushed the two articles of impeachment through the House on a near party-line vote. They won

grudging Senate permission a week ago to question the three witnesses, but only after paring their list down from a dozen or more.

Shortly before the vote, one House prosecutor aired his frustration.

"If one senator has failed to personally sit through... every deposition, that senator is not equipped to render a verdict on the impeachment trial," said Republican Rep. James Rogan.

A subsequent bid by Democratic Sen. Patty Murray to keep the videotapes out of presentations at the trial failed. The vote was 73-27, with 20 Democrats joining 53 Republicans.

Taken together, the day's votes underscored that senators in both parties are eager for a swift conclusion to the trial, near the end of its fourth week. Republicans, in particular, have been labouring to find an exit from a proceeding that is unpopular with the public and that Republican strategists say is inflicting political damage on the party.

The votes unfolded on the Senate floor as Republicans edged away from a confrontation over their proposal to delineate wrongdoing by Clinton before the final vote on his fate.

Democrats had attacked the proposal as unconstitutional, and Republicans said they had no interest in provoking a partisan confrontation. Republicans were also divided over the constitutionality — and the political wisdom — of such a vote.

## Butler may not seek extension to his contract

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5: With Russia and China demanding his immediate resignation, chief UN weapons inspector Richard Butler said Thursday he was unlikely to seek an extension to his contract which ends June 30, report agencies.

The former Australian diplomat also said he wasn't seeking a spot on a new panel that will make recommendations on Iraq's disarmament, a subject of much speculation in recent days. But Butler said he expects to be in the Security Council chamber when it considers the panel's recommendations and formulates a new policy on Iraq.

Speaking to a few reporters as he was leaving the United Nations building, the chief inspector defended the work of the UN Special Commission, known as UNSCOM, which he heads.

## Muslims vow to keep Rushdie out of India

NEW DELHI, Feb 5: A top Indian Muslim cleric told a 3,000-strong gathering here Friday that British author Salman Rushdie would be hounded "relentlessly" if he ever set foot again in the country of his birth, reports AFP.

"We shall pursue Salman Rushdie relentlessly if he comes to India," said Syed Ahmad Bukhari, deputy priest of India's largest mosque, the Jama Masjid in New Delhi.

Bukhari was addressing the crowd after holding Friday prayers at the mosque.

His warnings followed confirmation from India that it had granted a visa to the author of "The Satanic Verses" — the book which earned Rushdie a 10-year death "fatwa" from Iran.

Bukhari called on Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to personally intervene to prevent Rushdie coming to India, warning that he would be held responsible for "the Muslim anger" arising out of any visit. "No Muslim can tolerate a man who has insulted the holy Quran and the prophet Mohammed," Bukhari said.

## Diana's family fails to patent her image

LONDON, Feb 5: An attempt by the family of Diana Princess of Wales, and the memorial fund set up in her name, to register her image as a trademark, has been rejected, the British patent office said on Thursday, reports AFP.

The decision, after 16 months of deliberations, is a blow to attempts by The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund to prevent the use of pictures of the late princess on a huge range of unofficial merchandise.

If the application had succeeded, it would have been able to seek royalties from anyone who used the princess's image commercially.

The patent office, which has never allowed a dead person's image to be registered as a trademark, ruled that Diana is a historical figure rather than a commercial brand.

The family's only chance of stopping a souvenir free-for-all now, is to ask the High Court to take the unusual step of overruling the patent office's decision.

## Kurd leader seeks new base in vain

ANKARA, Feb 5: With Turkey breathing down his neck, Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan has apparently been wandering Europe, vainly seeking a new base to continue his battle for Kurdish autonomy, reports AP.

Since his departure from Italy on Jan. 16, Ocalan's whereabouts have been a mystery. One day, the rumour mill placed him in as many as three different countries at the same time.

Both the Netherlands and Switzerland reportedly turned away his chartered jet this week and a number of other countries made it clear he was unwelcome. Among his rumored hideouts are Russia, Greece, Belarus and Estonia. All four governments have denied his presence on their territories.

Turkish officials even claimed at one point that he spent two weeks aboard his plane in Russia, too frightened to leave because of a threat to life by a Chechen warlord.

## Carbon-dioxide found around Jupiter's moon

WASHINGTON, Feb 5: The US space probe Galileo has found a carbon-dioxide atmosphere around callisto, one of Jupiter's four moons, says a report appearing Friday in the weekly journal Science, reports AFP.

Galileo's scan detected the presence of carbon-dioxide up to 100 kilometers above the surface of callisto, Jupiter's most distant moon, the report said.

Callisto's atmosphere is so thin that it may not last longer than four years, says the author of the report, Robert Carlson of the jet propulsion laboratory in Pasadena, California.

The source of the carbon-dioxide is unknown, Carlson says. It could have come from gas emitted by the moon's nucleus, or from chemical reactions on its surface, or from the debris of comets that may have crashed on callisto.

## Murder of dissidents

## Iran rules out int'l inquiry

TEHRAN, Feb 5 - Iran rejected Friday calls by the European parliament and other organisations for an international inquiry into a recent wave of murders of dissident intellectuals here, reports AFP.

The entry of any foreign mission for an inquiry into murders or any other judicial matter is prohibited, conservative judiciary chief Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi said.

"Iran is an independent country and does not accept any foreign interference... The judiciary rejects an inquiry team or fact-finding mission of any sort," he told worshippers at Muslim.

Yazdi insisted that the openness of the Iranian justice system meant that there was in any case no need for any inquiry.

"There is a genuine dialogue between the judiciary and the people and we have no problem," he said.

But the wave of murders has led to a bitter war of words within the Islamic regime since the shock announcement by Iran's intelligence ministry early last month that "rogue" agents had been involved in the killings.

Opponents of reformist President Mohammad Khatami insist that the murders are part of a foreign plot to weaken institutions within the regime still dominated by the conservatives.

But reformers close to Khatami say that the murders were the work of hard-liners close to the conservatives and have demanded a thorough overhaul of Iran's intelligence

services and the replacement of their conservative head, Intelligence Minister Hojatoleslam Ghorbanali Dorri-Najafabadi.

Nationalist opposition leader Daryush Foruhar and his wife Parvaneh were found stabbed to death in their Tehran flat in November and three prominent campaigners for free speech were found dead in mysterious circumstances.

## Estrada hopeful about truce with Muslim rebels

MANILA, Feb 5: Philippine President Joseph Estrada expressed optimism Friday about prospects for a permanent cease-fire with Muslim rebels in the southern Philippines, reports AP.

A shaky truce appears to be holding after about two weeks of fighting between government troops and secessionist guerrillas of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Maguindanao province.

Military and rebel commanders on Thursday ended two days of informal talks on finding ways to implement the cease-fire and prevent fresh fighting.

MILF vice chairman Ghazali Jaafar said the two sides agreed on "no movement of troops and no firing."

Estrada sent a personal emissary, Robert Avenajado, to meet MILF chairman Hashim Salamat in the rebels' stronghold, Camp Abubakar, where they talked for more than one hour.

## Anwar Ibrahim's trial

## Mahathir served summons

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 5: Jailed politician Anwar Ibrahim served a court summons Friday against his former boss, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, in a massive defamation suit, reports AP.

The summons was delivered to the office of Mahathir's attorneys by Gobind Singh Deo and his father, Karpal Singh. They have filed the 100 million ringgit (26 million dollars) defamation suit on behalf of Anwar.

Deo said Mahathir allegedly defamed his former deputy in remarks made at a news conference on Sept. 22, two days after Anwar was arrested for leading a massive anti-government rally.

Anwar, fired on Sept. 2, is now on trial for four corruption charges. He faces a fifth corruption charge and five charges of illegal sexual activity. He denies all the charges, saying they were politically motivated.

Although Mahathir's lawyers are required to answer the summons within eight days, the process could take much longer because it could get tangled up in legal complexities, Deo said.

Lawyers were also considering suing the international

magazine Newsweek which printed the defamatory words in its Oct. 5 issue in an article titled: "Here's Mud in Your Face." He said they may also sue Atlanta-based Cable News Network.

"We are suing Mahathir in his personal capacity, not as the prime minister," Deo said, explaining why Malaysia's attorney general, the government's highest law official, was not representing Mahathir in the defamation suit.

The summons was received by a clerk at Shearn Delamore attorneys firm. They declined to meet reporters.

A summons in a separate defamation suit against the Malaysian daily newspaper, The Sun, which also published Mahathir's remarks, would be served later Friday, Deo said.

The suits were filed Jan. 25. No date has been set for hearings.

Anwar's lawyers contend that Mahathir's remarks caused "agony and pain" and "colossal damage" to the jailed politician's reputation.

Mahathir shocked this Southeast Asian nation and international observers when he graphically described Anwar's alleged acts of sodomy.

## Off the Record

## Fortune teller who didn't see his own fate

COLOMBO: An Indian fortune teller has landed himself in prison in the Buddhist temple town of Kandy, accused of doing business while on a tourist visa and overstaying, an Indian High Commission official said Friday, reports AP.

Thangavelu Balakumar of Madurai in south India, came to Sri Lanka on April 10 last year on a 10-day tourist visa. He got it extended for three months and started reading people's horoscopes and palms for a fee in Kandy, 90 kilometres east of Colombo. Kandy is famed for its shrine where Sri Lankan Buddhists believe a tooth relic of Buddha is kept.

He told us that he was making good money and he was very happy," said V.P. Kumar, India's deputy high commissioner.

Luck ran out and police arrested him on Jan. 7.

In most such cases, visa violators are deported unless they have been involved in a crime.

## Living with 250 cobras

KUALA LUMPUR: A former zoo keeper will attempt to create a world record by locking himself up in a cubicle for the next 35 days with 250 king cobras, a news report said Friday, says AP.

Mohd Noor Abdullah, 51, said he wanted to break the record set by his son-in-law, Osman Halip, who spent nearly a month with 150 poisonous snakes. The Sun daily reported.

Mohd Noor's sit-in with the snakes starts Sunday. Except for daily 30-minute breaks, he will keep the venomous cobras company in an air-conditioned cubicle in a shopping mall in the northern state of Penang. The room is 6 metres by 3 metres.

"I treat all snakes as friends. They are even more trustworthy than human beings," Mohd Noor said, after turning up at a media conference with a pet anaconda named "Sayang," or "Darling," coiled around his neck.

Despite his ringing endorsement of his pals, Mohd Noor has been bitten hundreds of times. He lost his right thumb after being bitten by a cobra he was trying to catch.

As a hobby, Mohd Noor rears snakes on a farm in the northern resort island of Langkawi.



Britain's longest married living couple, Catherine and Michael Brady, pose for the media Thursday in Middlesbrough. Catherine, 104, and Michael, 98, who were married on 29 July 1920, have earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records for their long lasting love.

— AFP photo

## BRIEFLY

Private no more: Charles and Camilla step out

**People** weekly

**Hillary & Chelsea GRACE UNDER FIRE**

An intimate look at the deep bond of love that sustains the Clinton women through their painful family ordeal



The cover of the Feb. 15, 1999, issue of People magazine shows a photo of Chelsea Clinton with her mother, first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton. President Clinton and his wife said Wednesday they were "profoundly saddened" by a decision by People magazine's editors to feature a story about their daughter.

— UNB/AP photo.

**Quake jolts Indonesia:** A strong earthquake rocked parts of the Indonesian province of Sumatra yesterday, but there were immediate reports of damage or casualties, the Meteorology and Geophysics Agency said, AP says from Jakarta.

The quake with a magnitude of 5.8 shook buildings in the city of Banda Aceh and surrounding areas at 2.28 am (1928 GMT Thursday), said Taufik, an officer of the agency's Jakarta office.

**Japanese FM to visit Seoul:** Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura will visit Seoul next week to prepare for a visit by his prime minister this spring, officials said yesterday, AP reports from Seoul.

During his two-day visit starting Wednesday, Komura will meet his South Korean counterpart, Hong Soon-young, and Unification Minister Kang In-duk. He also will pay a courtesy call on President Kim Dae-jung.

**Hotel fire claims 8 in China:** An early morning fire at a small hotel in southern China's Guangdong province has killed eight people, AP reports from Beijing.

The fire, which broke out in the six-story Meidu Hotel in Chaoyang city around 5 am on Tuesday, quickly spread through the building, the official newspaper, Yangcheng Evening News, said in a report published Thursday.

**Gary Coleman jailed for 90 days:** Former TV star Gary Coleman was sentenced to 90 days in jail after agreeing to a plea bargain in a case in which he was accused of hitting an autograph-seeker, AP reports from California.

Coleman pleaded no contest to disturbing the peace, ending his trial on assault and battery charges. He hung his head and wept as his attorney discussed the plea with the judge. The 39-kg Coleman, who played Arnold in the sitcom "Diff'rent Strokes," testified earlier Thursday he was trying to get away from Tracy Fields when he hit her.

**Riots claim 1 more in Indonesia:** Anti-riot squads patrolled a small town in eastern Indonesia yesterday after a fresh wave of religious violence left one man dead, police said, AP says from Jakarta.

Thursday's death brought to 96 the number of people killed in fighting between Muslims and Christians on several islands in Maluku province during the past three weeks. Sgt Agus Purnomo said nine people were also injured in the riot in Kairatu on Seram Island.

**Container ship on fire off UAE coast:** Tugboats were fighting a fire aboard a Panamanian-registered ship in the Gulf yesterday, 16 hours after the blaze broke out, causing the presumed death of four crew members, AP says from Dubai.

The Maersk Tokyo, with a crew of 28 Indians and two Pakistanis, was some 50 off Dubai's Jebel Ali Port Thursday when the fire started at 4 pm (1200 GMT), said Arshad Butt of Blue Fin International Shipping, the vessel's Dubai agent. The ship was heading for Kuwait.

**11 LTTE tigers killed in Lanka:** Sri Lankan troops killed 11 Tamil Tiger rebels in encounters with the separatists in the northern battlefield, the defence ministry said yesterday, AP reports from Colombo.

The fatalities occurred in four clashes Thursday, said military spokesman Major Kumara Dewage. Two government soldiers were injured, he said.

**3 die as ROK boat sinks in Japan:** Three crew members of South Korean fishing vessel died Friday after their boat capsized off the coast of southern Japan, the Maritime Safety Agency said, AP says from Tokyo.

The three were picked up by rescue workers who spotted their craft tipped over in open seas off Nagasaki prefecture, the agency said. Nagasaki is located 982 southwest of Tokyo. It was unclear when the boat had turned over. But South Korean maritime authorities asked their counterparts in Japan early Friday morning to rescue the crew of the 7.93-ton long-line fishing boat, the Japanese agency said.

## Australian PM says East Timor could become independent in 18 months

SYDNEY, Feb 5: East Timor could gain independence within 18 months, Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said Friday while a former foreign affairs official said it could end up wealthy thanks to offshore oil reserve, reports AFP.

Downer said it was a moot point whether the autonomy plan proposed by Indonesia would be acceptable to the East Timorese people but the outcome would be known soon.

"I think we can also look forward in the not too distant future — in the next 18 months or two years, whatever it may be — to the issue one way or another being resolved," he told ABC radio.

Australia's former consul to East Timor, James Dunn, said independence for the former Portuguese colony was attainable and it could end up quite well-off, despite suggestions that it would be a mendicant state.

"In fact it has really good prospects. It has the oil," he said on SBS radio.

"There is no doubt about it, if East Timor becomes independent, it will have to inherit that part of the gap (the mineral rich oil) that is in its territory."

"There is no reason then why it couldn't become quite wealthy."

But he said the Indonesian military appeared reluctant to let go, despite firm indications from Jakarta that self-determination was under consideration.

His comments came in the wake of reports that the Indonesian military was providing weapons to East Timorese who objected to separation from Indonesia.

"The Indonesian military is deliberately provoking the Timorese to take action against each other, by giving arms to one side, by urging them to act aggressively," he said.

"They realise that if there is no military activity, no insecurity, in East Timor they have no justification to remain there."

## Christian nun raped in Orissa

NEW DELHI, Feb 5: A Christian nun has been raped in the same eastern Indian state where an Australian missionary and his two young sons were burnt to death about two weeks ago, a state official told AFP Friday.

Sanjiv Chandra Hota, home secretary of Orissa state, told AFP by telephone that the nun was allegedly raped late Wednesday while she was waiting for a bus in the town of Baripada.

"She was going to a church, when a car stopped. There were two ladies inside and they offered her a lift. She went with them and later found that they were men dressed as women."

Hota said the nun complained the men had "misbehaved" with her and refused to elaborate, saying she would not undergo any medical test.

"But yesterday, she said in a written complaint to the police that she had been raped," Hota said, adding that the identity of the alleged attackers was unknown.

On January 22, Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two young sons were burned to death by a Hindu mob near Baripada.

## Serbian parliament votes to send team to talks Deadline for Kosovo peace not negotiable : Germany

BONN, Feb 5: German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said here Friday that the Contact Group's conditions set last week for the warring sides in Kosovo to reach peace by February 20 were non-negotiable, reports AP.

"The basis for a peaceful solution and a successful conclusion to the talks in Rambouillet (France, this weekend) are based on the non-negotiable statement of principle of the Contact Group" issued last Friday in London, Fischer said in a communique.

The six-nation Contact Group had last Friday imposed a 21-day deadline for Belgrade and ethnic Albanian leaders to reach peace in the Serbian province of Kosovo.

The foreign ministers of Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Italy and the United States also said the two sides would start peace talks at Rambouillet, near Paris, starting Saturday.

"The future of the people of

Kosovo is in the hands of leaders in Belgrade and Kosovo. They must commit themselves now to complete the negotiations on a political settlement within 21 days to bring peace to Kosovo," said in a statement last Friday.

"The Contact Group will hold both sides accountable if they fail to take the opportunity now offered to them," it said.

AP adds from Belgrade: Serbia's parliament voted Thursday to send a delegation to Kosovo peace talks but took a tough and uncompromising stance, insisting Belgrade won't budge on Western demands to give broad self-rule to the province.

The West is "knocking on an open door," Serbian Premier Mirko Marjanovic told parliament. "We stay open for a peaceful solution" of the Kosovo crisis.

The one-sided vote — 227-3 with three abstentions — was the last remaining hurdle to an

internationally brokered peace conference starting Saturday outside Paris and aimed at halting an 11-month-old war that has killed 2,000 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless.

But a US envoy acknowledged that the talks will be difficult. And rebel leaders expressed little hope of getting the independence for which they are fighting.

"Basically, we are not very optimistic," said Jakup Krasniqi, one of five Kosovo Liberation Army representatives being included in the delegation of ethnic Albanians. "The war never depended on us, and its continuation will not depend on us."

Meanwhile President Bill Clinton said that the United States cannot afford to ignore the explosive Balkans, as he prepared Congress and the American public for sending US ground troops to Kosovo as peacekeepers.

## Israeli settlements in West Bank, Gaza Strip Palestinians take their case to UN General Assembly

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 5: Palestinians are taking their case against Israel's policies in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the UN General Assembly, challenging settlement activities as a violation of the Geneva conventions, reports AP.

The move comes despite Israeli objections that Friday's session violates the spirit of the fraying Mideast peace deal struck in October and sets a dangerous precedent for the future. About 50 countries had signed up to speak at the session.

At issue is land seized by Israel during the 1967 Mideast War, including the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and east Jerusalem. The Palestinians say Israeli settlements threaten to change the makeup of these areas, even as their future is being negotiated, and are forcing the issue to the UN floor.

An estimated 150,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank,

home to 1.6 million Palestinians. Several thousand Israelis live in Gaza, where 1.02 million Palestinians live. About 210,000 Palestinians live in traditionally Arab east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians point to a 6,500-unit Israeli housing project planned in the Har Homa neighbourhood of east Jerusalem. They say the project violates the Geneva conventions because they prohibit population transfers in occupied territory.

The Palestinians want the United Nations to back a special conference of the countries that signed the Geneva conventions with only the settlement issue on the agenda, said Marwan A. Jilani, deputy ambassador at the Palestinian observer mission to the United Nations.

Israel must not be a state above the law," he said. "It has a legal obligation to abide by the

conventions." Palestinians see Har Homa, which they call Jabal Abu Ghneim, as a threat to their hopes to make east Jerusalem the capital of an independent Palestinian country.

AFP adds: Israel will oppose plans to convene a UN conference on the protection of Palestinians at Friday's UN assembly session. An Israeli spokesman said Thursday.

Jeff Helmreich, spokesman for the Israeli mission to the United Nations, sought to clarify a report from Jerusalem ministry saying that Israel would boycott the general assembly emergency special session.

Israel will not cooperate with this initiative and will not take part in this emergency UN conference whose sole objective is to condemn the state of Israel and its government, the Israeli foreign ministry said in a statement.