Boca start with new coach and old hopes

es TIMES OF OMAN



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TIMES OF OMAN

Making of a Pop phenomenon

Three Royal decrees issued

MUSCAT — His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has issued three

Royal Decree No. 6/97 appoints Mohammed bin Tahir bin Alawi Eided, Sultanate's ambassador to the Republic of India, as the Sultanate's non-resident ambassador to the Federal Republic of

Royal Decree No. 7/97 amends the supplement of the allocations of the Ministry of Development.

Article one states that the text of clause three of supplement one on the specialisation of the Ministry of Development annexed to Royal Decree No. 19/94 should be replaced with the following text:

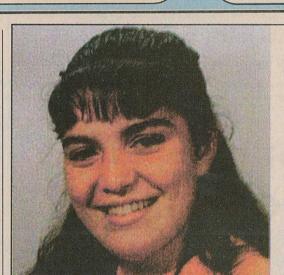
Preparing the annual development budget in conjunction with the Finance Ministry and in coordination with the ministries and other government departments and present them to the council of min-

Royal Decree No. 8/97 authorises the minister of communications to sign the air service agreement between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Maldives between their territories and beyond them.

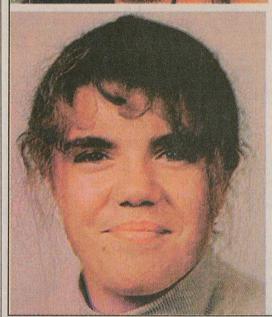
The decrees become effective from their date of issue. - ONA

prayers

at Ibri









The two sets of sisters who had been missing since February 12 and whose bodies were found on Friday by French police near the northern port of Boulogne: Amelie (top right) and Peggy Merlin (below, right) and Audrey (left) and Isabelle Lamotte (top left). • Report on Page 4. - AFP

Jiang Zemin vows to outperform Deng

Military swears loyalty to new leader

BELJING — China's most powerful man has boldly asserted he will outperform his mentor Deng Xiaoping, the late leader who dumped Communist economic orthodoxy to wrench the world's most populous

nation into the modern era.

Jiang Zemin, Deng's anointed successor with top posts in the Communist Party, the government and the military, waited just two days after Deng died on Wednesday before implying that the reformist had left

much undone.
"We would run China's undertakings still better, and make greater contributions to the cause of peace, development and progress of the mankind," Jiang told visiting Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev on Friday.

To ordinary Chinese, Jiang's words, his first statement since the condection of the 18 years long Dang era of

end of the 18-year-long Deng era of market reforms under Communist control, were an unmistakeable re-"Of course that's a criticism," said a Chinese worker without hesita-Jiang spoke even before the last rites were observed for Deng, whose no-frills memorial rites are scheduled for tomorrow in Beijing's enormous Great Hall of the People.

To some analysts, Jiang's remarks showed self-assurance, but also smacked of disrespect and arrogance that he may regret in the event of backstage power plays that are the traditional aftermath to the death of a strongman in China.

Chinese leaders have projected an image of seamless transition, mindful of the political tumult that enveloped China following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976.

Meanwhile, China's powerful military yesterday swore loyalty to President Jiang Zemin, vowing to rally closely around him and the country's political leadership following the death of senior leader Deng Xiaoping. Analysts said the vote of support from the largest standing army in the world was a crucial step for Jiang who unlike his predecessors has no active military background — in assuming Deng's mantel as China's top leader. The army's three core departments said they would channel their grief over the death of Deng on Wednesday into "strength" vowed to maintain the military's

"stability" and "unity" under China's

The bodies expressed their "profound grief" over Deng's death "and voiced their determination to rally closely around the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Military Commission with Jiang Zemin at the core," the official Xinhua news agen-

"The three bodies vowed to obey the leadership of the CPC Central Committee and the Military Commission in a steadfast way, and to ensure the army's unity," the agency added.

The departments — the General Staff headquarters, the General Political Department and the General Logistics Department — vowed to "obey the leadership" of the Communist Party and forge ahead with Deng's policies.

chiefs praised Departmental Deng's legacy, saying his "in-comparable historical feats will be remembered forever, and that his theory on army's contruction will be strictly adhered to with Jiang's instructions," Xinhua said.

Deng held the post of chief of the

Xinhua said. Yu Yongbo, director of the PLA General Political Department said the nation was "over-whelmed with grief" at Deng's death and pledged to preserve the three million-strong army's unity. "He said ... his department would remain utterly faithful to Deng's theory and will never change its resolve to maintain perfect stability and uni-ty in the armed forces," the official agency reported.
PLA General Logistics chief

People's Liberation Army (PLA) General Staff during the 1970s. Its present head, Fu Quanyou, said his

department would "turn grief into strength, strictly carrying out all or-ders and instructions from the Cen-

tral Committee and Military Commis-

sion," under Jiang's leadership

Wang Ke, whose department is responsible for arms procurement, also called for a continuation of Deng's policies and pledged allegiance to the party and the government. Xinhua said the military and people of China felt that cherishing the memory of Deng would "strengthen their adherence to Deng and Jiang's instructions on army building." — AFP

HM to offer Eid Al Adha

MUSCAT — Minister of Interior Sayyid Ali bin Hamoud Al Busaidi Qaboos bin Said will perform Eid Al Adha prayers for the Hijri year 1417 at the wilayat of Ibri in Al Dhahirah region.

He told Oman News Agency that His Majesty the Sultan has is sued his directives that he will perform Eid Al Adha prayers at the wilayat of Ibri to attend the celebrations of the people of the wilayat.

He expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Majesty for the

He congratulated the people of Ibri on the occasion of the blessed and auspicious event and pointed out that the people of the wilayat would be honoured to host the Eid Al Adha celebrations. - ONA

Cables of greetings

MUSCAT - His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has sent a cable of greetings to His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah, emir of Kuwait, on the occasion of his country's National Day

His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has also sent a cable of greetings to President Lennart Meri of Estonia on the occasion of his country's National Day. — ONA

Cable of thanks

MUSCAT - His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has received a cable of thanks from Hujjatul Islam Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in response to His Majesty's cable of greetings on the occasion of his country's National

In his cable, Rafsanjani hoped bilateral relations would further improve, and wished His Majesty the Sultan good health and the Omani people further progress. — ONA

CRUDE PRICES

MUSCAT (ONA) - Prevailing

yesterday were	as follows:		П	
	Delivery	Price	П	
Oman Crude	Apr.	\$18.62		
Dubai Crude	Apr.	\$17.75		
Arabian Light	Feb.	\$18.25	П	
Merban Crude	Apr.	\$19.90	П	
Arabian Heavy	Feb.	\$16.35	П	
North Sea Brer	it Apr.	\$18.80		
West Texas			П	
Intermediate	Mar.	\$21.55	П	

Omanisation 'vital for development

MUSCAT — Minister of State for Development Affairs Mohammed bin Musa Al Yousuf confirmed that Omanisation has special importance in development plans and programmes in the course of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's government to secure a better, prosperous and stable life for Omani citizens.

He said that the government was channelling financial and administrative resources to provide general and technical education and vocational training for Omani youths in all fields to achieve the goals of the Omanisation policy in a

Al Yousuf, in an interview on Omanisation and training published by Al Nahdhah Advertising House, said that the fifth Five-Year Plan has approbated RO207 million as additional funds for the development of human resources in the Sultanate, besides other funds approbated for ministries involved in human

He added that the funds will cover the development of basic education, increase the number of health and nursing institutes from eight to 11 to increase the number of Omanis working in the field of health and nursing and consequently increase the percentage of Omanisation in the health sector. The policy also aims at providing grants for technical and vocational train-

ing to train Omani students in commerce, technical and artisan fields, Al Yousuf said. He pointed out that about 30,000 Omani students are expected to be trained during the period 1996-2000 to meet part of the need of the Omani market and increase Omanisation ratio. The programme also includes training Omani girls in tailoring and stitching. Al Yousuf said that about one million citizens from among the students and

trainees will enter the work market from the beginning of the fifth Five-Year Plan to the next 25 years. He added that the 1996-2000 Five-Year Plan will create 164,000 additional

jobs and 110,000 Omani workers will join the workforce increasing the number of Omani employees from 266,000 in 1995, to 376,000 at the end of 2000. Most of the jobs will be in the private sector, increasing the ratio of Omani employment to 72 per cent of the total workforce in the year 2000. — ONA

Israel doing nothing for peace: Assad

DAMASCUS — Syrian President Hafez Al Assad yesterday accused the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of doing nothing for Middle East peace, during a visit here by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"Syria is committed to the peace process and wants peace, but the Netanyahu government has done nothing up until now to encourage peace," Assad said during a joint press conference with Mubarak.

The Egyptian leader, who arrived here earlier yesterday, left Damascus after holding brief talks with Assad on the peace process.

Assad said Netanyahu's call for a resumption of Israeli-Syrian peace talks "without pre-conditions" was in itself a pre-condition.

"None of the parties concerned with peace have previously imposed conditions, nor has Syria, because there is a principle on which the peace process was based ... and that principle must be accepted," he said. For his part, Mubarak said that the rights of all sides must be respected in order for there to be a fair

In Amman, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) joined the Palestinians in attacking Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's plans to build a new Jewish neighbourhood in disputed east Jerusalem. — AFP

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for foreign fund flow MUSCAT - Oman is planning to introduce further measures to attract foreign capital to diversify its economy and finance major projects, official sources said yesterday.

The sources said the measures could include making companies listed on the Muscat Securities Market (MSM) to allow foreign investors to buy more shares.

There are plans now to ensure all companies trading in the stock market do not put any obstacles for the movement of foreign capital if they want to remain listed," MSM executive president Mahmoud Al Jar-

"We are planning to meet within two weeks to decide on this issue. The measures will also affect all new firms seeking to be listed in the market," Jarwani said.

Several Omani companies had responded to government recommendations by opening up to foreign investors, who are allowed to own up to 49 per cent of a national firm. But

some companies are still blocking attempts by foreigners to own shares,

Oman plans new steps

"We want all national companies to remove any kind of obstacles and restrictions and facilitate the movement of foreign capital according to the limits specified by the investment laws in the country," he said. "This will certainly boost the

movement of foreign capital. We are talking about projects underway or to be carried out and worth billions of dollars ... They need funds from abroad because local resources are not sufficient. Oman has introduced a set of in-

centives over the past few years to lure in investment as part of overall reforms that also include privatisation, development of the non-oil sector and better taxation systems.

Oman's latest Five-Year Plan of 1996-2000 gives priority to attracting foreign investment to finance re-"Our aim is to free the market

any thing which could obstruct capital flow," Jarwani said. Jarwani said the Muscat Stock

forces because we do not want to see

Market, already one of the busiest exchanges in the Middle East, surged to a record level in 1996 because of better investment laws and strong performance by trading institutions, most of which recorded a 20-25 per cent increase in their net profits. His figures showed turnover, cov-

ering the value of shares traded, peaked around \$267 million in 1996 compared with \$109 million in 1995 The market capitalisation also jumped to \$4.42 billion from \$3.64 billion while the share index soared

by 26 per cent to 199 points at the

"We listed 17 new companies in 1996 and we expect another 20 this year. The number of the total companies trading in the market today reached nearly 100 compared with only 42 when we started operations in 1989," he said. — AFP

Sharp fall in Oman's budget deficit

MUSCAT — A surge in oil prices coupled with government spending cuts sharply reduced the deficit in Oman's budget in 1996 and the shortfall is set to disappear in 2000,

officials said yesterday.
From around \$1.24 billion in 1995, the actual budget deficit was slashed to only \$126.1 million in 1996, according to a report by the Ministry of Development.

Expenditure was trimmed to \$5.34 billion from \$6.06 billion while oil earnings grew to \$3.98 billion from \$3.56 billion.

'The government intends to wipe out the budget deficit by the end of the 1996-2000 development plan," Finance Ministry Undersecretary Darwish Ismail, said

He said the state budgets are usually based on an oil price of \$15 and that any increase is transferred to the state reserve fund.

This will enable the government to cover the deficit through withdrawal from the fund without affecting its main resources," he said.

More than 80 per cent of the country's total income comes from the exports of oil. The Sultanate produced an average 850,000 barrels per day of crude last year and the level is set to rise this year.

Crude prices surged by nearly three dollars in 1996, allowing most Gulf oil producers to cut the budget

deficit and achieve high growth rates Oman projected a budget deficit of \$683.8 million in 1997 but officials said they expected it to be lower by the end of the year as oil prices will likely remain above \$15 assumed by the government. — AFP

Malaysian minister invited

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysian Minister of Education Dato Seri Najib Razaq has received a written message from Sayyid Saud bin Ibrahim Al Busaidi, minister of education, dealing with bilateral relations, particularly in education.

The message also included an invitation to the Malaysian minister to visit the Sultanate in response to the visit of Al Busaidi to Malaysia last year. The Malaysian minister has accepted the invitation.

The message was delivered by Salim bin Mohammed Al Wahaibi. the Sultanate's ambassador to Malaysia, when the Malaysian minister received him here on Friday. - ONA

Workshop on organ donation, transplantation

MUSCAT — A workshop on matters related to organ donation and transplantation will be held tomorrow at Oman Sheraton Hotel. It will be held under the patronage of Dr Ahmed Abdul Qadir Al Ghassani, undersecretary for health affairs at the Ministry of Health.

The two-day workshop will be organised by the Ministry of Health and the Sultan Qaboos University on behalf of the Oman transplantation

The course is organised together with the European donor hospital education programme coordinators

and Eurotransplant.
This is the first of such a course to be organised in the Sultanate and it is hoped that, following the course concrete proposals will be made to increase the level of public awareness and of transplantation

activity in Oman. Oman has had a very successful kidney transplant programme since 1988. — ONA

Ghafri leaves for Riyadh

MUSCAT — Hamad bin Hamed Al Ghafri, undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, left yesterday for Saudi Arabia to attend the 42nd annual and regular session of the executive council of the AGCC states to be held at the Arab Education Office in

Yemeni parliamentary team on four-day visit



Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein Al Ahmar being received on his arrival yesterday. — ONA

MUSCAT — Sheikh Abdullah bin Hussein Al Ahmar, speaker of parliament in the Republic of Yemen, arrived yesterday at the head of a par-liamentary delegation on a four-day official visit to the Sultanate.

Al Ahmar was received on his arrival by Sheikh Abdullah bin Ali Al Qatabi, president of Majlis Al Shura; Sheikh Aflah bin Hamad Al Rawahi, vice-president of the Majlis; Ali bin Said Al Yahyaiee, vice-president of the Majlis; Abdul Qadir bin Salim Al Daha'ab, secretary-general of the Majlis; members of the Majlis Al Shura and the Yemeni ambassador to

In a statement to Oman News

shop which begins tomorrow at Al Falaj Hotel.

Meet on prevention of

non-contagious diseases

MUSCAT — The plan for a pilot project on the prevention of non-communicable diseases in Muscat region will be drawn up at a three-day work-

becoming the leading cause of mortality and morbidity in Oman. The Ministry of Health, with the support of the World Health Organisation, is planning to in-

itiate the project, which may prove to be a model for other countries in the re-

gion. The far-reaching social changes that Oman and many countries of the re-

gion have gone through during the last years have had a telling effect on the

health situation. New lifestyles, customs and traditions have been adopted.

These new lifestyles are leading to changes in dietary patterns resulting in in-

creased prevalence of obesity, increased numbers of smokers, and less physical

activity, the main causes of non-communicable diseases. Thus, these changes

are resulting in much higher rates of non-communicable diseases such as health

diseases, strokes, cancer and diabetes, said a press note from the ministry yes-

terday.

Lifestyle modification is the foundation to the prevention of non-communicable diseases and their complications. This includes weight re-

duction, increased physical activity and healthy dietary patterns. The pre-

vention of tobacco use and smoking cessation constitute another highly im-

portant measure of control. Quitting smoking reduces the risk of cardiovascular

diseases which is one of the leading causes of death in Oman. Reducing obes-

ity, maintenance of regular physical activity and consumption of a diet that is

high in fibre, low in fat and refined carbohydrates are also major steps in pre-

venting these diseases and their disabling complications.

Non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes are

carrying a message to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said from President Ali Abdullah Saleh of the Re-

public of Yemen. He added that his visit was a brotherly, official and parliamentary one. The accompanying delegation included members of the Yemeni parliament and the minister of state for parliamentary affairs, he pointed

He expressed his thanks to the invitation which he received from the President of Majlis Al Shura to visit the Sultanate. He hoped that this visit would strengthen bilateral relations and cooperation between the

two brotherly countries

mentary cooperation between the two councils, and to exchange visits and cooperation between the parliamentarians and exchange experience in the interest of the two brotherly countries, he said.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Qatabi said "we regard this visit as an opportunity to exchange views on improving relations between the two councils

He added that the guest was due to have an audience with His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said and would meet with state senior officials to exchange views on matters of interest to the two peoples of the

Seminar on planning and agricultural development

MUSCAT — The Sultanate will host three-day regional seminar on planning and agricultural development in

the AGCC states tomorrow. The seminar, to be organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in cooperation with the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD), is expected to be attended by a number of experts in the AGCC states and experts from

The seminar aims at looking at the experience of the AGCC states in implementing the plans and programmes to achieve agricultural developments and exchanging views on the obstacles and challenges which face these countries. — ONA



Sheikh Abdullah bin Ali Al Qatabi, president of Majlis Al Shura, received in his office yesterday Mohammed Ghaziri, president of the Beirut Municipality in the Republic of Lebanon, who is on a visit to the Sultanate. During the meeting, bilateral relations and ways of strengthening them were reviewed. The meeting was attended by the two vice-presidents of Majlis Al Shura, the secretary-general of the Majlis and the president of the Muscat Municipality. It was also attended by the members of the delegation accompanying Ghaziri and the Lebanese

Muscat, Beirut municipal presidents hold talks

MUSCAT — An official session of talks was held yesterday between the Sultanate and Lebanon at the Mu-

nicipality of Muscat. The Omani side was headed by Abdullah bin Abbas bin Ahmed, president of the Municipality of Muscat and president of the municipal council, and the Lebanese side was headed by Mohammed Ghaziri, president of the Municipality of Beirut Council, who is on a visit to the Sul-

Abdullah bin Abbas, who welcomed the president of Municipality of Beirut Council and his delegation, strengthen cooperation between the Municipality of Muscat and the Municipality of Beirut.

able both sides to lay down plans and programmes and to familiarise themselves with the cooperation needed by the two municipalities

The session was attended by Hussein bin Said bin Mohammed, vice-president of the Municipality of Muscat, and from the Lebanese side was attended by the Lebanese ambassador to the Sultanate and the delegation accompanying the Lebanese official. The president of the municipality

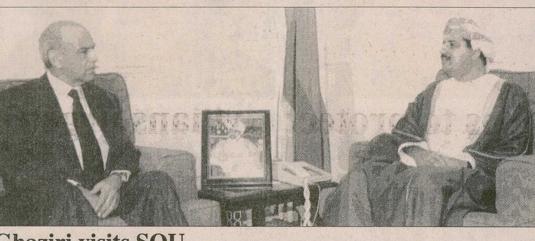
of Beirut, said in a statement to Oman News Agency that his visit came in response to an invitation from the president of the Municipality of Muscat and was a chance to exchange views on how the Mu-nicipality of Beirut works and we were briefed on the efforts of the

Municipality of Muscat in the development and its administrative He added during the talks "we ex-

change views on cooperation between Muscat and Beirut municipalities and we agreed on increasing communications and exchange information and official visits." He pointed out that his meeting with the President of Majlis Al Shu-

ra gave him the opportunity to acquaint himself with the role of the Majlis and the Omani experience in He also clarified that his visit to

Sultan Qaboos University was a good chance to see at first hand the important role which it plays in boosting the developments in the



Ghaziri visits SQU

Sultan Qaboos University Secretary-General Hamad Al Ghuraibi yesterday received in his office President of Beirut Municipality Mohammed Ghaziri and his accompanying delegation. They reviewed bilateral re-

Flew in like a bird to unravel secrets of unique wilderness

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — He is 'missing' from his home in Philadelphia in the United States of America since December 1990 since he took off on a lonely voyage, flying into the unknown.

Bush pilot Thomas Claytor, 34, who had embarked on a journey of a ifetime and crossing three continents travelling 84,000 miles in his Cessna 180 K, may also miss his home, but what he does not miss out on is preathtaking adventure. And if he has not been able to meet his family in the half-a-dozen years he has flown, he has compensated by meeting more than 10,000 people from various walks of life, rich in their diversity of culture. Claytor, who landed in Oman at Seeb International Airport last Thursday

in his plane 'Timmissartok' (after the Greenlandic word 'to fly like a bird'), will seek to unravel in his week's visit here the key to Oman's unique In fact, that is the theme he has adopted in his solo, and, most often,

dangerous flight around the world, and he is not stopping until he flies around all seven continents and may even steal a place in the Guinness Book of Records. From Timbuktu in Africa to Nuuk in Greenland, and from Yemen to Oman, life has been a mammoth adventure for Claytor who may go down in history as the first man to attempt flying to all seven continents in

"I may fail (in my attempt) — but I will not quit," Claytor said, driving home the message that he was a man who had made his dream come true in most unlikely fashion.

Claytor has been featured widely in the media and even the mother of all networks, the National Geographic, has done a one-hour special video profile on him in his flight over Africa. The film features his trip in the Namib desert, in Botswana, and along Africa's infamous skeleton coast.

Recounting his adventure tales, especially his unique experiences in Africa, and his last stop, Yemen, Claytor said that the essence of his flight and this solo attempt is that he was one who "took the road less travelled by" "You got to believe in the power of your dreams, and hold on to it," Claytor



THOMAS CLAYTOR

said, adding that this would be his subject when he meets students of the American-British-Acad emy at a lecture tomorrow. The purpose and

expedition was to seek out people and garner from them their wisdom as well as from the remote and diminishing parts of the world. He noted that over the years he has gathered immense experience, meeting a host of interesting people, and wherever he went he also share his

would not only gain but experiences. He

"marrow of life" but promised that he would not "choke on the bone" A man of enviable experience, he has managed to look within and outside, and in Oman his first attempt would be to meet the conservation authorities here and learn about Oman's environmental designs.

Just a couple of days into Oman has made him gush about the country. He considers the Sultanate the "friendliest" place, if not on earth, but at least standing out in the countries that he has visited. Despite being in many unpleasant situations which would have side-tracked

many an adventurer, Claytor still believes in the power to move and convince

people with his convictions. He thrives on people, their experiences and their way of life. He observes but does not criticise; he partakes without denouncing and this has enabled him delve into a diverse lifestyle which has added on to his multi-faceted and unique persona and his lifestyle.

The latter may sometimes border on the ridiculous to most people but underneath the sheen lies a sublime and inspiring theme which could be the envy of some people but yet to be learned and practised. Immediately after landing at Seeb International Airport, and after the

formalities, Claytor took wing (literally) under the plane in a small tent which looked like almost an extension of the 'Timmissartok' wings. He is not bothered. As long as he has a roof over his head and a book to

read or a laptop to chronicle his accounts, he is a happy man. Nor does the loneliness of the long-distance flyer seep into his inner being. In fact, he

His friends, he says unabashedly, is anyone he meets in his path. Yet, he also seeks out bush pilots and writers.

In Oman, he plans to visit the Wahiba Sands and the bedouins. He said that he wanted to talk to Omanis, learn the culture, the nature and heritage of

Oman and, most importantly, about their feelings about nature. He feels that language is a "window into culture" and, hence, he has

begun to learn Arabic. He has already picked up a smattering of the language and intends to go a big way. "Inshallah is my favourite word and concept," he notes. He adds that in his attempt to fly around the world, he has learnt to understand the nuances of humility. "I have learned to be humble before God." He had met some Omanis in Zanzibar and was surprised at the link between that country and Oman.

And that had spurred him to visit Oman, he says. "I plan to make as many friends here." From here he plans to go to Dubai and from there to a host of countries, including Pakistan, India, Japan, Indonesia, the Philippines,

Here, he is excited at the prospect of meeting bedouins. But, what is he going to do with the bedouins?
"Oh, ask them why is wilderness important?"

Prayer timings .03.37 Maghrib.

EVENTS

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry organises a debate on the use of mineral resources in building constructions today.

 Inauguration of the new showroom of Khimji Ramdas Computer and Com-munication Supply at CBD, at 5pm, to-

 Three-day conference on blood and tumour diseases begins tomorrow at the SQU Hospital.

Training course on organ donation/ transplantation at Hotel Oman Sheraton at 10.20am, tomorro

Ministry of Health workshop on com-

 Zain employee recognition awards distribution, 12 noon, tomorrow. Oman Marketing and Services Co's dealer conference at Oman Sheraton Hotel, 8pm, tomorrow.

Oman National Transport Co's function to award performance certificates. and prizes to selected drivers at Muscat

Holiday Inn, 8.30pm, Tuesday.

Arts exhibition at Al Bustan Palace Hotel by the landscape artist from Wales, Cartrin Webster. The exhibition will con-tinue till February 28.

OMAN TV

Royal Anthem Holy Quran News 10:30 11:33 Morning Coffee Children's Serial Children's Programme Happy Family Azan of Dhuhr Prayer Arabic Serial News Reports Local Programme Azan of Azar Prayer Teaching Lessons Children's Serial Arabic Serial Azan of Maghrib Prayer Brunei-National Day

10:00 10:03

Foreign Serial Azan of Isha Prayer Arabic Serial Guest of the Week Sports Evening Foreign Serial Late Night

Holy Quran Royal Anthem

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News highlights Classical relaxation. Preview of afternoon programmes and news headlines. 12.03 12.30 Theatre world.

Arabesque. 1.00 News headlines Economic report. Songs and music from France. Weather forecast and TV programmes. Crossroads

News bulletin. 2.40 World you mind saying that 2.58 Weather forecast and TV

Preview of evening Simply beautiful. Local news bulletin/Great

Islamic thinkers. Health watch. Hits in Germany 5.00 Afro Latino beat.

News headlines. Our changing world. News bulletin.

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Click your way to Malaysia

MUSCAT — Click your way to a trip to Malaysia seems to be the underlying theme in this year's Oman Today photography competition.

With the deadline looming ahead on February 27 at 12.30pm, chances are that most professionals and dilettantes alike are queuing up at the

A popular competition by all means, last year alone the contest witnessed 1000 entries. This year, with the added incentive of the Malaysian trip in line, more entries are "We expect at least a similar num-

ber of entries," editor Tom Athey said. There are five categories -Oman in Action, Heritage and Culture, Faces of Oman, Wildlife and Nature, Open Category for children aged 16 and under. Athey said one of the winners of the five categories will be declared overall winner who gets a trip of a lifetime (for two) to Malaysia. The category winners will appear

in the April/May issue of OT, with

the overall winner to be announced at

an invitation-only presentation in A selected number of entries will be displayed in a week-long exhibi-tion at the Omani Society for Fine Arts in Shati Al Qurum.

According to the competition rules, there can be any number of entries per person but, they must be original, unframed and unmounted. Slides are not accepted but the entries (minimum size of 25cmx20cm and a maximum of (30cmx40cm) maybe either in colour or black and white

Entries can either be posted or delivered to the OT office.





Charity sales

The Department of Social Research at the Royal Hospital organised a sale of handicrafts in support of cancer-affected children.

Charles meets Kuwaiti emir

KUWAIT CITY — Prince Charles yesterday met Kuwaiti Emir His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah during his two-day official visit here, the official news agency Kuna reported.

The meeting with the emir was one of several official engagements during the visit that began on Friday and which was to end later yesterday when he leaves aboard the Royal Yacht Britannia for Bahrain and

Prince Charles also met Kuwaiti Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah

Prince Charles is staying aboard the *Britannia*, which is now docked at Shuwaikh Port near the capitial and touring the Gulf and Asia for the last time before returning to Britain to be decommissioned at the end of

UAE braces for biggest arms show

ABU DHABI — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has invited 50 defence ministers for next month's international arms show, which it describes as the biggest ground weapons exhibition in the world.

The official daily Al Ittihad said yesterday 725 companies from 43 countries will participate in the March 16-20 show in Abu Dhabi, the

"We have invited more than 50 defence ministers. They will have the opportunity to see the exhibited arms and enjoy a neutral climate to discuss and reach deals," the paper quoted Brigadier General Sultan Bakhit Al Suwaidi of the UAE armed forces as

The armed forces are the sponsors of the biannual event, which will include weapons deals for the UAE and other countries, organisers said

More than 50,000 defence ministers and military and civilian delegates are expected to come for the show, which will cover tanks, frigates, artillery, missiles, guns,

radars and other defence equipment. The United States is again dominating the show, sending nearly

100 companies The other key exhibitors are France, Britain, Russia, South Africa, Italy, Germany, Netherlands and

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia and other Asian nations will also participate in the exhibition, which will go on Internet for the first time. It was not immediately clear if Iran would again be among the exhibitors.

The show coincides with plans by the UAE and its partners in the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council to bolster their armies in deals expected by Suwaidi to exceed \$80 billion over the coming five years. — AFP

"Organising such a show contributes to creating stability because acquiring defence weapons is a legitimate right," Suwaidi said. "It is the right of every country to possess defence weapons to protect its economic resources." — AFP

UN weighs effects of Sudan embargo

NEW YORK — A UN air embargo against Sudan could affect food production, patients seeking treatment abroad and the distribution of medicines, but should not hamper food aid, a UN report

The report, on the possible humanitarian impact of such an air embargo, was requested by the Se-Council in December, four months after it voted to impose a ban on flights abroad by Sudanese aircraft but postponed setting a date for it to go into effect.

The ban was to punish Sudan for failing to extradite to Ethiopia three men accused of trying to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak during a visit to Addis Ababa on June 26, 1995. Sudan has repeatedly said it has found no trace of the wanted men.

Mandatory diplomatic sanctions and a travel ban on senior Sudanese government and army officials have been in force since last May.

The report on the effects of an air embargo said: "From this review, it appears that the imposition

of the flight ban envisaged in SCR (Security Council Resolution) 1070 (1996) will impair the capacity of the public health authorities to facilitate patients' receiving specialised medical treatment outside the

It quoted the Sudanese Health Ministry as saying about 3,000 patients a year required medical evac-

The report also said domestic air transport could be affected by a ban on flights abroad since the same airlines "rely on international access for their maintenance and economic viability.

"Considering the dependence of domestic air carriers on offshore maintenance capacities, a flight ban could have a serious impact on immunisation programmes nationwide, domestic distribution of drugs, and on food production," the report said.

Regarding food relief operations in Sudan, where a civil war has long been raging, it said "it appears that emergency food assistance in government-controlled domestic air carriers. — Reuter

tion of Wau and Juba, does not substantially rely on domestic air trans-

Most of the food there was provided by the UN-coordinated operation lifeline Sudan and was either delivered by air from Kenya, using aircraft registered outside Sudan, or by road and river.

'The supply of food assistance, the present circumstances, should not be affected by the flight ban. However, the logistics of the assistance providers such as WFP (the UN World Food Programme) could be affected by the flight ban since they use domestic air carriers for the transport of equipment and personnel," the report said.

Regarding non-food assistance, said a flight ban might hinder large aid providers such as the UN Children's Fund (Unicef) and international non-governmental organisations by causing the suspension of operations until further financial arrangements were made to allow them to function independently of

Security Council to debate Cyprus issue

NICOSIA — The UN Security Council's permanent members will hold a mid-March meeting devoted to Cyprus, after six months of heightened tension on the divided Mediterranean island, the Russian ambassador here said on Friday.

Ambassador Georgy Muratov was cited by the official Cypriot news agency CNA as saying the meeting, organised by Russia, would examine the outlook for a peaceful settlement to the Cyprus problem.

Beside Russia, the other permanent Security Council members are Britain, China, France and the United

A senior Russian Foreign Ministry official recently visited Cyprus, Turkey and Greece to hold talks on the issue

Asked whether Turkey has invited Russia to enter into long-term military cooperation in return for cancelling its arms deal with Cyprus, Muratov said, according to CNA, 'there is no chance that this very important deal will be cancelled."

Cyprus announced in January the purchase of 20 Russian S-300 ground-to-air missiles, which are capable of striking targets in southern Turkish air space. — AFP

'Through my eyes' to focus on Oman

By A Staff Reporter

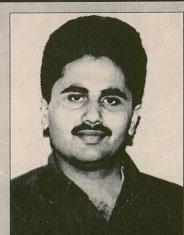
MUSCAT - An Indian painter, on a brief visit to Oman, is seeking to enhance the public knowledge of art through an exhibition, which he claims will be a challenging experience, both for the viewer as well as himself.

Vishal Bhandari, noted artist from Pune, India, is currently involved in gathering ideas for this exhibition, which, if he receives generous sponsorships, will attempt to resketch the artistic vistas of Oman.

The exhibition, to be titled 'Through my eyes', will reflect Vishal's perspective of Oman, which he has described as romantic. "There is a kind of romance in the hills. They seem to be reflecting different moods during different times of the day, changing their colour accordingly... From stark brown in the mornings to blue in the evenings...," he told Times of

Vishal, who is here at the invitation from Yiti Art Gallery, hopes to return to Muscat within a couple of months, with the paintings in tow for the exhibition, "which will deal with a tender market like Oman," he said, adding "Oman is a challenge."

According to him, it is an obligation on the artist to explain the nuances of the painting on



VISHAL BHANDARI

display to the viewers. He recommends the use of panels below every painting to let the viewer know what exactly the painter is trying to convey. "One cannot expect the viewer to be as exposed to art as the painter," he stressed.

"Art is a medium of communication and I believe in interaction. My objective is to enhance the viewer's thinking. To allow him to introspect and create an ambience of harmony," he added.

Art lovers in Oman will be treated with a visual delight when Vishal plans to exhibit his paintings on

Oman His works have already been exhibited seven times in India to rave reviews from connoisseurs of art and also the media. These exhibitions have proven his calibre as an artist, who professes his paintings are conceptual and

visually arresting ones.

And whilst in Oman, he will derive his inspiration from the traditional outlook portrayed by the country, seek romance in the hills ... The artist in Vishal has been particularly enchanted by the semblance of tradition in every

scale modernisation. He will focus on landscapes, architecture and people in action for his exhibition, which he promises will be different from all the others Oman has seen. He also hopes to do some exclusive paintings of His Majesty the Sultan

aspect of the life here, despite large

Stressing that his exhibition will be different, he said, "I decline to accept that everything in Oman has been covered. For instance, I intend to do the interiors of the forts, which has not caught the eye

of many an artist."

Vishal, who has already sold more than 400 paintings both in India and abroad, including the European and American markets, uses acrylic paints to portray his ideas. He describes his style as revolutionary, which is technically impressionistic

'Big five' to speed up Iraqi oil-food deal

NEW YORK - The five UN Security Council permanent members have held talks with UN financial officials in a bid to speed up implementation of an oil-for-food deal with Iraq, diplomats said on

Diplomats from Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States on Thursday held talks with UN controller Jean Pierre Halbwachs, who agreed after their joint approach to accelerate the process of releasing funds from a UNcontrolled escrow account.

The joint approach was unusual as the five countries are usually split on policy towards Iraq, with Britain and the United States favouring a tougher approach to Baghdad than China, France and

The meeting came after experts from the 15-member sanctions committee, which groups all the Security Council nations, agreed proposals on February 13 aimed at speeding

up the approval of contracts for food and medicine.

The full sanctions committee was to be informed of the new technical arrangements later on Friday.

Iraq has complained about the delays in approving the contracts, accusing the United States of responsibility for the slow implementation.

The oil-for-food humanitarian arrangement, which came into force in December, provides for Iraq to export two billion dollars worth of oil every six months to pay for food and medicine as well as to defray UN costs and contribute to war rep-

It is the first easing of sanctions since they were imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

A total eight food and medical contracts, and a total 31 oil contracts, have been approved so far.

Meanwhile, Iraq yesterday insisted it was not hiding any banned missiles and accused the UN's dis-

armament envoy Rolf Ekeus of lacking credibility and making false ac-

Ekeus, the head of the United Nations Special Commission on disarming Iraq (Unscom), has held two rounds of talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz since he started his latest mission on Thurs-

The former Swedish diplomat said after his last trip to Baghdad in December that he suspected Iraq was hiding more than the six to 16 missiles previously estimated, and his latest visit was aimed at pressing Iraq on the issue.

However, the official Al Jumhuriya newspaper said in an editorial yesterday that Iraq "had fulfilled all its commitments" on the disarmament issue.

And the paper turned on Ekeus for creating "false suspicions" about Iraq that were not justified.

'Unscom knows perfectly well that Iraq does not have the resources

grammes or to use the remains of destroyed missiles" to manufacture new weapons, said the paper.

The paper accused Unscom of

to carry out these (weapons) pro-

being manipulated by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and of being driven by "political considera-

It said the UN Security Council "was the only body capable of set-ting a limit to the length of Unscom's mission.'

Under UN resolutions Iraq must satisfy Unscom that it has dismantled its programmes for weapons of mass destruction and missiles with a range of more than 150km before UN sanctions can be lifted.

UN sanctions have been in force since Iraqi troops invaded neighbouring Kuwait in August 1990. Ekeus, who was to hold further

talks with Iraqi officials yesterday, has been constantly vilified by the Iraqi press as an alleged US agent.

A UN official said that Ekeus's

latest trip was aimed at discussing "all the weapons files, particularly missiles and chemical weapons.

Last month, Ekeus said Iraq was suspected of having transporters, launchers, support systems, rockets, and fuel weapons, "every piece of what is necessary to constitute an operational (missile) force."

He said Unscom remained concerned about biological weapons, with Iraq, suspected of concealing 'more sophisticated bombs than what they have declared to us," including spraying devices.

However, the Al Iraq daily said yesterday that Ekeus's concerns were simply "not credible," and said it was "Unscom that had become suspect as the Iraqis do not have confidence in it."

Iraq was allowed to resume limited oil exports in December under a humanitarian deal with the UN, but the full lifting of sanctions depends on Unscom's recommenda-

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Steps to protect civilians urged

NAQURA (Lebanon) — The international committee monitoring the truce in south Lebanon urged both Israel and Hezbollah fighters yesterday to take better pre-

cautions to protect civilians. The statement was issued after a meeting on Friday to dicuss a Lebanese complaint over the death of a civilian allegedly killed by an Israeli bomb, Lebanese officials

"In the interest of reducing tensions ... the monitoring group reaffirmed the importance for all combatants to take precautions to protect civilians," the panel said in a statement. The group — composed of France, Israel, Lebanon, Syria and the United States - voiced "deep regret" at the death of the Lebanese civilian but did not pin the blame on either side. Beirut lodged the protest on Thursday after 23-year-old shepherd Khodr Ali Shehade was killed by an explosion near the "security zone" occupied by Israel in south Lebanon. Lebanese police said Shehade was killed by an Israeli bomb camouflaged as a rock, and that he most likely died after picking up the device. The Israeli army, however, denied it was responsible

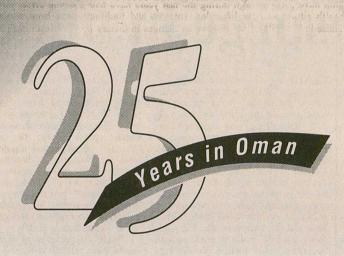
The committee, which met at the headquarters of the United Nations peacekeeping force in the border town of Nagura, condemned on Thursday Israeli shelling which killed a woman two days earlier and wounded two other

The committee expressed "serious concern" at the killing of Naamah Hallal, 33, by a shell which fell near her house in Habush in the Iqlim Al Tuffah region near the port city of Sidon. Another woman and a man were wounded in the shelling of Habush and the villages of Arab Salim

and Kfar Roummane.

for the death.

The truce committee was set up under the terms of a ceasefire ending Israel's 17-day onslaught against the Hezbollah militia in south Lebanon in April last year. — AFP





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Turkey plans to deport Bulgarians

ANKARA - Turkey is planning to deport tens of thousands of Bulgarians whose visas have expired, an In-

terior Ministry official has said. 'A directive has been sent from the Prime Minister's Office to local governors. It foresees the deportation of those who came in from Bulgaria after January 1, 1993, and who have not yet left despite their visas running out," the official said on Friday.

The official said the directive concerned around 70,000 Bulgarians, but a security official directly involved in the directive refused to give any fig-

The ministry official said Turkey had agreed to give citizenship to eth-nic Turks from Bulgaria in 1989. This lasted until 1993. The large number of arrivals after that date made it impossible to ignore the breaching of that rule, he said. Many fled Bulgaria following Sofia's forced assimilation of ethnic Turks - the Interior Ministry said in a statement that about 250,000 had been granted Turkish cit-

But Turco-Bulgarian relations have improved since then and allega-tions of ill-treatment by Sofia subsided. — Reuter

19 killed in Iranian bus crash

TEHRAN - Nineteen people were killed and 18 seriously injured when a bus collided with a truck in southeastern Iran, a newspaper reported yesterday. The accident occurred on a road

between Khash and Zahedan, the

main city in Sistan-Baluchestan

province, Kayhan said, adding that the two drivers were only injured. Iran has the highest rate of traffic accidents in the world with 205,000 collisions reported last year for some three million cars here. Around 5,000 people were

UK boils over

LONDON - British politicians re-

acted angrily yesterday to a German newspaper's description of Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind as "the

Jew Rifkind". The controversial de

'Jew Rifkind'

remark by

German

Two killed in Indian plane crash

BANGALORE (India) — Two peo-ple were killed when a two-seater Indian aircraft crashed in the southern city of Bangalore yesterday, the po-

A flying instructor and his co-pilot were killed when their Cessna aircraft, which was participating in an airshow, crashed near the Jakkur airstrip, about 10km from here, police

Police commissioner Sharat Chandra Burman said the aircraft crashed when the pilot tried to per-form aerobatics, which was banned by the airshow authorities.

'The pilot was into his third vertical loop when he lost control of the micro-light aircraft and crashed," Burman said.

He said the aircraft was flying very low at about 40 feet from the ground before the crash.

"Immediatley after the crash the aircraft caught fire." More than 50 aircraft from the country have been participating in the three-day "Fly in 97" show which be-

Kim Novak honoured at Berlin film fest

BERLIN — Actress Kim Novak came out of retirement to receive a Golden Bear award at the Berlin film festival for her cinema career, and particularly for her starring role in Alfred Hitchcock's Vertigo.

Novak, 63, who now breeds lamas on an Oregon ranch, said James Stewart, her co-star in Vertigo was her favourite acting partner.

The Berlin festival showed 13 films of the actress known as "soul on ice," including a restored print of *Vertigo*, which first came out in 1958. Restorer Robert Harris said the work took two years and saved the

Authorities foil mass Greek prison breakout

ATHENS — Security forces foiled a mass breakout by hundreds of inmates at the Korydallos prison near Athens, local police chief Ioannis Giorgakopoulos said. Teargas was used to repulse some 750 prisoners who tried to escape after around 100 Albanians in one of the wings of the jail sparked a mutiny which was followed by the other wings.

Two warders trapped in the kitchens were freed by colleagues, while the prisoners were grouped in the central courtyard and counted before being taken back to their cells, Giorgakopoulos said. No one escaped and

there was no damage, he added. Korydallos, the largest prison in the country, has some 5,000 inmates. In November 1995 it was the scene of a six-mutiny in which four people were killed and 77 injured.

N. Korean is dead

SEOUL - North Korea officially announced yesterday the death from heart failure of Defence Minister Choe Kwang, as analysts said his passing could accelerate the infusion of new blood into the ageing military leadership. "Marshal of the Korean People's Army (KPA) Choe Kwang ... minister of the people's armed forces, passed away from a heart attack at 8:30am (2330 GMT on Thursday) on Feburary 21, 1997 at the age of 78," North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. — AFP

Nigeria seeks UK help in investigation

ABUJA — The Nigeria Police Force said it was still waiting for Britain's cooperation in order to investigate Nigerians living in exile there who are suspects in terrorist acts.

'As soon as we secure the cooperation of the UK authorities and our detectives are allowed to extend their investigation to that country, then the picture (of those behind the terrorist acts) will be even more clear; national police spokesman Tunji Alapini said in an official statement.

He was responding to criticism over an earlier police statement that some members of the opposition coalition Nadeco, including those in exile abroad, were responsible for recent bomb blasts in Lagos in which, according to officials, two people died and 50 others, mostly soldiers,

Adams calls for IRA truce

DUBLIN - The leader of Sinn Fein, political wing of the IRA, said yesterday a ceasefire by the outlawed paramilitary organisation would be the most important confidencebuilding initiative" for the Northern

Ireland peace process. Gerry Adams also said in an article in The Irish Times that he believed any new ceasefire by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) would be genuinely unequivocal.

The IRA ended a 17-month ceasefire a year ago with a London bomb that left two dead, and has since continued its violent campaign for a united Ireland both on the British mainland and in Northern Ire

French protest against alien clampdown

PARIS — Tens of thousands of opponents of French government plans to toughen up immigration laws took to the streets yesterday in protests across France backed by artists and other celebrities.

In Paris, demonstrators began their march at the capital's Gare de l'Est railway station, a symbolic rallying point from where thousands of French Jews were deported during World War II by France's pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

Organisers estimated that 150,000 people turned out in support of the protest, although police put the figure at a more modest 33,000

The marchers were protesting against the so-called Debre bill -- named after its author, Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debre -- which notably strengthens monitoring of immigrants' movements. Petitioners have likened the proposed rules to those imposed in wartime

France where citizens sheltering Jews were ordered to inform the police. Several hundred illegal immigrants, mostly of Chinese origin, occupied a church in Paris's working class Belleville district on Saturday afternoon. A spokesman said they would stay as long as they could.

Earlier yesterday, a dozen people were prevented by police from unfurling a huge sheet on the capital's Pantheon building, the republican shrine to the

great and good, to declare the day of action open. The march was initially called by a group of French cinema directors who objected to a clause in the Debre bill requiring them to report the departure of any foreigner invited to work with them. Support for the rally snowballed with other contentious issues in the bill raised, so that yesterday's protest became aimed at forcing the government to withdraw the bill altogether.

Protests have grown particularly since a petition was drawn up by a group of celebrities and intellectuals.

Actress Emmanuelle Beart, singer-actor Patrick Bruel and film director Bertrand Tavernier were among the first to leave the Gare de l'Est rallying 'We are all children of immigrants," said one banner.

Leftist politicians and unions also joined the march.

Rallies in several other French towns, including Bordeaux, Caen, Lyon, Nantes, Dijon, Marseille, Strasbourg and Toulouse, were also well attended with crowds of up to 2,000 people.

Debre hit out at the marches, saying that the ringleaders were "committing

"It is not through slogans, discourse or simply good intentions that we will overcome racism and xenophobia, but through struggling unremittingly against irregular immigration," he told the weekly Le Figaro.

Activists in President Jacques Chirac's Rally for the Republic party also lent their support to the bill, distributing two million leaflets "against illegal im-

But French Jewish leader Jean Kahn rejected Debre's bill as a "dangerous mixture." "The memory of deported Jews and the respect due to the survivors and their families ... can under no circumstances be ridiculed," he said. French actress Isabelle Adjani wrote in the daily Le Monde on Friday that

the bill was "playing with fire," in particular at a time when the far-right, antiimmigrant National Front (NF) is on the rise. The French government has sought to calm the row already by considering

National Assembly next week. These include notably softening a clause which would oblige private French citizens housing immigrants who need a visa to enter France to report their guests' movements to local authorities. — AFP

scription came at the end of a report in Friday's Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) on a speech that Rifkind made in Bonn. Journalist Michaela Wiegel wrote: "As if he was not completely amendments on key points ahead of a second reading scheduled in the French convinced by his own words, the Jew Rifkind concluded - ironically apologetically — with a quote from Luther, delivered in German, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise'." Wiegel was reported yesterday as defending her words and saying no insult was intended. But British newspapers — the Daily Express devoted its front page to the story quoted members of parliament as de nouncing the German paper for publishing the description. "I find this totally abhorrent," said John Marshall of the ruling Conservative Party, whose north London constituency includes a large Jewish community, "It's disgusting. I was absolutely appalled when I saw it," said Gerald Kaufman, a prominent member of the opposition Labour Party. "I had thought this kind of thing was all over in Germany these days

words fail me. I cannot express my revulsion strongly enough."

Conservative Sir Ivan Lawrence, a member of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said: "This is not only offensive to the foreign secretary, it is offensive to the United The newspapers said Prime Min ister John Major had demanded

copy of the article but was leaving it to Rifkind to decide how to respond.
The foreign office said Rifkind planned to ignore it. A diplomat at the German embassy in London was quoted as saying: "This sort of thing makes us wince." But the FAZ appeared un-repentant, Wiegel was reported as saying: "I didn't realise that the way I

phrased the sentence could be of fensive to British people. "I was only trying to underline

how surprising it was that someone who is Jewish should quote the leading German Protestant reformer.' FAZ joint publisher Guenther Nonnenmacher said: "It was meant to

be funny... I am deeply worried about the reaction but the paper won't apologise or distance itself from what ap-

Benazir alleges Leghari's role in Murtaza murder

mier Benazir Bhutto yesterday alleged before a judicial tribunal that President Farooq Ahmed Leghari engineered the killing of her younger brother Murtaza in September. The three-member judicial tri-bunal investigating the killing was

set up in October while Benazir was still prime minister. Recording her testimony, Benazir said her brother's death in a police shootout in Karachi on September 20 was a "political murder to incite hatred against the democratically-elected government."

It was "part of a conspiracy," she said, alleging Leghari "colluded with anti-Pakistan People's Party forces to finish the party." The idea was to "kill a Bhutto to get a Bhutto" so that he (Leghari) had a "pretext to overthrow me," she said.

"He wanted to discredit and disgrace me among my followers by blaming my husband for the murder, she said. Benazir husband, Asif Ali Zardari, is in jail facing charges of involvement in the killing of Murtaza in the police shootout which also claimed the lives of seven colleagues of her politically estranged brother. She broke into tears when she nar-

rated her visit to a Karachi hospital on the night of September 20, where her brother's body was taken after the was a victim of conspiracies and killings since the time of late military ruler Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq.

Her father was overthrown by Zia in 1977 and hanged two years later. In 1985 her brother Shahnawaz was found dead in his apartment in France. "This has been the pattern to kill the loved and blame it all on the family," she said.

Benazir will resume her statement before the tribunal today.

The tribunal headed by Supreme

Court judge Nasir Aslam Zahid has already recorded statements of more than 100 witnesses including police officials, doctors and mediapersons.

The judges are to determine whether a heavy police presence near Murtaza's house on the day he was killed was justified, whether the shooting could have been avoided and excessive force was used. They will also determine whether medical aid was provided without delay after the shooting and also whether the police operation was pre-planned and carried out to kill Murtaza and his

The tribunal is due to conclude its investigation in the third week of March. In addition to Zardari, the former intelligence bureau chief, Masud Sharif, and 17 police officials are in jail in connection with Murtaza murder case. — AFP



The children's jury of the World Press Photo Contest has chosen this photograph by US photographer John McConnico. The picture shows the rescue of a one-year-old girl from the whirling waters of the Guyamil in Puerto Rico. The girl's home was swept away in the floods caused by

WHO warns of global surge in blindness

GENEVA - The World Health Organisation (WHO) warned that some 75 million people, twice the current figure, could be blind by the year 2020 unless there was a global effort to halt the trend. In a report issued after week-long discussions in Geneva United Nations agency said developing countries would be hardest hit but industrialised economies were also suffering. Within the next quarter of a century, the WHO said, "blindness and serious visual disability, already a public health problem - will become a major socio-economic burden worldwide ..

The development "may even thwart progress in some middle and low-income countries," the report de-

- Two sets of sisters whose bodies

were found near this northern French

port were assaulted and strangled, the

lawyer of their families said yes-

outside the court in Boulogne that prosecutors had called for two broth-

ers, both scrap merchants and ex-

convicts, to be charged with the "as-

sault and murder" of the four young

women found on Friday by French

Blandine Lejeune told reporters

clared. The WHO said that at present close to 150 million people around the globe suffered from significant visual disability, of whom 38 million were blind. More than two-thirds of these cases could be avoided "through adequate and timely inter-

Of about seven million people who now lose their sight every year, per cent had vision restored through treatment - leaving the overall number of blind increasing by up to two million annually.

Some 80 per cent of these new cases were related to ageing. Based on demographic trends, the experts estimated that by 2020 there would be around 54 million blind people around the world aged over 60, 50

Amelie and Peggy Merlin, aged 17

Isabelle Lamotte, also 17 and 20 -

and 20 respectively, and Audrey and

went missing shortly after a Mardi Gras carnival last Wednesday. Brothers Jean-Michel and Jean-

Louis Jourdain have been arrested in

connection with the murders and ar-

rived outside the court here shortly

two mothers concerned, Marie-Jose

Merlin and Laure Lamotte.

Lejeune was accompanied by the

after 7:00am.

million in developing countries. In other age groups, the total number in 25 years time would be over 21 million, the WHO said.

The report said that by 2020 the burden of disabling eye diseases on national economies would also surge.

gery are expected to escalate because of increased demand and as a result of the introduction of new technologies, it declared. "To curb this trend, a new global initiative is needed, bringing together international organisations governments, non-governmental development organisations and industry in a WHO-coordinated international effort to eliminate avoidable blindness and visual disability," the WHO

to check up on the hearing."
"I want to kill them," Merlin said

in tears. "They didn't deserve this.

The first day when I went to the po-

lice station I said they hadn't just run

away for a few days, that they'd been

"I will save every penny to buy a

Lamotte said she hoped President

pistol. I will take my revenge one

day when they get out of prison," she

Jacques Chirac would do something

to change the law and bring back cap-

Violence claims another life in Pakistan

LAHORE (Pakistan) — Two gun men killed a lawyer in Pakistan's central province of Punjab amid heightened tension between militant groups of the rival groups, police

They said Jarrar Zaidi, of Sheikhupura, two-time former president of the local bar association of Sheikhupura, was shot by the unidentified men as he waited for a taxi near his home to go to courts, 40 km from the provincial capital Lahore.

The gunmen, who were riding a motorcyle, shot Zaidi in the head and neck, police said. He later died being shifted to a hospital in Lahore.

The mayor of Boulogne-sur-Mer,

Guy Lengagne, told reporters outside

the court that he was "ashamed" for

logne is on the centre stage for some-

Lejeune said the bodies, found buried in sand close to a con-

crete shelter on the Sainte-Cecile

beach, 15km south of Boulogne,

had been taken off for autopsy in

thing horrible, it is deeply sad."

"I am ashamed for my town, Bou-

We are all in mourning," he add-

Tension between the militant groups has heightened after suspected militants burst into an Iranian Cultural Centre in Punjab's Multan city on Thursday and killed eight people including its Iranian director Mu-hammad Ali Rahimi. — AFP

Albright ends Euro tour; Nato wrangling goes on MOSCOW — US Secretary of State But her meeting with President

Madeleine Albright left for Asia after a week-long European tour that added momentum to Nato's plans to expand eastward despite Russia's stubborn resistance.

Albright, who arrived in Seoul yesterday to begin an Asian tour, also taking in Japan and China, said she made important progress in breaking down Russia's hostility to former Soviet-bloc states in eastern Europe joining Nato.

But she acknowledged that, after a hectic week of talks in Rome, Bonn, Paris, Brussels, London and Moscow, that there was no break-

Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who is due to meet Nato Secretary-General Javier Solana in Brussels today, repeated Moscow's opposition but said he wanted to "minimise complications" if Nato's plan went ahead.

Albright said it was far from certain that a deal could be reached before a Nato summit in Madrid in July to decide which ex-communist states to bring in as new members. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are favourites for early entry.

Boris Yeltsin may have succeeded, at least in so far as it kept negotiations going after weeks of increasingly angry words from Moscow.
"She brought proposals which

may not be significant on their own or change the nature of relations, but the West has shown it is trying to acommodate Russia's concerns, said Andrei Kortunov of the Russian Science Foundation think-tank. "Both sides have shown they want to keep the door open to further negotiations.

There was, nonetheless, a breath of Cold War diplomacy about Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin's visit on Friday to Russia's nuclear missile command centre. He declared that Russia's atomic

arsenal was in good working order and he warned that it would be "shortsighted" of European defence planners to ignore this. Albright, trying to counter fears among Russians that accepting Nato expansion would be a sign of weakness by the Kremlin, said: "We are no longer in a situation of you versus us. We are all on the

She also said that Yeltsin, 66, now

recovering from the pneumonia that laid him low after last November's heart operation, seemed to be "very

much in charge."

She gave Yeltsin a letter from President Bill Clinton, who is due to meet him in Helsinki on March 20-21, covering Nato expansion and other

er European security questions. White House spokesman Mike McCurry said: "There's a lot of hard work left ... part of that hard work is reflected in the correspondence the

president exchanged with President Albright and her Nato allies con-

sidered various proposals during the week which could go some way to meeting Russia's concerns. They included reducing conven-

tional weapons in Europe by modifying a 1990 treaty limiting the numbers of such arms and where they can be placed. This proposal addressed Russian fears of a Nato weapons build-up on its borders.

Albright also suggested creating a joint Nato-Russian brigade, mainly for peacekeeping purposes, to show goodwill, though the Kremlin said it was unimpressed by the idea. — Reuter

"We are here to find out what happened," the lawyer said. "I want The four - named as sisters Brazilian beauty wants to be a father

Four women found killed in France



BRASILIA — Plenty of people insist Roberta Close is the most beautiful woman in Brazil, but she of the jet-black tresses, sultry stare and sen-

Rio de Janeiro legally recognised the pop personality as Roberta Gambino Moreira, casting as under her past as

That's right, the woman who makes Brazil's machistas melt was a man. Or is, depending on who makes Federal judges who almost cer-

she's a he, the same Luis Roberto Gambine Moreira he ever was. Federal magistrates less convinced than courts in Rio decreed with cold certainty that "expert examinations find in favour of masculine gender" in Roberta's case, as closely watched as she was in her

And they said, despite the handiwork of Swiss surgeons who made significant alterations, Roberto/a's body continues to produce male hor-

mones. Furthermore, they ruled,

there's nothing in the constitution that could help settle this one. The problem for the best-known transsexual in this country where old-school machismo sometimes clashes with the most liberal attitudes in matters of sex and sensuality, is that Roberta's legal identity is up in the air just as she, firm in her conviction, hopes to become a fa-

her 1989 sex-change in Switzerland where she wed a Swiss man in 1993 — she, then a he, made a sperm-bank deposit she would now ke to withdraw For better or for worse, and for

now without a birth mother lined up, Roberta wants to be a father. And she wants her child to be born in Brazil, where her legal and potential Some lawyers consulted ac-

tion doesn't say anything specifically about transsexuals' rights, it does al low for individuals to do as they wish with their bodies. And sex changes aren't illegal.

Major set to face botanist in election

LONDON - Britain's Referendum Party, which rejects closer links with Europe, has picked botanist and ecologist David Bellamy to run against Prime Minister John Major in the upcoming general election.

Bellamy, 63, well known for his television shows on nature, was nominated to contest Major's constituency of Huntingdon, in central England, at a party meeting in Manchester. He said he had never cast a vote

in his life, but he shared Ref-erendum Party leader James Goldsmith's opposition to greater British involvement in the European Union, including the proposed single European currency "I know as an ecologist that a

single unit cannot work, we need biodiversity," Bellamy said. "I don't want to see this country stick its head into something we won't be able to get out of." The Referendum Party, which is

pressing for a national referendum on whether Britain should be part of what its members fear will be a European superstate, claims 50,000 members. Recent defectors say the membership rolls number closer to

Major, whose Conservative Party trails Tony Blair's opposition Labour Party after 17 years in power, is expected to call an election for

Rwandan refugees flee Kalima camp

KISANGANI (Zaire) — Twenty-five thousand Rwandan refugees fled the Kalima camp in eastern Zaire yesterday less than a week after it opened, amid unconfirmed reports of renewed fighting, humanitarian of-

Speaking after flying over the camp around noon (1000 GMT), officials said it was deserted, but that just an hour earlier it had been packed with people as usual. "It was incredible. There was nothing left there, as if the camp had

never existed," a member of a nongovernmental organisation said. A column of soldiers was sighted on the camp's small aircraft runway, but it was unclear if they were rebel

Sources said that rumours of fighting near the camp had been cir-

culating yesterday, and at least two wounded Zairean soldiers had been Observers said it was possible the refugees fled in panic without

waiting for confirmation that the rebels had arrived. In Brussels meanwhile, Belgian Cooperation Minister Reginald Moreels said the rebels were suspected of a fresh wave of indiscriminate genocide. Victims included both Rwandan Hutu refugees and dis-

magazine and on BRTN radio "They are killing and they are killing a lot," he said. Moreels added that it was es-

placed Zairean citizens, he said in in-

terviews with the Het Laatste Nieuw's

sential to send an armed international peace force to the Great Lakes. — AFP

'Scandals could topple Israeli government'

JERUSALEM — Israeli Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani warned yesterday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government could be toppled over the growing attorney-general scandal

'If it is discovered that the prime minister as well as Justice Minister Tahil Hanegbi are directly implicated in this affair, the government will have to be dissolved and new elections held," Kahalani said on Israeli military radio. " Kahalani's ministry oversees the police department, which launched an investigation three weeks ago into allegations that Netanyahu appointed Roni

Bar-On as attorney general in exchange for political favours The security minister's warning came a day after Israeli public television reported that Netanyahu had been told by police that he could face indictment over last month's short-lived appointment. — AFP

land. - AFP, Reuter

A file photo of Roberta Close. - AFP

suous coral lips just wants to be a

Five years ago, justice officials in

tainly gave more than a passing

glance to her photo portfolio still say

mid-1980's ascent to fame in glittery carnaval and on glossy magazine It turns out that before she had

parental status remain on confused. knowledged that while the constitu-

Roberta is hoping the Supreme Court will clear things up. — AFP

Dutch tourist finds exotic lizard in luggage

ROTTERDAM — A Dutch holidaymaker returning from the Caribbean island of Isla Margarita was shocked to find an iguana dozing in his suitcase when he unpacked,

Rotterdam police said on Friday. "We think smugglers planted the drugged lizard in his luggage with the aim of retrieving it before his case was returned at (Amsterdam airport) Schiphol," police spokeswoman

Angelique van Campen said.
She said the find had been reported to customs authorities, who

"Funnily enough the man did go through the red 'anything to declare' channel at Schiphol, but that was because he had too many cigarettes,"

Russian judge found hanged in train

MOSCOW — A Russian judge was found hanged by a cord in the sleeper compartment of a train near the western city of Kursk, police said.

A passenger sharing the compartment said he went out into the passage to smoke and when he returned he found Fedora Kopteva, chairman of the Kursk regional arbitration court, hanging dead, police told Itar Tass news agency The cord from Kopteva's tracksuit had been used. Police said they were investigating the possibilities of both murder and suicide. The train had been travelling from Moscow to Kursk, near the Ukrainian border.

'Special' pizzas home-delivered with hashish

KAISERSLAUTERN (Germany) The pizzas offered by an enterprising 21-year-old Turkish man for home delivery in Germany did not meet with police taste.

For ordering one of his 50-marks "specials" meant hashish was on its way along with the food, police in the Palatinate region said on Friday.

The man had an unpleasant surprise on realising that he had made a delivery to drug squad officers

Marriage legal even after sex change

SAINT-GALL (Switzerland) - A marriage stays a marriage, even when the husband switches sex, a court in this northern Swiss town ruled.

The district court, which has jurisdiction over name and identity changes, was called on to give its verdict in the case of a man who had changed his name after becoming a woman. "For the first time, at least in Switzerland, it concerns a married person and we had to give a ruling er the validity of the t district court vice president Thomas Mettler said.

"The interest of the partners who want to continue their marriage took priority," said the judge, who pronounced that the two women are

married in completely legality. "We decided the marriage could continue, even if the man is today a woman." Mettler said, explaining that the two were in complete agreement over the change in the status quo. He said the couple were in their

forties, but refused to give out their

Charlie faces misdemeanour charge

LOS ANGELES — Actor Charlie Sheen was slapped by prosecutors with a misdemeanour battery charge with serious injury for allegedly attacking his girlfriend in December at his home. Sheen, 31, is the son of actor Martin Sheen and brother of actor Emelio Estevez. His arraignment is set for tomorrow in Malibu Municipal Court.
The star of Wall Street, Platoon,

and Hot Shots has been free on \$20,000 bail since his arrest on the day, of the alleged December 20 incident at his Agoura Hills home.
Brittany Ashland said she had been dating Sheen for about five months when they got into an argument. She said he grabbed her hair and pushed her to the floor, knocking her unconscious.

Cohen to visit Europe

WASHINGTON — Defence Secretary William Cohen departs March 3 on his first foreign trip as secretary, visiting Belgium, Germany, Bosnia and Italy, the

Pentagon said on Friday.

The four-day trip, which will come less than two weeks after a European tour by new Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, will include visits with US troops in Bosnia and meetings with European leaders. The former Republican senator's first stop will be Brussels for a visit to Nato headquarters where he will meet with permament represenatives to the alliance and members of the US mission.

In Germany, he will meet with government officials in Bonn, visit with US troops at combat training areas, and receive briefings from top US military officials in Stuttgart.

- AFP, Reuter In Bosnia, the secretary will visit

Sharif's move to boost reserves faces hurdles

From Fahd Husain

ISLAMABAD — A conspiracy to dampen the inventive idea floated by Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, asking overseas Pakistanis to remit \$1,000 each, is being hatched by defeated politicians in collusion with a bunch of bankers and money changers who are kicking up rumours that the IMF and the foreign banks have objected to the proposal, an official said.

"In a systematic way it is being whispered that the International Monetary

Fund has objected to the suggestion made by Sharif to his countrymen abroad to deposit \$1,000 each," the source said. "It is a heap of rubbish. There is no IMF objection to this proposal and the Fund has not uttered a single word about it," the source who has been engaged in talks with the visiting IMF official said. "Howcome the IMF ask Pakistan not to increase its foreign exchange reserves through remittances?" the official said.

The rumours are being spread by the vested interests to create suspicion about a scheme that has already fetched \$150 million. "Sensing the success of the scheme these vested interests are trying to frighten away the expatriates who have shown their willingness to keep their deposits in Pakistani banks after the appeal made by Nawaz Sharif." Hours after gaining majority in the elections, two weeks ago, Sharif had appealed to overseas Pakistanis to send \$1,000 each back home to swell country's forex reserves. The appeal has met a tremendous success and since then \$150 million have arrived in Pakistan through various sources, pushing the dollar price down for the first time in the last one year. To get a mere \$76 million tranche release from the IMF, Pakistan had to succumb to a number of harsh conditions that have made the life of common man miserable as prices of commodities and utilities shot up. The

scheme, if responded even by one million Pakistani, would bring a whopping one billion dollar foreign exchange bringing relief to strained balance of payment position. "It is also being rumoured that there are legal hurdles in using these remittances for debt retirement which is totally wrong," the source said He said that the scheme primarily is to improve Pakistan's balance of payment position and not to retire debts. Secondly, the scheme is not a debt instrument like Foreign Exchange Bearer Certificates (FEBC) which cannot be used for debt-servicing. "The new instrument will bring in fixed deposits in foreign exchange to the country to be guaranteed by the government which will use them to better balance of payment. "It is a bold initiative whose features are slightly different from the traditional instruments", he said, adding that the bankers are praising the suggestion for it would fatten their deposits.

New government is pinning great hopes to the success of this scheme as there are 2.5 million registered Pakistanis in countries abroad. "Even if one million people respond to this scheme around one billion dollar amount will be mustered up," chief of an Islamabad branch of a foreign bank said. Pakistan, over the years, has piled up its long term foreign debt burden to a dizzying \$30 billion mark, which was \$16 billion in 1993, due to a large trade deficit that accumulates every year because Pakistan's exports are less than its imports.

To fill this import-export gap every successive government resorted to credit facility from all over the world which has created problems for the country. With the arrival of enhanced remittances, the balance of payment position of the country will improve and the vicious circle of taking more loans to pay import bill will provide a long-desired break to the country," the banker said term-



Family members of one of the victims of the Iranian Cultural Centre attack, mourning over a body during the funeral of four Pakistani employees of the centre. Eight people were killed on February 20, including an Iranian diplomat, when four unidentified gunmen stormed the of-

US evacuates embassy staff from Tajikistan

WASHINGTON — The United States said on Friday it was temporarily evacuating dependents of its embassy staff in Tajikistan because of worsening security in the turbulent

Central Asian country. State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said the move was prompted by the killing on Tuesday by unidentified gunmen of two embassy security guards, locally hired ethnic Russians who Washington

says were off-duty at the time. "That was the trigger for taking this action," Davies told reporters. The guards were among seven peo-

ple - including five Russians gunned down in separate attacks on Tuesday in the Tajik capital Du-

No one has claimed responsibility for the killings, widely blamed on fighters of the country's Islamist opposition who have battled the former

Soviet Republic's secular govern-

ment over the past four years. Davies said a total of five dependents were being pulled out on scheduled flights, leaving 12 embassy staff in place. About 65 private Americans in Tajikistan were being informed of the move but were not

being advised to leave, he said. "It's true that thus far only ethnic Russians have been targeted but in our judgment the situation is such that we should also bring dependents out, and we're doing that," Davies

An official statement issued later said the withdrawal was temporary and would be reviewed in 30 days to

see if the situation had improved. Reports from Dushanbe said the murdered security guards were dressed in distinctive uniforms with special badges and sleeve chevrons

The killings occurred a day after the end of a 14-day hostage crisis that highlighted the instability of Tajikistan, an impoverished country bordering China and Afghanistan. Russian and western hostages were held by a rebel group in a standoff with government.

The US statement said Washington was concerned "about the inability of the local government to ensure the safety of international personnel, including American cit-

Referring to the hostage incident, it said: "We cannot rule out another move by the same people to take hostages again." Tajikistan's President Imomali Rakhmonov and opposition leader Sayid Abdullo Nuri signed accords on Friday after peace talks in Iran, state-run Tehran radio said.

Powell likely

Republicans'

for 2,000 polls

WASHINGTON — Gulf War com-

mander Colin Powell is the favorite

candidate of Republicans for the pres-

idential elections in 2000, according

chiefs of staff would be the best

White House candidate, said 22 per

cent of respondents in the national

survey conducted by the consulting firm Fabrizio McLaughlin and Co.

ticket with presidential hopeful Bob

Dole in last year's race, scored 14 per

cent. Dole's wife, Elizabeth, ranked a

close third with 12 per cent, ac-cording to the survey of 830 Re-

publicans who were polled in early

February. The survey has a 3.5 per

cent margin of error. Powell was

number one with women Republicans (25 per cent), ultra-conservative

members of the party (17 per cent), moderate members (26 per cent) and

the liberal element (37 per cent).

Jack Kemp, who ran on a losing

The former chairman of the joint

candidate

to a survey released here.

Jatoi sworn in Sindh CM

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan's ruling party led by Premier Nawaz Sharif yesterday gained the leadership of three of the country's four provinces with the election of its nominee as chief minister in Sindh.

Liaquat Jatoi of Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) was sworn in as chief minister in southern Sindh. home province of former premier Benazir Bhutto, after a 65-34 vote in his favour by the 109-member state assembly. He defeated a candidate put up for the post by Benazir's Pakistan People's Party, which was routed in the February 3 elections by the PML. Jatoi, a Sindhi-speaking native, will form a coalition cabinet in Sindh with the Mohajir Qaumi Movement, representing the urban settler community made up of immigrants from India after the 1947 partition of he sub-continent. In the North West Frontier Prov-

ince bordering Afghanistan, PML's Mehtab Ahmad Khan has been in-ducted as chief minister to rule the state in partnership with the Awami National Party, which is dominated by ethnic Pashtuns. The largest province, Punjab, where Sharif's younger brother Shahbaz Sharif took over as brother Shahbaz Sharif took over as chief minister on Thursday, will be governed solely by the PML. In southwestern Baluchistan, Sardar Mohammad Akhter Mengal, leader of the Baluchistan National Party, became chief minister yesterday to head a multi-party coalition government in the radion, which also hore. ment in the region, which also borders on Afghanistan. — AFP

Space movies to make comeback

LOS ANGELES — George Lucas' sequel *The Empire Strikes Back* storms movie theatres and fans can expect more re-releases of space and alien movies as the millennium approaches

Twentieth Century Fox expects Empire to do well after Star Wars donestically grossed a record \$422 million.

The evil Darth Vader's relentless pursuit of Luke Skywalker in The Empire s the second of the Star Wars trilogy. The Return of the Jedi will be released

Star Wars success has prompted other studios to rummage through vaults ooking for contenders with space movies getting special attention, said Michael Schlesinger, of Sony's repertory sales department

For the past year Sony has been sprucing up Close Encounters of the Third Kind. "The most important thing to remember is that we did not decide to rerelease Close Encounters on the Monday morning after Star Wars came out,"

dios have been anticipating a thirst for space and alien movies as the third millenium arrives. Schlesinger sees Close Encounters as drawing an older, more enlightened audience intrigued by scientists' current speculation about life even if microscopic) on other planets.

"The end of a millennium brings out the craziness in society. Close Encounters was the first major science fiction film that showed aliens as peaceful and intelligent, and not slimy beasts after conquests," he said

He predicted there could be other re-releases, both of gentle and violent na-Fox has taught the 1979 thriller movie Alien, regarded by many science fic-

tion buffs as the premier movie about clawed, salivating voracious space creatures. It could be issued again in 1999 on its 20th anniversary. Other possible contenders are ET, the world's fourth top grossing movie, and 2001. But none, Schlesinger said, will create the kind of excitement that

"It was a once in a lifetime phenomena. It is in a class by itself," said Schle-

The trilogy's return will set the stage for Lucas' three 'prequels', set in the 40

years leading up to the Star Wars saga. Studios are looking closely at former blockbusters that can withstand the scrutiny of time, or at least rekindle nostalgia. —AFP

Missing French girls found safe in Britain

LONDON — Two French girls after coming to London on a day trip missing in London since Wednesday were found "safe and well" at 2130GMT on Friday in the city centre, and have been reunited with their parents, Scotland Yard said.

'They've been found in the West End and officers are going to speak to them now," said a spokeswoman, who could give no details of why the teenagers disappeared.

Laetitia Ranson, 16, and Angelique Wozniak, 15, disappeared

with their classmates from northern A team of 15 detectives had

been combing central London's Oxford Street shopping district, where the girls were last seen, carrying photographs of the teenagers. The girls' parents travelled to the

British capital earlier on Friday to appeal for information on their whereabouts, saying they feared the girls had been kidnapped.

In a press conference at Scotland Yard headquarters, Jacky and Jeanine Ranson, parents of Laetitia, and Marie-Christine and Noel Wozniak, parents of Angelique, showed photos of their daughters.

They said the girls spoke practically no English and had only about £10 (\$16) between them when they went missing on the trip organized by the city hall of their home town, Greney, in northern France. — AFP

Clinton mobilises 'literacy army'

WASHINGTON — President Bill Clinton mobilised a "citizen army" of literacy volunteers to help fulfill his campaign promise of having every American child able to read by the age of eight.

"The world we are moving toward will put a higher premium on education than ever before ... and we can only be a strong united community if we can educate all of our people," he told students at a school in Washington. The nation's capital has some of the most troubled schools in the United

States, where an estimated three million children under eight — four in 10 need extra help in learning to read.

The president has made education the centerpiece of his domestic policy

for his second term, insisting it is the only way to keep. America first in the "We intend to use thousands of ... volunteers to mobilise and train a citizen

army of one million reading tutors," said Clinton, who has asked universities to allocate half of all their "work study" students to fill the slots. Clinton announced on Friday that seven Washington-area colleges have ac-

cepted that proposal and will provide 700 students to work at 18 of the cap-The legislation Clinton has proposed for the programme calls for \$1.5 biltion in new education funds for after-school reading specialists to train the tu-

tors and another billion dollars for recruiting them. But the project Clinton announced during his re-election bid last year has drawn fire from the Republican-led Congress, where some members have charged that it is an expensive political gimmick.

We want to make sure we're not just throwing more money at the problem — rather than getting more money to the schools and getting parents involved," said Lauren Maddox, spokeswoman for House Speaker Newt Gingrich. She pointed out that there is already an \$8 million literacy programme in existence and asked: "If we have such a dramatic problem where is that Clinton and his wife Hillary met with students and teachers at the Wash-

ington grammar school, where they read the Tortoise and the Hare to a group The president has been pitching his education proposals across the country, but he chose Washington for Friday's event to highlight his new push to re-

vitalise the cash-strapped capital. "To truly renew our capital city, we clearly have to start with our children,"

Clinton said. The president has introduced a plan to relieve the city from some of its financial burdens by having the federal government take over some of the essential services. — AFP

Gore was US president for 5 minutes

WASHINGTON — US Vice-President Al Gore revealed on Friday that for purely technical reasons he was president of the United States last month, adding jocularly that his brief term was marked by peace in the country and

At the swearing-in ceremony here for Transport Secretary Rodney Slater, Gore explained that he took the oath of office on January 20 at 11:59am (1659 GMT), one minute before his and President Bill Clinton's mandates expired.

Another five minutes passed before Clinton took his oath in the ceremony on the steps of Congress.

"Some of the lawyers did say that for five minutes I was president of the United States of America, Gore said. "It was an important time for

me, for my family and, if I may be so bold, for America. "History will record that the

Gore administration had the fewest crimes committed of any administration in history, Republican or Democratic," he said

There was peace at home and abroad. We had a low inflation, a booming economy. We created 3.1

"You could hear patriotic hymns from the steps of the Capitol through the whole administration,' Gore concluded. — AFP

Whitewater prosecutor to remain on Clinton probe

WASHINGTON Whitewater prosecutor Kenneth Starr admitted on Friday he had made a major mistake and reversed his decision to leave the investigation involving President Bill Clinton and his wife, vowing to stay for any major prosecutions.

Bowing to nearly a week of public criticism even from his own staff over his plan to move to a new career at Pepperdine University this summer, Starr abruptly changed his mind and said he was putting that plan on hold indefinitely. At a news conference, he admitted his decision to leave was "unwise" and "incorrect" and ("imprudent" - it drew some strong editorial criticism, while delighting White House aides — and had shaken public confidence in the investigation.

Quoting a famous line from a one-time New York City Mayor Fiorello Laguardia, who was known for the pithy phrase, Starr said with a smile: "When I make a mistake, it's a In his formal statement, which he read, Starr said: "I have informed Pepperdine University ... that I do intend to continue as independent counsel, and that I will assume no duties or responsibilities at Pepperdine until the investigation and any resulting prosecutions of persons named in the order appointing me as independent counsel or high-ranking government officials have been substantially completed. "My commitment is to the Amer-

ican people and to the pursuit of the truth, and I will seek to fulfil that commitment to the best of my ability and for as long as it takes," Starr said. He noted the "persons named in the order" appointing him were President Clinton, Hillary Rodham Clinton and James McDougal, their business partner in the Whitewater land deal and head of a failed Arkansas savings and loan.

McDougal has been convicted on bank fraud charges and Starr said he was now talking with Whitewater investigators who are trying to persuade him to become a witness. Beyond that, however, Starr re-

fused to say anything about the state

or direction of his investigation,

whether he anticipated indictments, or how long it might take. Starr's inquiry started in 1994 as a probe of the Whitewater land deal involving the Clintons when the president was governor of Arkansas as well as the failure of an Arkansas Savings and Loan Institution run by

It has since expanded to include a number of White House controversies including the firing of the

travel office staff and the obtaining of FBI personal files. Pepperdine University, located in

Malibu, California, announced last Monday that Starr had accepted the appointment to become dean of its law school and was expected to leave the special prosecutor post for his new duties by August.

His decision to walk away from the highest-profile investigative job in the country, and one possibly involving the fate of the president and his wife, created a sensation - and Washington was soon awash in speculation as to what it meant.

The conclusion of many legal experts and political analysts - despite Starr's protestations - was that he was leaving because he did not have enough evidence to prosecute the Clintons. The conclusion was that they must be home free.

In trying to counter that guesswork, Starr initially insisted his move meant nothing more than that he was accepting a fine career opportunity and a stroke of good fortune for himself and his family. White House aides could barely conceal their glee at his initial decision to leave. Clinton had long ago endorsed the view that Starr, a Republican, was running a politically inspired investigation. The president is a Democrat. — Reuter



US President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton reading 'The Tortoise and the Hare' to a first grade class at Garrison Elementary School in Washington DC. The president and the first lady then spoke to teachers, students and volunteers about the importance of teaching young people to read. - AFP

16 cows die after eating stale sweet

NEW DELHI - Sixteen cows died in northern India after eating a stale sweet originally offered in temple, the United News of India said yesterday. Police in Rajasthan said 20 cows fell sick after eating "halwa," a milk-based dessert, given to the cows after a traditional local festival on

"The halwa was distributed to the devotees and what remained was left for cows and other cattle," a policeman said.

"While 13 cows died on Wednesday, and three died on Thursday.

He said veterinarians had been rushed to the remote village in Jalore district to treat the ailing cows.

Editor held for helping Tamil rebels

NEW DELHI — Police have arrested the editor of a popular magazine in southern India for allegedly helping Tamil Tiger guerrillas in Sri Lanka, *The Indian* Express daily said yesterday. A. S. Mani, chief of the

Tamil-language weekly Netrikkan, was arrested on Friday in Madras, after a raid on his house. A spokesman said Mani was a

sympathiser of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) group, fighting a protracted war for independence in northern and eastern Sri Lanka where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

"Several incriminating articles were found including cellular phones hired for LTTE members, LTTE propaganda material, photographs of LTTE leader Prabhakaran and LTTE

Bappi Lahiri faces cheating charges

CALCUTTA — A court has directed the police here to investigate a complaint that renowned musician Bappi Lahiri and his agent had cheated a person of Rs400,000.

Filing a complaint case before chief metropolitan magistrate Asit Dasgupta, Soumitra Biswas, a federal excise officer, alleged that he had payed Rs400,000 in bank draft to Bappi Lahiri through his agent Babu Halder for making arrangement of presenting superstar Amitabh Bachchan and pop singer Samantha Fox at a cultural function, organised by the Central Excise Athletic Club in Calcutta. Bappi Lahiri organised a function on behalf of the club on January 20 last year in the city but neither Amitabh nor Samantha were present in the function, Biswas alleged. He further alleged that for the past one year he was trying to get back his money from Bappi Lahiri, but with no success.

The magistrate directed the deputy commissioner of Calcutta police to enquire into the complaint and submit a report to the court on April 2 next.

Death rap for wife killer

AURANGABAD - A court yesterday sentenced a 40-year-old-man to death for strangulating his wife and axing to death his five children.

The additional sessions Judge Purandare after examining 11 witnesses and hearing the arguments of defence and prosecution, passed the death sentence on Friday.

The accused Sheikh Ayyub, suspecting fidelity of his wife Tasleem (35), strangulated her with a saree on the night of February 6, 1995, and later axed to death his daughters Mosira (3), Shamabi (5) and sons Mukthar (7), Nihal (9) and Javed (2). Ayyub's nephew Sheikh Aslam and his sister-in-law, who heard the shrieks of the children, knocked on the door and when Ayyub did not open it, they broke open the door to find him smoking sitting

Phoolan files another plea

KANPUR — Phoolan Devi has filed yet another application in the court of special judge (dacoit affected areas) seeking compliance of non-bailable warrant against her. The application was filed by her counsel, Nand Lal Jaiswal, in the court of S.K.Srivastav in Kanpur Dehat on Friday. The counsel in the application said that since the Allahabad High Court had stayed the proceedings of Kanpur special court till March 20, the execution of the non-bailable warrant should be stayed. In his order, Srivastava said: "The applicant may inform the police authorities if she wishes to do so." This was the eighth application moved by Phoolan Devi since the special judge had issued a non-bailable warrant against her on January 21 last. All her applications have been rejected by the court.

Six killed by wolf

AURANGABAD — A man-eater wolf has wreaked havoc in the villages around the forest area of Parbhani district in Maharasthra, killing six people, including a 14-year-old girl and mauling several others during the month.

Women and children in the villages of Nandgaon, Mausi, Jambli-Tanda and Siddeshwari-Tola are afraid to venture out fearing attack by the wolf. - AFP, PTI



an advertisement for a credit card company.

31 special flights for Haj pilgrims

From Our Correspondent

KOZHIKODE — Indian Airlines would be operating special flights from Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram to Madras for Haj pilgrims from March 10. There would be 21 special Haj flights from Kozhikode and 10 from Thiruvananthapuram. From Madras, the pilgrims would be flown to their destination by an Air-India jumbo flight. This was stated by the airline's regional director for the southern region,

Capt. S.N. Reddy here. Indian Airlines would also be operating similar flights between Hyderabad

and Bangalore. Air-India would ferry these pilgrims from Bangalore.
Capt. Reddy said that for the pilgrims from Kozhikode, customs clearance and other formalities would be completed at Kozhikode airport itself.

The Haj operations of Indian Airlines starting on March 10 will go on till May 6. The outgoing flights would be on all Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays till March 24 from Kozhikode and March 23 in the case of Thiruvananthanuram

There would be two Haj flights from Kozhikode. The incoming flights bringing the pilgrims back home would be operated to Kozhikode from April 20 till May 6 and to Thiruvananthapuram from April 22 till May 5.

Case against Nayanar quashed

THE Kerala High Court quashed the criminal proceedings initiated against Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar by the Thalassery special court for the trial of offences under the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.

The Court of Justice N. Dhinakar delivered the judgment while allowing

the criminal miscellaneous complaint filed by Nayanar challenging the criminal proceedings against him. The special court had taken cognisance of the complaint filed by Dr M.A.

Kuttappan, Congress(I) member of the Kerala Assembly on October 14 under the above act and under the Protection of Civil Rights Act. Dr Kuttappan, MLA, had said in his complaint that Nayanar, had, while addressing an LDF convention as part of his election campaign in Thalassery as-

sembly constituency, referred to Kuttappan as "Harijan Kuttappan He alleged that Nayanar had made the speech deliberately to insult him in public view. The conduct of Nayanar was tantamount to practising untouchability or was an action arising out of untouchability and hence an of-

Counsel for Nayanar argued that the alleged statement had not been made in the presence of Kuttappan and hence it would not attract Section 3 (1) (X) of

The judge, while quashing the proceedings, said the words uttered by Nayanar did not attract the above sections of the act.

New serial on Asianet

ASIANET is telecasting a documentary on the life and vision of Matha Amrithanandamayi from today. The serial has 10 episodes and is titled Pre

The documentary will protray the story of the spiritual transformation of Matha Amrithanandamayi who was born in a poor family of fisherfolk and had no formal schooling.

tabling of Bofors papers

the controversial Bofors gun deal.

While members from the Left parties demanded tabling of these documents, the Congress members asserted that it should not be done in instalments. Raising the issue during zero hour in the Rajya Sabha, Gurudas Das Gupta of Communist Party of India (CPI), contended that the "unusual prolonging" of the in-vestigation process had raised suspicion about an attempt at hushing up

notice demanding tabling of all the secret Swiss Bank documents releged payoffs in the house.

papers should be tabled.

Meanwhile, senior Congress leader Sharad Pawar has said that his party did not intend to pull the rug from under the feet of the United Front government right now but would launch an aggressive campaign on various issues after the bud-

party would ask for elections, afterall the party has to face elections sooner or later," Pawar said in an interview to Politics India, monthly

According to a press release issued by the journal, Pawar, who has been made the leader of the party in the Lok Sabha by party chief Sit-aram Kesri, denied that he had any deal with Kesri before the election of the Congress Parliamentary Party

Uproar over

NEW DELHI — Congress and Left party members clashed in both houses of parliament on the question of tabling of secret Swiss Bank documents relating to alleged payoffs in

In the Lok Sabha, Nirmal Chatterjee of the Communist Marxist Party, wanted to know the fate of his lating to the investigations into the al-

This led to vociferous protests from Congress members who op-posed any "piece-meal" laying of the documents and insisted that all the

Certain adverse remarks by CPI-M member in the upper house, Dr Biplab Das Gupta, on the findings of the joint parliamentary probe into the Bofors deal, triggered a mild furore with Congress members taking umbrage and accusing the CPI-M member of lowering the dignity of the

"If the situation favours us, the

BJP, SP to take up trust motion after budgets

NEW DELHI - The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Samata Party (SP) have announced that they would decide on their no-confidence motion against the Deve Gowda government after the presentation of general and railway budgets as Lok Sabha Speaker P.A. Sangma deferred action indefinitely on a notice of the motion given by SP leader George Fernandes. BJP's deputy leader in the Lok Sabha Jaswant Singh and Fernandes told newsmen that the two parties would take a decision whether to press for the motion after the presentation of the two budgets as "there will be enough ammunition after that"

They said they would meet the speaker after the budget presentation on February 28 after mutual consultations and convey their decision. Fernandes said they had met Sangma and were told that he would hold the motion till the presentation of the budget.

Earlier, Sangma told the Lok Sabha that he was deferring action on the notice of the motion given by Fernandes. But he did not indicate any time

Meanwhile, BJP will meet in Madras today to formulate the detailed

programme for the party's extended national council meeting to be held in Thiruvananthapuram in April.

Party president L. K. Advani, will preside.

BJP central parliamentary board member O. Rajagopal, told newsmen here that according to the revised schedule the party's national executive would meet here on April 2-3 to be followed by the national council on

About 3000 BJP leaders would attend the extended meeting of the national council

Rajagopal said a meeting of the state leadership of the BJP in Kerala held recently decided to organise state-wide agitation programmes against the policies of the central and the state governments, which had pushed up prices, worsened the unemployment problem and caused a spurt in the politics of violence

Workers conventions would be held in all districts from March 2 to 10 which will be followed by conventions at the constituency level from

Lottery draw that wipes smiles out

INDORE — Usually winning a lottery lights up faces, but here it spelt doom. It was a lottery draw with a difference. The draw held at the premises of the Indore Municipal Corporation to "select the illegal buildings to be demolished in the city" had all the ingredients of a high drama — curious onlookers, tight security arrangements, lots of scribes and cameramen. Conducting the lottery draw were Municipal Commissioner, K.P. Singh, city Mayor Madhuker Verma and District Collector S. Gopal Reddy. The "doomed" winners were picked up by the president of the Federation of Civic Employees (FCE) Ramlal Yadav.

Singh said that civic authorities had decided to introduce a lottery system to select the illegal buildings for demolition from amongst 290 structures in the city built in contravention

Singh said the civic body had selected 47 illegal structures. "Two or three among them will be selected periodically by lottery to be demolished", he said.

This was being done on the basis of a report of a high power committee set up following the orders of the Indore bench of the Madhya Pradesh High Court, in response to a public interest petition, he said.

City Mayor Madhuker Verma

said the standing committee of the corporation had authorised its officials to launch an anti-encroachment drive by the lottery system. -PTIsidy in the budget for the year 1997-

PM pledges food for 400m poor

NEW DELHI — Buckling under 98 will amount to Rs80 billion. It sustained pressure from the Left parties and failing to develop a rapport with the Congress leadership under Sitaram Kesri, Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda has decided to woo 400 million people living below the poverty line, which is to cost Rs20 bil-

lion extra in food subsidy.

Meanwhile, the government has decided to provide higher transport subsidy for moving the decontrolled phosphatic and potash fertilisers to low consumption areas like parts of Jammu and Kashmir and the North-

Both the proposals are likely to jack up the subsidy bill of the government and thus have a far-reaching effect on the economics for the forthcoming federal budget. The "Food for the Poor" scheme,

to be announced by Deve Gowda in parliament tomorrow envisages provision of wheat at the approximate rate of Rs2.50 per kg and rice at Rs3.50 to 4.00 per kg through the public distribution system.

To begin with, the downtrodden families will be given 10 kg of wheat or rice per ration card. With the announcement of the new scheme, the burden of food sub-

into being. Those living above the poverty line (ABL) will get wheat at the normal rate — Rs4.02 per kg at present.

also means that "dual pricing" in the

PDS at the national level will come

The prime minister was advised by the standing committee of the United Front which met at his Race Course residence not to enhance the issue price of wheat in the PDS for the time

When contacted, CPM general-secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet, confirmed that the prime minister had indicated that he would be announcing the scheme tomorrow.

However, he declined to reveal

the extent of financial burden on the exchequer on this score saying it was for the government to work it out. Although the cabinet had taken a

decision last year to give food to the poor from October 2 at Rs3 per kg and raise the issue price to Rs5.25 per kg, the Left found it unacceptable and matter dragged on. The prime minister has naw succumbed to the increasing pressure. The Cabinet Committee of Economic

Affairs is reported to have taken a de-

cision in this regard with food and fi-

nance ministers attending the meet-

ing. Front sources said the federal cabinet would, therefore, have to climb down from its original proposals and come out with dual prices for wheat for two categories of ration-card holders.

The Front constituents were opposed to raising prices for both the categories of the ration-card holders.

The government also announced a 10 per cent hike with immediate effect in the statutory price of urea which at the moment is Rs3,320 a

Agriculture Minister Chaturanan Mishra told parliament the increase in urea prices was being effected to correct the fertiliser use imbalance as well as to enhance the subsidy support on phosphatic and potash fertil-

Accordingly, he said, the concession on per tonne of diammonium phosphate was being increased by Rs750 from the existing level of Rs3,000

Similarly the concession on single super phosphate (SSP) has been raised by Rs100 and that on muriate of potash (MOP) by Rs500 a tonne. The new level of concessions on SSP would be Rs600 and that on MOP

Protests against policeman's murder

CALCUTTA - Massive public protests against the killing of the officer-incharge (OC) of the Bhadreswar police station stalled train movements and vehicular traffic in Howrah and Hooghly districts yesterday even as the police claimed a major clue to the incident with the arrest of the driver of the car used

A large number of people squatted on the tracks at Rishra, Baidyabati, Seoraphuli, Bhadreswar, Konnagar, Tarakeswar and Dankuni stations, disrupting movement of several long-distance as well as suburban trains on at least three sections of the Eastern Railway.

The driver, identified as M.N. Gupta, was spotted by the police in the city's Bhowanipore area with head injuries, believed to have been inflicted during a police-criminal encounter near Champdani late on Wednesday night when the

The car was found abandoned at Bally in Howrah district last night State Home Secretary Lina Chakraborty said that a .303 bullet was found in the body of the deceased OC, Bholanath Bhaduri and it suggested a firing from

She said the driver, during interrogation, stated that he did not seek permission from the owner before talking away the car.

Deputy Inspector-General of Police (HQ) Prasun Mukherjee said that the driver was hiding in the Bhowanipore area after he was refused admission to Howrah General Hospital and later at the S.S.K.M. Hospital in the city on Wednesday night, in the face of queries from doctors.

The driver's arrest, police sources said, might provide a major breakthrough to the OC's killing. Combing operations continued in Hooghly and its adjoining districts to track down the assailants who were still untraced. The state Criminal Investigation Department has been entrusted with the task of probing

Meanwhile, Pradesh Congress chief Somen Mitra alleged a nexus between

the police, the CPI(M) and the "mafia" that led to the killing of the OC. The PCC would hoist black flags and stage demonstrations at all police stations in the state on February 24 in protest, party sources said.

US expert team arrival delayed

ONGC under fire for lack of technology

HYDERABAD — The arrival of a three-member American expert team to help combat an oilfield fire here has been delayed even as strong winds kept the fire raging, officials said yesterday.

A spokesman for Andhra Pradesh said the expert team would arrive in Hyderabad today to cap a blow-out in an oilfield owned by the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC). "The three-member team will

reach the site today and not as earlier planned yesterday," he said without giving any reasons for their delay. An ONGC official said the fire was "still raging" around a 2km ra-dius of the oilfield and the company's

ly monitoring the situation.' 'A strategy to control the flame will be evolved by the crisis management group only after the American experts visit the blow-out site

crisis management group was "close-

The fierce 150-feet-high pillar of fire raging at the Oil Gas Corporation's (ONGC) Mandapet West-1 here since Wednesday reflects on the ONGC's "lack of interest" in equipoing itself with technology to prevent blowouts. The Devarapalli blowout is the 11th in the Krishna-Godavari basin since the ONGC started oil exploration in this area. It is the second blowout after the Pasarlapudi-19 well tragedy in 1995. This was preceded by a blowout at Komarada in 1993.

Though the ONGC has recorded a string of blowouts in its short drilling history in this river basin, it does not appear to have woken up to the reality that prevention of a blowout is better than cure.

After battling with the raging fire at the Pasarlapudi well for over 60 days in 1995, the ONGC seems to have thought that was the end of all blowouts and apparently did not

bother to concentrate on measures to

prevent such incidents in future. Says Amalapuram MP K.S.R. Murthy, The ONGC does not have any means to prevent blowouts. Neither does it have the necessary wherewithal to control and put them out.'

Ironically, ONGC officials did not reach the spot of the present blowout, which occurred at about 1pm, until the evening. A little action was visible only on Thursday afternoon when the leader of the regional crisis management team K. Satyanarayana arrived at the site with his group and took stock of the situation.

It is believed that the gas with a high density of oil issued out with tremendous force due to wrong assessment of the underground pressure at a depth of 2,700 metres at which the rig was operating. When drilling continued on the rig, fire sparks that flew at the mouth of the well ignited the gas and oil condensate, resulting in the blowout.

Sena making Congress blacklist

NASHIK — The nephew of Shiv Sena supremo Balasaheb Thackeray, Raj Thackeray, said here that a blacklist of corrupt Congress leaders was being drawn up by his party, to counter the smear campaign against the Thackeray family and the Manohar Joshi government.

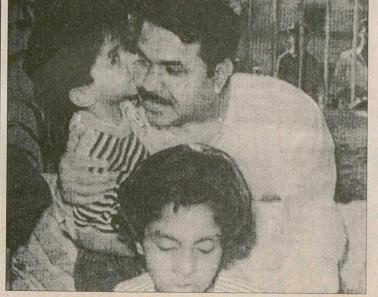
Addressing a public meeting at Swami Vivekanand Nagar, Cidco, he lambasted Congress leaders for targeting the Joshi government and the Thackeray family, with vested interests of toppling the government and maligning the Thackerays.

He pointed out that a blacklist of corrupt Congress leaders was being drawn up to counter the 'baseless propaganda of the Congress party. He criticised a section of the

press for becoming the stooge of Congress leaders, in launching a campaign against the government and the Thackeray family.

He also lambasted socialist women leaders for their baseless charges against the government.

He claimed that the kind of information being collected against the Congress leaders might lead them to



Mohan Rawle with his children on the second day of his fast.

BOMBAY — Shiv Sena MP Mohan Rawle appears to be waging a lonely battle for gangster Arun Gawli. He was ignored by his party leaders and he had few visitors as he began the second day of his fast for Gawli at the Agripada police station.

Rawle's plight is a pointer to the Sena's changing equation with Gawli and on a larger scale, goondaism in the metropolis. Barely five years ago in the last elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, Shiv Sena supremo had expressed pride in Gawli. At a public meeting at Shivaji Park, he had, in his ongoing battle against the minorities, proclaimed that if "they"

Five years down the line the screws are being turned on Gawli. Says Nikhil Wagle, the crusading

could have Dawood Ibrahim, "we

could have Arun Gawli.

editor of Apla Mahanagar which has taken up the cudgels against criminalisation of politics, "The Sena used to adopt tactics similar to Gawli's earlier on. Now that Gawli seems to be cutting into their territory, they have reacted with such extremism." Adds rebel Shiv Sainik Madhav Deshpande, "If Gawli could be detained under the National

Security Act merely for intimidatory tactics, so should Thackeray: the pattern and ultimate purpose of both is the same, after all." But that is little consolation for Rawle who, squashed between the two, seems pretty determined not to give up. He has had little communication with Thackeray or other Sena leaders so far. By his own admission he took a split second decision to go on an indefinite fast in protest against being

allegedly duped by the police into

facilitating Gawli's arrest. He suffers from diabetes and his glucose level has been rising in the 48 hours that he has been on fast. Police are threatening to hospitalise him but he steadfastly refuses to be prised out of his seat at the Agripada police station where he has been squatting since Thursday

The lone fighter for Gawli the gangster

His determination has become a source of great embarrassment to the Sena whose leaders refused to comment. But Rawle appears to be only salvaging his own skin, given that his equation with the Thackeray clan is on a sticky wicket and that Dagdi Chawl, part of his constituency and the heart of Gawli's anti-social activities, has for long contributed to Rawle's and the Sena's electoral victories in the past. The Sena's top leadership, particularly the Thackeray scions Uddhav and Raj, were never

really reconciled to the rapprochement worked out between him and the Sena chief in the wake of the 1995 elections to the state assembly

Rawle, a former bodyguard of Thackeray, got on the wrong side of his boss by allegedly facilitating the defeat of a no-confidence motion against former prime minister P.V. Narasimha Rao in July 1993 by simply staying away from the house at voting time. His defence was that he fell ill and had to be hospitalised. but Thackeray believed otherwise and declared him persona non grata until potential rebellion in a segment of Rawle's constituency during the assembly elections forced both into adopting a more conciliatory approach

Lack of suitable candidates saw Rawle winning the Sena ticket at the

1996 Lok Sabha polls despite the past record. He now, however, feels deeply betrayed, though he has been careful not to take on his party leaders. instead, he puts the blame squarely on the police. The question now is why is Rawle is seeking a rapprochement with Gawli at such a sensitive time. Rawle's contention is that he was only seeking peace for his constituency which was on the threshold of "bloodshed" until he talked Gawli into surrendering to the police for a mere half hour. Now he is peeved that it looks as though it was he who betrayed Gawli. Given the equation of politics and the mafiosi in his constituency this is cause for serious concern. The Sena on the other hand, seems to have killed two birds with one stone, getting rid of both Gawli and Rawle in one stroke.

BEIJING — Chinese senior leader

Beijing tomorrow a day before his

crematorium official said yesterday.

died in 1976 was embalmed and his

body is displayed in a mauseoleum in

Deng whose economic reforms

transformed China into an economic

powerhouse, will be cremated at the

exclusive Babaoshan Revolutionary

Cemetery in west Beijing in a private ceremony, the official who requested

who died late on Wednesday of

respiratory failure brought on by

advanced Parkinson's disease, will be

burned in a special incinerator reserved for China's top leadership,

The body of the paramount leader,

His predecessor Mao Zedong who

massive state funeral here, a

Tiananmen Square.

the official said.

Deng Xiaoping is to be cremated in

PANMUNJOM — US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said yesterday that a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula may be achieved if

North Korea was "hurting" enough. Answering questions from US soldiers serving in a peacekeeping mission here, Albright said it was 'very hard to predict" whether a peace treaty could be achieved

between the two Koreas. "It depends on how much the North Koreans are hurting and on whether they are willing to realise that a peaceful solution to this division is the best way to go,

Albright said. North Korea on Friday agreed to attend a joint briefing in New York on March 5 on proposed formal four-way peace talks that would involve the two Koreas, with Washington and Beijing playing a

support role.

Pyongyang's move towards formal peace talks was announced after the United States and South Korea agreed to provide food aid to stave off widespread starvation in North

Korea. US officials have not linked food aid to North Korea to Pyongyang's participation to the preliminary talks but they privately agree that the food shortages helped persuade the North

Koreans to come on board. Albright, who earlier held talks with President Kim Young-Sam and Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha, visited an observation post manned by US and South Korean troops and drank coffee with US troops at a

Donning a baseball cap, the new US secretary of state said the United States should keep its 37,000-strong force in South Korea.

"From what we can see and the instability that we see in North Korea, I think we should stay where we are," Albright said.

The relationship between South Korea and the United States is "as close as two allies can be," she added.

Kim's son apologises

SEOUL — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam's second son yesterday apologised to the people for causing concern in connection with widespread allegations of his involvement in a stormy loans

"I feel very sorry for inadvertantly causing concern to my father and to the people," Kim Hyun-Chul was shown on television as saying in a choked voice as he left the Prosecutor General's Office

He then bowed deeply, after being questioned for the second straight

day by prosecutors.

Kim Hyun-Chul presented himself to the Prosecutor General's Office on Friday as the plaintiff in a libel suit he filed against six opposition figures who accused him of involvement in the Hanbo scandal.

But prosecutors said they had also questioned the president's son about allegations that he had brokered loans for the debt-stricken Hanbo business group and other charges that he had been exercising influence over government administration.

Strong quake rocks China

BELJING — An earthquake measuring 5.0 on the Richter scale shook northwest China's Xinjiang region late on Friday, an official at the state seismological bureau said yesterday. "A quake struck Jiashi (county)

last night. We don't for the present have reports on casualties or damages," the official said. The quake struck at 10:29 pm

Earthquake jolts

TOKYO — A strong earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale

Japanese island

was registered off the northern

Japanese island of Hokkaido, the

occurred at 8:41am (2341 GMT),

island in the Pacific, the agency

There were no reports of

casualties or damage, police said,

was located some 200km east of the

meteorological agency said yesterday

The epicentre of the quake, which

(1429 GMT) on Friday and had its epicentre near Jiashi county, 60 kilometres (35 miles) from Kashgar, the official Xinhua news agency said.

It followed a killer temblor on January 21 in the same region which

left close to 50 dead. Another quake on February 12 caused no injuries. The latest quake was "strongly felt" in the Central Asian region, where the population is dominated by ethnic-Uighur Muslims.

and other tasks. Among their agenda items will be

Hong Kong's new flag and the approval of a budget straddling the handover will also be considered, as will the appointment of judges and the alteration or scrapping of some lo-

Sanoh Thienthong told reporters.

National Union (KNU) at Minthamee

Deng's ashes would be transferred into a special urn which would be given to his wife and five children ahead of his state funeral on Tuesday "After the cremation Deng

She added that after the cremation

Xiaoping's relatives will take his ashes back home" to their house near Beijing's Forbidden City, the crematorium official said.

The ashes will be then brought to the Great Hall of the People in Tiananmen Square in the centre of the capital for the funeral which is to be attended by 10,000 specially selected guests, all or them Chinese.

But the official denied reports that a special new incinerator would be inaugurated to dispose of the late patriarch, saying that one of the cemetery's 10 ovens was always used for China's top statesmen and

She also stressed that although a new incinerator would not be built especially for Deng, there was no danger that the revered senior leader's ashes could be mixed up with those of somebody else.

Deng to be cremated tomorrow

"It's impossible to build a new incinerator for Deng given the short time we have to prepare," she said.
"But the ovens are in any case

thoroughly cleaned after every cremation, so of course the special ncinerator will also be cleared out beforehand."

The crematorium official, however, said she had no idea where the 92-year-old senior leader's body was being kept ahead of the exclusive cremation ceremony.
Other Chinese leaders and top

dignitaries — including its first premier Zhou Enlai, Deng's longtime rival Chen Yun and ex-president Li Xiannian - have been cremated at Babaoshan Revolutionary Cemetery which is reserved for the communist country's VIPs.

Last Monday, former defence minister and powerful party cadre Qin Jiwei, who died on February 2, was cremated at the same crematorium.

Deng's family said in a letter published on Friday that the dead leader wanted his ashes to be scattered at sea after his body had been given over to medical science and his corneas put up for donation.

Deng's family also said the leader wanted his remains to be disposed of with no ostentatious fanfare, in keeping with his pragmatic view of life. Reports said the move was also an effort to ensure that his death did not disrupt China's peace and

respect the last wishes of the former figurehead contrast vividly with the handling by the authorities of the death of Deng's predecessor Mao

Zedong in September 1976.

Mao had specifically asked to be cremated, but his wife and other top cadres insisted that the founding father of communist China should be embalmed and his body put on public

display.

Millions of black-armbanded Chinese turned up in Tiananmen Square to pay tribute to him after his death, a phenomenon which the current leadership is anxious to

His preserved corpse still lies in a grand mausoleum in the centre of the capital's Tiananmen Square about 12km from the cemetery where Deng will be cremated tomorrow. — AFP

Ashes will be scattered in sea off HK

HONG KONG — Paramount Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping's ashes may be scattered in the sea off Hong Kong after Britain returns its colony to "the motherland," according to mainland sources in the territory.

While in power Deng repeatedly said he wanted to see the territory back under the wing of "the motherland," even if only for a few minutes, and if necessary in a wheelchair.

The ashes idea has been publicly backed by a pro-Beijing political party

which has written to the patriarch's family urging them to give support.

Deng, who died 18 weeks short of the July 1 handover, is thought to have passed through Hong Kong at least once before the communists took over China in 1949. Deng, who died last Wednesday aged 92, is to be cremated today, one day ahead of his state funeral in Beijing.

According to an informed Chinese source, the Beijing leadership is considering taking some of his ashes to be thrown in the sea off Hong Kong after

July 1.
"Deng's wish to visit Hong Kong after the handover was well known," the The chairman of the pro-Beijing Democractic Alliance for the Betterment

of Hong Kong, Tsang Yok-sing, has written to Deng's family requesting their

"It will be a symbolic fulfilment to scatter his ashes on Hong Kong shores on that historic day," Tsang said.

Officially, it has been announced in Beijing that the ashes will be handed

back to his family. The family has said it would like the remains scattered at sea rather than preserved. Meanwhile, an exclusive photo of a disease ravaged Deng, believed to be

the last taken of the paramount leader in December, has become the talk of Hong Kong media since being published by the Apple Daily on Friday. A photo-studio, which sold the copyright to Apple Daily, is widely re-

ported to be making a fortune from overseas rights.

The picture reportedly was bought from the unknown photographer for some HK\$200,000 (\$25,900).

But Apple Daily could be pursued over the close up photo of a gravely ill Deng in his hospital bed, according to the Hong Kong Journalists Association. It has warned that China may consider the publication a breach of state secrecy and the Hong Kong man who bought the photo is said to have fled the

"He was just out of town on a routine trip," an employee at the studio said.
"It's not a question of anyone fleeing the territory."

According to Xinhua news agency, the semi-official Chinese representative office in Hong Kong, more than 15,000 people have so far passed in front of a portrait of Deng at the office to pay their last respects since Thursday. The endless stream, which has included foreigners, has forced the agency

to extend its opening hours each day by two hours to 7:00pm. Scores of wreaths have been placed outside the building.
Governor Chris Patten, chief executive-designate Tung Chee-hwa, senior

politicians and tycoons have been among those to bow three times before the portrait of the man who came up with the "one country, two systems" formula for post-1997 Hong Kong.

Two members of the territory's Democratic Party, staunch opponents of

China's plans for Hong Kong, also visited and paid their respects.

"It is a big regret that Mr Deng will not see Hong Kong's handover," said La Ka-shing, a tycoon who is one of the world's richest men, who described the patriach as a man of "vision".—AFP

Deng photo trader flees

HONG KONG — The seller of the last known photograph taken of paramount Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping before his death on Wednesday has fled Hong Kong, sources said yesterday, amid reports he could face trial in China for breaking state secrecy laws. The man bought the photograph, showing a disease and age-ravaged Deng, and sold it to Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper, which published it on Friday, the sources said. The newspaper said the picture was taken by one of Deng's staff last December.

The Apple Daily is owned by garment tycoon turned publisher Jimmy Lai,

who has irked Beijing with his anti-Chinese remarks.

Employees of the man who sold the photograph yesterday confirmed he had left Hong Kong but refused to say where he had gone or when he would re-

China's shadow parliament Writer halts book-signing over bomb threats for HK meets in Shenzhen

SHENZHEN (China) — China's shadow parliament for Hong Kong, widely opposed by Britain and the territory's pro-democracy camp, yesterday held its first formal meeting here with a three minute's silence to pay tribute to late senior leader Deng Xiaoping.

latest item to join other memorabilia available in stores. - AFF

The body met in an arts centre in Shenzhen, across the border from Hong Kong, because the current government refuses to afford it any meet-

The 60-member provisional legislature is fiercely opposed by Hong Kong Governor Chris Patten as it will replace Hong Kong's elected version when China resumes power here in

July.

The group spent much of its time anomalies in yesterday discusing anomalies in translation and the atmosphere was generally one of confusion but it did manage unanimous votes to set up administrative and procedural working

However, by the time they meet next month they hope to have all the necessary back up in place to start preparing the handover legislature

the preparation of laws defining permanent residency in Hong Kong, a vexing question in the cosmopolitan

BANGKOK — Reported clashes between Thai border police and Burmese

Burma, are a cause for concern, Thailand's interior minister said yesterday.

enclave that has been overrun by Burmese forces in the past two weeks.

Thailand's frontier with Cambodia, plans to travel to Tak on Tuesday.

base at Minthamee in its Fourth Brigade area in southeastern Burma.

opposite the former Karen market town of Sakkanthit, which was taken by

Slore a week and half ago. Border sources said that there was an exchange of

Sanoh, who compared the tense border situation to former difficulties at

An offensive into the last stretch of land still in the hands of rebel ethnic

Karens close to the Thai border could drive as many as 10,000 villagers into

Thailand, a rebel source said yesterday.

Forces of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slore), as Burma's

ruling junta is known, are pushing from the north and west towards the Karen

20km away from us," said Kwe Htoo Win, district chairman for the Karen

There is fighting all over Fourth Brigade Area. Slorc battalions are about

He predicted that as many as 10,000 could join the flight when Slore troops

"I get a report from Tak every day and the news is not encouraging,"

He was referring to the northern Thai province opposite a major Karen

On Thursday, Slorc forces reportedly attacked a Thai patrol on Thai soil,

Security was tight at the meeting for journalists covering the event, al-though Provisional Legislature Chairman Rita Fan said future meetings

may be open to the public. The provisional body also agreed to set up new offices — a Secretariat office here in southern China and an office in Hong Kong for the body's

Fan led the three-minute tribute to Deng, the architect of modern China. She told reporters later: "Mr Deng was very concerned about the issue of Hong Kong. He once said that the continuance

of Hong Kong's stability and prosperity depends largely on whether China carries out appropriate measures after the handover

"Hong Kong's present system, and most of its laws can be continued after 1997. Hong Kong can still carry on capitalism," she added. Fan defended the independence of

the body, and its unanimous voting pattern. "I welcome opposing views, welcome different views ... it's the nature of a legislature," she said after the two-hour meeting.

"There is nothing wrong with con-frontation, but personal attacks and foul language are not good things for a parliament to gain respect from the Selina Chow, a current legislator

who was chosen to head the future body's procedures working group, defended the meeting which was dominated by procedural bickering. "With the establishment of the

two working groups, I think we have

achieved our goals.
"I don't think it's right to compare the provisional legislature with that of the existing Legco (Legislative Council) because Legco has more than 100

The Xinhua bookstore doing a brisk business in sales of newly-released official commemorative portrait posters of Deng Xiaoping yesterday. The new commemorative poster is the

years of history."

The present legislature had a large back-up staff, she told reporters, adding that "we've got just 10."

Her comments were echoed by Fan, who made two procedural mis-takes from the chair during the meeting: "It's just a minor matter, just like university students going to orientation camp. They've got to get familiar

The Provisional Legislature will consider human rights and other law changes suggested by Beijing's Preparatory Committee on Hong Kong.

This has exacerbated pro-democracy activists dislike of the body which has already been condemned by the Democrats and others as illegal.

The Democratic Party, the largest in the current legislature, is considering court action against the

body.
On Thursday Hong Kong's future leader, Chief Executive-designate Tung Chee-hwa announced his main policy secretaries for post-handover Hong Kong.

The named secretary of justice El-

sie Leung said that she would meet tomorrow with current Attorney-Jeremy Mathews, whom she will replace in July, as the first of a series of meetings with current policy secretaries to assuming her

TOKYO — The winner of one of Japan's most prestigious literary prizes

denounced a self-proclaimed rightist for making bomb threats to Tokyo Book Stores that forced cancellation of her book-signings this week. Yu Mi-ri, 28, a Korean resident of Japan and winner of the Akutagawa Prize for serious fiction, said the telephoned threats were "a cowardly chal-

lenge to freedom of expression" that deprived her of a chance to meet read-Yu's book-signing sessions for the prize-winning novel Family Cinema at Tokyo-area book stores this week were cancelled after a man claiming to be a member of an obscure rightist group threatened to plant bombs at the

"A Korean named Yu Mi-ri is making remarks which make fools of Japanese," a clerk at one bookstore quoted the man as saying by telephone. The man's identity and specific complaint were still unclear, said a spokesman for Kodansha Ltd, publisher of the Japanese-language novel, which depicts relations between scattered members of a family who reunite to make a film about the family.

"We're not sure if the caller was really a rightist and he did not say

what novel or what passage he was protesting," a Kodansha spokesman The bomb threats were the first of their kind involving an author published by Kodansha, he said.

Japan has hundreds of self-styled right-wing groups, some affiliated with organised-crime groups, which stage protests and occasional violent attacks against people or groups they accuse of being unpatriotic.

Among rightist targets are journalists or authors who write critical accounts of Japanese World War II atrocities or who are critical of the imperial family or other national symbols.

The 600,000 Koreans who live in Japan, many of them descendents of wartime forced labourers, often complain of discrimination in education and employment — themes that often appear in the minority community's literature and films. On Monday, a member of a right-wing group crashed a van into the front gate of the home of the brother of Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto. No one was hurt.

Daijiro Hashimoto, governor of Kochi Prefecture on southwestern Shikoku Island, had earlier questioned whether Japan should keep the song 'Kimigayo" (his majesty's reign) as Japan's national anthem. — Reuter

Mayor pledges stability of Beijing

stores unless the sessions were called off.

BEIJING — Beijing's newly elected mayor said yesterday his top priority was to safeguard stability in the Chinese capital and also pledged to work closely with President Jiang Zemin, Xinhua news agency said.

Jia Qinglin was elected yesterday by the city's 10th People's Congress. ending a three-month spell as acting mayor of the sprawling city of 10 million people.

'The new mayor said that he will work closely with the CPC central committee, and his first priority is to safeguard the stability of Beijing," the official agency said. — AFP

Riots flare up in Indonesia

JAKARTA — Ethnic unrest flared up again in Indonesia when some 6,000 people rampaged through an East Timorese enclave, leaving one person dead and wrecking scores of buildings and vehicles, a human rights official said yesterday.

The latest East Timorese uprising was sparked by a slight on a Roman Catholic priest in the small enclave of

The unrest follows violence in Timor, Java and Borneo which have reportedly claimed hundreds of lives in recent weeks. However, Indonesian armed forces chief General Feisal Tanjung maintained on Friday the country was

safe and people had no need to worry about unrest. The head of the East Timor chapter of the National Commission on Human Rights, Alex Refialy, said the Ambeno violence started when a migrant from the predominantly Muslim Bugis ethnic group of South Sulawesi

Catholic priest. "Reports that I have received say that one person died, eight vehicles were burned and scores of buildings were damaged," Refialy said by telephone from the East Timorese capital

province insulted a local Roman

Ambeno is an enclave on the northern coast of West Timor province, some 150km southwest Dili, but it is an administrative district of East Timor. One Bugis migrant died and burned before calm was restored in Ambeno on Friday when some 6,000 people went on a rampage, the Ja-United States to intervene discreetly karta Post daily said quoting district chief Filomeno Da Costa.

6,000 rampage through East Timor enclave

Local military and community leader met late on Friday to discuss the unrest and agreed to work together to ease the tension, The Post said, adding that police were still investigating the incident.

It was the latest in a series of clashes between South Sulawesi migrants, who are mostly traders, and East Timorese.

On January 15, five East Timorese were killed in a battle with migrants from South Sulawesi in Bacau, 130km east of Dili.

Washington has also expressed concern about violence in the East Timor town of Viqueque, 110km southwest of Dili in which at least six people died and several injured during five days of fighting in early Feb-

"We are concerned" about the information coming out of East Timor, a State Department spokesman

Sources said the Viqueque fighting involved demonstrators and government soldiers or people with mil-

itary backing.
Exiled East Timor independence activist Jose Ramos-Horta, who has won the Nobel Peace prize, said in Lisbon on Wednesday that he believed US policy on East Timor was "It is the ideal moment for the

in Indonesia's transition to democracy," he said. Indonesia invaded East Timor in 1975 and annexed it a year later but the action was never recognised by the United Nations which views Lis-

bon as the administrator of the ter-

The Ambeno violence came the same day as armed forced chief General Feisal Tanjung downplayed unrest in the country.

'All our regions are in a safe condition," Tajung was quoted yesterday by the armed force's daily Angkatan Bersenjata as saying, adding that the military "are prepared to safeguard all regions from the possibility of un-

Tanjung said recent violence in Java, Borneo and Timor was not serious "but because of the mass media's to open reporting on incidents of unrest ... the impression that the situation is critical arises".

He said the province of West Kalimantan on Borneo island which has been rocked by ethnic unrest since December, was now "safe and secure." Sources there say clashes between the indigenous Dayak community and migrants from Madura island, off East Java, have claimed hundreds of lives and thousands of people have fled their homes. - AFP

while the agency said there was no risk of a tsunami seismic tidal wave. Viet PM to visit India

HANOI — Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet is to pay an official visit to India in the first half of March to boost cooperation and relations between the two countries, the Foreign Ministry announced

A Foreign Ministry spokesman

said Kiet would be accompanied by a

number of ministers and

high-ranking government officials but did not indicate the dates of the According to diplomatic sources,

the visit will take place from March 7 to March 9.

Former Indian Prime Minister P.V Narasimha Rao came to Vietnam in September 1994. — AFP

Thailand wary of border clashes arrive at Minthamee, currently base to about 500 KNU troops, including troops who have swept through territories once held by Karen rebels in eastern militia. Speaking by a radio-telephone connection from the base, situated "not far" from the Thai border, he said that 200-300 villagers fleeing the fighting

had arrived at the base yesterday from outlying villages.

the border at Bongthi village to find refuge in Thailand's Saiyok district, he "People have travelled by foot for over four days and others by boat. A lot of people are still trapped inside Brigade Four Area," he said. "The situation is

Between 2,000-3,000 Karens have already fled from the area and made for

A Thai official said on Friday that 1,000 other Karens from this region were trying to cross into Songklaburi district, but had been turned back by

KNU's bases in its Sixth Brigade Area further north, causing at least 7,000 Karens to escape to Thailand. Thailand, which over the past two decades has played host to thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries, also including Laos and Vietnam, is currently sheltering some 90,000 Karen refugees who have fled military rule,

A massive Slorc offensive in the past two weeks has already swept the

most of them KNU supporters. The KNU, which has been fighting for greater autonomy within Burma for almost 50 years, is the only major insurgency yet to reach a ceasefire agreement with the Slorc. — AFP

Albright's visit to Russia

US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright left Russia on Friday with no breakthrough in the row over Nato's eastward expansion plans, but she at least succeeded in keeping open the door to agreement. Some Russians had predicted hostility at the talks in Moscow and ruled out any chance of doing business with a woman who fled Communist rule in her native Czechoslovakia half a century ago. But Albright, who spoke Russian with president Boris Yeltsin, and her hosts were determined not to let talks collapse before next month's Russian-US summit in Helsinki. By making proposals on how the alliance and Russia could build real cooperation, she hoped to leave the impression that Nato is seriously trying to address Moscow's worries. "She brought proposals which may not be significant on their own or change the nature of relations, but the West has shown it is trying to accommodate Russia's concerns," said Andrei Kortunov, head of the Russian Science Foundation think-tank. "Both sides were concerned by the prospect of failure and there was a lot of speculation here that it would fail completely. But both sides have shown they want to

keep the door open to further negotiations."

During her visit, officials from President Boris Yeltsin down maintained their fierce opposition to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's plans to admit Moscow's former cold war allies in eastern Europe. The risk of a major clash over Nato was high. Russian leaders have stepped up their verbal campaign against expansion in recent weeks, saying it will open divisions in Europe, threaten Russia's security and undermine Yeltsin. But the pleasantries from officials on both sides and the lack of strong words at a joint news conference with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov pointed to a mutual interest in keeping relations on track. Albright's spokesman, Nicholas Burns,

even quoted Primakov as saying: "I'm going to be nice to you."

Moscow was probably never intended to be a forum for major breakthroughs over Nato enlargement. Hopes have been pinned instead on Yeltsin's planned summit with US President Bill Clinton in Helsinki on March 20 and 21. Officials from both countries regarded Albright's trip primarily as a chance to establish a working relationship following her appointment last month and an opportunity to map out areas where progress might be made in Helsinki. For Moscow, it was an opportunity to test Nato's willingness to make concessions. For Washington, it was a chance to gauge Yeltsin's ability to rule after pneumonia and heart problems -- Albright said he seemed "very much in

The secretary of state signalled no major change in US policy. She remained opposed to Russia's main demand for joint decision-making with Nato on matters which touch its security interests. But she and Nato presented proposals during her tour of Europe this week which at least went some way to taking account of Russia's concerns over Nato enlargement. They included reducing conventional weapons in Europe under proposed modifications to a 1990 treaty limiting the numbers of such arms and where they can be placed.

This addressed Russian fears of a Nato build-up on its borders.

Albright also suggested creating a joint Nato-Russian brigade, mainly for peacekeeping purposes, to show goodwill. The Kremlin said on Friday it was unimpressed by the proposal, criticised by nationalist and communist op-ponents. "Many people feel disappointed by the results of her visit and say she brought nothing significant," said Viktor Kremenyuk, deputy director of the USA and Canada Institute think-tank. "But in the sea of disappointment, I see signs of a possible agreement. The trial balloons have been raised and there are slightly better grounds to hope for an agreement by July." Kremenyuk was referring to the month in which Nato holds a summit in Madrid to offer membership invitations, probably to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic

Other Opinions

The last emperor

AT long last, Deng Xiaoping kept his appointment with Marx. And the paramount leader must have quoted Walt Whitman: "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself. I am large. I contain multitudes." For Deng not only rewrote communism into an oriental theology of contradictions but pretended to have possessed the copyright over the destiny of multitudes. In his last days, Deng, immobile but omniscient, was certainly doing something equally pleasurable as playing bridge: he was retreating in the glory of his own magic which has no parallel in the mythology of communism. As the Helmsman was slowly merging with history, out there in the bazaar a synergetic party was mocking history. Mao and Marx, Confucius and Adam Smith, Lenin and Bill Gates - the revellers in the Middle Kingdom were certainly not drawing their energy from Big Mac but from the magic of Deng. For Deng "there can be no communism with pauperism, or socialism with pauperism. So to get rich is no sin". To create a situation of richness, he assembled computers, invited capitalists, invoked the long dead terrorists, and, of course, built prisons. In Deng's free market, only the citizen was chained.

Even the blood in the market didn't deter Deng from pursuing his deadly dialectic. In the dawn of June 4, 1989, when the beast of Dengist tyranny abandoned its oriental masquerade and exhibited its fearsome nakedness on a million television screens, it was a defining pause in the evolutionary tale of Dengism. Deng "quelled" the "storm" in Tiananinen with the same bloody spirit of the Cultural Revolution of which, ironically enough, he himself was a victim. Perhaps, bliss it was to be alive in that dawn, but to be Deng was very For, the Cultural Revolution's "bad egg" was miming an old, terrible, personal history when Deng terminated the young minds contaminated by the counter-revolutionary viruses let loose by the East European converts. built his market, his special economic zones, his silicon cities in the backdrop of gray, neo-Siberian monuments. Questions frightened him and the Chinese gulag personified his paranoia. In Deng's China the realm of the private didn't

True, Deng, along with his fellow gerontocrats of Zhongnanhai, China's Kremlin, created a society policed by the party, but enriched by selective capitalism, a society where Mao's place was in the amulet. During his autumnal days, the dakuan - fat cats- were living up to the Dengist ideal of xia hai (jump in the sea), a figurative expression for "going into business". In the dynasty of despotism, it created a new standard for corruption and nepotism. But Deng the lord of the market was also the last emperor whose passion for a Pax Sinica translated itself into the trauma of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Tibet. The emperor, the last of the heroic Long March generation, the one who stood with Mao atop Tianamen on that fateful day on October 1, 1949, the comrade who survived many purges, took his last march as a self contradictory communist who played bridge with history. And how! — The Indian Express

Telecom pact

THE World Trade Organisations (WTO) agreement on global Telecom announced this week is the first major triumph for the successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (Gatt). It is likely to have a profound effect on a market that is already worth \$600 billion a year, which is expected to reach \$1.8 trillion within a decade. Effectively what has happened is that the world market for telecoms has been thrown open to international competi-

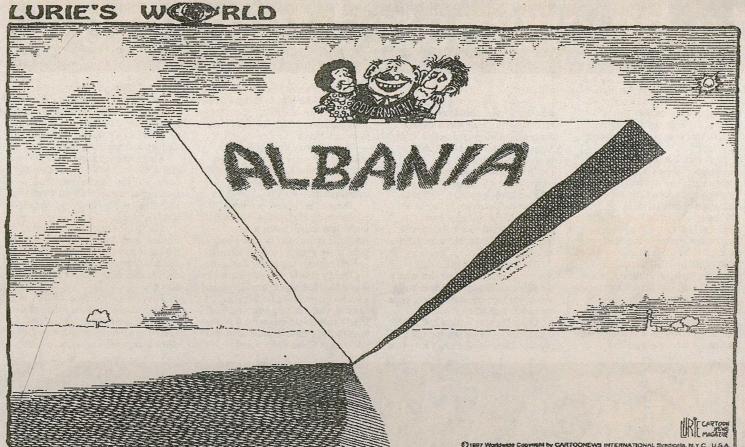
Developing countries with antiquated telephone systems will benefit at two levels. First the massive investment needed to upgrade their telephony will now come from international telecommunications providers, either completely or in partnership with local telephone companies. Secondly the increased quality of the service available, is both likely to be provided at a lower cost and will encourage greater use of telecommunications to boost trade

The World Bank has estimated that the level of investment in new telephone systems, both land and cellular, as well as satellite infrastructure, needed in the medium term will run at some \$60 billion a year. This sort of figure is beyond the resources of poor countries in Africa and Asia, indeed even the fast-growing economics of Eastern Europe.

Fortunately, technical advances have been so rapid that many countries. which still use elderly copper-wire systems, are going to be able to jump two or three generations of technology and move straight into relatively cheap,

low-maintenance but powerful state-of-the-art digital communications. However, the enthusiasm with which the agreement greeted by the rich industrialised nations should not disguise the fact that, inherent in this new

world telecommunications order, are some very real dangers. At one time or another, nearly all governments in the world have taken the view that telecommunications were a strategic interest that should remain within national control. This attitude was based on a straightforward consideration of security. In time of war or international tension, it would not do for a country's communications to be controlled by an outsider. Technology may have advanced by leaps and bounds, but the basic point of concern has not gone away. For sure, governments can install highly secure phone systems, but the fact is that much important traffic still moves over lines that are effectively open. Shadowy private organisations specialising in the gathering of commercial intelligence are known to bug and otherwise intercept the data of companies that are rivals to their clients. — Arab News



"As you can see, we have a broad-based economy!"

No quick-fix solution in sight for Albania's plight

By Knut Engelmann

FINANCIAL analysts say there is no quick fix to ease Albania's economic turmoil and they doubt if hundreds of thousands of small investors will ever get their money

The country's biggest investment holding company promised to repay small investors who were panicked by the collapse of a string of get-rich-quick pyramid schemes last

But a trader at a Tirana bank said it was unlikely that the company, Vefa Holding, whose interests range from hotels to mines, could find enough cash to repay all of its

"Unless the company gets new loans very soon, they'll go under," he predicted.

Vefa, one of four investment firms which froze client assets after five pyramid schemes failed, offered on Wednesday to pay back those investors who had put less that \$5,000

The reimbursement of small in-

By Nicholas Doughty

WHETHER you think it's the way

to wealth and opportunity for all or

something that will widen the gulf

globalisation is here to stay - and

between rich and poor, economic

crushing its critics like a giant

Last weekend's agreement

reached in Geneva to open up much

of the world's telecommunications

market is the latest example of a

trend that began when soviet-era

communism collapsed in 1989,

leaving capitalism as the winner.

technological changes that have

made the world smaller, growing

competition and openings in new

become one of the great economic

Free trade is the aim, with

China to Croatia in the name of

money and prosperity. The

late than never.

Geneva-based World Trade

borders increasingly ignored from

Organisation (WTO) watches to see

The defenders of globalisation

say it creates wealth and jobs, cuts

that everyone plays by the rules.

Driven by super-fast

markets, "globalisation" has

and political forces as the

millennium approaches.

steamroller.

vestors got off to a slow start on Thursday. About 2,000 people crowded outside the headquarters of Vefa, which had previously frozen the accounts of its \$0,000 clients.

A senior western banking source said he doubted if any of the failed pyramid schemes would be able to generate enough cash to repay tens of thousands of impoverished in-

'A pyramid company cannot, by definition, have enough assets to match liabilities," he said.

Vefa has steadfastly maintained that it is solvent and has 240 businesses in Albania ranging from tourism to supermarkets and petrol stations. It says it has no relation to pyramids, except that the scandal ightened its investors.

It estimates its total assets at \$500 to \$600 million. But just covering the small investors, who represent 60 per cent of its accounts. could cost the company up to \$240

Vefa officials insisted they had received sufficient foreign credits as well as having an array of assets

around the world, breaking cultural

boundaries and prejudice, giving a

voice to all and even undermining

Critics say it destroys cultural

diversity in the name of free-market

wealthy industrialised countries while

values, lining the pockets of the

putting the developing world at an

ever greater disadvantage, undermining the nation state to boot.

it as an attempt to build "McWorld",

Even in industrial nations, critics

competition creates unemployment

Regional deals like the North

(Nafta) and European Union's single

market are now being supplemented

everything from telecommunication

Diplomats say foreign policy has

become increasingly trade-oriented as

devoted to economic and commercial

a result, with far more resources

American Free Trade Agreement

by much wider agreements on

to agricultural produce.

and stress, eroding the values and

fabric of society in the name of

a homogenous mass culture,

say, the pace of change and

taste-free.

competition.

One US commentator has labelled

authoritarian governments.

which could be sold to generate cash if necessary

Pyramid schemes suck in money offering sky-high interest rates and prosper by paying existing investors with the money of the new. They fail when the flow of new cash

Economists believe Albanians sank up to \$2 billion, about 80 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), into such funds, money that was desperately needed to fund the poor country's economic

The funds, which blossomed after the old communist regime was ousted in 1990, were fuelled by the absence of a functioning banking system and the hordes of cash sent nome by hundreds of thousands of Albanians working illegally abroad.

The government has promised some of the hardest-hit savers that they will be exempt from taxes for two years, but it insists that it will not print money to bail out investors.

The domestic currency, the lek, has plunged some 25 per cent against the dollar this year and signs

For the United States and other

The EU's plan to create a single

currency by 1999 is partly a response

to globalisation, since one currency

competition with the United States

whose country has been a driving

force in opening up world markets.

hailed the latest telecommunications

deal as promising a better future for

all. It would bring "clear benefits to

American workers, businesses and

consumers alike ... and will spread

A report issued last September by

revolution to citizens around the

the United Nations Conference on

Trade and Development (Unctad)

The subject was one of the hot

topics at last June's summit meeting

industrialised nations, the Group of

as an opportunity rather than as a

The summit hailed it globalisation

said business globalisation was

increasing at a dramatic pace.

of the world's seven leading

Seven (G7).

the benefits of a technology

and Asia. US President Bill Clinton.

will make the bloc stronger in

western countries, it has become an

essential tool, a way of spreading

Globalisation is here to stay

of economic trouble are obvious across the mountainous Balkan state. Industrial activity has come to an

almost complete standstill. Unemployment in some places tops 80 per cent, with those in work scratching a living as waiters or running one of the make-shift kiosks that have sprung up along the pot-holed

The government of President Sali Berisha, elected in 1992 on a freemarket ticket, ran a deficit of 10 per cent of GDP last year. This year's budget has yet to be agreed upon.

Foreign experts say international financial assistance will be essential to get Albania out of its economic

"The danger of instability exists, but the opportunities for success are just as big," Carlos Elbirt, the World Bank's representative in Al-

"The key for (ensuring) sustainable growth is creating the nec-essary physical and institutional infrastructure. A lot more could and should have been done in this re-

leaders, whose countries account

choice.

for half the world's trade, had little

Just a few weeks before the G7

summit, World Trade Organisation

globalisation of the world economy

"Anyone who believes that

globalisation can be stopped has to

tell us how he would envisage

technological progress this is

rotation of the earth," he said.

tantamount to trying to stop the

This, however, has not stopped

criticism of trade policies and the

increasing tendency to deregulate

in pursuit of profit - particularly

at recent UN summits which have

examined how one billion people,

population, languish in poverty and

"Many developing countries

currently obtain very little (foreign

direct investment) and are not as

yet a significant part of ... global

and regional growth strategies.

These countries risk being marginalised," last year's Unctad

or one-fifth of the world's

face starvation

report said.

chief Renato Ruggiero said

was an unstoppable force.

stopping economic and

Hong Kong too benefited from Deng's reform policy

By Kathleen Kearney

DENG Xiaoping's open-door economic policy brought riches not only to China but to Hong Kong, and tied the two inextricably together long before the British colony's political reversion to its neighbour

this year.
"No (foreign) economy was better positioned than Hong Kong to capitalise on the market opening that Deng achieved," said David Dodwell, director of Jardine Fleming

"Deng's initiatives, his successful liberalising of China's economy provided immense opportunities for all businesses," said Dodwell.

The late Chinese patriarch's re-forms launched in 1979 opened China to foreign investment, and Hong Kong, on the doorstep of southern Guangdong province, was at the

head of the queue And when Hong Kong's economy was ready to burst the seams of the tiny territory in the mid 1980s, the reforms across the border allowed growing industries to find ample labour and land in its giant neighbour.

For many Hong Kong man-ufacturers which moved production across the border, this meant a swift expansion of their workforce, said Professor Yiu-Kwan Fan, dean of the School of Business at Hong Kong Baptist University.

"Over a short period of a few years, we are talking about 80 per cent of the manufacturing processes moving to China."

As a result, manufacturing's contribution to Hong Kong gross domestic product fell to less than 10 per cent at the end of 1994 from a hefty 23.7 per cent in 1980, said Fan.

In contrast, trade-related services in Hong Kong boomed as raw and semi-finished materials poured through the territory to China, and finished goods poured out. In 1996, some 90 per cent Hong Kong's re-exports of HK\$1.19 trillion (US\$128.2 billion) involved China.

In another illustration of the inter-twining of ties, 54 per cent of out-going international telephone calls in the year to March 1996 from

Hong Kong went to China.

By 1995, Hong Kong contributed a cumulative total of US\$20.19 billion in investment, more than 50 per cent of the total. More than 100,000 joint ventures in China are funded

with Hong Kong capital.

Isolating China's contribution to
Hong Kong's domestic economy
was difficult since the territory does not restrict capital flows, but it was considerable, said George Leung, economic adviser at the Hong Kong

and Shanghai Banking Corp Ltd. "PRC (People's Republic of Chr-na) investment in Hong Kong is es-timated at US\$20 billion by some sources," Leung said.

China's profile is rising. China-related companies are rushing to list on the Hong Kong stock market and high-profile office blocks which they emblazen with their names. Hong Kong's economy now booms in line with China's.

"One can only look at the in-direct evidence, the contribution to the growth of the service sector, the consumer wealth created, the number of cars on our roads," said Fan. But Deng's contribution was

more than just economic. "The economic reform programmes were only possible because of the political stability in China, because there were no upheavals except for four weeks in May and June 1989," said Dave O'Rear, regional economist at the economist confer-

Deng sent in the tanks to quash the student-led pro-democracy movement around Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

'Deng's greatest contribution is that he kept a very stable and prosperous China going for a long enough period of time that the issue of (the handover of Hong Kong to China in) 1997 could be dealt with

Don't cry for Deng'

CHINA is striding forward, on the strength of late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's vision, but few people are shedding tears here over his demise, just enjoying the benefits of

Thousands of mourners have paid their respects to Deng, bowing in mural of the architect of modern China at a busy crossroads here. Many wreaths also adorn the spot.

The mood is quiet and respectful, but there is none of the hysterical mourning which followed the death of some previous Chinese leaders, particularly premier Zhou Enlai in the mid 1970s, from whom many Chinese feel Deng inherited the mantle of more liberal communist thinking.

Flags are flying at half mast, but there is no sign of increased police or army presence.

It is business as usual, and business is something Shenzhen knows a lot about.

Shenzhen became China's research laboratory in the early 1980s when Deng promoted it as a Special Economic Zone, pumped money in and restricted rules on foreign business involvement.

The sleepy village on the southern tip of China was transformed into a mini-Hong Kong. One English newspaper recently printed a picture of the border backwards, mistaking Shenzhen for northern Hong Kong and

One of Deng's last outings was to the boom town, when he lent his considerable support to the idea of the special economic zones, some of which were not performing as hoped. "It's only those old comrades who

would have deep feelings over his death," said Yang, a Shenzhen cab driver.

'As for most citizens, they have no feeling at all.

"I remember when Mao died we did have those feelings, but we don't

any more. Of course, we pay tribute

"Maybe it's those who have become rich who will have sentimental

feelings over his death."
You Jianhui, 22, from neighbouring Guangxi has not got rich, but he was lured by the special op-portunities which Shenzhen has to ofter. He works in a local restaurant.

"I came here three months ago. I felt very sad when I heard the news of Deng's death, He was a great revolutionary, he made a great contribution to our country. Without his vision and ambition I would have no chance to come here to work." You

Daily newspapers are posted up on signboards here for public con-The glorious life of our great

Deng," screamed the headline on Saturday's Shenzhen Special Zone Daily. "Deng was a great Marxist politician, great militarist, great diplomat and a durable and experienced compatriot of the Chinese Communist party," the paper's editorial

Street stall owner Zheng Piaofu, in his 20s, is also enjoying the economic liberalisation, but also a victim of the continuing political hard-

"It's regrettable that Deng cannot come himself to Hong Kong to see his achievement of 'one country, two systems'... but of course a man has to

"One country, two systems" was the device coined by Deng to describe Hong Kong's future under Chinese rule, to allow the capitalist powerhouse to retain its way of life. Some say the expression was actually

devised for Taiwan. Zheng used to be a news reporter in a coastal region. He quit after be-

ing told he could not write articles critical of the system, he said "Without his vision and ambition

I would have had no chance to come here to work," he said.

From Our Archives

February 1982

Oman proposal for Gulf oil pipeline

MUSCAT — His Majesty's government has put forward a proposal for a Gulf oil pipeline. The plan envisages a single pipeline linking the northern Gulf states with a new terminal to be based on the Oman coast.

The proposal is to be investigated by the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council, according to the Bahraini Minister for Development and Industry, Yousef Ahmed Shirawi, who talked to the London-based Middle East Econom-The plan for the pipeline, which would put an end to tankers passing

through the narrow Straits of Hormuz, is to be considered by a council sub-The sub-committee would consist of advisers from Petromin of Saudi

Arabia, the Kuwait National Petroleum company and the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, Shirawi said. Shirawi also made it clear that in the next five years energy, its exploration and conservation would be a major area of joint action by the Arab

Gulf Cooperation Council. Shirawi, however, denied that there were any proposals establishing a unified AGCC oil company or a joint marketing company.

READERS' FORUM Immaculate image

'START of a slanging-match' (Point Blank, Times, February 20) was a very well-presented article by Mr Kuruvilla.

Western media believe P.V. Narasimha Rao was the shrewdest prime min-But they hardly know K. Karunakaran, the ringleader who masterminded Rao's strategies up to an extent and finally bailed out to safety. He symbolises

the all-white, immaculate image of Indian Congressmen with that not-so-M.P. Veerendra Kumar lost nothing in the last eight months. But H.D. Deve Gowda lost the services of Veerendra Kumar during that period. Better

Times stopped reporting (thanks!) about the two British nurses who were accused of involvement in a murder in Saudi Arabia. Nobody complained. Nobody is either very keen on knowing what happened to Charles Sobhraj,

All we want to know is, he's "safe" in France or wherever he wants to be, but not in India anymore.

Vague announcement

I FULLY agree with the views expressed by Mr Ravindranath (Reader's For-The demand for free transportation of bodies of Indians who die in Oman

was emphasised through Readers' Forum at least four months ago. The demand was made after the Indian minister's announcement allowing the facility to the Indians in the UAE.

A few months after that, Times carried a report in which a visiting member of legislative assembly from Kerala, Kadammanitta Ramakrishnan, was quoted as saying that he had been assured by Indian ambassadors in Doha and Muscat that they would "look into" the matter. I also remember a letter war between Anthony Baptista and another read-

er (whose name I do not remember) over a related topic. It is hard to believe that such an important announcement, which benefits Indians in the whole of the Gulf, was made in such a vague manner. The announcement, it seems, was made in a vague way deliberately.

It is high time Indian embassies and social clubs did something for the benefit of "common Indians".

Commendable coverage

I WOULD personally like to express my gratitude to CNN for keeping up with the Hubble space repair mission by the astronauts aboard the US space shuttle Discovery. Furthermore, CNN did a great job in broadcasting a special half-hour live

coverage of the astronauts working on the telescope, daily The pictures shown to us by CNN were of superb quality This is a commendable move to draw the youth's attention to science and

technology. Such worldwide exposure to scientific projects and other programmes on Discovery and science fiction-based TV shows like the X-Files have tre-

mendously contributed to developing interests in science and technology Also, I hope geniuses, such as Bill Gates, will find a solution to the 'millennium bug' before December 31, 1999.

> Dilhan Nonis. Al Ghubrah

Al Khuwair

Letters, signed with full name and address, may be sent by mail (Times of Oman, P.O. Box 770, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Oman) or by fax (799153).

Sudhakaran.

Looking for water on moon

By Rudolf Merget

A NEW US space mission to the moon has been given added significance by the apparent discovery of ice on the lunar south pole. Lunar Prospector, scheduled for launch in September, will have the task of corroborating findings made by the Clementine space mission in 1994.

One of the few of President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative projects to come to fruition, Clementine was designed to test technology for spacecraft in high radiation environments — like those beyond earth, or in the event of a nuclear war. The 226-kilogramme spacecraft sent home two million images of the moon, in visible and infrared light, in 71 days in lunar orbit, as well as detailed laser measurements of the moon's share.

ments of the moon's shape.

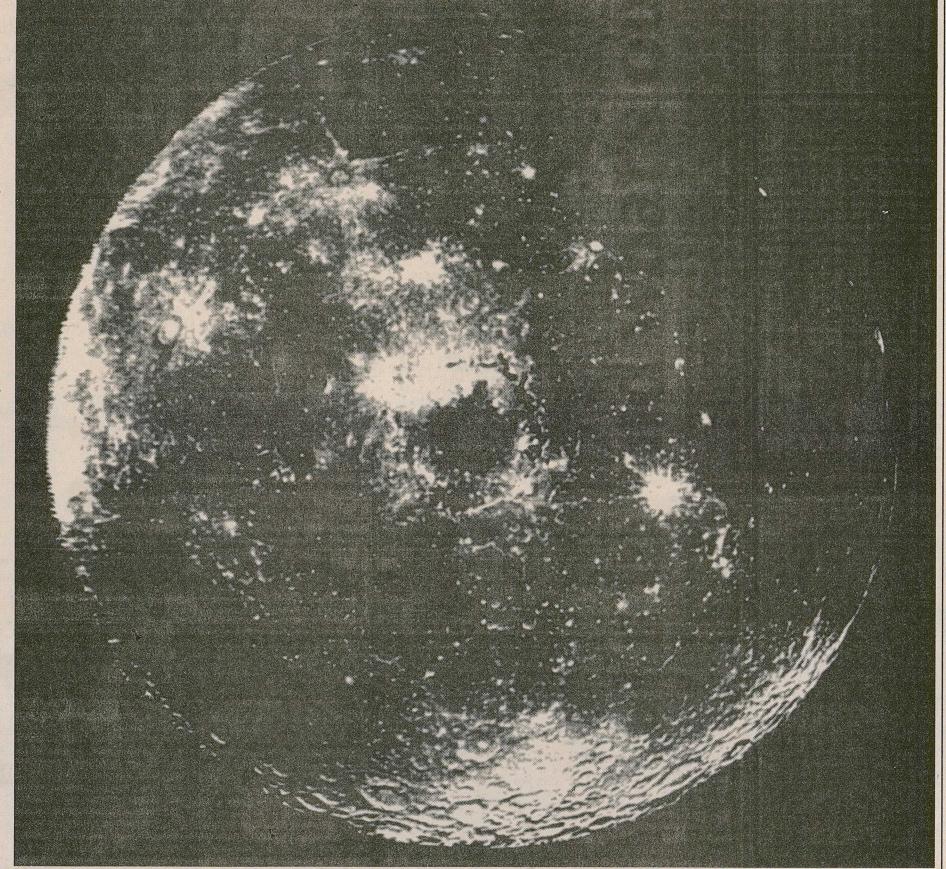
The data included detection of what appeared to be a frozen lake hidden deep inside a crater in the moon's South Pole-Aitken basin.

The discovery of ice deposits near the lunar south pole have important ramifications for a permanent return to the moon," according to Paul Spudis, a planetologist at Rice University in Houston, Texas. Spudis says the ice increases the chances that man might one day colonise the moon and use it as a refeulling base for flights deeper into space.
US scientists believe the water

was deposited on the moon's surface by the impact of comets more than a billion years ago. The moon's south pole is generally shielded from the sun, and temperatures there can plunge to minus 200 Celsius. Water trapped in the crater would be prevented from escaping by the intese cold. Lunar Prospector will attempt to confirm the Clementine observa-tions when it approaches to within 10 kilometres of the lunar surface later

The spacecraft is equipped with five sensors designed to analyse the chemical composition of the lunar surface. Scientists say they expect to learn within a month of receiving the first data from Lunar Prospector whether there is water on the moon

The spacecraft is part of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Discovery series of budget missions. Each project in the series has a cost ceiling of \$250 million for carrier rocket, spacecraft and running costs. By comparision, Nasa's Galileo mission, with a probe



A computer-enhanced image of the back — the unseen dark side — of the moon reveals a fascinating mosaic of meteor-created craters. Now scientists are focusing their attention on

Role reversal in EMU game

By Douglas Busvine

GERMANY, long the front-runner in Europe's integration drive, is finding itself in the highly unusual position of having to reassure EU partners that it will indeed have into the planned single currency in

Its economy, battered by a jobless crisis, high state spending and inability to push through key fiscal reforms, is even being parodied by countries like Italy, previously regarded as the sick man

In an ironic role reversal, it was Bonn's man at Monday's meeting of European Union finance ministers in Brussels who had to reassure partners of the solidity of his government's pledge to meet the budget deficit target of the European Monetary Union's guiding

Maastricht Treaty Finance state secretary Juergen Stark said his government's forecast of a deficit of 2.9 per cent of gross domestic product took ac-

count of "all recognisable risks". But with commentators still musing over January's surge in un-

employment to the highest since the 1930s, and Chancellor Helmut Kohl's coalition flailing over key reforms, doubts are mounting over whether Bonn can meet the three

per cent deficit goal. Views on the issue among independent analysts fall into two

One argues that Finance Minister Theo Waigel will be able to summon the political will to clamp down on state spending to meet the deficit goal, even if joblessness overshoots official targets and growth this year turns out lower than expected.

Then, the launch of the Euro currency would be able to go ahead on time in 1999 with Germany leading a group of countries with a sound track record of fiscal and monetary prudence.

That view is held mainly by German-based economists, who also tend to see EMU going ahead even if Bonn misses borrowing tar-

More sceptical analysts in Britain and across the Atlantic in the United States tend to see a German deficit overshoot forcing a delay in the whole EMU project.

January's shock unemployment data, which showed a 500,000 rise nearly 4.7 million, were enough to persuade Holger Fahrinkrug of UBS in Frankfurt to raise his deficit forecast to 3.4 per cent from

3.0 per cent previously.
But, he said on Tuesday, monetary union will still go ahead on time by making use of the room for interpretation left open in the text

of the Maastricht Treaty. Asked whether Germany would hit the three per cent goal, he said: "no — but they will still fulfill the

deficit target. Gerhard Grebe, at Bank Julius Baer in Frankfurt, expects Germany to achieve the Maastricht tar-

If it misses, he said Bonn despite its reservations - would not be able to stop the so-called "club med" southern states like Ita-

ly and Spain from joining. "One must see that a delay would have a devastating effect on other countries," he said. Failure to get EMU off the ground would leave "the whole world laughing at

Firmly in the second camp is Prior-Wandesforde

HSBC James Capel in London, however, to try to cut welfare costs who sees Germany's deficit at 3.4 per cent of GDP this year leading to creating investment. a postponement of EMU.

If such a scenario plays out "It's leaders of the opposition Social crystal clear that they (Germany) Democrats (SPD) to try and un-

Seizing on a chink in Bonn's armour, Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi visited Germany for the second time in two weeks on Monday, arguing strongly that his government's austerity measures should be rewarded with member-

ship of the Euro club. There is a difference between Italy and Germany. We have economic problems and I have prepared a strategy to solve them," Prodi told Reuters Financial Tele-

The German coalition on Tuesday dashed speculation that it would freeze on state spending at least for now.

Such a measure, analysts say, would only be enough to save a few billion marks.

"That does not meet the real scale of the problem," Fahrinkrug

Coalition leaders did agree,

and plough more cash into job-

Kohl meets tomorrow meets don't want Italy in and would post-pone EMU", he said.

block an impasse over tax reforms and spending cuts which stuck in

parliament. But positions remained wide apart on Tuesday

Government spokesman Peter Haussmann restated Waigel's goal of cutting taxes by 30 billion marks (\$17.6 billion) over the next two years to boost investment and

growth. But Joachim Poss, SPD finance spokesman, said Waigel's tax plans for 1998 — published in draft form on Tuesday - would open a multi-billion mark gap in state finances

Waigel on Tuesday presented a draft tax reform bill that would bring forward 14 billion marks in planned tax cuts to 1998

The bill, presented to Chancellor Helmut Kohl's cabinet, is part of a comprehensive two-stage tax reform plan agreed by coalition leaders to cut a total of 30 billion marks in taxes by 1999.

Karen rebels on the brink of split

By Sutin Wannabovorn

BURMA'S rebel Karen National Union (KNU) leader Bo Mya is using Karen refugees as a human shield to buy time to try to avert a looming split within his ranks, rebel and Thai border officials said.

The KNU, one of the world's oldest rebel organisations still fighting a government, maybe near the brink of collapse because of serious policy differences between the hardline General Bo Mya and moderate vicepresident Swe Seing, they said.

Their rift has created uncertainty among more than 70,000 Karen refagees who have been camping along Thailand's western border with Bur-

It has also cast a pall over more than 20,000 other Karen refugees who arrived in Thailand after fleeing fighting last week between Burmese troops and KNU guerrillas inside eastern Burma, the sources said. Burmese troops destroyed sever-

al key KNU mobile camps inside their soil which ruffled rebel ranks and led to charges by some that Bo Mya's hardline stance led to the guerrilla group's recent string of set-

The predominantly-Christian KNU was formed in 1948 to fight for greater autonomy from Burma's central government. It was wracked by a major internal split in 1994 and lost all bases and headquarters on the Burma side in March 1995.

But it is still one of the last holdouts among Burma's dozen ethnic rebel groups, most of which have recently signed peace pacts with Rangoon after having fought the central government on and off since the country's independence from Britain.

Bo Mya, 71, KNU head since 1976 but now leader of a smaller group of guerrillas, has vowed to fight the ruling Burmese State law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) and refused to lay down arms despite Rangoon's peace offers.

But a more moderate and pow erful faction lead by KNU vice-president, General Swe Seing, want o soften their stance and start some negotiations for peace with Burma, KNU sources said.

"The KNU is about to collapse because of the internal conflict. That is why a certain group of people who are very selfish have decided to use the civilians as the shield for survival," said a top KNU official who declined to be named.

The official said he was re-ferring to Bo Mya and his loyalists as the group of people fighting for

'He (Bo Mya) was supposed to be finished since (1995) and be replaced by Swe Seing but the old man is too selfish and people are too scared of him," he added.

He estimated that 70 per cent of KNU guerrillas who used to be under Bo Mya were either living in Thai border towns or mingling with the refugees in the camps.

Fighting traffic pollution: S'pore shows the way

By Anil Agarwal

ALL over the world, especially in Asia, as cities have started getting wealthy, they have concurrently started running into serious pollution problems. Singapore has managed to save itself from being a living hell by applying the polluter pays principle. Can the other cities do the same?

At an exhibition on air pollution in India's metros organised by the Centre for Science and Environment, the Danish development journalist Knud Vilby asked a question: Why did Delhi have a heavier vehicular population load, when it had lesser population than aither Pombay or Calcutte.

ulation load, when it had lesser population than either Bombay or Calcutta

The answer lies in two things. One, having more foresight than Delhi, the cities of Bombay and Calcutta have developed mass rapid transit systems (MRTS) which takes care of a substantial portion of daily passenger trips. Delhi has, as yet, no such system; it goes without saying that India's capital is run by capitally stupid government. The second factor which determines the pollution load in Delhi is its wealth. And this is a factor that needs serious thought.

All over the world, especially in Asia, as cities have started getting wealthy, they have, concurrently, started running into serious pollution problems. Growing wealth means greater consumption, which in turn means greater pollution. Delhi is the richest city in India in terms of per capita incomes. Bangalore — the pride of India's anti-environment Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda — is also growing rapidly. And, not surprisingly, both Delhi and Bangalore are today immensely polluted and getting

With the advent of the Maruti Suzuki, car-ownership has reached upper — and middle-income groups, while the lower middle-income groups are reaching out for two-wheelers. A large portion of Delhi's citizens have enough money to buy the polluting two-wheelers if they cannot afford cars. What is happening in Delhi and Bangalore is bound to happen in

every city of the country as the economy, hopefully, booms.

The East Asian experience shows clearly that when economies grow at or near 10 per cent per year, and when industry accounts for the bulk of that growth, pollution levels can rise fast in the absence of effective en-

vironmental policies. As an example, industrial pollution loads in several Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand) have been estimated by the World Bank (WB) for the period from 1975 to 1989 based on their in-

dustrial growth patterns and pollution-intensity coefficients derived in the US. The estimates show that while Thailand's gross domestic product roughly doubled over this period, most pollutant loads increased at least 10-fold. In the case of Indonesia, a related exercise projected forward pollution loads to the year 2010 based on recent industrial growth patterns. For each

of the 11 pollutants considered, the annual emissions in 2020 are projected to be at least 10 times greater than those in 1990, assuming no change in environmental policies or industrial practices. A 1993 WB study found that Indonesia had to spend about US\$500 million (Rs1,750 crore) per annum (in 1990) to counter the health effects

of pollution in Jakarta alone. When other considerations are taken into account — such as water treatment facilities needed to clean polluted water, downstream impacts on other economic activities, flushing of rivers and building of dikes to supply clean water — the current and potential costs of pollution to society will be quite mind-boggling. Delhi and Bangalore are today in the eminent company of other Asian

cities which have rapidly acquired wealth in recent decades. Bangkok in the most notorious for its pollution. But Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong, Shanghai and others have been or are still in a similar mess. This does not mean that pollution is inevitable. If growing wealth is the key cause of pollution, stupidity and indiscipline are the key factors that aggravate the sit-

One Asian city which has escaped becoming a living hell is Singapore. And it has done that through sheer discipline and foresight. Singapore has truly lived up to its Sanskrit meaning — the 'Lion City. Singapore first became famous by allowing only odd — or even-number vehicles into the congested city centre on a specific day. Soon, only millionaires could afford to buy cars in the city.

This was achieved by the government releasing only a limited number of permits every year to Singapore's citizens to buy cars and then auctioning these permits to the highest bidder. The price of buying a car in a rich city like Singapore, thus, took a quantum leap — a kind of polluter pays and pays heavily principle. And it restricted the total vehicular population in the city

Following this, Singapore took another step. In order to stop polluting vehicles coming in from neighbouring countries, it forced people to park their cars at the international border and use the city's public transport sys-

This was the discipline that the city introduced in its transport management. But this discipline became possible only because it had the fore-sight to invest in and develop an excellent public transport system. Thus, it became easier to insist on disciplined behaviour by citizens, who complied with the directives. In Delhi or Bangalore, in the absence of an MRTS, it becomes impossible to demand disciplined behaviour and get

With the passage of time, India's rural environmental problems as well as its urban-industrial troubles have magnified. If the government cannot deliver, then the civil society must get together and fight. Join a nongovernmental organisation or set up one of your own and demand your right to clean air and water. And tell the politicians that before pollution leads to your 'premature death' - as medical specialists put it - you will ensure the premature deaths of the political careers of your elected repre-

The East Asian experience shows clearly that when economies grow at or near 10 per cent per year, and when industry accounts for the bulk of that growth, pollution levels can rise fast in the absence of effective environmental policies.

By Jeffrey Parker

WHO said the generation gap was a social torment peculiar only to the developed, affluent Across the vast swath of

Asia, from the richest countries to the poorest, a familiar pattern is unfolding three decades after a pop culture-driven wave of youth rebellion shook the social foundations of America and Eu-Whether borne by the tech-

nicolour rain of satellite TV or the battering ram of free trade, the visions and values of an outside and largely western world have penetrated Asia's oncesheltered societies in the 1990s as never before.

Young people, or so an older generation says, are spurning traditional Asian values of collective duty and filial respect to embrace the very vices that have corrupted the West - sex,

drugs and rock 'n' roll. Filipino teens don the baggy, in-your-face, hip-hop fashions that have bedevilled many American parents for a decade.

Purple-haired punks rattle their elders in Malaysia. Young Bangladeshis and Thais experiment with designer drugs like ecstasy and more basic over-the-

"Amphetamines have penetrated every walk of life, inschool children and Buddhist monks," lamented law-

Asian youths veering towards permissive culture

Thailand's parliament made the death penalty available for convicted amphetamine traffickers.

Youth suicide, homicide, violence and alcoholism are on the rise in parts of Asia, with experts blaming the permissiveness that often comes when both parents work outside the home.

Even in ostensibly regimented socialist states like China and Vietnam, many young people scorn the model workers said to embody their elders' ideals - preferring the lustier Baywatch models and pop music icons beamed in on satellite

In India, sociologists say satellite TV has dramatically altered wealthier teens' values since arriving in 1991

Satellite television distorts the way teenagers look at sex. Young people don't feel inhibited any more said psychologist Vasantha Patri. "The traditional values that Indians promoted were restrained denial, doing with what you have and aspiring within limits - which

Ironically, Japan's soaring affluence has actually fostered abuses like teen prostitution that long were

have all but vanished."

maker Sophon Phetsawang after assumed to be the trappings of poverty in less-developed neighbouring countries.

Fearing that a generation may be slipping away, many Asian civgroups and governments are fighting back with measures ranging from values education and compulsory national service to tough new laws, late-night curfews and anti-vice dragnets.

Sri Lanka is forming a child protection authority to oversee a national campaign against youthcentred sex tourism — seen as the most serious problem facing the island's young

In South Korea, where a cautious opening to global trade has raised living standards but also brought new market challenges, the government is drafting a "teenager protection law" to shelter Korean youths from unwanted foreign

"As Korea opens its markets, all sorts of harmful culture has made its way into the lives of our teenagers .- especially pirated versions of Japanese comic books," said Choi Jin of the Culture and Sport Ministry's youth guidance di-

In Taiwan, where the 1987 lift-

ing of martial law heralded a democratic renaissance, officials are proud of the island's vast new freedoms and wealth but also worry about the late-night licentiousness that so tempts its teens.

The answer? A midnight curfew in the capital Taipei enforced by police equipped with M-16 rifles and bulletproof vests. When I go out for fun there are

always restrictions," groused 17year-old lin Chin-fa, who on a recent late night out beat the curfew bringing along his father. "I wish they could make it later two or three o'clock." Discipline-minded Singapore is trying controversial measures such

punishment of parents for their

childrens' crimes and "reintegrative

shaming", in which young offend-

ers and their parents are chastised in public. Malaysia has gradually intensified its crackdown on youth rebelliousness, restricting nightclubs and video parlours seen as incubators of youthful vice and most recently forbidding anyone under 18 to smoke or possess cigar-

"We don't beat up people," a 15year old Kuala Lumpur skinhead

told a local newspaper in response to Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed's charge that punk culture was stupid. "It's the music and the looks. It's just for effect," the boy said. With Malaysia and much of Asia embracing the Internet and other border-blind multimedia technologies, experts say such alien affectations are sure to spread.

young people are beginning to act, and even look more and more alike. Our young people are thinking more like their western counterparts," said Ami-Rasul Bernardo of the Philippines National Youth Com-

Because of globalisation,

Bernardo cited research showing that, beneath it all, Filipinos generally are no different from their parents in that they are God- centred, family oriented, desirous of good marriage", though western influence was becoming a prob-

Malaysia's Mahathir, who like most Asian leaders believes that local values can undergird a globally interconnected society, says that enlightened, religionbased education rather than isolation and discipline is the ultimate guide for youth. "We have to actually teach

them how to lead a good lifestyle and maintain good social behaviour," he said. "It (religious education) should be aimed at shaping good character.'

Rial Omani per one unit of

India rules out foreign equity in domestic airlines

NEW DELHI - India is contemplating extending financial assistance to private domestic airlines and has ruled out foreign equity participation in these, Civil Aviation Minister C.M. Ibrahim said yesterday

The government will not allow foreign equity participation in any of the private domestic airlines," Ibrahim said, inaugurating a seminar on "airline in-

dustry — strategy for success" here.

"We (Aviation Ministry) are going to have a meeting with the governor of Reserve Bank of India and other leading financial institutions like ICICI, IDBI shortly to request them to extend loans to private domestic airlines to purchase

Referring to Tata-Singapore Airlines proposal, the aviation minister said "I have made it very clear that we won't allow foreign equity participation in domestic airline. No country in the world has such a policy," and added "the worst sufferers would be none other than the private domestic operators them-

"I have already conveyed my view point on this issue to the cabinet and the cabinet will take the final decision," Ibrahim said adding "the government would table its aviation policy in the budget session of parliament."

"One should not have an impression that we are averse to the foreign investment. What we really want is investment in infrastructure development," the aviation minister said, calling upon foreign investors to come forward in developing the aviation infrastructure.

On the controversy about the proposed international airport project to be executed by the Tatas-led consortium at Devanahalli in Bangalore, Ibrahim said: "We can't allow them (Tatas) to execute the project on 'build own operate (BOO) basis'. Since we are providing all major facilities, including air traffic control, we want the project to be on build own transfer (BOT) format," he said. Ibrahim said state governments have no powers to allocate any airport development project to private companies, when asked about Karnataka government's reported proposal to hand over the development of Devanahalli airport to Tatas on BOO basis.

"The clearance of any aviation project is not a state matter. The authority lies with the Aviation Ministry," he said.

Stressing the need for healthy competition between the state-owned and private domestic airlines, the minister assured representatives of private operators all possible help from the government. He also recognised the Federation of Indian and Foreign (scheduled) Airlines and Air Taxi Operators (Fifaato), the organisers of the seminar, and assured them that any policy decision on aviation will be taken after having consultation with them.

President of Fifaato, Ravi Prakash Khemka, in his address urged the government to draw up a policy for overall development of aviation sector in the country with a more liberal outlook towards private airline operators.

The seminar was attended by representatives of private domestic airlines operators and aviation experts. — PTI

SingTel pulls out of **UK** cable television

SINGAPORE — Singapore Telecommunication Ltd., (SingTel) the city state's biggest and most profitable listed firm, has pulled out of Britain's cable television business to focus on the fast-growing Asia-Pacific region.

The company late Friday said its wholly-owned overseas investment arm, Singapore Telecom International, has sold its remaining 9.9 per cent stake in British-based cable television firm General Cable plc. for about £57.4 million (\$93 mil-

The 33.4 million shares were sold in a block trade to Lehman Brothers, which subsequently placed the shares

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with institutional investors.

Allen Lew, chief operating officer of Singapore Telecom International, said in a statement that the sale marked its exit from the UK cable sector and a further step in its strategy concentrating on larger investments, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. Singapore Telecom obtained a 23 per cent stake in General Cable in July last year, in which it exchanged its 50 per cent stake in another cable TV operator, Yorkshire Cable Group, for General Cable shares. It did so with the aim of eventually bowing out of the competitive cable TV business in Britain completely. -AFP

India and Iran approve \$350m fertilizer project

Railway, trade pacts signed

terday gave their final approval to the proposed \$350 million joint venture fertilizer project to be set up in Iranian Oeshm Island free trade zone.

The ongoing Indo-Iran joint commission meeting here accepted the technical feasibility report on the project, paving way for the prestigious

A memorandum of understanding for the project was signed last year between two Indian companies — In-dian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO) and Krishak Bharati Cooperative Ltd (Kribhco) - with 30 per cent of the equity each, and the Qeshm Free Trade Zone Authority, during Iranian Speaker Ali Akbar Na-

teq Nouri's visit to India. The Indian and the Iranian companies agreed on the price of gas and power supply for the proposed plant, which will produce urea and ammonia, using Iranian gas.

Major shipping

WASHINGTON — A shipping group carrying 85 per cent of the cargo moving by sea from Asia to the

United States is planning a rate hike to offset flat trade growth and an over-supply of vessels, the associa-

Robert Peavy, administrator at the Washington-based Transpacific Sta-

bilization Agreement (TSA), said the group would likely meet before the end of March to set new rates applicable May 1.

But he described the rates, which

are for the most part paid by US im-

porters, as recommendations and

stressed that they were not binding on

shipping firms, four from Europe,

two from the United States, three

from Japan, two from South Korea,

two from Taiwan, one from Hong

The body has described itself as a

A TSA statement said the amount

of the increase, which would apply

from all Asian origins, was still under consideration. — AFP

discussion forum and policy-setting

Kong and one from Singapore.

The Agreement groups 15

members.

group plans

rate hike

India agreed to buy back the entire production of urea to meet domestic demand. Six sub committees of the joint commission reviewed the progress of ongoing projects, including those whose progress had been held up due to lack of finances.

India is keen to diversify mutual

cooperation in the energy sector with Iran's traditional supplies of petrole-um crude to India steadily going up in recent years, sources said. The joint commission noted with that during the year 1996, bilateral

trade grew, identified issues which re-

tard growth and resolved to solve

them with speed and urgency to maintain the momentum of growth.

The two sides felt the need for executing a double-taxation avoidance agreement to promote investment projects. Both the countries also finalised several agreements for mutual cooperation in the fields of medicine,

health care and agriculture

terday signed a contract for the \$25 million Ahwaz-Bandar-E-Imam sig-nalling project to be executed by the Indian Railway Construction Com-pany (IRCN). I.K. Gujral, who cochaired the ninth session of the Indo-Iran joint commission, here said, "we hope India's participation in the project would be a catalyst to speedy progress in much larger railway pro-

Indian railway companies were in a position to make a significant contribution to development of the Ira-

nian railway network, Gujral said.

The large potential for Indo-Iranian cooperation in railways, transportation and infrastructure sector, reinforced by the two countries' commitment to cooperate in transit trade to central Asian republics through Iran, has been in focus for quite some time, he said. India would set up a railway workshop for the main-

tenance and rehabilitation of locomotives in Iran, Gujral added.

India also signed yesterday a historic trade transit treaty with Iran and Turkmenistan, opening a new chapter in its economic relations with central Asia. The tripartite treaty was signed by I.K. Gujral, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati and Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Boris Sheikh Muradov at the end of the Indo-Iran joint commission meeting here. The treaty, the first of its kind, provides access to Indian goods to the central Asian republics through Iran, opening a strategic gateway to central Asia for Indian trade

"The agreement will be a strong base for expansion and strengthening relations between the three nations and also establish and set the pace for formation of multilateral organisations between regional countries, Gujral said after the signing cer



Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral handing a letter from his prime minister to Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani in Tehran yesterday. - AFF

SECURITIES MUSCAT TRADING CHART FOR SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1997

SECTOR-WISE PRICE INDEX: Industry 209.94; Banks & Investment sector 256.20; Insurance sec Opening price July 1, 1990 = (100) points, used as a basic price for calculating daily price Index.

NAME OF COMPANY	PREV. CLSG	HIGH	LOW	CLSG PRICE	NO OF SHARE			
REGULAR MARKET	1000	DATE TO THE PARTY OF THE PARTY						
INDUSTRY SECTOR	1	THE PRICE INDEX OF THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR IS 209						
Raysut Cement Co	3.540	3.540	3.540	3.540	4500			
Dhofar Cattlefeed	3.200	3.200	3.200	3.200	6587			
Oman Chromite 50%	1.460	1.460	1.460	1.460	468			
Oman Cement Company	2.550	2.600	2.550	2.580	20423			
Al Anwar Industrial & Trading Co.	1.360	1.350	1.350	1.350	5500			
BANKS & INVEST. SEC.	1	THE PRICE INDEX O	OF THE BANKS &	INV. SECTOR IS	256 2			
Nat'l Bank of Oman .	4.400	4.600	4.390	4.600	208500			
Bank Oman, Bahrain & Kuwait	2.370	2.380	2.370	2.380	4000			
Oman Int'l Bank	4.590	4.760	4.650	4.750	165656			
Ominvest	3.350	3.350	3.340	3.340	27020			
Al-Ahlia Portfolio Co.	4.940	5.060	4.990	5.050	77638			
Oman Nat'l Holding Co.	4.390	4.400	4.400	4.400	33600			
Oman & Emirates Inv.50%(Oman)	1.940	1.960	1.950	1.950	42790			
INSURANCE SECTOR		THE PRICE INDEX C						
Oman United Insurance Co	2.230	2.230	2.200	2.200	22200			
Dhofar Insurance Co 50%	2.100	2.210	2.150	2.200	27000			
Muscat Insurance Co. 50%	2.580	2.710	2.650	2.690	81800			
SERVICES SECTOR		THE PRICE INDEX OF THE SERVICES SECTOR IS 164 82						
Oman Aviation Services Co.	3.370	3.370	3.370	3.370	15700			
Oman Fisheries Co.	2.290	2.290	2.290	2.290	39796			
PARALLEL MARKET				,				
Oman Textile Mills	2.370	2.370	2.370	2.370	1000			
Reem Batteries & Power Appl .	1.680	1.840	1.740	1.840	21500			
Majan Glass.	1.260	-		- 16 J	79			
Oman Dales	1.200	1.260	1.220	1.260	13500			
Salalah Flour Mills	1.230	1.240	1.240	1.240	105			
Oman Chemical Industrial Co.	1.250	1.280	1.260	1.280	6979			
Nat. Rice Mills	1.250	1.260	1.260	1.260	1000			
Gulf International Chemicals .	1.270	1.310	1.260	1.310	15600			
Al Khaleej Poly Propylene Produc	1.190	1.200	1.190	1.200	12058			
Oman Securities Portfolio Co.	1.190	1.310	1.250	1.310	97300			
Bank Muscat Al Ahli Al Omani .	4.120	4.300	4.200	4.300	8500			
Commercial Bank of Oman	1.720	1.750	1.710	1.710	48279			
Muscat Finance	2.820	2.930	2.900	2.930	10000			
The Oryx Joint Inv. Fund	1.230	1.230	1.220	1.220	7500			
Gulf Investment Services 50%	2.270	2.470	2.270	2.450	64400			
Transgulf Indus . Inv . Co .	1.450	1.500	1.480	1.480	10020			
Oman Savings & Finance Bank	1.700	1.710	1.700	1.710	15101			
United Power Company	1.840	1.850	1.850	1.850	1600			
Dhofar Fisheries Industries CO.	1.000	1.460	1.260	1.460	239014			
Modern Poultry Farm	1.420	1.430	1.420	1.430	2000			
Renaissance Services SAOG.	1.320	1.380	1.320	1.380	24248			
THIRD MARKET				/	1111			

223.34

1384072

3894833

(+3.42)

EU ruling boosts Italy's bid for EMI

BRUSSELS — The European Union on Friday bolstered Italy's hopes of a timely entry into a single currency by approving its controversial euro-tax, a one-off measure aimed at bringing its public finances under control in 1997.

Eurostat, the EU's statistical office, said the "the Italian tax on wage funds is a new tax and should be recorded as a receipt reducing the def-

Italy, like other EU states, is trying to bring its deficit, debt and other budget targets into line with criteria set in the EU's Maastricht Treaty, for qualifying for the EU's single cur-

In Rome, the Italian treasury welcomed the decision, but the German Finance Ministry, where there is concern about Italy's fitness to be a founding member of the new euro currency, declined to comment.

Malaysia's

slows to 8.2%

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's robust economic growth slowed to a more stable rate of 8.2 per cent last year after a dizzying 9.5 per cent in 1995, Deputy

"The figures were better than we expected," Anwar, who is also finance minister, said when releasing Malaysia's 1996 economic data.

Anwar said the government's tight fiscal and monetary policies had suc-

ceeded in reining in growth in private sector consumption expenditure to 9.8

The figures are reassuring, but this does not mean we can be complacent. We need to be prudent," Anwar told reporters after chairing a meeting of the

He said the current account deficit - measuring the deficit in trade, services, debt payments and other overseas transactions - shrank to 11 billion

ringgit (\$440 million) from 18.69 billion ringgit in 1995 as exports outpaced

imports. Exports grew 6.4 per cent to 191 billion ringgit, while imports grew

This resulted in a trade surplus of 9.1 billion ringgit last year compared with a surplus of 233 million ringgit in 1995.

at least 4.4 months of imports compared to reserves of 63.8 billion at the end of

cent in 1995. Private economists have projected inflation rising to 3.7 per cent

in 1997 and 3.8 per cent in 1998 as sustained demand and the tight labour situa-

Anwar said despite a slowing down of output growth in the manufacturing sector to 12.2 per cent from 14.5 per cent in 1995, the sector remained the en-

This in turn raised the government's reserves to 70 billion ringgit to sustain

Inflation, however, was slightly higher at 3.5 per cent compared to 3.4 per

economy

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday.

per cent compared to 13.1 per cent in 1995.

National Finance Council at his ministry.

by 1.5 per cent to 181.9 billion ringgit.

gine of economic growth. -AFP

1995 that could fund 4.1 months of imports, Anwar said.

tion and infrastructural constraints continue to dog the economy

Eurostat estimated that the part of the so-called euro-tax it was reviewing would represent 0.19 per cent of GDP.

The estimated amount to be collected under that portion of the tax is 3.5 trillion lire (\$2.1 billion), the office added. this is less than the 5.5 trillion lire analysts had originally anticipated would be covered under

European Commission officials stressed that the remaining portion of the tax — 0.4 per cent of GDP — was not under dispute in this latest review. Therefore the entire tax, roughly 12.0 trillion lire and representing about 0.6 per cent of GDP, can now be applied towards the 1997 budget

When the tax was initially proposed by Rome, it came under fire from critics who saw it as a temporary measure and not in line with durable budgetary consolidation.

Moreover early statements from Italian Politicians suggested the levy might be reimbursed to taxpayers once Rome qualified for monetary

But EU officials stressed on Friday that there was no mention of the possibility of repayment in Italy's

"We examined Italy's financial act and found nowhere a committment to repay it," an EU official told a news conference.

Had such a promise been included, the EU would have ruled against the tax, he added. Commis sion officials, meanwhile, cautioned against taking today's ruling and extrapolating what the EU executive might forecast for Italy's deficit-to-GDP ratio in 1997. —AFP

Oil prices down to 6-month lows

LONDON - World oil prices melted to six-month lows under \$20 a barrel on Friday as traders said good-bye to the heating oil season and faced more Iraqi barrels hitting the US market.

The 20 per cent drop in benchmark Brent crude oil prices over the last six weeks also damaged the technical foundation enough to prompt many analysts to predict further loss es until demand starts to pick up for the spring driving season.

April Brent crude futures closed 26 cents weaker at \$19.82 a barrel after dropping to \$19.76. That is the weakest price for the spot month since \$19.70 was hit on August 8.

"I think it's probably more a kiss good-bye to the heating season than taking a look at the gasoline season yet," said Peter Gignoux, manager of Smith Barney's petroleum desk in London.

"The technicals have turned weak and last but not least, there is a bout of mild weather along the east coast (US)," he said. "I don't think the technicals are going to give it a

chance to turn yet.' More Iraqi sales to the US dark ened the crude market after reports earlier this week that inventories there rose 3.1 million barrels in the last week and were now nearly six million above a year ago. - Reuter

البنك الوطني العسماني المحدود (شرع ع.ع.) National Bank of Oman Limited (S.A.O.G.)

Head office: P.O. Box 751, Ruwi. Postal Code: 112, Sultanate of Oman

Exchange rates

Currencies	Buying	Selling
Dollar	0.381	0.388
Sterling	0.618	0.629
DM	0.2270	0.2302
S. Fr.	0.2598	0.2638
D. Fl.	0.2022	0.2047
F. Fr.	0.06720	0.06815
Lira	0.000226	0.000233
Yen	0.003103	0.003144
A. Sch.	0.03210	0.03269
D.K.	0.05948	0.06040
N. Kr.	0.05701	0.05801
S.K.	0.05149	0.05251
Can.\$	0.2823	0.02862
Aus.\$	0.2948	0.2993
N.Z.\$	0.2656	0.2701
Sing. \$	0.2692	0.2724
Mal. R.	0.1521	0.1564
HK.\$	0.0493	0.0502
Sp. Pes	0.00252	0.00286
B. Fr.	0.01095	0.01117
Jord. D	0.538	0.547
Ind. Rs	0.01055	0.01095
Pak. Rs	0.00943	0.00978
SL. Rs	0.00650	0.00690
Fin.M	0.07650	0.07760
Cyp.£	0.752	0.0767
B. Taka	0.00889	0.00929
Gulf currencies		
UAE Dh	0.1043	0.1054
BD	1.015	1.027
SR	0.1021	0.1032
QR	0.1052	0.1063
KD	1.258	1.278
Rates supplied by National Bank of Omar	, Muscat, dated	20/02/1997

BritishBank (X) Member HSBC Grun

	OMR	USD	DEM	GBP	JPY	CHF	NLG	AUI
Saving	3.00	4.120	1.93	5.06	0.00	0.25	1.85	4.56
Call	2.25	3.120	0.93	4.06	0.00	0.00	0.85	3.56
1 Month	5.50	4.625	2.56	5.59	0.00	1.00	2.35	5.31
2 Months	5.50	4.685	2.56	5.81	0.00	1.00	2.38	5.25
3 Months	5.75	4.715	2.56	5.56	0.00	1.00	2.46	5.30
6 Months	5.87	4.875	2.56	5.68	0.00	1.12	2.50	5.30
9 Months	5.87	4.935	2.62	5.81	0.00	1.00	2.56	5.37
12 Months	6.50	4.995	2.52	5.93	0.00	1.03	2.60	5.50
Indic	21.	-	78 E. S.					

1 Week	6.87	5.05	7.56	2.06	3.31	4.52	7.55
1 Month	6.87	4.81	7.71	2.00	3.25	4.45	7.43
2 Months	6.94	4.81	7.93	1.96	3.25	4.48	7.43
3 Months	6.97	4.81	7.81	1.97	3.25	4.59	7.60
6 Months	7.12	4.81	7.93	1.97	3.37 -	4.60	7.56
9 Months	7.19	4.75	8.06	1.95	3.25	4.68	7.65
12 Months	7.24	4.87	8.18	2.02	3.28	4.70	7.75
The above rat	tes are for a	amounts of ON	IR 100.000/ar	d over or equi	valent thereof		
NO.	S ACCOUNTS OF THE PARTY OF	NAME OF STREET	THE RESERVE OF THE PARTY OF THE				NAME OF TAXABLE PARTY.
EORWA	rd r=	te an	ainet	DO for	r Febi	HAPW	26
PUTTE	IUIC	ic ay				CCL)	
THE PERSON NAMED IN	PERTAMENTAL	SECURIOR SEC	OSCIEDANT SERVICE	SHEET SEED AND SE	PROGRAMME STATE OF STREET	SECULOS CUERTO ACOCOMIS	NAME OF TAXABLE PARTY.

Forwa	ard ra	te a	gains	t RO	for Fe	bruai	ry 26		
PERIOD	GBP	DEM	CHF	FRF	JPY	NLG	ITL		
MONTH	0.62588	0.22952	0.26376	0.06798	0.0031511	0.20360	0.00023118		
MONTHS	0.62535	0.23052	0.26549	0.06841	0.0031836	0.20378	0.00023097		
MONTHS	0.62423	0.23188	0.26806	0.06891	0.0032481	0.20478	0.00023103		
MONTHS	0.62372	0.23355	0.27071	0.06957	0.0032954	0.20534	0.00023106		

STREET, SQUARE	9 MON 12 MON	THS	0.62372	0.23355	0.27071 0.27346	0.06957 0.07013	0.00	032954 033511	0.20534 0.20639	0.0002 0.0002	3106
Manager of Street, Str	Spot again	rates st US\$	OMR/US	\$ SWAP	POINTS			Cros	s rates		
THE RESIDENCE OF THE PROPERTY	DEM GBP JPY CHF FRF NLG EGP AUD ECU INR PKR LKR	USD 1.6885 1.6185 123.2500 1.4710 5.7000 1.8990 3.3875 0.7780 1.1493 35.8000 40.0799 57.5000	1 Month 2 Months 3 Months 6 Months 9 Months 12Month	0.38495 MINUS 0.00007 0.00022 0.00040 0.00051 0.00083 0.00109 0.00116	0.00015 0.00070 0.00145 0.00226 0.00445 0.00687	DEM GBP JPY CHF FRF	DEM	GBP 0.3661 	JPY 73.0000 199.4000 83.8000 21.6500	CHF 0.8714 2.3919 1.1943 25.8246	FRI 3.375 9.216 4.627 3.877

Bullion \$352.35 per ounce RO51 per tola \$5.22 per ounce



MARKET ROUNDUP

Following are the retail prices of livestock and fish, as of yesterday. Livestock:

Australian sheep Omani cows, calves and bulls Fresh Australian Mutton (Source — Al Essa Livestock)

Mackerels Tuna Fish

Sardines Baracuda King Fish Hamour

Prawns Red Muller Catfish (Source — Muttrah fish market) RO24.000 per head RO1.200 per kilo RO1.000 per kilo

RO1.000 for 7 (big) RO1.000 for 30 (small) RO8.000 for one (big) RO4.000 for one (small) RO1.000 for 60 RO1.000 for one RO12.000 for one (big) RO2.000 per piece RO2.000 for one RO3.500 for kilo RO1.000 for 6 RO1.000 for one

SHIPPING

Ship	Cargo	Arrv.Date
STK 1021	Containers	23.02
FNV Jules	Visit upto 24.02.97	23.02
V.D. Mina Qaboos	Containers	23.02
Ibn Al Haitham	Containers	26.02
Fresh Water Bay	Containers	26.02
Artemis V709	Containers	26.02
Isparta V 1/97	Steel rebars from Turkey	26.02
STK 1025	Containers	26.02
Reef Island Am	Load Cargo	27.02
V.D. Mina Qaboos	Containers	27.02
Minerva	Tourists	27.02
Ial President	Containers	28.02
V.D. mina Qaboos	Containers	01.03
Bunge Orchid Lima	Timber from S. America	01.03
HMS Illustrious	Visit upto 4.03.97	01.03
Rossana II V032	General	01.03
Royal Vikingson	Tourists	01.03
Pierre Doux	Load 24 empty	01.03
Norasia Karachi	Containers	01.03

BUSINESS SNIPPETS BUSINESS SNIPPETS BUSINESS SNIPPETS BUSINESS SNIPPETS BUSINESS SNIPPETS BUSINESS SNIPPETS BUSINESS



Al Mazyona Big Gift scheme

BANK Muscat Al Ahli Al Omani conducted the first draw for Al Mazyona '97 Big Gift savings scheme at Mulladah branch. The chief guest was Abbas Ahmed Ali Ibrahim Al Ajmi, inspector of schools, Ministry of Education, Batinah area. The function was attended by Riad Hassan Al Asfoor, senior manager corporate relations and Ali Mohd Sultan Al Zaabi, manager Mulladah branch and a large number

Al Mazyona's Big Gift '97 offers more than 6,000 prizes. Four luxurious villas are given as prizes. Each villa costs RO50,000. The villa draws are held every quarter. Every month there are three prizes each for RO5,000 in addition to four prizes each of 250 gms of gold. Two of these gold prizes are reserved exclusively for lady customers. Twenty winners of Swiss watches are drawn daily throughout the year.

For the month of January, the 3 lucky winners of RO5,000 each were:

Mohd Aubad Bakhit Shama of Salalah Branch. Majda Sulaiman Soomar A/c Mukhl of Al Khoudh Branch. Jason Michael Budrage of Sultan Qaboos University Branch.

The winners of 250 gms of gold each were:

1) Hermann Josef Boyng of Medinat Al Sultan Qaboos Branch.

2) Zeyana Mohd Salim Al Harassi of Al Ghashab Branch

3) Saleha Mubarak Rashid Al Hattali of A'Seeb Branch. 4) Hamida Abdullah Said Al Sarhani of Main Branch.



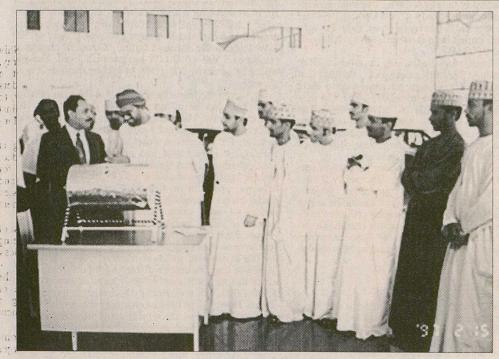
HSE bags major contract

THE 'HSE Management Services Division' which is part of the National Training Institute (a Renaissance company — member of the Tawoos Group) has secured a major health, safety and environment contact with the Baker Hughes Group of Companies. The group consists of Baker Oil Tools, Baker Hughes Inteq, Centrilift and Eastman Christensen who, together, have singed major contracts with Petroleum Development of Oman (PDO). Speaking on behalf of the group, Bob Stone, country manager of Centrilift said: "As a group we give top priority to HSE issues. We decided this year to employ the HSE Management Services Division of the National Training Institute to maintain our HSE management systems to an even higher standard whilst continuing our own visible management commitment."

Paul Humphrey's, GM — seated, left to right

Bob Stone, Country Manager — Centrilift
 Ken Brown, GM — Baker Oil Tools
 Kader — Group HSE Manager

4. Ken Babcock, GM — Baker Hughes Inteq 5. Clive Hedge, Director — NTI-HSE Management Services.



Omasco raffle draw

OMAN Marketing and Services Co., sole distributors for Honda cars in the Sultanate of Oman, conducted their second fortnightly raffle draw of their spectacular Ramadan promotion for Honda cars on Al Felaj Trading and Contracting were the lucky winners.

Seen in the photograph are Cawas B. Sahukar, sales and marketing manager-Honda along with the officials from Ministry of Commerce and Bousher Municipality"

Spring fair '97 to mark 25% growth

THE 22nd edition of the International Spring Trade Fair (ISTF '97) running from March 5 to 11 at the Dubai World Trade Centre will have an overwhelming international presence with over 30 countries

The event, billed as the most popular Spring-time general trade exhibition in the Gulf, will have over 400 exhibitors marking a 25 per cent increase over last year's Spring Fair putting up 322 participants. Four national pavilions, featuring not only an impressive line-up of exhibitors but also an extended rarray of merchandise and new products will be the hallmark of the event this year. Countries mounting mational pavilions include China fielding 50 exhibitors, Iran (50), Turkey (35), participating for the first

time and Jordan (40) returning after a gap. Other countries making a strong presence at the fair are Hong Kong (35), Taiwan (40), Egypt (20), Syria (20), Czech Republic (7). In addition, over 50 local companies will be present at the fair, said Fayez Ahmed, Managing Partner of Al Fajer Information and Services, which is organising the seven-day

Nabil Day celebrated

NATIONAL Biscuit Industries Ltd. SAOG celebrated their tenth Nabil Day on February 15, '97. On this occasion the chairman thanked all the employees for their contribution to the growth of the company. 1996 has been an outstanding year for Nabil in all aspects.

Nine employees from various divisions were given special awards for overall outstanding performance.

Zubair felicitates Ramadan offer winner

ZUBAIR Auto conducted the most exciting sales promotion offer in Oman, during the holy month

The scheme was hybrid of a wide spectrum of customer-oriented benefits rolled into one, such as the upto 60 months easily payable monthly instalment scheme, the lowest-ever cash price, attractive trade-in offers, numerous surprise gifts, upto five months instalment holiday plans, the unique lifetime 'Diamond' warranty, the weekly Visit-and-Win Ericsson GSM raffle and the lifetime 24-hour recovery

Some of the latest and the best models of the world's leading franchises with Zubair Auto-Mitsubishi, Chrysler, Citroen and Galloper were on display for sale, to the discerning and quality-conscious customers. New sales records were registered successfully by Zubair Auto and the customers too got

Picture shows Hani Mohammed Al Zubair, handing over the documents to one of the lucky winners of the "Simply the Best Win-a-Car Day" Ramadan promotional offer. Looking on is Suleiman Mohd. Al Wahaiby, vice-president - sales.



Oman Arab Bank draw

THE 15th monthly draw of Oman Arab Bank's saving accounts (Hassad) was held recently under the auspices of H.E. Juma bin Ali Al Juma, chairman of the Tender Board. The draw was held at the bank's Qurum branch premises and was attended by Murtadha Hassan Ali, deputy chairman, OAB, general management department managers, OAB Muscat area branches managers, and a large number of businessmen and customers of the bank.

The first prize of RO8,000 was won by Heinzowieland from Ruwi branch, the second prize of RO4,000 went to Hameed bin Sultan bin Juma Al Saadi from Jalan Bani Bu Ali branch. The third prize of RO2,000 was won by Kayed Yusuf Fadil Atoum from Al Khuwair branch. The fourth prize of RO1,500 was won by Muna bint Abdullah Mohammed Al Abidani from Nizwa branch, the fifth prize of RO1,000 was won by Ali bin Salim bin Mohammed Al Farsi from Sur branch in addition to numerous other winners of other prizes whose names will be published in the local newspapers later.

The saving accounts scheme "Hassad" maintained by the bank for the second consecutive year

A monthly draw is conducted for upto RO20,000 in monthly prizes. The first and second prizes are given in the form of certificates of share ownership in leading Omani joint stock companies traded on the Muscat Securities Market, in line with Royal directives to encourage the saving habit by citizens and expatriates and government directives to encourage investment. Oman Arab Bank has made available to all citizens and expatriates this saving account (Hassad) as a unique investment scheme. The results so indicate the outstanding success of this saving scheme, whereby a growth rate of 25 per cent p.a. was achieved in the value of prizes distributed to winners last year. This remarkable growth rate was a reflection of the general rise in value of shares traded on the Muscat Securities Market. The success of the "Hassad" saving accounts scheme has generated goodwill feelings amongst bank's customers.



Bahar cash bonanza

THE National Detergent Co. SAOG has brought out yet another exciting, mega consumer offer, called 'Bahar Cash Bonanza' a part of the ongoing series of promotions on what has popularly come to The scheme is very simple to enter. For as low a purchase of 500 baizas worth of Bahar, all

customers have a chace to win one of the many cash prizes. Every month, there are RO5,000 to be won and a total of RO15,000 in three months. All a customer has to do to enter: pick packs of 'Blue' Bahar, attach the required number of (relevant)

Arabic top flaps of the packs and drop it in the Bahar box at all leading supermarkets or mail it directly to The National Detergent Co. SAOG, P.O. Box 3104, Ruwi 112, Sultanate of Oman.

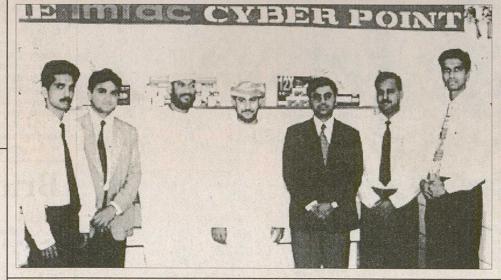
The scheme is open for a three month period — with the draws to be held on March 25, April 26 and

May 25. So, enter now, you too could be a lucky winner!

Imtac Cyber Point opens in Al Ghubra

THE third franchise outlet of Imtac, the Imtac Cyber Point was recently inaugurated at Al Ghubra. Consumers in Al Ghubra, Ghala, Bousher and nearby areas can now have access to Imtac's products and services at an authorised franchise outlet close to them. The wide range of products available will include HP, PCs, printers, consumables, renaissance multimedia and Internet ready PCs, computer accessories and software, Motorola and Bang & Oulfsen GSM phones and accessories. Consumers will be assured of attractive prices as well as efficient warranty and after sales service backed by Imtac. Imtac proposes to open franchise outlets at Al Khuwair, Salalah, Sohar, Buraimi, Sur, Nizwa during 1997.

Seen in the picture are Saif Al Alawi of Al Amjad Trading (franchisee) with Vinesh Malik, marketing manager and Manoj Powar, channel sales manager of Imtac.



Muscat Index Fund announces 6% dividend

THE Muscat Index Fund has announced a cash dividend of six per cent for 1996, the highest dividend declared by any fund in Oman. The Muscat Index Fund managed by Bank Muscat Al Ahli Al Omani SAOG and advised by Bahrain International Bank has performed exceedingly well in its first year of operation. The net asset value of the fund has appreciated by more than 25 per cent in one year. Salem bin Nasser Al Ismaily, chairman of the Investor's Committee of the Muscat Index Fund said:

'We are delighted with the excellent performance of the fund and the Investor's Committee is pleased to declare a cash dividend of six per cent for the period ended December 1996. We are happy to mention that this dividend is declared only out of the current income received by the fund during 1996". He also said that the fund, which tracks the performance of the MSM Index is expected to do even better in the future on the expected strong performance of MSM Index in 1997.



Omanexpo Eid Festival

OMANEXPO 11th annual Eid Festival, which was held from February 6 to 14, concluded very

In order to celebrate the 11th anniversary of holding this exhibition the organisers made the entry free of charge, to enable one and all to have a chance to experience this happy occasion. And large crowds thronged the Oman International Exhibition Centre daily, to be a part of the festivity.

A total of 26 valuable prizes were given away, including a car, which was the first prize of the grand

A whole host of sponsors assisted in making the Eid Festival a grand success, including Genetco

(Sanyo), Middle East Automobiles (Daewoo), Areej Business Systems, Bahwan Foods (Khalijana), Oman Refreshments Company (Pepsi), Oman National Transport Company and Gulf Air.



Team meets to discuss future strategies

THE future was the main topic of discussion at the Team Advertising regional meeting held recently in Dubai. Team's role in the cyber age was defined and decisions were made to keep investing in the necessary technology and resources

Other subjects included streamlining and expanding client service units throughout the network, building better agency-client relationships, safeguarding client interests and drawing up a three-year

The meeting brought together heads of Team operations in Abu Dhabi, Beirut, Dubai, Jeddah, Kuwait, Paris and Sana'a, and the newly opened Cairo office. Talal EI Makdessi took the opportunity to introduce and welcome Hani Mahmoud, Managing Director — Team Cairo, and Joe Ayache, Managing Director — Team Beirut, both recent appointees. He also unveiled plans to open two new Team offices within the

MID TV '97 from March 9

THE prime focus of the four-day Media International (MID-TV '97) running at the Dubai World Trade Centre from March 9-12 will be on the production, availability and telecasting quality tailor-made programming to meet the phenomenal surge in demand from a vast array of satellite channels in the Middle East that are currently in an intense race to attract more television viewers to their fold.

"The entry of seemingly countless new broadcasters in the region's mass media scene during the past few years had created a chronic shortage on contents and substance for telecast. MID-TV is conceived to address this issue by providing a forum for buyers and sellers to discuss how they can tide over this major challenge," said Fayez Ahmed, managing, partner of Al Fajer Information and Services.

MID-TV, which will have high-profile participation of around 150 programmers and over 100

Broadcasters comprising 60 regional local channels, promises to be not only the region's most sought-after software market, but also a forum where the future programming requirements for the region will be mapped out for the next two years.

MID-TV, which is sponsored by Emirates Dubai Television (EDTV), is designed to specifically address issue of coping with increased demand for quality software that suits the taste and changing needs of the Middle East region, particularly the Gulf which is home to a multi-national, multi-racial and multi-lingual



Ford to launch Escort, Tracer

THE introduction of the new Ford Escort from Europe and the new Mercury Tracer from the US is nothing short of a landmark event for Ford in the Middle East.

Ford will now be able to compete in the small car segment, which represents over 35 per cent of the total car market in this region, from which Ford has been shut off until now.

Ford market researchers did extensive surveys to find out what Middle East customers would like to

find in a small car and what it takes to make them buy one.

At the same time, Ford engineers performed exhaustive studies to introduce technical changes in both cars, to make sure that they would meet the very demanding operating environment of this region without

Escada Sport fragrances

THE many moods of leisure time are captured by three new Escada Sport fragrances for women, designed to complement a casual lifestyle: moments of calm, hours of sport and afternoons in the country. Escada Sport fragrances are infused with plant extracts that will elicit a spirit of relaxation, exhilaration or escape, based on the science of aromachology.

Feeling Free combines soothing, satisfying ingredients to relax and cleanse — the purity of rose and lily, the meditative quality of myrrh, the calming properties of passion flower and the serenity of sandalwood. All combine with the natural transparency of hyacinth to create a subtle sensation of total well-being. Feeling Free respects natural body rhythms and explores sensations of relaxation and peace.

Sport Spirit fuses essential oils of lavendar, rosemary, clary sage, juniper and mandarin to stimulate the senses and banish fatigue. Essences of cantaloupe, grapefruit and geranium offer an emotionally charged, energetic lift. It's a fragrance for feeling the spirit of sport whether playing hard and pushing the limits or

just watching the game. Country Weekend captures nature's harmony with essences of comfort and warmth, conjuring up images of a warm country cottage with

jasmine and cedar. The fragrance embraces a sense of the fresh

outdoors with apple and cinnamon and reaps the regenerative properties of nutmeg. Country Weekend is a fragrance which reflects the shared values of

Gold prices bounce back Pakistan economy

weeks of depression and soared by more than seven dollars per ounce in a single day, after the prospects of further European central bank sales appeared to recede.

Market sentiment picked up on the wings of reassuring comments by the South African Central Bank governor and a slight fall in the dol-

Governor Chris Stals said he felt that recent sales by the Belgian and Dutch banks were unlikely to be followed by other European central

Gold prices have been very weak in recent weeks, amid fears that European central banks might sell gold to help their governments reduce debt levels and thereby meet one of Merrill Lynch argued that silver the key criteria for membership of

the single European currency. Although many analysts did not share the South African central banker's optimism, the market seized on his comments to send the price of

Elsewhere on the commodities markets, oil continued to sink deeper into gloom and Brent crude oil prices fell below \$20 per barrel.

After coffee's sharp rally last week, the tropical bean lost all its gains, following the end of a general strike in Colombia, the world's second-biggest coffee exporter after

GOLD: Rebound. Gold prices rebounded this week on comments by the South African Central Bank governor that appeared to weaken the prospect of further gold sales by European central banks.

The price of the precious metal on the London Bullion Market surged to more than \$353, the highest price since January 28, and \$11 above the previous week's closing

Gold prices had risen on "the comment by the South African Central Bank governor (Chris Stals) that he felt the recent sales by the Belgian and Dutch banks were unlikely to be followed," said London-based trading house GNI.

Stals's comment, made late on Thursday, sent gold prices higher at the end of the week.

Other analysts also pointed to the recent decline of the dollar as a factor boosting gold. The slight depreciation of the US currency has encouraged Asian buying, as it makes gold contracts, which are quoted in dollars, seem less ex-

Gold prices have been very weak in recent weeks, amid fears that European central banks might sell gold to help their governments reduce debt levels and meet one of the key criteria for membership of the single European currency.

The Belgian and the Dutch central banks made large gold sales last year, sparking concerns that other European central banks could follow

come to an abrupt end.

"If no further sale by central banks over the next few months and world growth appears on track, then there is a danger of a sharp rebound in the gold price," GNI said.

However, at US investment bank Merrill Lynch, analyst Ted Arnold said that Stals was wrong, and there would be more European central bank sales unless the January 1. 1999 launch date for economic and monetary union (EMU) was post-

SILVER: Firm. Silver prices consolidated after the previous week's sharp rally, which had been driven by speculative buying, but still managed to inch higher, climbing above \$5.20 per ounce.

has the most glittering potential of all the precious metals. PLATINUM: Ceiling. After last

week's sharp rally, platinum prices were relatively steady. The metal did, however, hit a high since January 2 during the week of \$370 per ounce, before retreating slightly to \$369,

lars to \$1,217 per tonne, consolidating after its dramatic rise the previous week to a high since January 1995.

London-based trading house GNI warned that prices could fall sharply, given that the recent rally had been driven mainly by speculative investment funds

It pointed nervously to a rise in market stocks this week, ending months of continual decline over the past few months which had supported prices. LME reserves rose by 1,000 tonnes this week to 476,600

ALUMINIUM: Shine. Aluminum prices rose on the wings of copper and predictions of a supply shortfall in the coming year, dealers said. Three-month aluminium prices rose by about \$55 to 1,615 per

The market also took heart from a fall of 7,750 tonnes in LME reserves to 908,225 tonnes.

GNI trading house reported the Alumax metals giant as saying that the aluminium market would slide with the United Nations. The deal permits Iraq to export limited quantities of crude to finance humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people.

Oil analyst at the BZW merchant bank, Nick Antill, said that the limit set on Iraqi crude exports is measured "by volume and not by

Thus any sharp fall in crude prices means that Iraq can increase the volume of oil exports.

Under the terms of the agreement, Iraq is free to export the equivalent of about two billion dollars' worth of oil every six months to purchase food and medicine. The London-based Centre for

Global Energy Studies (CGES) said in its monthly report that "prices need not necessarily be heading for a It added: "There is, however, one

issue of which one can be reasonably certain — the price of oil is unlikely to return to a rising trend."

RUBBER: Sticky. Rubber prices

stuck at £795 per tonne amid quiet

COMMODITI

the same price as the previous Fri-

COPPER: Hard. Copper prices surged to their highest point since June last year, when Japanese trading giant Sumitomo sacked its star trad-Yasuo Hamanaka, for unauthorised copper deals which cost it \$2.6 billion.

The reference price (for threemonth delivery) on the London Met-al Exchange (LME) climbed \$93 to \$2,368 per tonne.

Dealers took great interest in the opening of the Tokyo trial of the disgraced Hamanaka on Monday, but the proceedings had no influence on

Market players said investment funds had bought copper because of prospects of strong demand from the construction industry as it enters its busiest season, and expectations of heavy buying by the Chinese.

China indicated recently that it wants to rebuild its strategic stocks. At metals broker Rudolf Wolff, analyst Will Adams said that largescale Chinese purchases could absorb an anticipated surplus of market sup-

plies this year. Copper stocks held in LME warehouses across the world increased by a modest 775 tonnes to 222,500

LEAD: Rise. The price of lead rose by \$8.5 to 668.5 per tonne, supported by the firm tone elsewhere on the base metals market. Stocks of this metal (mainly used to make car batteries) fell by 1,600 tonnes to 109,050 tonnes on the

ZINC: Fall. The price of zinc, a metal used largely for anti-corrosive exports under the terms of the so-

into a deficit situation this year. Alumax predicted that there would be a market short-fall of 320,000 tonnes in 1997, after a surplus of 210,000

It forecast that global demand would rise by 5.4 per cent this year, compared with growth in output of just 2.7 per cent.

NICKEL: Mirror. Nickel prices

followed copper higher this week. Three-month prices rose by about \$230 to \$7,940 per tonne.

Stocks of the metal fell by 78 tonnes to 45,816 tonnes.

TIN: Rise. Tin prices followed the stronger tone of the base metals complex. Prices rose by about \$20 to \$6,030 per tonne, despite a rise of 380 tonnes in LME reserves to 10,030 tonnes. OIL: Slip. Oil prices continued

to slip as the weather warmed in the northern hemisphere. Dealers noted that the arrival of spring here is never good for crude prices. Brent North Sea oil prices fell by

almost one dollar and dipped below \$20 per barrel at the end of the week for the first time since August 1996. Dealers were troubled by a build-

up of US crude stocks, which rose to

304.88 million barrels at the end of

the week as mild weather arrived in the northern hemisphere. Dealers were also worried by the prospect that Opec countries would over-shoot their export quotas and that non-Opec producers would also increase output. A future increase in

supply would tend to depress prices further, they warned. In addition, dealers feared that

New flight simulator benefits aeronautics students

ket was subdued this week. The slight depreciation of the British which made sterlingpound. denominated contracts on the London market cheaper to overseas investors, encouraged some buyers.

However, market players have become less focused on short-term cur-

rency fluctuations. Cocoa prices briefly hit a high of £882 per tonne, before slipping back to £876 at the end of the week,

up a dollar over seven days. Ghana, an important cocoa producer, is expected to harvest 300,000 tonnes of the tropical bean this year, less than previously forecast.

COFFEE: Cold. Coffee prices plunged on the London and New York futures markets, sounding a retreat from recent highs.

The end of a general strike by public sector workers in Colombia provided a pretext for a bout of profit-taking, although the strike action had no effect on coffee consign-

biggest coffee exporter after Brazil. In London, robusta prices fell by \$120 to \$1,560 per tonne, almost wiping out the previous week's gains of \$100.

Colombia is the world's second-

Prices at one point during midweek fell even lower — to \$1.510 but recovered somewhat thanks to a positive backdrop of worse-thanexpected harvests and low stocks, London-based trading house GNI

The 1996-97 harvests in Colombia and Central America are both expected to come in below original anticipated at less than 25 million sacks of coffee. At the same time, stocks in con-

sumer countries are at low levels. TEA: Strong. Prices once again moved higher on the London tea auctions, thanks to good demand. The price of medium-quality brew gained two pence to 109 pence per

SUGAR: Warming. Speculative buying and market rumours that India would not seek to increase exports in the near-term lifted sugar prices to their highest level since October 1996 mid-week at \$312.50 per

Prices closed nine dollars higher than at the end of last week, at \$310

Nonetheless, some dealers feared that India might, at any moment, seek to offload some of its hefty sugar stocks, which the most recent estimates put at eight million tonnes.

Czarnikow trading house reduced downwards its forecast for the world's 1996/1997 sugar crop. The London-based trade group predicted that global production would be 850,000 tonnes lower than its previous forecast at 123.48 million tonnes. Nonetheless, this would be about 280,000 tonnes higher than in

VEGETABLE OILS: Spurt. Soya prices rose on the wings of a delay in the Brazilian harvest and strong consumer demand on the Chi-

The price of a bushel of soya (of 27.2kg) rose by 22 cents on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBoT) to

However, on the Rotterdam market, palm oil prices fell by \$12.5 to

\$577.50 per tonne. Sunflower oil prices rose by \$17.5 to \$515 per tonne and

groundnut oil rose by five dollars to \$895 per tonne. Rapeseed oil prices held firm at

99 guilders per 100kg. GRAINS: Popping. In Chicago. wheat prices rose by five cents to \$3.64 per bushel (of 27.2kg — delivery in March) on the wings of a large-scale purchase by Pakistan. The country was reported to have purchased 450,000 tonnes on the US

The London market followed Chicago higher and prices rose by about one pound to 93.70 per tonne.

The price rise flew in the face of a prediction by the International Grains' Council (IGC) that the world's wheat harvest in 1997 would rise by five million tonnes compared with the previous year to a total of 585 million tonnes.

COTTON: Spin. Cotton prices fluctuated wildly on the New York futures market this week as technical trades and speculative deals set to work. However, prices remained unchanged over the week and closed at 79.80 cents per pound (0.454 kg).

WOOL: Stretched. Wool prices rose by 13 pence to 413 pence per kg on the London market. — AFP

in deep trouble despite optimism

Nawaz Sharif's arrival in power has fuelled optimism about reviving Pakistan's economy, but economists say dire problems cloud the horizon.

They fear the new government's declared determination to stimulate growth will put it on a collision course with the International Monetary Fund, which wants fiscal rec-

"Sharif seems to want to confront the IMF, which is the worst possible thing he could do," said a European ambassador.

Sharif, a 47-year-old industrialist, swept to office in February 3 elections in which his conservative Pakistan Muslim League routed Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party. The business community has wel-

comed Sharif's victory, hoping he will restore political and economic stability after three years of drift and alleged corruption under Benazir.

President Farooq Leghari sacked Benazir on November 1, saying she had brought Pakistan close to economic collapse.

He installed a caretaker governwhose economic supremo Shahid Javed Burki said at the end of his three-month tenure that the economy had been "pulled out of a nose-

The Karachi Stock Exchange 100-share index has risen 32.5 per cent since January 1, largely on Sharif-linked expectations, though dealers say a technical correction is now

Sharif said on Wednesday his appeal to Pakistanis working abroad to remit at least \$1,000 each through banks to help the shaky balance of payments had already brought in deposits worth \$150 million, but there was no way to confirm the figure.

PML secretary-general Sartaj Aziz, expected to be the next finance minister, told the official news agency APP this week it was "not possible" to achieve the IMF-set target of cutting the budget deficit to four per cent of gross domestic product in fiscal 1996/97 from 6.3 per cent in 1995/96

Cutting the deficit would be a "by-product not an objective" of economic policy. "I will take all those measures to bring down the budget deficit which do not depress the economy and do not damage our competitive position," Aziz declared.

Such remarks have rung alarm bells at the World Bank and IMF, which resumed a stalled standby loan in December only after the caretakers pledged to meet the four per cent def-

icit target. Economists say the IMF, mindful of Pakistan's previous failures to meet agreed targets, is likely to give short shrift to any attempt by the new gov-

ernment to seek easier terms. A rift with the IMF, which would the second in less than two years, could have painful results, ranging from suspension of the standby loan

to further cuts in Pakistan's credit rat-Pakistan faces foreign debt re-ayments totalling about \$1.5 billion in March to June, not including payments on military debt. Liquid for-

Bankers say the current account deficit is likely to shoot beyond \$5.0 billion in 1996/97 with foreign debt

eign reserves now stand at \$792 mil-

servicing reaching \$2.25 billion and a trade gap of about \$2.8 billion.

"Pakistan's external vulnerability has not been reduced in any way, said a regional economist, who asked

not to be named. The trade account has not turned round, especially exports. Other inflows are down on last year, so the current account is not turning round, which means a haemorrhage of re-

To keep Pakistan afloat, the caretakers borrowed about \$1 billion in December, often at shorter maturities and higher interest rates than the loans on which payments were due.

The new government hopes eventually to retire some of Pakistan's onerous foreign debt by privatising state assets, though Aziz has said this is a 'long-term solution", requiring careful work to set up regulatory frame-

Despite heavy additional revenue measures imposed in October to secure resumption of the IMF standby loan, there are indications that revenue has already fallen behind target.

The Nation daily said this week the revenue shortfall could reach Rs35 billion (\$870 million) and take the deficit to at least 5.4 per cent of GDP. The report has not been denied.

The regional economist said cuts might have to be made in hitherto sacrosanct areas such as military spending, which along with debt servicing, accounts for more than total net revenues. "You absolutely have to tackle the fiscal problem up-front and you absolutely have to put in place mechanisms to reach the (IMF) targets," he said. "Fiscal policy is out

Power sector scenario

By Muhammad Jamil

THE International Outlook released recently by the US Department of Energy's Information Administration has forecast that electric power will be the fastest growing source of end-use energy throughout the world over the next 20 years. The volume of this expansion is envisaged at 125 Gw/yr by "The Future of the Electric Power Industry Around the World" a new study from DRI/

We shall view the situation of this industry in Pakistan up to 2002. The problems being faced by industry are the ageing plants (20 years), seasonal effects on hydel generation, poor transmission, and distribution networks and financial constraints of the public sector to invest in power sector.

The installed capacity in the country is 11,869MW (1995), hydel and thermal power constituting 41 per

cent and 59 per cent respectively. Hydel production is heavily monsoon-dependent Alternation for agricultural use, poor rainfall or very cold weather does reduce the hydel production capacity. Plant ageing is a typical problem in thermal installations i.e. reliable production at capacity should not be exin such cases. Transmission and distribution network in the country suffer from ageing, mismanagement, and pilferage, consequently losses in

transportation average 30 per cent. The demand has therefore, to be curtailed by stopping new connections, load shedding and management measures. Forty per cent of the population do not have access to electricity and the per-capita power consumption of the country is only 300 kWh. The total generation in the country totalled only 42,300 kWh in 1994-95. The electricity demand is thus suppressed. Even the suppressed demand cannot be met at peak hours, the shortage being 2000-2500 MW.

A World Bank study, assuming a modest GDP growth scenario, forecasts electricity demand in Pakistan to grow at 7.9 per cent per annum up to 2002 and at 6.5 per cent per annum from 2002-2010. The system capacity is projected at 21,267 MW by 2002. The addition in capacity of at least 9,400 MW (if retirement of ageing units are not considered) will be required by that time. The study proposes a minimum addition of 900 MW/yr (1994-2000) and 2000 thereafter.

Thus huge investments in the power generation sector is required for such an expansion. The policy framework for private sector power generation projects (March 1994) expresses the inability of the public sector to finance such ambitious projects citing ceiling of public sector development programme as the reason. Therefore, both WAPDA and KESC have been restrained from going ahead with the proposed capacity additions in the thermal sector.

Demand growth

AN analysis of demand growth is required at this stage to find out the actual addition that be required in the period up to 2002. The future electricity tariffs, industrial consumption patterns, and population growth are the three aspects on which this analysis is based.

The government has committed substantially lucrative guarantees to IPPs both in terms of purchase price of electricity and plant factor operation. A spate of privatisation of thermal power installations throughout the country is also planned. These measures will push the power tariffs upwards. The higher tariffs would be a leading factor in discouraging the consumption pattern.

The liberalisation of imports under the now globally accepted trade agreements would be a further deterrent in the growth of local industries. The contribution of

the manufacturing sector to our GDP (1996) was barely 3.1 per cent (GDP growth 6.5 per cent). The growth is likely to suffer, if the domestic goods become less competitive, as is feared. The manufacturing sector will a major sufferer. The growth of electricity demand may

The population growth now around three per cent may reduce with the family planning programmes of the government now in full swing. This factor will also restrain the growth of power.

Thus the projected electricity growth in the period may be around six per cent (if not lower). Assuming a flat growth rate of 6 per cent, the power capacity scenario 2002 would be 19,467 MW. The capacity addition works out to 7,600 MW. The additions already planned in the public sector are 200 MW at Bin Qasim, 1,450 MW (Ghazi- Borotha) and Chashma (184 MW). Luckily, the HUBCO (not an IPP project) is nearing completion and would generate 1,300 MW.

IPPs role

FUTURE expansions definitely needs private sectors participation in the power sector. However, the quantum of additions is not likely to be as desperately high as was being anticipated. The reasons are:

• The public sector power stations has not been performing very badly inspite of different constraints.

• IPPs role in Hydel sector has not been foreseen as

The total additional requirement in the period is in the quantum of 7,600 MW. The Commissioning of HUBCO and Unit 6 at BQPS will yield 1500 MW, another 1,500 MW will be available with the public sector projects in hydel sector. Chasma nuclear project of 300. MW will ease the situation further. Financial closure in respect of 3,500-4,000 MW has been achieved. The gap would be around 1,000-1,500 MW over the next five to

However, the investment climate in Pakistan remains poor. This has been confirmed by the McGraw Hill Studies recently. The foreign investors fear unique legalities on the repatriation of funds. To cope with this problem, the IPP projects in Pakistan are joint ventures involving the government and private power producers. The government has guaranteed internationally competitive tariffs, higher plant load factor operations, tax holidays, premium on fast track projects (those completed before December 1997) and exemptions from a variety of local taxes. These incentives are offered through a policy package and legal reforms. The investors have offered the advantage of technology and employment opportunities to the local population.

The investment situation remains murky till todate. Inspite of huge incentives offered to the IPPs only about a handful of them survive till today. A maximum of 3,500-4,000 MW may actually be available through this source. However, in the fast changing scenario of the investment climate in the world many projects may also. back track. Therefore, excessive reliance on them could

The IPPs have failed to bring about a technological advantage to the country, in fact most of the plants are small diesel sets, justified neither for our system size nor for the use of local indigenous resources. Even the large steam generators are not new to the country or the existing technology here.

The employment situation far from being eased will. actually come under pressure. Local population is likely to gain mainly through odd jobs during the construction period. Some jobs may be available to expatriate Pakistanis only, closing the openings in the public sector.

Bridgestone to boost sales in Europe

TOKYO — Japan's Bridgestone Corp. will boost the number of tyre sales outlets from 140 to 900 in Europe by the end of 1997 in an effort to challenge European tyre giant

organise sales networks of Japan's largest automobile tyre maker through its European unit Bridgestone Firestone Europe, the Nikkan

16 per cent of the world's automobile

ket, now dominated by Michelin, which is operating more than 3,300 sales outlets in the region, the daily The company also plans to boost

vantage of supplying tyres to Formula One motor racing team TWR Arrows,

preciation. Its net profit in 1996 is estimated.

at 71 billion yen, a record high, but! lower than the company's earlier forecast of 73 billion yen, news reports; have said. Bridgestone's consolidated rev-

lion yen, above the firm's earlier forecast of 1,850 billion yen. Bridgestone Firestone Europe's net profit is estimated to rise six per

enue is expected to reach 1,900 bil-

US unit Bridgestone Firestone's net profit is expected to rise 31 per

cent year-on-year to \$170 million on revenue of \$6.5 billion, up six per cent from a year earlier. — AFP

LONDON — Student numbers in the Aeronautical Department at London's City University have increased by 70 per cent since the installation of a new low-cost flight simulator designed and built in Britain. Designed and built by Merlin Products of Sussex, southern England, the simulator addresses the need for an affordable training machine by being a single-seat, fully enclosed capsule, equipped with real-time computer generated vis-

uals and a three-axis motion system. Commercial flight simulators of the type used to train pilots are gen-

leges that teach aeronautics.

dynamic model that can be adjusted

to reproduce the features of whatever aircraft type the instructor chooses - from a light plane to a

dynamic modifications in the way

the machine handles

The system could pay for itself in two to three years because it re-

design to this stage is Professor

George Done who teaches aeronautics in the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Aeronautics at City University.

Baltic states. It has also been flown and appraised by the RAF and the Royal Navy. — LPS

Bridgestone is currently holding ports to Asia and the yen's de-

Michelin, a newspaper said yesterday The increase is part of plans to re-

its world automobile tyre market share to 20 per cent, the business daityre market share, following its acquisition of Firestone of the United The project is aimed at grabbing a bigger slice of the European tyre mar-

its advertising in Europe by taking ad-

starting this year, the daily said. Bridgestone is expected to post a record pre-tax profit of 92 billion yen (\$742 million) in the year to December, boosted by robust tyre ex-

cent with revenue likely to increase three per cent.

erally too costly to buy and maincommercial airliner duces the need for students to fly in tain for most flying schools and col-Engineering students at the City real aircraft and provides the facility The simulator costs from University are now using the Flight Mechanics Teaching Simulator for students to actually fly their de-£50,000-£100,000 depending on Kogyo Shimbun said.
With the project, Bridgestone hopes to raise annual sales by 33 per They are also designed to repsigns and experience abnormal concustomer specification. It is atlicate in great detail the flight char-(pictured) to test the results of modtracting interest from flying colacteristics of one particular type of fications they make to their de-The Merlin is the brainchild of leges, universities and airlines from cent to 200,000 tonnes in the Euaircraft. The Merlin 520-T is a Chris Neal who has worked in the signs. They programme their de-Japan and the Middle East to the much simpler type of simulator that ropean market by 2000 and expand simulator industry for 17 years. sign changes into the simulator via addresses the need for an aeroa computer and experience the aero-Also instrumental in bringing the

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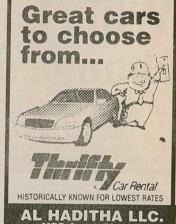
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Brilliant Bulls dedicate win over Bullets to Clinton

WASHINGTON — United States President Bill Clinton lived a basketball fan's dream here, watching Michael Jordan personally deliver a victory dedicated to his nation's elected leader.

Jordan scored 18 of his 36 points in the fourth quarter, including 15 consecutive Chicago points in the final six minutes and 16 seconds, to give Clinton's beloved Bulls a 103-99 triumph over the Washington Bullets. Clinton greeted both teams in their locker rooms before the game but did not cheer for either one during the National Basketball Association contest.

Still, the Bulls knew what he wanted after their presidential pep talk. "He talked to us about how much we mean to the world and how excited he was to be watching us," Chicago star Scottie Pippen said. "We were excited having him here. We know he's a big fan of ours. So we won it for

The Bulls rose to a league-best 47-6 with their fifth victory in a row and 13th in their past 14 games. None other had a presidential audience.

"It meant a lot to us to have him come in and talk to us," Bulls coach Phil

Jackson said. "It was a very comfortable talk to the team. Not every Bull was excited to see Clinton. Controversial Dennis Rod-

man, whose hair was coloured yellow and whose nose bore a ring, missed

I didn't hear a thing he said. I was taking a shower," Rodman said. Rodman has already heard more than he cares to from Clinton, who earlier this month advised Rodman to apologize for kicking a photographer. Rodman never apologized but paid the man \$200,000 to avoid a court case. After the game, Rodman wore a cap with the US presidential seal, saying

it was given to him not by Clinton but by "one of his (security) boys." Rodman was unhappy to discover the cap had Clinton's name on the back. "Bill Clinton. It says it right here," Rodman said. "Oh damn. Oh damn." Rodman was suspended without pay for 11 games due to the kick, the

second-longest banishment in league history. This was his fifth game since Rodman, who talked of teaching British Princess Diana about "rough love" during last year's NBA final, said he and Clinton's wife might be kin-

dred spirits on the wild side of life.

"I told him his wife is kind of related to me — Rodham, Rodman. She talked about that," Rodman said. "I said we're related in more ways than one. We had a lot of fun with that.

Clinton appeared to enjoy himself, smiling and laughing and chatting with fans as well as posing for pictures whenever nearby fans from a sellout crowd of 18,576 got past ushers near the president's location.

Clinton, who spent much of the first half munching popcorn from a huge box, sat in the best section of the arena, the seventh row at centre court. He was one seat right of Bullets' owner Abe Pollin, who was on an aisle.

Re-sellers outside the arena were asking \$200 for tickets to watch the NBA's most popular attraction. Seats in the section sell for \$50 each but must be bought as part of a season package, which only businesses can gen-

Metal detectors were used at arena entrances to ensure safety and small remote-controlled blimps normally flown in the arena were not used because of the president's presence.

Clinton's only applause, four polite claps, came during a performance by a cheer squad of women dressed in tight black leotards. When one performed a tumbling routine, the large arena television screen caught Clinton mouthing the word "Wow

Clinton did not stand and perform the 'YMCA' cheer when other fans contorted their bodies in the shape of those letters, a routine Charles Barkley led fans in during an Olympic game timeout last year.

Clinton missed out on a free lottery ticket and free sandwich when random fans failed in stunts such as catching beach balls and making half-court baskets. He also was not the lucky seat holder for tickets to a future game or

But the president appeared as stunned as everyone else in the crowd

when Jordan slammed down a trademark dunk during his late run.

And he might even have celebrated with the Bulls after the game, if noted Bulls' Steve Kerr's parting words as he departed the arena can be be"We all hang out with the president," Kerr said. "I'm going out to grab a drink with him right now." However, Mookie Blaylock's 15-foot jumper with one-tenth of a second remaining lifted the Atlanta Hawks to a 76-74

With the score 74-74, Blaylock forced Rockets guard Brent Price into a 10-second violation when he couldn't get the ball over halfcourt at the 14.4-

After a timeout, Price fouled Blaylock with seven seconds to play. Blaylock received the inbounds pass, cut to his left and put up a 15-footer over Price for the game-winning basket. "We wanted the ball in his hands," said Hawks coach Lenny Wilkens.

Blaylock finished with 17 points and Christian Laettner added 16 for Atlanta, which improved to 22-2 at home and avenged on Monday's 127-98 de-We really wanted to show Houston we're a better team than what hap-

pened Monday," said Hawks guard Steve Smith. Charles Barkley scored 22 points for Houston, which has lost eight straight road games. Hakeem Olaj uwon was held to nine points, two in the second half.

We blew the game, we just made a mistake," said Barkley. "It's all our faults. We win as a team, we lose as a team. We, we, we blew this one.' In Miami, the Portland Trail Blazers used a 23-2 run bridging the third and fourth quarters and rallied from an 11-point deficit for a 114-110 victory

that snapped the Heat's franchise-record 11-game winning streak Rasheed Wallace scored 25 points for Portland, which broke a six-game road losing streak. The Trail Blazers have won 18 of 20 all-time meetings

The Heat lost all-star centre Alonzo Mourning, who left with a torn right plantar Fascia, a tendon that runs beneath the arch, midway through the third quarter with Miami up 67-60. Mourning had been playing with pain in his foot and sat out the all-star game because of the injury

This was the worst team that we could have played against back-toback," Heat coach Pat Riley said. "They're just very physical and we played as well as we could without Zo."

In Seattle, the supersonics held New York without a field goal for nearly 10 minutes in the second half and got 17 points apiece from Gary Payton and Terry Cummings in an 84-64 rout of the Knicks.

Seattle limited New York to a franchise-record 20 field goals in ending the Knicks' season-high seven-game winning streak. Seattle stretched its own winning streak to five and beat New York for the sixth time in seven 1.

meetings. The Knicks made only two field goals in the fourth quarter.

At Los Angeles, Elden Campbell scored 21 of his 23 points in the second half and Eddie Jones also had 23 as the Lakers beat the Vancouver Grizzlies

Los Angeles improved to 7-0 against the second-year Grizzlies. In Charlotte, Glen Rice scored 18 of hr. 29 points in the third quarter as the Hornets broke open a close game and went on to rout the Los Angeles Clippers 114-96. At Detroit, Grant Hill came within one rebound of his sixth triple-double of the season as the Pistons posted their ninth straight win

over the New Jersey Nets, 98-84. Hill finished with 19 points, 13 assists and nine rebounds, leading the

Pistons to their fifth consecutive win. In Orlando, Penny Hardaway scored 22 points and interim head coach Richie Adubato improved to 2-0 at the helm of the Magic, who outlasted the Denver Nuggets 99-86.

Orlando turned 23 Denver turnovers into 38 points.

In Phoenix, Wesley Person scored 22 points and tied a career high with six three-pointers as the Suns beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 94-88, snapping

a three-game losing streak. Cedric Ceballos had 20 points and 11 rebounds and Kevin Johnson add-

ed 20 points and seven assists for the Suns. In San Antonio, Carl Herrera had two key baskets in the final 80 seconds and finished with a career-high 24 points as the Spurs snapped a seven-game home losing streak with a 98-93 triumph over the Milwaukee Bucks, losers of seven of their last 11. In Minnesota, Tom Gugliotta scored 18 points as the Timberwolves routed the Golden State Warriors 101-82.

Minnesota has won eight of its last 11 games. — AFP, Reuter

Will changes in latitude change attitude at NBA?

EAST RUTHERFORD — Changes in latitude, changes in attitude was the hopeful theme song of the NBA trading season as two bad teams swa1\$9" a slew of problem personalities, but the elite clubs

The trade deadline passed on Thursday night with a flurry of minor deals on the heels of a blockbuster. However, only two top title contenders have made even one small tweak recently.

The Chicago Bulls — favoured to win their fifth championship of the Michael Jordan era - made no changes. Why should they, as long as they have Jordan?

Miami coach/general manager Pat Riley's Heat, with the secondbest record in the NBA, added small forward Jamal Mashburn to centre Alonzo Mourning and Guard Tim Hardaway, capitalising on Don Nelson's demolition and reconstruction of the bickering Dallas Mavericks.

Third best in the league, the Detroit Pistons were content to keep on watching the growth of the latest and greatest "next Jordan," Grant

Soaking up savvy from teammate Joe Dumars and spurred into nastier spirit by coach Doug Collins, Hill recently surprised a Madison Square Garden crowd by returning a fan's obscenity in kind after pounding a series of one-onone drives down the New York Knicks' throats.

more Mr Nice Guy, the tough New York fans murmured appreciative-

The Knicks, who wound up winning that battle, likewise made no trades, encouraged by the progress of the three new starters placed around Patrick Ewing this season: Allan Houston, Larry Johnson and Chris Childs.

In the western conference, after injuries to centre Shaquille O'Neal and recently acquired forward Robert Horry, the Los Angeles Lakers

McCloud from the revamped New Jersey Nets to help hold the fort.

Elden Campbell and rookie Travis Knight, drafted and quickly cast off by the Bulls, were already doing passable job making up for O'Neal's absence.

The sputtering Seattle Supersonics, last year's runner-ups led by Shawn Kemp and Gary Payton, tampered with their chemistry coming into this season but stayed out of the laboratory come trading time, and despite their unhappiness remained right behind the Lakers in the stand-

The Houston Rockets have been busy at the medicine cabinet trying keep veteran superstars Hakeem Olajuwon, Charles Barkley and Clyde Drexler healthy, but sought no midseason injections of fresh talent. Neither did another vintage team, the Utah Jazz of John Stockton and Karl Malone.

two above-mentioned changes — Mashburn and McCloud were prelude and postscript to the blockbuster deal in which Nelson finished cleaning out what he called the "mess" in Dallas by exchanging nine players with the Nets. Not one of last year's Mavericks remains with Dallas

Both new-look teams were in action on Thursday night and both lost, but more respectably than they had grown used to.

In a five-point loss to Miami, the nicks' throats.

No more goody two-shoes, no

Nets' new point guard Sam Cassell equalled the team high with 17 points, new centre Eric Montross ad 12 points and 11 rebounds (but looked immobile on defence) and all-star forward Chris Gatling had 13 points and 10 rebounds.

Only guard Jimmy Jackson, expected to have the biggest future of them all, was off, shooting 2-for-9 for five points. Backup centre Joe Kleine was still on his way from the

"I think we got a lot better overnight," said the Nets' Kendall Gill. Coach John Calipari, brought in up swingman George with sweeping powers this season to

"the swamp" in New Jersey, was

Now he had players who could score without him calling a set play on every possession, he exulted and he also could look forward to up to \$14 million (likely much less) in salary cap room in two years, along with a couple of draft picks.

"I went for a run today and I ran faster than I have in a year-and-ahalf," the rookie NBA coach said.

Calipari rolled the dice with the deal, but Nelson's gamble looked to be much the greater

Already scarred by sour relations with players in New York and Golden State, Nelson was leaning on the ultra-slim reed of Shawn Bradley, at 7 feet, 6 inches the second tallest man in NBA history but more devoted to his family and religion than to the sport genetics thrust upon

The Mavericks also picked up unhappy guards Robert Pack and Khalid Reeves and little-used for-

ward Ed O'Bannon.
Bradley had 10 points, 10 rebounds and six blocks despite feeling like "a lost sheep" in his Dallas debut, a two-point loss to the Milwaukee Bucks. Pack sat out the game with an ankle sprain and Reeves scored eight points before leaving with an injury.
Sweet-shooting Sasha Danilovic,

acquired from Miami in the Mash-burn deal, was not with the Mavericks for the game.

Point guard Mark Jackson, the NBA assists leader, headlined a sixplayer trade on Thursday when he was sent back to Indiana with centre Lasalle Thompson and rookie forward Darvin Ham for swingman Vincent Askew, guard Jerome Allen and forward Eddie Johnson, plus second-round draft picks in 1997

Guard Ricky Pierce was part of another Denver trade, gave the Charlotte Hornets added depth when he was dealt for guard Anthony Goldwire and centre George



Miami Heat centre Alonzo Mourning (right) fouls Portland Trail Blazers centre Rasheed Wallace as he

Beckham strikes to keep United on top of table

LONDON David Beckham disallowed. slammed home a brilliant volley to keep Manchester United top of the Premiership yesterday to rescue a point at Chelsea, who had taken a second-minute lead through Italian playmaker Gianfranco Zola.

Despite the two dropped points, Alex Ferguson's men retained their one-point advantage as Liverpool could only draw at home to Black-

Zola hit United before they could settle into any kind of rhythm, squeezing home a stunning goal, his eighth of the season, from the tightest of angles past keeper Peter Schmeichel after beating United's Irish defender Denis Irwin to collect Dan Petrescu's pass.

Chelsea, who won at Old Trafford in October, were seeking to complete their second double over United in the past three seasons — and hand out United's first Premiership defeat

But they were undone by a piece of outrageous skill from Beckham as he nearly burst the net with a brilliant right-footed volley midway through the second period for an equaliser af-ter Dennis Wise and Franck Leboeuf had both missed good chances for the

Liverpool, so prolific against Leeds in midweek, missed out on the chance to go top as they were held to a goalless draw at Anfield by Blackirn, whose Scottish international defender Colin Hendry turned in a sterling performance to keep the Red's attack at bay. Liverpool striker Robbie Fowler hit the post twice.

Les Ferdinand meanwhile scored his 18th of the season, as Newcastle beat North East rivals Middlesbrough 1-0, in the eighth minute at the Riverside to keep Newcastle United in the title hunt as the Geordies stretched their unbeaten league run to seven. Boro deserved at least a point, however, hitting the woodwork twice. while Fabrizio Ravanelli had a goal

In the crucial relegation battle, Ian Marshall blasted a hat trick in the first half hour for League Cup semifinalists Leicester after they had gone one down at home to Derby.

Marshall, doubtful before the

match with injury, scored an ex-

cellent equaliser after eight minutes

Dean Sturridge having scored in the second minute. He was then presented with his second when Derby keeper Russell Hoult slipped in the area trying to receive a backpass, leaving the Leicester striker to slot the ball into an empty net.

Marshall, signed from Ipswich

this season and replacing suspended youngster Emile Heskey, tapped in his third after splendid work down the right by Steve Claridge.

After the break, Claridge made it four as he scored from close range following a Garry Parker corner, Sturridge later pulled one back for, At the Dell, Sheffield Wednesday

overcame a two goal deficit to beat Southampton 3-2. Southampton's Norwegian striker Egil Ostenstadt scored the opener against Sheffield Wednesday in the 28th minute after being set up by Israeli playmaker Eyal Berkovitch.

Southampton's inconsistent play maker Matt Le Tissier scored their second from the penalty spot. But in an amazing turnaround, David Hirst pulled one back for Wednesday, who went into the game with just one defeat in 19 games, on 50 minutes and hit an equaliser four minutes later. Former Huddersfield striker Andy Booth completed Saints' misery as he

converted a late winner. Elsewhere, Everton, with six defeats in seven games, grabbed a point at Coventry in a goalless draw.

Leeds recovered from their mid week drubbing at Liverpool as a Lee Bowyer goal early in the second half secured three vital points at Sunder-

Alphand stretches World Cup lead Malaysia



French Luc Alphand celebrates winning men's Super-G event. - AFP

risked all here yesterday to win his fourth World Cup downhill and stretched his lead in the downhill and overall standings - his 12th World Cup win in three years.

The 31-year-old Frenchman stands poised to seal his third successive World Cup downhill series and would become the first Frenchman to win the overall title since Jean-Claude Killy in 1968.

Alphand, who won Friday's Super-G, clocked 1minute 54.27seconds starting from the number 10 position. Pietro Vitalini of Italy was second in 1min 54.85secs and his teammate Kristian Ghedina, lying second to Alphand in the downhill standings, third in 1min 54.86secs.

Alphand went in low and in the tuck position into as many of the sharp turns corners as possible as he overhauled main rival Ghedina, who had posted the early target. Earlier, Alphand dismissed his

disappointing world alpine skiing championships as "water under the bridge" after taking the lead in the World Cup with a Super-G triumph The Frenchman, who crashed out of the downhill at this month's cham-

only 12th in the Super-G, showed control and composure on one of the most challenging courses in the sport to take the lead in the overall stand-"Forget about the world championships. That's all water under the bridge. I'm not thinking about them more," said the 31-year-old

downhiller who is bidding to become

the first Frenchman to win the pre-

pionships in Sestriere and finished

stigious overall title since Jean-Claude Killy in 1968. That was one of the fastest Super-Gs I have ever raced. The course was cut up and covered in ruts. It was a wild run ... (but) the World Cup has given me momentum again."

With bright sunshine and warm temperatures in the relatively low German resort, the start of the race

was brought forward by 90 minutes to mid-morning. There were some surprising performances from some of the later racers. Wearing bib number three, Alp-

hand sped down the mountain to win

in one minute 15.32 seconds. Aus-

trian Hermann Maier pulled off a shock by taking second place from start number 32 in 1:15.87, 0.55 sec-Italy's Werner Perathoner, who has just come back from knee surgery, also caused a surprise by taking third place in 1:15.90. Canada's Ed

Podivinsky took fourth place in 1:15.96 after starting back in 35th. "It was too fast for the technicians," said Alphand who replaced Kjetil Andre Aamodt at the top of the overall standings. The Norwegian finished fifth in 1:15.97 and is now 51 points behind the Frenchman overall.

With 10 races remaining, Alphand, who excels in the speed events is still playing down his chances of beating all-rounder Aamodt to the title. There are six speeds event re-

The Frenchman's main goal is to win the downhill title for the third consecutive season. "Aamodt is still the overall favourite as far as I'm concerned. He can ski in all the events, said Alphand who had bad memories of a crash in Garmisch in 1992 before last season's win.

get too afraid to attack. The overall World Cup is the greatest achievement. For me it is just a dream. I don't like to think about it. The result marked only the second Super-G victory of Alphand's career

If you think about the points you

of Laax last month Norway's Atle Skaardal, the world champion in Sestriere, made a mistake at the top of the course when he lost control of one of his skis and he finished only 10th in 1:16.22.

after his triumph in the Swiss resort

Maier broke his arm earlier in the season but has shown good form in recent training and was not surprised by his second place despite his high

in final

JAKARTA — Malaysia will face hosts Indonesia in the final of the \$150,000 Asia Cup men's badminton championship after beating Taiwan 2-1 in the semifinals here yesterday. Indonesia had an easier 3-0 win

over South Korea in the other semifinal. Malaysia won both singles matches against Taiwan, but not without some anxious moments. Ong Ewe Hock came from a set down to beat Indonesian-born Fung Permadi 9-15, 18-13, 15-13, while

Pang Chen, seeded 23rd in the world beat junior player Chien Yu Hsiu in 'Fung played well. I have beaten him twice in the past but I think this time was the hardest fight," Ong said after clinching his win. After losing the first set Ong trailed Permadi until

"Ong stole some points from me towards the end of the second set with his sudden attacks," Permadi said afterwards. Ong led the decider until 10-7 before Permadi came back to lead 12-10 only to falter and see rapid attacks from Ong give the set to the Malaysian 15-13.

13-13 in the second set before mov-

In the doubles, the more experienced Malaysian duo Tan Kim Her and Lee Wan Wah squandered a first set lead to lose to Taiwan's Huang Shih-chung and Chien Yuhsun, the runners-up at the junior World championship in Denmark last year, 8-15, 15-5, 15-10.

In the second semifinal Indonesia's Indra Wijaya, the world number four, avenged his string of losses to South Korea's Park Sung-Woo with an easy 15-6, 15-8 victory here. Park had won the previous four times the pair had clashed Encouraged by Park's success,

Budi Santoso beat Kim Chul-Joong 15-9, 15-7, and in the doubles Sigit Budiarto and Chandra Wijaya gave Indonesia a clean sweep beating Lee Dong-Soo and Yoo Yong-Sung 15-6,

Olazabal to stage comeback in Dubai

Maria Olazabal makes his return to competitive golf in the Dubai Desert Classic at the Emirates Golf Club from February 27 to March 2, the PGA European Tour announced here. Olazabal has accepted a invitation

spot in Dubai after playing his last tournament golf at the Lancome Trophy in September 1995. The 1994 US Masters champion has been out of competition due to an arthritic right foot.

"I have decided to return next week because of the big improvement in my health in recent weeks," Olazabal said in a statement. "After 18 months out of competi-

low me to walk properly, I now consider most of my physical problems to be behind me. "My participation must be seen as

tion, due to condition that did not al-

a full test in real competition conditions. I will take stock of the situation following the Dubai Desert Classic.' Ken Schofield, executive director of the PGA European Tour said: "We share with Jose Maria his delight at

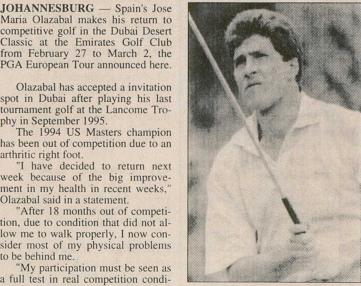
tion and look forward to him now resuming his outstanding career." Olazabal has won 15 European Tour events among his 22 worldwide victories and made four appearances

being able to return to tour competi-

for Europe in the Ryder Cup. Colin Mongomery, Europe's top golfer for the past three years, is considering joining the US Tour said Nick Faldo yesterday.

"He is going to be here for seven weeks and he is going to get a really good picture (of what life on the US circuit is like)," commented Faldo, who quit Europe two years ago.

"I am sure he is tinkering with coming over here. He enjoys Eu-



JOSE MARIA OLAZABAL

ropean life, but he also enjoys playing courses in good condition. Montgomerie defends his Dubai

Desert Classic title in the UAE next week, but then heads straight to Florida to prepare for the Masters.

Defending champion Faldo is convinced that if he fails to retain his title the most likely to take it off him is

"Monty might be the next man to keep the cycle going," said the Englishman, who goes for his fourth Mas ters victory in nine years on April 10-

Despite Montgomerie's poor record at Augusta, Faldo believes that Europe's eighth win in 10 years could still come from the Scotsman. "I don't think it's and over and done with yet,

Faldo also thinks that 21-year-old sensation Tiger Woods will not be affected by the attention that is certain, to be on him, but he points out that it took him six or seven visits "before you know exactly what to do". Woods will be making only his third "The Masters is more of a mental" effort (than other tournaments).

perience course. "I step up my short game just before. I practise two-yard bunker shots and two-yard chip shots for there and they are quite unusual," said the Eng-

There are elements of Augusta where

there is a scare factor and it's an ex-

Meanwhile, Earl Woods, the 64year-old father of Tiger Woods, was resting in intensive care here on Fri-w day following heart bypass surgery. A spokesman for the University

of California at Los Angeles Medical Centre would not disclose the elder Woods' condition following Thurs-But a spokesman for the golfer at

International Management Group said the operation was a success. Woods was on hand for his fat available ther's surgery, which was performed on Thursday but was revealed on Fri-

The young golfer who has won four titles in six months as a pro-size fessional is taking this week off after 1824 playing in Australia and Thailand the I past two weeks.

He had planed to return to the PGA Tour next week at an event here, but said his return was conditional upon his father's health. The elder Woods spent four way

days in an Oklahoma hospital instant October after suffering chest pains. He had a quadruple heart bypassy 100 in 1987. — AFP

Boca start with new coach and old hopes

RIO DE JANEIRO — The second and final championship of the Argentine soccer season begins at the weekend, allowing the country's most popular club Boca Juniors to once again revive their dreams of a return to greatness.

Hope springs eternal for Boca supporters, who for the past few years have believed the opening weekend of every competition will be the start of a revival, only to see their illusions shattered by around the halfway mark of the tournament.

This time last year, the return of Diego Maradona and coach Carlos Bilardo, the pair who led Argentina to World Cup victory in 1986 and the runners-up spot four years later, raised optimism and expectancy to an eyen higher level.

But Maradona missed a succession of penalties and abandoned the team, leaving Boca fans to watch formerly unfashionable Velez Sarsfield walk off with their third title in

Bilardo did not give up and for the following tournament — the 1996/7 Apertura Championship which began in August — the club spent a reported \$15 million on building a completely new team.

Money, however, was not enough and despite the satisfaction of beating River Plate 2-1, Boca saw their arch-rivals win the championship by a nine-point margin.

Although Bilardo had said that he needed time to build a championship-winning team, Boca's fans demanded immediate success and the coach was out of the job in De-

Boca, a club with a huge tradition, have failed to win any of the last eight tournaments, which have been dominated by old foes river and upstarts Velez instead.

After the latest failure, president Mauricio Macri, a glamorous, young businessman who took over the club just over a year ago, announced an end to the big-spending approach and said Boca would concentrate on training promising youngsters.

"The model based on one or two magic players has not given good results," he said. As a result, the only major change for the Clausura Championship has been the introduction of new coach Hector Vieira.

Two championships are played during the Argentine season, the Apertura (opening) from August to December and the Clausura (closing) from February to June.

The football itself tends to be overshadowed by the trials and tribulations of Boca, the antics of some of the goalkeepers and the controversies stirred up by hardline referee Javier Castrilli.

Three goalkeepers — Paraguayan Jose Luis Chilavert of Velez, Ignacio Gonzalez of Racing Club and Carlos Bossio of Estudiantes - got on the scoresheet in the Apertura.

Chilavert scored goals from free kicks and penalties, Gonzalez converted two penalties in one game and, not to be outdone, Bossio scored with a header.

Castrilli has upset many with his liberal use of the red card and is known as the lawman. Last week, he sent off three Uruguayans in a World Cup qualifying match in

River, the current South American champions who delighted many people with their attacking soccer in the Apertura, are hot favourites for dependiente and Lanus seen as their main challengers.

Independiente were runners-up in the Apertura in their first championship under veteran coach Cesar Luis Menotti and could be an even bigger threat now that Menotti and his squad have got to know each other better.

Lanus, an unfashionable club from a Buenos Aires suburb, have never won a major title in Argentina but have enjoyed several relatively successful seasons and last year won the South American Conmebol

In Rio De Janeiro, the experiment of time-outs in soccer came to an end on Friday when the Sao Paulo Football Federation (FPF) announced they would no longer be allowed in the Sao Paulo Championship.

An FPF spokeswoman said the experiment had been suspended on the orders of soccer's world governing body Fifa because it was not in the rules of the game.

The experiment, which began last year, allowed coaches the option of calling a three-minute timeout at any moment between the 22nd and 25th minutes of the half in which their team had kicked off.

This year the experiment was widened to allow a time-out at any time before the 30th minute of the

However, the rules caused confusion on the first day of the season when a Canadian official brought in to referee the match between Sao Jose and Palmeiras refused to allow time-outs on the basis that they were not sanctioned under international rules. — Reuter



Italian boxer Alessandro Duran (right) grimaces as he lands a punch on South African Gary Murray during their WBU welterweight world title fight in Ferrara, which the Italian

Fiorentina face tough task against Juventus

ROME — Fiorentina coach Claudio Ranieri is apprehensive about today's league clash with Serie A leaders

Juventus The home game comes at a delicate moment for Fiorentina, who were surprisingly beaten 2-1 by third-from-bottom Verona last Sunday and are now in 11th place, 13 points behind runaway leaders

This is my most difficult game since I've been at Fiorentina. We're at a turning point, it's now or never", says Ranieri, who has found himself under pressure from disgruntled fans. Traditionally bitter rivalry

between Juventus and Fiorentina has in the past led to litigation between prominent Fiorentina fans such as film director Franco Zefferelli and

former Juventus president Giampiero Boniperti.

Ranieri seems likely to opt for a 4-4-2 formation with Russian and ex-Everton winger Andreii Kanchelskis partnering Fiorentina captain Gabriel Batistuta of Argentina in attack and with Swede Stefan Schwarz, Portugal's Rui Costa, Sandro Cois and Giovanni Piacentini in midfield.

Juventus travel south with an almost full-strength squad, missing only two long-term injury victims -Croat striker Alen Boksic and midfielder Antonio Conte. Influential Juventus central defender Paolo Montero of Uruguay will renew Latin American rivalry with Batistuta.

"Batistuta is one of the best strikers in the world and I like his

style - he's fearless, powerful and sets his sails straight for goal, a real team leader," said Montero. "This'll be a very special game, hotter than usual because of their defeat by

Verona. Alessandro Del Piero and Michele Padovano lead the Juventus attack in a match which follows 1-0 Juventus wins in Turin last September and in Florence in March of last season.

 POLICE have passed a report into allegations that Manchester United goalkeeper Peter Schmeichel racially abused Arsenal's black striker Ian Wright to the crown prosecution

The English Football Association (FA) confirmed the report was with the CPS late on Thursday, 24 hours

after animosity between the two players dating back to November resurfaced in a match at Highbury.

The police investigation followed allegations from television viewers that Schmeichel verbally abused Wright during a league clash at United's Old Trafford ground on

November 16.
If the CPS decides the evidence is strong enough, Schmeichel will become the first soccer player in Britain to face criminal charges for alleged racist abuse.

The escalating dispute between the volatile Schmeichel and Wright, whose disciplinary record is as bad as his scoring record is good, is threatening to overshadow all future clashes between the two Premier

Wright was fortunate not to be sent off after a two-footed challenge on Schmeichel on Wednesday which left the United goalkeeper writhing in

agony on the edge of his penalty area.
Wright, who had been booked before the incident, claimed the Dane was play-acting. As the players left the pitch at the end of the match he had to be restrained by stewards as he tried to confront Schmeichel. Police intervened to keep the two players

United manager Alex Ferguson leapt off the bench at the time of the original challenge but refused to comment on it after the match, which United won 2-1. "I've got a view but I'd rather keep it to myself," he said. "Every time I come to London I get misquoted." Arsenal manager Arsene

Wenger said: "Every time Ian Wright is involved in anything it becomes a major issue with the whole country talking about it. I don't know if anything happened in the tunnel, I can't speak about that."

Wright was quoted in British newspapers on Friday as saying Schmeichel made another racist remark on the way to the tunnel. "It was racial and completely out of order," the striker was quoted as saying in the tabloid Daily Mirror. You could see from my reaction how incensed I was. I wouldn't get

like that if it was an ordinary insult. The FA confirmed on Friday they had received a match report from referee Martin Bodenham but had yet to decide what action, if any, to take

against the two players. - Reuter

Dortmund shocked

BONN — German champions Dortmund saw their hopes of winning a third straight title dented as they slid to a 2-0 defeat at lowly Dusseldorf, leaving them two points behind leaders Bayern Munich. Dortmund, looking to move a point clear against opponents whom they thrashed 4-0 earlier in the season, were undone as Russian international and

former Millwall man Sergei Yuran opened the scoring seconds after the break. Yuran's compatriot Igor Dobrowolski then sealed the win for Dusseldorf with the second on the hour and hand Dortmund their fourth defeat of the campaign. Bayern can now go five points clear if they beat seventh-placed Bochum. Freiburg, meanwhile, look doomed after Hamburg came away with a

4-0 win to leave the hosts rooted to the bottom of the table. Arminia Bielefeld continued their recent improvement by coming away from relegation-threatened Sankt Pauli with a vital 3-2 win, veteran German international Stefan Kuntz hitting the winner.

In Kuala Lumpur, China beat Singapore 3-1, while hosts Malaysia beat Finland 2-1 in the opening Group A matches of the inaugural Dunhill Cup soccer

The young Chinese side appeared set for a big win when they took the lead in the 11th minute through a Fan Zhiyi penalty. But they did not sustain their early momentum and had to wait until the 59th minute for a second when Li

Jinyu headed a cross from Sui Dongliang.

Though Nazri Nasir pulled one back for Singapore with a long range shot in the 73rd minute, China wrapped up the match in the 82nd minute when Su Maozhen scored. - AFP

Fosters begin in style

MUSCAT - Oman Darts Club Division-I began on a bright note for the defending champions Majan Fosters as they roared their way past Holiday Inn Tigers 7-2.

It was 4-2 at half time. Wins came from Neil Barber, Jim Grant, Berson Coutinho and Karanjeet Singh. Chong Zamora and Richard McDermott replied for Tigers. Fosters went on to claim all three

doubles through Barber and Grant, Greg Hague and Chandra Babu and Karanjeet Singh and Berson Coutinho. Neil Barber had the match high finish of 55 (19, D18).

Hosts Times of Oman went down fighting to last season's Division-II champions Konica in a closely contested game that went down to the wire. Three all at the end of the singles with wins from Fred Castro, Rick Cruz and Boy Saddi for Konica, Abdul Shaheed, Haroon Moosa and Ibrahim Masood (who scored the first 180 of the season), replied for the Times.

Armie DeGuzman and Boy Saddi took the first double for Konica, but Ibrahim Masood and Mahmood Al Jabri took the next for the Times

to draw level once again. In a nail bitting final doubles Alex Pontero and Noel Tutanes had the better of Abdul Shaheed and Sulaiman Al Hadi to make sure of a 5-4 win for Konica. Haroon Moosa had the match high finish of 64 (D7, Bull).

In another closely contested game Majan Phoenix up from last season's Division-II beat Lansab 5-4. It was all level in the singles. Wins for Phoenix came from Mansoor Haponed till this week.

money, the jury was told.

bib, Rashid Saleh and Salim Ham-doon. Salim Said, Said Al Nabhani and Nasser Saleh replied for Lansab. Salim Hamdoon teamed up with Ismail Saleh and Mansoor Habib with Nazeer Tajudeen to take the first two doubles and the match for Phoenix. Derek Woodward and Salim Said saved the last for Lansab. Salim Said had the match high finish of 73 (13,

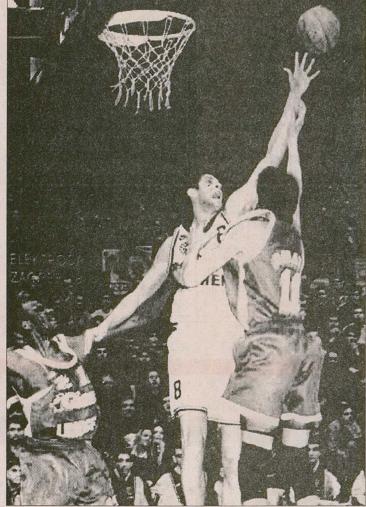
In Division-II Al Nusoor, down from last season's Division-I, whitewashed hosts Holiday Inn Gold Leaf. Wins in the singles came from skipper Ahmed Suhail, Peter Whalley, Salim Al Awaisi, Fareh Saleem, Khamis Mabrook and Fadhil Khamis. Doubles wins came from Peter Whalley and Nasir Al Rahbi, Faresh Saleem and Khamis Mabrook and Ahmed Suhail and Salim Al Awaisi. Fareh Saleem had the match high finish of 56 (16, D20).

Onslaught, the second team down from last season's Division-I, beat the all ladies Darling Buds of Majan 8-1. It was all over in the singles 5-1. Wins came from Richard Desa, Fahad Al Rahbi, Robin Rowles, Carl Rodricks and Hamid Al Baluchi. Jennifer Rowles saved the white-

Onslaught took all the doubles through Richard Dessa and Carl Rodricks, Hamid Al Baluchi and Fahad Al Rahbi and Robin Rowles and Chris D'sa. Hamid Al Baluchi had a high finish of 58 (18, 20, D10) while Karen Teyn had the ladies high finish of 54 (18, D18).

The match between Cat Power and Film's Magic (H2) was post-

Jury told of 'duped' prosecution



Cibona Zagreb's Jevgenji Kisurin (centre) with Yann Bonato and Marc M'Bahia of Limoges during their Euroleague basketball match in Zagreb. Cibona won 72-66. - AFP

Sinha enjoy double success

By A Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — Sinha Cubs and Sinha Masters enjoyed success in their OCC League matches played at the OAC grounds, winning over Petromin Amateurs and Zubair respectively.

Sinha Cubs' victory took them a step closer towards claiming the runner-up berth in Division C whilst the Masters' narrow win over Zubair enabled them to maintain their unbeaten run.

In the morning encounter, the Cubs fielded a 10-man outfit and took the field first. Jaison Anthony and Bimal batted confidently despite a fiery onslaught from Rohan Fernando and Ajith Perera. By the break, Petromin

Amateurs had reached a total of 98 but lost five vital wickets in the process.

Undaunted by this, the tail wagged sufficiently to add a further 96 runs in the remaining 12 overs with Cherry (27), Ravi (30) and Suresh (29) not out batting with assurance to take the total to 194/9 at the close. Ajith Perera 3/35 and Rohan Fernando 2/38 were the most successful

bowlers for the Cubs. Lloyd Patternott and Jagath Perera began the Cubs' reply and were cruising steadily when the left-handed Patternott was cruelly run out at 33. This brought Ajith Perera to the wicket and two Pereras revelled against some

wayward bowling and added 112 runs for the second wicket when the adventurous Ajith was stumped for 56 after having hit five boundaries. Jagath and skipper Suraj Fernando then combined forces and saw their team to victory without any further loss and three overs to spare. Jagath was

unfortunate to miss out on a well-deserved century, remaining unbeaten on 93 runs with nine fours. Suraj Fernando was 27 not out.

Brief scores Petromin Amateurs 194/9 (Jaison Anthony 46, Bimal 22, Cherry 27, Ravi, Suresh 29 not out. Ajith Perera 3/40, Rohan 2/38). Sinha Cubs 198/2 (Jagath Perera 93 not out, Ajith Perera 56, Suraj

Fernando 27 not out).

Veterans steer Masters home

VETERAN cricketers, Kamalendran Navaratnam and Cholomondolev Abeysuriya were forced to draw out on all their experience to steer Sinha Masters to victory over Zubair in a thrilling F Division encounter at the OAC2

The Masters played with 10 men and put up a convincing display in the opening hour by restricting Zubair to 78/2 at the 13th over. A. Raman and Srikanth were both shaping up for big scores before becoming run out victims for 46 runs apiece. After the break, Zubair's aggressive tactics paid off and 99 runs were scored in 12 overs. Mohan was in sparkling form, top scoring with

55. Cholomondoley Abeysuriya was the pick of the bowlers with two wickets The Masters' opening combination of Elmer Balthazaar and Allan Berhardt failed to give their team a flying start as Balthazaar fell cheaply for three runs. Berhardt then teamed up with Navaratnam and the latter played a masterly

Vimal takes on John

By A Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — The men's 'A' singles in the fourth annual Tawoos/Sanyo Gulf Hotel Open tennis tournament start today with fifth seed Vimal Kirthi in combat with John Bejiga.

The tournament, in its second week, is hotting up with many events in the quarterfinal and semifinal stag-

Tops seeds S. Hemanth and Vimal Kirthi had a comfortable 6-2, 6-2 win over Madny Al Bakry and Mohammed Al Harthy in the first round of the doubles. Hemanth and Kirthi displayed classic doubles combination of a hard hitter and steady consistent player working well together.

The men's doubles appears to be an open battle between six or seven candidates of which one pair, Dave Clayton and Sajid Khan managed a 7-6, 6-3 victory over Howard Walkington and Willie Hinnart in front of a vocal audience to enter the quar-

Today's fixtures 4pm — J Caldwell vs J Devero 4.30pm — V. Guillen vs S. Ban-

6pm — H. Kolster/R. Duxan vs J. Eliang/L. Mowie, G. Marks/A. Emura vs D. Dobbs/F. Dobbs. 7.30pm - M. Al Bakry/W. Al Kharusi vs D. Shirodkar/A. Al Shi-

9pm — V. Kirthi vs J. Bejiga, B. the fourth season of the league, set to Al Sharji/M. Balushi vs A. Farr/T. start on March 21. Interested teams have been re-

PARIS — French Sports Minister Guy Drut said here that he was not France's leading football figures.
"I can only say that to assure the prepared to risk taking the fences down for the 1998 World Cup be-

security in a competition of this size there can be no question about taking fences down," he said. "We carried out a survey and came to the conclusion it would not

France not to risk with fences

be possible to take fences down. We aren't ready for it," he added. However, Claude Simonet, President of the French Football Federation, said he knew nothing about this

decision until he read L'Equipe. "I was a little shocked to read about it in the newspaper, particulalry as they have not had the courtesy to involve us in the consultative pro-

cess," Simonet said. "I am of the view that this is not the right long term measure to combat hooliganism and that we can come to a better solution if not in time for the World Cup at least for the period af-

terwards," Simonet added. Joao Havelange, president of foot-ball's governing body Fifa had called on French president Jacques Chirac to dismantle fences in France.

"We shouldn't put fans behind

stadiums, dismissed that incident and said that each stadium should be judged individually and that the original order to put cages in the stadia was a sporting one and not a political

The success of the European Championship finals last year in Eng-

land where fans behaved impeccably

without fences to hold them back had

persuaded Fifa that the war against

chairman of the World Cup organ-ising committee was afraid of the

consequences and last week a lines-

man was knocked out when hit on the

head by a bottle thrown from the ter-

racing at Lens, one of the World Cup

national committee for security in

Gerard Rousselot, president of the

However, Michel Platini, co-

hooliganism had been won.

"I think that each case should be judged individually. I am astonished that we were not consulted on this announcement as we were the ones who first ordered the cages to be put up," Rousselot said. — AFP

All-Filipino Basketball to start on March 21

By A Sports Reporter

that," Drut added.

MUSCAT — The organising committee of the 1997 All-Filipino Basketball Tournament has announced

cause any hooliganism would dam-

L'Equipe newspaper that Drut and In-

terior Minister Jean-Louis Debre

had decided to keep the fences up at

the 10 stadia that will host matches at

the 1998 football showpiece — despite Fifa's insistence that the fans

should not be cooped up like anin-

perfect world. We would like to en-

force less strict measures but its not possible," Drut said. "France will be

the centre of the world's attention

next year and we cannot afford to

take any risks that may harm our

country's image. It's as simple as

Debre had told the sports daily l'Equipe on Friday that he also could

not take the risk of pulling fences

down - however, his announcement

came as a surprise to several of

"Unfortunately we don't live in a

It had been announced in Friday's

age France's image.

quested to contact Erick De Jesus at Telephone 701952 or GSM 9328205

or Bon Lainez at 590355 or 563219. A general meeting with the team representatives is scheduled for February 27 at the Palayok Restaurant in

This year's organising committee

man; Val Tayo, vice-chairman; Erick De Jesus, secretary-general; Cheryl Al Zedjali, treasurer; Younis Khamis Al Zedjali, tournament coordinator; Ghaleb Subhi Farah Balawi, technical commissioner and Amin Al Barwani, tournament adviser.

fixing was discussed. Grobbelaar has told the court he "played along" with

Vincent when Vincent approached him with a plan to throw games, and that,

prosecution, who have been duped by Christopher Vincent and dazzled by Vincent has told the court how he went to the Sun newspaper after falling out with Grobbelaar over the collapse of a joint business venture. The newspaper secretly filmed meetings between the two men in which match

WINCHESTER — The prosecution in the English soccer match-rigging trial have been duped by their key witness Christopher Vincent and dazzled by

The claim was made by Jerome Lynch, counsel for one of the defendants,

Lim has told Winchester Crown Court he paid goalkeepers Grobbelaar and

Segers but only for match information and forecasting of results. He passed the

tips on to a wealthy benefactor in Indonesia, Johannes Josef, to assist him with

his betting. Lynch told the jury: "It's our case that Mr Lim did no more than

forecast for his benefactor in Indonesia, and all the evidence taken together is

more consistent with his account, than the interpretation placed upon it by the

Lim, along with footballers Bruce Grobbelaar, Hans Segers and John

Fashanu, deny trying to fix Premier League games for the benefit of a Far

Malaysian business man Heng Suan Lim, in his closing speech.

though he discussed the subject, it was part of his plan to discover who was behind the scheme so he could go to the authorities

Lynch said Vincent was "a man so consumed by hate and money, you wouldn't have believed him if he gave you directions to the toilet, unless you

He told the jurors: "You have to believe the central elements of his testimony because without, there's nothing beyond the suspicion.

Prosecutor David Calvert Smith had told the jury on Thursday not to be dazzled by the "star quality" factor in the case and to "follow the money" that was involved. But Lynch said stardom was a factor in the case. "It is because of their notoriety, because they are regularly seen and observed everywhere they go, that the risk is all the greater. He also warned the jury not to be misled by the considerable amount of

levity during the trial into thinking it was not a serious case for the four men in

"This is not a petty offence for which, if guilty, they can expect a slap on the wrist. It's a serious case alleging corruption, which has serious consequences, not just for them but for the game of football itself.

And he urged the jury to ask themselves if a goalkeeper could fix a game, and if anyone who knew anything about football would be prepared to wager hundreds of thousands of pounds on it. — AFP

Indians thrash Poles

MADRAS — There was total transformation in the experimental Indian hockey team's approach as they overwhelmed Poland 6-1 in their third and final test match at the Mayor Radhakrishnan stadium here. India dominated the proceedings throughout the match but could score only in the 32nd minute.

TIMES SPORT

Bowe leaves Marines

WASHINGTON — Former heavyweight boxing champion Riddick Bowe has left the US Marines after just 10 days in military service, the fighter's manager said. Manager Rock Newman told CNN in an interview that Bowe was going through agony being away from his wife and children. "Once he got there it was more than he expected," Newman

Sunday, February 23, 1997

strong for Bangladesh

SCOREBOARD

Chang-Martin

face-off in semis

MEMPHIS — Top seed Michael Chang and third seed Todd Martin advanced to a semifinal showdown in the \$825,000 St Jude Classic tennis tournament.

Thirteenth seed Jonas Bjorkman of Sweden and eighth seed Todd Wood-

Chang, one day before his 25th birthday, earned his second straight Mem

In the other quarterfinals, Bjorkman eliminated fifth seed Paul Haarhuis 6-3

Chang's match against Reneberg included uncharacteristic unforced errors

"I know every time I play Richie, it is going to be a battle," he said. "We've

played quite a bit of times since I turned pro. It's always a lot of grinding and

Reneberg's best opportunity to put Chang in trouble came in the first set when he had five break points with Chang serving at 4-5. He escaped the final

break point on an unforced Reneberg return error, an ace and perhaps the best

In the second set, Chang faced no break points and won the match when

"He is hard to beat," said Reneberg, who is 1-6 lifetime against Chang.

"I will have to return serve well and I'll have to go take it to him," Chang

Martin, who is 23-3 in Memphis, won the tournament in 1994 and 1995

Bjorkman is 13-2 this year and Woodbridge 11-1, and each has won a title

'One of the reasons I play well here is because it's early in the year and I'm

"You have to hit good approaches and good volleys. You don't get anything

against him without hitting good shots."

Martin, a finalist in Memphis the past four years, has one career victory

said of playing Martin. "Todd has a great record here and seems to play his

point of the match, an open-court volley to finish off an end-to-end rally

against Chang in five matches, but the lone win came in Memphis

The other semifinal features two of the tour's hottest players

phis semifinal with a 7-6 (7-4) 6-4 win over seventh seed Richey Reneberg. Martin advanced with a 6-4 7-6 (7-3) win over New Zealand's Brett Steven.

veed Nawaz and tight bowling by Dulip Liyanage gave visitors Sri Lanka A a five-wicket win over hosts Bangladesh in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Cricket Tournament here

Bangladesh scored 220 for nine in the stipulated 50 overs. Sri Lanka A, in reply, piled up 222 for five in

One-down Naveed Nawaz hammered a superb 88 before being caught by Enamul Huq Moni off Saiful Islam on 196 in the 41st

Man of the match Nawaz hit nine fours and a towering six off 106 balls. He was supported by skipper Ruwan Kalpage with an un-

Athar Ali Khan c and b Kalpage37
Javed Omar c Jayantha b Liyanage0

S. Hossain e Anurasiri b Liyanage.....76 A. Khan st Dissanayake b Chandana.54 H.Hossain b Liyanage......9

bridge of Australia will meet in the other semi.

running around ... a lot of long rallies."

Reneberg volleyed wide on match point.

fresh physically and mentally," Martin said.

best tennis here.

this year. - Reuter

6-4 and Woodbridge beat unseeded Jeff Tarango 6-3 6-1.

by Chang, who left the court to practice briefly on a sidecourt.

Alam c Jayantha b Liyanage ...

N.Durjoy run out........ Saiful Islam b Kalpage.

Zakir Hossain not out.. Extras (lb5 wb7 nb5).

Earlier Dulip Liyanage dismissed four noted batsmen conceding 42 runs off 10 overs. Ruwan Kalpage took two for 35.

Bangladesh's Sanwar Hossain hit brilliant 76 that included seven fours in his debut in first class cricket. Captain Akram Khan scored a fine 54 with four fours and two sixes. India A are to face Pakistan A to-

Bangladesh, who lost to Pakistan in the opening match on Wednesday, will take on India on February 26 in the last encounter.

Sri Lanka earned three points from two outings and will face Pakistan on February 25. So far Pakistan have two points, India one

and Bangladesh none.

The top two of the league will play in the final on February 28.

Ruwin Peiris c Masud b H. Hossain...12 C. Mendis c J.Omar c Z. Hossain8

Fall of wickets: 1-21, 2-30, 3-77, 4-

Bowling: H.Hossain 8.2-0-40-1, Zakin

Hossain 8-0-36-1, Saiful Islam 9-0-44-1, Athar Ali 8-0-40-1, N. Durjoy 5-0-21-0, E.Moni 2-0-11-1, Akram Khan

21-0, E.Moin 2-6 11 3-0-27-0. Result: Sri Lanka won by five wickets. Man of the Match: Naveed Nawaz. — AFP

Naveed Nawaz c Moni b Islam...... S.Jayantha c Durjoy b Moni W. Waragoda c Masud

b Athar Ali

Ruwan Kalpage not out... Upal Chandana not out ... Extras (lb3 wb24 nb2) ...

Total (43.2 overs, 5 wickets).

Lankans too Davenport stops Capriati; Coetzer out

OKLAHOMA CITY — Top-seeded Lindsay Davenport beat Jennifer Capriati my serve was very important. She returns serve so well. She hit a right forewhile second-seeded Amanda Coetzer was upset by Italian Francesca Lubiana in the quarterfinals of the \$164,250 IGA Tennis Classic.

Davenport polished off the fifth-seeded Capriati 6-3 6-4 while the 110thranked Lubiana shocked Coetzer, 12th in the rankings, 6-0 6-4.

Third seed Kimberly Po stopped Sandra Cacic 6-3 6-3 and fourth seed Lisa Raymond bested Pam Shriver 7-5 7-6 (7-1).

Davenport will meet Po and Raymond will take on Lubiana in semifinals.

Davenport, who is eighth in the WTA rankings but lost to Capriati in the semifinals of the Sydney International in Australia, jumped to a 3-0 lead in the first set before Capriati rallied to make it 3-2.

Davenport then broke Capriati's serve and won three of the final four games for the 6-3 victory.

Capriati, clearly the favourite of the capacity crowd of 2,400 fans, jumped to a 2-0 lead in the second set. Davenport broke her serve again and evened the

A double fault by Capriati allowed Davenport to break serve again and take a 4-3 lead.

Davenport held serve the rest of the way and closed out the match, which required just 59 minutes

"The match just lasted two sets, but it was really tough," she said. "Holding

hand one time that was one of the best shots I've ever seen. 'When I lost to her in January, I won the first set and she came back to beat

me in three sets. It was important for me to put it away this time.

Lubiana made Coetzer her second seeded victim of the tournament. She beat sixth-seeded Amy Frazier in the first round.

Lubiana, playing nearly flawless tennis, needed just 25 minutes to win the first set 6-0. The second set was more of a contest, featuring a single service

Tied 2-2, Lubiana broke Coetzer to go up 3-2. The South African missed three of four first serves in the game and double faulted once.

In Hanover, third seed Iva Majoli narrowly avoided defeat by France's Anne-Gaelle Sidot at the Hanover Grand Prix before fighting back to win their quarterfinal 4-6 7-6 6-4. Sidot made the early running with determined groundstrokes until Majoli, the world number nine from Croatia, finally took ontrol in second set tie-break.

Majoli's semifinal opponent will be Austria's Barbara Paulus who returned to form in 1996 after struggling for years with injuries and was one of three players nominated on Friday for the WTA's "comeback player of the year"

Paulus won through 7-6 6-4 against Miriam Oremans of the Netherlands,

second-round conqueror of second seed and German home favourite Anke Huber. The other semifinal pits Czech top seed Jana Novotna against Magdalena Maleeva of Bulgaria. Novotna cruised past Yelena Likhovtseva of Russia 6-4 6-2 and Maleeva beat Sandrine Testud of France 6-1 6-4.

The finalists for the WTA Tour's 1996 annual awards, to be awarded on March 19 at a gala in Miami, Florida:

Player of the year — Martina Hingis and Steffi Graf. Doubles team of the year — Martina Hingis/Helena Sukova, Lindsay. Dav-

enport/Mary Joe Fernandez, Jana Novotna/Arantxa Sanchez Vicario. Most improved player of the year - Irina Spirlea, Karina Habsudova, Mar-

Most impressive newcomer of the year — Patty Schnyder, Henrieta Nagyova, Anna Kournikova.

Comeback player of the year - Meredith McGrath, Barbara Paulus, Jennifer Capriati Karen Krantzcke sportsmanship award — Sabine Appelmans, Amy Frazier,

Yavuk Basuki

Player service award — Mariaan De Swardt, Marianne Werdel Witmeyer,

Aces award — Gabriela Sabatini, Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, Monica Seles.

Australians race to victory against Natal

DURBAN — Australia raced to an eight-wicket win inside three days over a depleted Natal side at Kingsmead here on Saturday bowling the home side out for 112 in their second innings and then quickly knocking off the 78 runs needed for victory.

Unorthodox left-arm spinner Michael Bevan claimed 4-19 in a stunning six-over post lunch spell, which saw Natal lose five wickets for just

Jonty Rhodes joined the growing list of South African Test casualties when he collapsed in the dressing room and had to be rushed off for emergency treatment at a nearby clinic. Rhodes was found to be suffering from dehydration after being laid low by a stomach bug.

According to the doctor who treated him, Rhodes's condition is not serious. "He'll be as right as rain in a couple of days," he said.

Rhodes's collapse was mild by comparison to that suffered by Natal, who saw their scheduled four-day against the Australians wrapped up in only three.

Although they lost two early wickets, the visitors had no trouble making the 78 runs required to seal their third successive tour win off

Australian spinner Shane Warne started the landslide by getting rid of both Natal openers Mark Bruyns (20) and Doug Watson (9) in an im-

eld on to a superb catch in the gully

paceman also got rid of Neil Johnson for zero, Natal were 4-65.

After that it was basically all over to Bevan, who totally mesmerised the Natal tailenders with his unusual repetoire. Only Errol Stewart showed any resistance and was unfortunate not to have been rewarded with at least a half century

Stewart was left stranded on 49. hitting five fours and one six, when last man in Tertius Bosch was clean And when Australia's young bowled by Glenn McGrath for 1.

Australian Mark Waugh in action against Natal at Kingsmead in

pressive morning spell of 2-25 off 13 Australia's matchwinning spinner had to leave the field for treatment to

a jarred knee, but before doing so, to help Jason Gillespie send Derek Crookes packing.

SCOREBOARD

Natal 1st innings 335 (M Bruyns 105, D Benkenstein 103, Gillespie 4-71, Bevan 3-56). Australia 1st innings 370 (M Waugh 124, M Bevan 52, Symcox 4-117, Gild-Natal 2nd innings
D Watson st Healy b Warne .
M Bruyns c Healy b Warne . N Johnson c Elliott b Gillespie D Benkenstein c sub b Bevan ... K Forde c Healy b Bevan P Symcox lbw b Bevan G Gilder c M Waugh b Bevan T Bosch b McGrath.
J Rhodes (absent ill)

Fall of wickets: 1-29, 2-36, 3-55, 4-65, 5-58, 6-84, 7-90, 8-109, 9-112. Bowling: McGrath 18.2-8-33-1 (nb1), Gillespie 10-6-14-2 (w1), Warne 13-6-25-2, M Waugh 1-0-1-0, Bevan 10-1-

Australia 2nd innings M Taylor c Johnson b Symcox M Hayden c Bruyns b Gilder I Healy not out Result: Australia won by 8 wkts.

marches into final

Extras (lb3, b1, w1, nb1)

4 in the semifinals of the million dollar European Community Champion-

ship here yesterday. The 70-minute victory put the 22-year-old Briton into his third final of the year. "This match was a big improvement," said Henman.

"I was consistent from the baseline and took my chances. I didn't want to stay out there and slug with him. It helped to keep him off guard and constantly changing direction. That's not his strong point," Henman added. Sixth-seeded Henman, 19th on the ATP Tour list, was aided by some woeful serving from the German. Goellner double faulted in his opening serve in both sets to give Henman early breaks.

Henman said he had been surprised that Goellner had not come to the net and played a baseline game.
"I spoke with him afterwards and

he said he expected me to serve and volley more. But I wanted to keep his targets to a minimum," Henman

ANTWERP — Britain's Tim Henman produced his best tennis of the week to defeat Marc Goellner 6-4, 6
and Henman, who is likely to move up to at least 15th in next week's rankings even if he does not win the utes against the world title, has occasionally hit with the British-based Goellner in London.

"I had one hiccough in the match when I lost serve in the second game of the second set. Perhaps I could have closed the match out faster," Henman commented.

"But this was the best of the four matches that I have played this week. When I broke for 3-2 in the second, I felt very comfortable. I hope there is still some more improvement for the final," he added. Henman was beaten by Jim Courier in Doha in the first week of January in the final, but won a trophy six days later over Spain's Australian Open finalist Carlos Moya in Sydney, the first ATP Tour title of the Oxford player's career.

In today's final he will face the winner of the other semifinal between

Czech Petr Korda and Marc Rosset of Earlier, Briton Tim Henman, the final surviving seed, reached the sem-

ifinals, taming Spaniard Francosco

Henman came through in 94 minclay-courter on the GreenSet hardcourt of the Sportpaleis. Goellner earned an easy trip into

the semis when Czech opponent Mar-tin Damm retired injured shortly after the start of their quarterfinal when he could not carry on due to an ankle sprained on Thursday night. Damm, ranked 48th in the world, had taken treatment for the problem during his second-round win over second seed Marcelo Rios. Goellner, the world No. 57, trailed 0-2 in the pair's career series, but was in complete control during the 15-minute contest as he broke the Czech for 2-0 and took a 3-

0 lead from an ace. In the afternoon session, 29-yearold Czech Petr Korda ended the upset hopes of Belgian qualifier Dick Norman, defeating the local player 6-3, 6-4 to reach his first semifinal of the year. Korda, 33rd on the ATP Tour list, spent just 59 minutes in taking victory over the Belgian, 236 in the world. — AFP, Reuter

Rhodes back in Test side

DURBAN — All-rounder Brian McMillan has been left out of the 12man South African squad for the first ing at the Wanderers in Johannesburg

on Friday. The team, announced vesterday, will show a possible two changes from that which played India in the third Test at the Wanderers last month, with Jacques Kallis replacing McMillan and Jonty Rhodes regaining his Test berth batting at num-

McMillan, who played a major part in South Africa's 2-0 Test victory over India, has been suffering from a recurring ankle ligament complaint. "We might have taken a gamble and played him, but we decided against that," selection convener Peter Pol-

While both Kallis and Adam Bacher have been named, Pollock said the former would definitely bat at number three. But that also didn't automatically rule Bacher out of the Test. "We have selected three openers," explained Pollock, "and Adam

is one of them. You can work that one out for yourself.'

The selectors could be looking at ing Bacher on his nome tur of seasoned opener Andrew Hudson. The attack is built around seamers Allan Donald, Lance Klusener, Shaun Pollock and Kallis, as well as spinner Paul Adams.

Adams and middle-order batsman Daryll Cullinan have also been laid up with injuires in the past week but, according to Pollock, both have been given a clean bill of health.

Pollock said Rhodes, despite collapsing from dehydration following a stomach complaint yesterday, would also be fit for action.

"It's good to have him back," he said. "His mere presence in the field makes a huge difference to the side. His value extends far beyond his av-

The squad: Andrew Hudson, Gary Kirsten, Adam Bacher, Jacques Kallis, Daryll Cullinan, Hansie Cronje (capt), Jonty Rhodes, Shaun Pollock, Lance Klusener, Dave Richardson, Allan Donald, Paul Adams. — AFP

West Indies want World Cup after every two years

ST JOHN'S (Antigua) -World Cup to be staged every two years instead of every four

Caribbean officials are also seeking to host the 2003 edition of the game's most prestigious limited overs tournament. The West Indies Cricket

Board (WICB) was meeting last night to finalise plans for its bid, ahead of an International Cricket Council (ICC) meeting in Malaysia next month, said board secretary Andrew Sealy.

England are hosting the next World Cup in 1999 and South Africa have been awarded the 2003 event, although the West Indies are still challenging for

They are also pushing to host an earlier World Cup if the ICC approves a proposal to have the tournament every two years instead of every four.

Sealy said on the Caribbean News Agency's (Cana) radio sports programme on Tuesday The West Indies have a twofold attack basically. "We feel that we are entitled

to the World Cup in 2003 but outside of that fact, we are also keen to have the World Cup changed from every four years to every two years, and we are suggesting that 2001 is when the next World Cup could be held after 1999."

At the ICC meeting in Malaysia, the WICB's position will be put forward by president Pat Rousseau, vice-president Julian Hunte and chief executive officer Steve Camacho.

The WICB is "cautiously optimistic" the final decision over the 2003 venue - not expected until the traditional full ICC meeting at Lord's in July - will be in its favour

Sealy said West Indies' proposal to host the World Cup would feature a strong effort from various facets of the region and must not be seen as purely a WICB venture.

The last World Cup was held in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka 12 months ago, and was won by Sri Lanka. - Reuter

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