

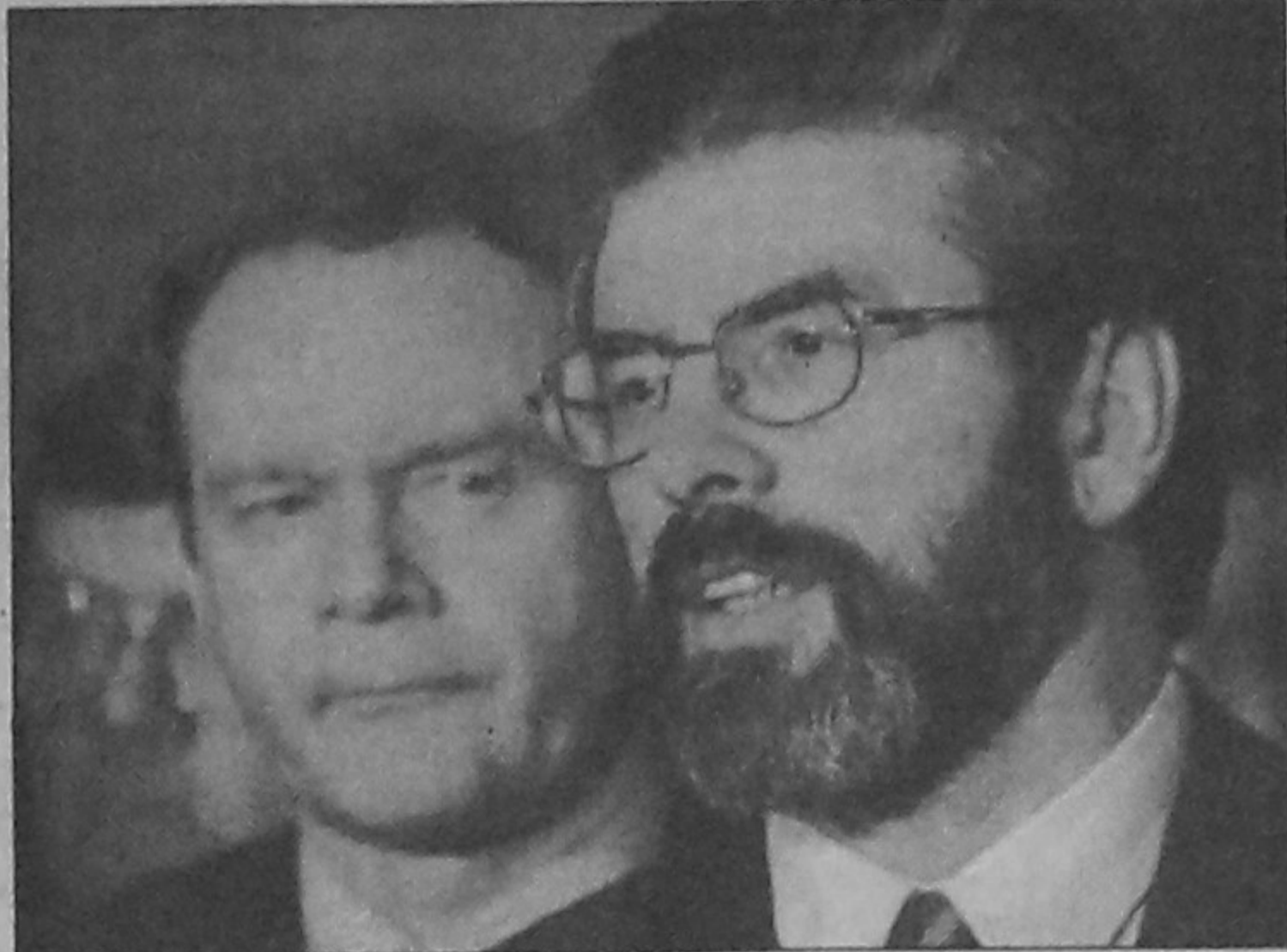
Chernobyl closed after safety system dysfunction

KIEV, Feb 12: The only reactor still running at Ukraine's Chernobyl power station, site of the world's worst civil nuclear disaster, was shut down Friday after a dysfunction in the safety system, nuclear authorities announced, reports AFP.

Direct rule restored in N Ireland despite 'valuable progress'

BELFAST, Feb 12: The IRA on Friday made new commitments to the international disarmament commission, but too few to prevent the suspension of the province's 72-day-old power-sharing government, reports AFP.

whose party had threatened to bring down the Belfast executive without an immediate start to IRA disarmament.



Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams (R) with his deputy Martin McGuinness speak to the press at Parliament buildings Belfast late Friday after Northern Ireland Minister Peter Mandelson suspended the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The new proposals described in a second report by the disarmament commission, include an assertion that the Irish Republican Army will consider how to put arms and explosives beyond use.

The De Chastelain report said the commission believed the IRA commitment 'holds out the real prospect of an agreement which would enable it to fulfil the substance of its mandate.'

'We find particularly significant, and view as valuable progress, the assertion made to us by the IRA representative that the IRA will consider how to put arms and explosives beyond use, in the context of the full implementation of the (1998) Good Friday agreement, and in the context of the removal of the causes of conflict.'

earlier Friday, saying that a 'new and significant proposition' been put to the British and Irish governments that he called a 'major breakthrough'.

Pakistan sounds stern action against terrorist activities

ISLAMABAD, Feb 12: Pakistan yesterday said it was opposed to all forms of terrorism and would take stringent action against any group or person involved in terrorist activities on its soil, reports PTI.

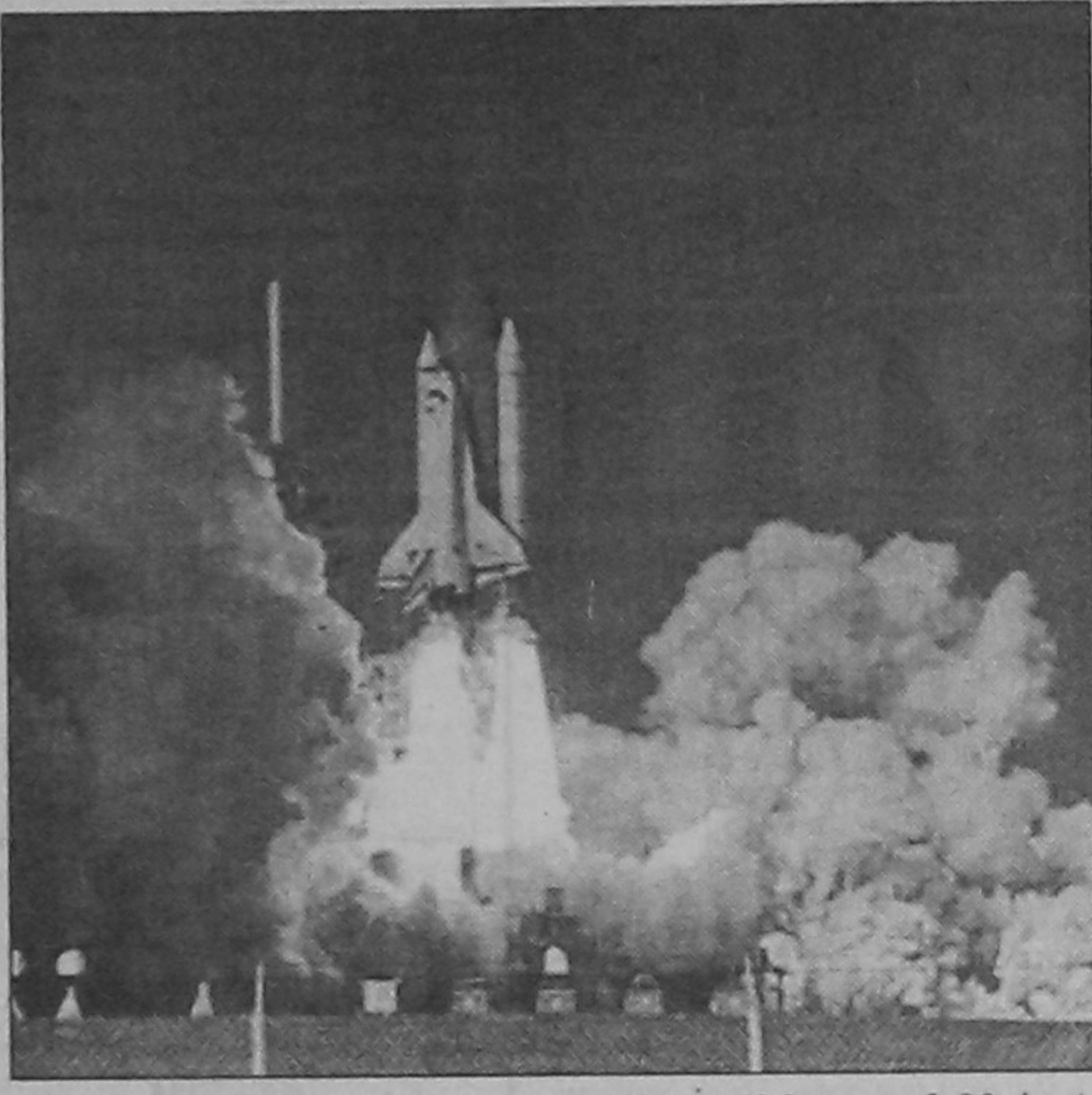
group by the US and India to counter terrorism, he said, the subject required a multilateral approach.

He, however, said, militancy is not a crime unless a person commits an act of terrorism or uses force against an innocent person.

Another report adds: The military regime in Pakistan will not stay in power for long and hold elections to local bodies this year as the first phase of transfer of power, a senior official has said.

Kashmir market blast: Death toll rises to 5

JAMMU, Feb 12: Police braced for more bomb attacks in Kashmir in advance of US President Bill Clinton's visit next month, as the death toll rose to five Saturday from an explosion in a crowded vegetable market, reports AP.



The US space shuttle Endeavour lifts off from pad 39-A at Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on Friday. The Endeavour and her six-person international crew are just beginning their 11-day shuttle radar topography mission.

Endeavour lifts off to map the world

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, Feb 12: The space shuttle Endeavour blasted off here Friday with six astronauts on board, on an 11-day mission to create highly detailed three-dimensional maps of the Earth's surface, reports AP.

It looks like it's going to be a great day to go flying, launch director David King commented on the weather.

Israel set to quit Lebanon

JERUSALEM, Feb 12: Israel appears determined to pull its troops out of southern Lebanon, whether or not it secures peace with Syria and Lebanon or an end to hounding by Hezbollah guerrillas, reports Reuters.

Barak came to power last year on a pledge to pull the troops out of Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon by this July — but hoping this would be part of a peace deal with Israel's northern neighbors.

Israel's arrogance and show of strength will lead to nothing but more human and material losses and the killing of any possible opportunity for peace in the region," Shara said.

Myanmar junta warns Suu Kyi

YANGON, Feb 12: Celebrating independence from Great Britain, the head of Myanmar's military regime issued a veiled warning Saturday to Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi to stop alleged attempts to destabilise the country, reports AP.

Tiny satellites may be communications future

LOS ANGELES, Feb 12: Two miniature satellites, not much bigger than cellular phones and using the same wireless technologies, have paved the way for the future of communications, scientists said today, reports Reuters.

Robinson said finding the two tiny satellites in the vastness of space was, in itself, a major achievement, likening it to finding a needle in a haystack.

Wiranto will resign Monday Indonesian president says

BANGKOK, Feb 12: Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid said today that security minister Wiranto, accused of responsibility for the bloodletting and terror in East Timor last year, will resign Monday, reports AP.

Wiranto said he understood Wiranto's concerns that he would have to face questions in court. Wiranto has indicated he would prefer to resign only if he is ever found guilty.

Valentine's card from Mars!

PASADENA, Calif. Happy Valentine's Day from Mars. A satellite circling the Red Planet on Friday sent back pictures of a heart-shaped Martian plateau just in time for star-struck lovers to download it from the Internet and e-mail them to their Earthbound sweethearts, reports Reuters.



Models present outfits by Thomas Steinbrück during the Moët & Chandon Designer Debut fashion show on Friday in New York. The show is part of the Fashion Week Fall 2000 Collections.

Zimbabweans vote in crucial referendum

HARARE, Feb 12: Zimbabweans began voting today on a controversial new constitution in a referendum seen as a test of President Robert Mugabe's hold on power, reports AFP.

Proton rocket booster lifts off

A Russian Proton rocket booster lifted off today from the Baikonur cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan, Russian media reported, the first launch since a rocket of the same type crashed last October, reports Reuters.

Quake rocks East Java city: An earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale rocked the Indonesian city of Malang in East Java province Saturday morning but there were no reports of casualties, the state Antara news agency said, reports AFP.

Sharif sacked Musharraf hours before coup

KARACHI, Feb 12: Deposed Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif sacked his army chief just hours before the army launched a coup, his military secretary told a Karachi court today, reports AFP.

Sharif signed the papers sacking Musharraf and appointing a replacement on October 12, while the general was flying back to Pakistan from a visit abroad.

Annun calls for peace talks with ASEAN

BANGKOK, Feb 12: United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called today for a new dialogue on peace and security with Southeast Asian nations during a summit with regional leaders, reports AFP.

Annun said the operation to rebuild East Timor, which was engulfed in militia violence after voting for independence from Indonesia last year, had important implications for peace in the whole region.

Clinton names envoy to Lanka: President Bill Clinton on Friday nominated E. Ashley Willis to be the US Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Reuters reports from Washington.