

Most kissable actress

LOS ANGELES, Dec 23: A new poll says America has changed its mind over who it wants to kiss under the mistletoe this Christmas, reports Reuters.

War in Chechnya far from over: Putin

MOSCOW, Dec 23: Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said today that 90 per cent of the population of Chechnya now lived in areas "liberated" by Russian forces but warned that the war was far from over, reports AFP.

helping to squeeze out, and some cases even destroy the rebels. Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov on Wednesday issued an order for his troops to retreat to the mountains occupying the southern third of Chechnya.

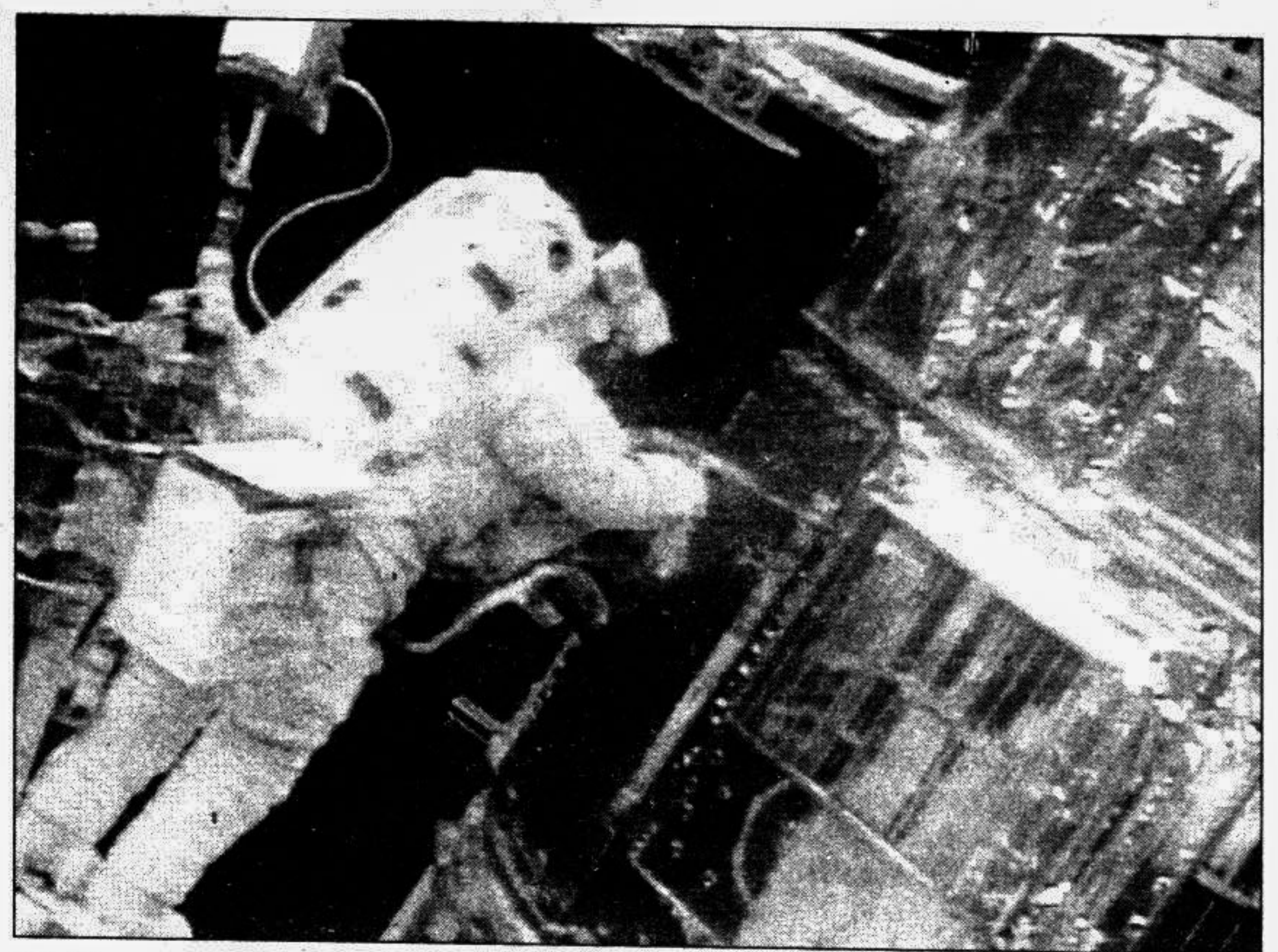
around this strategic locality, which lies at the foothills of Chechnya's rebel-held mountainous south. The Chechens also suffered losses in the east of Chechnya, near the border with Dagestan, when some 40 guerrillas were ambushed by Russian troops, according to the federal press centre for the eastern front, cited by ITAR-TASS.

Quake kills 28 in Algeria

ALGIERS, Dec 23: At least 28 people died and more than 175 were injured in the earthquake that hit northwest Algeria on Wednesday night, state television reported today, reports AFP.

Chandrika leaves for London for treatment

COLOMBO, Dec 23: Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga has gone abroad seeking treatment for her right eye, damaged in a Tamil Tiger suicide bomb attack, officials here said today, reports AFP.



US Mission Specialist John Grunsfeld tightens a screw on one of the Hubble Space Telescope's service panels Wednesday as he and US Payload Specialist Steve Smith (not shown here) finish up their work on the telescope in Discovery's cargo bay. Grunsfeld and Smith finished up a seven-hour plus spacewalk which is the first of three planned to replace several crucial parts on the telescope.

Astronauts fix Hubble

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, Dec 23: Spacewalking astronauts from the shuttle Discovery made critical repairs to the Hubble Space Telescope yesterday, and the \$3 billion observatory should soon be able to turn its eye on the universe again, reports Reuters.

Smith. The astronauts replaced three units that held two gyroscopes each. Ground controllers reported the gyroscopes passed early tests even as the spacewalkers moved on to other tasks.

Throughout the evening the astronauts struggled with latches, valve covers, bolts and reluctant power tools.

Opposition to support Kumaratunga's effort to end Tamil war

COLOMBO, Dec 23: Sri Lanka's top opposition leader said Thursday he will support the president's effort to end the Tamil war, reports AP.

ation of the disappointment in the business community about the outcome of the election. The Sri Lankan shares recovered from huge early losses Thursday, but still closed sharply down as sellers crowded the market.

Indian church sends observers to troubled region fearing Christmas violence

NEW DELHI, Dec 23: A Christian association today said it would send observers to a troubled region in western India fearing a repeat of hate attacks over Christmas, reports AFP.

civil society encroached with impunity. The administration has either looked on helplessly or connived with the (Hindu fundamentalists) in the furtherance of their goals and objectives.

Ship disaster: 600 rescued 58 still missing

MANILA, Dec 23: Almost 600 survivors were plucked from rough seas after a Philippine ship packed with passengers returning home for Christmas sank shortly before dawn today, reports Reuters.

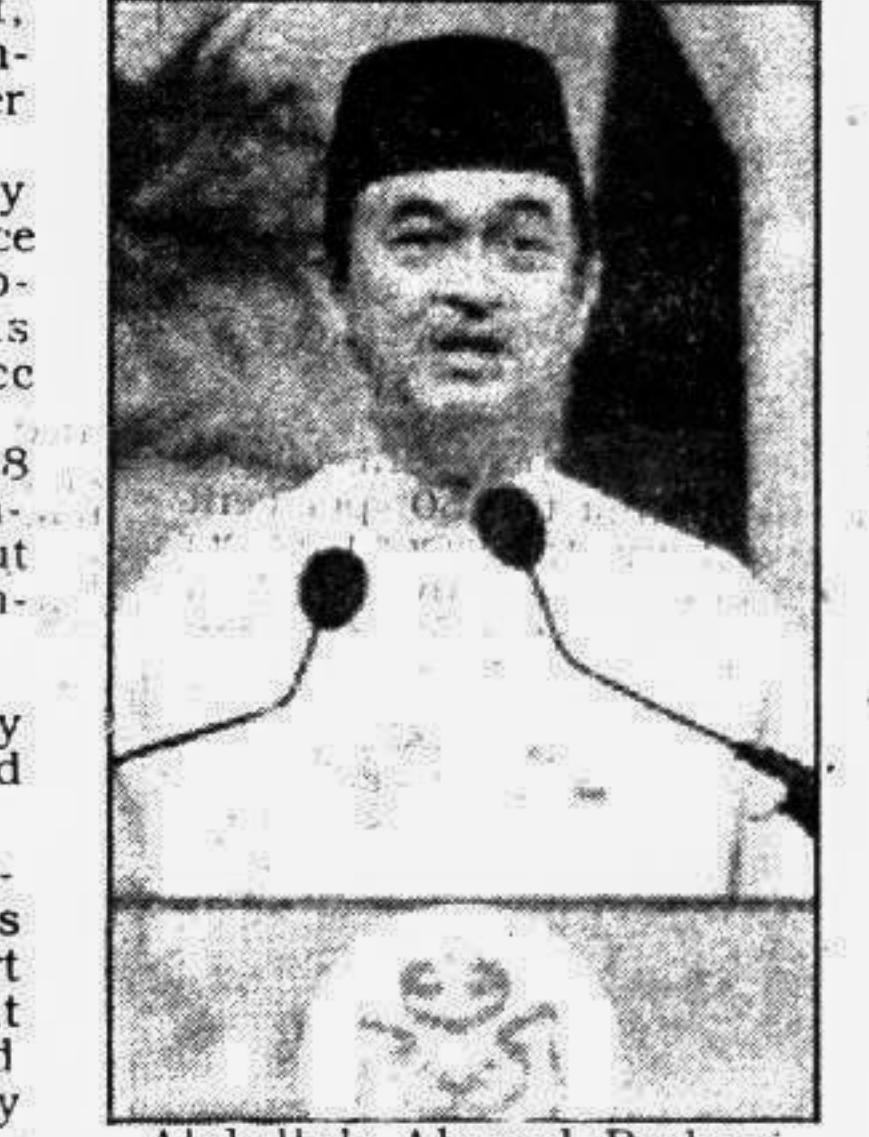
Ship disaster in Philippines



Abdullah to succeed Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 23: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia's ruling party was likely to support Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as his successor, in his strongest public support so far for his deputy, reports AFP.

Abdullah, 60, has previously held the foreign, education and defence portfolios.



Japanese emperor turns 66

Japanese Emperor Akihito marked his 66th birthday Thursday, showing support for people who are suffering from the country's weak economy and greeting well-wishers at the imperial palace, AP reports from Tokyo.

It is of great concern to me that the severe economic circumstances of this past year still persist, causing various hardships in the lives of the people," Akihito said in comments released Thursday.

UN urges quick, generous help for Venezuela

UNITED NATIONS, Dec 23: The UN General Assembly on Wednesday pressed the international community to provide quick and generous aid to Venezuela to boost its ongoing rescue and recovery effort from last week's devastating floods and mudslides, reports AFP.

resolution on Wednesday to strengthen the coordination of international humanitarian aid and relief in cases of natural disasters, highlighting the grave problems disasters pose for developing countries.

Religious violence claims 43 in Ambon

JAKARTA, Dec 23: Muslim and Christian mobs ignored presidential pleas for peace and fought bloody gang battles in Indonesia's troubled Spice Islands, killing 43 people, news reports said today, reports AP.

among Christians and Muslims in Maluku, as known as the Moluccas.

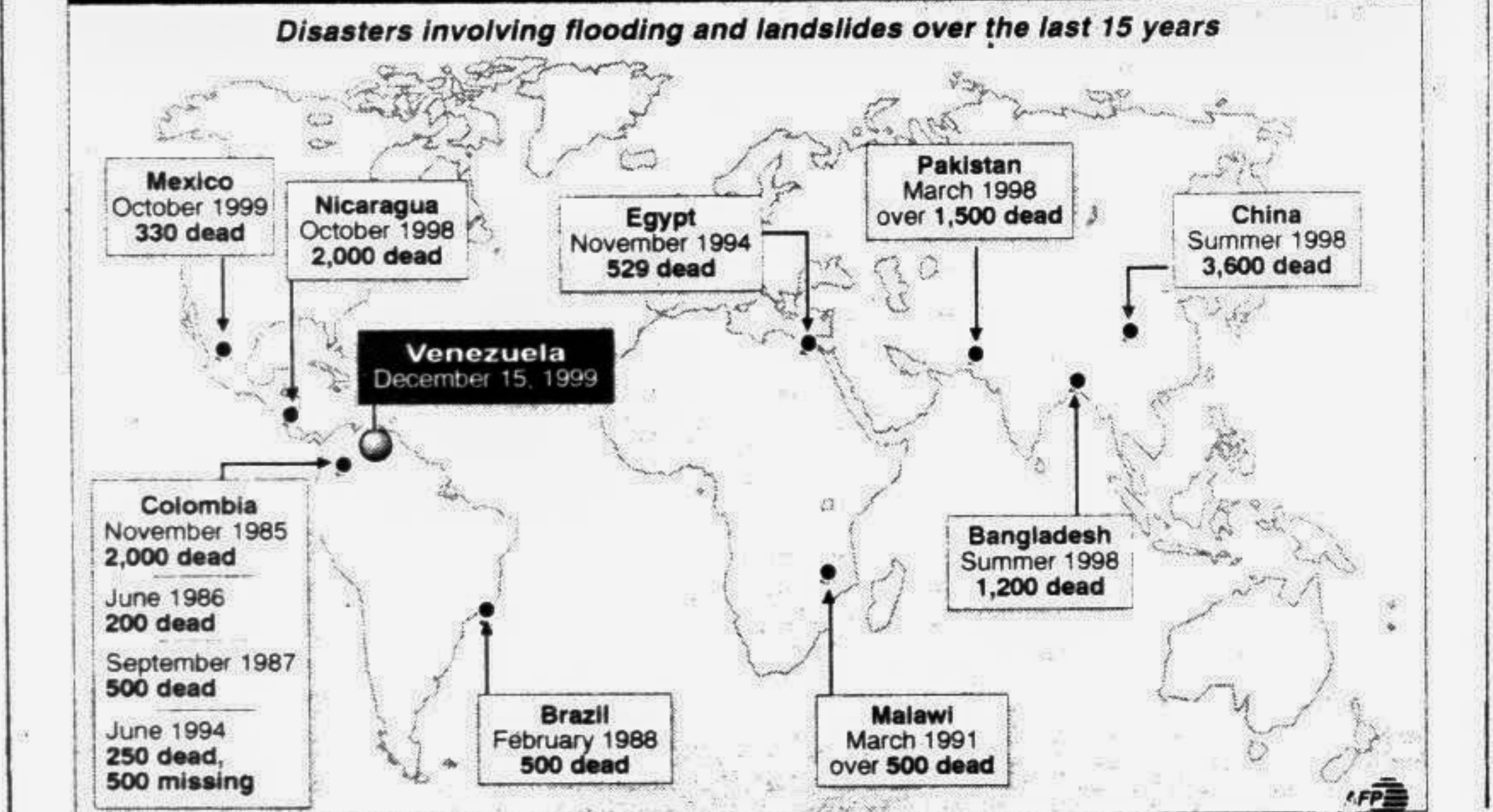
Bangladesh Shilpa Bank Head Office, Dhaka Law Department Sale Notice

Mortgaged Assets of M/s Specialised Jute Yarn & Twine MFG. Co. Ltd, Khulna. The project is a Jute Yarn & Twine MFG. Co having Annual Production Capacity of 2500 Tons.

Millennium gift to humanity

NEW DELHI, Dec 23: A huge statue of a poet billed as the biggest one in Asia will be unveiled on New Year by a southern Indian state as its millennium gift to humanity, a newspaper reported today, says AP.

Venezuela: one of the world's biggest natural disasters



Millennium celebrations Indian leader slams colonial 'flunkies'

NEW DELHI, Dec 23: India is aping the West and clinging to its British colonial legacy by going gaga over the millennium which is a 'footnote in its long existence,' a Hindu leader said in remarks published today, reports AP.

"The year 2,000 is at best a footnote in its long existence," he said, adding the "frantic preparations for all-night parties, disco dances and music shows" were signs that India had not got over its colonial roots.