

International

Amnesty calls for inquiry into killings in Assam

NEW DELHI, Jan 5: Amnesty International called today for an independent inquiry into a recent wave of civilian massacres in the northeast Indian state of Assam, in which at least 120 people have died, reports AFP.

Israel will never agree to refugees' return: Barak

LONDON, Jan 5: Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak insisted Thursday that his country would never agree to the return of millions of Palestinians who were forced from their homes in what is now Israel, reports AFP.

The refugees' right of return, reaffirmed by Arab foreign ministers at a meeting Thursday in Cairo, is one of the key obstacles to securing a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace.

over the Temple Mount's neighbouring mosque compound, Islam's third holiest shrine, as well as control of 95 per cent of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip, in exchange for renouncing the right of 3.7 million refugees to return to Israel proper, which they left in the wake of the 1948 war for independence.

Indo-Pak dialogue soon, says Kashmir chief minister

NEW DELHI, Jan 5: The chief minister of Indian-administered Kashmir Farooq Abdullah said today that India and Pakistan would soon restart talks to resolve their differences on the region, reports AFP.

relations," the chief minister said. New Delhi extended the ceasefire by another four weeks on December 20.

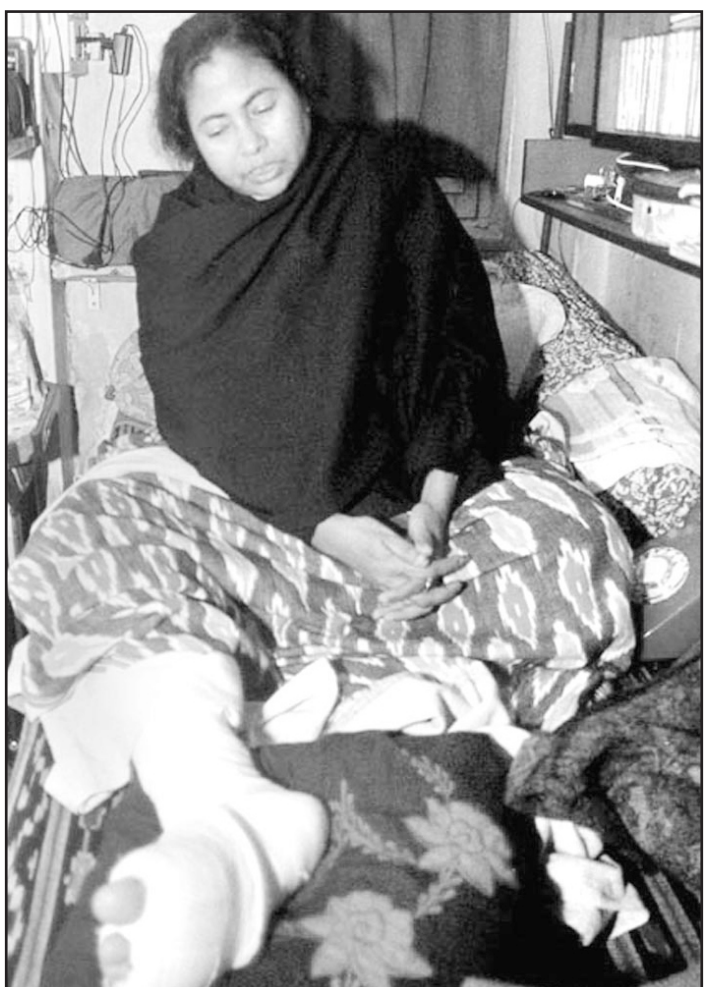
with India on their thorny dispute over Kashmir and voiced "optimism" for the start of a peace process.

would lend impetus to a tripartite dialogue process on the issue of Kashmir," involving Pakistan, India and Kashmiris.

Justice gets death threat over Estrada trial

MANILA, Jan 5: Philippine Supreme Court chief justice Hilario Davide Friday read out a death threat sent to him for presiding over the corruption trial of President Joseph Estrada, reports AFP.

the letter had come from the vice-president's office. He told the court he would not be scared off and would continue to perform his duty, "even if it would call for the sacrifice of my own life."



Trinamool Congress Party chief Mamata Banerjee was injured during clashes between CPI-M and Trinamool Congress Party workers at Keshupur, some 150 Km south of Calcutta on Thursday.

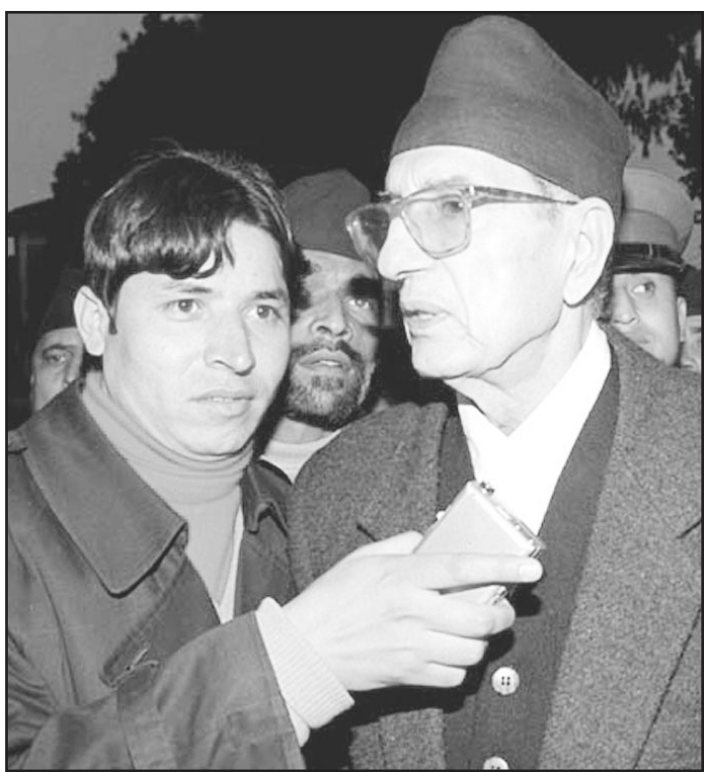
Fighting in Aceh leaves 6 dead

JAKARTA, Jan 5: Fighting between government troops and separatist rebels in Indonesia's violence-racked Aceh province has left at least six people dead, police and hospital workers said today, reports AP.

the insurgents, and rebel leaders have warned of civil war if the truce is not extended. The two sides are tentatively scheduled to meet on Monday in Geneva.

US extends sanctions on Libya

WASHINGTON, Jan 5: US President Bill Clinton informed Congress Thursday of his decision to extend for a further six months US economic sanctions slapped on Libya some 15 years ago, reports AFP.



Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala (R) talks to the press after he survived a no-confidence motion in Kathmandu on Thursday.

Saddam appears for 2nd time on Iraqi TV in two days

BAGHDAD, Jan 5: President Saddam Hussein appeared on Iraqi television for a second time in two days Thursday, apparently trying to dispel rumors he had suffered a stroke, reports AP.

Army promises to stay in barracks as Thailand goes to polls today

BANGKOK, Jan 5: With the memories of Thailand's 1991 military coup still fresh in many voters' minds ahead of Saturday's elections, the army has promised it will never again unseat a democratically elected government, reports AFP.

demise of the absolute monarchy in 1932. In the 1960s and 1970s, in the midst of the Cold War, the army conducted bloody "interior security" operations to eradicate communist guerrillas and student unions.

to normalisation," a European diplomat told AFP. Thailand's last military takeover took place in February 1991 when the elected government was toppled by coup leader General Sunthorn Kongsompong.

Taiwanese ship completes historic trip to China

TAIPEI, Jan 5: A ship carrying about 500 worshippers of the goddess Matsu returned from China today, completing a historic trip that marked the end of a five-decade ban on direct shipping ties between China and two Taiwanese islands, reports AP.

3 ex-customs officials to die for smuggling in China

BEIJING, Jan 5: Three former Chinese customs officials have been sentenced to death for smuggling almost \$89 million worth of goods as the government continues a crackdown on rampant corruption, state media and officials said, reports AP.

BRIEFLY
Quake rocks Taiwan: An earthquake measuring 4.3 on the Richter scale jolted northeastern Taiwan yesterday but no casualties or damage were reported, the Central Weather Bureau said, AFP reports from Taipei.
Five die in Brazil shootout: Armed robbers exchanged gunfire with police and security guards, spraying a supermarket with bullets. Five people were killed and 13 wounded in the mayhem, police said Thursday, AP reports from Brazil.
Russia to launch 29 rockets: Russia plans to launch 29 civilian rockets into space in 2001, carrying both manned space ships and satellites, a Russian space official said Thursday, AP reports from Moscow.

Political career of Wahid hangs in balance

JAKARTA, Jan 5: The political career of Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid hangs in the balance ahead of a decision on corruption charges against him the latest in a series of tussles he has had with politicians, reports IPS.

The people's consultative assembly is the biggest representative body in Indonesia, which named Wahid president in October 1999. So far, police have arrested Suwondo, a former close aide of the president, on charges of involvement in the 35-billion rupiah scandal. He will be tried next week.

nation a wakening of party that has Wahid as patron, say the corruption charges are part of a large agenda by the president's opponents to topple him.

convictions and 18-month sentence for corruption. Police have sent out two teams in search of Suharto, but have not been able to send him to jail.

Mursidan Baldan, a legislator from the Golkar party that was the ruling party under Suharto's administration. Looking back, some analysts say that while the president began with the stature and integrity to lead a fractured country, his governance performance for 2000 has been poor.