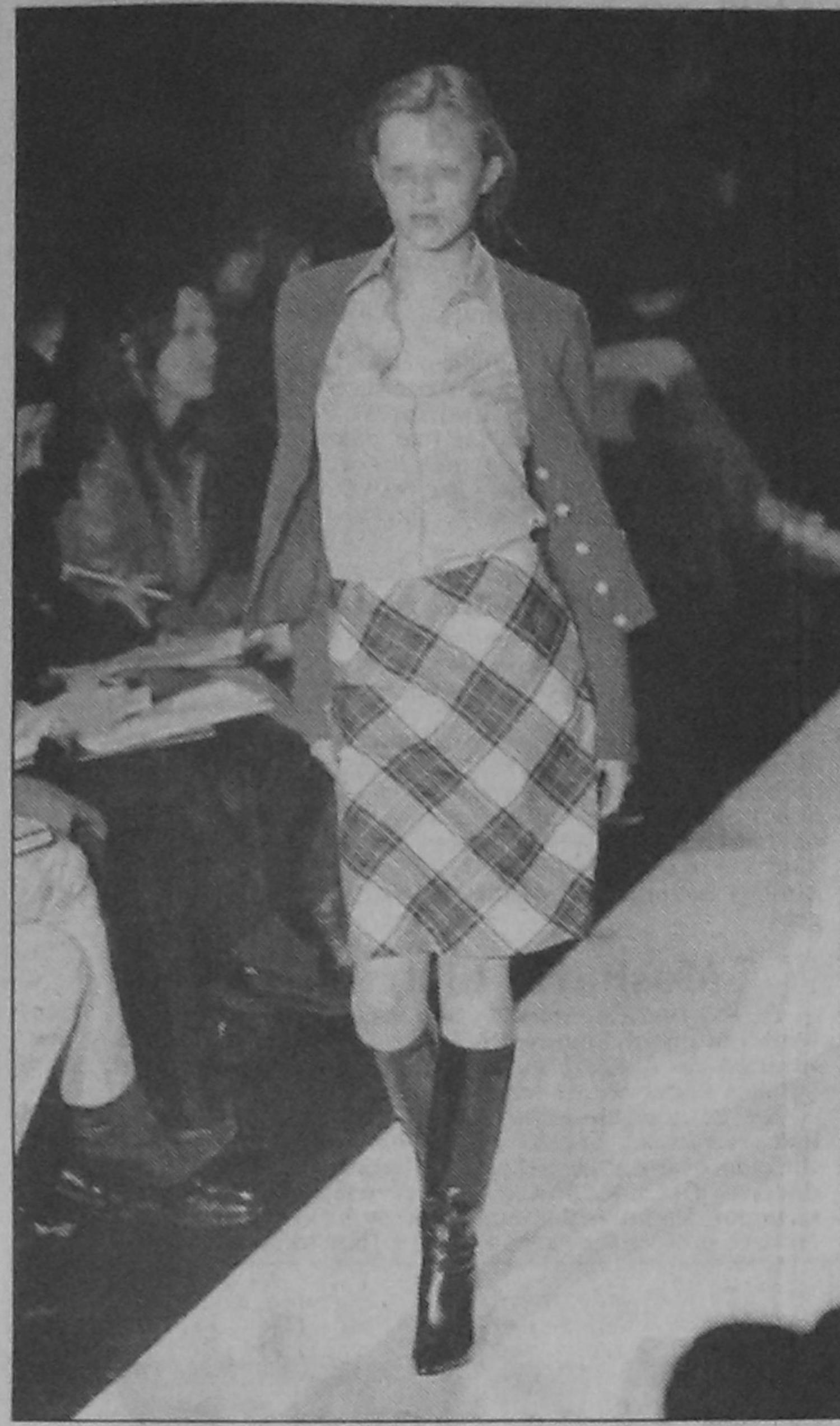


International



A model presents a red cashmere cardigan over a light blue silk blouse and a wool tartan plaid skirt during the Tommy Hilfiger fashion show on Sunday in New York. The show is part of the Fashion Week Fall 2000 Collections which continues through 11 February. — AFP photo

Wahid fully trusts Wiranto

JAKARTA, Feb 7: Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid said he was sure a coup would not be staged by cabinet minister and former military chief General Wiranto, who is refusing orders to resign, local newspapers said today, reports Reuters.

They quoted Wahid, touring Europe, as telling a gathering of Indonesians in Italy that Wiranto had saved his and Vice President Megawati Sukarnoputri's lives when they were opposition figures under former President Suharto's rule.

"I trust Wiranto," Wahid said.

He said the general, then head of the Kostrad strategic reserve, called him in 1997 to say

he had received an order to "terminate" Wahid and Megawati.

Wiranto was told that the order had come from the top, Wahid was quoted as saying.

"Wiranto said he checked with Suharto about the order, and Suharto said he never gave it."

Wahid last week ordered Wiranto to resign from his cabinet post of co-ordinating minister for political and security affairs, after an official investigation into last year's violence in East Timor implicated the former military chief.

But a defiant Wiranto appears ready to hang on to his post until Wahid returns from his overseas tour February 13.

BRIEFLY

Russian FM to visit N Korea:

Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov will visit North Korea this week to sign a new friendship treaty between Moscow and Pyongyang to replace their Cold War pact in the first such trip in 10 years, officials said Monday, AFP reports from Seoul.

The February 9 to 10 trip is aimed largely at inking the new treaty to supersede a 1961 one signed between North Korea and the former Soviet Union in 1961, which included a mutual defense pact between the communist allies.

Reagan marks 89th birthday:

Admirers of Ronald Reagan held a giant party in honour of his 89th birthday Sunday, while the former US president reportedly spent the day at home quietly with family members in California, AFP reports from Washington.

US media reported that thousands of Reagan fans paid tribute at the Ronald Reagan presidential library in Simi Valley, California, where festivities included a car show, barbecue, and live country and western music. Reagan, the oldest of four surviving US presidents, was diagnosed in 1994 as having Alzheimer's disease, and reportedly in the latter stages of the deadly, progressive ailment.

Presidential poll begins in Croatia:

Voting started yesterday in Croatia's presidential run-off to find a successor to Franjo Tudjman, with pre-election opinion polls predicting victory for maverick centrist Stipe Mesić over his rival Drazen Budisa, reports Reuters from Zagreb.

Both men have vowed to turn their backs on Tudjman's hardline, nationalist policies. They have also promised to stop interfering in the affairs of neighbouring Bosnia and move Croatia closer to the European Union and NATO. Polling stations around Croatia will stay open between 7:00 am (0600 GMT) and 7:00 pm (1800 GMT), with first official results not due until around midnight GMT.



A man rides a vintage bicycle as people walk on Spanish steps in Rome on Sunday during the "Sundays on foot" initiative that banned cars from the historic centres of Italy's cities. Some 150 Italian cities took part in the initiative aimed at reducing the record pollution levels registered in Italy in recent months. — AFP photo

Palestinians freeze all contacts with Israel

GAZA CITY, Feb 7: A senior Palestinian official said today that all contacts with Israel aimed at drawing up a peace accord had been frozen, complaining that Israel had not respected its commitments under signed agreements, reports AFP.

"Our position now is no meetings, no communication or any bilateral actions," said Palestinian cabinet secretary-general Ahmad Abd el Rahman.

The Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are frozen now because of Israel's lack of respect on all their obligations and dates," he told AFP.

A meeting between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators due to have been held on Sunday to

push forward efforts to finalise a draft peace accord by a mid-February deadline was called off following a failed summit between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Thursday.

The Palestinians declared a crisis after the summit broke down, saying Arafat was furious that they were not consulted about maps outlining a delayed troop withdrawal from 6.1 per cent of the West Bank, approved by the Israeli cabinet last week.

Israel said it was not obliged to confer with the Palestinians about which parcels of land it hands over, and has moved to downplay the crisis.

"The Israeli side doesn't show that there is any crisis, but there is a crisis like there has not been before," Abd el Rahman said.

"Barak is playing with the dates, so talks are frozen until the Israeli side fulfills its obligations and there is real international coordination in the talks."

Palestinians have called for an increased US mediating role, but Israel has said it wants to keep talks on a bilateral level.

US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross said on Sunday following a meeting with negotiators aimed at breaking the deadlock that the United States believes the two sides should work out their differences in direct talks.

Hundreds of Chechen rebels killed: Russian report

Operation in Grozny over: Putin

MOSCOW, Feb 7: Russian news reports today said government troops had killed hundreds of Chechen rebels trying to reach the southern mountains over the weekend, reports AFP.

An NTV television correspondent said from Grozny that 147 Chechen bodies had been found on a battlefield just southwest of the separatist capital.

Depleted Chechen forces were meanwhile struggling under fierce bombing to maintain control of corridor leading from the west of the city to mountain strongholds.

The report said local residents had buried the bodies of another 160 fighters. The clashes were recorded between the villages of Shami-Yurt and Katyr-Yurt.

The Interfax news agency meanwhile cited "preliminary reports" from the Russian military as saying that 100 Chechens had been killed in last 24 hours.

That report failed to specify where the fighting had taken place. Wahid was quoted as saying.

"Wiranto said he checked with Suharto about the order, and Suharto said he never gave it."

It carried heavy casualties and the Russians have been trying to eliminate the rest before they reach the southern mountains, where the rebels successfully regrouped during the 1994-96 war.

How quickly the resistance is eliminated carries heavy political implications in Moscow. Acting President Vladimir

Putting stands for election on March 26 and his popularity is largely dependent on the war's outcome.

On Sunday Russians raised their flag over Grozny as acting President Vladimir Putin declared that the operation to liberate the destroyed Chechen capital was over.

Depleted Chechen forces were meanwhile struggling under fierce bombing to maintain control of corridor leading from the west of the city to mountain strongholds.

"The liberation operation in Grozny is finished," Putin said on television.

The last pocket of resistance in Grozny, the Zavodskiy district, has been cleared. The Russian flag has been raised on one of the administrative buildings.

Russian bombing of Grozny from the air, which began on September 23, ended on Sunday, RTR television reported.

Russian shelling was targeting the region around the villages of Alkhan-Kala, Zakan-Yurt, Shaami-Yurt, Katyr-Yurt and Achkol-Martan, between 20 and 30 km southwest of the capital of the breakaway republic, an AFP correspondent reported.

Chechen rebels were driven out of the capital last week after several months of aerial bombardment and a massive ground attack on the capital that began mid-January.

Rebel sources said Sunday

that almost all their fighters had evacuated Grozny in a pull-back to refuges in the southern mountains, adding that the Russian strikes had caused mainly civilian casualties.

The last of the Chechen fighters in Grozny were withdrawing, the sources said, leaving behind only about 200 men and many mines, the cleanup of which caused the Russians to take precautions which delayed the official announcement of the city's capture.

Grozny was as much a symbolic target as a strategic one for both sides, with Chechen president Aslan Maskhadov urging his fighters to hold out until February 23, the anniversary of Stalin's mass deportation of Chechens in 1944.

Russian military commanders proclaimed victory in the capital Thursday, while Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev reported that a "brilliant" Russian ploy of trapping and killing rebels fleeing the city had cost the lives of 1,500 Chechen rebels.

He said the rebels left on a road that appeared to lead to freedom, but which in fact ended in a minefield where they also came under artillery and machine-gun fire.

Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Igor Ivanov on Thursday said the situation in Grozny marks "a turning point which opens the way" for the end of the war.

Rebel sources said Sunday



Members of the media gather outside the perimeter fence at Stansted as the hijacked Afghanistan Ariana aircraft (R/background) waits by a airport hanger yesterday, as day breaks over Stansted airport, 40 miles north of London. — AFP photo

Finland elects first woman president

HELSINKI, Feb 7: Finns have elected a single mother and former leftist radical as Finland's first woman president in a cliffhanger election in which politics played second fiddle to women power, reports Reuters.

Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen won 51.6 per cent of the vote to 48.4 per cent for her male Centrist opponent, former Prime Minister Esko Aho, ending eight decades of male monopoly on the country's highest office on Sunday.

"This is women power and a sign that politics did not matter," said Eero Ilonleemi, a liberal commentator.

Halonen, a Social Democrat, told jubilant supporters her election would be a boost for gender equality, already well advanced in this egalitarian Nordic nation.

"I think this will encourage women ... by showing that a man or a woman can equally well make it in any office," she said.

Finnish women were among the first in the world to win the right to vote at the start of the 20th century. Most of them work, earn nearly as much as men and occupy over a third of 200 seats in parliament and several cabinet posts.

Halonen has vowed to continue the main tenets of her predecessor's foreign policy platform of close cooperation with Finland's EU partners and the United States.

A human rights activist, she has strongly backed the European Union's political sanctions against Austria.

Making of a millionaire

ATLANTA, Feb 7: Who gets to be a millionaire?

Conventional wisdom says it's the students who get good grades and go to elite universities. Or maybe it's the children born into wealthy families with brilliant connections, reports AP.

That is typical, says Thomas J. Stanley, who surveyed 1,300 millionaires in the United States for his new book, "The Millionaire Mind," due out Monday.

The average millionaire's test scores as a student were not good enough for them to get into many topnotch universities, and once at university, they didn't excel, Stanley says. In fact, most millionaires say they were told they were not smart enough to succeed.

"I find no correlation between SAT scores, grade point averages and economic achievement. None," Stanley says. "Admittedly, there are some very bright people in the data, but not many."

Instead of relying on natural genius, millionaires choose careers that match their abilities, Stanley said. They may not have great analytic intelligence, but they are creative and practical. They focus on a goal, take calculated risks and then work harder than most people.

It's a lesson Stanley has taken to heart. The author, who lives in Atlanta, has gotten rich himself by writing about the rich.

For years he was a marketing professor at Georgia State University. He wrote three textbooks about marketing to wealthy people and gave seminars around the country. But he

felt like he was on a treadmill going nowhere.

So he took time off to write what he calls "the home-run book," "The Millionaire Next Door," written with researcher William D. Danko of Albany, New York, and published in 1996. It has been on The New York Times Best Sellers list for more than 150 weeks.

In "The Millionaire Mind," Stanley studied even richer millionaires — the top 1 per cent of households. These people had an average net worth of dls 9.2 million and earned dls 749,000 a year.

The average multimillionaire in Stanley's study is a 54-year-old man, married to the same woman for 28 years, with three children. Nearly half are business owners or senior corporate executives.

And almost none of them credit their success to being smart. They say the keys to success are being honest and disciplined, getting along with people having a supportive spouse and working hard.

"Somehow they figured out what they were good at," Stanley said. "They all said, 'I'll be the best at this. This is what I really, really love to do.'

One of his case studies is Oneida Sonnen, the 64-year-old head of southern Bloomer Manufacturing Co in Bristol, Tennessee. Sonnen's only education was a single year of high school, but he was a millionaire by the time he was 24.

How? His company takes scrap cloth and makes underwear for prisons and gun-cleaning patches. He got rich by working hard and capitalising on an idea no one else had. Stanley said.

Mexican police take control of university

Hundreds of students arrested

MEXICO CITY, Feb 7: Mexican police wrested control of the country's largest university from student protesters Sunday, quelling protests that have kept the institution's doors shut for almost 10 months, reports AFP.

Some 2,200 police moved into the National Autonomous University (UNAM), arresting more than 600 student activists in a surprise early morning raid.

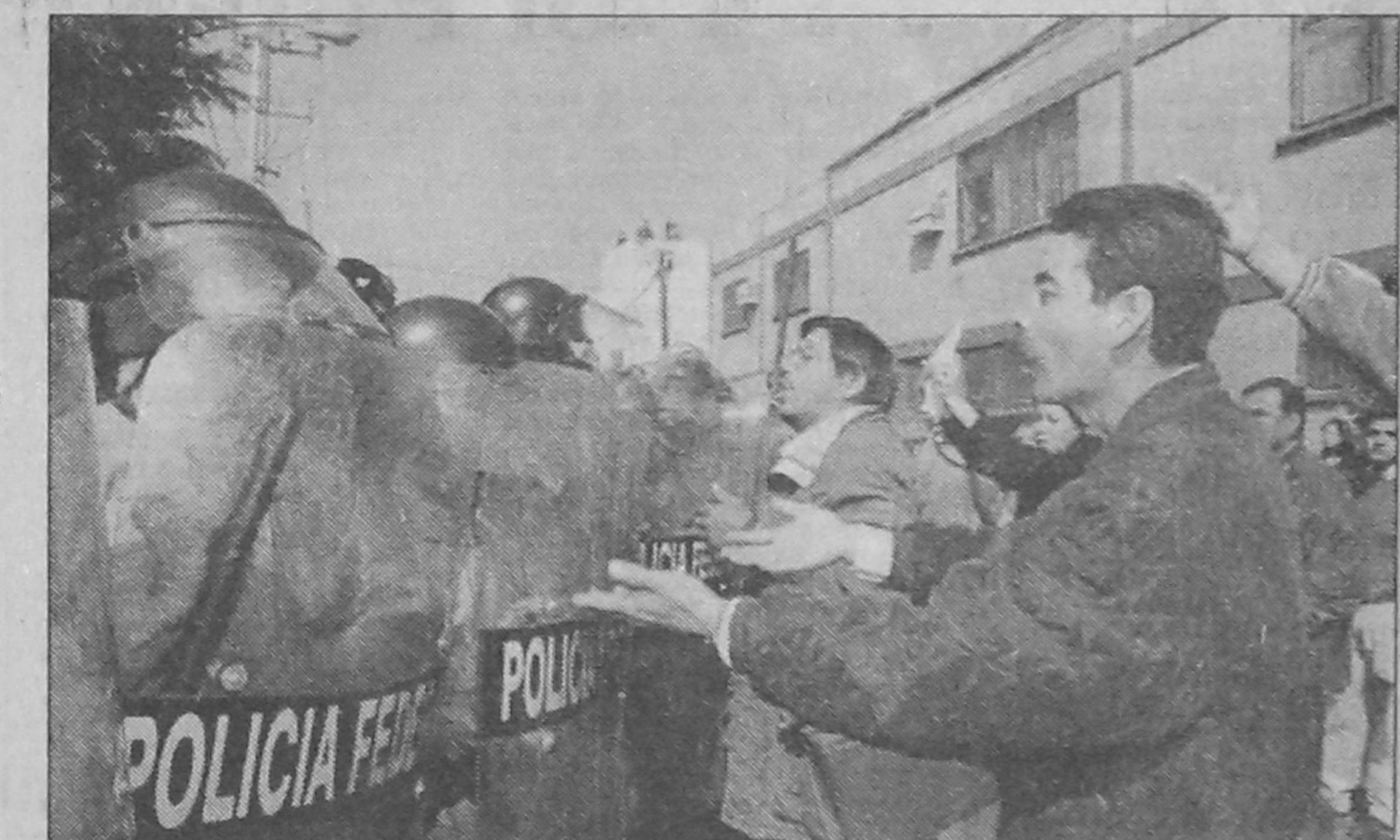
While school officials welcomed the restoration of order, they expressed concern for the fate of the students who instigated the protests.

The university's rector, Juan de la Fuente, called on Mexico's official National Human Rights Commission to "scrupulously monitor" the situation.

President Ernesto Zedillo said in a televised speech Sunday that he authorised the four-hour police raid, insisting that "impeccable legal procedure" had been followed.

The massive police deployment onto the sprawling campus in the south of Mexico City took place at around 6:00 a.m. (1800 BST) Sunday, under cover of darkness.

The strike began on April 20, 1999, mainly to protest plans to introduce tuition fees in the public university which has been virtually free.



Relatives of students of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) protest before a police barricade on Sunday in Mexico City where students had laid siege to the educational facility. The authorities took the control of the UNAM after an almost 10-month strike by students opposed to a hike in tuition fee.

— AFP photo

Obuchi may favour early polls

TOKYO, Feb 7: Japan's ruling coalition has tilted towards a compromise with the opposition over its parliamentary boycott as it banks on local election wins that look to have strengthened its hand and may hasten a general election, reports Reuters.

The victory of candidates backed by Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi in local elections on Sunday was seen as a vote of confidence in the three-party government which may give it more leeway in the timing of Lower House elections that must be held no later than October.

Obuchi had been thought to favour delaying an election until after Japan hosts the Group of Eight summit in July, but the weekend's electoral success means he may now opt for an earlier date, analysts said. They said the option of an April poll, after the government's mammoth budget aimed at stimulating a fragile economic recovery is passed, could now gain favour. "If elections are held right after the budget passes, the ruling party will be able to advertise the steps they have

taken to improve the economy," said Shingo Fukushima, a political science professor at Tokyo's Senshu University.

"Voters are choosing candidates based only on what they see right in front of them and are casting votes in favour of improving the economy more than anything else."

Obuchi's other headache, a 10-day boycott of parliament by opposition parties, also appeared to be easing after signs emerged over the weekend that the government and opposition were seeking a compromise.

Observers said both sides seemed eager to reach solution by Wednesday, when a question-and-answer session modelled on Britain's prime minister's question time is scheduled.

The opposition is seen as increasingly eager to end the stand-off in case voters start blaming it for disrupting the passage of the budget and jeopardising the economic recovery.

"If the boycott continues much longer, voters will lay most of the blame on the opposition, severely weakening them ahead of the election," said Susumu Takahashi, a political science professor at Tokyo University.

"They will probably make some kind of backroom agreement