

International

Top judge suspends Estrada trial as prosecutors quit en masse

Thousands protest Senate decision, president senses acquittal

MANILA, Jan 17: The Philippines' top judge today adjourned the corruption trial of President Joseph Estrada until further notice after prosecutors called the proceedings a "charade" and quit en masse, reports AFP.

Senators sitting as judges in the emotionally-charged trial shouted down a move by an Estrada lawyer to set a deadline for the House of Representatives to elect a new set of prosecutors.

Senators who fought a lost battle to open bank documents which prosecutors said would provide clear proof of the graft charges against Estrada.

schoolchildren and activists, waved signs saying "Guilty", "Oust Estrada now" and "Justice died last night" as they chanted, "Enough is enough. You're exposed, Get out."



Some 10,000 anti-Estrada demonstrators call for Philippine President Joseph Estrada to resign on Wednesday to protest the Senate decision suppressing potentially damning evidence at President Joseph Estrada's corruption trial in Manila. Cardinal Sin warned the decision could spark bloodshed.

--AFP photo

Siliguri goes without newspapers for 27th day

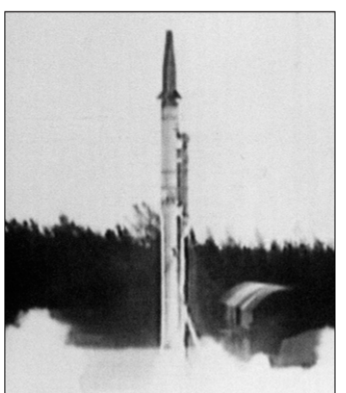
SILIGURI, Jan 17: This commercial hub of North Bengal went without newspapers for the 27th day yesterday as a meeting convened by the mayor of Siliguri municipal corporation failed to solve the dispute between CITU-affiliated hawkers and newspaper managements, reports PTI.

India test fires Agni-II missile

NEW DELHI, Jan 17: India successfully test-fired its longer-range Agni-II intermediate ballistic missile for the second time Wednesday, a defence ministry statement said, reports AFP.

ongoing visit to India of China's second highest leader, Li Peng. The missile was first tested in April 1999, drawing strong protests from Britain, Pakistan and the United States.

However, some observers have tagged the missile an "insurance policy" against any major reversal in Indo-Chinese relations.



This file picture dated April 11, 1999 shot off a video projection shows the test launch of the Agni II missile in the eastern Indian state of Orissa, screened during a press conference in New Delhi.

China closes 110 fire hazard night-spots

HONG KONG, Jan 17: Chinese authorities have closed down 110 Shenzhen night-spots to prevent another tragedy like the Christmas night fire at a club in which 309 people died, a report said today, reports AFP.

Rescue efforts focus on quake survivors

SANTA TECLA, El Salvador, Jan 17: With little hope left of finding survivors, rescue workers Wednesday focused on helping thousands of people made homeless by El Salvador's earthquake, as the appalling magnitude of the catastrophe became clear, reports AFP.

worst-hit areas told reporters here Tuesday: "The magnitude of the disaster is difficult to comprehend."

Israel eases Gaza blockade as talks with Palestinian Authority go on

JERUSALEM, Jan 17: Israel eased its tight grip on the Gaza Strip again today as talks continued with the Palestinians on a future peace deal, though with little sign of progress, reports AFP.

On Tuesday, "There were serious talks to try to bridge the wide gaps. I cannot say that the gaps no longer remain, but there were serious efforts from both sides," Qorei told al-Ayyam, the Palestinian newspaper.

Palestinians roughly 95 percent of the West Bank and also calls for Palestinian sovereignty over the Arab quarters of east Jerusalem as well as all of the Gaza Strip.

followed by an overnight meeting on security, during which the Palestinians demanded the lifting of the blockade on the Gaza Strip imposed on Monday following the murder of an Israeli settler.

Jailed Khmer leader Ta Mok hospitalised

PHNOM PENH, Jan 17: Jailed Khmer Rouge leader Ta Mok, known as "The Butcher", was taken to hospital and received treatment for high blood pressure before being returned to his prison cell, his lawyer said today, reports AFP.

S Korea braces for early visit of North's leader

SEOUL, Jan 17: South Korean leaders today ordered heightened preparations for an earlier-than-expected landmark visit by North Korean leader Kim Jong-il following his surprise trip to China, officials said, reports AFP.

by Kim Jong-il, a presidential spokesman said. Seoul newspapers said the government is actively preparing for a fast visit.

Delhi ready to talk peace with ULFA

GAUHATI, Jan 17: The Indian government said Wednesday it is ready to hold peace talks and discuss demands for sovereignty with a separatist guerrilla group in northeastern Assam to end a two-decade insurgency that has killed more than 10,000 people, reports AP.

ceasefire in Assam, similar to one in Jammu-Kashmir. "The government of India is ready to hold unconditional talks and discuss any of the ULFA's demands and at any venue of their choice in the world," Pillai told journalists.



Pulitzer prize-winning US based Bengali writer Jhumpa Lahiri (L) and her husband Alberto Vourvoulias Bush pose for photographers in traditional Bengali dress after their wedding ceremony in Calcutta on Monday. The couple will spend their honeymoon in Goa, and return to New York on January 28.

UK govt steps into trans-Atlantic feud over adopted twins

LONDON, Jan 17: Britain's government said on Tuesday it will examine the unsettling case of twin baby girls being fought over by two adoptive families on either side of the Atlantic after being sold over the Internet, reports AFP.

Gulf War anniversary Saddam declares victory over enemies

BAGHDAD, Jan 17: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein declared a "victory over enemies" of the Arab world during the 1991 Gulf War, in an address to the nation Wednesday to mark the 10th anniversary of the conflict, reports AFP.

strators burnt US and British flags in a protest to mark the 10th anniversary of the start of US-led missile and air strikes on Iraq in the Gulf War, a correspondent reported.

Doctors remove skin cancer from Clinton's back

WASHINGTON, Jan 17: A small lesion removed from President Bill Clinton's back last week during his annual medical check-up tested positive for the most common form of skin cancer, the White House said on Tuesday, reports AFP.

office Saturday, no longer suffers from the relatively mild affliction, superficial basal cell carcinoma.

Doctors remove skin cancer from Clinton's back

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While the president, I guess it could be said, had skin cancer, that has been removed and he no longer has it," said Siewert.

Lankan offensive claims 108 as battle rages

COLOMBO, Jan 17: Heavy fighting in northern Sri Lanka has killed at least 108 people, including 54 government troops, officials said Wednesday as Norway kept up attempts to broker peace in the island, reports AFP.

There was no immediate reaction from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to military claims of casualties in the latest fighting which broke out in the Jaffna peninsula on Tuesday.

mittee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the military said, even as heavy long-range exchanges continued.

The ICRC confirmed they were approached by the military to transfer the bodies, but said they could not immediately give an exact number.

S Korea to develop missile

SEOUL, Jan 17: South Korea declared today it would develop new missiles capable of hitting targets in most of North Korea, despite international fears of a missile race on the Korean Peninsula, reports AFP.

The new policy would allow South Korea to develop short-range missiles with a range of 300 km and a payload of 500 kilograms (227 pounds). A previous accord with the United States limited South Korea's missile range to 180 km.

It was not known immediately whether Washington endorsed the program. The United States had feared the development of South Korean missiles would provoke the Stalinist North.