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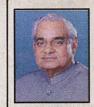
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1999

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PAKISTAN - PAGE 5 **Sharif vows to** fight terrorism in Karachi



INDIA - PAGE 12 Vajpayee hid N-test secret from Advani: Report



SPORTS - PAGE 16 Akram calls for 2-year ban on Calcutta



LEISURE The doomed brother and sister

Cable of thanks

MUSCAT — His Majesty Sultan Oaboos bin Said has received a cable of thanks from King Abdullah bin Hussein of Jordan in response to His Majesty's cable of condolences on the death of his father, King Hussein bin Talal. — 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 Jaber Al Sabah, emir of Kuwait, on the occasion of his country's national

HIS Majesty the Sultan has also sent a cable of greetings to President Kim Jong II of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on his birthday. — ONA

Sultan of Brunei receives Busaidi

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN -Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei Darussalam received Sayyid Ali bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, minister of interior, at Astana Noor Al Iman here in the Brunei capital yesterday.

During the meeting, Sayyid Ali conveyed His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah and His Majesty's good wishes for the people of Brunei's continued

progress and prosperity. Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah hailed the warm relations between Oman and Brunei and extended his greetings and good wishes to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people.

Present at the meeting from the Omani side were Sheikh Hamoud bin Nasser Al Hashemi, wali of Buraimi; and Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Riyami, the Sultanate's ambassador to Brunei Present 1 Brunei side were Behen Issa, adviser to the sultan of Brunei and Interior Minister, Dato Abedin, deputy minister of interior,

• Continued on Page 3



SYMPOSIUM ON COPYRIGHT: His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said, minister of national heritage and culture, and Maqbool bin Ali Sultan, minister of commerce and industry, during the opening session of a three-day symposium on the economic importance of intellectual property rights. • Report on Page 7

List of 12 new banned jobs will be out 'within weeks'

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — The Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour and Vocational Training is to unveil the exact nature of the 12 jobs that would be Omanised "in a matter of weeks", according to ministry sources. While the sources declined to unveil either the 12 professions that

would come under the Omanisation ban, or the exact date when this information would be made public, they made it clear that it is only a matter of time before a clear picture emerges.

"Maybe in two or three weeks, or maybe after a few months," one informed source said, adding that the information was classified at the moment and would be unveiled only by the minister of social affairs, labour and vocational training.

Sheikh Amer bin Shuwain Al Hosni had, at a meeting held at the Muscat Technical College with labour-inspection teams on Sunday, revealed that the ministry would in the future ban non-Omanis from

working in 12 other professions. However, he did not specify the jobs.

This unanswered question has created some uneasiness among those expatriates involved in lower categories of work.

workers — in short even blue-collar workers — may also be on the list. The question on every expatriate's (involved in lower grade profes-

sions) lip is whether they are going to be on the list.

There is no doubt that a day would come when almost all of the posts are filled with locals themselves, they said, adding that the authorities concerned were justified in doing so.

However, many wondered aloud if a quick decision on the exact

nature of the professions that are going to be Omanised would be made

"The sooner we get to know the position, the better it is for us," was

the general comment from many.

boys, launders, waiters, sandwich makers, tailors, construction workers

Some expatriates expressed concern whether the 12 included office

The buzz on in the market is that most of the labour class, unskilled

If this was revealed quickly enough, it would be mutually beneficial,

These are jobs that could be easily Omanised, and hence the worry.

Kosovo peace hangs in balance

RAMBOUILLET (France) -The Kosovo peace talks hung in the balance yesterday with no apparent signs of a breakthrough from the rival Serb and ethnic Albanian delegations, despite intense US pressure.

With less than 24 hours to go before toda's 1400GMT deadline for both sides to reach an accord on the embattled province, the Serbs were still opposed to a Nato presence in the majority Albanian province and the ethnic Albanians were insisting on guarantees of ultimate independence.

"There is nothing new in our position. We don't agree on the military aspects," Serbian President Milan Milutinovic said on a walkabout near the chateau where negotiators have been holed up since February 6. "First, we must have a politi-

cal accord and then we can discuss the scope and the character of implementation," he added.

"If we have a very good agree-ment we may discuss about the scope and the character of (an) international presence to fulfil an accepted agreement. But the six-nation Contact

Group on ex-Yugoslavia has from the start of the talks insisted that the rival Serb and ethnic Albanian delegations must reach a global accord comprising political and military aspects of their draft peace plan for Kosovo.

Pristina, Meanwhile in Yugoslav army tanks fired on fighters of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in northern Kosovo

yesterday, forcing thousands of

civilians to flee their homes.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees said the fighting had forced more than 4,000 people to flee. The tanks began firing after an

army convoy was attacked by KLA fighters in the Vucitrn region, 40km north of Pristina, said officials of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Washington yesterday piled up

the pressure on the Kosovars to agree to a peace deal in order to corner the Serbs into signing on as well. US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright met the Kosovo Albanian negotiators for the third consecutive day to convince them to jump on board ahead of the looming deadline.
"If we had the Kosovo

Albanians to agree, that would change the situation fundamentally," US State Department spokesman James Rubin said.

"Then we would be in the position to see a very real

prospect of Nato military action to concentrate on the minds of the Serbs." The North Atlantic Treaty

Organisation (Nato) has threatened to carry out air strikes against the Serbs if they block a deal, while the Albanian Kosovars face sanctions. "Only the credible threat and

Yugoslav President bring Slobodan Milosevic to understand the need to move to the military portion of this integrated agreement," Rubin said. - AFP

Allied jets attack Iraq facilities

WASHINGTON - US and British warplanes struck sites in northern and southern Iraq yesterday amid turmoil over the assassination of the country's top

US F-15E fighters and British GR1 Tornados struck two communications facilities and two weapons storage facilities near the southern port of Basra after two Iraqi MiG-23s entered a no-fly zone over southern Iraq, US military officials said.

In the north, US F-15s dropped more than 20 precision guided bombs on multiple Iraqi anti-aircraft artillery and radar sites near Mosul after being illuminated and fired on, the US European Command said.

The air strikes occurred against the backdrop of burgeoning unrest in the south in the wake of the assassination on Friday of Ayatollah Mohammed Sadek Al Sadr, the top cleric in "We continue to monitor the situation on ground and how it

might affect coalition forces in the region," said Major Joe Lamarca, a spokesman for the Tampa, Florida-based US Central Command. A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed there has been "some

unrest" since the assassination Friday of Ayatollah Mohammed Sadek Al Sadr, the top cleric in the country. When asked how significant

t was, the official said, "It's hard to say at this point.' But he played down its long-

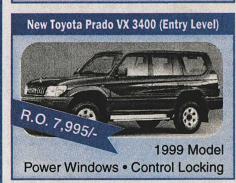
term impact, noting "they've had unrest in the past.' Iraq firmly denied that there

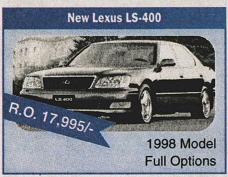
have been riots. But Iraqi opposition groups said protests and clashes with security forces have spread through towns in southern Iraq to Baghdad, where Iraqi sources said the death toll topped

A State Department official said the opposition reports were credible. If they are accurate, it would be the first widespread unrest against the regime since 1991, when uprisings in the south were crushed by Iraqi security forces and the Republican Guards. — AFP

Y TOYOTA'S AT UTO "CAR CITY" (Next to Al-Harthy Complex, Qurum) New Toyota Prado VX 3400 Super Special New Toyota Corolla 1.3 XL (Gold Edition)













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Briton offers millennium bug solution

LONDON — Patrick Bossert who solved the riddle of Rubik's cube has invented a test kit to detect where the millennium

computer bug will strike. At the age of 12, Patrick worked out his own solution to the Rubik's cube which was published by Penguin Books as You Can do the Cube, selling over 1.5 million copies worldwide in the following year.

This prompted him to develop his understanding of how computers work, and to go on to design his own computer sys-

While studying Electronic Engineering at the University of York, Patrick became a leading designer of embedded systems, thus laying the foundation for the invention of the Delta-T probe for detecting millennium bug problems in embedded systems.

Prior to his engagement at WSP, Patrick was technical director and co-founder of CDC (Central Data Control) Ltd, specialising in business solutions requiring the integrating embedded systems data into the IT information environment. Delta-T Probe is a programme that can work out whether microchips embedded in electronic equipment are likely to fail on January

1. 2000. Delta-T works by electronically detecting equipment to identify chips that process date and time, making it likely to malfunction when 1999 becomes 2000.

"Only a small percentage of systems will fail to recognise the next millennium, but finding out which ones might go wrong is a huge and costly process," said Bossert, now 30.



BOSSERT: Genius

Bossert estimates hundreds of millions of chips are buried deep inside equipment in Britain. The chips control devices such as security systems, fire alarms, production lines, medical equipment and telecommunications.

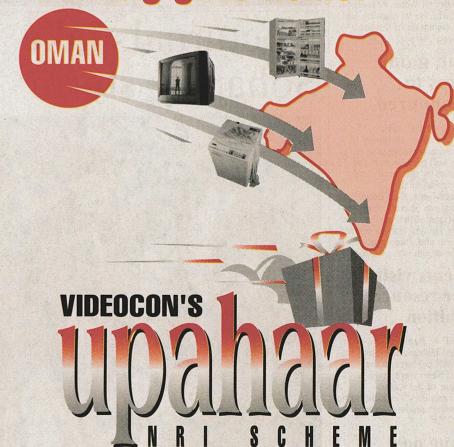
Bossert expects one in 500 embedded systems will take equipment back in time to January 1, 1900, causing equip-British supermarket chain

Sainsbury's Plc and British Airways are among major companies that have tested Delta-T. Sainsbury's said a trial run at one of its stores in Devon, southwestern England, had been a suc-

"We have been working on the millennium bug since 1995, and thanks to Delta-T Probe, we have confirmed that the work we have done on equipment with embedded chips has been spot on," said Trefor Hales, Sainsbury's director of retail systems and innovations.

• Continued on Page 4

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SUR — The Directorate-General of Health Services in the southern Sharqiyah region organised a workshop yesterday on heart and breathing revival under the auspices of Mohammed bin Khamis Al Farsi, director-general of health services in the southern Sharqiyah. Several specialists attended the workshop held at the Sur Central Hospital.

Al Farsi in his speech described the important aspects in health care, including training nurses to act in difficult situations. He said that some deaths resulting from heart attacks would be avoidable if the proper person was there to assist the patient until the arrival of the specialist team. The workshop includes theoretical and practical sessions. — ONA

AGCC meet on oil, gas begins today

MUSCAT — Salim bin Mohammed bin Sha'aban, under-secretary at the Ministry of Oil and Gas, left for Riyadh yesterday, heading a delegation to Arab Gulf Cooperation Council Oil Ministry undersecretaries' meeting at the AGCC secretariat-gen-

The meeting, which will be held today, will discuss progress on the AGCC states' gas distribution network project. Sha'aban was seen off by Oil and Gas Ministry officials. — ONA

Arab youth and sports ministers' meeting begins

ALGIERS — The Arab youth and sports ministers' council began its 22nd ordinary session

here yesterday.

The Omani delegation to the three-day meeting is headed by Sheikh Mohammed bin Marhoon bin Salim Al Ma'amari, president of the General Organisation for Youth Sports and Cultural Activities. — ONA

Educational delegation on UAE visit

MUSCAT — A five-man delegation from the Ministry of Education school inspectors is on a two-day visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as part of the 1999 Oman-UAE educational cooperation programme.

The delegation members will hold meetings with their UAE counterparts and discuss ways of improving school inspection methods and techniques. - ONA

14 graduate in meteorological observation

MUSCAT — Ahmed bin Said Al Rawahi, director-general of civil aviation and meteorology, presided over the graduation of the fourth batch of meteorological observers from the training centre of the Directorate-General of Civil Aviation and Meteorology yesterday.

Fourteen trainees graduated,

including four trainees from the Royal Navy of Oman, one from the Ministry of Water Resources and six from the forecasting and observation centre of the Seeb International Airport. — ONA

Scout, guide groups to be honoured

IBRA — Dr Khamis bin Mubarak Al Alawi, minister of regional municipalities and environment, will preside over the celebrations by the scouts and guides mission of the Directorate-General of Education in the northern Sharqiyah region in the wilayat of Ibra on Thursday. He will honour a number of scout and guide groups during the ceremony. — ONA

Students visit water resources exhibition

MUSCAT — Pupils of the Khurais Al Habous afternoon primary school for boys in the wilayat of Seeb were given a guided tour of the water resources ministry's exhibition on Oman's water resources yesterday. — ONA

Unique pool corner offer

MUSCAT — Al Jizzi Lounge of the Sohar Beach Hotel, which offers the hotel residents and members an elegant ambience and a 'game of pool' at the refurbished pool corner daily from 12.30pm to 3.00pm and from 6pm to midnight, is all set for a unique promotion, starting this month.

A selection of cigars and drinks will be offered on Wednesday evenings during the 'Weekend Nightcaps' promotion at the lounge



Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas presenting awards to the book fair participants. - ONA

Book fair participants honoured

MUSCAT — Abdul Aziz bin Mohammed Al Rowas, minister of information, and chairman of the Muscat international book fair committee, held an award-giving ceremony yesterday for the organisations, publishing houses and bookshops which are taking part in the fourth Muscat International Book Fair '99. The minister presented awards to the local media for their role in

covering the activities of the book fair, which concludes tomorrow. He also presented certificates of appreciation to several book fair

A luncheon was also held for the participants. It was attended by

Hamad bin Mohammed Al Rashdi, undersecretary of information; Salim bin Ismail bin Suwaid, secretary-general of Sultan Qaboos University; and Sheikh Mohammed bin Ahmed Al Harthy, undersecretary for national heritage affairs at the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture.

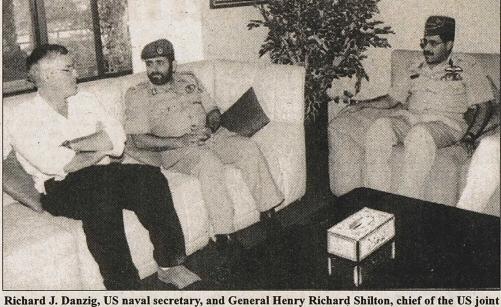
Around 300 publishers from 17 states including Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Sudan, Yemen, Morocco, Syria, the US, Germany, Lebanon, Egypt, Qatar, France, Iran and the Sultanate are taking part in the fair.

Thousands of titles on various topics are on display in both

Arabic and English on political scientific, religious, social, practical, medical, pharmaceutical, language, literary, philosophical, historical, and geographical, topics. There are also a number of children's books

The participating publishing houses are spread over 360 pavilions including 40 pavilions for 19 participants from the Sultanate. The main Omani exhibitors are Ministry of National Heritage and Culture, the Ministry of Information, Sultan Qaboos University, Omani Centre for Traditional Music, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry. - ONA

US naval secretary on visit



staff, arrived in Muscat yesterday. They were received on arrival at Seeb Air Base by Lieutenant-General Khamis bin Humaid bin Salim Al Kalbani, chief of staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces, Senior officers of the Sultan's Armed Forces and the American military attache in the Sultanate.



Nocturnals take Sohar by storm



The Nocturnals, an Indian band on its maiden visit to Sohar, has taken the city by storm with excellent renditions of the popular Hindi and Bengali song and dance sequences. The performance of the duo, Kajol and Kiran, who dance to the Bollywood hits and Bengali melodies sung by Sultana and Ashim, has been well appreciated.

Expedition team leaves Muqshin

MUQSHIN — The Canadian-Omani expedition left the wilayat of Muqshin in the governorate of Dhofar for the desert region of Umm Al Tabool yes-

The group, which is crossing the Empty Quarter on camels, has now travelled 401km since leaving Salalah.

They expect to reach Umm Al Tubool, 250km from Muqshin, by March 2.

The expedition set off from Salalah on February 2. It is travelling through the deserts of Oman to Aradah Al Uruq Al Shaibah in Saudi Arabia, and will end its journey in Liwa, near Abu Dhabi, at the end of

The group is following the same route as the one taken by the explorer Wilfred Thesiger in 1946. In doing so they hope to promote and publicise the Sultanate of Oman.

The journey is being recorded on film.

The expedition consists of three Canadian travellers Bruce Kirkby, the leader, and two brothers, Leigh and Jimmy Clarke — as well as three Omani bedouins from the Bait Kathir tribe, which lives in the Empty Quarter. They are Musallam bin Abdullah Rub'at Al Katheri, Ali bin Salim Al Hazar Al Kathiri and Salim bin Musallam Haramash Al Kathiri. The group is accompanied by twelve thoroughbred Arabian camels. — ONA



the year yesterday under the chairmanship of Malik bin Suleiman Al Ma'amari, minister of housing and chairman of the board.

Envelopes were opened for tenders to supply medical equip-ment for Sur hospital, improve the Dhahirah region's 132kV electricity grid and install two 33kV power lines from the Medinat Al Sultan Qaboos transformer station to the proposed Tenders were awarded with a

total value of RO19,184,370. They included an RO16,370,942 tender for a project to supply, install, test and operate equip-ment for extending the GSM network in the governorate of Muscat and the Batinah region, an RO1,071,428 tender for a project to construct the Omani embassy and ambassador's residence in New Delhi, an RO2.5 million tender for consultancy

tions Organisation and an RO242,000 tender for the Seeb International Airport automatic teleprinter project.

The board also discussed the question of standard labour and materials prices for electricity grid projects in 1999, as well as hospital catering, cleaning and pest control services and a number of other topics received from various ministries and government departments. — ONA

Ghassani opens ENT forum



A section of the participants with Dr Ghassani at the conference yesterday. Photo by Khamis bin Saif Al Saidi

MUSCAT — Dr Ahmed bin Abdul Qader Al Ghassani, undersecretary for health affairs at the Ministry of Health, inaugurated the fourth national conference on ENT, head and neck surgeons in the Sultanate yesterday in the presence of Khamis Al Zedjali, member of the Council of State and the director of Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

In his opening speech, Dr Ghassani highlighted the achievements of the hospitals in Oman in

the field of ENT, head and neck

surgery.

He called for making use of such scientific gatherings as forums of cooperation and inte-

gration. The scientific sessions of the conference will begin today.

Seminar on transformers



Pawel Prylinski and Ryszard Dabrowski addressing the

MUSCAT — ABB, in association with their sponsors Suhail and Saud Bahwan, conducted a seminar on Power Transformers at Hotel Mercure Al Falaj.

Representatives from the Ministry of Electricity and Water and leading consultants and electro-mechanical contractors attended the seminar.

ABB Elta, Poland, a member of ABB group, is specialised in the manufacturing of power transformers for generation, transmission and distribution network.

The production unit located in Lodz has facilities to manufacture 500MVA at 420kV. ABB is an ISO9001 and ISO14001 certified company.

Pawel Prylinski, export sales manager, and Ryszard Dabrowski, area sales manager, gave a presentation on the product and services offered by the company. ABB's country manager Thomas Jivung welcomed the delegates.



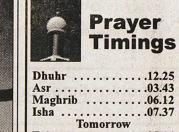
Al Khuwair Tel: 602565 (extension 172), 605400 (direct) Opening times: Saturday to Thursday: 9.00am to 1.00pm;

Oman Museum, Information City, Qurum, Telephone: 600946. Opening times: Saturday to Thursday 9.00am to 1.00pm; Children's Science Museum, Shati Al Qurum area, Qurum, Tel: 605368, 605369.

Opening times: Saturday to Thursday 9.00am to 1.00pm; Friday closed
Armed Forces Museum, Bait Al Falaj, Tel: 312655, 312646.

Opening times: Saturday to Thursday 8.00am to 1.00pm; Oman-French Museum, near Muscat Police Station, Tel: 736613.
Opening times: Saturday to

Wednesday 9.30am to 12.30pm Bait Al Zubair Opening times: Saturday to Thursday 9.00am to 12.30pm Mondays open for families 9pm to 11pm



EVENTS

Workshop on marketing problems of Omani factories at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry today at 9am.

Fajr05.14

• The ninth President's Cup sailing yacht regatta from Dubai to the governorate of Muscat begins on March 4.

• The Oman International Exhibition and Trade Co. in association with the Muscat Securities Market will organise a three-day 'World of Wealth' exhibition from March 16 at Hotel Hyatt Regency.

OMAN TV

News Bulletin Morning Coffee Children's Cartoor Children's Serial Cartoon Cartoon
Family Programme
News Bulletin
Omani Serial
Today's Dish
Words and Meaning
Cultural Programme
Arabic Serial Arabic Serial
Omani Classical Music
News Bulletin
Tennis
Cartoon
Children's Serial Religious Talks Handicraft Handicraft
News
Our Heroes
Star of Winds
English News Bulletin
Arabic Serial
Traditional Markets
International Book Fair
News News Poetry Evening by SQU Sports Evening Late Night News Arabic Serial Foreign Serial
Views on Oman
Light of Councils
Holy Quran
Rays on Civilisation
Football

Let us Learn Arabic Children's Cartoon **OMAN RADIO**

Opening, the Holy Quran, Preview of Morning Programmes and Weather Forecast, Pharmacies on

Forecast, Pharmacies on Duty
The Scientific Unattainable Marvels of the Holy Quran News Bulletin Light Melody Invitation to the Proms The World of Piano Music News Highlights Ramadanian Nights Classical Relaxation Preview of Afternoon Programmes and News Headlines, Pharmacies on Duty Noon Time Islam the Complete Code of Life Man and Health Music from the Netherlands News Headlines

News Headlines Ramadanian Delicacies Places of Interest
Weather Forecast and TV
Programmes
Jazz Beat

Jazz beat
News Bulletin
Studies in Islamic Culture
and Civilisation
Weather Forecast and
TV Programmes
Preview of Evening 03.00

Programmes
In Concert
Local News Bulletin
Ramadanian Delicacies
Sit Dalal Diary Oman in View The Blessed Month of The Blessed Month of Ramadan The Holy Quran Naii/Adhan/Duaa/Kaman Studies in Islamic Culture and Civilisation News Headlines Health is Wealth News Bulletin Weather Forecast and Pharmacies on Duty Short Story

06.00 06.02 06.30 06.04

Pharmacies on Duty Short Story Country and Western Spotlight The Holy Quran News Summary, Preview of Morning Programmes, Pharmacies on Duty, Close Down, National Anthem

WEATHER



Partly cloudy skies over Muhafadhat Musandam, Al Batina, Dhahira and Dakhiliya and mainly clear skies over the rest of the Sultante with chance of early morning fog over Dhahira.

Wind: Over Gulf of Oman and Dhahira winds will be southeast light at night becoming north to northwest light to moderate during day. Over the rest of the Sultanate winds will be south to southeast light to moderate.

Sea state: Over Oman coast, seas will be slight with a significant wave height of 1.0 metres.

Tides: Muscat Area
High 1.47am – Low 09:05am
Sunrise 06:34am – Sunset 06:07pm
Dhofar Area
High 01:19am – Low 09:03am
High 04:36pm – Low
——
Sunrise 06:46am – Sunset 6:28pm
Temperatures recorded in other cities: Muscat 26, Abu Dhabi 23, Dubai 25,

Sunrise 06:46am - Sunset 6:28pm Temperatures recorded in other cities: Muscat 26, Abu Dhabi 23, Dubai 25, Sharjah 25, Ras Al Khaimah 26, Doha 22, Manama 19, Riyadh 19, Makkah 35, Madinah 26, Jeddah 29, Kuwait 17, Sanaa 27, Aden 29, Mukalla 27, Baghdad 20, Beirut 17, Amman 14, Damascus 14, Cairo 18, Tehran 12, Karachi 28, Bombay 34, Ankara 06, Geneva 04, Brussels 05, Frankfurt 03, Paris 06, London 08, New York M08, Tokyo 01.

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Omani and Italian delegates at the joint session yesterday. - ONA

Oman-Italy private sector cooperation discussed

MUSCAT — A session of talks was held at Muscat Inter-Continental Hotel yesterday between the Sultanate, represented by the Omani Centre for Investment Promotion and Export Development (Ociped), and Italy to discuss ways of promoting cooperation between the Omani and Italian private

They discussed the competitive qualities of the Sultanate and Italy and reviewed cooperation in

setting up joint projects between the two countries, determining investment opportunities and finding a mechanism for continuous cooperation between the two sides in addition to drafting a future plan for cooperation.

The opening of the session was attended by Salim bin Naser Al Ismaily, executive president of the Ociped, and the Italian ambassador to the - ONA



The contestants of the QBB cooking competition.

Winners of cookery contest

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Ranjana Jain was adjudged winner of the recently 10th QBB cooking competition in the vegetarian

Jain stole the top slot with her delicious pan rolls in the event held at the Indian Social Club Lakshmy Ramakrishnan and Sunita Asher won the second and third spot for their dishes Alampana and Paprika Burgonia, respectively.

In the sweet dish category, the winner was Malina Dutia with

Marie/coconut rolls, with Devyani Sampat and Jinnifer Rodrigues with Ghevar and nutty cream carrot fantasy, respectively.

Kitchen gadgets from Kenwood and Braun were presented to the winners by Rajendra Ved, partner of Lakhoos and vice-chairman of ISC. OBB and Dabur gift hampers were presented to all participating

The QBB competition, which is an annual feature sponsored by Laxmidas Tharia Ved and Co, the local agents of QBB, always gets "We always get a great response," noted Freddie Printer, general manager of ISC, adding that this year too they had good

participation. The judges of the QBB competition were Hilla Sengupta, Asha Bhatia, Gayatri Dhar and Gauri Bahadur. "All of them have a great deal of experience in the culinary field and needless to say, they had a tough time, with array of mouth watering delicacies the participants had churned out," noted Freddie, himself a connoisseur of culinary

And if trophies and medals adorning the salon do not convince you of his 'international' stature, browse through his collection of photographs with beauty queens, models, celebrity singers and members of the royal family in Jordan.

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Crown of glory

for some, mane of agony for others. Yeah, we are talking about the quintessential hair.

Quintessential because even people sporting baldpates have bad hair days'. But then, who

But the solution isn't far.

It's time to let the hair down. It

is awaiting all beauty conscious

women at Muscat Inter-

Continental Hotel's beauty

salon. The solution comes in

international hairdresser George Sarkis, who will be at the Hotel

For connoisseurs of beauty

this side of the world, George Sarkis is an international

celebrity who has sniped and

tucked the hair of hundreds of

celebrities in France and other

homeland Lebanon.

parts of the world, including his

the neat guise of renowned

until March 15

doesn't?

Meet George Sarkis hairdresser, hair cutter, make-up and tattoo artist. His 'work of art' has received some of Europe's highest recognition. To his credit is the 'Oscar Beaute Nuptiale' International Oscar for Nuptial

The trophy was awarded at the International Hairdressing Festival held at Cannes sometime in 1993. Also included in the list of trophies



Let your hair down — here comes the dresser!

GEORGE SARKIS: He works wonders with hair

is the 'Oscar De La Mode', 'Oscar De L'Elegance', 'Coupe Du Monde', 'Coupe D'Europe', Golden Scissors Award ... the list seems endless. He is probably the only hairdresser entered in the Guinness Book of World Records. His name is mentioned as he was one of the international hair stylists at the 200th anniversary of the French Revolution to

His hands work magic. He can do wonders with the hair and the face and transform ordinary looks into special ones. An expert at tattooing, he can also give a permanent eyeliner or lip liner for women who never want to look dull and dowdy. However, his

recreate the historic characters.

entry into this field of beauty and fashion wasn't planned.

In fact, he had joined the university in the hope of becoming a doctor. But the beautician in him overtook the doctor. Destiny. The beautician streak in him

could be detected quite early, when as a school going kid he would become hairdresser for his sisters. At 14, he was getting requests to do bridal makeup and hairdressing for the bride's family. And expectedly, in 1974 he opened his own salon in Beirut. His friend and host in Muscat, Hussam Aldabbakah, who runs the beauty salon at the Muscat Inter-Continental Hotel.

acted as translator to George Sarkis, who speaks no English. But his work does not need language and it is not bound by the current trends in the fashion market. He says that the face and the hair on the woman dictate the style and the make up. Adept at creating accessories to go with the costumes, he can easily match the hairstyle with the dress worn

to give his client a complete look. George Sarkis, who arrived here early this month, was the main hairdresser and makeup man for the models who walked the ramp at a fashion show in Gulf Forum Hotel. He has since been attending to individual customers at the salon. He will

does he charge for a hair cut? Hold your breathe. It is as little as RO10 for a haircut. Of course, the price might vary depending on the complexity of the cut and the style. But as Hussam pointed out, the fee will be a nominal hike over the price normally quoted by the beauty salon. And this is definitely a treat for all fashion

conscious women of Muscat. A treat to be pampered at the hands of Sarkis who has dressed the hair of celebrities all over the world. Most famous

of them being Farah Fewcett. Besides being the official hairdresser for Miss France since 1993 and the hairdresser for models at Montana, Ungaro and Valentino fashion shows, George Sarkis has also been on the panel of judges for Miss Mediterranean in 1981.

Lebanese born Sarkis shifts his time between Paris and Jordan attending to models and the royal family. Paris, the fashion haven, has brought the best out of him. There he works as a fashion instructor at the Paris School of Hairdressing and also runs a beauty salon He also travels to Paris to learn about the latest in hairstyles and makeup. His art has taken him all over the world, except the Far East, where he hopes to

travel some day.

The artist in him has also sought to experiment with long tresses. He has created orchids and fruits like pineapple with the hair of some models. He has also cut the hair of some of his clients over the computer. Strange but true.

New drug regimen combination to help suppress HIV virus

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Long-term, durable suppression of the HIV (Human Immuno-deficiency Syndrome), the virus that cause Aids (Acquired Immuno-deficiency Syndrome), is possible if a patient is treated with a combination drug regimen, an MSD (Merck Sharp & Dohme) — a leading researchdriven pharmaceutical product and services company) — official told the *Times of Oman* yesterday.

The official was commenting on the latest news on HIV and Aids, when he made the above comment. The above fact was also released at a conference on retroviruses and opportunistic

infections held in the US recently.

Quoting official MSD versions, the official said that the inhibitor Crixivan protease (indinavir) in combination with ZDV (zidovudine) and 3TC continues (lamivudine) suppress viral load (HIV RNA years of treatment.

Crixivan is a trademark of Merck & Co. Currently, more than 180,000 patients worldwide are being treated with Crixivan, which is also the most widely studied protease inhibitor on the market. In the landmark study known

as Protocol 035, after up to three years (156 weeks) of treatment, 68 per cent of contributing patients (21 of 31) and 63 per cent (19 of managed has suppress/lower the viral load to varying levels.

Protocol 035 is the ongoing trial of a combination antiretroviral regimen, producing sustained reductions in viral load. "In addition to sustained viral

suppression, the triple therapy combination Crixivan also produced sustained and substantial increases in CD4 cell counts," the MSD official said. The study originally included 97 HIV positive patients who had

3TC or a protease inhibitor but had received ZDV, and with viral load level at least 20,000 copies/mL and CD4 cell counts between 50 -400mm3. Patients were initially randomised to receive one of three anti-retroviral regimens: Crixivan by itself (800mg every eight hours), or a combination of ZDV (200 mg every 12 hours) and 3TC (150mg every 12 hours) group.

Intent-to-treat analyses were Patients who conducted. remained in the study and those who discontinued the study for therapy related reasons (eg, increasing RNA, adverse events) or whose RNA was greater than or equal to 500copies/mL at the time of discontinuation were included in the analysis at the 156th week.

"In addition to testing CSF samples, the investigators also studied residual viral RNA and DNA levels in body compartments that are likely to support HIV

replication such as lymph nodes and genital secretions. After two years of treatment, the analysis could not detect the virus (limit of detection less than 50 copies/mL) in the genital secretions of 23 out of 26 patients. In some lymph node samples from these patients, only rare cells were seen that exhibited evidence of HIV replication.

In addition to these findings from Protocol 035, a number of other studies were also conducted, providing further scientific evidence to support the overall sustained efficacy of antiretroviral regimens which include Crixivan.

"These include the Crixivan in children and in combination with protease inhibitor (nelfinavir). Data demonstrating the tolerability of Crixivan and its positive impact on patient's quality of life, as well as new insights into resistance are also explored.'

Israel raids Hezbollah positions

TYRE (Lebanon) - Israeli warplanes staged a series of raids against southern yesterday after Hezbollah fighters attacked the Israeli-occupied buffer zone, Lebanese police said

There were no immediate reports of casualties. A couple of Israeli fighterbombers fired a total of five air-to-

ground missiles during three consecutive raids on suspected Hezbollah positions in a valley between Zebqine and Jbal Al Botom, east of the southern port city of Tyre, police said. In Israel, the military

confirmed that it had carried out the air raids. Fighters of Hezbollah's military wing responded by firing anti-aircraft rockets at the planes, without scoring hits, security sources said.

The air strikes followed a claim by the Hezbollah that its fighters had fired 10 mortar rounds on the Israeli army position in Blat, in the western sector of the occupied border enclave. - AFP

Doha to cut jail terms of prisoners who byheart Holy Quran

DOHA — Qatar's Emir His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani has decided to cut the jail sentences of prisoners who learn Holy Quran byheart, the official news agency QNA announced yesterday.

An Islamic Affairs Ministry

official, quoted by QNA, said inmates who memorised the whole of holy book would have their terms halved. Others would have part of their sentences

The offer — similar to one implemented in jails of neighbouring Saudi Arabia — is also open to non-Muslims, an Interior Ministry official added.

Jordan king retires 10 top army officers

AMMAN — Jordan's King Abdullah II has retired 10 top army officers including the deputy commander-in-chief in his first reshuffle of military ranks since taking the throne, a top Jordanian official said yesterday. The retirements, effective

from Thursday, were decided by the cabinet in line with the constitution on the advice of the 37-year-old king who ascended to the throne and became supreme commander of the armed forces on the death of his father King Hussein on February 7.

The new king's most significant move was to retire General Tahsin Shurdoum, the army's deputy commander who in charge of ground operations for nearly a decade.

He also retired General Eid Kamel Rweidan, in charge of military intelligence, General Azab, head Hamzi administration, and Brigadier Mahmoud Fahad, head personnel. — AFP

Brunei sultan receives Busaidi

Dato Hazayer, undersecretary at the Interior Ministry, and Behen Lim, political affairs undersecretary at the Foreign Ministry. A session of official bilateral talks was also held yesterday. The Omani side was headed by Sayyid Ali, while Behen Issa headed the Discussions focused on ways of expanding and reinforcing

bilateral relations in various spheres, particularly security. Sayyid Ali and his delegation visited the fire brigade department

headquarters yesterday. They were received with a speech of welcome by Dato Abedin, who hailed the strong relations between the two

Sayyid Ali and his delegation were given a briefing on Brunei and the responsibilities and functions of its Interior Ministry.

After the briefing, Sayyid Ali and his delegation toured an exhibition which had been organised to mark their visit. The

exhibition included pictures and models illustrating the activities of the Brunei Interior Ministry's departments.

The delegation also watched a live demonstration of a fire-fighting

and rescue operation.

The team is scheduled to attend a religious celebration at Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque here to mark Brunei's 15th National Day. The sultan of Brunei will be present at the event. — ONA



STORMS WREAK HAVOC: Many parts of the North Batinah region witnessed heavy storms and rainfall which wreaked havoc to the crops in the region last week. - Photo by Khamis bin Saif Al Saidi

MUBARAK GREETS SCALFARO: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak with Italian President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro at the Qurinale Palace yesterday. Mubarak is expected to urge Italy and Europe to shoulder a greater role in the Middle East peace efforts. He is also expected to discuss Egypt's partnership negotiations with the European Union as well as the Kosovo crisis. - Reuters

Rabin grandchildren shun Labour Party

JERUSALEM — The grandchildren of slain Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin have abandoned their grandfather's Labour Party to back a new centrist movement in May general elections, associates

Noa Ben Artzi, who moved television viewers around the world to tears with her eulogy to her grandfather at his 1995 funeral, and her brother Yonatan officially joined the Centre Party headed by Yitzhak Mordechai on Sunday, party officials said.

They were following in the footsteps of their mother, Dalia Rabin Filosof, who joined Mordechai earlier this month and was given the sixth slot on the Centre Party's list of candidates for parliament.

Rabin's widow Leah criticised her daughter for not entering politics with the Labour Party, which is struggling in its campaign to topple the right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "I regret my daughter's decision, I would have preferred her to join the Labour Party," Leah Rabin said. Noa and Yonatan Ben Artzi will work as volunteers on the Centre

Party's campaign, party officials said. Mordechai was fired last month as defence minister by Netanyahu

for negotiating with opposition groups ahead of May elections. He joined forces with a former military chief of staff, Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, and two other senior defectors from Netanyahu's Likud Party - former justice and finance minister Dan Meridor and former Tel Aviv mayor Roni Milo — to create the Centre Party. Opinion polls indicate the Centre Party could win 15 or more seats

in the 120-member parliament, becoming the third biggest Israeli party. Noa Ben Artzi came to world attention when she gave a moving eulogy during the funeral for her grandfather, who was gunned down by a right-wing Jewish extremist on November 4, 1995.

She later wrote a book about her childhood in the Rabin family. Labour Party leader Ehud Barak, a highly decorated former general and military chief of staff, is running against Netanyahu and Mordechai for the prime ministership, presenting himself as the spiritual heir to Rabin. — AFP

Divers to marry under Red Sea

CAIRO — A couple of British divers has decided to take the plunge and get married under the Red Sea, the wedding's organisers said yesterday. A spokeswoman for the Red Sea Centre for Diving and Safari told AFP the ceremony will be held later this month off the coast of the Red Sea resort of Mersa Al Alam, 800km south of Cairo.

She declined to give further details, but according to press reports published in Cairo the British pair will be clad in formal attire for the 20-minute wedding, which will be witnessed by 50 international divers. The reports did not say at what depth the wedding will take place but stressed that after the "I do's" are exchanged the wedding party will

Woman fined for floral attack of her pigeon

woman to pay 20,000 Lebanese pounds (\$13) or spend four days in jail because her pigeons pecked municipal flowers, judicial sources said

A municipal guard in Halba ticketed Watfa Hammoud, 39, because her pigeons and chicken were eating flowers and seeds planted by the

municipality, they said.

Hammoud was accused of failing to keep caged her birds which were "destroying plants and flowers in the municipal garden," they added. The woman said she cannot afford to to pay the fine and had been raising the creatures for a living. — AFP

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New York City seizes cars of drunken drivers

NEW YORK — New York City stepped up the war on drinking and driving yesterday, authorising police to seize the cars of

drunken drivers.
Under the initiative, any driver found behind the wheel of the car with a blood alcohol reading of 0.1 per cent will immediately forfeit their car in addition to any criminal proceedings for driving

under the influence.
The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) immediately announced it would challenge the decision in the courts.

"If someone has a few drinks and they don't hit anybody it's excessive to seize a 50,000 dollar asset," Norman Siegel, director of New York's ACLU branch told the Daily News.

The city — the first in the United States to take the step – announced a month ago that it would extend provisions used against drug traffickers to drunk

The regulations allow police to seize vehicles (boats, lorries, planes or cars) used in the commission of a crime.

In New York, the provision is already used to confiscate cars

used by prostitutes. In 1998, New York's police department made 6,368 arrests for drunken driving, according to

Kazakh woman mummifies mother

ALMATY — A woman in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan, saying she was unable to afford funeral costs, has been arrested after mummifying her dead mother and three other relatives, police said yester-

A police officer doing a routine check of documents noticed an odd smell coming from the woman's apartment, senior police inspector Rafik Valiyev said.

Taking a closer look, the officer found three corpses sitting against a wall and another in a cardboard box. The woman said they were relatives who had died from various illnesses.

The police said the woman, a graduate from a medical institute, explained she had mummified the bodies because she did not have enough money to pay for a burial. Autopsies were being done and murder charges had been filed against her. The police did not say how

she had mummified the corpses but newspapers said she had used an alcohol-based solution. Neighbours had ignored the

strong smell in the belief that it came from a local meat plant, the

Peru baby born on Fujimori's helicopter

LIMA — A Peruvian gave birth mid-flight in President Alberto Fujimori's helicopter as the 23year-old woman was evacuated from her village cut off by heavy rains on the country's northern coast, newspapers said yesterday.

Fujimori was on a helicopter trip on Sunday to inspect flood damage to several villages near the northern city of Chimbote when Peru's leader decided to fly pregnant Marcelina Rojas, who was suffering contractions, to a nearby hospital.

The woman gave birth before the helicopter, filled with top government officials as well as Fujimori, could reach the hospital in time. Fujimori's personal doctor supervised the delivery.

son Kenyi Alberto, after Fujimori and the president's youngest son.

Nigerian polls generally acceptable: US

WASHINGTON — The United States yesterday characterised Nigeria's weekend legislative elections as "not perfect" but "generally acceptable" and a step toward restoring civilian rule.

'There were some defects ... but we would characterise them as not perfect but an important step in Nigeria's return to civilian rule and part of a process that has been for the most part a positive one," a State Department official

"They were generally acceptable to the political parties and to most international and domestic observers," the official said.

In a statement, State Department deputy spokesman James Foley said the election appeared to have been "success-The people's Democratic Party of Olusegun Obasanjo has won majorities in both houses of parliament, taking 56 seats in the upper house and 181 in the lower chamber. — AFP, Reuters

Exercise boosts brain power, says study

WASHINGTON — Two reports published yesterday added to the overwhelming body of evidence that exercise is crucial not only to staying

alive, but to boosting brain power as well.

A review of studies for the American Heart Association found that regular, moderate exercise keeps blood pressure down, lowers cholesterol and reduces the risk of blood clots that cause heart attacks.

And a study published in the journal Nature Neuroscience showed that mice who engaged in regular exercise grew twice as many new brain cells as mice who sat in their cages.

"The difference was striking," Fred Gage, a neurologist at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California, said in a statement. "And because we know now that human brains also make new cells, it just might be that running or other vigorous exercise stimulates brain cell production in

Gage, a leading researcher into brain development, reported in November that human brain cells do divide and grow, something that doctors did not think could happen.

Conventional medical wisdom had held that the human brain is stat-

ic - once it is fully developed it cannot renew itself. Gage's team showed that belief was false.

In April, Gage's group showed that mice kept in cages with tunnels, toys and an exercise wheel grew more brain cells than bored mice. In the most recent study, the Salk team was trying to discover just what kind of exercise was most important.

They kept the "control" group of mice stuck in ordinary cages, and a "runner" group that of mice that were allowed to run as they pleased on an exercise wheel.

Two other groups of mice were designated as "swimmers." One group of swimmers had to learn a maze, while the other was just put in a shallow pool every day to swim.

The runners still grew more new brain cells than the swimmers. 'We don't know if it's the voluntary factor that's key — that is, the running mice were free to jump on or off the wheel as they liked — or if it's because the swimmers simply got less exercise," Gage said.

Gage said he is not sure if the exercising mice with more new brain cell growth also are smarter.

which has been linked by many studies to learning and memory. And the 'enriched' mice in previous studies performed better on learning tests.' ly affects learning ability.

Now the team is testing the mice to find out whether running direct-

cell growth takes place in the part of the brain called the hippocampus,

"But it seems reasonable to think they might be," he said. "The new

In the American Heart Association report, published in the group's ournal Circulation, Dr Roy Shephard of the University of Toronto and Gary Balady of Boston University Medical Centre performed an analysis of 100 different studies. They found that all studies consistently show that moderate exercise — enough to break a sweat — performed regularly can lower blood pressure, reduce cholesterol, reduce the overall risk of heart disease and prevent dangerous blood clots.

Exercise also helps people who have already suffered a heart attack heart disease, the review found.

And the benefits can be seen day to day. Patients have lower blood pressure on days they exercise than on days they do not, one study

RESCUE OPERATION: Workers searching for the missing persons yesterday. - Reuters

Avalanches batter western Europe

SION (Switzerland) — Two people were found dead in a car and at least 18 were still missing after avalanches hit Switzerland, Austria and Finland over the past

Harsh winter weather also trapped tens of thousands of tourists and threatened floods across large tracts of western

In Switzerland, rescue teams found two young people dead in their car yesterday after nine chalets were swept away by simultaneous avalanches which struck the villages of Villa and Le Sage in the southern canton of Valais late on Sunday.

Another eight people, includreported missing in avalanches in the area, while 200 people were evacuated by road.

Rescue attempts resumed yesterday after a break caused by avalanche risks.

In the Austrian Alps, two people were missing after an avalanche partly destroyed a restaurant in the Montafon valley. Eight staff members were

In western Austria, up to 30,000 tourists were holed up in ski resorts by heavy snow as authorities issued maximum ava-

Eight people were missing in apland in the north of Finland, believed swept away by an avalanche, police said. Avalanches also swept por-

tions of eastern Switzerland, blocking roads and forcing the closure until Thursday of the Gotthard tunnel, the main northsouth axis between Switzerland, Italy and Germany. The unprecedentedly heavy

snowfalls created transport chaos, with just one rail track operating on the key Bern to Fribourg line, authorities said.

In France the Alpine town of Chamonix closed off a number of roads and evacuated 200 people from neighbouring hamlets because of the risk of avalanches About 20 people have died in avalanches in the French Alps in the past two weeks.

Heavy flooding was reported northwest Switzerland, Germany and parts of France.

Yesterday, navigation on the Rhine river between Basel and Mannheim in Germany was banned, river authorities said. Water volume was expected to hit record levels overnight. Embankments would be sandbagged, they said.

In the eastern French region

of Savoie, meanwhile, three mountain walkers who set out last week were reported still missing in snowstorms. Rescuers looking for them were forced to hole up in an emergency hut overnight Sunday, officials

In Italy, Cervinia resort on Mount Cervin across the border from Zermatt was closed because of avalanche risks and heavy overnight snowfalls, rescue serv-

In western Austria, traffic was severely disrupted in Tyrol and Vorarlberg Helicopters were used to fly supplies to villages, including at least four ski resorts, cut off from the outside world said.

On Saturday, some 100 tourists including Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and Princess Caroline of Monaco were evacuated by helicopter from the fashionable ski resort of Lech, authorities said.

The bad weather also brought chaotic road traffic conditions. Two people were killed in a car pile-up in thick fog on the Milan-Parma motorway in northern Italy, police said.

The motorway is currently closed in both directions. - AFP

Blair govt faces press criticism over court move

- Britain's Labour government faced down a storm of criticism yesterday after trying and failing to gag a leak of an explosive report on racism in London's police.

Home Secretary Jack Straw told parliament he was unrepen-tant about going to court on Saturday night to try to stop newspapers publishing details of the highly sensitive report into how police bungled their investigation of a racial murder.

According to the Sunday Telegraph, which published the story in its first edition, the report by a retired judge into the murder of black London teenager Stephen Lawrence contains devastating criticism of the capital's police. Due to be published tomorrow,

the independent inquiry's findings accuses the London Metropolitan "institutionalised racism" in its investigation into the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993. In a weekend of high drama,

Straw late on Saturday obtained a court injunction against the Sunday Telegraph.

But the story had already been carried in first editions of the

newspaper, and less than 24 hours later the Telegraph and other papers succeeded in a partial lifting of the ban. Straw defended his actions.

insisting that the leaking of the report was "profoundly unfair" to the family of the murdered black

Radioactivity

may pinpoint

people at risk of

heart problems

teenager, the police officers involved and to parliament as well. But this argument was roundly rejected by national newspaper editors.

The Sun, the four-million-selling tabloid which dramatically switched support to Labour from the Conservatives before the May 1997 election, yesterday launched a front-page broadside against the Blair administration.

"Is this the most arrogant cab-inet in history?" it asked above a front page photo of Blair and his In an uncharacteristically long

two-page editorial, Britain's biggest newspaper lashed at Labour's "control-freak" tenden-"What got up the govern-ment's nose was that the press was

controlling the agenda. And the — at least, the national papers - have been declared the enemy because most of us refuse to toe the line and be Labour lapdogs."
The liberal Guardian broad-

sheet argued that the affair had 'exposed the frailty of what should be one of our most basic human liberties and supplied a glimpse of what seems an alarmngly authoritarian streak at the highest levels of government."

No state secret had been revealed and national security was not at risk, making a court injunction indefensible, underlined the

"When a government bans the media from reporting a story it must have a good reason to do so. 'Instead this was a fit of pique

that the carefully planned "spin" for the launch of the report on Wednesday has been upset," the newspaper alleged.

Last year, the government blocked the British media from reprinting MI5 agent David Shayler's allegations about the involvement of British security services in an attempted assassi-nation of Libyan leader Muammar

And in an earlier episode, Straw prevented the identity of his son — arrested for selling drugs to an undercover journalist — from being made public under the justification that a minor's privacy had to be protected.

Neither measures were popular, but were respected until the information leaked out elsewhere Labour, which before taking

office in the landslide 1997 election, honed the skills of controlling press coverage through an army of "spin doctors", has long been accused of trying to keep the same tight leash in government.

It drew the ire of Fleet Street

last month, when after a series of newspaper revelations about the high-spending habits of cabinet ministers, it tried to limit London newspapers' influence by turning to other media seen as more com-

Alarming rise in antibiotic resistance of bladder infections

CHICAGO — A study by Washington state researchers is highlighting an alarming rise in the resistance of several urinary tract infections to commonly prescribed antibiotics.

Kal Gupta and colleagues at the University of Washington in Seattle studied antibiotic resistance in more than 4,000 women diagnosed with acute cystitis, or bladder infections, the most common urinary tract infection, between 1992 and 1996.

The study, published in the latest issue of *The Journal of the* American Medical Association, found that Escherichia coli and Staphylococcus saprophyticus represented more than 90 per cent of pathogens found in the urine samples collected at outpatient

The prevalence of resistance among E. coli and all pathogens combined was more than 20 per cent for ampicillin, cephalothin and sulfamethoxazole in each year

The prevalence of resistance to trimethoprim and trimethoprimsulfamethoxazole jumped from more than nine per cent in 1992 to more than 18 per cent in 1996 among E. coli, and from eight per cent to 16 per cent among all iso-lates combined, the researchers

By contrast, the prevalence of resistance to nitrofurantoin, gentamicin and ciprofloxacin hydrochloride was 0 per cent to 2 per cent among E. coli and less than 10 per cent among all pathogens combined, and did not change significantly during the five-year period.

"The high prevalence of resistance to ampicillin and cephaloth-

in, has long been appreciated and precludes their use in empirical treatment," the authors wrote.
"Of considerably greater concern is the increasing prevalence

of resistance to trimethoprim and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole that we observed.' They warned that the data suggested that trimethoprim and trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole,

currently commonly used to treat acute cystitis, "may not be acceptable choices for empirical therapy for much longer."

With frequent use, antibiotics tend to lose their effectiveness against bacterial strains, the authors noted, adding that as a result, rates of resistance of bacteria to a particular antibiotic vary from community to community, depending on which antibiotics are commonly prescribed.

They said that when resistance to trimethoprim or trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole exceeds 15 per cent to 20 per cent in a community, those drugs should not be used routinely to treat acute cystitis.

— AFP

Babies at risk from untested drugs: Report

LONDON — Babies are being put at risk because they are being given drugs that have only been tested on adults, British researchers said here.

Although licensed for adults, many of the drugs are offered to children in modified forms and different doses from those in which they were originally tested. "It's quite a serious problem,"

Sharon Conroy, a research pharmacist, said in an interview. "I wouldn't say children are

dying as a result but we really don't know. What I will say is that we cannot be sure that the drugs we use are safe and effective in the ways we are using them. because we haven't got any trial data to support what we are Conroy and her colleagues at

the Academic Division of Child Health at the University of Nottingham in central England called for urgent action and more research to make sure the drugs and doses were safe for very young children.
"We need funding from the pharmaceutical industry and the

government to take this problem seriously and to set up units so that trials can be organised on children in a controlled way," Conroy added. Before a drug is licensed for use it must be tested in a series of

clinical trials to prove its efficacy and safety. - Reuters

Supplement helps chronic fatigue

WASHINGTON - A nutritional supplement based on an energy-giving natural enzyme can help in some cases of chronic fatigue syndrome, researchers said yesterday.

A team at Georgetown University in Washington tested the supplement, Enada, and found it helped as many as 72 per cent of patients with the baffling

Americans have been diagnosed with chronic fatigue syndrome, and an estimated two million people believe they have it. In the Georgetown study, approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Dr Joseph Bellanti and colleagues

equivalent of a Phase II safety and efficacy trial. For four weeks half the patients got Enada and half got placebos.

said they tested 26 patients in the

For the next month both groups got nothing, then the groups were switched — and the volunteers who got Enada the first time got a placebo for the next four weeks, while the second group got the supplement.

Neither group knew which they were getting at the time, placebo or supplement.

Writing in the Annals of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology, Bellanti's team said 31 per cent of the patients said their symptoms got better while they took Enada, as opposed to 8 per cent of those on placebo.

Then the researchers opened the trial, allowing all the volunteers to knowingly take Enada. After a year 72 per cent reported

Enada is the brand name of the company's version of a natural substance known as nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide plue high-energy hydrogen

part of the chemical reaction that enzymes produce in the body. According to Menuco, the more NADH a cell has, the more energy it has. The company

It is a co-enzyme — the active

hopes that can translate up to the level of a whole human being.
Unlike many supplement companies, Menuco went through some of the FDA protocols for testing.

They were not required to. In December Hemispherx Biopharma Inc. applied for European Union approval of the first-ever drug to treat chronic fatigue syndrome. The drug, Ampligen, is also being tested for FDA approval. It

consists of hydrocortisone, a synthetic version of one of the corticosteroid hormones produced by the adrenal gland. Chronic fatigue syndrome is hard to define, marked mainly

Sometimes called myalgic encephalomyelitis, some doctors attribute it to psychological rather than physical causes.

by an unexplained lack of ener-

Others say a virus, perhaps Epstein-Barr virus, may cause it, or perhaps an autoimmune disorder in which the body's immune system mistakenly turns against itself. - Reuters

Was Napoleon a third-generation Scotsman?

LONDON — French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte may have a third-generation Scotsman, grandson of a labourer who fled his native land for Corsica, according to a Scottish

historian cited yesterday. Robert Torrens, a historian from Perth, in central Scotland, uncovered an 1881 book on the "traditions" and "characters" of the small town of Crieff, which linked Napoleon to a certain William Bayne, an agricultural labourer.

He was a fervent Scottish nationalist, a sworn enemy of the English, against whom Napoleon fought many battles.

Partisans of "Bonnie Prince Charlie," who led a revolt against the English, Bayne and his family had to flee Scotland in 1745 after the prince's defeat, the historian told the Daily

Telegraph. Setting sail in a boat, the Bayne family were driven by a storm to the coast of Corsica.

According to the book uncovered by the historian, the Baynes, warmly welcomed by the local population, then experienced a subtle change of identity as new generations were born on Corsican soil.

"Bayne and his party" became "Buon-de-party", then "Buon de Parte", and

Although saying that the 1881 archives were "highly thought of' at the time, the historian concedes that it will be difficult to prove the claim as William Bayne left no descendant in Scotland. — AFP

Briton offers Y2K solution

WASHINGTON — Taking From Page 1 images of the heart after exercise using radioactive materials can The primary function of the help pinpoint people at increased Delta-T probe is to detect the presrisk for cardiac problems, ence of clock information within

embedded systems.

and date information.

If time and date information is

found, the probe is able to locate

and store the sections of code

being executed by the embedded

system which manipulate the time

possible to determine whether the

system will fail as the year date

changes from 99 to 00. The Delta-

T probe has been likened to an

electronic version of an X-ray -

in a matter of minutes it can 'see

the code and data being executed

within a system without interfer-

ing with the system's operation.

By analysis of this code it is

according to a report published in the journal, Circulation yester-Generally, prior studies have shown that people who demonstrated exercise endurance have a negligible risk of future heart problems. But in the study in the Journal of the American Heart

Association, US researchers

found that there is a subgroup of

people who can exercise for long

periods but still have "a signifi-

cantly higher risk for heart prob-"We can identify through MPI (myocardial perfusion imaging) those at relatively high risk of having a heart attack, sud-den death, or the need for bypass surgery or balloon angioplasty to open clogged vessels," said Sofia Chatziioannou, one of the

authors of the study. The team from Baylor College of Medicine and St Luke's Episcopal Hospital/Texas

Heart Institute in Houston, Texas carried out tests on 388 people.

The team asked the patients to run on a treadmill for nine minutes, and then injected them with radioactive material to measure blood flow to the heart. The doctors then used a scan

of the heart, called a radioisotope

image to see where and how

much of the radioactive material

is flowing to the heart. — AFP

counts against him.

wife, Primrose, and their son.

and expert analysis indicates the severity and course of action. The only alternative approach used to date is to remove the chip containing the code and examine the code off-line, which is both invasive and can take weeks to do. So how does the Delta-T probe

work? It relies on the principle that industrial embedded systems rely a number of common components, comprising a processor, ROM (which holds the code), RAM (the system memory) and possibly an RTC (real time clock). The probe works by connecting to some of the ICs (chips) using specialised test clips, and scanning data written into by the micro-processor into RAM for data values identifiable as clock. Any clock data found is displayed to

the probe operator.

The Delta-T Probe also stores each instruction the processor fetches from the ROM in a sliding buffer, which provides a window onto the code being executed. By triggering on the RAM access on clock data, or a value being read from the RTC chip, it is possible to freeze the code window so that the code leading up to and immediately after the clock data access is captured.

This code sample can be sent by email from the Delta-T probe to validation service, where it is first checked against other known samples from systems using a similar microprocessor. Who is it designed for? Field service personnel with an elemen-

Initial inspection of the results shows whether there is a problem, tary understanding of what embedded systems are and do. This includes, but is by no means limited to, electrical engineers, facilities managers, and maintenance engineers. The software supplied with the Delta-T probe makes locating and identifying different types of ICs easy, by providing a smart search facility complete with pictures and instructions on how to connect the clips.

Some elementary training is required, but the hardware and software have been designed to minimise the time required for deployment. It is a much-needed tool to enable rapid testing of embedded systems, given the time-pressure presented by the ever-approaching millennium deadline. — Agencies

patients

his women patients after police added a further seven murder The doctor is charged with

> including three in as many weeks in January-February of last year. During their investigation, police have so far exhumed more

than 12 ex-patients of Shipman. In each case, autopsies showed they did not die of natural causes.

The doctor was the last to have seen the patients alive and signed their death certificates. Police have said that more bodies may be exhumed, as they of the police in June last year when the daughter of the oldest of alleged victims, widow Kathleen Grundy, 81, complained that her mother had changed her will in the doctor's favour. Angela Woodruff was shocked

when her mother, in good health for a woman of her age, then died suddenly two weeks later.

Shipman denied her murder and having forged the widow's £300,000 (\$500,00044) will so

that all the money came to him. The doctor, who is in custody, has faced multiple proceedings in a number of different courts as more charges are laid against him. Every few weeks he emerges from

jail for a fresh court appearance.

first murder charge has been set for October. If doctor Shipman was found

guilty of all the murders, he would go down in the history books as one of the world's worst serialkillers. The "butcher of Rostov", Russian Andrey Tchikatilo, was found guilty of 52 murders between 1978 and 1990. The French doctor Petiot, executed in 1946, had 27 murders to his name.

In Britain, the last major murder trial was that of Rosemary West, condemned in November 1995 to a life sentence for 10 murders. In the "House of Horrors" where she lived with her husband Fred, who committed suicide in prison, 10 bodies were found, including their own daughters.

Doctor accused of killing 15 British family doctor stood accused yesterday of killing 15 of Wagstaff, 81, Maureen Alice Ward, 57, Pamela Hillier, 68, belt surrounding Manchester. Shipman came to the attention Marie West, 81 and Lizzie Adams,

charges to the eight he already murdering 15 mainly elderly patients between 1995 and 1998, The bearded, bespectacled 52year-old doctor appeared in court briefly to hear the fresh murder

Harold Shipman, who practices in Hyde, near Manchester in northwest England, spoke only to confirm his name, address and that he understood the nature of the

He was accompanied by his During the five-minute hearing intend to examine every single at Tameside magistrate's court, the names of his latest alleged victims death among his former patients, a were read out: Muriel Grimshaw, total of more than 50 in a small

ISLAMABAD — Chinese Defence Minister General Chi Haotian ended yesterday a fourday visit that officials said focussed on strengthening defence cooperation with Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz

saw him off at a military air base. Chi, who is also vicechairman of China's central military commission, held talks with senior civil and military officials, besides meeting President Mohammed Rafiq Tarar and Prime Minister Nawaz

Officials said the visit would lead to further consolidation of close ties between the long-term

Sharif told Chi here on Saturday, the "strategic' cooperation between Pakistan and China was critical for peace and stability in South Asia.

The official APP news agency

quoted Foreign Minister Aziz as saying agreements reached during the visit would strengthen ties and "start a new phase of

relationship."
Aziz, who did not give details of the agreements, said the reaffirmation of the "strong ties both in the defence and economic fields at this particular time is of

great importance to us."
Chi said Pakistan and China would continue to develop understanding beneficial for

He said the younger generations of the two countries would enhance the cooperation following in the footsteps of their

The senior-most official at the Pakistani Defence Ministry, retired lieutenant general Iftikhar Ali Khan, said China had been a source of "invaluable" defence assistance, particularly in defence

The high-profile Chinese visit coincided with a landmark weekend summit between Pakistan and India in Lahore

During his stay here Chi expressed China's support to Pakistan-India dialogue for peace

UN Afghan envoy in Pakistan for peace talks

ISLAMABAD — The United Nations special envoy for Afghanistan arrived in Pakistan for talks on efforts to end the Afghan civil war, UN officials said yesterday.

Algerian diplomat Lakhdar ranimi, who arrived in Islamabad on Sunday night, is also expected to visit Iran, Russia and Central Asian countries during his tour of the region.

Brahimi, who last visited Pakistan in December, had a meeting with Pakistani Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz in Islamabad yesterday.

Pakistan is a member of the so-called UN-sponsored "sixplus-two" group seeking a peaceful settlement to the Afghan war. The group comprises six countries with common borders. with Afghanistan — Pakistan, China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan plus the United States and

The UN envoy is expected to meet representatives of Afghanistan's ruling Taleban militia and other Afghan groups during his two-week stay in Pakistan, Pakistan's official APP news agency said.
Brahimi's visit follows one by

Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Borish Shikhmurodov last month in which Pakistan and Turkmenistan called for a formation of "a broad-based and multi-ethnic government" in the war-torn country. Pakistan is one of only three

countries that have extended diplomatic recognition to the Taleban administration.

Yeltsin lavishes awards on Russian military

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin lavished awards and praise on members of the military top brass and security chiefs yesterday to mark Russia's army

Yeltsin, keen to reassert his authority after poor health, thanked the security forces for their work at a Kremlin ceremony on the eve of the Defenders of the Motherland Day, a holiday initially

introduced to celebrate the birthday of the Red Army. "With your perfect service for the good of the Motherland you have once again proved that the power of the spirit, courage and

valour are not just empty words," Itar-Tass news agency quoted

Yeltsin as telling the officers. Three of them received the highest honorary rank of Hero of the Russian Federation.

- Reuters, AFP



BUS ON FIRE: Activists setting a bus ablaze on a Karachi street early yesterday on receiving news that 500 of their workers, including their leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed, have been arrested in Lahore city after police used tear gas and baton charge to disperse

Sharif vows to fight terrorism in Karachi

KARACHI — Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif vowed yesterday to pursue his fight against terrorism in Karachi, despite a setback to his project to crush it through military courts.

"Do not be afraid of terrorists and continue to fight those who have disturbed the peace of the city, he told a gathering of thousands of policemen and relatives of officers killed in the past four years.

He distributed close to a million dollars among families of 80 policemen killed in four years. Pakistan's largest city has witnessed more than 3,500 killings over the past few years in political,

ethnic and religious violence... In October Sharif clamped direct federal on Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital, after dismissing the elected provincial government.

He set up military courts to try civilians, but abolished the tribunals this month after the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional and illegal.

The court asked the government to rely on the special anti-terrorism courts set up under a 1997 law to try suspects and increase their number to cope

In a broadcast to the nation on Friday Sharif said he would honour the verdict and carry on his "war" against terrorism in line with the judicial

in

LOS ANGELES — Shakespeare

In Love walked off with the

Writers' Guild Award for best

screenplay written directly for

the screen in the latest

The 51st annual Writers Guild

Awards, held on Saturday evening in Beverly Hills, was the

latest awards show to honour the

surprise hit comedy, which this month carried off 13 Oscar

nominations — more than any other film nominated by the

Academy of Motion Picture Arts

as Hollywood gears up for the Academy Awards — the film

which will be held on March 21.

The Oscars are likely to be a

battle of love and war as the

romantic comedy hit Shakespeare

goes up against Steven Spielberg's epic war drama

Saving Private Ryan, which

Ryan was among four other

received 11 Oscar nominations.

world's most coveted awards -

Awards season is in full swing

and Sciences this year.

trophy-yielding event

Hollywood.

booster" for the force. They said around 450 policemen were killed in attacks by terrorists in Karachi since 1994 and blamed "terrorists" allegedly belonging to the ethnic-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) for the

'Shakespeare' script takes

US Writers' Guild Award

films competing on Saturday for

the Writers Guild screenplay

award. Other contenders were

Bulworth by writer/actor/director

Warren Beatty and Jeremy Pikser, The Opposite of Sex, by Don Roos and The Truman Show by

Shakespeare starring Gwyneth

Paltrow as an aristocrat whose

love inspires the Bard to make

major changes to a play he was

writing tentatively called Romeo

and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter,

also walked off with Golden

Globe awards last month for best

comedy film award, best screenplay and best actress in a

Award on Saturday night,

Shakespeare co-writer Marc Norman said, "I think this award

is special because it is given to

people like us from people like

Guild of America represents

writers in the motion picture,

Founded in 1933, the Writers

In accepting the Writers Guild

Romantic comedy hit

Andrew Niccol.

comedy last month.

The MQM, which represents the Urdu-speaking settler community that arrived here after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, is at loggerheads with

The party accuses the government of persecuting

the community and waging a "ruthless" campaign to crush the MQM. -AFP

broadcast, cable and new media

much as it resonates from the

middle ages and connotes craftsmanship," said celebrated playwright Tom Stoppard, who

co-wrote Shakespeare with

"I still feel like an import from the London theatre," he said, but

added he hopes to do more work in Hollywood. "

Kidman. Here, you got me. That's just how it works!," he said,

referring to Kidman's recent

critically-acclaimed London

stage performance in The Blue

Room, which has been hailed as

began as a poolside gathering at

the Bel Air Hotel in 1949 and

soon attracted the biggest stars in Hollywood. Stars like Brooke

Shields, James Coburn and Kirk

Douglas were on hand on

Saturday night to present the

The Writers Guild Awards

"pure theatrical Viagra."

awards. - Reuters

In London, we got Nicole

"I like the word guild very

How can I forget those images," a widow told the

lost his two sons including a policeman in 1997.

Senior police official Aziz Farooqi said he had

Police officials said the ceremony was a "morale

cooperate on visas, He complained that his efforts since coming to power in 1997 to change the status quo and ensure speedy justice had been obstructed by vested Relatives of the slain policemen described to the bug, POWs gathering yesterday how their sons and husbands were gunned down by terrorists. "My husband and brother-in-law were killed mercilessly by terrorists in front of my own eyes.

LAHORE ministers of India and Pakistan will review the outcome of the Vajpayee-Sharif Lahore summit meeting shortly.

"The modalities for the meeting will be worked out Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz said in news reports here yesterday. The decisions of the summit would be followed and implemented, he added.

In fact, he added, the foreign ministers would be henceforth meeting periodically "to discuss all issues of mutual concern including the nuclear-related

Aziz said both Islamabad and New Delhi had agreed to relax visa restrictions and certain categories of passengers would be identified to extend this facility.

"The condition of reporting to the police will be waived off and visa staff increased in both countries," he added.

India and Pakistan, Aziz said would also undertake consultations on World Trade Organisation-related issues with a view to coordinating their respective positions.

Both countries will also determine areas of cooperation in the information technology field, in particular for tackling the problems of Y2K, the Millennium Bug.

"We also decided on appointing a committee at the ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues relating to civilian detainees and missing prisoners of war [POWs]," Aziz added.

Pakistani The foreign minister also informed that New Delhi would support Islamabad in securing the membership of the Indian Ocean Rim countries at the meeting of the body being held next year. — Internews

Pakistan, India to millennium

yesterday criticised Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for not pushing India to sign a nuclear agreement during a weekend summit.

Benazir said in a statement released by her Pakistan People's Party that Sharif "missed a golden opportunity for both India and Pakistan to jointly announce the signing of the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) during the summit

Sharif and India's Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee agreed at the weekend meeting to notify each other about ballistic missile tests, extend their moratoria on further test explosions and to notify each other immediately of accidental or unauthorised incidents that could create the risk of

escalating tension. They also pledged to establish means of communica-

security was in the "supreme national interests" of both sides.

Indo-Pak summit

to Lahore yesterday after violent protests surrounding the landmark Pakistan-India summit which was shall do the same, to translate this

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his Indian counterpart Atal Behari Vajpayee pledged in the border city of Lahore to work to reduce the risk of nuclear war and resolve disputes - including their centrestage conflict over Kashmir. final settlement of Jammu and

But thousands of police and paramilitary troops were needed to battle two days of clashes around the talks.

hailed by both countries.

Police said they had freed top leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami but around 1,000 workers of the party remained in custody in Lahore.

Some 150 people were injured

and a police constable died from bullet wounds during street fights. The Pakistan government said yesterday the Lahore summit marked an "important milestone" in relations but added that it

expected "genuine" progress now on the future of Kashmir. Foreign Office spokesman Tariq Altaf told reporters the next round of dialogue between senior officials will be held in New Delhi

That would be the occasion for India to "demonstrate" the symbolism of Vajpayee's visit had its "true foundation in sincerity," said the spokesman.

Vajpayee's visit was "an important milestone in bilateral relations," Altaf said, adding the message given by the two prime

leader and former prime minister Benazir Bhutto

non-proliferation

"It is our hope that India will bend all efforts, as much as we

Lahore calm after

into reality," the spokesman said.
"After Prime Minister Vajpayee's visit and his signature on the Lahore Declaration we will rightfully expect a genuine and positive movement towards the

Kashmir," he said. India's President Narayanan also praised the summit's results in a governmentprepared address to the opening of the budget session of parliament in New Delhi.

"India and Pakistan will now work to enter into agreements to put in place far-reaching confidence-building measures," Narayanan said.

"It is our hope that the prime minister's historic initiative for the welfare of the peoples of the two countries and his reiteration that a secure, stable and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest will mark a new chapter in our bilateral ties," the president

Analysts said Vajapyee and Sharif had raised hopes for an end to 50 years of hostility despite their lack of breakthrough on the Himalyan state of Kashmir.

The two leaders wrapped up their historic encounter with smiles, making conciliatory comments and signing a Lahore Declaration as well as a document

countries

September.

should

announced a firm and early date

for the signing of the test ban

which carried out tit-for-tat

nuclear tests last May, have said

they would sign the treaty by

power from Pakistan but tariff

should be reasonable.

people of Pakistan.

Love

in South Asia.

India wants to buy surplus

His 24-hour brief visit to

Pakistan will help improve relations between both the

countries. India wants peace,

harmony and friendship with the

and

understanding should replace

hate and distrust between both

countries as India wants peace

Both India and Pakistan,

Benazir criticises

They agreed the world's two newest nuclear powers would notify each other in advance of ballistic missile flight tests and vision of the two prime ministers consult to develop means to avoid an accidental nuclear conflict.

The declaration binds them to "intensify" efforts to resolve all issues, including the dispute over Kashmir, the cause of two of their three wars since independence in

Despite the summit, Kashmir is likely to remain a source of tension, analysts said.

highlighted Vajapyee's vow to "negotiate with sincerity" on Kashmir and Sharif's repeated reminders that this root cause of rivalry would have to be tackled to achieve real progress.

And Jamaat-e-Islami leaders said their protests had achieved their aim of highlighting that the summit would weaken the freedom" campaign in India-held

Vajpayee said back in New Delhi on Sunday that it would be very difficult to normalise relations if killing by pro-Pakistan militants in Kashmir did not stop.

However Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad insisted his country was not to blame for deaths in Kashmir.

"It is, in fact, the Pakistani stand that atrocities (in Kashmir) should end for a durable peace The killings in Kashmir cannot be attributed to Pakistan," Ahmad said in reaction to Vajpayee's

Sharif agrees to visit India premiers' meeting ISLAMABAD — Pakistan

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif KARACHI — Opposition war and to review existing will visit India in the next few months, a top government official said here yesterday. communications and confidence-building measures. Benazir said the two

"The prime minister will return the compliment to his honourable Indian counterpart by flying to New Delhi," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs official confirmed, requesting that he not be named.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee formally extended an invitation to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to visit India during his historic two-day trip to Lahore over the weekend.

"Vajpayee assured Sharif that he will find in India a very warm Despite unsuitable weather conditions, India had a bumper welcome and that he looked wheat crop. It could supply its forward to receiving the surplus wheat to Pakistan.

Pakistani premier soon in India,' the official said. Sharif, he informed, had thanked Vajpayee for the invitation and assured that he

would soon visit India. "No dates have been

finalised, but it is safe to assume that the trip will materialise in the next few months, probably before the federal budget is presented in June," the official

Troops deployed ahead of local polls in Bangladesh



STRIKE CALL: Opposition supporters marching through Dhaka with flaming torches yesterday, urging residents to participate in a 72-hour national strike planned to begin today. The strike coincides with municipal elections which the opposition has threatened to resist. - Reuters

DHAKA — Thousands of troops in 137 out of 182 municipalities and security forces began fanning out yesterday on the eve of Bangladesh municipal elections to thwart possible violence amid an opposition boycott and general

A spokesman for the election commission said that troops would be deployed in phases. "On Monday they would be

deployed in those areas where elections will be held tomorrow, while another group would be deployed for the other areas for Tuesday," he said. Asked if there were any

reports of problems from any of election areas, commission source said "so far all is right and we have had no complaints so far from any side."

A security source said they would report to the district chief and then move out to sensitive

The Election Commission said some 35,000 personnel would guard nearly 2,100 polling centres

nationwide where voting will take place from today through to Thursday

Chief Election Commissioner Mohammed Abu Hena said all arrangements had been taken to ensure "free, fair and peaceful voting" amongst the more than three million Bangladeshis expected to vote this week.

An opposition alliance led by former prime minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), has called a threeday general strike from today to disrupt the polls in protest at election chief Hena, who they accuse of bias.

The opposition, which plans more agitations next month, has held a series of strikes in recent weeks to push for its demands which include the removal of

(\$83 million), a day.

The strikes are estimated to have hit the Bangladesh economy to the tune of four billion taka

Thousands of people left Dhaka since Thursday to enjoy the extra nine-day holiday, with a break yesterday only, newspapers said, adding that some also left for their respective districts to vote. Many affluent Bangladeshis

Observers earlier said this

week's three-day polls will set the

tone for political conduct in

coming months for this South

Asian country which has been a

victim of chronic political unrest.

Newspapers reported high enthusiasm for the local

government elections, despite the

Wajed has appealed to the

opposition to settle all disputes in

parliament and stop politics of

violence.'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina

have reportedly left the country or prepared to do so before the shutdown as tour operators offered "strike packages," with rush for visas and hotels book in resort areas, the Daily Star. newspaper said. — AFP

DHAKA — Air pollution causes an estimated 15,000 premature out information. Dhaka's air pollution will be reduced substantially if deaths and several million cases of sickness every year in Dhaka the Bank's project succeeds in regulating baby-taxis in the next three alone, the World Bank has said years, Brandon felt The Bank's environmental economist, Carter Brandon, identified

Air pollution kills 15,000 annually in Dhaka

two-stroke three-wheeler autorickshaws, known here as baby-taxis, as the major culprits in polluting the air. "We can't ban baby-taxis overnight unless we find another economical, social alternative," he said, stressing the need to clean up the existing fleet estimated to be between 30,000 and 50,000.

Bank-sponsored studies by the Department of Environment and the Atomic Energy Commission show that Dhaka air in certain areas has high levels of lead — as much as 463 nanograms per cubic metre with 50 tonnes of lead deposited in the city's air annually

Brandon said proper inspection and availability of lead-free and pure motor spirit were among the prerequisites to control vehicular pollution and contain its hazardous impact on human health.

As one of 21 implementing agencies of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-sponsored environmental programmes, the World Bank has initiated a project aiming to reduce vehicular pollution and associated health hazards in Dhaka in a costeffective manner, Bank sources said. The main objective of the \$5 million project, called the Air

Quality Management Project (AQMP), is to reduce human exposure to vehicular pollution.

Improved lubricants and lubricant delivery systems can help clean up automobiles, Brandon said. He was here for talks with officials on the Bank-aided project. Brandon, a senior official of the Bank's South Asia Environment

Unit, said there would be no progress in reducing air pollution without a better vehicle inspection system. "The inspection system must not be corrupt," he said, pointing to the failure of pollution control in Delhi and Mexico City. He felt the need to disseminate information about air pollution, its

causes and laws to contain it. "We don't know how much of air

pollution comes from baby-taxis, how much from industries and domestic households," Brandon said, urging the government to give

Paul Martin, environment specialist at the Bank's Dhaka office, emphasised better monitoring of fuel delivery system, mainly petrol stations, many of which, he said quoting a survey, mixed kerosene or some other low-cost oil with motor spirit.

He also pointed to industrial air pollution and stressed the need to give factory owners information relating to environmental hazards caused by their units. The government is reviving a taka 100 million project to make petroleum products lead free in the wake of widespread public

concern on lead pollution and its impact on humans, particularly It has asked the Eastern Refinery Limited (ERL), the country's lone oil refinery, to reactivate its lead separator unit to install new equipment under the project, sources said. The unit has been lying

ERL refines only 42 per cent of national consumption and the rest is imported. The new rule to keep fuel lead-free would also be applicable to imports, official sources said.

The decision coincided with the Bank's approval of a \$177 million loan to deal with Dhaka's traffic congestion and air pollution under a joint programme of the government and the Dhaka City Corporation. It also followed a vigorous campaign by environmentalists and health workers to demand use of unleaded Child neurologist Naila Khan recently said her study showed that

than the limit permitted by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Khan conducted her survey on children reporting for behavioural and mental disorders at the Dhaka Children's Hospital. According to an earlier government decision, petrol was to be refined or imported with 0.015 gram of lead per litre. But there was 0.45 gram of lead in one litre of octane, sources said.

the level of lead in blood samples of children was eight times higher

- India Abroad News Service

INDIA'S impoverished millions

will have little to smile about

when the national budget is

unveiled later this month, despite

government pledges to insert

Experts say India's growing

The deficit totalled \$17.4 bil-

Jay Dubashi, an ideologue of

"There is no thought given to

markets respond favourably,"

Dubashi said, adding that the need

of the hour was not subsidies but

employment climate by spurring

"They have to create an

Vajpayee attempted to cut

food and fertiliser subsidies last

month, but had to roll back the

measure for those living below the

poverty line following widespread

he might have a second crack at

share all the responsibilities."

Columnist Tayleen Singh

The prime minister hinted that

Vajpayee's ruling BJP party, said

pro-poor" elements.

TIMES OF OMAN

ESTABLISHED: 1975

A summit of goodwill

AS expected, nothing substantial has emerged from the hyped-up summit between Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif to make it a defining moment as a section of the press would like to term it. Except perhaps for a promise to build confidence-building measures to avert a nuclear war, no breakthrough has been achieved. Considering the people's fears of a nuclear war, one would have thought at least a no-war pact or something close to it would emerge. That did not happen. On balance, there was only a slimmish basis for the euphoria generated by the

Nonetheless, it doesn't mean that the summit was a waste of time. It was, indeed, a success in the sense that it helped create a friendly atmosphere for further talks. As Sharif has succinctly put it, 'The ice has been broken'. Even this can be deemed an achievement of sorts for the two countries wallowing in rivalry for over 50 years. If the miasma of swingeing hatred and distrust can be supplanted by an atmosphere of camaraderie and goodwill, the two developing countries can focus their resources and energies on developmental projects rather than on building and stocking weapons of mass destruction. The confidence building measures (CBMs) which envisage a mechanism to prevent a possible nuclear war are, decidedly, a positive out-

Unfortunately, other points in the Lahore Declaration are nothing but a recycling of the much bandied about proposals. In fact, a shufti into the Declaration would convince anyone with an average IQ that it is at worst, officialese signifying nothing and, at best, full of words of goodwill for public consumption. Of course, nobody had expected the summit to cut the Gordian knot in Kashmir. But one had expected some positive developments on less festering issues like Siachen Creek. Furthermore, there was no mention of accelerating bilateral trade relations, notably in the context of a power deal fleshed out with much aplomb.

The question, therefore, is: was all this hype in the run-up to the summit worth it? The PR flummery orchestrated by the BJP spin masters speaks for itself. The BJP government was badly in need of a boost for its flagging image this side of an election which can descend on it anytime now. With the withdrawal of support of the ally, INLD, last week the BJP government is left to survive by a majority of just two seats. The party has drawn much confidence from the much-publicised summit to present its budget on Saturday. As for the two PMs, despite the lack of any substantial outcome, they did come out with their respective profiles a touch higher than before thanks to the enormous fund of goodwill their meeting has generated.

Other Opinions

Sisters in arms

THE blossoming of friendship between the two formidable ladies of the AIADMK and the Trinamool Congress — and their kind words might come as a pleasant surprise to the prime minister. At the minimum what this could mean is a respite from the two attacking each other. But Atal Behari Vajpayee should not bet on a trouble-free relationship with them singly or jointly. A near euphoric Mamata Banerjee emerged from the meeting in Chennai full of praise for the prime minister and her newfound sister Jayalalitha. Most of what transpired has been kept confidential. But it appears the two see eye to eye on several issues, including the need to dismiss the DMK government in Tamil Nadu, and have decided to stand together behind Vajpayee in the midst of his troubles with his own party. As always, opportunism appears in the guise of

The attempt to combine AIADMK-Trinamool Congress forces at this juncture is not at all inexplicable. Om Prakash Chautala has caused cracks in the ruling coalition when he walked out of it. Those cracks may not be particularly serious and indeed may be papered over quite soon. The differences within the BJP and the inability of the party managers to overcome them are more significant. Any signs of erosion in the ranks of an 18-party alliance are bound to enhance each constituent's sense of its own importance.

From that to trying to coordinate action and demands is the next log-

ical step. The AIADMK and the Trinamool Congress have been the first to move in this direction. Others could follow suit. So Vajpayee should take all the promises from Chennai with a large pinch of salt. What Jayalalitha and Mamata Banerjee share in common is well-known: a combative style of politics, persistent demands for the dismissal of state governments, a populist agenda and a propensity for fishing in trouble ow intending to reinforce the other, th the prime minister will increase. At the same time the new sisterhood could fall apart with as much facility as it came together. Mamata Banerjee, outspoken about corruption at other times, chose to say nothing about the central government notification transferring cases against Jayalalitha from special courts to sessions courts. Such tactfulness is not going to enhance her image. Furthermore, if the BJP fails to be evenhanded about favours in future, the sisterhood will be strained. Sooner rather than later it will become apparent if any specific agreements were reached in Chennai. Attending each other's rallies may bring out larger crowds and more media attention. But the two are aiming for more than that. Javalalitha lacks the clout and numerical strength she once enjoyed after the BJP managed to split her alliance with smaller parties in Tamil Nadu. Mamata Baneriee lacks the kind of financial resources her "sister" can command at election time. Apart from these linkages the two can be useful to each other during street demonstrations. It may be a natural alliance of two demanding politicians but not one with very much of a future beyond the bargaining table. — The Indian Express

Living with our mistakes

RECENTLY the ninth five-year plan was launched in Islamabad with much fanfare. A gathering of over 500 leading industrialists, business executives, bankers and economic experts provided an appropriate forum for the announcement of the plan which is more than six months behind time. Although little input was expected from such a large audience which was invited to put the seal of approval on the plan, it did serve one very important purpose. It was designed to help mobilise popular participation in the development programme embodied in the plan.

The importance of such participation was highlighted by the prime minister's announcement on the occasion that development planing would no more remain the government's exclusive domain. He invited the private sector to actively participate in the implementation process. For this purpose the prime minister proposed the establishment of a business council comprising representatives of the business community and government officials to supervise and monitor the implementation

The prime minister reiterated his government's commitment to the policies of liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation. He assured the business community of his government's commitment to creating an environment which would allow it to work without the least intervention by state functionaries. It would have been a great omission if the weaknesses of the economy had not been duly recognised on this occasion. Among the more important of these weaknesses are the fiscal deficit and the stagnation of exports. The prime minister touched on both of these matters and sought the support of the businessmen in over-

His audience may not have been too pleased to learn that the general sales tax on wholesale and retail commerce has come to stay and that no exemption was to be granted in future. Fiscal consolidation is not possible without this tax which alone has the desired elasticity. Those who pleaded against the tax were reminded that they were only an agency for collection since payment was to be made by the consumer. Since the government's priority number one is the enhancement of rev-

enues, not marginally but substantially, the revamping of the tax collection machinery will, therefore, receive prime importance. On the external front, exports have been stagnant at around \$8,000 million for several years. Despite the several packages of incentives offered since 1997, exports could not pick up. In fact the situation has deteriorated and this fiscal year there has been a 12 per cent decline. The rot is mainly attributable to high cost and indifferent quality. Cost could have been reduced if the decline in international prices of oil had been passed on to industries and other consumers, as had been promised, through a reduction in electricity tariff and transport costs. Further, interest rates also could have been slashed if genuine efforts had been

made for the recovery of defaulted loans. In the absence of these two possible measures, businessmen should innovate internal efficiencies and realise quality improvement. Regarding the loss of investors' confidence, the prime minister has been very forthright in admitting that freezing of foreign currency accounts was not a correct decision. "Had there been a right advice the

decision to freeze the accounts could have been avoided". - Dawn



ARAFAT WELCOMED: German Interior Minister Otto Schily welcoming Palestinian President Yasser Arafat prior to their talks yes-

Lahore Declaration personal triumph for Vajpayee, Sharif

By P. Jayaram

INDIAN Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif have raised visions of peace in the turbulent relations between their countries with their novel diplomacy that culminated in Sunday's Lahore Declaration.

Even though there was no dramatic breakthrough as many had expected, both the prime ministers have reasons to be satisfied with the outcome of Vajpayee's bus trip to Lahore which saw the two countries reaching a broad agreement on avoiding an accidental nuclear confrontation and a series of confidence-building measures.

The two belied the warnings of the protagonists of the "don't-trust-them" approach in their countries to break the proverbial ice in bilateral relations that is seen by observers as personal triumph for both leaders

THE landmark summit between

Pakistan and India was a positive

initial step toward detente, ana-

lysts in Lahore said, but Kashmir

Indian Prime Minister Atal

Behari Vajpayee's vow to "negoti-

ate with sincerity" the disputed

Himalayan state of Kashmir

'reflects at least an awakening on

the part of Indians that it is time to

tackle this root-cause of tensions

On Sunday the prime minis-

ters of Pakistan and India pledged

to take immediate steps to reduce

the risk of nuclear conflict and to

intensify efforts to resolve all

bilateral disputes, including the

Declaration" signed following an

historic weekend summit in

Lahore between Indian Prime

Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and

his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz

But on his return to New Delhi

late on Sunday, Vajpayee said relations with Pakistan could

The pledge came in a "Lahore

key issue of Kashmir.

Sharif.

seriously," said one analyst.

remained a stumbling block.

By Sami Zubeiri

cism from friends and foes alike at home, has reason to be particularly happy with the outcome of the visit. The Pakistanis, who were expecting a typical "Hindu nationalist" — as western newspaper reports project him and his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — were impressed by his sincerity and down-to-earth approach to the problems that bedevil relations between the two

Vajpayee's eloquence and sincerity stirred the hearts of the Pakistanis who heard him speak in Hindi at the civic reception accorded by Lahore Mayor Khwaja Ahmed Hassan at the sprawling grounds of the Punjab governor's regal mansion.

"He spoke from his heart. It was a tremendous speech," said G.M. Sikandar, a senior bureaucrat. "It was a poetry of love. Is

improve only when killings by

being killed. If such killings con-

tinue, it would be difficult to nor-

malise relations between the two

of parliamentary committee on Kashmir, said there had been "no

achievement" out of this high pro-

but we have to make it clear to

India and the rest of the world that

Kashmiris must have a right to self-determination," he added.

Kashmir rejected the outcome as

lacking substance. "It is just eve-

wash," the leader of the Lashkar-

i-Tayyab, Hafiz Saif-ur Rehman,

two of their three wars since parti-

tion in 1947 over the divided

resolution of the Kashmir dispute

was "essential" to ensuring mutu-

Himalayan region.

al peace and security

India and Pakistan have fought

The declaration stressed that

said reacting to the declaration.

Groups backing the struggle in

"We are not against dialogue

"Innocent men and women are

Nawabzada Nasrullah, a veter-

separatists in Kashmir ended.

countries." he said.

politician and

Abdul Jabbar Munir, a former professor at the government Christian College, was also "very impressed" by Vajpayee's speech. "He is genuine about friendship between our two countries, and I feel that for the first time in 50 years I may be able to visit my relatives in Jalandhar (on the Indian side of Punjab)," said Munir, whose family was one of thousands that were separated when the subcontinent was partitioned in 1947. Vajpayee said his bus journey to Lahore had reduced the distance between New Delhi and Lahore. But that was not enough. "We have to reduce the distance between our two countries."

"How can you not go and see your relative when he is sick?" he asked tugging a cord in the heart of many whose families had been separated. "Even if you finally

Although no significant break-

And more encouraging was

A leading human rights

"Nothing more was expected.

through had been expected on

Kashmir, analysts viewed the

the resolve of the two newest

nuclear powers to work out a

mechanism to reduce the risk of

activist I.A. Rehman described

Vajpayee's visit as a "meaningful

The Lahore Declaration and the

memorandum of understanding

signed by Prime Minister Nawaz

Sharif and Prime Minister

Vajpayee set the stage for gradual

normalisation of relations

between the two countries," he

said. "Both sides are very much

keen to avoid an armed conflict,"

he said, observing they had made

some "progress" towards avoid-

separate memorandum of under-

standing contained specific meas-

ures for building confidence on

nuclear issues, they offered no

While the declaration and a

ance of a nuclear war.

step" for peace in south Asia.

to the analysts.

summit results as a beginning.

you know, how our police are?" he said, referring to the hassles travellers face in each other's country. He also told his invited Pakistani audience at the rally that history could be changed but not geography. Similarly, one can change friends but not neigh-

strong Pakistani audience.

Pakistan, from where the resolution to set up a separate state of Pakistan was adopted in 1940. also went down well with the people of his host country.

Vajpayee, who acknowledged that his visit to the historic monument could spark off a controversy back home, used the occasion to convey India's genuine desire for peace and friendship with Pakistan.

new initiative on the bitter ques-

tion of Kashmir beyond a commit-

ment to intensify efforts towards

party Jamaat-e-Islami made no

comment. A JI spokesman said the

party would take up the issue in a

formulate its response to the out-

visit, the first by an Indian pre-

mier in 10 years. Activists took to

the streets on Saturday and one

policeman died while at least 100

people were injured as demonstra-

Central Asian studies at New

Delhi's prestigious Jawaharlal

Nehru University, said the issues

facing the two countries were

"very complex" and the "mindset

other's approach ... As of today,

one can say that some step for-ward has been taken ... They have

managed to show the world that

they are discussing seriously," he

"They have taken note of each

Kalim Bahadur, head of

The JI strongly opposed the

of its se

tors clashed with police.

is still solidly grounded."

come of the talks.

Pakistan's key fundamentalist

seeking a resolution, they said.

industrial growth as well as demand. This can be done by reducing import duties and giving more benefits to greenfield projects so that more and more come "Instead of creating jobs, we report to the police stations, and have been giving the poor subsidised food and things which do not really improve their situa-

Vajpayee's speech was punc-tuated by repeated rounds of applause from the about 200-

getting the cuts accepted. "The next budget will be good His decision to visit Minar-efor the poor and the country,' Vajpayee said. But there is the question of subsidy. The government cannot

avoids solutions A step towards detente By Alan Wheatley

THE Group of Seven has confronted the need to correct the imbalances weighing on the world economy but its weekend talks have merely exposed a long-standing rift between Europe and the United States on the solutions

Policy shifts from meetings of finance ministers of the seven eading industrial nations are the exception rather than the rule, and Saturday's talks in Bonn did at least yield agreement to step up supervision of the world financial

Ministers, moreover, were that Asia is stabilising and that a floor under jittery financial mar-kets. But on what they identified as the biggest threat to sustained growth of output and jobs

- the debate seemed at times to sink to the level of petty pointscoring. US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin said graphs showed that the increase in America's current account deficit, the broadest measure of trade, from 1996 to 1998 mirrored a rise in east Asia's surplus over the same period.

not growing fast enough to absorb more imports from the recessionhit region, he said.

"There was a broad-based move forward to promote a higher rate of domestic demand-led

"On the question of how, we had a lot of discussion." Indeed. Turning the tables on Rubin, French Finance Minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn blamed the huge US surplus on its poor savings rate, which he said was at

"If it had a higher savings rate, America would be draining less of Europe's and Japan's savings, which is having a dampening effect on their economies,"

answer to the poverty crisis, and pointed out that the state food distribution system was mired in corruption and mismanagement.

"Study after study has shown that in most of the country, the poor obtain few benefits from the government's largesse. Our poorest states receive barely 10 per cent of the (subsidised food) supplies," Singh said.
"The poor do need help from

the government. But instead of subsidies they need roads to their villages, schools for their children, halfway decent healthcare and employment opportunities that will come automatically with telephones, electricity and roads."

India's anti-poverty strategy comprises a wide range of programmes, whose share of central budget expenditure programmes has increased from 5.4 per cent in 1990-91 to 7.7 per cent in 1995-

But a recent World Bank study on poverty in India was damning in its evaluation of the programmes' effectiveness. 'Only 40 per cent of the total

quantity of wheat and about 46 per cent of the total quantity of rice supplied through the (sub-sidised) Public Distribution System is consumed by the poorest 40 per cent of people in India,' the report said. Subsidies on "non-merit" con-

sumer goods totalled 11 per cent of gross domestic product, whereas spending on health and education is less than five per cent of The study said India had the

world's largest concentration of poor people with abysmal living "Life expectancy at birth, now twice the 30 years that was the

Indian average in 1947, remains well below that of China (69 "Adult literacy rates for Indian

males (64 per cent) and for females (39 per cent) in 1991 were almost identical to those of sub-Saharan Africa and far behind those in China," it added.

G7 spots problems,

able to take comfort from signs prompt interest rate cuts have put America's ballooning trade deficit

But Europe's surplus contin-ued to swell because it was simply

recognition that Europe needed to growth," Rubin told reporters.

its lowest level since 1933.

Strauss-Kahn said.

As for burden-sharing, Bank of France Governor Jean-Claude Trichet calculated that the cost of money in the 11 countries of the euro zone had fallen 25 per cent in relative terms in the run-up to the launch of the euro on January 1 whereas the 0.75 point cut in US rates amounted to a 14 per cent reduction.

"There were two different approaches...the classic debate.' Trichet summed up.

In reality, domestic demand is already taking more of the strain in Europe and economists say the euro zone's surplus is largely a statistical mirage. Equally, the US savings rate is not as sickly as it seems because of the way capital gains from Wall Street's recordbeating run are calculated.

Nevertheless, if there was a winner from Saturday's talks it was Rubin: the key section of the G7 communique contained three references to his mantra of the need for domestically based growth in general and in the euro zone and Japan in particular.

Rubin also got his way on exchange rates, swatting aside dreams harboured by France, Germany and Japan for a new system that would somehow tame

unruly currency markets. Ministers, perhaps surprisingly, said they spent little time discussing the current constellation of exchange rates even though lurches in the yen in recent weeks

score concern about the instability of currency markets. "I can safely say that the yen's movements were not discussed at all," Bank of Japan Governor Masaru Hayami said.

and months have served to under-

A senior German official said the euro's fall to a record low against the dollar was not a matter concern either. Bundesbank president Hans Tietmeyer said the inflation-conscious European Central Bank was not completely indifferent to

the euro's exchange rate, even though the small share of trade in Euroland output makes it less vulnerable to imported inflation.

From Our Archives

February 1984

Seminar on management

MUSCAT — The need for advanced management training for Omanis to prepare them for senior positions was the main topic at a two-day seminar on "The Special Problems of Management Development in the Gulf', organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in association with Ashridge Management College of Britain. The Honorary Secretary of the Chamber, Aflah Hamad Al

Rawahy, formally inaugurated the seminar and underline the OCCI's efforts in developing local skills with a view to achieving selfreliance in the management field.

The Deputy Principal of Ashridge College, William Bradie said that with proper guidance and further training, Omanis could occupy senior management positions and thus reduce the dependence on for-

READERS' FORUM.

Right moves

THE stern warning issued by Sheikh Amer bin Shuwain Al Hosni, minister of social affairs, labour and vocational training, is very commendable and comes out at the right time, (Times, February 22). Many expatriates — especially those in senior managerial positions

have long mistaken Omani traits of friendliness, pleasantness, hospitality and warmth for signs of weakness.

There will certainly be individuals, both Omanis and expatriates, who will try to defeat the very purpose of such directives, though they do 'lip service' while working to diminish the effectiveness of Omanisation, which is vital to the nation's aspirations and goals to become more self-reliant.

It is time that people realised that more and more young Omanis are now looking for job opportunities. The days of recruiting a large number of expatriates while Omanis

remain unemployed are long gone; so are the days when Omanis can sit behind and 'choose' jobs. No one is against expatriates. View it this way: They were guests in my house, but they have now overstayed. Besides, I cannot afford to

keep you well-fed, cutting down on the food of my children. It is appreciated that expatriates are here because they have and are contributing, and not for fun or to have an easy life. And to my Omani brothers and sisters who feel comfortable to have

expatriates around you, those days are also now getting over. Just as you got the opportunity to get to where you are today, it is high time you provided chances to your younger brothers and sisters, of

course only to those who are really committed, dedicated and loyal to their work, responsibilities and work ethics. I am sure that there are still many job opportunities for young and

willing Omanis (90 per cent, if not more, of all general managers and managing directors in companies are expatriates!). Artificial barriers and restrictions being placed on capable Omanis

to move up need to be reviewed and removed. I salute the moves initiated by the minister, and feel that more Omanis should come out to the support of his initiatives.

Majid bin Said bin Nasser Al Suleimany

Overworked boys, these ONE must not bemoan the result of the cricket match in Calcutta.

The players (Indian) would probably find it hard to concentrate on the game at hand with all the work piling up while they gallavant on the

Work, did I hear you say! Sure, the work required to peddle black fizzy drinks, plastic money, pan masala, soap, cooking masala, jotter pens, rubber footwear and the other crucial consumables gripping modern-day society by the proverbial throat. I wish them a good holiday in Colombo.

They do need their breaks, don't they, the poor "boys".

Avirat Vaishnav

Lack of sportsmanship

PAKISTAN won the inaugural Asian Championship Test in Calcutta. It was a great achievement, specially after being six down for 26 in the first innings. They have shown that they are real fighters.

But what about sportsman spirit!

Wasim Akram is very well aware that this victory would have been very difficult to come by had Sachin not been run out in an unfortunate

A true sportsman should have withdrawn his appeal considering that both the players were not at fault. The television replays clearly showed that Sachin had grounded his

bat in the crease before he collided with Shoiab. Has the game lost all its true sportsman spirit?

Letters, signed with full name, address and telephone number, may be sent by mail (Times of Oman, P.O. Box 770, P.C. 112, Ruwi), by fax (7713153) or by e-mail (times@gto.net.om)

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Tuesday, February 23, 1999

Bahrain records \$16.6m trade deficit

a 6.3 million dinar (\$16.6 million) trade deficit in the first nine months of 1998 because of low oil prices, reversing a healthy surplus, the central bank said

The Bahrain Monetary
Agency (BMA) said total exports
fell to 943.8 million dinars (\$2.48 billion) and imports stood at 950.1 million dinars (\$2.5 bil-

Over the same period of 1997, Bahrain recorded a trade surplus of 93.2 million dinars (\$245.26 million) on exports of 1.21 billion dinars (\$3.17 bil-

The main cause of the reverse

was the collapse of oil prices.

Total oil exports in the first
nine months of last year stood at 498.9 million dinars (\$1.312 billion), down from 759.7 million dinars (\$1.999 billion) during the same period in 1997, the BMA said. Bahrain became in 1932 the first Gulf Arab state to produce oil but its reserves have since almost dried up and its output is

all for domestic use.

But it receives 140,000 barrels per day (bpd) from an offshore field shared with neighbouring Saudi Arabia, from whom it imports some 200,000 bpd of crude oil to refine for

export.

Most of the petroleum exports go to Asia or other Gulf states.

Apart from diesel, the main products are naphtha, gasoline, jet fuel and liquefied petroleum gas.

VSNL announces satellite phone tie-up

BOMBAY - India's stateowned international telecommunications carrier announced yesterday a tie-up to provide satellite telephone services for the domestic market.

"We will be exclusively providing in India the services of ICO Global Communications, when it is globally launched next year," Amitabh Kumar, chairman and managing director of Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd (VSNL), told VSNL is one of the 40 strate-

gic investors along with British Telecom and Australia's Telstra in the Britain-based ICO Global Communications which has so far collected funding worth three billion dollars.

Kumar said VSNL and ICO Global Communications would shortly launch a joint venture company to provide the service

Bishnu Pradhan, general manager of ICO in India, said the satellite phone handsets would cost between \$700 and 1,000, while the calls could cost a maximum of three dollars a minute. "Our pricing will be much

lower than the competition as our capital costs are much lower. Prices will fall further, in line with competition, business volumes and subscriber base," he said. Pradhan said ICO was working with New Delhi's Department of Telecommunications to set up satellite phone services in rural India.

"India has 300,000 villages without telephones. We are working out an arrangement whereby rural customers will continue to pay the same price as now, for a satellite phone call. Our phones in the rural areas can be powered by solar power and this will sharply reduce capital costs," he

Pradhan said ICO's main competition would be with the recently launched Iridium satellite phone network and the to-belaunched Globalstar Communications.

Chinese domestic markets may face glut

BEIJING — China's domestic markets face a potential glut in the first half of 1999, with supply predicted to increase a further 38 per cent over the second half of last year, official media said yes-

terday.

"Among 605 major commodities... more than 72 per cent of the total surveyed, or 437 items, will present a supply over market demand," Guo Shouzhong, an official with the State Administration of Internal Trade (SAIT), told the *China Daily*.

"This oversupply is 38.4 percent superior to that of the second half of last year," he added. - AFP, Reuters

the industrial, scientific, literary or artistic fields. preparation of implementing the He said that the last few years regulations. had seen a number of legal, economic, commercial and social the attitude and position of the activities around the world aimed Omani government on this", he at protecting and promoting intellectual property rights. On people who live off pirated States protect intellectual Air France shares soar

to boost creativity,

By Nasser Al Harthy

MUSCAT — Oman pays special

attention to the protection of

copyright and intellectual proper-

ty to encourage innovation, arts,

trade and investment, Maqbool

bin Ali Sultan, minister of com-

merce and industry, said yester-

ment to property rights reflected its belief that these rights would

encourage creativity, remove obstacles to the transfer of tech-

nology, enrich literature and arts

and contribute to the promotion of

trade and investment.

His Highness Sayyid Faisal bin Ali Al Said, minister of

national heritage and culture,

presided over the opening of the three-day forum, which is organ-

ised by the Geneva-based World

Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in co-operation with the Ministry of Commerce and

held at Hyatt Regency, has attract-

ed delegations from 17 Arab

Ministry of Commerce and

Industry organised three seminars

on the subject in cooperation with

WIPO aimed at increasing aware-

ness of the provisions of the agreement on trade related intel-

excellent and progressive record

in the field of intellectual property

rights. It has issued over the past

few years a number of legislation

such as the Trade Mark Law, the

Unified Gulf Law for invention

certificate and copyright law with

the aim of protecting intellectual

An outstanding step is Oman's joining the Paris Agreement for the Protection of Industrial

Property and Bern Agreement for

the Protection of Arts Articles, he said, adding that the actual imple-

mentation of these laws has begun

to which the private sector gave a

positive understanding and sup-

port.
Sherif Saadallah, director of cooperation for development bureau for Arab countries, WIPO,

defined intellectual property as a

legal right, enacted in law, result-

ing from intellectual activity in

Transactions started at 1115 GMT

after a 15-minute suspension

before even a single deal had been

concluded when heavy demand

pushed the shares up to an indicat-

ed 700 per cent premium on trad-

The first traded price was up 26 per cent compared to the 14 euros flotation price for private

individuals. Institutional investors

lysts had forecast an initial rise of some 20 per cent. At 1145 GMT,

Grey market traders and ana-

have to pay 14.2 euros.

property rights.

He added that Oman had an

lectual property rights, he said.

states including AGCC.

The regional meet, which was

During the last two years, the

He noted that Oman's commit-

innovation: Maqbool

ital, he added.

property rights for two reasons: protecting moral and legal rights

of authors and encouraging inno-

intellectual property rights include, encouraging scientific

and technology innovations, new ideas have become significant for

continued economic develop-

ment, investment and foreign cap-

cover cultural, social, economic and technological progress and that they have become an impor-

tant factor in international trade.

He added that WIPO is cooperat-

ing with all Arab countries in creating modern systems of intellec-

tual property protection in terms of providing legal advice and technical assistance to member

countries. After the opening session Sayyid Faisal said the choice

of the Sultanate as a venue for the

forum reflected the country's

importance and its commitment to

al property laws were a funda-

mental condition for membership

to the World Trade Organisation

the WTO, he said that over the

past year discussions on the sub-

ject have been positive and encouraging. He added that the

Omani negotiating team would be

meeting again at the end of next

March and hoped that the Sultanate would be able to join

the organisation before the end of

that all the Arab member coun-

tries of WTO or those in the

process of joining it are committed politically into changing the intellectual property laws and to

come in line with the obligations

Later Saadallah told the press

this year.

tions, he said.

Maqbool noted that intellectu-

On Oman's application to join

intellectual property rights.

He also said that these rights

The important features of

pledge to Air France's pilots and the European Commission, which have urged the sell-off for differ-

ing reasons. The flotation valued the whole airline at 3.1 billion euros. Small investors who had

applied for up to 10 shares would get the full allocation, while whose who asked for more would only get up to three extra shares, the bourse said.

Air France Chairman Jean-Cyril Spinetta hailed the response as an "enormous popular success" in an interview on France Inter radio. "This success is due to the

Market analysts said the govcompared to European competitors such as British Airways, Lufthansa of Germany and KLM of the Netherlands.

seen their share prices under pressure due to tough competition on ticket prices, with too many seats piled on to transatlantic routes due to the Asian crisis and too few between its current partners Delta Air Lines and Continental by the end of the year, to form a major global airline alliance. — Reuters



Dr Victor Nabhan, consultant, and Sherif Saadallah, director of Cooperation for Development Bureau for Arab countries, WIPO, Geneva, at the opening session in Muscat yesterday of the World Intellectual Property Organisation Arab Regional Symposium on the Economic Importance of Intellectual Property Rights. Right, delegates of participating countries at the conference.

— Photos by Rudolfo Alfonso

lot of people are using and eco-

nomically exploiting copies of works and there is no way of help-

ing them. He added that in some

countries they have a short grace

period to enable them to change

the kind of activities they are

undertaking.
All these activities are punish-

able by law and there are particu-

lar sanctions in the law and today

the government here in Oman is

taking all possible measures to enforce that law fully, he pointed

have to take into consideration is

that adopting a new law brings in

new concepts and new ideas. I think it is very difficult to bring in

a new law and force it on the peo-

ple without having enough time to

understand it and enough time to

adapt to it", he said.

He added that this is the

process under way in Oman right

now and the government is in the

process of building the awareness

of the importance of the law. At

the same time, it is trying to give

an equal chance to everybody in

order to change their activities

related to those pirated works in

the field of copyright or computer

by enforcing these laws, Saadallah explained that one of the basic benefits for developing

countries in having strong sys-

tems of protection of intellectual

property is that it will be easier to

lot of countries that own new and

modern technologies are not will-

ing to transfer them to countries

where there is no strong intellectual property system.
"When you have strong intel-

lectual systems in a country like Oman, there could be a lot of ven-

Experience has shown that a

receive modern technology.

On the benefits to be gained

"I think one of the things we

Oman's copyright steps Indonesia bank liquidation to lay off 25,000 jobs

JAKARTA — Some 25,000 Indonesian bank employees risk losing their jobs as a result of government plans to shut down unviable institutions, a report said here yesterday.

The figure was mentioned by Manpower Minister Fahmi Idris, who said in Bogor on Saturday that banks at the risk of closure should discuss possible job alternatives with their employees, the Kompas daily said.

The government has said that it will on February 27 issue a list of the banks to be closed if they failed to meet minimum capital adequacy ratio requirements of minus 25 per cent.

The chairman of Association of Workers in the Commercial Bank and Insurance Sector, Bomer Pasaribu, was also quoted by Kompas as saying his organisation was currently pushing for the setting up of tripartite institutions involving the government, entrepreneurs and workers.

"The tripartite institutions to be set up soon, will discuss the various alternative to overcome the problem of the lay off of some 25,000 employees of banks that will be closed down," Pasaribu said

He said his organisation suggested the merger of affected banks, a possible union with stronger banks and a comprehensive severance package for employees at the risk of losing their jobs. — AFP

Olivetti bid for Telecom gets frosty welcome

MILAN — Olivetti's audacious \$58 billion bid for its bigger rival Telecom Italia got a cool reception on the Milan bourse yesterday on fears it may spark one of Europe's biggest takeover battles. Telecom Italia looked poised to go all out to fight the hostile bid announced at the weekend and called a board meeting for Thursday. Olivetti responded by calling a pre-emptive meeting for

"This is a cheap bid and Olivetti will have to raise it if they have any hope of getting their hands on Telecom," said Paolo Perrella, equity analyst at ABN Amro in Milan.

'The real issue is who else will be able to counter-bid given that foreigners could be opposed by the government

Prime Minister Massimo D'Alema said yesterday the gov-ernment did not want Telecom Italia to fall under foreign control but would remain neutral for now. But he declined to say whether the treasury would use its golden share in the former state monopoly — privatised in 1997 — to block the deal.

"It is natural for our interest to be that this great company should not be dismembered or fall under the control of foreign interests," D'Alema told a weekly news

On the Milan bourse investors took fright at the towering debt pile Olivetti would have to amass to capture its five-times larger competitor after the Ivrea-based group said it would seek a capital increase to help finance the deal.

Olivetti shares fell over six per cent before steadying 5.13 per cent down at 3.05 euros after an initial bounce.

Shares in Telecom Italia and its unit Telecom Italia Mobile were suspended for pushing through the 10 per cent limit up on the Milan bourse before retrading 8.05 per cent up and 4.29 per cent

up respectively.

"This is an audacious bid and given Telecom's discount to its peers the price seems cheap," said Robert Grindle, European telecoms analyst at HSBC Securities.

"I'd be aversized if Telecom Italia." "I'd be surprised if Telecom Italia

does not put up a big fight".

Olivetti announced the 10 euro per share cash, bond and share bid for Telecom Italia on Saturday and delivered a veiled warning the former state monopol could fall into foreign hands unless it was accepted.

Telecom Italia lashed back, griping that the bid was riddled with holes and worked furiously over the weekend drawing up battle lines for what is shaping up to be one of Europe's biggest corporate takeover fights. - Reuters

HK 'must reform fiscal system'

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's government should reform its fiscal system and reduce its dependence on revenues from the property sector as its budget slides into the red amid recession, a bank said yesterday.

After many years of fiscal

surpluses, the territory is expected to end up with a budget deficit of HK\$40 billion (\$5.2 billion) in the 1998-99 fiscal year, the Bank of East Asia said in an

It blamed the deficit on the recession, which has reduced the government's revenue base.

"On the surface of it, the situation may appear grim," it said. "However, we believe that the situation provides an opportunity for (Hong Kong) to reform its fiscal system.

"In the near-term, the govern-ment can buy time, thanks to its healthy reserves and other assets. In the long-term, it must do more, making it less dependent on the property sector," the report said.

The property sector is a major player in the Hong Kong economy. The sector is trying to emerge from a deep slump, which saw property values slump by up to 50 per cent from their peak in mid-1997. Bank of East Asia warned of potential long-term consequences for government finances.

"With the prospect of ample land supply and relatively high real interest rates, revenues from the property sector will be lower," it said. "Meanwhile, lower economic

growth and higher unemployment rate would contribute to lower profit and salary taxes." With demand for spending on welfare and infrastructure

remaining strong, government spending would outpace income available from the existing revenue base, the report said.

It called for a leaner and more efficient government, and urged it to consider letting some public services such as housing, postal services and water supply to be managed by private companies.

A transparent and more equitable alternative to revenues, such as consumption tax, is worth considering in the long term," it said, adding that a tax rate of five per cent on consumer goods would produce about HK\$25 to 30 in revenue per

The report came ahead of the Hong Kong government's budget announcement due prext month. — AFP



fame of Air France in France and Europe," he said. Air France stood up 17 per cent at soared yesterday as the airline 16.41 euros in volume of nearly reached the Paris Bourse in a one billion euros (\$1.10 billion). long-awaited partial privatisation. The flotation of a 20.7 per cent ernment's pricing of the stock val-LOWEST The shares were first traded at stake meets a long-standing ued the national company cheaply 18.00 euros against a flotation price of 14-14.2 euros.

European and US airlines have premium-paying business passengers. Spinetta also reaffirmed his intention to pick a US company

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Mood in market improves



MUSCAT - With the declaration of good dividends from National Bank of Oman, BankMuscat and National Biscuits (Nabil), the mood in the market improved leading to a rally of 1.5 per cent in the MSM index. National Bank of Oman which declared a profit of RO15.1 million, gained 200 baisas at RO3.650 albeit on low volumes. NBO has also proposed a cash dividend of 20 per cent accompanied by a stock dividend of 15 per cent. BankMuscat has proposed a cash dividend of 25 per cent while Nabil will payout a 50 per cent cash dividend. Reacting to the dividend announcement, BankMuscat rallied to RO3,600 from its overnight level of RO3.420 when profit-taking emerged to drive the price down to RO3.500. Global Financial Investments has turned in a profit of RO1.185 million for the sixteen-month period ended December 31, 1998. A seven per cent cash dividend has been proposed. The net asset value of Muscat Index Fund as on January 31, 1999 was RO0.944 whereas the NAV of Oryx JIA on Sunday, February 21 was RO1.169. — Al Ahlia Securities Co. SAOC

| INDEX MOVEMENT | Yesterday | Change | % Change |
|----------------------|-----------|--------|----------|
| MSM Index | 230.07 | 3.38 | 1.49 |
| Banking & Investment | 276.21 | 6.11 | 2.26 |
| Insurance | 302.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 |
| Services | 140.44 | 0.37 | 0.26 |
| Industry | 188.79 | 0.24 | 0.13 |

| ADVANCE-DECLINE RATIO | |
|-----------------------|----|
| Advances | 18 |
| Declines | 1 |
| Unchanged | 21 |
| Not Traded | 98 |

| TRADING VOLUMES | Yesterday | % Change |
|-----------------|----------------|----------|
| Million RO | 0.32 | 2.37 |
| '000 Shares | 245.45 | -9.73 |
| | | |
| SAU THE SAU | Te Part Vision | |

| TOP GAINERS | Price | Increase | % Increase |
|---------------------------|-------|----------|------------|
| Nat. Aluminum Prod. | 1.340 | 0.120 | 9.84 |
| DIDIC | 2.290 | 0.140 | 6.51 |
| National Bank of Oman | 3.650 | 0.200 | 5.80 |
| Salalah Port Services | 2.100 | 0.100 | 5.00 |
| Al Mawarid Securities 50% | 0.850 | 0.040 | 4.94 |

| TOPLOSERS | Price | Decrease | % Decrease |
|---|----------|----------|-----------------|
| College of Admin. Sciences | 0.960 | -0.100 | -9.43 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| (A) | SE AGE Y | | 建筑建筑的企业发 |

| VOLUME LEADERS | Price | No of Shares |
|-------------------------|-------|--------------|
| Topaz Energy & Marine | 1.130 | 23,634 |
| Commercial Bank of Oman | 1.700 | 23,200 |
| Oman International Bank | 1.910 | 21,420 |
| Nat. Aluminum Prod. | 1.340 | 20,307 |
| Alliance Housing Bank | 0.980 | 17,300 |
| | | 437 |

Muscat Securities Market share price bulletin for Monday, February 22

| Company Name | TRADED | PREV. CLOSING | HIGH PRICE | LOW | CLOSING | DIFF. |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------|-------------|-----------|
| Banks and Investment companies Sector | r Index 276.2 | 21 | Diff. +6.12 | | Change 2.2 | 6 % |
| NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN | 2295 | 3.450 | 3.650 | 3.650 | 3.650 | 0.200 |
| GULF INVESTMENT SERVICES | 3000 | 0.600 | 0.650 | 0.620 | 0.620 | 0.020 |
| OMINVEST | 850 | 2.800 | 2.820 | 2.820 | 2.820 | 0.020 |
| ONIC. HOLDING | 14800 | 1.380 | 1.400 | 1.380 | 1.380 | 76 H (15) |
| OMAN UNITED HOLDING | 1000 | 1.240 | 1.260 | 1.260 | 1.260 | 0.020 |
| OMAN SECURITIES PORTFOLIO | 25 | 0.900 | | | | |
| OMAN INTERNATIONAL BANK | 21420 | 1.880 | 1.910 | 1.880 | 1.910 | 0.030 |
| DHOFAR INT. DEV. & INV. HOLDING | 10795 | 2.150 | 2.290 | 2.150 | 2.290 | 0.140 |
| OMAN & EMIRATES INV. (OM) | 5900 | 0.730 | 0.750 | 0.740 | 0.750 | 0.020 |
| Industry Sector | Index 188.7 | 9 | Diff. +0.24 | | Change 0.13 | |
| OMAN CEMENT | 700 | 2.150 | 2.150 | 2.150 | 2.150 | |
| OMAN FLOUR MILLS | 500 | 4.150 | | N 45 0 -71 | | |
| OMAN REFRESHMENT CO. | 1000 | 3.500 | 3.500 | 3.500 | 3.500 | |
| Services Sector | Index 140.4 | | Diff. +0.37 | 0.000 | Change 0.27 | 7 % |
| OMAN FISHERIES | 1200 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | 1.000 | |
| UNITED POWER | 2500 | 2.150 | 2.160 | 2.150 | 2.150 | |
| RENAISSANCE HOLDING | 1600 | 0.870 | 0.880 | 0.870 | 0.880 | 0.010 |
| PARALLEL MARKET | | 10.7 | | | 0.000 | 0.010 |
| AL BATNA DEV. & INV. HOLDING 50% | 4500 | 0.820 | 0.820 | 0.800 | 0.820 | |
| NDUSTRIAL BANK OF OMAN | 3149 | 0.820 | 0.870 | 0.850 | 9.860 | 0.040 |
| AL SHARQIYA INV. HOLDING | 9607 | 0.900 | 0.920 | 0.890 | 0.920 | 0.020 |
| OMAN HOLDING INTERNATIONAL | 1453 | 1.600 | 1.600 | 1.600 | 1.600 | 0.020 |
| UNITED FINANCE | 500 | 0.900 | 0.900 | 0.900 | 0.900 | |
| AL MAWARID SECURITIES 50% | 16900 | 0.810 | 0.860 | 0.850 | 0.850 | 0.040 |
| ALLIANCE HOUSING BANK | 17300 | 0.970 | 1.030 | 0.980 | 0.980 | 0.010 |
| COMMERCIAL BANK OF OMAN | 23200 | 1.670 | 1.740 | 1.700 | 1.700 | 0.030 |
| BANK MUSCAT INTERNATIONAL | 4550 | 3.420 | 3.600 | 3.500 | 3.500 | 0.080 |
| THE ORYX JOINT INV. FUND. | 4500 | 0.790 | 0.800 | G.790 | 0.790 | |
| MUS .INT. GUARANTEED FUND (A) | 500 | 0.930 | 0.930 | 0.930 | 0.930 | |
| MUS. INT. GUARANTEED FUND (B) | 17000 | 0.840 | 0.850 | 0.840 | 0.850 | 0.010 |
| AI AHLIA CONVERTING INDS. 50% | 99 | 2.050 | | | | |
| GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS | 8900 | 0.900 | 0.900 | 0.900 | 0.900 | |
| GULF INT. CHEMICALS | 99 | 1.250 | | 6 - C 6 1 | | |
| MANI EURO FOODS INDUSTRIES | 9294 | 0.660 | 0.690 | 0.660 | 0.660 | |
| NAT. ALUMINIUM PRODUCTS | 20307 | 1.220 | 1.340 | 1.220 | 1.340 | 0.120 |
| SALALAH MILLS | 1170 | 1.300 | 1.300 | 1.300 | 1.300 | |
| SHELL OMAN MARKETING | 87 | 6.900 | | | | |
| MAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INV. | 100 | 1.100 | 1.100 | 1.100 | 1.100 | /e |
| MAN MEDICAL PROJECTS | 50 | 1.230 | | | | |
| POMAN S.A.O.G | 2000 | 2.260 | 2.260 | 2.260 | 2.260 | |
| OPAZ ENERGY & MARINE | 23634 | 1.120 | 1.130 | 1.120 | 1.130 | 0.010 |
| ALALAH PORT SERVICES | 6362 | 2.000 | 2.100 | 2.050 | 2.100 | 0.100 |
| OLLEGE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCI. | 2600 | 1.060 | 1.010 | 0.960 | 0.960 | -0.100 |

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| 445 |
| 230.07 / +3.38 / 1.49 % |
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BOMBAY STOCKS

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 1999

Sensex dips by 51 points on fresh wave of selling pressure

BOMBAY — The Sensex dipped by 51 of 1479.45. The BSE-200 closed lower at points on fresh wave of selling pressure by 337.60 and the Dollex at 132.56 from the Foreign Institutional Investors (FII) and previous close of 342.73 and 134.75 respecspeculators on the first day of trading for the new account on the Bombay Stock Exchange

(BSE) yesterday.

The market got off to a firm stand on speculative buying at the start of the new account. Later, prices gradually slumped on sustained selling by foreign funds and profittaking by speculators who are cautious and awaiting for the outcome of the federal budget on February 27.

Softwares, pharmaceuticals and multinational scrips were aggressively sold and the sharp fall reflected the decline in the sensitive index. Reliance was again worst hit on all-round selling while Pentafour Software fell sharply on disinvestment selling. Reflecting the trend, the BSE sensitive

index opened higher at 3370.60, traded between a high of 3397.33 and a low of 3300.67 and closed at 3303.89, down by 51.03 points from the previous close of 3354.92. The BSE-100 closed at 1458.90, with a loss of 20.55 points from the last close

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tively. There was a lot of activity in the side shares, which were also sold on profit booking at higher levels. BPL Ltd, Credit Rating, Cummins Ind, Dabur Ind, Digital Equip, Dr Reddy's, ICl Ind, Infosys Tech, IPCL, Knoll Pharma, NIIT Ltd, Parke Davis, Novartis (I), Rhone Poulenc, Thomas Cook, TVS Suzuki and Workhardt all showed substantial losses. Burroughs Welcome, Cadbury, Glaxo (I) Ltd, Ind Shaving, SKF Bearings and Wartsila NSD also firmed up on speculative support. The total turnover on the bolt system was Rs1382.35 crores. Pentafour Software continued to be the top traded scrip with a turnover of Rs238.57 crore, RIL Rs152.27 crore, Satyam Computer Rs143.23 crore, ITC Rs76.90 crore and Silverline Rs62.62

Pentafour Soft slumped by 64.50 to 831.25, RIL by 9.70 to 131.50, Satyam Comp by 45.00 to 925.25, ITC by 10.75 to 807.75 and Silverline by 10.90 to 238.40. — PTI

3303.89 1458.90

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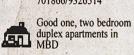
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Sharing accomodation available 9349744

Sharing room available opposite Al Nahda hospital, for ladies and couples. contact

Single room available for an executive bachelor, cooking/non-cooking near Wadi Kabir R/A. contact Sabarish (Accts dept)7711953/7714154

Sharing accomodation with independent bathroom available at Wadi Kabir for couple/bachelor. contact 762583/7713167

Spacious room available at Al Khuwair. contact 9320957

One big room with carpet and curtains, seperate bathroom for executive couple or bachelor, opposite Khamis shoes, Hamriya, contact 7736934

Two bedroom house opp. Al Nahdha - 9321187.

Independent single room accommodation available for executive bachelor with attached toilet & AC. Opp. star

Sharing acc. for bachelor/lady seperate room with bath at Hamriya near R/A. Contact; 9103141 or 796659

Sharing room available for a Keralite executive bachelor in Walja. Rent RO. 30/- Including E/W. Contact: 9342014

ACC. WANTED

Wanted executive accomodation, single and double bedroom flat in Seeb Town. contact Sajid 798692, 707549

Wanted 2-3 bedroom flat at CBD area. Call: 9351675/780512

Indian executive looking sharing/single accommodation in between Qurum, Al Khuwair area. Contact: 9358266 after

Wanted One bedroom flat -Contact: 9334266

TUITION

Painting, drawing and sculpture tuition. contact 7732060

TRANSPORT

Car with driver available. GSM

Transport wanted from Mumtaz area to Ghala, near Toyota Yard, morning 0800, Evening 1800 from Ghala. for a lady. Sat. to Thu. Contact: 9335876

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Professional packing and Air/Sea Cargo Service to all Destinations. AMTCO 7735411/7733497, 9314557

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OMANI RIALS IN PRIZES SIT. WANTED

Diesel engine mechanic, 10 years experience in generator maintenance, overhauling, trouble shooting, installation of diesel, fuel, duel gas engines, dozer, marine and automobile, call 595637/911685

20 years experience in sales of car parts and heavy vehicle parts. Well versed in American, Japanese and German vehicles, holding valid driving license, seeks suitable placement. contact 701767 extn 20

8 years experience in X ray welding and pipeline work. contact Mr Ashokan- 714729

Electronic Diploma holder with 4 years experience in production, service and marketing of electronic weighing and measuring system, on visit visa seeks placement. contact 785412/9311349

auditor/accountant in banking sector seeks suitable placement. Tel. 540798

Six years experienced female secretary knowing computer, MS word 98, Excel 98, internet email, on permanent visa seeks suitable placement. Release available. contact 7731701

Young commerce graduate, computer literate, typewriting, shorthand, English higher grade, 4 years experience in accounts, 1 year in Oman, seeks suitable placement. contact GSM 9375873/ 7733057(resi)

Senior chartered accountant with 19 years experience(13 years in Oman) in accounts, finance and credit control looking for a change. call 7735631

BE (Mech.) marketing manager with 9 years experience in selling turnkey projects, management and admin. skills, computer literate, on 2 weeks vacation to Oman seeks suitable employment. call 439381, pgr -9153108

TV/VCR/hi-Fi/CD/audio system/car stereo technician with 15 years experience with exposure to organ & toys, on visit seeks suitable placement. call 698235/GSM 9370405

MBA (Marketing), IIM-Bangalore, B.E. Electronics and communication having 2 and half years work experience in Marketing in MNC (India) seeks suitable placement. Visit visa upto 28th Feb. Contact:

Young and energetic sales and marketing professional, Bsc graduate, diploma in computer applications, doing ICWA, with 4 years experience in consumers in India on visit seeks suitable placement. Contact: 737513 / 9354866.

Graduate, Arabic speaking, computer literate, young man with experience in sales. Seeks suitable placement. Contact: Pgr. 9113528, 7717718

A male having 23 year Gulf experience in accounts & administration with Airline background seeks immediate

SIT. WANTED

Experienced accountant, computer literate, flent in English and Arabic, with good experi-ence in sales seeks suitable full time and part time jobs.

Graphics Designer, B.sc. graduate having 2 years experience including Oman experience in Adobe Illustrator, Quark 3d studio, Adobe Primiere, seeks suitable placement. Contact: 9320974.

Female MBA in personnel/marketing seeking suitable employ-ment, excellent command in English, with knowledge of conversional Arabic. Contact

Foreman 18 years gulf experienced in a reputed company in and road works now on visit, tact 707354

Exp. PG lady having secretarial practice and computer knowledge seeks suitable part time/full time job. contact

years experience in Oman, on visit visa, available for immediate placement. contact 781714.

knowledge of computers including windows, word etc seeks placement in travel agencies as secretary. contact 7712311

and half years experienced in typing, good in English, Arabic, Hindi, Malayalam with computer background, seeks suitable placement. Release available. contact 9351823.

Experienced diploma holder (Dca & Dtp) having good knowledge of DOS, Windows 95& 98, LAN, MS office, page-maker, coreldraw, powerpoint, photoshop, foxpro, now on visit seeks suitable placement. contact - 9425925

Sr business systems analyst/IT with long experiences in IT al firm in Oman, 6 years with est technology, finance fundamentals, logistics and well versed with various business line support. call 7714374

years in Oman executive secreers, seeks suitable placement.

Medical lab technician BSc with post graduate certificate course with 7 years Eexperience. contact Imran 712363

9424772, fax 694885

Diploma in electronics and communication engineering, 2 years Bombay experience in tele-communication products like Epabx, Kts, fax, presently in Oman on visit visa seeks suitable placement. GSM

Middle aged Goan nanny/housemaid looking for a better placement, locally available, well experienced. contact

Experienced female secretary (Oman/India) computer literate(word, excel, email, graphics) shorthand with excellent communication skills. contact GSM

Female MSc (IIT Madras) on family visa, experienced in Y2k reverse engg.projects at Tata consultancy services seeks career in software completed oracle 8, D2k vb. contact

Contact: 687532

sewerage, water main pipeline seeks suitable placement. con-

Graduate with post graduate diploma in travel and tourism,

Secretary/ Arabic graduate one

leader for change. Post graduate field, 16 years with multinationtop firm in India. Strong on lat-

contact 502817.

professional, experienced in sales of food products and home furnishing with additional background of event management on visit seeks suitable placement. contact 956598,9169817,

Diamond cutter with 15 years experience in natural diamonds in India and Bangkok, specialist in bruting. contact 9319385

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ing 11 years work experience as

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companies, capable of self-cor-

knowledge of computer opera-

Dynamic extrovert male BCom

in computer, MS word, wp 6.0,

excel, lotus, internet, email,

Maintenance Man, 6 years

plumbing and other mainte-

tact Binu 594762

seeks suitable placement. con-

Omani experience in electrical

nance works with valid Omani

driving licence, release avail-

Computer science eng. diplo-

ma with 3 years programming experience in foxpro presently

on visit, seeks employment, has

expertise in windows95 & 98,

ms office, lotus, c, oracle, visual basic. contact 843750.

Lady MBA Eng. excellent aca-

demics, well experienced man-

agement lecturer seeks part-

time teaching training assign-

ment in marketing, Hrd etc. in

reputed organisations. contact

Male executive secretary, 15

years experience (13 years in

good secretarial skills, inde-

India & 2 years in Oman) with

pendent correspondence, short-

hand proficiency, computer lit-

erate seeks suitable placement.

Computer Hardware engineer

(BE), 3 years experience upto

contact 9152815 - pgr

tions, seeks suitable employ-

ment contact 797579.

respondence and with good

graduate on resident visa hav-

Full Range of Computer

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Storekeeper - spare parts, 9

graduate with exoerience in concept selling seeks suitable placement presently on visit visa. contact GSM 9363734. Male graduate 4 years experience in Oman as secretary/ office administration, proficient

able. contact 9110124. Project eng/plan eng. (BE Civil), first class, 13 years experience in road division seeks suitable placement/consultancy. Having computer knowledge and driving licence. Release available. contact 687916, MKG Swamy.

7 years experienced 3 and half tary with knowledge of comput-

Young, talented, energetic sales

Senior Barman, contact mob.

latest technology, local release available. call GSM 9350669 Part-time (After 6pm) Data entry operator/steno secretary, proficient in ms word, excel etc with excellent speed in typewriting and data entry. Pgr 9340899, res. 7733010

> Graduate with 12 years of experience in India & Middle east in Hotel and cateringf industry, seeking for suitable placement. contact GSM

> > Female with experience in sales with excellent communication skills and driving license seeks suitable placement in sales or marketing. contact

years experienced in net-

edge in windows NT and hardware engineering seeks suitable placement. contact 687533

Female with knowledge of sec-

work/ customer support knowl-

SIT. VACANT

Urgently required a male B Com. graduate having atleast 3 years experience for a reputed company, contact Tel. No. 694440, 693404 or fax 693391

Required a female marketing executive, candidates holding valid Omani license need only apply. Apply within 7 days with photograph to the advertiser PO Box 488, PC 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman. Mark on envelope the post applied.

Wanted experienced screen printer urgently. contact

Required female staff nurse and lab technician with MOH license for Seeb branch and Capital area. For interview call Lakshmi ph: 798693/92

New concern requires Office secretary/outdoor salesman (with driving license). Send Cv with2 photos to PO Box 1070, PC 131, Hamriya

Wanted book keeper with 5 years experience in Oman. Also freelance sales. contact 697777 or fax CV to 691313

English language teacher wanted for a private school. Contact 9420905 Urgently required part-time

educated female with Internet/Email skills.

Preferrably mobile and willing to visit clients 2-3 times(morning). Can work from home. contact 9357419 Urgently required experienced

Beautician with hair dressing knowledge. Contact: 502817 Urgently required spareparts salesman, Sales Executive with minimum ten years experience in the field. Contact: GSM

9412094/623662, Al Raisi Asst. General Manager for Roads & Contracts, Sales execxutive, Computer, Operator, Cleaner- 783840,

ucts for a reputed firm with a N.O.C. or a release and a valid Omani driving licence. Required urgently, an MOH

Urgently requires a van sales-

qualified doctor to work in a clinic in Muscat. Interested persons may contact on Tel: 736890 and 7731508.

Wanted an experienced Indian driver able to speak Arabic and English for immediate appointment. Contact: 602199

aerobics classes & Gym. Contact: 603662/9360025

Experienced Instructor for

SIT. WANTED retarial practice seeks parttime/full-time job. contact

Female executive secretary on family visa MA having experience in shorthand, windows, ms office application, excel & word seeks immediate employment. contact 9492506

15 years experience in personnel & Admn. Dept. having valid driving licence with release letter seeks immediate suitable placement. Contact: 703542

Female MCA holder experienced in MS office, Windows, Oracle 7, Developer 2000, Power Builder, Visual Basic and Sybase seeks suitable placements. Contact 9122576 or 502722 after 4pm.

Teacher BA, B.Ed (English) with computer knowledge and Arabic. Six years teaching experience in Oman with Ministry of Education and college level seeks suitable opening. Contact 9383096.

computer training seeks suitable placement. Contact 605691. 6 years experienced Arabic/English typist. Contact 795433 C/o Mr. Sahib/Salam.

(ICWAI) female, with formal

Qualified cost accountant

8 years experienced lady graduate secretary/accountant knowledge of computer seeks suitable placement. Contact Mr

FOR RENT

2 bedroom flats, Offices, Shops, Available in Al Khuwair

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sell three state banks this year under its commitments to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the central Bank of Thailand (BoT) said yesterday.

Bangkok Metropolitan Bank, Siam City Bank and Radanasin Bank are expected to hit the market in 1999, BoT assistant governor Tarisa Watgase said.

The schedule of sale would be set out in the seventh letter of intent to the IMF, which is expected to go to cabinet for initial approval in the next two weeks.

Tarisa said the sale of the three banks had been delayed in the hope of getting a better price and to give potential buyers more time for due diligence.

The government would sell 75 per cent of its holdings in each bank and would continue to hold the balance of 25 per cent. The balance could be sold

later if the price was attractive. Methods of sale were up to the Finance Ministry but would likely involve the sale of groups of mixed assets or separate

tranches of good and bad assets. Bangkok Metropolitan Bank and Siam City Bank were nationalised last year as part of compre hensive reforms to the banking sector that has been gutted by Thailand's economic crisis.

S&P lowers ratings for Swiss firm

GENEVA - Standard and Poor's yesterday lowered its rating outlook to negative for Swiss Life/Rentenanstalt which has just announced plans to buy a majori-ty stake in Gotthard Bank from Sumitomo of Japan.

"The outlook was revised to negative from stable, following the company's reported intention to take over unrated Banca del Gottardo of Switzerland," a statement said.

Swiss Life said the acquisition of a 53.5-per cent stake in the Swiss-Italian private banking institution will cost around 1.366 billion Swiss francs (853 million euros/\$945 milion).

The US rating agency said that the outlook change reflects the group's "somewhat weakened, though very strong" level of capital and the challenges associated with managing two large acquisitions. — AFP



FALL IN PROFITS: HSBC Holdings PLC Group Chief Executive Keith Whitson, right, with HSBC Asia Pacific Chairman David Eldon during a news conference in Hong Kong yesterday, reporting the bank's 21-per cent fall in 1998. - Reuters

Online trading facility for Gulf Indians soon

in the Gulf would soon be online with the major bourses in India if Department

of (DoT) Telecommunications (DoT) clears the last hurdle before setting up abroad of trading terminals of the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

A high-level delegation of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) was scheduled to meet top officials of the DoT to finalise the details for setting up terminals based on VSAT technology, which is being used throughout India for computerised trading.

The NSE and BSE had been contemplating tapping the overseas investors by setting up tradterminals at their doorsteps.

The move had gathered momentum with the Sebi and the Reserve Bank of India giving their consent in principle. To begin with, the online trading facilities would be extended to non-resident Indians (NRIs) settled in the Gulf countries.

has been the DoT's regulation by the NSE and the BSE.

According to afficient

between two different networks. The DoT does not permit interconnected networking within Indian territory either. The department has been under continuous pressure to amend the regulation which, business sources argue, has been hampering the development of e-commerce in India.

Of late the DoT has softened its stand and agreed to allow interconnectivity between two networks through I-Net lines. Sources say the option, however, is not cost effective for business

"We are hopeful of getting positive response from the DoT...Let's keep our fingers crossed," a BSE official said.

In a related development, the Stock Holding Corporation of India Ltd (SHCIL) has decided to set up overseas its Request Transfer Machines (RTM) which would give near-real time trading facilities to NRI investors in the Gulf countries.

The RTM, however, is said to be a much slower mechanism as compared to the online trading

RTM would be connected to banks and brokers in India and will be operated through a chip-based smart card. SHCIL officials claim that a stock transaction through RTM would be completed in about ten min-

The potential investors need to open an account with one of the empanelled banks to avail themselves of RTM facilities. For the Gulf countries the SHCIL has been negotiating a tie-up with the International Bank.

The whole trade would be in a dematerialised form to eliminate the risk involved in physical transportation of share certificates and other delivery related problems. After necessary permission from the RBI an overseas investor could use the RTM facilities installed at the participating banks or have a machine installed at his own premises at a cost of \$3,000.

The SHCIL would soon be patenting its RTM, which is expected to bring a revolution in the international investment scenario, said the company's CEO, B.V. Goud.

- India Abroad News Service

Sharp fall in 1998 earnings

HONG KONG — Banking giant HSBC Holdings PLC yesterday reported a 21-per cent fall in group net profit to \$4.31 billion in 1998 after making hefty provisions for bad and doubtful debts in crisis-hit Asia.

"In a number of our major markets, 1998 saw the toughest economic conditions for many years," group chairman John Bond said in the annual report released here.

The level of bad and doubtful debt provisions required to meet the group's prudent policy on non-performing loans resulted in a 21-per cent decline in profit attributable to shareholders compared to 1997," he said.

The bank took a charge for bad and doubtful debt of \$2.63 billion in 1998, up from \$1.01 billion in the previous year, reflecting the continuing downturn in Asia and its impact on asset quality in several economies. Net interest income rose six per cent to \$11.54 bil-

Basic earnings per share were down 22 per cent to 1.61 dollars. Net profit at subsidiary Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. Ltd was down 46 per cent to 10.785 billion HongKong dollars (\$1.39 billion) in 1998. The bank made provisions of 12.53 billion Hong Kong dollars for bad and doubtful debt.

Midland Bank net profit rose three per cent to £1.04 billion

Hang Seng Bank, another HongKong-based unit of HSBC, posted a 27.5-per cent fall in net profit to 6.7 billion Hong Kong

HSBC acquires Seoulbank

giant HSBC Holdings PLC yesterday clinched a deal to take over South Korea's ailing Seoulbank, becoming the first foreign institution to gain a substantial foothold here.

HSBC agreed to acquire a controlling 70 per cent stake in Seoulbank for \$700 million, the Financial Supervisory Commission (FSC) said.

HSBC, whose flagship is the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp., said Seoulbank's name would probably be changed to HSBC after the completion of the transaction following due diligence by the end of May.

HSBC will be given full managerial autonomy, while the government will maintain a 30 per cent stake, along with war-rants equivalent to 19 per cent of the shares outstanding at the closing date.

The deal will help boost confidence in South Korea's economy, analysts said, describing HSBC as the first foreign institution to open a nationwide banking network here.

"This will help South Korea introduce advanced management skills into our banking industry," FSC chief Lee Hun-Jai said.

Following the sale of Korea First Bank to an American buyer in December, the government has preferred a European buyer. The auction has been seen as a major step forward in the restructuring of troubled

We are very pleased with this transaction and opportunity of increasing investments in Korea," HSBC Korea chief Geoff Calvert said.

Underwriters Morgan Stanley Dean Witter said the deal would provide the first real foothold in the Korean market for a foreign institution, and would therefore "have a huge psychological impact on the local industry as well as foreign

investors and ratings agencies." Foreign analysts insisted that HSBC got a favourable deal on asset transfers. But they warned that Seoulbank is not expected to bring a meaningful profit contribution to HSBC for at

least two or three years.

The deal followed HSBC's acquisition of Bamerindus in Brazil.

"It is the right moment to be in Korea. Its economy is showing healthy signs of bouncing-back," said BNP-Prime Peregrine Securities analyst Haydn Meadows.

He said that if HSBC provides sufficient provision, "which provides adequate cover for its non-performing loans, it should be well-received by the

HSBC said the government would retain voting rights relat-ing only to issues that "materially impact its economic posi-

"In effect the government will retain a 49 per cent eco-nomic interest, and as a result will be able to recoup a substantial portion of the cost of the support package (for

The government in turn will have a put option — the right to

sell — in the event the call option — the right to buy — is not exercised by HSBC within

the agreed timeframe. HSBC will make an up-front facilitation payment to the gov-ernment of \$200 million and certain assets, and liabilities will

be separated and transferred to an asset management company.
FSC officials said HSBC was selected over other contenders, including a consortium of North American banks, which were overly concerned about excess

exposure here. The government had nationalised Korea First Bank and Seoulbank as part of its financial sector reforms which include the purchase of bad bank loans,

insurance. Details including branch adjustment and the amount of government aid in the Seoulbank acquisition will be determined after the completion of due diligence.

recapitalisation and deposit

But the government promised to take on non-performing loans and buy out minority shareholders in Seoulbank.

Hyundai Securities' Kim Sung-Soo said that the decision to scrap all minority shares would negatively affect the banking sector.

Furthermore, a tough classi-fication of bad loans by HSBC could destabilise the market, he warned. "The acquirers of Korea First Bank and Seoul Bank will shake up the loan portfolio system particularly for conglomerates and the tackling of the fallout must be the most urgent

And now, an automatic finger-nail printer

TOKYO - Japan's Atlus Co. Ltd said yesterday it is preparing to release the last word in schoolgirl fashion - a machine that can print more than 100 designs on their finger nails. The "Nail More" devices

targeted at trend-setting schoolgirls — will go on sale in Japan in late April or early May for about ¥900,000 (\$7,400) each, a company official said.

The machine — which looks much like a toilet hand dryer —

offers ink-jet printing of flowers, animals and letters on two nails for ¥300 (less than three dollars).

"It is difficult to develop inkjet printing techniques for nonflat objects," management plan-ning official Fuyumi Suzuki The print can be peeled off

"If authorised, users can print Louis-Vuitton and other logos on their nails," she said. The machine will have

advanced features allowing users to make up their own designs or scan in their own patterns which they can then carry around literally at their finger-

Together with leading game machine maker Sega Enterprises Ltd, Atlus has already launched the schoolgirl favourite "Print Club," a machine which snaps instant pictures and turns them into sheets of tiny, adhesive-backed prints. — AFP

Hong Kong jobless rate rises anew

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's jobless rate rose to a record-high 5.8 per cent in the three months to January despite signs of recovery in some sectors of the recession-hit economy, official data showed yesterday.

Government officials warned

the unemployment rate would stay high in the near-term as a number of companies are expected to trim their payrolls follow-ing the Lunar New Year holiday in mid-February.
The provisional seasonally

adjusted rate rose to 5.8 per cent in November-January, the Census and Statistics Department said, compared to a revised 5.7 per cent for October-December, 1998.

Government economist K. Y. Tang told a press conference that with the economy remaining slack, both the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate and underemployment rate edged up further.

Hong Kong's economy is currently mired in its worst recession on record, with the gross domestic product projected to have contracted 5.0 per cent in

Firms operating here have been laying off staff and cutting wages as the economic downturn Based on the current trend

deepened. and in the aftermath of the Chinese New Year holiday, the unemployment rate is likely to stay high in the near term, Tang said, as a number of firms downsize or readjust their headcounts. "Of course, we're very much

concerned and are keeping alert on the situation after the Chinese New Year," he said. The latest increase in the unemployment rate occurred mainly in the transport and man-

ufacturing sectors, but this was offset by decreases in the decoration and maintenance and the business services sectors, the For the period November-January, the size of the total labour force was provisionally estimated at 3,451,000, while

provisionally estimated at 202,000. Education and manpower secretary Joseph Wong said that as the economy was still undergoing a process of adjustment, the unemployment rate was like-

the number of unemployed was

ly to stay high in the near future. "The employment outlook for the next few months remains uncertain and sentiment in the private sector is still cautious,"

Wong said.
"The rate of unemployment is a factor of the (overall weak) economic situation. What the government can do is to ease the situation," he said.

Wong, however, pointed out that there were some positive developments, noting that tourist arrivals had reached five million in the latter half of 1998, a growth of 7.5 per cent over the same period in 1997.

He also pointed out that a number of major infrastructural projects will get underway in the next two months, creating more than 2,000 new jobs.

Wong said despite the down-turn, about 3,000 people found jobs through the Labour Department in January. The government's task force

on unemployment is to meet Thursday to discuss measures to tackle the growing jobless rate. Last month, Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa told legislators

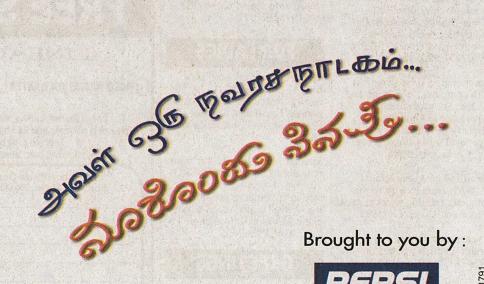
that the government may be forced to revise down its medi-um-term growth forecasts due to the severity of the current reces-

The current forecast, made last October, is for growth to average out at 4.0 per cent over the next five years

"We are setting it at 4.0 per cent, but that forecast was made some time ago and the situation is somewhat changed," he said during the first of his bi-annual question and answer sessions in the Legislative Council.

"As to whether we can achieve 4.0 per cent, of course it is something we want to achieve, but we also understand we are experiencing some very hard times with regard to economy recovery, but we are trying our level best," he said. — AFP





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| Rial Omani per one unit of foreign currency | | Foreign one | currency per Rial Omani |
|---|----------------------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Currencies | Buyin | g Selli | ing |
| Dollar | 0.381 | 0.388 | 2.58 |
| Euro | 0.4198 | 0.4308 | 2.32 |
| Sterling | 0.620 | 0.631 | 1.58 |
| DM | 0.2162 | 0.2194 | 4.56 |
| S.Fr | 0.2641 | 0.2681 | 3.73 |
| D. Fl. | 0.1919 | 0.1944 | 5.14 |
| F.Fr - | 0.06441 | 0.06536 | 15.30 |
| Lira | 0.000217 | 0.000224 | 4464.29 |
| Yen | 0.003156 | 0.003197 | 312.79 |
| A. Sch. | 0.03061 | 0.03120 | 32.05 |
| D.K. | 0.05676 | 0.05768 | 17.34 |
| N.Kr. | 0.04850 | 0.04950 | 20.20 |
| S.K. | 0.04746 | 0.04848 | 20.63 |
| Can.\$ | 0.2579 | 0.2618 | 3.82 |
| Aus. \$ | 0.2446 | 0.2491 | 4.01 |
| N.Z.\$. | 0.2078 | 0.2123 | 4.71 |
| Sing. \$ | 0.2235 | 0.2267 | 4.41 |
| Mal. R. | 0.0985 | 0.1028 | 9.73 |
| HK. \$ | 0.00492 | 0.0501 | 19.96 |
| Sp. Pes | 0.00239 | 0.00273 | 366.30 |
| B. Fr. | 0.01043 | 0.01065 | 93.90 |
| Jord. D | 0.537 | 0.546 | 1.83 |
| Ind. Rs | 0.00888 | 0.00928 | 107.76 |
| Pak. Rs | 0.00752 | 0.00787 | 127.06 |
| SL. Rs | 0.00538 | 0.00578 | 173.01 |
| Fin. M | 0.07099 | 0.07209 | 13.87 |
| Cyp £ | 0.724 | 0.739 | 1.35 |
| B. Taka | 0.00779 | 0.00819 | 122.10 |
| EGP | 0.1126 | 0.1138 | 8.79 |
| Gulf currencies | S CHARLES THE SECOND | | |
| UAE Dh | 0.1043 | 0.1054 | 9.49 |
| B D | 1.015 | 1.027 | 0.97 |
| SR | 0.1021 | 0.1032 | 9.69 |
| QR | 0.1052 | .0.1063 | 9.41 |
| K D | 1.255 | 1.275 | 0.78 |
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| 1 Month | 5.000 | 6.000 | 4.310 |
| 2 Months | 5.250 | 6.250 | 4.340 |
| 3 Months | 5.750 | 6.750 | 4.370 |
| 6 Months | 6.000 | 7.000 | 4.400 |
| 9 Months | 6.250 | 7.250 | 4.460 |
| 12 Months | 6,500 | 7 500 | 4 620 |

Shipping schedule

| Ship | Cargo | Arrv. Date |
|-------------------|---------------|------------|
| Global Metis | Vegetable Oil | 23.02 |
| Pearl of Abudhabi | Barley | 23.02 |
| Orient Aishwarya | Containers | 23.02 |
| Global Power | Containers | 23.02 |
| Jebelali | Containers | 24.02 |
| Gulf Heritage | Containers | 25.02 |
| Eagle Confidence | Containers | 26.02 |
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| Elbe Star | Containers | 26.02 |
| Hual Trooper | Vehicles | 27.02 |
| Orient Strength | Containers | 27.02 |
| Libra Leader | Vehicles | 27.02 |
| Al Messilah | Sheep | 27.02 |
| Sibirskiy | Containers | 27.02 |
| Hotaka Maru | Containers | 28.02 |
| HMS Beagle | Visit | 01.03 |
| Monet | Tourists | 01.03 |
| Auto Diana | Vehicles | 01.03 |

Prize-giving ceremony

LAST Tuesday evening all roads led to the Sri Lankan School Muscat (SLSM) situated in Wadi Kabir. The occasion was the 10th anniversary celebrations of the school. The annual prize-giving was followed by a colourful variety of entertainment performed by the students of various ethnic communities in the school. It was not the first time that the school had a prize-giving but it was the first time that prize distribution for three consecutive years was

Painstaking, meticulous and amiable principal of the school, Somabandu Kodikara presented a memorable report in which he said among other things that "this is a time, which witnesses unprecedented explosion of knowledge due to the mind boggling advances made in the sphere of information and computer technology. The Internet and the information superhighway has added previously unthought-of possibilities in to the tool kit of the educationist. It has also created its own share of obstacles too.

A few more excerpts: "For example: A teacher is traditionally considered as the know all' master in the classroom, in front of a set of eager students thirsty for knowledge. Is this scenario applicable still? Could any teacher or even Bill Gates himself for that matter, master the existing knowledge available via ICT ?"

Kodikara underlined the fact that the SLSM treated the teacher as a facilitator all along. He added: "In other words, we endeavour to facilitate the teaching-learning process which is an interactive as well as pro-active mode of imparting education. We believe that this is the only option available in the next millennium, in which the meaning of literacy will be

"Instead of being the ability to read and write, before long, literacy will be redefined as the ability to communicate with a computer" predicted the principal adding that the school does not leave room for the students to be left behind in this sphere.

A number of prizes were distributed. Some students bagged more than one prize. Students who achieved A grade in the London GCE(O/L) examinations in June 1998 and in GCE(A/L) examinations in the same year were given medals. A challenge trophy for the best academic achievement in 1998 was presented to Nishardi De Silva, who is a regular contributor to the Times of Oman, for obtaining eight distinctions in the GCEOL

examination in 1998.

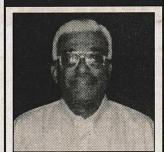
Two senior students Dilmini Kalambarachchi and Taraka Narayana were the presenters of the variety entertainment programme. They did a splendid job with their slick announcements. The highlights of the entertainment included dances - Sri Lankan, Indian, Pakistani and western. It would be unwieldy to mention all the names of the innumerable participants in these items. They did them all very well The music and dance were compatible with each other. Teachers in charge of these presentations should be congratulated in harnessing the varied talents of the young artistes in school.

I think everyone (nearly more than 1,000 members of the audience) left with satisfaction and praise of the hardworking teachers and lively children of the school.

The SLSM is now looking forward to the first inter-house athletic meet to be held on Friday, February 26.On the previous day some field events would have worked off.

The Sri Lankan school in Muscat is an institution to be

GLEANINGS



K.S. Sivakumaran

From school activities, let's turn our attention to poetry

Books: Poems

THE New Dragon Book of Verse edited by Michael Harrison and Christopher Stuart-Clark is an anthology of 243 poems by famous poets in English classified under the following heads:

Landscapes, Seascapes Creatures, Childhood, People, War, Mystery and Reflections. Along with Nine Modern poets, this book is also prescribed for the London GCE(O/L) English literature

Here is one piece of poetry I liked very much. It's from Shakespeare — Prospero's Farewell to his Magic:

Our revels are now ended. These our actors, As I foretold you, were all spirits and

Are melted into air, into thin And, like the baseless fabric

of this vision, The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces, The solemn temples, the

great globe itself, Yea, all which inherit, shall

And, like this insubstantial pageant faded. leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff

As dreams are made on, and our little life Is rounded with a sleep.

Books: 'Literary Criticism'

IN Literary Criticism, a new approach is being practised in academic circles. While I subscribe to the familiar methods, I do not shun knowing about the new approaches. Terry Eagleton, Mark Schorer, Hans Robert Jauss, Linda H. Peterson, Jean-Francois Lyotard and others have written a few books on these approaches. What seems now is that a new literature with new technology is evolving. In the forthcoming millennium the formal study of literature may have to give way to something unpredictable. Until then let's enjoy literature in the way we are used to.

Literary quotes

TO the man in the street, who, I am sorry to say, is a keen observer of life, The word 'intellectual' suggests straightaway, A man who's untrue to his wife. - W.H. Auden

Books are a load of crap Philip Larkin Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love

perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it

Love is only dirty trick played on us to achieve continuation of the species -W. Somerset Maugham

Literary terms: Post-Structuralism

"SOME thinkers in the 60s and 70s emphasised the instability of meanings and of intellectual categories and sought to undermine any theoretical system that claimed to have universal validity. They favoured a non-hierarchical plurality or free play of meanings, stressing the indeterminacy of texts."

I am indebted to Chris Baldick for the above definition. Let's meet next Tuesday. Good reading.

BJP destroying institution of governors: Rajesh Pilot

From R.K. Bhatnagar

IS the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led coalition government in India destroying the well established institution of governors? According to former minister of state for home affairs and prominent Congress leader Rajesh Pilot, the answer is Yes.

According to him Home Minister L. K. Advani's move to change Bihar Governor Sunder Singh Bhandari and shift some others after disclosing it to the media was beyond comprehension.

In an exclusive interview to the Times of Oman. Pilot pointed out that the appointment of governors was the prerogative of the President, K. R. Narayanan, who though acts on the advice of the council of ministers but is not obliged to work on the dictates of the home minister. The governors were his representatives in the states who submitted periodical reports to him with copies to the Home Ministry.

It was not fair for an individual minister, even if he is looking after the home portfolio to air his views in public about a constitutional head (governor) before obtaining a formal decision from the president,"

Rajesh Pilot strongly felt that the BJP government was out to destroy the well established institution of governors, enshrined in the Indian constitution five decades ago. The Home Ministry under L.K. Advani had short-listed a few names from among them one would be appointed as Bihar governor in place of Bhandari who was according to them a hardcore RSS member.

on February 10, is one of the respected Congress leaders known for his frankness. An air force pilot, who took part in the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict in Bangladesh he later joined politics. He became a member of the Lok Sabha since 1979 having won six elections. He was a minister both in the Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao governments holding independent charge of surface transport, communications and environment. He was also minister of state for home under S. B. Chauhan. He is a prominent member of the Congress Working Committee (CWC) and was elected to it at the Tirupati convention in 1992. Last year, Sonia Gandhi, Congress party president, nominated him again to the CWC. Comparatively young, known for his bold and straight-forward ideas, he is a suave soft-spoken and handsome well built leader with rural bias.

Excerpts: • What is your opinion about the political and economic situation in the country?

It is a big question. Both political and economic situation are under great stress. There is a continuing deterioration in the economy as well as political situation notwithstanding law and order, crime rape cases, atrocities on the weaker sections and the women. There seems to be no effort on the part of the present government to check the deteriorating situation. You may know better as you read it in the

• You have been advocating for transparency in government functioning. How



RAJESH PILOT: Firm believer in democracy

do you think the Congress would have tackled the problem of deficit financing, rising prices and with maladministration?

The Congress party and its governments have always acted in the best interests of the people. Both in 1980 when the Congress returned to power under Indira Gandhi and again in 1991 under P. V. Narasimha Rao the Congress provided a stable government tackling the tricky problems of rising prices, maladministration, and scarcity. Finance ministers R.

Venkataraman in 1980 and Dr Man Mohan Singh in the

Congress ministry tackled the problem of deficit financing. In fact in 1980, our senior leader Venkataramanji who later became president gave to the country a revenue surplus budget. We are confident of putting the economy back on rails once again, when the Congress assumes the reins of the administration.

• When do you feel the Congress would step in to stop the rot?

The Congress is constantly watching the developments. It will all depend on the situation. I can assure you that the Congress will not be found lagging behind in discharging its responsibility

towards the people when the time comes. But it all depends on the political situation which is fast

• You were very close to Rajiv Gandhi and worked closely with him in the government. What do you feel?

Rajiv Gandhi was a young and dynamic leader. He stood for accountability and transparency in public life. He started very well but as a young person had advantages as well as disadvantages. He wanted to do many things in short time. If he had not been assassinated in May 1991, he would have made a much better prime minister and taken the country to greater heights. He was fit cast to lead India into 21st century. How sad it is, is it not?

• What are the activities of the Gandhi Forum launched on October 2 with former president R. Venkataraman and former Congress chief S. Nijalingappa?

It is a good question. Launched on October 2, 1997 from Rajghat, the Gandhi Forum strives to bring forth accountability and transparency in public life. It also aims to strengthen the political fabric and national character with emphases on social service. During this period the forum

has a mix of success. In the matter of transparency in public life, all major political parties in the country have accepted the plea of the Gandhi Forum to declare assets by all elected representatives like members of parliament (Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha) and state legislatures. Similarly the federal council of ministers also passed a resolution asking them to declare their

often ridiculously low prices. A

new class of Russian "oligarchs"

meanwhile, received privatisation

vouchers which privatisation mastermind Anatoly Chubais

promised would be worth as much

as a car. Some swapped them for a bottle of vodka. Others put them

in big-talking investment funds which collapsed, leaving them

without enough to buy even tyres.

and shady deals that rose in the era

of privatisation have prompted

some sociologists to describe

Russia as a kleptocracy, or

charitable fund-raising for his

own gain, a type of scheme that is

well-off townspeople for a secret meeting of the "Union of the

Sword and Plough". Using hints

of an anti-government conspiracy,

he raises significant sums for

homeless children. He promptly

These days some charitable

rganisations for athletes and

Afghan war veterans have won

similar reputations by using tax

breaks on imported cigarettes and liquor. The "Union of the Sword

and Plough" episode also contains

another familiar theme. Ostap

said, that 'the West will help us' that there will be western

investment and enrichment -

there won't be anything of the kind," Deputy Atomic Energy

Minister Bulat Nigmatulin told a

million. Would you really bring

them here with the risk of losing

them?" Yet the West did invest,

tens of billions of dollars in

Yavlinsky credited Chubais, who in 1998 was Russia's chief

loan negotiator, with Ostapian

talents in winning billions in

International Monetary Fund

good example to explain the

relations between Chubais and the

melted away by last August when

the government defaulted on its GKO treasury bills and devalued

the rouble. Much of the banking

system became insolvent, parting

millions of Russians from their

was playing the game of Ostap Bender and not the banks," said

Vyacheslav Nikonov, head of the

Politika Fund, a think-tank. "The

reaction was 'What could you

expect from the government or the

its high-yielding T-bills, Ostap also promises easy wealth to the

citizens of Noviye Vasyuki.

Posing as a chess grandmaster, he

said he would organise an "Inter-

planetary Chess Congress" in

When he is unmasked -

Ostap can barely play chess - he

ridicules the locals for their naive

trust; a humiliation 1998

depositors felt when their banks

their backwater town.

Much as the government with

"It was the government that

"Maybe Ostap Bender is a

Billions of dollars in loans had

lend — and has yet to recover

"Imagine that you had \$1

recent news conference.

Russia in the 1990s.

loans last summer.

IMF." he said.

'This belief, as Ostap Bender

promises "the West will help us".

pockets the cash.

practised far and wide today.

"government of thieves".

The widespread corruption

Ostap is not above using

In the novel, he gathers some

Russians.

assets. Another major concern of the forum related to public life that all government functions including the prime minister should be brought under the purview of the Lok Pal Bill. This has been accepted and the bill is likely to be debated and passed by parliament. Third major point taken up by us was about the implementation of the Panchayat Raj system, the grass root democracy

Twelve states in the country. including Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa have implemented it and soon it will come into force in Jammu and Kashmir, Others are being persuaded. Gandhi Forum is busy striving to achieve the goal of Mahatma Gandhi in

of India living in rural areas. • Are you optimistic about democracy succeeding in India and why?

Yes. Democracy and the functioning of democratic institutions in the country is the strength of India. If democracy succeeds, India succeeds. If democracy fails, India fails. It was the democracy which keeps the entire country together marching towards progress. If democracy weakens, the country will become weak.

ushering prosperity to the people

Personally speaking I am a firm believer in democracy, you know, I not only believe in democracy in government but also in inner democracy in my party. Many a times, I have been a lone crusader for inner party democracy, but I have succeeded. May Almighty give us the strength to remain on a democratic party in all our



MOST-AFFORDABLE VEHICLE: A little girl holds on to the ribbon on her hair as she rides in a bag attached to her grandfather's bicycle in Beijing yesterday. Although China's streets are becoming more flooded with cars and trucks, most of China's 1.24 billion people still get around on the more

Thailand moves to save wild elephants

By Sutin Wannabovorn

A FEMALE elephant herd commander emerges from dense jungle on the edge of an open valley in the shadow of Thailand's southern mountains.

She waits patiently and makes a thorough survey of the terrain until sunset before signalling to the rest of the herd to come out of hiding and move to large piles of food that soldiers have left for

Seven wild elephants eat the prepared food nervously, while metres away from them, animal researchers hidden in the bushes monitor their movements.

This is Thailand's Kui Buri National Park and the site of a unique experiment by Thai environmentalists to elephants and farmers live in peace in a region that has seen generations of conflict between human beings and pachyderms.

Encouraged by King Bhumibol Adulyadej, officials are conducting a long-term project to try to keep elephants inside protected areas of parkland and away from the vast pineapple plantations that have sprung up in recent years to employ many local

The project began last year after three elephants were found

EATING TIME: Wild elephants eat food prepared for them late in the afternoon at Thailand's Kui Buri

dead - two poisoned and one from gunshots — in the national park in Prachuab Khiri Khan province on the border with Myanmar, about 250km south of the Thai capital, Bangkok.

Project organisers use a fleet of military trucks to dump 10 tonnes of sugar cane, pineapples and other fruits three times a week at several points that wild elephants usually cross on their routes from the mountains to the pineapple farms.

"We are feeding them here during the dry season to lure them

away from farmland. This is a short term action. We also have a long-term project initiated by the king to help wild elephants and farmers co-exist," said Bunlue Choonil, chief of Kui Buri National Park.

Conflict between elephants

in recent years as pineapple farms have grown and some of the natural habitat has been eroded by development.

Kui Buri is a rich, fertile plain in a valley beneath the Tanaosri mountain range where farms now grow pineapples in an area of 237,200 acres, producing about 1.2 million tonnes of fruit a year for 18 canning factories in the province. But in the past few years, farmers have said at least 20 per cent of their crop has been destroyed and eaten by invading herds of wild elephants that have come in from the region's 450sq km of forest.

Sathorn Khaikhaew, a farmer near the park, said his farm alone had lost at least 10 tonnes of fruit annually from 192 ha of pineapples due to wild elephants over the last few years.

"All the wild elephants look healthy and I think there is plenty of food for them in the jungle. They come to this area because they are now addicted to the taste of pineapples, which are easy to find," he said.

"We also have a protection squad here and the elephants don't want to return to Myanmar where there is sporadic fighting,' Sathorn said.

Fast-thinking swindler Ostap inspires Russia insiders snapped up state assets at

was born.

Ordinary

By Adam Tanner

SEVENTY years after he first made his mark as a fast-thinking swindler, Ostap Bender is alive and well, at the heart of a long series of dubious deals and outright theft that have flourished in post-Soviet Russia.

When millions of Russians lost their money in pyramid schemes in the early 1990s, Ostap was there. When the government defaulted on its bonds last year, Ostap laughed at how easily investors were fooled. When the West saw much of its food aid stolen in 1992-93, Ostap marvelled at how simple it was.

The exploits of the dashing but touchingly naive con-artist, who travelled through far-flung Russian towns and villages artfully ripping off the locals, made the 1927 novel *The Twelve* Chairs one of Russia's best-loved

Yet these days he has become more than just a character from fiction.

To many Russians, the spirit of Ostap Bender is the driving force behind the country's "wild west"

capitalism. The book by satirists Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, in which Ostap searches for diamonds stashed inside one of a set of 12 missing chairs, serves as a sort of guidebook to Russia today.

"Ostap Bender is kind of a symbol of this anarchy and will to survive," Boris Fyodorov, a former deputy prime minister and chief tax collector, said.

Fyodorov estimated that all but one per cent of Russians, following Ostap's tradition, try to skirt the rules. In the novel, Ostap hunts

down the chairs one by one using a mixture of charm and deceit. His ultimate goal is to get enough money to go to Brazil — although he never makes it that far.

The book is set during the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 1920s, a brief and rambunctious experiment with capitalist policies that Bolshevik followed the Revolution.

"It's basically about an adventure in a free country, and that's why it was so popular during the Soviet times," said Fyodorov, whose 1998 efforts to boost tax collection fell victim to well-respected traditions of

deceiving the government.

The post-Soviet privatisation of public assets provided similar opportunities to follow Ostap's adage of "respecting the criminal code" while exploiting loopholes and human weaknesses for selfgain.
"We can see this character

especially in the period of turmoil and upheaval when there are more opportunities to express yourself,' said book publisher Igor Zakharov. Grigory Yavlinsky, a candidate for president in the 2000 election

and head of the liberal Yabloko party, said the vast web of ingering Soviet ways made Ostap-style cons easy.
"The book of Ilf and Petrov is

about the absurdity of the previous system, and the previous system is still in place," he said in an interview. "While the Soviet system is in place, Ostap Bender is still in place."

froze their accounts.
"Fools," Ostap told an angry The government's major effort crowd as he escaped. "I don't to undo the Soviet system privatisation - mobilised a new think that a chess grandmaster army of Ostaps as well-connected would visit such idiots as you."

celebrates 25th anniversary By Francis Temman

Versatile F16

A QUARTER-CENTURY after its inaugural flight, the US F16 remains one of the most versatile combat fighter iets in the world. Above the sands of the

Bosnia, the jet has earned its "Fighting Falcon" nickname by winning all 69 of its military engagements. With some 4,000

Middle East and the hills of

examples produced, the F16 is part of the arsenal of some 20 nations. "Quite simply, the F16 is

the best, the most popular fighter, the safest and the most capable single-engine fighter the world has everseen," said Colonel Jeff Riemer, director of the F16 Systems Project Office at Wright-Patterson Air Force

Base in Ohio. In 1971, five US firms threw themselves in the race to produce a single-seat

fighter. General Dynamics whose military arm was bought by Lockheed Martin in 1993 — and Northrop won the contract to build two prototypes: The YF16 and YF17.

The YF16 first took to the air on February 2, 1974 at Edwards Air Force Base in the California desert. On March 11, it broke the Mach 2 speed barrier of 2,400km per hour. In January 1975, the US Air Force embraced it.

With advanced aerodynamic wings, a pilot's seat inclined toward the rear, a bubble-shaped cockpit canopy that enhanced visibility and a reliance on electric instead of hydraulic controls, the jet was revolutionary for its time. Combining speed and manoeuvrability, the "falcon"

proved to be as talented at aerial combat as ground attack, rapidly becoming the air force's weapon of choice. During the 1991 Gulf war, some 250 F16s were

responsible for more than 40 per cent of the 13,500 missions, launching a combined total of 20,000 tonnes of bombs. Today the aircraft remains

the best-selling fighter jet around the world. Joel Johnson, vice-president for the International Aerospace Industry Association, says there are good reasons for its brisk sales.
At \$25 million per unit,

'it is less expensive than other jets fighters of its class," he said. "Another advantage is that the US Air Force still has 1,400 of them, so you know spare parts are going to be available and the olanes maintainable."

Tuck McAtee, head of international marketing at Lockheed Martin, pointed to the F16's design that allows it to adapt rapidly to new

technology.

The jet's latest high-tech version, he said, should rival the best European fighters such as the European consortium's Eurofighter and Dassault's Rafale until 2010. "It's going to be very competitive," McAtee said.

With the end of the Cold War, Lockheed Martin is looking to expand its F16 sales to Eastern Europe now that those nations are no longer required to buy Soviet

Indo-Pak summit, 'a quantum leap to ease tension'

NEW DELHI — The landmark weekend summit between India and Pakistan marked a quantum leap toward easing mutual hostility, Indian newspapers and politicians said yesterday.

"Ice is finally broken," the Times of India said in an uncharacteristically upbeat headline for Indian newspapers, which normally adopt a guarded tone on Pakistan relations.

A headline in the Pioneer newspaper gushed: "Ties take

In the first visit by an Indian prime minister to Pakistan in a decade, Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif met in Lahore and agreed to take steps to ease tension and reduce the risk of a nuclear war.

Vajpayee, who took a bus to the Wagah checkpoint that divides the two countries, signed a declaration with Sharif pledging to step up dialogue on all issues, including the bitter territorial dispute over Kashmir, cause of two wars between the two neighbours.

Last year, the two leaders ordered back-to-back underground nuclear weapons tests, triggering global condemnation

and raising tension in the region.

Over the weekend, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding pledging to take immediate steps to reduce the risk of accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons.

'I am glad it (nuclear blasts) has been referred to, to guarantee and assure each other that there shall be no accidental (nuclear) outbursts because that may be dangerous," former prime minister Inder Kumar Gujral was quoted as saying on the Star Television network.

A headline in the *Observer* newspaper said: "India, Pakistan to play it safe in nuclear mat-

But others reminded that problems remained for India despite the weekend burst of

An editorial in the Asian Age newspaper headlined "Death in Jammu, and Vajpayee's silence in Pakistan", referred to violence in Jammu and Kashmir that left 31 people dead over the weekend. — AFP

Lahore declaration a landmark for peace, security: Narayanan

Narayanan yesterday described the Lahore declaration as a landmark for the peace and security of India and Pakistan and said the two countries will now work to enter into agreements to put in place far-reaching confidence building measures.

"It is our hope that the prime minister's historic initiative for the welfare of the peoples of the two countries and his reiteration that a secure, stable and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest will mark a new chapter in our bilateral ties," he said in his address to the joint session of

On the nuclear issue, the president said India would redouble its efforts to securing world peace through speedy, universal and comprehensive dismantling of all weapons of mass destruc-

"Continuing the national consensus on foreign policy matters,

vigorously for global nuclear disarmament on a comprehensive and non-discriminatory basis," he

Expressing satisfaction that terrorism and subversive activities in various parts of the country were being effectively contained, Narayanan said the government will continue its efforts to strengthen peace in the state and revive normal economic, social, cultural and educational activities in those ar

Noting that continuity and consensus are the hallmarks of India's foreign policy, Narayanan said: "India seeks to strengthen and deepen our historic and friendly relations with China in all spheres of mutual benefit and is looking forward to continuing the dialogue with that coun-

Turning to the difficult financial position, the president said it

Parliament begins budget session

is critically important for both central and state governments to restore health to their finances by reducing both revenue and fiscal

This calls for tight control over low priority and wasteful expenditure and determined efforts to mobilise resources, including appropriate cost-recovery policies, he said.

Describing the recent attacks on Christians as an aberration, Narayanan said, "this did not reflect the national ethos and that government was fully committed to the protection of minorities and upholding secularism which has deep roots in our society and

Justifying the imposition of president's rule in Bihar, he said the mass killings of Dalits had caused pain and anguish to all

and it was the first duty of any government to protect the life and property of citizens specially those who are poor and socially

oppressed. Stressing the need for boosting agricultural development, Narayanan said the government is formulating a new national policy on agriculture and agrobased industries.

Narayanan said the national agricultural policy would focus on raising food production in the country's vast rain-fed areas and in the eastern and north-eastern regions besides expanding and revitalising agricultural coopera-tives and other rural credit insti-

The policy aims at maximising horticulture, floriculture and medicinal plants especially to increase exports in these areas

and lays emphasis on afforesta-

Expressing concern over the grave health challenge posed by the rapid spread of Aids, Narayanan said the government has drawn up a draft National Aids Policy and National Blood Policy to check the proliferation of this dreaded disease.

make India a major centre for hardware design, manufacture, and exports is on the anvil. "Besides, the government would unveil major initiatives to promote computer training, information technology (IT) based education and increasing Indian content on the Internet.

He said an action plan to

"The government has already taken a number of decisions to boost software exports to \$50 billion annually by 2008," he said.

Listing out the legislative business before parliament, Narayanan said these included insurance regulatory authority bill, freedom of information bill, Repeal Of Illegal Migrants (determination by tribunals) Act 1983 and amendment of the

Essential Commodities Act. Making a brief mention of the technology restrictions imposed on India following the nuclear tests, Narayanan said the nation is meeting this "unwarranted action with determination and I am confident that we shall emerge stronger and more self-

He said India was committed to the peaceful use of nuclear power and the work on the Kaiga atomic power unit two and the Rajasthan atomic power project unit three continued these units are expected to become critical

The Kalpakkam reprocessing plant — the third, and the largest reprocessing plant built by India was dedicated to the nation in September last, he said.

On electoral reforms, he said the Indrajit Gupta committee had suggested partial state funding of

elections and government will finalise its recommendations in consultation with all parties. The government was also considering the recommendations

of the commission on administrative laws, Narayanan said. The president said major advances are being made in the power sector due to a proactive approach of the government to

remove the bottlenecks in clearing a large number of pending power projects.

He said more and more state governments are setting up regulatory commissions, restructuring their electricity boards to cut

down transmission and distribution (TD) losses and facilitating the inflow of expected invest-



SESSION BEGINS: President K.R. Narayanan walking with Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Parliament Affairs Minister R. Kumaramangalam into parliament to address both houses of parliament in New Delhi yesterday. - Reuters

Congress to fight sacking of Rabri govt

NEW DELHI — The Congress party said yesterday it would fight the BJP-led government in parliament over the sacking of a state government earlier this month.

The Congress, which initially had supported the sacking of the Bihar government, said it would block the passage of a resolution on

the dismissal in the Rajya Sabha.

Parliament has to ratify into law the sacking of a state government and the imposition of direct federal rule by President K.R. Narayanan. Congress leader Arjun Singh said party members will block the resolution in the Rajya Sabha where the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) is in a minority "We have decided that the Congress will oppose the ratification of the presidential proclamation ... We will vote against it in parliament," Ariun Singh warned.

The parliament opened yesterday for its month-long budget session. A decision to oppose the BJP-led coalition government was taken at a meeting of the Congress leadership presided by its Italian-born president Sonia Gandhi. The Press Trust of India news agency said the

resolution's failure in the upper house, where the BJP coalition has only one-third strength, would mean the government's virtual defeat in

The Congress, which had previously said, "there was no other alternative" to the sacking because "law and order (in Bihar) was totally out of control," alone has 64 members in the 245-seat upper house.

The BJP government, which sacked the centrist administration of Bihar February 12 following the latest in a series of massacres of landless farmers, yesterday said it was unfazed by the Congress threat.

"We are ready to face any eventuality," BJP spokesman Venkaiah Naidu said as top party leaders rushed to meet Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the looming crisis.

The 545-seat lower house, where the BJP-led coalition holds a fragile majority, will debate the resolution today, officials said. While sacking the state government the BJP argued the move

aimed to curb lawlessness in Bihar which saw 5,000 murders, 3,000 attacks by bandits, 1,000 rapes and 2,500 abductions on an average per year for the past nine years. — AFP

PM hid nuke secret from Advani: Report

NEW DELHI - The prime minister kept the decision to test nuclear bombs last May a secret from his cabinet number two while confiding in more-favoured colleagues, a report said yester-

Mohan Guruswamy, who quit last month as a top government that Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani was not told about the nuclear tests until one hour before they took place.

The Asian Age newspaper quoted Guruswamy as saying this was for "security" reasons.

The defence and finance ministers "and a few others in the prime minister's coterie were privy to this for days if not weeks, but the country's home minister was kept out of it for security considerations," he said.

It was the first public confirmation of the widely rumoured rift between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Advani, a powerful leader of the ruling BJP

Asianet calls

viewer's

choice for

Government officials could not be reached to comment on the report but BJP spokesman Krishan Lal Sharma denied Guruswamy's claim.

"This is not at all true," Sharma said. "There is no rift between Vajpayee and Advani. Advani is the first to be taken into confidence when the prime minister decides to do something important?

Guruswamy was adviser to Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha until resigning January 27 following well-publicised differences with the government on moves to turn the economy around.

The government, however, said on February 3 it was sacking

Vajpayee and Advani, both former presidents of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), are known to be poles apart within the party

Although they are the two best known faces of the BJP, Vajpayee is considered the most secular

Advani is widely seen as a Hindu Advani succeeded Vajpayee as

party president in 1986 after the latter led the BJP to a miserable two-seat win in the 1984 elec-Advani was then credited with

the amazing growth of the BJP, which in 1996 emerged for the first time as the single largest group in parliament to end the long-held record of the Congress

Advani, however, did not contest that election and Vajpayee held the post of prime minister for 13 days before his government collapsed.

Vajpayee was again chosen over Advani as prime minister in March last year because he was the most acceptable leader to secular allies propping up his multi-party coalition. In the past year Advani, who otherwise chooses his words carefully, has been often accused of embarrassing the prime minister with comments on

jeep-truck collision JAIPUR — Thirteen people, including five children, were

13 killed in

killed and four injured in a collision between a jeep and a truck at Deva-ka-Khera village in Bundi district of Rajasthan on Sunday night, police said here The deceased - five chil-

dren, five men and three women were travelling in the jeep, which was on its way to Deva from Hindoli when the accident took place. The injured were admitted to

the Bundi government hospital where two of them were stated to be in serious condition, police said. In another accident at Reengus in Sikar district on Sunday, former director-general of Rajasthan police Gyan Prakash Piplania and two others were injured when his car rammed into another vehicle, police said.

The injured have been admitted to SMS Hospital here, police

14-year-old clears Microsoft examination

JAIPUR — A 14-year-old boy from Jaipur has become the youngest Microsoft Certified Professional. Govind Jaju cleared the tough examination conducted by the international software giant, netting a high score of 87.2 per cent, a certificate issued by

the company says.
Govind, a B.Com part I student of commerce college at University of Rajasthan, had earlier achieved the distinction of passing senior secondary board examination at the age of 13

Govind said he was inspired by a young boy who became a doctor at the age of 17 in the United States.

"I wish to be a system engineer in a big company managing its entire computer operations,'

Govind said.

Catcalls for government

strayed into parliament on the opening day of the budget ses-sion yesterday, sparking swift wisecracks from government crit-

Behari Vajpayee, occasionally yawning. When an official tried to shoo them away, they disap-peared briefly but returned to the

"The cat has crossed the government's path," said maverick
MP Laloo Prasad Yadav. "I won-

anthem was played, Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav said that the BJP-led gov-ernment had "murdered" democracy by dismissing a duly elected government in Bihar and impos-

tear off the speech prepared by the government and throw it away and instead speak on his own. — PTI, AFP

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BRIDGESTONE The Power Behind Winners

politico-military coup NEW DELHI — The sacked chief of Indian Navy, Vishnu inform defence minister about the Pokhran nuclear tests on May 11

film awards From Our Correspondent

NEW DELHI — The popular Malayalam TV channel, Asianet, in collaboration with the pharmaceutical giant Johnsons have announced film awards for the

from the people.

The organisers have invited nominations from the public for 14 categories in a bid to choose

year 1998 and sought nominations

the best in the Malayalam cinema. The categories of awards include the best film, best director, best actor, best actress, best supporting actor, best supporting actress, best screenplay, best cinematography, best film editing, best art direction, best lyrics, best music direction, best playback (male) and best playback

While the best film would receive a cash prize of Rs100,000, the best director Rs50,000 best actor and actress Rs35,000 each. An independent jury consisting of noted personalities will select the final winners from the nominafilms released in the calender year 1998. The last date for receipt of nominations is March 8, 1999.

Gemini Ganesan flees to escape from fourth wife

THE distinguished Tamil film lot at the ripe age of 70.
According to Bollywood reports, he has fled the country to escape from his fourth wife, who is just half of his age.

Ganesan, who lives in Madras, was noted for his romantic image on screen and popularly known as kaadalmannam (king of romance). While Ganesan's two wives are dead, his first wife Bobji lives in Madras with her children and grandchildren.

Ganesan married for the fourth time last year a girl from Bangalore, Juliana, who is in her mid-thirties.

Bhagwat: My ouster, a

Bhagwat, yesterday termed his removal as a 'politico-military' coup carried out by Defence Minister George Fernandes him-

The first military chief to have been dismissed in 50 years of independent India, Bhagwat said, "the entire process of his dismissal and appointment of incum-bent Sushil Kumar was grossly violative of procedure and law."

"This in a nutshell is a politico-military coup carried out by the defence minister himself," Bhagwat said at a meet-the-press programme at Press Club of India here, his first media interaction since his sacking on December 30 last. He said not once since assuming charge had Fernandes sent for him to correct or warn "So, in fact, there was no

record of repeated disagreement with the minister — only that he found me inconvenient in regard to his illegal acts ... Whether giving a free run to people, furnishing arms to insurgents for use against people and the army, appointing dishonest and racist officers, or defence purchases detrimental to indigenous projects," Bhagwat alleged.

Maintaining that he was dis-

missed without due process, he said no appointments' committee of the cabinet note has been prepared for selecting the new chief of navy staff. No intelligence vetting has been undertaken ... He also handed over to the press a bunch of documents.

Bhagwat was dismissed by the government for deliberate defiance and actions, which threatened the traditional neutrality of the armed forces as well as grounds of national security.

Bhagwat also charged

Fernandes with having deliberate-ly and in bad faith subverted the

military chain of command and having used media for a witchhunt first against Air Chief Marshal S.K. Sareen (retd) and then agianst himself. In an apparent bid to question dependability of Fernandes, Bhagwat claimed the prime minis-

The chiefs were functionally informed of the Pokhran tests. They were formally told by the prime minister on May 9 and specifically told not to inform the

Fernandes was only informed in the forenoon of May 11, Bhagwat said. In his opening remarks, Bhagwat quoted prime minister's principal secretary Brajesh Mishra as having told him to convey to Fernandes during a visit to Andamans that the defence minister should be moderate in his public stance on China. Mishra will of course deny it now, he quickly added. Bhagwat alleged that foreign intelligence opera-tions were being carried on with the Help Arms agents but declined to answer specific queries on details. Bhagwat said he had fully briefed Fernandes on the method-ology of subversion of navy offi-cers by arms peddlers on May 4 and 8 last year.

When arms peddlers succeed in subverting officers, the navy stands compromised. Foreign intelligence operations are also carried on with the help of arms agents, he said alleging that Fernandes had entered into direct communication before and after his sacking with a former admiral who was in arms business.

Asked why he did not challenge his dismissal in a court, the former navy chief said: "I cannot

share my strategy with you."
Recalling his statement of
January 14 when he reached
Bombay from the capital,
Bhagwat said: "I shall not let this pass. So no option is ruled out."
He said Fernandes had spoken

of his (Bhagwat) leaking informa-tion about India's advanced technology vessel project (ATV) as one reason for his dismissal. "This he cannot show but information about the ATV is already in the public domain."

On government's charges against him involving national security, he said "it is absurd to suggest that an officer, who has dealt with such matters directly with successive prime ministers since 1980, would have leaked ter's office (PMO) had specifically asked the service chiefs not to any such information". - PTI

NEW DELHI — Two cats

The cats sat impassively near the seat of Prime Minister Atal

Many Indians consider cats to be inauspicious, and the unex-pected feline intrusion prompted one opposition member to question the future of Vajpayee's frag-

der what will happen to the gov-As soon as the national

ing president's rule there. He requested the president to

Estrada's 'love child' urges him to own up

MANILA — A teenage beauty queen, who says she is a love child of President Joseph Estrada, urged the president in an interview broadcast yesterday to "tell the truth" and own up to his responsibility as her father.

Josephine Rose Ejercito criticised the president for equivocating on the subject of her parentage, telling ABS-CBN television:
"My mother finds this a bit rude."

Estrada said last week that "if she has no father, then I am willing to act as her father so that this matter will be finished"

However, he also said he did not really know if he was the father and that he had lost count of the "many women" who wanted to bear his children.

"If you are watching this, please tell the truth and do not equivocate," said the 18-year-old girl, crowned "Miss Caloocan" at a northern Manila district of that name last week.

'The people are confused with

"Just say yes or no, if I'm your daughter or not, so this issue can be put to rest."

The girl said she had always considered Estrada to be her father, and that she and her mother used to visit him at his office when she was a child and he was the mayor of San Juan, a satellite town of Manila.

The visits were to ask for child support, she said. Often they would be received by the mayor's staff as he was frequently "out of town" or "having a meeting.'

She claimed Estrada regularly sent them food until he was elected senator in 1987 and vice-president in 1992, when the support stopped altogether.

But she said she continued to send her presumed father gifts, including Bibles and framed caricatures, which she would see on television when Estrada was interviewed at his office.

The girl said she had become so traumatised that she started writing "deceased" on the blank space reserved for her father's name on forms.

"I wrote deceased so the questions would stop," she said.

Floods kill 29 in Lanao del Norte

MANILA — Floods following heavy rain killed at least 29 peo-ple and displaced 1,000 residents of riverside villages in a southern Philippine province, a disaster relief agency and officials said yesterday.

Two days of heavy rain caused the Kauswagan River to swell and flood three towns in Lanao del Norte province on Mindanao island on Sunday, the National Disaster Coordinating Council said in a report.

Superintendent Isnadi Bantala, provincial chief of police, said waters flowed down a deforested mountain in the region, causing the river to swell.

He said the flash floods hit the towns early evening on Sunday. Many of the victims in the riverside villages were sleeping, he

said.
"This is the worst flooding in Lanao del Norte province," Bantala said

Coast Guard personnel from two neighbouring cities have sent boats to Panguil Bay, where the river meets the Mindanao Sea, to look for more casualties. They are joined by a civilian and paramedic rescue team.

At least 11 bodies were recovered and taken to funeral houses in the provincial capital of Iligan City. Eighteen others were awaiting identification at the hall of nearby Kauswagan town, officials said. More than half the dead were children, witnesses said.

The council reported three people were injured and 21 missing, including a family of nine, as of yesterday afternoon. The council said at least 80

houses were damaged. Witnesses said 27 were washed away.

The flash floods damaged one main bridge and broke two small bridges in Kauswagan and cut off the highway from the town to

"Even light vehicles cannot pass now. We have improvised a temporary path in the crippled bridges for people to pass," said

Rebels abduct another officer

LEGAZPI — Communist rebels seized a Philippine police intelligence official after shooting dead his companion in the second kidnapping of a senior officer in five days, police said yesterday.

Major Roberto Bernal was

staving in the house of a police informant when seven New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas burst in on Sunday, shot the informant and abducted Bernal, they said.

The incident occurred in near-

by Bacon town, Sorsogon province, 380km southeast of

Investigators said Bernal's kidnappers were led by an NPA commander whom the officer had arrested a few years ago but who was later freed after being given amnesty. The rebel commander went back to the mountains after being released. — Reuters, AFP



Corazon Aquino and Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin as they are showered with confetti at the foot of the People Power Monument' in Manila yesterday. The government is commemorating the 13th anniversary of the 1986 'People Power' revolt that ousted late strongman Ferdinand Marcos. The statue symbolises the unity of Filipinos during the bloodless uprising that brought Aquino to power. - Reuters

Zamora's relative accused of molesting student

From Our Correspondent

- A close relative of Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora has found himself in hot water after a 21-year-old student accused him of molesting her on Friday afternoon in Sampaloc,

Businessman Ricardo Zamora, 59, of Barrio Pineda in Pasig City and the owner of a photo developing shop in Sampaloc, was invited for questioning by the Manila police for allegedly mashing the complainant inside his KIA Besta

Zamora claimed that his mother and that of Secretary Zamora are sisters. He has opted to use her

mother's maiden name, he added. Inspector Josefina Lacdang, chief of the Manila police children and women's desk, identified the complainant as Gigi Moriones, a 21-year-old student at DataPro Computer College on Claro M. Recto Street, Santa Cruz, Manila. She is from Sampaloc.

Moriones alleged that around 1:30pm on Friday, the complainant went to Zamora's photo shop on Bustillos Street to have her film negatives developed. Zamora was said to have asked

From Our Correspondent

MANILA — More than 670

overseas workers returned home

in coffins in 1998, their number

leaping by 20 per cent from the

year before, according to Senator

Loren Legarda. Causes of death

included shipwreck, suicide, mur-

der, road accidents and "mysteri-

in 1998, compared with 581 in

1997, according to reports from the Foreign Affairs department

and the Episcopal Commission

for the Pastoral Care of Migrants.

committees on foreign relations

and labour and employment to

hold a joint inquiry into the

implementation of the Magna

Legarda has asked the Senate

A total of 673 returned dead

ous circumstances."

tional gimmicks, which the complainant reportedly turned down After turning over the film

negatives to the photo laboratory attendants, Moriones left with a promise to come back for the pic-At 4pm, Moriones said she

was surprised to see Zamora still there. He explained that he was the owner of the shop and offered the victim a ride wherever she was

Moriones said she was going to school, but she initially turned it down. She was convinced by him later, however.

"You can go with him because boss is a kind person. He would not do you any harm," Moriones quoted one of the employees as saying. The victim went with Zamora in his van with license plate number TRD-495.

While on the road, Zamora reportedly made sexual advances on her: He allegedly mashed her

asked him if we could pass by our

house on Cayco Street because I

Carta of Migrant Workers and

The magna carta is supposed

to "institute a higher standard of

protection and promotion of the

families and other overseas

Filipinos," Legarda said in a

statement. The senator-cum-

welfare of migrant workers, their

broadcaster said she was seeking

the probe "in light of widespread

not enjoying the protection and benefits accorded them under the

The workers' bill of rights

public furor over the execution of

Contemplacion's supporters

was passed in 1995 following

Contemplacion in Singapore.

believed that she had been

Filipino maid Flor

perception that OFWs are still

Overseas Filipinos.

legs and her private parts. Moriones then asked that she be allowed to get out of the car. "I

needed to get something before we could proceed."

Moriones went out of the van but upon seeing that she brought her purse with her, Zamora followed her and tried to stop her. A minor struggle ensued.

Upon seeing her cousin, how-ever, the suspect sped away. The cousin, identified as Florencio Sario, accompanied the victim to file a complaint before the Sampaloc police.

Sampaloc policemen then went to the photo shop in Sampaloc. They did not see Zamora because he was reportedly already in his Pasig residence.

dants to call up Zamora and ask him to come over to the Sampaloc photo shop, or else he would be Zamora went to the photo shop and a confrontation was arranged between him and the victim at the WPD headquarters in UN Avenue. The victim then positively identified Zamora.

Police were set to file charges against Zamora, although on Sunday night there were reports that Zamora and Moriones were on the verge of forging an agreement to settle the case between

Over 670 OFWs died in 1998: Report framed by authorities for the

killing of fellow maid Delia Maga and her five-year-old ward. A resulting investigation by local authorities concluded that Contemplacion had received little or no help from both Philippine Embassy authorities in Singapore and labour and diplomatic officials here.

Legarda said that the law required the government to permit the deployment of OFWs 'only in countries where their rights are protected."

She said it was clear that the law was being broken, or there would have been no need for provisions offering distressed OFWs "facilities and legal assistance" and protection from illegal

Chessboard request proves Obillo is alive From Our Correspondent negotiating for the rebel leader's

DAVAO CITY — The general

needs his chess board. For Estelita Obillo, wife of Brigadier-General Victor Obillo, it was the most wonderful piece of news she had ever heard. It proved that her husband, captured a few days ago by communist rebels, was still alive.

Using a radio transceiver, members of the New People's Army let the families of Obillo and Army Captain Eduardo Montealto know that their loved ones were being treated well.

The news was also welcomed by Montealto's wife, Gliz, who since the capture of the officers couldn't find sleep. Worried sick about her hus-

band's plight, she could not bring herself to eat or talk to people, even to her relatives and friends.

But just before noon on Sunday, she started to smile again. Kumander Parago, the communist rebel leader who kidnapped her husband got in touch with the captives' families for the first time.

Parago said the officers needed some clothing, medicine and other personal things.

There was also one special request: bring General Obillo's chess board.

Obillo and Montealto, both of the Army's 55th Engineering Brigade, were lured into a trap last Wednesday when, instead of

family offered

'to keep silent'

MANILA - A man claiming to

Echegaray's

P10 million

r brother's case.

Echegaray, his widow Zenaida

Javier and his siblings had consistently maintained that he was

wrongfully convicted of and executed for the crime of raping his

According to Leonor, a man who introduced himself as

Engineer Ocampo arrived last February 16 at Fernandez Street in

Barangay San Antonio, Quezon City, where the Echegarays live.

Ocampo was said to have looked for Zenaida, who was not

around. He then approached

Ocampo had verbally offered P5

million to P10 million for the

family "to keep silent" on the call

gested that the amount could go

Representative Roan Libarios has

filed a resolution seeking a review

of the case on the ground that pro-

cedural errors were committed

during Echegaray's arrest, prelim-

Libarios later amended the resolution to include a review of

to be a retired employee, and showed a calling card, which bore the logo of the DSWD.

tioned in passing the name of

Paranaque Representative Roilo

House Resolution stating that the

chamber was not predisposed to

review Republic Act 7659, or the

signed by the majority of the House members, convinced the

Supreme Court to lift the tempo-

rary restraining order it had earli-

er issued on Echegaray's execu-

effect until June 15.

The TRO was to have been in

Leonor told Ibon Features she

had rejected Ocampo's offer out-

right, saying her brother was cry-

ing for justice for the wrongful death. She said she advised

Ocampo to offer the money

Echegaray's in-laws, who had

the Riveras,

death penalty law, at this time.

Leonor said Ocampo claimed

She said Ocampo also men-

It was Golez who sponsored a

The resolution, which was

inary investigation and trial.

all death-penalty cases.

Golez.

to review Echegaray's case.

of the negotiation.

Agusan

Leonor told Ibon Features that

She said Ocampo even sug-

gher depending on the outcome

del

Norte

alleged daughter in 1994.

surrender, they were taken in as

"I am very much relieved and hopeful that Vic would soon be released," Estelita Obillo said. "I

am at peace," she added. Shortly before noon, Estelita Obillo received a handwritten note from Rudy Caneda, executive director of the Office of Presidential Assistant for Regional Concerns (OPERACO), informing her and Gliz Montealto that the rebels had agreed to their request to send medicines and extra clothing to

Parago reportedly contacted Caneda through a radio transceiver, advising the families of Obillo and Montealto not to worry.

the captives.

Without wasting any time, the two women prepared two duffel

Estelita Obillo sent a pair of shirts and pants, several crossword puzzles and a bottle of Calcibloc for the general's hypertension. Not to be forgotten was Obillo's favourite chess board. 'It's his most treasured pos-

session. He would forget everything but not this chess board,' Estelita Obillo said.

Gliz Montealto packed five T-shirts, two pairs of pants, a jacket, jogging pants, shampoo and a pair of rubber slippers. All these were to be taken by

a courier to the mountains where the captives were being kept.

Explaining why she sent only a few pieces of clothing to her husband, Estelita Obillo said she believed he would soon be

released by the rebels. "Last night, as I was praying before dinner, I saw a vision. I

saw Vic stepping out from a van," she said. "I think it's a sign that Vic would soon be with us and we could be one family again. Interviewed by ABS-CBN tel-

evision at her husband's headquarters in Barangay San Gabriel, Mintal in Davao City, Estelita Obillo said she was happy that God has been very good to them.

"For you, dear, I thank God that He has not abandoned you. I know we will be together again with our children. I am so thankful to God.'

The Obillos have four children — a girl and three boys. Mildred, the eldest, joined her mother in Davao while the youngest, Lester, stayed home in Manila. The two others are working in the United States. They have been calling their mother

Appealing to the rebel leader, Estelita Obillo said, "Commander Parago, you are a person with a heart. I pray that God's love will touch you and make you release Vic. Give them a chance to serve the country."
Gliz Montealto had the same

plea. "Have mercy on us. My

wrong to anybody," she said. The Montealtos have been

married for almost 13 years. They grew up in the same neighbourhood in Ozamiz City. When they were in high school, "Loloy" as Montealto was fondly called by his family wooed

Gliceria.
In 1976, they became steady and married 10 years later.
"Loloy is my first and only

boyfriend and I am also his first and only," Gliz said as she narrated her story. When Montealto joined the

military corps of engineers in 1990, Gliz followed him wherever he was assigned.

Six years ago, they moved to Davao City where Montealto had his roots. An elder sister of his mother, Paz Mata, has been a long-time barangay leader in Calinan district before she was elected to the city council in 1992. It was Mata's vehicle that Obillo and Montealto used in going to sitio Calatong, barangay Carmen, in Baguio district when they were taken captive last Wednesday afternoon by a 40-

man rebel group. Since Friday, Obillo and Montealto's wives practically held vigil in the mess hall of the 55th Engineering Brigade.

Streams of well-wishers came as wives of fellow military officers and family members dropped by.

Pardon for jailed rebels withheld

be connected with the Department MANILA — President Joseph Social Welfare and Estrada suspended the release of Development offered from P5 50 jailed communist guerrillas million to P10 million to the family of Leo Echegaray barely two weeks after his body was buried. This was disclosed by Leonor yesterday and deployed more than 3,000 soldiers to track down rebel units which abducted an army Echegaray, sister of the first general and two other security officials. Filipino convict to be put to death by lethal injection.

Leonor said the money was offered in exchange for her family's silence on the call to review

The New People's Army (NPA) had snatched army Brigadier-General Victor Obillo, Captain Eduardo Montealto and police Chief Inspector Roberto Bernal to turn up the pressure on the government to restart stalled peace talks.

was about to give amnesty to about 50 political detainees but we held it because of this incidence of kidnapping," Estrada told reporters after the police officer was abducted on

"After this incident that happened, we have to rethink," added Estrada, referring to the government's stated aim to seek a political settlement to the 30-year

Maoist insurgency.

Bernal was kidnapped by the NPA near the town of Bacon in the eastern Philippines on Sunday in an operation, which left a police informant dead.

The government's chief peace negotiator, Howard Dee, warned yesterday that the general's cap-ture "undermines the prospects for progress in the peace talks."

He said he had written to his rebel counterpart "to propose the early and unconditional release"

of the captives "as a goodwill and confidence-building measure." The peace talks with the communists were suspended last year amid disagreement on how to

implement a preliminary accord signed by the previous govern-ment of Fidel Ramos. The agreement called for the release of imprisoned guerrillas and compensation for victims of human rights abuses during the

counter-insurgency campaign of the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Estrada did not identify the 50 prisoners set to be pardoned and did not say if this was in line with the preliminary accord signed in The Hague in March last year.

Last week his government had threatened to cancel the entire agreement due to the kidnapping

Military officials say the NPA is demanding the military suspend operations against the rebels, and that senior rebel leader Amado Payot be included in the list of jailed guerrillas to be given amnesty

More than 80 NPA rebels are serving prison terms for murder or weapons charges. Two of the detainees are serving life terms after being convicted of the 1989 murder of US military adviser Colonel James Rowe.

Army chief Lieutenant-eneral Raul Urgello told General reporters 3,000 soldiers were conation in the Apo mountain region of Mindanao for two NPA units which are holding one hostage

A small infantry unit was separately tracking down the police officer's abductors.

Estrada yesterday described the abductions as "pure and sim-ple treachery," and warned "if something happens to General Obillo, then I think something serious will happen." He did not elaborate

The NPA is the armed wing of the Maoist Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP).

CPP founder Jose Maria Sison told dzBB radio by telephone from his base in the Netherlands that Bernal and the two other captives were "targets of opportuni-

"The arrests of military and police officers is in line with the policy of the revolutionary move-ment to launch offensives, raids and ambushes," Sison said.

"We were not able to undertake these in the past years" because the movement was "devoted to mass work and recti-

fication" of previous strategic mistakes, he added. Sison said the rebels' National Democratic Front organisation

was undertaking an "act of generosity by offering negotiations to release the prisoners of war," and warned government intransigence could cause the captives

Ankara, Manila to sign anti-terrorism accord

Philippines hope to sign a cooperation accord to fight terrorism, money laundering, drug dealing and other trans-national crimes, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel said here yesterday.

Demirel, who arrived here on

Sunday for a three-day state visit, met President Joseph Estrada at the presidential palace after a welcoming ceremony of full military honours. "We just had extensive and

fruitful discussions ... with his excellency, Joseph Estrada and between our delegations, covering bilateral relations as well as international issues of mutual concern," Demirel said in a state-

"I am pleased to note that there is a big convergence in our views on the bilateral as well as multilateral topics we have discussed," he said.

Since both countries faced similar problems "that are transnational in nature," they should cooperate to combat international organised crime. Demirel mentioned illicit drug trafficking, money laundering and terrorism as "the most

dangerous scourges that require

effective international coopera-

"Today, during our talks with President Estrada, I declared our readiness to conclude a similar agreement with the Philippines," he said, highlighting that Turkey has signed such an accord with 43

countries. There was no immediate reaction from Estrada, but the Philippine leader is a known to be a strong advocate of tough measures against crime.

Estrada told reporters after the meeting he did not seek a briefing on the arrest and subse-

quent trial of Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan, which has sparked protests by his Kurdish sympathisers across Europe

Tight security was clamped around Demirel for the visit although there have been no specific threats against him and there is no known Kurdish community in the Philippines. Both leaders witnessed the

signing of agreements on the promotion and protection of investments, economic and technical cooperation and the issuance of visas for visiting officials.

An accord under which Turkey pledged US\$50,000 for a fund to promote economic development in the main southern island of Mindanao was also signed. Mindanao is home to a separatist rebellion engaged in preliminary peace talks with Manila. — AFP



GUARD OF HONOUR: President Joseph Estrada with his Turkish counterpart Suleyman Demirel reviewing the honour guard during welcoming ceremonies at the presidential palace in Manila

lodged the rape charges against him and supported the call for the lifting of the TRO. -AFP50 legislators sign for release of pork barrel

MANILA — Fifty neophyte legislators, mostly from the Visayas, had signed the papers for the release of about P250 million of their pork barrel under request from the same woman involved in a P3 million bribery attempt in Malacanang.

two who were approached by Mary Ann Maslog of Esteem Enterprises.
The congressional funds were for the acquisition of textbooks

This was disclosed yesterday

by four congressmen, including

for Grade III pupils. The lawmakers were reported-ly enticed to sign the documents by an endorsement from Deputy Speaker Eduardo Gullas, who is from Cebu City.

Representative Michael Defensor (LP, Quezon City) said Maslog misrepresented herself as an education department official and had assured the neophyte leg-

islators that she would work for the release of their pork barrel.

The funds were for the acquisition of a physical education workbook titled Maunlad ang Batang Pilipino and a Pilipino book, Umunlad sa Pilipino. Each of the 50 legislators reportedly signed requests for the release of P4 million to P5.5 million, which Maslog said, would be sourced from the "reserves of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports still with the DBM (Department of Budget and

Management)". The pork barrel, a lump-sum fund for the pet projects of legislators and a source of kickbacks, was passed on to the first-term members of the House of representatives by their predecessors in their respective districts.

The money was part of the 1998 budget that was "frozen" by the Ramos administration because

Defensor said he had noticed Maslog and some of her "agents" the Batasang Pambansa legislative complex, visiting congressmen at their offices or requesting for brief talks from them while on the ses-

of the growing budget deficit.

"She gave (the legislators) the papers to be signed," he said. The documents bore identical requests for the two Grade III textbooks, Mandaluyong Representative Neptali Gonzales II said that as

those approached by a female "facilitator" and asked to sign a request for his district. But as a lawyer, I am always

early as December, he was one of

wary about things that somebody I do not know asks me to sign," said Gonzales, who is the House assistant minority leader.

He said the woman told him

that the release had actually been facilitated by the office of the speaker, a claim the congresssman quickly dismissed as untrue the woman "was not because from Speaker (Manuel) Villar's Gonzales said the woman bore

a strong resemblance to Maslog whose photos landed in the front pages of newspapers last week for her involvement in the P3 million bribery attempt in Malacanang last month. Maslog had claimed that the

money was meant for Deputy Executive Secretary Vicente de la Serna, a former Čebu congressman, and his assistant Ricardo Fulgencio IV. But De la Serna, who was later cleared by Maslog, said the P3 million was meant for Budget Secretary Benjamin Diokno because Maslog gave the money to a budget department employee. — AFP

Pacers keep Nets reeling

INDIANAPOLIS — Mark Jackson's nine-foot leaner in the lane with sixth-tenths of a second remaining — his only basket of the game — lifted the Indiana Pacers to a wild 80-79 victory over the reeling New Jersey Nets on Sunday.

Indiana staggered to the finish, missing 14 straight shots in a 7:57 drought before Reggie Miller and Chris Mullin hit consecutive 3-pointers.

for a 78-75 lead with 46 seconds left. Mullin finished with 21 points and Miller added 18.

The Nets have dropped six of

their last seven games. In Minneapolis, Joe Smith had a season-high 30 points and 13 rebounds and Kevin Garnett added 22 points, 19 boards and seven assists as the Minnesota Timberwolves cooled off the

Sacramento Kings, 102-90. Stephon Marbury contributed 23 points and 15 assists and only one turnover for Minnesota, which has won seven of its first nine games.

Chris Webber scored 20 points and Tariq Abdul-Wahad added 14 for Sacramento.

In New York, the Knicks beat the Chicago Bulls 79-63 in a boring game, notable for the Bulls franchise-record fewest points.

Allan Houston scored 25 points on 10-of-15 shooting from the field and Kurt Thomas added 17 points for the Knicks, who targeted the Bulls during the Michael Jordan era but consis-

tently came up short.
"It was not Knicks-Bulls of old without Scottie (Pippen), Michael and Dennis (Rodman), but we still have a job to do," said New York's Patrick Ewing, who hit just 4-of-15 shots from the field and finished with 10 points and seven blocked shots.

Brent Barry led the Bulls with 19 points but his teammates combined to hit just 17-of-56 shots from the field. Toni Kukoc had 16 points, hitting just 6-of-

The Bulls' previous scoring low point was in 1994 when they scored just 63 points when Jordan was in his first retire-

In San Antonio, Tim Duncan and Mario Elie picked up the slack for foul-plagued David Robinson as the San Antonio Spurs rolled to an 85-64 victory over the Detroit Pistons, who were held to the lowest total in franchise history.

Duncan recorded his fourth

straight double-double with 17 points and 14 rebounds while Elie added 16 points in his first start of the season, helping San Antonio (5-5) snap a two-game losing streak and climb back to the .500 mark.

"They get tired of me talking," Elie added. "We have talent but we have to believe. It takes more than talent alone. It takes heart to win."

Robinson scored just 10

Washington, Mitch Richmond scored 25 points and Rod Strickland just missed a triple-double as the Wizards won their third straight game with an 86-75 victory over the Celtics, who benched three starters.

Guard Kenny Anderson, forward Ron Mercer and centre Tony Battie all began the game on the bench and entered midway through the first quarter. Starting in their place were Dana Barros, Bruce Bowen and Andrew DeClercq, who did very little to slow down the Wizards.

"It was just something I tried because of (Washington's) quickness," said Celtics coach Rick Pitino.

Barros shot 2-of-12 and had just two assists. Bowen scored just three points and DeClercq contributed five. Anderson managed six points, while Mercer scored 17 points and Battie pulled down 11 rebounds. In Toronto, the Raptors' rook-

ie Vince Carter scored a season-

high 27 points in a 102-87 victo-

ry over the Vancouver Grizzlies

before a sellout crowd of 19,800. With the game tied 72-72, Carter dunked to ignite a 10-2 run with 9:14 remaining. He capped the spurt with a 3-pointer that gave the Raptors an 82-74

cushion with 5:28 left. Vancouver closed to 88-85 points, playing only 15 minutes but Toronto opened a 99-85

after picking up his fourth foul in the first minute of the third quarfoul shots with 22 seconds to play. "I was just trying to take some pressure off the other guys," said Carter, who was 11of-16 from the field, including 3of-4 from 3-point range. "Once I hit a couple, I just got into a groove. I'll do whatever I have to

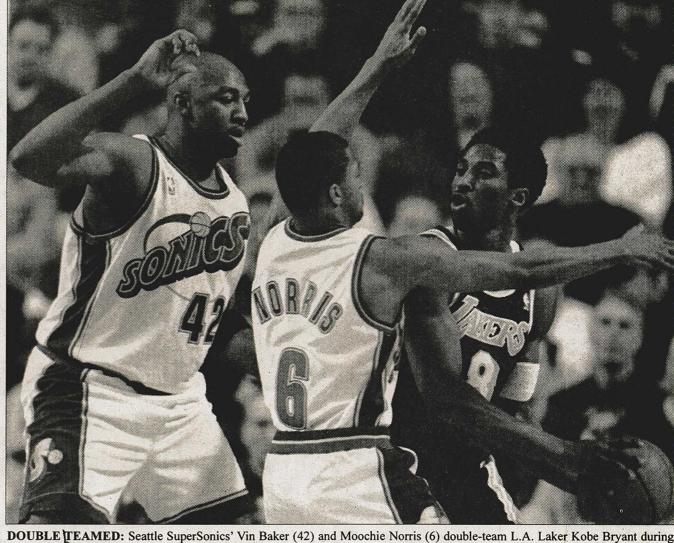
> In Orlando, the Magic, powered by the three-pronged backcourt of Penny Hardaway, Nick Anderson and reserve Darrell Armstrong, remained unbeaten at home with a 109-83 trouncing of the Houston Rockets.

Hardaway had 16 points, 11 assists and four of Orlando's 17 steals. The 6-6 Anderson collected 19 points, scoring from both the post and the arc.

Hakeem Olajuwon had 21 points and 10 rebounds and Scottie Pippen added 19 points for the Rockets.

In Seattle, Gary Payton led five players in double figures with 26 points as the Seattle SuperSonics rebounded from a 30-point loss and kept the rival Los Angeles Lakers frustrated on national television with a 92-89 victory. SuperSonics centre Olden Polynice outplayed superstar Shaquille O'Neal for much of the game. He had 15 points and 17 rebounds for Seattle, which led by at least five points throughout the fourth quarter.

O'Neal finished with 27 points on 11-of-24 shooting.



- Reuters second quarter of NBA play at Key Arena in Seattle. - Reuters

Novotna ends Venus' hopes

champion Jana Novotna played a sharper tactical game than her opponent to defeat big-hitting American teenager Venus Williams 6-4, 6-4 in the final of the \$500,000 WTA event here on Sunday.

The victory, her third in as many matches against Williams, gave the 30-year-old Czech player her 26th career title.

The defeat was a tremendous disappointment to the 18-year-old American who beat former world number-one Steffi Graf in the semifinals — but she took some consolation when she won the doubles title alongside younger sister Serena. The Williams sisters beat

French team Nathalie Tauziat and Alexandra Fusai 5-7, 6-2, 6-2 in

Lazio go clear; Roma hold Fiorentina

PARIS - Lazio staked their claim to this season's Italian League title on Sunday, surging two points clear after beating Inter Milan 1-0 while rivals Fiorentina were held 0-0 at home by AS Roma.

In Spain Barcelona stayed pn top of the Primera Liga but a brilliant 3-1 victory by Mallorca at Oviedo saw the Balearic side emerge from the chasing pack as leading challengers to the Catalan giants. Barcelona travelled to third-placed Celta Vigo and came back with a point in a

Bayern Munich underlined their Bundesliga supremacy in their opening match of 1999 with an easy 3-0 win at Duisburg while closest challengers Bayer Leverkusen could only draw 1-1 draw at home to Freiburg. And in France, the French Cup continued to be a nightmare for First Division clubs with only three top-flight sides reaching the lastsixteen of the competition.

The big name casulaties included Marseille, Paris St Germain, Rennes, Sochaux, Le Havre and Strasbourg with only Lens, Metz and Nantes surviving to fight another day.

Lazio's Portuguese midfielder Sergio Conceicao scored their winner in the 38th minute, snapping up a rebound after goalkeeper Gianluca Pagliuca could only parry an effort by centre-forward Christian Vieri. For luckless Inter, Sunday's setback came four days after their Italian Cup campaign all but ended with a 2-0 semifinal defeat at home

Now 11 points off the pace in the Serie A, Inter Milan president Massimo Moratti admitted that their title challenge was now over too. Fiorentina, missing 18-goal Gabriel Batistuta through injury, were held by Roma in a tough but entertaining match in which both sides hit

AC Milan stayed third on goal difference but joined Fiorentina on points with a 1-0 victory over Cagliari.

Barcelona had Dutch goalkeeper Ruud Hesp to thank for a share of the points after a goalless draw at Celta Vigo. Hesp turned in a series of magical saves — notably from the Liga's top scorer Bulgarian Lubomir Penev who has put away 124 goals in 10 years in Spain.

Mallorca, meanwhile, were superb. Two goals from striker Dani, who is reported here to be moving to English champions Arsenal in the summer, helped the islanders move within three points of the Nou Camp

Dani scored within one minute but three minutes later Roberto Pompei had levelled the match for the home side.

Yugoslav Veljko Paunovic put Mallorca back in front after 66 minutes before Dani wrapped up the points five minutes from time. It was an unusually expansive performance from Mallorca whose title challenge has been built on a watertight defence — they have

scored 25 goals this season while Barca have 48. In form Deportivo La Coruna, in fourth, dropped two points at Espanyol, who went ahead through Ivan Helguera after 42 minutes. The visitors hit back with two second-half goals in a minute from Francisco Fran and Turu Flores only for Martin Posse to level it in the closing

Valencia saw their title bid all but end with a 1-0 home defeat by Valladolid, for whom Croatian striker Alen Peternac scored the crucial goal with 10 minutes remaining.

In France, champions Lens hammered a depleted Marseille 3-1 Philippe Brunel, set up by quicksilver Tony Vairelles, opened the scoring in the 35th minute and Vairelles then made it 2-0 just before the

Nouma wrapped up the match with an easy header seven minutes after the interval while Ghana's Arthur Moses pulled one back for Marseille on the hour — but his goal was too little too late.

The defeat was a latest blow to Marseille who have been struggling to find form in recent weeks and who were hit by crowd trouble last week when they crashed to defeat at Toulouse.

Without injured key players Laurent Blanc, Fabrizio Ravanelli and Florian Maurice, Marseille were a pale shadow of a team bidding to top the First Division and they never looked likely to upset a cohesive Lens. In another all First Division clash, Nantes eliminated Paris St

The third-seeded 20-year-old Haas, who reached the semifinals at last month's Australian Open, pocketed a first prize cheque for \$120,000

Maiden ATP

title for Haas

MEMPHIS (Tennessee) -

Germany's Tommy Haas won the

first ATP title of his career here on Sunday when he defeated defeat-

ing former world number one Jim

Courier 6-4, 6-1 in the final of the

\$700,000 ATP St Jude tourna-

It was his fourth appearance in an ATP tournament final. He was runner-up in Auckland last month and in Lyon in 1997 and 1998.

Unseeded Courier, the 1993 winner here, was bidding for his 24th ATP crown. He was clearly handicapped against Haas, however, after spraining his left foot in the semifinals. — AFP

Detroit, Buffalo share spoils

BUFFALO (New York) Vyacheslav Kozlov recorded his third career hat-trick but failed to convert two scoring chances in overtime as the Detroit Red Wings settled for a 4-4 tie with the Buffalo Sabres on Sunday.

"It was a frustrating hat-trick," Kozlov said. "I did not enjoy the hat-trick. I should have had four but hit two crossbars in overtime. We should have won this game." Kozlov knotted the contest

9:21 into the third period. Breaking into the offensive zone, he used Sabres defenceman James Patrick as a screen. Kozlov's slap shot deflected off the tip of Patrick's stick and over the left shoulder of Chris Osgood for his 17th goal.

In an end-to-end overtime, the teams combined for nine shots. In addition to Kozlov's failure to cash in, Buffalo's Curtis Brown had a redirection attempt turned aside by Osgood.

Greensboro, North Carolina, Ray Sheppard scored two goals, including an historic in the opening period, as the first-place Carolina Hurricanes extended their lead in the Southeast Division with a 4-1 victory over the New York Islanders.

After Keith Primeau opened the scoring at 8:07 of the first period, Jeff O'Neill's power-play tally with 2:50 remaining in the session made it 2-0.

Sheppard netted his 20th goal of the season 36 seconds later making him the first player in NHL history to score 20 goals with six different teams.

"It's a testament to his skill," Hurricanes coach Paul Maurice said. "He can adapt to any centre he's playing with. It's interesting that he's (played with so many teams) because he's been so con-

Arturs Irbe turned away all 15 shots over the first 40 minutes before Sergei Nemchinov spoiled his shutout bid at 2:19 of the third period with his seventh goal.

In Chicago, after scoring just one goal in his previous 12 games, Dmitri Khristich recorded his third career hat-trick and added an assist to lead the Boston Bruins to a 6-3 victory over the Chicago Blackhawks.

Khristich had two of Boston's three goals in the first period and completed the hat-trick with just 4:29 left. Khristich leads the

Bruins with 24 goals. Boston's top line of Khristich, Jason Allison and Sergei Samsonov combined for four goals and four assists.

The Bruins snapped a threegame losing streak and scored as many goals as they had in their previous four games. "Being outcompeted in your

owen building like we were today is unacceptable," Blackhawks coach Dirk Graham said. In Dallas, Patrick Roy and the Colorado Avalanche again were nearly perfect against the league-

leading Dallas Stars as they

extended their road-unbeaten streak to nine games in a 1-1 tie. Roy allowed only a power-play goal to Brett Hull and finished with 23 saves against the Stars, who had won five in a row. He stopped 27 shots in a 3-0 win at

Dallas just 15 days ago. Rookie Chris Drury scored the equaliser midway through the period, helping the Avalanche

improve to a remarkable 7-0-2 in their last nine road games.

In Edmonton, Eric Lacroix scored his first point for the Rangers as New York rallied for a 2-1 victory over the Edmonton

New York scored the tying goal with 7:29 left in regulation and endured a final minute in which an apparent go-ahead goal by Edmonton was overturned by

the replay judge.

Less than two minutes later, Lacroix took advantage of an outstanding play by Mike Knuble to record his first goal since March, when he was with the Colorado Avalanche. Mike Grier scored for

In Philadelphia, after his franchise record-tying 18-game points streak was snapped on Saturday, Eric Lindros collected a goal and an assist and Ron Hextall made 19 saves to lead Philadelphia to its ninth straight home victory against the Pittsburgh Penguins, 2-

Lindros lifted the Flyers into a 1-1 tie with his 34th goal at 4:09 of the second period. — Reuters

Newcomers spearhead US victory

LAUDERDALE (Florida) - Goals from Eddie Lewis and Ben Olsen helped the United States score a 2-1 win in their football friendly against

Lewis and Olsen were among seven newcomers in the home lineup as the United States, who finished last among 32 nations in last year's World Cup finals, try to rebuild for the 2002 tourna-

The Americans have now won two and drawn two of their four matches since Bruce Arena took over as coach last November. Olsen, making only his sec-

ond international appearance, opened the scoring in the 58th minute when he latched on to a cross from Brian McBride and volleved home from close range.

Chile replied six minutes later when Roberto Cartes slammed a 30m shot past a helpless Tom Presthus. — AFP

Germain in a penalty shoot-out after the two sides finished 1-1 after Freeman back on track

SYDNEY — A visit to Sydney's Olympic Stadium and a powerhouse return to competition have left Australia's world 400 metres champion Cathy Freeman hungry to get back into the athletics fast Freeman, who missed last September's

Commonwealth Games with a foot injury, completed her first 400 metres race in seven months in

50.76 seconds, beating Britain's Commonwealth Games silver medallist Alison Curbishley (51.55). Although well outside her best, it was enough to

have Freeman smiling broadly after the foot problems that sidelined her in the second half of last year and a muscle strain that forced her to miss recent domestic competitions.

"I was really determined and passionate about getting a good, solid run," Freeman said after the win at an international meeting staged on the warmup track for the 2000 Olympics.

She said the hunger to compete still burned

"I am about trying to win every time I go out there, I am not about titles and medals," Freeman told reporters. "Even with an egg and spoon in my mouth I am competitive."

On Friday Freeman, also the silver medallist behind France's Marie-Jose Perec at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, made a trip to the cavernous main stadium for next year's Olympics.

She said later it had helped fire her up for Saturday's race. "I was doing some stories for a television pro-

gramme and... they had my Atlanta (Olympics) final run on (the video screen)," said Freeman. "All the competitor's juices started flowing again." Freeman is scheduled to compete in a relay event at the World Indoor Championships in Japan

dashing style on Saturday.

The 26-year-old Australian raced away to win in might also contest the 400 individual event but would delay a decision until she arrived there. "She doesn't really like running indoors and

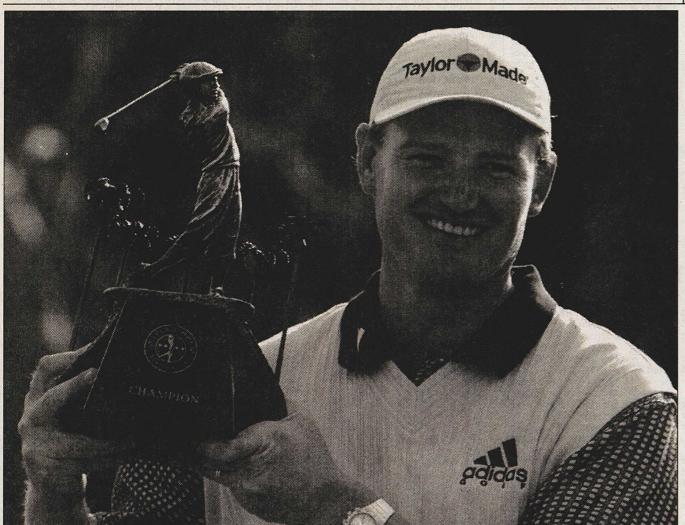
she's got to feel comfortable about the track and conditions before she runs in the individual race," Bideau said yesterday.

For now Freeman, who will attempt to defend her world title in Spain later this year, is simply happy to be back on the track.

"I was not supremely confident because I'd had an upset stomach," Freeman said of Saturday's race. "But once I came out to the track everything took care of itself.

"I just surprised myself. I am just happy to be running again and know where I am in terms of fitness." Saturday's meeting was staged in the shadows of the 110,000-seat main stadium for the Sydney Games.

The stadium is the biggest in modern Olympic history, and can accommodate four jumbo jets side by side under the span of the main arch. It is almost 14 storeys tall at its highest point. — Reuters



CHAMPION: Nissan Open champion Ernie Els from South Africa holds his trophy after winning the golf tournament at the Riviera Country Club. - Reuters

Els holds off Woods to clinch Nissan Open

(California) - South Africa's Ernie Els fired a final-round three-under par 68 here on Sunday and got away with a bogey on the final hole to win the PGA Nissan Open by two strokes.

The two-time US Open champion won his seventh career victory, finishing 14-under-par on 270 to win the \$504,000 first prize at the \$2.8 million event, the first on the US tour for Els in

Els moved past the \$5 million mark in career earnings with a victory that gave him at least one tour title in six consecutive years, matching Phil Mickelson for the

longest active streak.

Els subdued a star-studded lineup that included Tiger Woods, Davis Love and Ted Tryba, who set a Riviera Country Club record 61 on Saturday, sharing second. Zimbabwe's Nick Price and money leader David Duval shared fifth at 273. "When you are competing

against players of this caliber it is very satisfying to come out on top," Els said. "This will go down as one of my good ones. It almost was a tragic one. Els

made bogeys on two of the final three holes, missing a five-foot par putt on the final green to open the door for 1997 Masters champion Woods and Tryba.

18th tee moments after South African PGA Championship winner Els, 29, made his finishing bogey knowing they had to have a birdie to force a playoff. "I have given Tiger a chance

or two in the past and he has taken advantage," Els said. "At least I kind of did the job today." Brisk winds had picked up

minutes before, contributing to

six bogeys in a row on the 18th as Tryba and Woods began the final hole. Only three of 74 prior players had birdied the hole on Sunday. Tryba and Woods made the fairway, but Tryba landed in deep greenside rough to the left and Woods sent his approach too far right, bounding into a concession tent.

Woods chipped out 20 feet from the hole to end his chance of matching Els. When Tryba followed by sending his chip 10 feet. short, Els' had sealed his first US victory since winning at Bay Hill

"It was kind of crazy, you know," Els said. "That last four holes really played tough. But I'm really pleased. This is really sweet. I needed the 68."

Woods and Tryba finished with bogeys to share second at 272 along with Love, the only player among the final three

groups to manage a par at the

18th. Woods and Love fired finalround 70s.

"I had my chances for birdies and was not able to convert," said Woods, who won last week's event. "You have to make birdies in order to win."

Tryba, whose lone title in seven tour seasons came at Williamsburg in 1995, fell apart on the final seven holes. A bogey at the 12th and another on the 16th cost him dearly.

"The last five or six holes were pretty serious," Tryba said. "You have got to play better than you think and the ball has to bounce your way. I did show myself that when I am playing well I can compete with the best players in the world." Woods posted his 12th top-10 finish in his past 14 events, picking up \$209,067 and surpassed the \$1 million mark in 1999 earnings. Duval's \$106,400 from here kept him atop the money list with

\$1.198 million. • AT LUTZ in Florida, Nelson made sure he finished ahead of the hottest player on the Senior PGA Tour. Last week Larry Nelson finished second as he watched a record-breaking per-

formance by Bruce Fleisher.

Hampered by a stiff neck throughout the tournament, Nelson claimed his fourth title by holding off Fleisher for a two-

Jim Dent at 4-under 209. Both carded 70s. The 51-year-old Nelson won his first three Senior Tour titles last year and finished second in five other events, including two playoff defeats.

stroke victory today at the \$1.2

Taking a one-shot lead into the final round, Nelson fired a 4-under-par 67 at the TPC of Tampa

Bay to finish at 8-under 205 and collect the first prize of \$180,000.

PGA Tour history by winning his

first two starts, was denied in his

bid for three in a row as he also

carded a 67 to finish two shots

Last week, Fleisher and Nelson finished 1-2 at the

Australia's Graham Marsh

American Express Invitational.

completed his best round of the

tourney by posting a 66 to place

third at 5-under 208. Hale Irwin, the most dominant

player on the Senior Tour the last

two years, recorded his first top-

10 finish in three events as he tied

for fourth with Tampa resident

Fleisher, who made Senior

million GTE Classic.

back.

Defending champion Jim Albus shot a final-round 70 here for the second straight year to finish 11 shots back at 3-over 216.

The par-71 layout of the TPC at Tampa Bay measures 6,638 yards. — AFP, Reuters

From Our Correspondent

MANILA - Purefoods kept a

letting loose a barrage of baskets

during the same span to score

their second win, 81-70, on

Filipino Cup at the Araneta

through the efforts of Alvin

Patrimonio, Jerry Codinera,

Dindo Pumaren and Rey

Coliseum

Sunday night in the PBA All-

The Hotdogs' spurt was

Evangelista, who played proba-

bly his best game in his career

Evangelista scored four of his

with a double-double perfor-

18 points in that crucial span

gained control and left the persis-

The 6-foot-4 Evangelista also

"At least tonight we were able

finished with 14 rebounds, three

to show our character and we

our humiliating loss to Shell,"

Pumaren. "And the guys really

said Purefoods coach Derick

made Alaska work for every

to the defending champion

point."

were able to recover quickly after

That's exactly what happened

Alaskans who, after closing in at

65-66, fell into disarray and com-

mitted a string of errors to suffer

tent Alaskans for good en route

where the Hotdogs finally

to their second win in three

assists and three steals.

By Our Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — Royal Stables continued to maintain their top position in tent pegging this season with yet another fine show in yesterday's competition held at the Royal Stables Polo Ground in Al Safinat. Not to be outdone. Firqa Squadron made a clean sweep of Class 2 taking the first five places with scores of 20, 18, -16 and 14.

In Class I, Royal Stables' Saif Abdullah returned to winning ways on Shahel with a clean run ahead of stablemate Turky Abdul riding Zagali. Royal Oman Police claimed third place through Omer Saleym on Mawood.

II. In Class Yousef Mohammed of Firqa Squadron finished with a perfect score of 20 on Watida followed by Saud Nasser riding Zamaim and Saif Ali on Aloof.

As per FEI rules of tent pegging events, each class is run over four runs. Two of the runs at 6cm width pegs and the other two runs at 5cm width pegs. Each peg is 30cm and 2.5cm thick and the competitor is expected to gallop the horse at a speed of 800 metres per minute on a track of 100 metres from start to finish.

Five points are given for the peg carried clear 15 metres or more, three points if the peg is lifted out of the ground but falls within 15 metres and one point if the peg is struck by the point of the lance, but is not lifted out of the ground.

Meanwhile, Oman Equestrian and Camel Federation will host three classes of showjumping today at the Enam ground in Seeb.

Class 1 Novice Training Competition, which has seen a tremendous increase in the numbers of participants this season will commence proceedings. Young riders with experienced horses and experienced riders on Omani bred horses will be in action and four points and a rosette will be awarded for a clear

Class 2 is a Grade C Power and Speed competition in two phases. The first phase is a course of six to eight obstacles with combinations. The second phase takes place over four to six obstacles, which may include a combination.

Competitors penalised in the first phase are halted by ringing the bell after they have jumped the last obstacle or when the time allowed for the first phase has been exceeded, after crossing the finish line of the first phase. They must stop after crossing the first finishing line. Competitors not penalised in the first phase contincrossing the second finishing line. In the second phase, the penalty for exceeding the time allowed is 1/4 penalty for each second or fraction of a second.

Class 3 will be a Grade B & A Handicap competition against the clock, but in the event of penalties for first place there will be one jump off against the clock. Other competitors are placed according to their penalties and time in the first round.

The handicap will apply to Grade 'A' horses with the height of some obstacles being increased by up to 15cms and the spread being increased proportionately.

Grade B horses will jump the course first, followed by Grade A horses over the raised course.

Class 1: 1. Shahel (Saif Abdullah - Royal Stables); 2. Zagali (Turky Abdul - Royal Stables); 3. Mawood (Omar Saleym - Royal Oman Police); 4. Gurrah (Abdullah Khalifa - Royal Stables); 5. Dheib (Saif Obeid -Royal Oman Police).

Class 2: 1. Watida (Yousef Mohammed - Firqa Squadron); 2. Zamain (Saud Nassar - Firqa Squadron); 3. Aloof (Saif Ali Firqa Squadron); 4. Eynash (Nassar Saqar - Firqa Squadron); 5. Eniaz (Said Awad - Firga

Simeone to Hard work pays for Purefoods leave PSG

PARIS — Experienced Italian striker Marco Simone, dejected by Paris St Germain's lacklustre performances, will leave the French capital next season.

"My decision is made. I have a contract and a clause in it," he told the sports daily l'Equipe in an interview published yesterday. Simone, who clashed with

coach Artur Jorge in training last week, joined PSG from AC Milan in 1997 for four years but will be free to leave the club at the end of the season for a 40 million francs (\$8 million) fee. "There is a lot of nervousness. Nobody's happy. On the pitch we can see that our per-formances are bad. We don't feel any pleasure playing," he said after PSG's home defeat by Nantes on penalties in the French Cup on Saturday.

"For Artur Jorge, with whom I had a dispute last week, it is a difficult situation to handle. We're all on the same boat."

Very critical of the team's training facilities and of the club's management, the 30-year-old Italian said PSG's chances of salvaging the season were dim.
"I don't know whether PSG can save their scalps. With a little

bit of luck we might go all the way in the League Cup," he said. "But the main goal right now is to avoid relegation. It's always a mess at PSG because we're badly

organised. It's everybody's fault if

we are that low." — Reuters

of their all-time low of four in tight leash on Alaska Milk's scoring in the final six minutes while

"We committed a bunch of mistakes down the stretch and that was it," said Alaska coach Tim Cone. "It's really very tough for us.'

Kenneth Duremdes' long jumper ended Alaska's fiveminute silence but that was too late (1:20) as Purefoods was way ahead by then through Patrimonio's four straight free

"We kept our poise, I'm glad at how the guys responded to Alaska's comeback," said

Known for stalking their preys all game long before pouncing down the stretch, the Alaskans almost succeeded when they forced the Hotdogs to commit 22 turnovers and even threatened at 65-66 on Roel Gomez's three-pointer.

But Edmund Reyes quickly converted an unmolested undergoal stab to spark the Hotdogs' endgame blitz.

Second game Purefoods 81 — Patrimonio 24, Evangelista 18, Codinera 16, Pumaren 13, Daep 6, Reyes 4, Yee 0, Cabanayan 0, Sasuman 0, Fernandez 0.

Alaska 70 — Duremdes 17, Lastimosa 13, Abarrientos 11, Gomez 9, Santos 7, Lim 6, Bachmann 6, Juinio 0, Reyes 0, Quarters: 20-14, 37-32, 64-

• RECOGNITION, at last. Filipino Frankie Minoza's stint in the Andersen Consulting World Match Play championship in Carlsbad, California starting on Thursday is expected to open the doors for the recognition he truly deserves from the legitimate superstars of the game.

Not Japan or Asia, not Southeast Asia but the world.

The entry ticket to this cashrich tourney is not being a regular card-holder of either the US or European Tours, not skin colour. One should be among the top 64 players of the world to be included in the roster.

They call it direct acceptance. When Minoza had received his invitation as early as a month ago, Englishman Nick Faldo, the former world number one, waited for the final cut-off day to know if he had made it to the draw.

As it turned out, Faldo wasn't supposed to be in the list, being eight rungs lower than Frankie's rating of 57th at 65th. But the withdrawal of Jumbo Ozaki, gave him a sure spot.

And when he plays Zimbabwean Nick Price in the first round, it will be an opportunity to display his talent before an American crowd that only has eyes for players as spectacular as Tiger Woods and as icy cool as David Duval.

A television audience of mil-

David of the East will fare against a Goliath of the West in a shootout that puts big money on

Minoza last competed against Price in a Japanese Tour leg, the Bridgestone Open, a couple of years back with the Zimbabwean

placing second and the Filipino checking in a fighting fourth. An impressive finish would put Minoza on track to joining two other multi-million events in the new World Golf Championship series — the NEC

World Cup team event. Also, Minoza will be out to make the most of his last chance to join the Masters' field this year in Augusta, Georgia.

Express Championship and the

Invitational, the American

Since only the top 50 of the world are "automatic exempt" for the Masters, Minoza is hard pressed to perform well on a day-to-day basis in the event if he is to salvage the trip to

Augusta. Minoza is bringing along his most trusted swing doctor Roger Retuerto — to the La Costa Spa and Resort in a bid to be in the best of shapes for the

Retuerto had to be plucked out by Minoza from the South Point driving range in Alabang where the former is now head instructor to work on the latter's game for a week in Bukidnon.

Identical twins that even father could not recognise

HAMILTON — Identical twins James and Hamish Marshall played for New Zealand's Northern Districts against South Africa yesterday, confusing players and spectators alike.

Impossible to tell apart, the twins fielded side by side for much of the opening day of the three-day match as the tourists piled on the runs on a pitch tailormade for batsmen.

Opener Herschelle Gibbs was the first man to involve the 20year-old twins when he drove a delivery to mid on for 57 - scorers, commentators and spectators all having to wait until lunch to discover that James had taken the

Then, with Daryll Cullinan on 99, Northern Districts captain Robbie Hart tossed the ball to one of the Marshalls for his first bowl of the innings. Cullinan duly completed his century but officials and spectators were again forced to wait until tea to confirm the bowler was James.

The problem appeared to be at an end when Drew Marshall, the twins' father, was tracked down in ed into the scorers' room to offer advice on recognising the broth-

Mildly embarrassed, the proud father - watching his sons play together for just the third time in first-class cricket - was forced to admit he couldn't.

"They normally wear something different, which helps, but I have no idea which is which from here... their Mum might know, stammered Marshall senior.

The Marshalls' appearance was made even more unusual by the inclusion of two other pairs of brothers in the Northern Districts team, Michael and Neal Parlane and Matthew and Robbie

S. Africa get good practice

Africa's batsmen got exactly what they wanted on the opening day of their three-day match against Northern Districts yesterday

With the first Test against New Zealand starting in Auckland on Saturday, they needed a lengthy batting workout and got it, scoring 407 for four declared in hot, sunny con-

In reply, Northern Districts were eight without loss, with identical twins Hamish and James Marshall on five and two respectively.

Captain Hansie Cronje was one of three batsmen to cash in on a feather bed strip with a after the South Africans had won the toss and made perfect use of the opportu-

Openers Gary Kirsten and Herschelle Gibbs made comfortable progress to 41 before

medium pacer Joseph Yovich into the covers, chopped the ball on to his stumps.

Daryll Cullinan, the batsman most at risk of missing the first Test team, chose an ideal time to hit his 27th first-class hundred.

Gibbs, having completed his 50 in classy fashion, clipped a catch to deep mid on. Cullinan and Cronje kept up

the momentum, with Cullinan getting better as his innings pro-Having got to 100, he played a tired stroke to a ball outside his

off stump from Yovich and got a

bottom edge to wicketkeeper The pair had added 120 at run-a-ball rate, but the tempo increased when Jonty Rhodes

He had 17 off 21 balls at tea the middle session having produced 150 runs in 130 min-

joined his captain.

ing after the break.

With Cronje's century always appearing a formality after he had settled in, Rhodes was unstoppable as he raced to 50 in 52 balls, bringing it up with a four-six-four sequence in one Yovich over.

Cronje's 30th first-class hundred, loaded with stylish, sweetly timed strokes, came off 154 balls, and included 12 fours and

But at 104 he drove medium

pacer Scott Styris to cover point where Neal Parlane took a tidy catch. That ended a 145-run stand in just 97 minutes and once Rhodes had brought up his century in only 96 balls with 17 fours and two sixes, the declaration was made.

The final few minutes were given over to fast-medium bowler. Victor Mpitsang having his first overs in a first-class match for his country, and leftarm spinner Paul Adams having his first overs of the tour. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

South Africa first innings G. Kirsten b Yovich H. Gibbs c Marshall b Hart D. Cullinan c R Hart b Yovich H. Cronje c N Parlane b Styris. J. Rhodes not out D. Benkenstein not out Yovich 23-5-105-2 (nb10), Styris 19-1-89-1, Bradburn 25.5-5-87-0, M Hart 5-0-27-1 (nb1), Bailey 4-0-20-0, J Marshall 5-

Northern Districts first innings
J. Marshall not out
H. Marshall not out Bowling: Elworthy 2-1-1-0, Mpitsang 3-2-1-0 (nb1), Adams 2-0-6-0. — AFP



FASTEST FIFTY RACE: Rashid Latif, left, receiving the 20" BPL colour TV for scoring the fastest fifty in the Times of Oman Muscat Cricket Challenge from Hasan Irshad, centre, managing director of Omasco as Sanjeev Nagpal, divisional manager of BPL-Omasco, looks on.

OMANI ACE: Hamed Al Wahaibi

Hamed set for Kenyan Safari Hamed Al Wahaibi from Oman hard. I will be encountering an

From Our Correspondent

NAIROBI — Less than two weeks after the finish of the only snow rally of the World Championship, the rally circus moves to equatorial Africa for the Safari.

Centred on the Kenyan capital of Nairobi, the rally crosses the equator four times during its 2,853km route. Records could again be broken on this rally. Marlboro Mitsubishi Ralliart could beat the record it equalled in Sweden by winning six rallies

Richard Burns won the rally for Mitsubishi last year and Makinen won it in '96, but this year his team mate, Freddy Loix is making his debut and may find it difficult to judge the pace on his first encounter with the long competitive sections.

Makinen should have no such

who beat Pesquero 2-1. The

Bolivar, whose season last

players went on strike on several

occasions, lead Real Potosi on

goal difference after four games.

Champions Blooming were

held to a goalless draw by bottom

team Guabira and dropped to

onship. As in Peru, the champi-

onship is divided into two stages

with the winners of each meeting

in the final at the end of the year.

Costa Rica: Saprissa main-

tained their five point lead in the

Clausura, the second stage of the

championship, by beating

mered San Carlos 4-0.

not the calendar year.

Goicochea 1-0 with a goal by

Championship is also divided

into two, but as in Mexico fol-

lows the European season and

El Salvador: Fas stayed top

of the championship by beating

Sonsonate 2-1 with goals by Honduran Miguel Mariano and

point ahead of Limeno, who were

Erick Dawson. They are one

held to a 1-1 draw away to

Aguila.

Reuters

Argentine striker Adrian Mahia

Second-placed Limonense ham-

10th in the 12-team champi-

year was disrupted when their

difficulty, being a master judge of when to attack. "It will be very rough and hard on the car, but we know that the Mitsubishi is very strong. We will try our best, but this rally is very unpredictable," he says.

Also making his debut in the Safari is Oman's ace Hamed Al

Though not gaining any points in Sweden, which again was his debut run, Hamed hopes to do better in Africa. Of course, the situation is entirely different in Kenya, where the terrain is slushy and hard.

The Group N category will be attritional, and as the cars are less modified than the Group A or World Rally cars, much depends on the drivers' ability to avoid the roughest parts of the roads.

Luis Climent won here last year but faces tough opposition.

drives a Marlboro-backed Mitsubishi for the Ralliart Team and will be keen to open his points score in the series. Manfred Stohl in a similar car is more experienced but these three face tough local opposition who know the roads well. Unlike the other events the

special stages here are lengthy with the maximum distance being 117km approximately and the least being 49km approximately. However, the first spectator stage will be only less than 3km. In all there are fourteen stages to be covered in three

The spectator stage will be held on February 25 evening and the event will conclude on February 28.

Hamed, who completed the reconnaissance yesterday, said: "The stages are very rough and entire different terrain than what it was in Sweden." He further stated that he will

be looking for points only from the Portugal Rally, however, "I am not giving up here. I will try to finish the rally and gain as much experience. But if all goes well I could be among the points as well."

Another point to be noted is that the reigning Group N champion Gustavo Trelles will not figure in the Safari this year.

Leading Group N entrants: Hamed Al Wahaibi & Tony Sircombe (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution); Manfred Stohl & Kay Gerlach (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution); Luis Climent & Alex Romani (Mitsubishi Lancer Evolution); Jamil Khan & Sudhir Thatti (Subaru Impreza); Hideaki Miyoshi & Eido Osawa

(Subaru Impreza).

in Val di Fiemme, Italy.
Olga Danilova of Russia, Olympic 15km champion, took the silver, crossing more than 13 seconds adrift in 13:02.5.

Katerina Neumannova of the

The Norwegian men, mostly thanks to the efforts of Bjorn Daehlie and Vegard Ulvang, have dominated the men's Nordic scene for much of the past decade

women have amassed 17 World Championship and Olympic medals since the 1987 worlds, until Martinsen coasted across the finish line, arms raised in triumph, only one had been gold.

The win also hoisted Martinsen to the head of the fam-

Her father, Odd, president of the International Ski Federation's cross-country committee, also represented Norway internationally, winning individual silver medals at the 1968 Olympics and 1970 World Championships while contributing to a pair of golds in the team events. "I'm very happy because I'm the boss of the family now," smiled Martinsen, who has also achieved three World Cup wins this season and leads

also includes team silvers from Nagano and the 1997 World Championships in Trondheim, when she returns to the track

because I'm better in the classic

'Big Phil' slams flabby Palmeiras

Palmeiras coach Luiz Felipe Scolari claimed his team were overweight after watching them struggle to a 3-1 win against unrated Sao Raimundo in the Copa Brasil.

For the second weekend running, a players' strike prevented any play in the Argentine championship while the South American Libertadores Cup kicked off with Liga de Quito hammering Emelec 4-1 in an all-Ecuadorean tie.

Brazil: Palmeiras, who kick off their Libertadores Cup campaign on Friday, struggled to overcome modest oppoents from the Amazon rainforest on Sunday and their lacklustre form was put down to excess flab by coach Luiz Felipe Scolari.

"The players are not in top condition. They are two and three kilos too heavy and if you add that up it makes our team 15 to 20 kilos overweight," said the abrasive Palmeiras boss, popularly known as Felipao (Big Phil).

To prove his point, the club handed media representatives a list of the players with their current weights and ideal weights. The biggest offender, according to the list, was midfielder Rogerio at 4.5 kilos overweight.

When they come back from Carnival, they think it's acceptable because it's carnival. Then it's Easter, they eat a lot of chocolate and they think that's alright as well," Scolari said.

The Copa Brasil is a nationwide knockout contest that in the early stages pits top clubs such as Palmeiras against opponents from the remotest parts of the country. Palmeiras, who won the first leg of the first round tie 2-1 away, were expected to stroll home but fell behind in the ninth

minute. They only turned the game around after Sao Raimundo goalkeeper Nailton banged his head against the crossbar in making a save and was taken off injured. Three goals in the last 20 minutes against his nervous replacement prevented a major embarrassment.

In the season-opening the

Paulo won 3-2 at Vasco da Gama

Rio-Sao Paulo tournament, Sao

while Santos won 1-0 at home to Botafogo in semifinal first legs. Meanwhile, the first stage of the Paulista (Sao Paulo state) Championship continued with another win for Portuguesa, the team coached by ex-Brazil boss Mario Zagallo.

Portuguesa, who have already qualified for the second stage when the big clubs such as Sao Paulo, Santos and Palmeiras enter, scored twice in the last five minutes to overcome Ituano 2-1. The top four teams in the two

six-team groups go through.

Ecuador: Although the national championship has yet to begin, local clubs Liga de Quito and Emelec kicked off the South American Libertadores Cup with a group five match.

Liga de Quito, who beat Emelec 7-1 in last year's championship final, handed out another hammering to the same opponents as they won 4-1 at home with Colombian Ricardo Perez

scoring twice. Emelec have lost the services of striker Ivan Kaviedes, who has been sold to Italian soccer after scoring 43 goals last year. Bolivian clubs Wilstermann and Blooming make up the group from which the top three teams Argentina: A players' strike,

which is approaching the end of its second week, prevented any action in the Clausura (Closing) Championship, which had been due to start the previous weekend. The players are protesting over a court order which has suspended the second and Third Divisions because of repeated crowd trouble. The top division players say they are striking in solidarity with their lower division colleagues, whose clubs have been hit financially by the stoppage. However, they will play in Libertadores Cup and national team matches.

Mexico: Cruz Azul, America, Necaxa and Toluca all managed to stay top of their groups in the Invierno (Winter) Championship, the second of the two tournaments in the Mexican season, without playing at the weekend All four play their games during the week.

The highlight of the weekend's action was Santos Laguna's 5-2 thrashing of Monterrey, who are Mexico's representatives in the Libertadores Cup. Elsewhere, Pachuca notched up their first win by beating Morelia 2-0. The 18 teams are split into four groups aheead of the quarterfi-

Peru: Sporting Cristal beat champions Universitario 2-0 to go top of the Apertura, the first

Caribbean leaders to stage of the championship, after three games. They lead on goal discuss difference from Alianza Atletico cricket crisis Peruvian Championship is split into two stages with the winners

of each meeting in the final. Bolivia: Bolivar stayed top of BRIDGETOWN - Caribbean the Apertura, the first stage of the leaders will discuss the parlous state of West Indies cricket at a championship, by beating archrivals The Strongest 2-1 in a La meeting next month following the Paz derby watched by a 40,000 team's 5-0 Test series drubbing at the hands of South Africa. The Carribean News Agency

(Cana) reported on Sunday that Caricom leaders had placed the future of West Indies cricket high on their agenda for a meeting in Surinam on March 3-4. "The Caricom leaders' deliberations on the future of West Indies cricket will take place within the

context of their plans to develop

the game and to re-establish West

Indies cricket supremacy," the agency said. The concerns come on the eve of a West Indies Cricket Board (WICB) meeting in St John's, Antigua, when Brian Lara's future

as team captain will be discussed. Newspaper reports have suggested Lara is to be sacked as captain for the forthcoming series against Australia but these reports have been denied by WICB chief Steve Camacho.

due to recommend a captain to the WICB who will then meet in St John's to ratify the recommendation on February 28. Steve Waugh's Australians are already in the Caribbean and they were to open their two-month tour later yesterday with a three-day

match against a West Indies Board XI. — Reuters

The West Indies selectors are

Jackie Joyner-Kersee to lose world heptathlon record LONDON - American Jackie Joyner-Kersee will lose her world hep-

tathlon record at the end of this year due to a technical change to the women's javelin. From April 1 a new javelin with a slightly different centre of gravi-

ty will be used in women's competitions so that the implement will land more consistently on its tip. As the javelin is one of the seven disciplines used in the heptathlon the International Amateur Athletic Association (IAAF) has decided to erase Joyner-Kersee's mark of 7,291 points set at the 1988 Seoul

IAAF spokesman Giorgio Reineri said yesterday Joyner-Kersee's record would be wiped from the record books on December 31. The world record from January 1, 2000, will be this year's best performance recorded with the new javelin.

A similar change was made to the men's javelin in 1986 but while

East German Uwe Hohn's world record of 104.80 metres was erased,

Briton Daley Thompson's then world decathlon record of 8,847 was Joyner-Kersee, 36, retired last year after a career during which she won two Olympic heptathlon titles as well the 1988 long jump gold

Lomu sidelined by injury

WELLINGTON — New Zealand's rugby union superstar Jonah Lomu has been felled by a knee injury and will miss at least the opening three weeks of the Super 12 tournament. "He'll be back on the field - hopefully - in the next three, four, five weeks," Lomu's manager Phil Kingsley Jones said. Lomu had been a keen starter for the opening Super 12 match in Christchurch on Friday night between his new team The Chiefs and the Canterbury Crusaders before the weekend mishap. He suffered a partial medial ligament tear in his right knee during The Chiefs' warm-up game against the Otago Highlanders in Invercargill on Saturday night and All Black doctor John Mayhew estimated his recovery time at three weeks, local media reported.

Chiefs assistant coach Matt Te Pou said Mayhew's diagnosis of the injury as "moderate" was encouraging. Te Pou said it appeared Lomu would also miss the match scheduled

the following week against the Queensland Reds and the match against New South Wales Waraths in Sydney on March 13. His return to the field would likely occur against the Auckland Blues

Lomu's previous team — in Albany on March 20, he said. The Chiefs saw their Super 12 chances as significantly higher with the entrance of Lomu, the team having failed to reach a Super 12 final during three previous attempts. - Reuters

Martinsen claims first gold in eight years

RAMSAU - Bente Martinsen battled to victory through a raging blizzard in the five kilometres cross-country classic at the Nordic World Championships

yesterday to give Norway their first women's title in eight years. Martinsen, bronze medallist over five kms at the 1998 Nagano Olympics, clocked 12 minutes 49.8 seconds for Norway's second gold of the championships and the first by a Norwegian woman since Trude Dybendahl won the 5km classic at the 1991 championships

Czech Republic, the Olympic silver medallist and winner of two of three 5km World Cup races this season, took the bronze in 13:07.0. "After the first 1.5km I still wasn't at my limit," Martinsen said. "It was only at the second that I stepped up a gear and then had a good finish."

while the women have toiled in their imposing shadows. Although the Norwegian

ily medal table.

the overall standings.

The 26-year-old Norwegian can add to her medal tally, which

today for the 15km freestyle. "I'm not sure about tomorrow

style than skating," Martinsen said. "I'll fight and try my best but it may be too tough." — Reuters



TIMES SPORT

Larsson hits another hat-trick

EDINBURGH — Henrik Larsson scored four times to inspire Celtic to a magnificent 7-1 victory at Motherwell in the Scottish Premier League clash — his third hat-trick in the club's last four games. But he later admitted that Celtic's task had been made easier when Motherwell had Scotland striker John Spencer sent off after only 13 minutes for

Tuesday, February 23, 1999

Tum Aao Gulshan-e-Lahore Se Chaman Bardosh;

We offer you the lovely dawn of Banaras; And then let's ask each other if we are still enemies).

EVEN as the two countries shunned much of their acrimonious

Indian poet let his refreshing candour overflow, the Garden of

That it happened at a time when Jagmohan Dalmiya was

world one, was a double shame. As skipper Mohammed Azharuddin rightly pointed out, "It is the country's image which

look at the 'issue' which triggered it. One has waxed eloquent on

Sachin Ramesh Tendulkar in these columns countless times, all

deserving of the world's best batsman. But it really amazes one to

find how a nation's fate could rest with only one individual all the

time in what is after all a team game.

The impression one gets is as if India's very existence depends on what Sachin does which is

save for that stupendous Madras effort, Sachin

failed in all the other innings. Drowned in hero-

worship, very few people have cared to note that

picked rare chinks in the master's armour. Pity. It

is not every day that people crash through the

This brings me to a pertinent point. Isn't it about time the public and media especially,

Saqlain Mushtaq (thrice) and Shoaib Akhter (once)

defences of Sachin — indeed Calcutta was the first time he was castled first ball in his Test career!

relieved Sachin Tendulkar of the enormous burden

of expectation every time he walks to the wicket?

Isn't he entitled to his share of human failures?

But more than committing the wrong by treating

him like a super hero, it is the immense iniquity being dealt to the

rest of the team that is highly questionable. By placing all the eggs

in one basket, no one played on the side of intelligence. Besides,

think for a moment what it does to the morale of the team, where

count if not on Sesame Street! Small wonder the team falls like a

In an era where cricket is played with marked out strategies, all

pack of cards once the opposition manages to deal with Sachin.

the opposition has to do is to remember the moral of the story -

the other end. One may argue that the recipe is easier said than

Sachin which has pushed fans into near-belief that the country's

a bundle of nerves — thanks to the media hype surrounding

fortunes entirely depend on the 25-year-old's willow.

get Sachin - and if that's not a fair game as will be the case most

of the time, he could be held to ransom by going for the jugular at

applied but the fact is, it has reduced the rest of the Indian team to

As if this charade is not enough, we have quite a population sitting in judgment on Sachin's second innings dismissal. The long

and short of it is that the batsman was out according to the rules

interpreted by neutral umpires (Steve Bucknor referring to K. T.

Francis, the third umpire) and later seen several times over and

affirmed by ICC Match Referee Cammie Smith in the presence of

ICC President Jagmohan Dalmiya and Sachin himself. After this,

the preposterous suggestion that Wasim Akram should have

the others are made to feel like they are up there for the mere

pretty autistic. A more realistic look will show that

past thanks to two very open-minded premiers and the renowned

Eden was in a world of its own - playing to the devil. Not a hint

heralding a New Asian Order as a precursor to the more ambitious

Without going into the details of the Calcutta mobocracy, let's

Hum Aayen Subh-e-Banaras Ki Roshni Le Kar; Phir Uske Baad Yeh Poochchen Ke Kaun Dushman Hai

(You bring in the fragrance of Lahore;

of living upto its exalted name.

Two-horse race for vice-captaincy

Are Azhar's days as captain numbered?

From Our Correspondent

NEW DELHI — Are the days of Indian skipper Mohammed Azharuddin numbered? Who will succeed him? Who will be India's vice-captain? These are the questions agitating the minds of the cricket managers in the country as

well as lovers of the sport.

A strong section feels that Azhar has outlived his utility and the time has come to replace him. That he has been named captain only for the Sri Lanka Test, under-lines the fact that he is under scrutiny again. Azhar's captaincy has left a lot to be desired in the Test matches and the One-day series in New Zealand.

The defeat against Pakistan at home has only made matters worse for him. The selectors were also apprehensive about his commitment to the team.

The way he got out in both the innings of the Calcutta Test raised many eyebrows. Board sources say that Sachin Tendulkar is the obvious choice to succeed him. At the same time, sources point out that Tendulkar is reluctant to take

CALCUTTA — Calcutta's Eden

Gardens, one of the largest cricket

grounds in the world, faces an

uncertain future after an unruly

crowd forced India and Pakistan

to complete a Test match in front

Pakistan beat India by 46 runs on

the fifth and final day.

Trouble on the last two days

has fuelled speculation that Eden

Gardens could be banned from

status for two years," an unattrib-

uted report in the Statesman daily

The city is unfit for the game," the

newspaper said in an editorial

Angry spectators disrupted play for 46 minutes on Friday

when they threw water bottles and

oranges at Pakistani fielders after

India's top batsman Sachin

Tendulkar was unlucky to be run

out as he collided with a fielder

On Saturday, spectators armed with stones and bricks, disrupted

play for almost three hours when

India were on the verge of defeat

after Pakistan took three quick

evicted the vast majority of the

expected to follow suit soon.

Play resumed only after police

before reaching the crease.

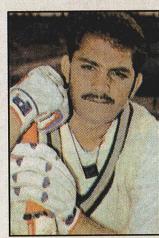
"Calcutta may lose Test-centre

"Save cricket, ban Calcutta.

Test cricket for some time.

Police and media outnumbered spectators on Saturday as

of empty stands last week.



AZHAR: Under scrutiny

taincy and Azhar was given the

reins. Now the five-man selection committee consisting of chairman Ajit Wadekar, Madan Lal, Anil Deshpande, Shivlal Yadav and Ashok Malhotra will meet again if India make the final in Dhaka and apart from selecting the team, they will also have to name the

He, it seems, has not forgotten the shabby treatment meted out to him when he was divested of cap-

90,000-strong crowd.

Eden Gardens also fell into

gnominy in 1996 when spectators

threw missiles as Sri Lanka were

on the verge of victory in a World

Cup semifinal. The match was

abandoned and then conceded by

tional cricket at Eden Gardens.

However, he said there was no

formal move to impose a ban.

"It's all gossip. We have not yet

received any opposition to (hold-

behaviour.

Agarkar proves fitness

BOMBAY — Ajit Agarkar has submitted a fitness certificate to the

Indian cricket board paving the way for his retention in the World Cup squad while his injured Bombay teammate Vinod Kambli, too, is

According to sources in the Bombay Cricket Association (BCA)

Agarkar has already submitted the medical report certifying that he had

recovered from his shin fracture sustained in December last to the

The BCCI may face a big dilemma if Kambli too submits a similar report prior to the February 28 selection committee meeting which has

been convened here to prune down the 30-strong list to 19 as per Cup

Screams Indian press

Save cricket,

ban Calcutta

only contenders. There was, of course, no vice-captain for the just-ended series against Pakistan as the same is not appointed for

Incidentally, both have already had a taste of the vice-cpataincy. Kumble, though, is the senior contender. In fact, as recently as last September, both were simultaneously appointed to the No. 2 position. Sourav went as Mohammed Azharuddin's deputy to the Sahara Cup while Kumble headed for the Commonwealth Games where Jadeja was captain.

One of them, logically, ought to have been made Azhar's deputy on the New Zealand tour, but the selectors chose to elevate Jadeja to the vice-captaincy.

Maharaja of Calcutta was a prominent also-ran when Jadeja got the nod. But Kumble's historic effort at the Kotla has probably changed equations.

Still, as the vice-captain is always just a ball away from taking charge and not everyone favours a bowling captain - the over-bowling and under-bowling scenario comes into play Sourav may just nose ahead. But these are early days. In any case, the Kumble-Sourav tussle should

Lele denies Tendulkar

BOMBAY — The Indian cricket board yesterday denied a news report that star batsman Sachin Tendulkar wanted to skip next month's triangular One-day series at home to recuperate from his back injury sustained during the first India-Pakistan Test in Madras last month.

wanted rest

Board secretary Jaywant Lele said from Vadodara that the report was absolutely bogus. "It is absurd and there is no truth in it at

A report in the Asian Age said It was for the second day run-Pakistan's captain Wasim Akram ning the board was denying a report concerning Tendulkar. Board president Raj Singh Dungarpur on Sunday termed reports that Tendulkar had been wanted a two-year ban on interna-"He (Akram) felt that perhaps a two-year ban on holding international matches at the venue offered captaincy of the Indian would be in order to teach trouteam during the Asian Test ble-makers a lesson," the paper Championship opener at Calcutta which he had turned down as kite

flying of the worst kind. Association of Bengal said they Yesterday's report had quoted were disappointed by the crowd's sources close to the star performer's family as saying 'We are very shocked. Before Tendulkar has aired his desire to holding any match, we should think carefully now," said Debdas rest during the demanding doubleleg limited overs series, featuring Banerjee, joint secretary of the India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which involved a lot of travelling. Cricket Association of Bengal.

Tendulkar badly needs to rest his injured back to be ready before the three-nation tournament in April, and more importantly, for the World Cup in May-June, the report said.

ing) Test matches," he said.

Jagmohan Dalmiya, who heads both the Cricket Meanwhile Indian team was Association of Bengal and is the to leave for Colombo later last president of the International night to play against Sri Lanka in Cricket Council, was not immedithe second match of Asian Test ately available for comment. Championship.

The team led by Mohammed Azharuddin was scheduled to leave for Colombo on Sunday night, but could not make it due to some visa problem for two members of the squad.

When contacted, Tamilingam, visa officer of the Sri Lankan deputy high commission here said the application for visas for both Ashish Nehra and team manager Brijesh Patel were received only yesterday morning. However, he said, there was no problem in issuing the visa. Meanwhile, the team members have been arriving in batches to Madras. - PTI

recalled Sachin takes the cake. It borders on the naivete, to say the least. Wasim had a point when he asked if Azhar would have Akram calls for 2-year

ban on Calcutta as host

LAHORE — Pakistan captain Wasim Akram has made a strong plea to clamp a short-term ban on holding of any international matches at the Eden Gardens in

The famous all-rounder was clearly upset with all the hooliganism at the stadium which held up his team's victory march and did not mince any words in an interview published on Sunday.

"You cannot have a situation like this. This is not the first time such a thing has happened in Calcutta. You cannot have a situation where the people dictate terms to the teams and are intent on disrupting proceedings if their team is not doing well," he plead-

Wasim said it was unfortunate that Eden Gardens had developed a reputation where people were not good losers and felt in such a situation, perhaps a two-year ban on the holding of any international matches at the venue was in order to teach the trouble-makers a lesson.

"I know the majority of the people here wanted to watch good cricket, but you can't allow such situations to carry on. Someday you might have a player seriously injured, it is not good advertisement for the game.'

With reference to Tendulkar's sensational run out on Friday and the trouble that followed, Wasim was quite angry with some of the reports in the Indian newspapers and denied that anyone had made an approach to the Pakistan team asking them to call Tendulkar back to bat in the larger interest of "No such talk was held at any

time. It is all rubbish and why should I call Tendulkar back, he was fairly run-out." Once the umpire ruled him

out, what is the problem. Would Azharuddin have called Saeed Anwar back in a similar situation?" he questioned.

The Indian press was clearly off line in some of their reports, he charged, with the largely circulated local Telegraph newspaper running the provocative headline 'Wasim loses India, set for win."

The newspaper also insinuated that Sunil Gavaskar had gone to the Pakistan dressing room and advised Miandad and Wasim to call back Tendulkar. Gavaskar on Saturday strongly

denied he ever did such a thing and stated he was no one to give advice to the Pakistanis. Wasim stated he was surprised

by the reaction to the Tendulkar dismissal, making the point that two teams were playing a Test match and not a club game. "Why blame us, didn't Ganguly claim a bump catch off Malik, knowing well he had not taken it clearly. Why didn't the Indian press write about his behaviour which was not sporting at all," he wanted to know. - Internews

resorted to the gimmickry if a similar fate had befallen Saeed

It all boils down to that killer instinct

deep

extra

cover

In professional sport, no quarters are asked or given. The stakes are even higher when you are going for broke. Of course, this is not to suggest that the game should not be played within the spirit and constitution. The tourists caused no grievances on that score and in fact had cause for complaint when Saurav Ganguly claimed a catch on a bump which terminated Saleem Malik's innings pre-Having said that, there are few sides who would manage to lose

after reducing the opposition to 26 for 6 only nine overs into the first morning of a Test match. The predicament begs the question - Are Indians afraid to win? It is a question The Times of India quite relevantly asked in its regular feature Black And White this week. It entails two personalities one of whom says "yes" and the other "no" to the question asked and argue the case in their defence. This week both the contestants drew similar views on the

Ashish Ballal who was a member of the gold medal-winning hockey team at last year's Asian Games in Bangkok said: "The killer instinct is not determined merely by the result. A sense of national pride is essential." Prakash Padukone, the former national

champion and now coach at the BPL Badminton Academy deciphered: "We are submissive by nature. We also lack motivation and encourage-

The gentlemen in question do not need any introduction for their voice of reason. In my considered opinion, that is the bottomline. One would also add lack of commitment that is borne of national pride. For twenty years that one has followed the sport, one is yet to come across an Indian team that actually professes that it has the will to beat Pakistan which is a bit strange considering the "arch-rivalry" the two neighbours have in the sport. Last week, when teams from the two coun-

tries came here to participate in a festival match, I took time off to discuss this question with them. There was universal consensus among players from both sides about the intensity of rivalry, that extra something,

that nerve-tingling sensation, that temptation of instant acclaim about Indo-Pak contests. The Pakistani team was definitely weaker of the two, a fact not completely lost on myself when I told a colleague that there could hardly have been a more configured mismatch. And yet, the Pakistanis had their sleeves up and made their intention of winning even this inconsequential tie in the desert known. Rashid Latif hadn't picked up a bat for a month and yet the guy packed a punch as if he was on a mission! Before the Calcutta Test began, Javed Miandad and Wasim

Akram boldly declared that the Eden Gardens would 'decide' the series already resting at one-all. The declaration was audacious but it spoke volumes for the confidence, the killer instinct and commitment of the tourists. In contrast, the Indian management including Azharuddin and coach Gaekwad were at pains to say that they didn't consider the Test a "decider".

Of course, the issue at hand was not about statistical correctness but one of gaining a psychological advantage. Here were two teams — the hosts fresh from a resounding victory at New Delhi and the tourists supposed to be on the defensive and also nursing injuries with Inzamam already gone home and Wasim Akram and Malik themselves not hundred per cent fit. The contrast between the two teams couldn't have been more stark. The way Shahid Afridi dived forward to bring off the catch of the match inches off the turf and the way he celebrated it on the last day made that a

Indian team complained of ball-tampering: Report

BOMBAY — Match Referee Cammie Smith yesterday refused to confirm or deny reports the Indian team had indicated to him that the Pakistanis had indulged in ball-tampering during their clash in the tri-nation Test series opener in Calcutta.

Contacted by PTI in Colombo yesterday about a report in a Bombay eveninger, the West Indian Smith said: "Whatever it is, I will take it up with the appropriate authorities"

Indian cricket board secretary Jaywant Lele said he was not

aware of any such protest.

According to the report, the Indians had lodged a verbal protest against the constant appealing of their rivals and, more significantly, the hot topic of discussion in the Indian dressing room was the prodigious reverse swing' the Pakistani fast bowlers were able to come up

with.

The Indians also indicated indirectly to Smith that the repeatedly Pakistanis were repeatedly tampering with the ball with their fingernails, the report said.

"After paying heed to the allegations, match referee Smith examined the ball used by the Pakistanis and found that the leather from the ball was extracted which enabled the quicks to bowl virtually unplayable deliveries," the report said.
"The referee had a word with

both captains about the ball. When it was pointed out to Pakistan skipper Wasim Akram, he said he had no nails," the report said and added that his contention may not mean much considering that the ball-tampering nowadays is being done by the fielders too.

Two of India's best batsmen Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid, fell victims to the prodigious reverse swinging of speedster Shoaib Akhtar in the first innings when India were comfortably placed chasing pakistan's modest 185. These two dismissals had a

major effect on the final outcome of the Test. — PTI

Aussies rocked in tour opener

ST JOHN'S — Australia's top order batting was rocked by the West Indies Board XI pace attack on the opening day of their Caribbean tour yesterday.

The Australians were reduced o 52 for four at lunch after a rain interrupted first morning in the three-day match at the Antigua Recreation Ground. The touring team lost Michael

Elliot (10), Justin Langer (0), Ricky Ponting (8) and Michael Slater (25). The damage was done by pace trio Pedro Collins (2-23), Corey Collymore (1-8) and Dwight Mais (1-18). Greg Blewett, two not out, and wicketkeeper Ian Healy, yet to get off the mark, were together at the interval.

With captain Steve Waugh not olaying, leg-spinner Shane Warne is leading the touring side. Australia's two-month tour includes four Tests and seven One-day internationals against West Indies. Earlier, Australia won the toss and decided to bat yesterday.

West Indies Board XI Stuart Williams (captain), Adrian Griffith, Wavell Hinds, Reynold McLean, Ryan Hinds, Chris Gale, Matthew St Clair, Ricardo Powell, Pedro Collins, Dwight Mais, Corey Collymore.

Australia - Matthew Elliot. Michael Slater, Justin Langer, Ricky Ponting, Greg Blewett, Ian Healy, Shane Warne (captain), Stuart MacGill, Andy Bichel, Colin Miller, Adam Dale.

Pakistan outlast India in thriller

RAWALPINDI — Pakistan beat in the first half. Ten minutes into India with a sudden death penalty the second half Pakistan launched stroke after they were stuck in prolonged deadlock in the eighth hockey test here yesterday.

India levelled the match 3-3 with a spectacular last-minute goal by Gagan Ajit Singh. Both teams failed to score in the extra 15 minutes but Pakistan won 8-7 after five penalty strokes.

Pakistani keeper Ahmed Alam saved Thirumal Valavan's feeble push with his left foot to spark wild celebrations in the packed army stadium.

Pakistan now lead the series 6-2 with just one match to be played in Lahore tomorrow

Baljit Singh Dhillon scored two goals for India in regulation time. Pakistan scored through captain Atif Bashir, Sohail Abbas and Mohammad Khalid. The home team scored two

goals in two minutes to lead 3-2 after twice conceding the lead to the visitors. Pakistan allowed the Indians

to completely dominate the first half. Dhillon, Singh and Kamal Horo combined well to create space in Pakistan territory. Dhillon found the target with a slick scoop on India's first short corner in the 25th minute. Pakistan's forward line was

made so ineffective by a packed Indian defence that the home team failed to force any penalty corner furious attacks on the Indian goal. Skipper Atif Bashir hit a rasping shot on Mohammad Wasim's pass to bring equaliser for the home

The visitors were rewarded with a penalty stroke when their forward Kamal Horo was fouled by Pakistani half back Mubashir Mukhtar in a goal-scoring position. Dhillon successfully converted the penalty stroke in the 60th minute for his seventh goal in the series.

"We should not have allowed the Indians to equalise in the last minute but I am happy that we have won," Pakistan captain Atif Bahsir said.

Pakistan struck twice in the space of two minutes. Sohail Abbas scooped home Pakistan's first penalty corner in the 67th minute and in the very next minute Mohammad Khalid scored after a goal mouth scramble.

Singh spoiled Pakistan's outright win when he shot home a spectacular goal from the top cir-

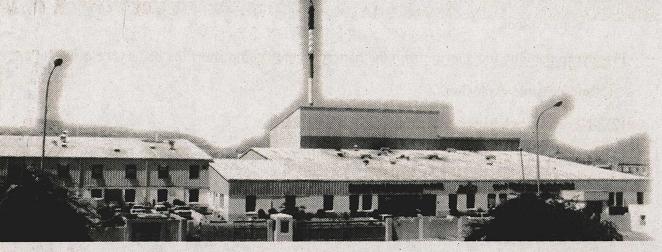
Both teams missed a penalty stroke each in the first session to prolong the tension. Mohammad Saqlain's low push was well saved by Indian goali B. Poonacha while Pakistan's goalie Ahmed Alam thwarted Rajesh Chauhan's push. — AFP





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REEM BATTERIES & POWER APPLIANCES CO. SAOG



RECEIVES ISO 9001 CERTIFICATION



TIMES OF OMAN

Tuesday, February 23, 1999

The first Battery Manufacturing Company in the Middle East to get ISO 9001 Certification.

Reem Batteries: Charging ahead!

One Million batteries per annum! And in top Quality! Certified by ABS!

acquired Batteries, a sick unit

Dr Omar Zawawi according to suit for Japanese, American Singer individual requirements" said Mr.

and European vehicles in capacities ranging from 32 AH to 230 AH. company has expanded the production capacity thrice, accelerating the process of sales and exports. Armed with a trained and committed workforce, customer service policies, world class technology and quality as the foreword, Reem Batteries is strongly charging ahead, to face the new



MESSAGE FROM H.E. DR. OMAR ZAWAWI

I am extremely pleased to learn that Reem Batteries & Power Appliances Co. SAOG, has been awarded the Prestigious ISO 9001 Certification and is the first

Battery Manufacturing Company in the Middle East to get this Certification. On this occasion I wish to extend my congratulations to the Management Team and all employees of the Company. This Certification, in a sense, is a vindication of Reem Batteries' reputation and quality, which has made it as the largest exporter of batteries, in this part of the world.

I wish them continued success in their future endeavours.



Reem Batteries has charge of the market!

It all started some nine

years ago when

losses and built brands with years of dedicated and continued efforts.

" We produce as many as 176 different types of batteries catering to Japanese and the American markets.We have the capacity to raise this number if the need arises and as

Executive Officer of Reem Batteries and Power Appliances.

" It is this flexibility to the varied requirements of our clientele that has won the company various export markets all over the world. Today Reem is the only battery manufacturing unit in the Middle East with an ISO 9001 certification that recognises design capability" said Mr. Gopalan.

Reem Batteries and Power Appliances Co. SAOG, a 100% Omani owned joint stock company and an unit of the prestigious Omzest Group of companies is today one of the largest automotive battery manufacturer in West

Today the two brands of batteries " Antara' designed for extreme heat and harsh off-road driving conditions prevalent in the Gulf and 'Gulfstar' which is designed for the cold and temperate climates, covers the most popular battery types

These products are designed in conformity international specifications modern trends - drycharged, with radial grids, low antimony alloys and enveloped separators.

The technical license agreement of the company with Johnson Controls Battery Group Inc., USA in 1991, had ensured that the company benefits from the application of world class technology to all its products. Reem Batteries have made their mark in Oman's market with their quality approach and world class product

The Batteries are available in over 30 countries and this rapid development of Export markets is a tribute to the quality of the company's products. Application support and after sales service for its products are an integral part of the company's marketing program.

Over the years, the



millennium.

Congratulations

Reem Batteries & Power Appliances Co. SAOG

on the occasion of receiving ISO 9001 accreditation











received the ISO 9001 accreditation 'Design & manufacture of Batteries' this year, a mark of excellence indeed, its endeayour to take

> MESSAGE FROM CHIEFEXECUTIVE **OFFICER**

S. Gopalan.

The receipt of ISO 9001 Certification by our Company is a testimonial to our

reputation and quality and would further strengthen our ability to export batteries from Oman to all parts of the world. The credit for this Certification goes to all the employees of the Company who had shown a tremendous degree of dedication in implementing a quality management system of the highest standard.

This Certification clearly explains our success in the last few years in exporting Omani made batteries to over 25 countries in the world, including Western Europe and South America. We are all the more pleased since we will be the first battery manufacturing company in the Middle East to get ISO 9001 Certification and this would motivate us to perform further better, in the coming years.

Automotive tips

Battery, cables, electrical connections: Safety first.

- 1) Batteries, give off hydrogen gas during charging. Hydrogen gas is highly EXPLOSIVE.
- 2) Always disconnect the negative cable first. They are marked "NEG." or " ".

 Then, always, hook the negative cable up last.
- 3) Sulfuric acid is the liquid used in batteries as a electrolyte (the fluid inside the battery). It is a very strong acid that can cause burns to eyes and skin. So use proper safety precautions such as rubber gloves and safety glasses.
- 4) If you get the battery acid on your skin flush with water immediately.
- 5) If you get the battery acid in you eyes flush immediately with water for 15 minutes, get medical attention promptly.
- 6) If you accidentally ingest the battery acid, drink large amounts of water or milk. Follow with milk of magnesia, beaten eggs or vegetable oil. Call a doctor immediately.
- 7) When you service, a battery, or jump start a battery, make sure the area is well ventilated.
- 8) Never allow open flames, smoking etc. near a battery being jump started.



9) When inspecting a battery always turn off the engine, and turn all accessories off.

- 10) Never break a live circuit at the battery terminals. An arc could occur causing the hydrogen gas to explode.
- 11) Keep metallic tools away from the battery as they could short the battery, or cause an arc, and possible explosion.
- 12) Never move a battery with the vent caps removed.
- 13) Always use a proper battery carrier when lifting or moving a battery.
- 14) Use fender covers to prevent spillage of acid on paint.
- 15) Don't, over tighten battery hold-downs, and make sure there are no sharp objects inside battery compartment when installing a battery.



The winning team at National Trading Co. LLC.

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Some myths about Batteries



Driving a car will fully recharge a battery.

There are a number of factors affecting alternator's ability to charge a battery. The greatest factors are how much current from the alternator is diverted to the battery to charge it, how long the current is available and temperature. Generally, running the engine at idle or short "stopand go trips" during bad weather at night will not recharge the battery.

A battery will not explode.

While spark retarding vent caps help, recharging a battery produces hydrogen and oxygen gasses. Battery explosions can also occur when the electrolyte level is below the top of the plates. If a spark or flame occurs, an explosion will occur.

A battery will not lose it's charge sitting in storage.

A battery has self-discharge or internal electrochemical "leakage" that will cause it to become fully discharged and sulfated over time. Prior to storing a battery, it should be fully charged, placed in a cool location above freezing, and recharged when it reaches the 80% state-of-charge level or once every six months, whichever occurs first. If left in a vehicle, disconnect the negative cable.

Test the alternator by disconnecting the battery with the engine running.

A battery as like a voltage stabilizer or filter to the pulsating DC produced by the alternator. Disconnecting a battery while the engine is running can destroy the electronic components, e.g., computers, radio, stereo, alarm system, etc., or the charging system. Just say NO! If any one suggests this.

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- * Deep discharges (leaving your lights on),
- * Misapplication or using an undersized battery,
- * Undercharging or loose alternator belt,
- * Excessive vibration (due to a loose holdown clamp),
- * Using tap water,
- * Corrosion, and
- * Freezing.

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GOING GLOBAL

The company's batteries are now available in more than 30 countries. This rapid development of Export markets is a tribute to the quality of the company's products.

The modern and sophisticated infrastructure of the Sultanate of Oman, the availability of cheap skilled labour, the low cost of capital and low tax structure have added impetus to the export efforts of the company. This is supplemented by an aggressive but flexible marketing policy which looks at each customer's needs individuality.

The company provides application support and after sales service for its products as an integral part of its marketing program.

THE EXPORT MARKETS:

- ◆UAE ◆Saudi Arabia ◆Kuwait ◆Qatar ◆Bahrain ◆Yemen
- ◆Lebanon ◆Libya ◆Zaire ◆Congo ◆Guinea ◆Ghana
- ◆Cameroon ◆Kenya ◆Ivory Coast ◆Burundi ◆Rwanda
- ◆Tanzania ◆Gabon ◆Greece ◆Netherlands ◆France ◆Germany
- ◆Azerbaijan ◆Armenia ◆Kazakhistan ◆ Turkmenistan
- ◆Uzbekistan ◆Iran ◆Portugal ◆United Kingdom ◆Sweden
- ◆Denmark ◆Chile ◆Singapore ◆Afghanistan ◆Pakistan



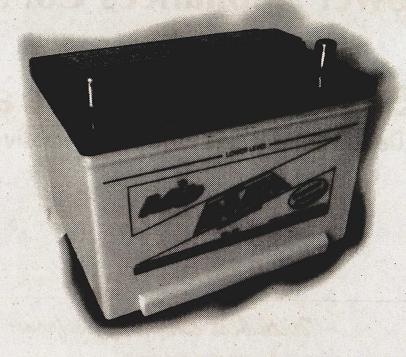
QUALITY POLICY STATEMENT

- * It is our quality policy to provide products that meet or exceed the needs of all our customers and provide them with the best value for money.
- * We will make products suited to the needs of specific customer segments and uniformly excel in meeting their expectations of Delivery and Services.
- * We would strive to exceed the quality expectations of our customers, by continuously improving process and product designs.
- * We would continuously strive to improve our internal process control and achieve a manufacturing system of "Building in Quality"

Chief Executive Officer

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