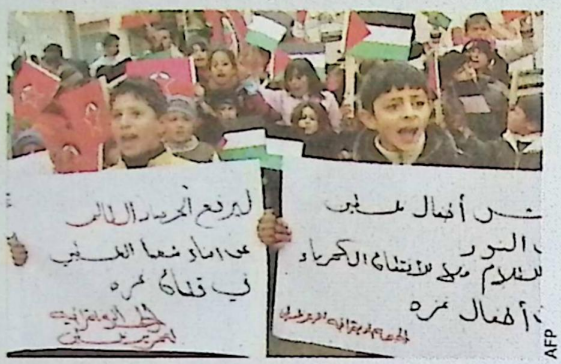
Palestinians defy Isreali blockade



Palestinians in Gaza try ending an Israeli blockade by blowing up part of the border wall with Egypt. Thousands surge into Egypt for food and fuel. Egypt expresses reluctance to send its neighbours back. Earlier, Gaza City is plunged into darkness after Israel shuts Gaza's borders on Jan 17, in reply to rockets and mortars being launched from Gaza after an Israeli operation leaves 18 Palestinians dead on Jan 15. Delivery of supplies to Gaza, including fuel, is brought to a halt. The UN and global opinion backs the EU's condemning Israel's "collective punishment -- which is against international law.

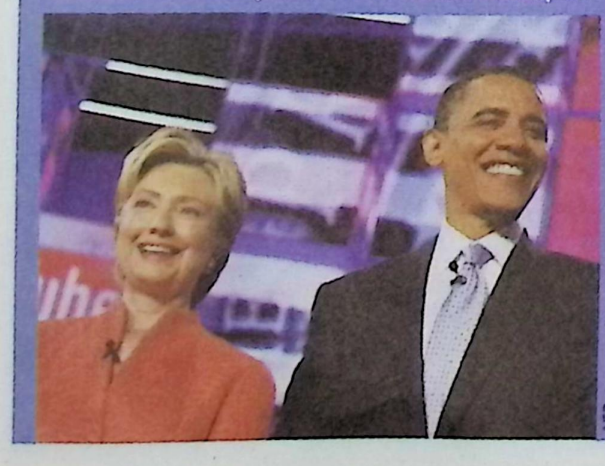
Indonesia's Suharto dies



Former Indonesian president Suharto -- who ruled with an iron fist -- dies on Jan 27 aged 86, after suffering multiple organ failure and slipping into a coma. During his 32-years in power, the economy thrived, but thousands were killed in the provinces of Papua and Aceh and in the East Timor invasion of 1975. Suharto left office in 1998 amid mass protests over corruption and human rights abuses, but did not stand trial on health grounds.

Clinton, Obama battle it out

The focus of the US presidential race turns to the southern states. Democratic presidential contenders Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton take an escalating war of words to the airwaves -- ripping into each during a televised debate ahead of South Carolina's primary and launching radio ads directly attacking each other. Clinton, after winning Nevada, faces a hard struggle in the southern state, where Obama may be helped by a large black population. In Florida, two Republican candidates Mitt Romney and Rudy Giuliani battle it out. The Democrat and Republican races remain wide open.





Protests in Kenya escalate

Violence breaks out in Kenya after the election of President Kibaki on Dec 27 was disputed by supporters of opposition leader Raila Odinga. Kenya's National Commission on Human Rights also casts doubt on the vote, listing a catalogue of irregularities. A month of widening protests leave more than 600 people dead and a quarter of a million homeless, prompting attempts at intervention and mediation by other African nations and the international community.