

2 killed in blasts near US embassy in Yemen

A schoolgirl and a policeman were killed in a bomb attack against a girls' school near the US embassy in the Yemeni capital yesterday, police said, describing it as a criminal incident.

Ultra-nationalist rabbi stabbed near Jerusalem

An ultra-nationalist Israeli rabbi was lightly wounded yesterday after being stabbed near the Damascus gate into annexed east Jerusalem's Old City, police said.

The 49-year-old is a member of the Ateret Cohanim organisation and teaches at a yeshiva religious school in the Old City, a police spokesman said, without giving other details.

Iraq begins national unity Conference

Iraq's feuding sectarian factions yesterday began a conference aiming to resolve their differences amid international concern that insufficient progress has been made toward national unity.

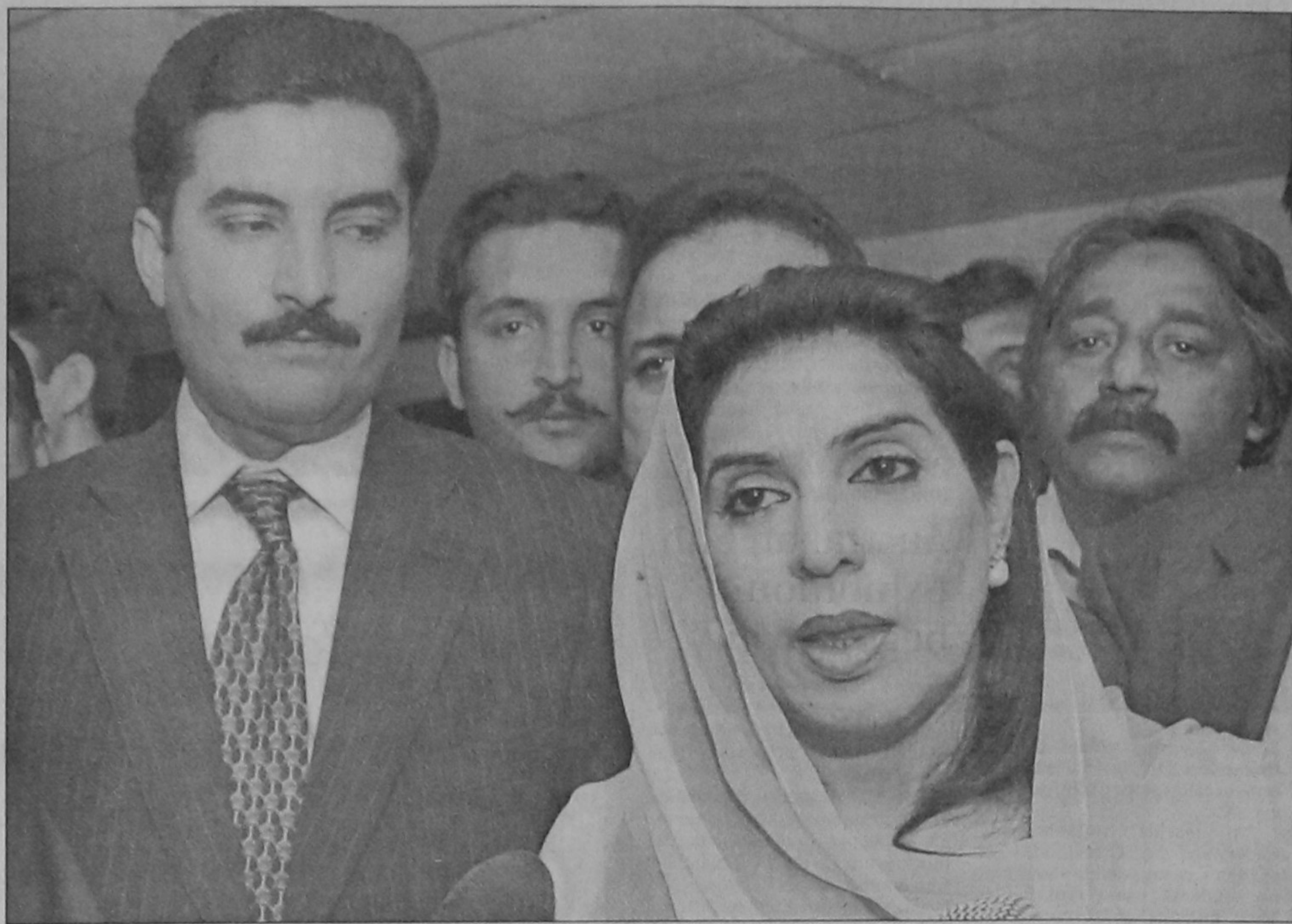
The two-day national unity conference comes ahead of Thursday's fifth anniversary of the launch of the US-led invasion and as one of its architects, US Vice President Dick Cheney, visits Iraq for talks with the rival leaders.

German Court upholds ban on headscarf

A German court yesterday upheld a regional ban on teachers wearing the headscarf in public schools, rejecting the complaint of a convert to Islam.

Jordan appeals for aid for Iraqi refugees

Jordan appealed yesterday for more aid to assist neighbouring countries sheltering hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees uprooted by war, saying the solution lies in their return home.



Fahmida Mirza (C) contesting the post of national assembly speaker and also leader of The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is watched by Faisal Karim (L) deputy speaker for national assembly as she addresses media representatives after filing her nomination papers at Parliament House yesterday. If elected, Fahmida will be the first Muslim woman assembly speaker of the deeply conservative Islamic nation of 160 million people.

Obama tackles race and religion as Hillary fights rival lead

Florida decides not to redo Democratic primary

Florida will not redo its voided presidential nominating primary Democratic party officials said Monday, as the agonizingly close campaign contest between bitter rivals Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton plays on.

presidential campaign's most divisive disputes, party officials in Florida had proposed a repeat presidential primary on June 3 that would combine mail-in ballots with in-person voting.

Dalai Lama to resign if Tibet violence worsens

The Dalai Lama yesterday vowed to resign as leader of Tibet's exiles if violence back home worsened, just hours before his aides said 19 people were killed in new demonstrations.

that the Dalai Lama, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, had orchestrated the unrest.

Kosovo town tense after Serb riots

A UN policeman in Kosovo has died of injuries suffered in rioting by Serbs, police said yesterday as Nato tried to restore calm after the worst violence since Kosovo's independence declaration.

Badawi brings new faces to cabinet

Malaysia's Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi unveiled a slimline new cabinet yesterday, dropping veteran politicians and appointing fresh faces after unprecedented election losses.

More than half of the cabinet ministers are new faces and I hope they can serve the people more effectively and bring a fresh approach to the country's administration," Abdullah told a press conference.

Karbala shrine death toll rises to 52

The death toll from a bomb attack near a revered Shiite shrine in the central Iraqi city of Karbala has risen to 52, a health official told AFP yesterday.

A bomb exploded near the shrine of Imam Hussein, a pilgrimage destination for Shiite Muslims in the centre of the city, on Monday.

Blasts kill 7 in Iraq

Insurgents killed at least seven people in attacks across Iraq yesterday, including two policemen in Baghdad, security officials said.

Quake rocks islands off New Zealand

A strong 6.1-magnitude earthquake struck off the Kermadec Islands north of New Zealand yesterday, the US Geological Survey said.

Separatists kill 11 in India

Suspected separatists fatally shot 11 migrant workers in three separate attacks in India's remote northeast, police said yesterday.

Deal reached on Belgian Coalition

Belgian political parties struck a deal yesterday on a programme for a coalition government under Christian Democrat Yves Leterme, who will take the reins on Thursday, the Flemish leader said.

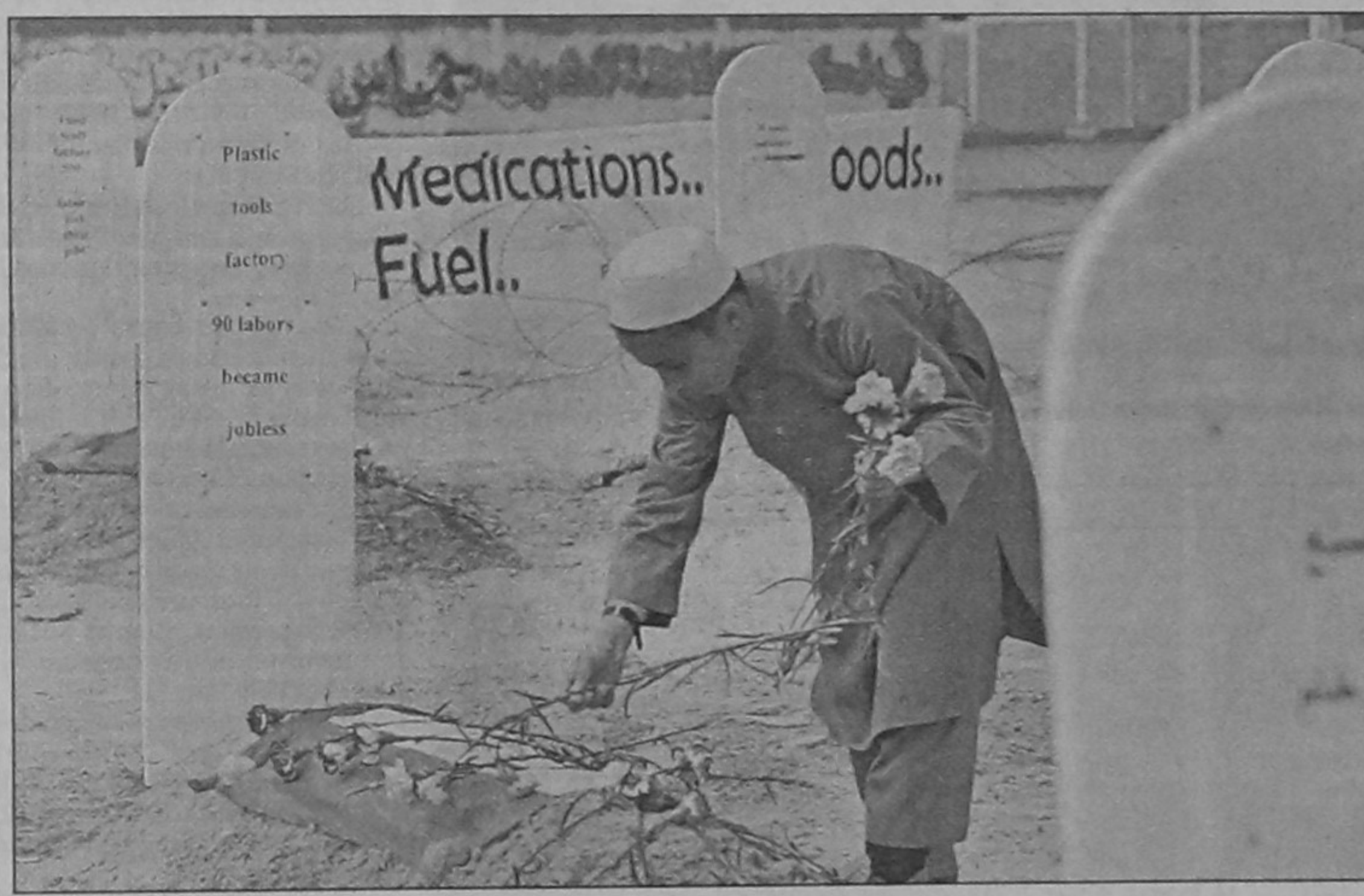
McCartney divorce ruling criticises ex-spouse

A judge criticised the estranged wife of Beatles legend Paul McCartney as "less than candid" in a ruling on the couple's bitter divorce battle released yesterday.

McCarty himself was described in more complimentary terms.

Copenhagen, Oslo, London world's costliest cities

Tourists to Europe will have to fork out more as currency fluctuations mean they will be visiting some of the world's most expensive cities, researchers from Swiss bank UBS said yesterday.



A Palestinian boy puts carnation flowers on tombs at a mock cemetery set up in Gaza City yesterday to symbolize the death of the economy due to Israel's crippling blockade on the Gaza Strip. An Palestinian association has installed tens of mock tombs in a public space in the war-battered city to represent the death of Gaza businesses. The unemployment rate in the territory tops 70 percent, private businesses across the Gaza Strip have collapsed, and water and power shortages have undermined the local health sector.



Russian Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov (L), US Defence Secretary Robert Gates (2L) and US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice walk prior to talks at the Foreign Ministry guesthouse in Moscow yesterday.