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OMAN Page 3

Images of Sept. 11 tragedy on display



PAKISTAN

Sharifs allowed to leave



COMPLIMENTARY





LEISURE

DARK SHADOW behind this



HM issues four royal decrees

MUSCAT — His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has

issued four royal decrees.

Royal Decree No. 14/2003 amending some of the provisions of the law on classification of technical posts at the Legal Affairs Ministry and specification of the financial

status of its occupants.

Royal Decree No. 15/2003 establishes the Directorate-General of Organisations and Trade Relations and amends the name of the general administra-tion of planning and follow-up at the Commerce and Industry Ministry.

Article one of the decree states that a Directorate-General of Organisations and Trade Relations shall be established at the Commerce and Industry

Article two replaces the name 'General administration of planning and follow-up' at the Commerce and Industry Ministry by 'Directorate-General of Planning and

Follow-up'.
Article three cancels all that contravenes the decree or in conflict with its provisions.

Royal Decree No. 16/2003, article one of the decree approves the organisational structure of Dhofar

Article two cancels all that contravenes this decree or in conflict with its provisions.

Royal Decree No. 17/2003

appoints Mohammed bin Nasser bin Hamad Al Wahaibi, Sultanate's ambassador to the Republic of Turkey, as the Sultanate's extraordinary and plenipotentiary non-resident ambassador to Republic of

Azerbaijan.

The four decrees come into force from their date of issue.

HM greets Brunei, Guyana

MUSCAT — His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has sent a cable of greetings to Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah of occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty wished the sultan of Brunei good health and happiness and to his people further progress

• HIS Majesty the Sultan has also sent a cable of greet-ings to the president of Guyana on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. His Majesty expressed his best wishes to the president and his people. — ONA

Cable of thanks

MUSCAT — His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has received a cable of thanks from King Abdullah of Jordan in response to His Majesty's cable of greetings on the occasion of

his birthday.

King Abdullah expressed
his thanks and appreciation to
His Majesty the Sultan for his brotherly feelings and best wishes. He wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. — ONA

'Spy' arrested KUWAIT CITY — Kuwait

has arrested an Iraqi working for the country's intelligence services, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. "Zuhair Faqira Mohammed Nader ... confessed that he provided military and security information to intelligence officers in the Iraqi regime's embassy in Bahrain," said the statement obtained by

Prayer Timings



Regular Savings Plan	6.50%
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Saudi Arabia



Page 13

19 injured in clashes inside **Golden Temple**



SPORTS

Henin spoils Seles party in Dubai thriller



glittering jewel

Blix gives Iraq a week to start destroying missiles

Bush warns UN has 'last chance' on Iraq

CRAWFORD (Texas) - US President George W. Bush said yesterday the UN Security Council would have less than two months to pass a new resolution that paves the way for war

against Iraq.
As Bush announced that a new resolution would be introduced next week, chief UN weapons inspector Hans Blix demanded that Iraq start destroying its stock of banned missiles within a week.

"Time is short. And this is the chance for the Security Council to show its relevance, and I believe the Security Council will show its relevance because Saddam Hussein has not disarmed," Bush said after meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar at his

Texas ranch.

Asked during a joint press conference whether the measure will amount to the world body's last chance to prove its relevance in the standoff, Bush curtly replied: "Yes. 'Si.' Last chance."
The US leader also said "no'

to giving the council two months to approve the USbacked measure, which will lay out "in clear and simple terms that Iraq is not complying" with a November 8 UN disarmament ultimatum. Saddam "has no intention of

disarming, otherwise he would have done so," Bush said after he and Aznar held a four-way telephone conversation with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. All four nations have taken a

are coordinating an all-out diplomatic campaign to win the nine votes needed for the 15member council to approve the Meanwhile, Blix's March 1 deadline for Baghdad to begin the demolition of its Al-Samoud 2 missiles and warheads gave

hard-line stance against Iraq and

proof of its good faith and willingness to comply with UN demands on disarmament. The deadline is being

Iraq a chance to provide rapid

Another Qurum march for peace

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT - First, it was the 'Women Against War and now it is the turn of intellectuals.

Close on the heels of the women who marched for peace here recently is another group of people, a combination of both men and women this time, that will be lending its mite to the peace cause at a gathering near the Sabco Centre, Qurum, at 7pm today. Omani intellectuals – writers, poets, artists, et al would probably give

demonstration against war plans against Iraq.
Thanks to the SMS service of Omantel, the group has managed to make its march already known to the public.

the lead for today's

According to the organisers, anyone wanting to promote peace is welcome to join this 'peaceful' gathering.

viewed as a key test of the assertion by diplomatic sources in Baghdad that "the Iraqis are ready to respond to all of Blix's

But it leaves Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein facing a dilemma, observers said. Getting rid of the missiles would deprive Iraq of a key arm in its defense against a US-led attack, while failure to destroy them could be used by Washington and London as a justification for

• Continued on Page 4



GEARING UP: Ordnance crewmember wheels a cart holding inert practice bombs past missile racks on board the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) aircraft carrier in the Gulf yesterday. - Reuters

VIEWPOINT

By Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali

Arab Summit and expected resolutions

THE Arabs, from the seven seas to the Gulf, are these days following with deep interest news of the expected ordinary Arab Summit to be held in Cairo on March 1 after the failure to convene an extraordinary summit. The summit is to take place at a very critical time where American war preparations against Iraq have reached a climax.

Under the circumstances, the Arabs should make clear and bold stands and carry out practical steps to prevent a war. We should all remember that this is a war against an Arab country and a member of the Arab League. How we had wished that the Arab League would have been the first party to make a move to solve the crisis, that the Arab Summit had been held a long time ago and that its resolutions actually implemented!

Unfortunately, talk about an extraordinary Arab Summit began only after the whole world voiced its protests against war plans and spelled out stands, rejecting any aggression against Iraq. Take the example of France and Germany who stood firm and resolute against the war option. Rallies were held in Europe to close ranks and to put pressure on the US and its allies to avoid a war which would have disastrous consequences on the Middle East and the rest of the world. From the beginning of the crisis, the Arab citizen in all the Arab countries wished to see a united Arab stand calling for

peace, an extraordinary Arab Summit followed by strong and comprehensive efforts to save the Iraqi people and a clear-cut plan for peace and against war. Protests had been organised in more than 600 cities in the six continents calling for peace and rejecting war against Iraq.

Only then, the talk about an Arab Summit began, as if the preparations for war started only yesterday. This would show that the Arab Summit, after all, is only an attempt to go with world public opinion. Why this delay? Is the West more loving and sympathetic to Iraq, a true Arab country, than the Arab world itself? The matter should have

required the holding of an extraordinary summit. All parties are watching the efforts to hold the ordinary Arab summit and it is high time the summit came up with some bold decisions. It should be taken into consideration that protesters all over the world have said "No" to war.

The Arab Summit has to respond to the level of the peace rallies witnessed on the world streets.

There is a need for a stronger stand because the Arabs, more than anybody else, should take a firm stand on a war targeting an Arab country. No doubts, the Cairo summit comes at a critical juncture.

One path for the summit is to take a unified stand and effort for stopping the war machine - demonstrating and utilising the Arab's many strategic potentials. The other path is restoring to the usual language of condemnation and resolutions - rubbing salt into the Arab wound.

The Arab citizens are all watching and waiting for the summit — wishing that it would adopt brave and proud resolutions. They are waiting for a clear message to the whole world saying "No" to war against Iraq. Iraq is an integral part of the

Despite previous disappointing summits, the Arab citizens have not completely lost hope. This summit would be held at a time America is preparing to attack Iraq. The Arabs have to make a stand stronger than that of western countries. Would the summit fulfil the Arab citizens' expectations? The answer

The end of the world is nigh

2060 is the date set by Sir Isaac

Newton, say new documents LONDON - Armageddon is

just 57 years away, by the calculations of Britain's most famous scientist, the Daily Telegraph newspaper reported yesterday. Sir Isaac Newton, the 17th century scientist and

theologian, wrote thousands of pages of notes in his attempt to decode the Bible and pin down the date of the apocalypse, said the article.
His theories about Armageddon have been

unearthed by academics from little-known handwritten manuscripts in a library in Jerusalem. The thousands of pages show Newton's attempts to decode the Bible, which he believed contained God's secret laws for the universe. Newton, who was also a theologian and alchemist, predicted that the Second Coming of Christ would follow plagues and war and would precede a 1,000-year reign by the saints on earth

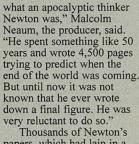
of which he would be one. The most definitive date he set for the apocalypse, which he scribbled on a scrap of paper, was 2060.



ISAAC NEWTON: Apocalyptic thinker

Newton's fascination with the end of the world, which has been researched by a Canadian academic, Stephen Snobelen, is to be explored in a documentary, Newton: The Dark Heretic, on BBC2 next

Saturday.
"What has been coming out over the past 10 years is



papers, which had lain in a trunk in the house of the Earl of Portsmouth for 250 years, were sold by Sotheby's in the late 1930s

John Maynard Keynes, the economist, bought many of the texts on alchemy and theology. But much of the material went to an eccentric collector, Abraham Yahuda, and was stored in the Hebrew National Library. It was among these documents that the date was

Newton, who died in 1727, is best known for discovering gravity — suppos-edly when an apple fell on his head — and is credited with being the forefather of modern physics. — Reuters

Bomb threats target Qatar Airways planes

DAMASCUS — A Qatar Airways plane en route to London made an emergency landing in Damascus yesterday following a bomb threat but security forces have so far failed to find any explosives on board, Syrian officials said.

A second Qatari aircraft bound for Doha was delayed in Cairo after a note was discovered on the plane saying it would blow up, but a search found no explosives and it was allowed to depart later yester-

day.

The Doha to London flight, carrying some 243 passengers, requested permission to land in Damascus after a female Spanish passenger claimed there was a bomb on board, the head of Syria's civil aviation board said.

"It seems the Spanish pas-senger was in an abnormal mental state," Hussein Mahfoud told reporters at the scene. He said Flight 001 would depart for London's Heathrow airport once security officials finished searching the aircraft.

Syrian Interior Minister Ali Hammoud added: "This seems to be a false report from one of the passengers.
"Until now the situation is

good and there is nothing there, there is no danger," he told reporters at Damascus International Airport, where dozens of ambulances and fireengines surrounded the Airbus Meanwhile, another Qatar Airways plane was delayed by more than 150 minutes in Cairo

after cleaners discovered a tis-

sue on which it was written:

"Bin Laden ... the plane will blow up on takeoff," Cairo air-

port sources said. - Reuters

issue. "We assured Mr El-Baradei that all out activities are under IAEA control and we have left the door open for further discussions," Gholamreza Aghazadeh said.

TEHRAN - Iran refused yes-

terday to snap inspections by the

UN atomic energy agency of

nuclear facilities which have

alarmed Washington, but agreed

to promptly inform the Vienna-based watchdog if it decides to

But at a joint press confer-

ence with visiting International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohammed El-Baradei,

Iran's nuclear energy agency

chief said the country was ready

to further discuss the inspection

build any new ones.

At the top of El-Baradei's agenda since his arrival on Friday was trying to convince Iran to sign the additional protocol to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) which allows for snap inspections of both declared and undeclared nuclear

"This is not just about Iran, but for all countries," El-Baradei

said.
"As soon as the countries sign a NPT as well as the protocol, we can provide comprehensive assurance for those countries who have signed both protocols, but without the additional protocol, the assurance is less strong," he added, alluding to possible secret nuclear weapons

programmes. The European Union, whose 15 members have all signed the

nuke inspections additional protocol, has urged Iran to come on board as well.

The United States however is

only adopting an amended version which excludes "activities

Iran refuses snap

or locations of direct national security significance" The additional protocol, which has only 28 signatories, was drawn up in 1991 when the IAEA realised that Iraq, which like Iran is an NPT signatory, had a secret nuclear weapons

programme.

El-Baradei managed to extract a pledge that Iran would inform the IAEA of any decisions to build new nuclear power facilities.

"The Iranian government has agreed to provide the IAEA with all information over new sites as soon decisions are made for their creation," said El-Baradei, who was due to leave Iran later

President Mohammed Khatami stressed yesterday fol-lowing talks with El-Baradei the peaceful nature of Iran's nuclear programme.

'Iran is working under the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency's rules and will continue to do so, the IAEA can visit our installations to verify this," he said.

Following his arrival on Friday El-Baradei and a team of IAEA experts visited the nuclear power station construction site at Natanz in central Iran, the Iranian Atomic Energy Agency

But he did not visit the Arak site southwest of Tehran as

has said it suspects the two sites are evidence of a covert attempt to produce fissile uranium for a nuclear weapons pro-Khatami announcement on February 9 that Iran was mining

The US State Department

new uranium deposits and planned to produce its own nuclear fuel raised the ire of Until that point, Russia, under US pressure, had agreed with Iran to provide it with nuclear fuel and insisted that

Tehran return all spent fuel as a

condition for going ahead with

the building of the Bushehr reactor, being built by Russia in southern Iran. El-Baradei had also been slated to visit the Bushehr site, which is set to be completed in 2004, but did not make it there

Following announcement of the new nuclear sites, a State Department spokesman said, "we continue have very grave concerns that Iran is using its supposedly peaceful nuclear programme. as a pretext for advancing a nuclear weapons programme.

Washington charged anew last week that "Iran's ambitious and costly pursuit of a complete nuclear fuel cycle only makes sense if it is in support of a nuclear weapons programme," and it has questioned why Iran, a country rich in oil and gas deposits, needs nuclear-powered electric generators. — AFP

MUSCAT — Sheikh Suhail bin Mustahil Shimas, housing, electricity and water minister, has received a written message from Azan Al Ahmed, minister of public works and housing in Palestine.

The message was delivered by O'wni Mohammed Battash, Palestinian ambassa-dor to the Sultanate, when the housing, electricity and water minister received him here yesterday.

During the meeting, the excellent brotherly relations and cooperation and matters of common interest between the two countries were discussed. — ONA



BOOSTING TIES: Sheikh Suhail bin Mustahil Shimas receiving the Palestine message from the ambassador yesterday. — ONA

Caledonian College graduates honoured



SO PROUD: Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Mattar Al Azizi presenting awards to graduates at a function yesterday.

- Photos by Sultan Al Hasani

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT Caledonian College of Engineering, in affiliation with Glasgow Caledonian University, held the seventh graduation and award ceremony at Inter-Continental Hotel yesterday. Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Mattar Al Azizi, minister of civil service, presided over the ceremony. Principals, dignitaries, family members and other invited guests attended the

As part of the ceremony, Professor Frank McIntosh, prin-ciple of Caledonian College, said: "These awards are fully recognised internationally for which we are very proud. This link with our affiliated university is part of our contribution to the higher education provision in the Sultanate because by working closely with the Higher Education Council, the Education

Accreditation Board, the minister of higher education, and other ministries and organisations, we wish to continue to develop and enhance the quality and standards of the degrees and diplomas to international lev-

Since 1995, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said set a vision to promote higher education in Oman and create a partnership between the government and private education

which is today sighted as a model of success throughout the world. Today, there are 1,000 students studying in the college and with those receiving their awards will have produced 557 graduates and diplomats who are contributing to various sectors including economy, social and cultural development of the Sultanate. "We, at this university college, are privileged to have played our part," added Frank McIntoch.

Ma'amari chairs Arab youth panel meet

CAIRO — The meetings of the second session of the Arab youth technical committee commenced at the Arab League headquarters yesterday under the chairmanship of Sheikh Mohammed bin Marhoon Al Ma'amari, president of the General Organisation for Youth Sports and Cultural Activities.

The committee is expected to make important recommendations to the 43rd session of the executive board of the Arab Youth and Sport Ministerial Council, which will convene here today. The committee will consid-

er proposals made by Arab countries to activate Arab youth work, exchange experience and unify positions. The committee will also dis-

cuss the unified constitution of youth unions, support for Arab countries broadcasting union and other relevant issues.

Meanwhile, the board of directors of the Arab Fund for Youth and Sport Activities will

Men's & Ladies Casuals

Men's & Ladies Formals



Ma'amari presiding over the Arab youth technical committee meeting in Cairo yesterday. - ONA

also meet today, and the 26th session of the Arab Youth and Sport Ministerial Council will

start on Tuesday. A ceremony to celebrate the ministerial council's silver jubilee will be held on the sidelines of the session on Tuesday. Talented youth will be felicitat-

ed at the ceremony. Sheikh Al Ma'amari, in his capacity as president of the youth technical committee, will address the ceremony. - ONA

City Plaza: 698988

City Centre: 545981

Cairo from tomorrow to February 27.

Abdullah Al Hinai, ministry undersecretary for economic affairs, will head the Sultanate's

officials from the National Economy Ministry, Commerce and Industry Ministry and the Directorate-General Customs at the Royal Oman

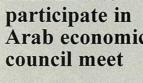
Sultanate to

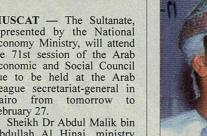
delegation to the meetings.

The delegation comprises Police. — ONA

Arab economic

MUSCAT — The Sultanate, represented by the National Economy Ministry, will attend the 71st session of the Arab Economic and Social Council due to be held at the Arab League secretariat-general in





Global meet on child health begins







MAKING THEIR POINTS: Dr Saud bin Nasser Al Riyami, Dr Bazdawi Al Riyami and Dr Zakia bint Mohammed Al Lamki addressing the health conference yesterday.

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT - Oman played host to the 15th International Child Health Conference, which was held at Sindbad Hall, Crowne Plaza

Hotel, yesterday.

Dr Saud bin Nasser Al Riyami, president of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), inaugurated the conference. It was held under the auspices of Oman Medical Specialties Board. The conference is being organised by the Department of Child Health, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, SQU and the Department of Child Health, Royal Hospital,

Ministry of Health. The three-day conference, which will have 10 moderators, will see key issues being tack-led by 20 (five international and 15 local) speakers. "Healthy children are a pre-

requisite for a bright future of any nation. The fact is more relevant in our circumstances, as 40 per cent of Omani population is less than 15 years old," Dr Saud Nasser Al Riyami said in his address.

"We are proud of the achievements made under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, including the revolutionary change in the provision of healthcare and educational facilities to the young generation of this coun-

try," he added.

The contributions of the Health Ministry and SQU to attain this milestone have been exemplary, he noted. "I wish to make a particular mention of the department of child health at SQU, for striving hard to update the knowledge and clinical skills of paediatricians in this

country," Dr Saud Riyami said. He also praised Dr Zakia bint Mohammed Al Lamki, head of the department of child health, SQU, and chairperson of the organising committee of this conference. He said that she and her team had always been active in organising conferences and bringing experts from abroad to make healthcare professionals dealing with children aware of the recent advances in the field.

He advised all participants, especially the "young Omani professionals to make best use of the opportunity in an effort to further improve the quality of service rendered to our

Referring to the international speakers, he said it was great to find that despite the "existing international situation, our guests from abroad have made it to the conference, which reflects their commitment to the advancement of healthcare education and of course, the care of sick children around the world".

Dr Zakia Al Lamki, meanwhile, noted that this time, the conference was focusing on infections in specific areas and genetic aspects of haematological and neurological disorders of childhood.

Yesterday's programme included a welcome speech by Dr Zakia Al Lamki, the dean's

Low-cost BMT programme possible, says Indian doctor

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT - It is possible to develop an allogeneic bone marrow transplant programme in developing countries with not only good results, but also at lower cost than in the West, according to a top Indian doctor, who is attending the 15th Oman

International Child Health Conference (OICHC). Dr Mammen Chandy, professor and head of the department and bone marrow transplant (BMT) services, Christian Medical College Hospital, Vellore, India, made the above comment, in the oration made in tribute to Prof. Musallem El Bualy, which was also arranged as part of the OICHC.

The oration was in honour of Prof. El Bualy for his enormous contribution to the child health services in Oman. Prof. El Bualy was the one who initiated the BMT service programme in

Dr Chandy was confident that the BMT programme can be developed in developing countries "with results that are compa-

rable to those achieved in the West at a significantly lower cost".

The infrastructure developed for a BMT programme will improve the quality of care in terms of transfusion support, infection control and management of neutropenia in tertiary referral institutions, he said.

Earlier, he noted that in the developing world, education, nutrition, housing, sanitation and family planning have the most important impact on health.

Therefore, investments in these areas would have a much greater impact and immunisation, prevention of communicable diseases and provision of basic hospital services take priority over interventions like BMT, which benefit only a few at very

"However, resources are not evenly distributed and a proportion of the population can afford to have the best treatment available anywhere in the world," Dr Chandy said.

"By providing this treatment in the developing world, the patient can have this treatment in surroundings in which he is familiar at a much lower cost.

"There are many diseases where this strategy is not only cost effective, but will prevent resources from being lost to the

The cost of transfusion and chelation with desferrioxamine for a 30-kg child in India is Rs200,000. The Rs600,000 required for a bone marrow transplant is equivalent to three years of transfusion in the developing world. Chronic myeloid leukemia is the commonest leukemia among adults and allogeneic bone marrow transplant offers curative treatment at a fixed cost when compared to Interferon and Imatinib, which can only prolong survival at a prohibitive cost, Dr Chandy said.

address by Dr Bazdawi Al Riyami, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, SQU; Dr Saud Al Riyami's remarks, the Professor Musallem Elbualy Memorial Oration; bone marrow transplantation services in developing countries by Prof. Mammen Chandy, head, department of bone marrow transplantation services, Christian Medical College and Hospital, Vellore, India; and Professor Musallem Elbualy Memorial Awards presentation.

The international speakers at the conference includes Aziza Shad, director, paediatric haematology/oncology services, Georgetown University Medical School, Washington DC, USA; Jan Inge Henter, associate professor, childhood cancer research unit, Karolinski, Stockholm, Sweden; Mammen Chandy, professor and head, haematology department and bone marrow transplantation services, Christian Medical

College Hospital, Vellore, India; Veena Kalra, professor and head, paediatric neurology serv-All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India; and Yukio Fukuyam, Emeritus Professor, child neurology institute, Tokyo, The local speakers include:

David Dennison, department of haematology; Akbar Rafay, department of microbiology and Vasudeva Rao, department of histopathology at SQUH; Mohammed Hosni and Riaz Ahmed of the department of child health, Royal Hospital; Roshan Lal Koul, Hashim Javad, Yasser A. Wali, Mathew Zachariah, Venugopalan P, Alexander P.C., Khalfan Al Seneidi and Wasifuddin S. M. of the department of child health, SQUH; Eileen Tomas, department of child health, Royal Hospital; and Aqeela Taqi, department of pharmacy and therapeutics at SQUH.

Lifestyle Magazine



OMAN

Forum on citrus trees

MUSCAT — An international forum on citrus fruits will open at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) today under the auspices of Dr Hamad bin Sulaiman Al Salmi, SQU deputy president.

The forum will be organised by the SQU's crops science department and will assess growing citrus trees in the Sultanate and the Gulf

The forum will also consider research made on the witches' broom disease. — ONA

EVENTS

- The committee on liberalising foreign trade and economic globalisation in the countries of the ESCWA region will meet at
- ailments by Dr K.M. Johny at Al Amal Medical and Health Care Centre on February 27, at 8am.

 • Melodies of the Future is
- organising a musical talent show by the most talented artistes at Oman Sheraton Hotel on February 27. Ministers, sheikhs, the ambassador of India, diplo-mats and other dignitaries to
- 798156, 9255904. • Lecture in English on 'Marital Relationship', at Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, on March 2.
- Seminar on 'Negotiation Skills', organised by Ideas Management Consultants, from March 8 to 11. Information on Negotiation Consultants, and the State of the Consultants of the Consultants of the Consultants of the Consultants of the Consultant of the Consulta 798881/787349/791876. • The Directorate-General of Mines will host a two-day semi-
- nar on investment opportunities in mining sector in the AGCC states on March 18 and 19.

 Seminar on 'Secretarial Skills', organised by Ideas Management Consultants, on March 30 and 31. Information on 798881/787349/791876.

Images of sadness, grief and anger from Sept. 11 tragedy

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — 'After September 11: Images From Ground Zero', a photo exhibition on the September 11 tragedy, which was inaugurated by Richard L. Baltimore III, ambassador of the United States to the Sultanate, at the Oman Society for Fine Arts, has displayed a mixture of sadness, grief and anger. The exhibition will

The exhibition presented the images taken by renowned photographer Joel Meyerowitz, who lived in that scene during the most sor-rowful time of the United States of America. Secretary of State Colin Powell inaugurated the exhibition, organised by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in association with New York City Museum, at the US State Department, on February 27, 2002.

Joel Meyerowitz's images included those taken during his tour around the world which covered 118 cities in 50 countries. During the launch of the exhibition, Colin Powel said: "September 11 was a very personal experience for each of us. Each of us remembers where we were when we first learned of the attacks. Each of us remembers our initial chilling impressions and our response. These images remind me that our country, our people and our fami-lies are very precious and that we must do all we can to protect them from the scourge of ter-

Twenty-seven images from different scenes and timings of the tragedy by Joel were dis-played at the exhibition expressing the deep sadness and sorrow in the minds of the people. However, the images reflected the courage and the strong will displayed by the firefighters and the authority in overcoming the terrible

The events of September 11, revisited in these images, have touched the people around the globe, evoking reactions of anger, sorrow, incredulity, fear and mourning," said Richard L. Baltimore in his speech at the opening of the

PRESENTATION AND SPEECH COURSE: A training course in presentation and

speech was opened yesterday at Muscat Police Command under the auspices of Major Mohammed

bin Abdullah Al Dhahab, director of administrative and financial affairs at the command. Seventeen

ROP officers attended the course, which would continue till Wednesday.



AFTERMATH: An image of the destroyed World Trade Center.

Each image displayed at the exhibition marked an important day the New Yorkers had to combat the tragedy. It, however, shared the grief and believes of various people from different backgrounds in the United States and around the November 8: Smoke rising through the sunlight is one of the images shown among the 27 photographs. The image gives details of the firefighters cleaning Ground Zero as the smoke rises through the sunlight on November 8, 2001. September 25: The flag midnight showed the American flag fluttering from a window on the World Trade Center, which explains the strong resistance of the situation. One of the very emotional images, October 28: A memorial, shows a number of gifts, flowers and letters kept on the destroyed parts of the World Trade Center, and of fireman keeping roses on Ground Zero and praying for the victims of the attack. The September 26: The South Tower image is one among the hor-rifying scenes because it gives a close account of the destroyed South Tower. It also shows the feeling of fear and sympathy to the victims who couldn't survive the disaster. September 1982: The blue hour is a picture of the stunning New York City taken by Joel, showing the blue sky above the World Trade Center and the stunning city before the 9/11 incident. As Joel noted: "To me no photographs mean no history. So I decided to find my way in and make a photographic archive for the city of New York. It is a privilege to work at Ground Zero. Everyone who works there has been transformed by the spirituality of

"Moreover, the idea behind this exhibition was to bring all people together to understand how life could be turned into a horrifying moment for them in a second anywhere in the world." Fear and sympathy definitely speaks in one language, and there is no doubt that the exhibition brought different ethnicity in Oman to witness the harsh moment which will never be forgotten, hence, praying and hoping for a better

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

News Bulletin; The early on show continues Headlines Late Breakfast Show Nisham

News Highlights Late Breakfast Show Nisham News Headlines, Weather Forecast, Preview of Afternoon Programme The Spread of Light Faiq Vintage T.O.P.

News Headlines
Faiq Vintage T.O.P.
News Bulletin
Non-Stop Hits Preview of Evening Piano Fascination Music Local News Bulletin and

Weather Forecast Music Montage Afro-Latino Beats News Headlines, Weather

News Bulletin Kalile and Dumnai Abir Evening Show News Bulletin Lakshmi Country Music News Summary, Preview of

Sun Set Drive

Morning Programmes, Pharmacies on Duty The Holy Quran National Anthem, Close Down

FM frequencies

Name of station Ruwi Heights (main) Salalah (main) Thumrait (main)



WEATHER

Winds: Over Gulf of Oman winds winds: Over duit of Oman winds will be northeast to easterly light to moderate during day becoming light variable at night. Over the rest of the Sultanate winds will be southeasterly to easterly light to moderate occasion-

to easterly fish.

Sea State: Moderate over Musandam coast with a significant wave height of 1.5 to 2 metres and slight to moderate rest of Oman coasts with a significant wave height of 1.25 metres.

Temps: Maximum today: 29C

Tiemp: Maximum today: 29C
Minimum tonight: 20C
Relative humidity: 50 to 90 per cent
Tides: High 01:43pm — Hig
01:20am
Low 07:29am — Low 07:25pm
Suprice 06:34am — Supert 06:06pm

Salalah Salaian
Temp: Maximum today: 28C
Minimum tonight: 22C
Relative humidity: 55 to 80 per cent
Tides: High 02:08pm — High

Sunrise 06:34am — Sunset 06:06pm

Sunrise 06:46am — Sunset 06:28pm

Sumail Nizwa Bahla Mudhebi ... Thumrait Salalah

 Jabal Samhan
 .25
 .16

 Jabal Qamar
 .26
 .17

A Reputed Group of Company requires the following personnel urgently

1) For our Group Management: Chartered Accountant: With proven track record. 2) Shipping Division

Sales Executive: Freight forwarding experience with Oman Driving License. 3) Software Division

Sales Executive: With relevant experience and holding Oman Driving License. 4) Construction Division

Project Manager/Coordinator: BE-Degree Civil Engineer with 8-10 yrs experience in Oman. b) Civil Site Engineer: BE-Degree with 5-7 yrs experience in Oman c) Site Foreman: Diploma in Civil Engineering with 5-7 yrs

experience in Oman. d) Electro Mech. Foreman: Diploma holder with 5-7 yrs experience in Oman and possess MOEW license.

(Position a, b & d should possess Oman Driving License) 5) Sanitary Wares Supply Div. a) Sales Executive: With Oman driving license and proven track records

6) Aluminium Division a) Supervisor/Fabricator: With 5-7 yrs experience in Oman.

Eligible candidates fax your CV to 687935

JOB VACANCIES

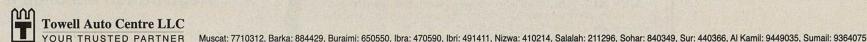
A leading Restaurant **Business Co. Requires**

Waitresses, Waiters, Receiving Hostess

Interested Candidates may attend at Co. Office for interview with passport size photograph, passport copy, CV & Qualifications.

Please Call 564779 for interview timing on Sun 23rd, Mon 24th Feb 2003 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm only





MINERPE Visit us at www.towellauto.com MUSCAT — Sayyid Hilal bin Hamad Al Busaidi, state adviser for justice affairs and head of the Supreme Court, yesterday opened a forum on judicial execution in civil, commercial and civil status cases being organised by the Justice Ministry in collaboration with the College of Sharia and Law. Sayyid Hilal underlined the importance of the forum in an opening address and said His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said was keen to make litigation easy and affordable. He said the package of modern legislations issued in the Sultanate enhanced judiciary and allowed coping with changes. The forum will discuss issues such as the executing judge, expedited execution in sharia and law, executive writs, debtor detention and others. A number of judges will present papers at the forum. The opening ceremony was attended by the presidents of the State Council, Majlis Al Shura, ministers, inspector-general of police and customs, undersecretaries, judges, representatives of legal consultancy offices and stu-

Soil workshop

NIZWA — A workshop on using soil in renovation works began at Falaj Daris Hotel here yesterday. As many as 16 trainees attend the workshop being organised by the Heritage and Culture Ministry. Experts from the ministry and outside the Sultanate will address the event. The workshop will conclude on February 26. - ONA



Sultanate of Oman **Ministry of Commerce & Industry NOTICE NO. 4/2003**

On the Occasion of the Omani Industry Day, it pleases The Ministry to invite businessmen and industrialists to attend the Industralist Meeting to be held under the auspices of H.E The Minister of Commerce and Industry, at 9:00 am on Tuesday 24 Dhul Hijja 1423H, corresponding to 24 February 2003, in Al Afrah Hall at Grand Hyatt Hotel.

Book fair begins on Tuesday

MUSCAT — His Highness Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said, minister of heritage and culture, will open the eighth Muscat Book Fair at Oman International Exhibitions Centre at Seeb on Tuesday.

The fair will continue until March 7.

As many as 500 publishers from 24 Arab and foreign countries will take part in the event which will be held on an area of 500 square metres and include more than 50,000 titles on various sciences.

The organising committee prepared the titles' manual which includes around 30,000

The manual will be ready for sale to the public several days prior to the fair.

The committee also stated

that the mornings of Saturday (March 1) and Monday (March 3) will be confined to ladies only. — *ONA*

Workshop begins

MUSCAT - A workshop entitled 'Developing skills of training human resources officials' being organised by the Civil Service Ministry in collabora-tion with the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) began at IPA yesterday

The workshop, which is the first of its kind to be organised by the ministry, will conclude on March 5.

As many as 20 training and administrative development officials from the civil service apparatuses are taking part in the workshop, which is meant to develop the participants' skills and acquire them modern knowledge relating to planning and follow-up actions. - ONA

Long service, good conduct medals conferred



HONOUR: Major-General Nabhani conferring medal on an officer yesterday. - ONA

MUSCAT — Major-General Ahmed bin Harith Al Nabhani, commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), conferred the medals of long service and good conduct on several non-commissioned officers and personnel of the Firqa Forces in recogni-

tion of their long service and loyalty in performing their national duty.

The occasion was attended by the commander of RAO's 11th Infantry Brigade and the commander of the Firqa Forces. — *ONA*

Mian Riaz returns as PSC president



NEW BEGINNING: Pakistan Social Club officials with Ambassador Karam Elahi and Azad

By Shahzad Raza

MUSCAT — Pakistan Social Club (PSC) directors met to elect their working body office-bearers and immediately touched a new high with the world's tallest man Azad Khan Mahsood.

Mian Mohammed Riaz was re-elected president while Jameel Ahmed Rana, former general secretary, returned as vice-president. Akhmat Hayat Raja is the new general secretary of the club with Syed Zafar Abbas Jaffry being the finance secretary.

Eight others who form the 12-member board of directors are: Chaudhry Mohammed Ilyas, Javed Nawaz, Iftikhar Ahmed Khan, Tahir Chaudhry, Mohammed Jamil, Ilyas Ahmed Khan, Abdul Rehman And Mohammed Saad.

After the meeting the PSC officials had a gettogether with Azad, who is currently on a visit to Oman these days. Karam Elahi, Pakistan's ambassador to the Sultanate was also present on the occasion. PSC president then expressed his resolve to improve the performance of the club by putting in more hard work and reaching out to more Pakistanis in other areas of Oman

However, this time the PSC officials are facing an aggressive opponent in the 'Group of Friends', who boycotted the recent club election. Chellenging the validity of their election, the Friends took strong objection to the re-election of Mian Riaz as president. Objecting to the early elec-tion of PSC office-bearers, which was pledged to be held a month after the club elections, Arshad Ali Khan, Friends' spokesman, said: "The unholy haste shown by Mian Riaz smacks of his lust for power."

He reiterated their demand for the annulment of the whole exercise in order to pave the way for fresh meeting 'based on fairplay and justice'

Arshad even challenged Mian Riaz to hold a public debate in the larger interest of the communi-

Blix gives Iraq a week to start destroying missiles

• From Page 1

Blix's order came in a four-page letter "concerning the destruction of the Al-Samoud 2 missiles and associated equipment" which was delivered to the Iraqi ambassador to the United Nations, Mohammed Al Douri. A copy was sent to the Security Council, spokesman Ewen Buchanan said. In Tehran, International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohammed El Baradei said: "We have not yet finished our work and Iraq is not yet fully cooperating with us. "We particularly don't have full access to Iraqi scientists and we hope that Iraq would cooperate in the coming weeks." British Prime Minister Tony Blair had a 30-minute private audience with Pope John Paul II, one of the staunchest opponents of military strikes on Baghdad, at the Vatican. The head of the Roman Catholic Church urged Blair to make "every effort" to avoid going to war against Iraq as he came face to face with a leading protagonist of a military assault on Baghdad for the first time. "The Holy Father hoped that, in finding a solution to the grave situation in Iraq, every effort be made to avoid new divi-sions in the world," the Vatican said. Meanwhile, Turkey was nearing an agreement with Washington for use of its strategic bases, ports and territory in an invasion. Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis had said in Ankara that the two nations were "quite close" to a deal that would open his country to US troops and materiel, providing a vital northern flank for any invasion of neighbouring Iraq. "If there is a will, this could be finalised by working on Settyrday and Sunday." he said. AFP Saturday and Sunday," he said. - AFF

'Dictator' Bush to pump Iraqi oil to allies: Press

DUBAI - Gulf newspapers yesterday accused US President George W. Bush of being a 'fanatical dictator' who wants to get hold of Iraqi oil reserves and distribute some to helpful regional allies. "As war approaches, the distribution of Iraqi oil to certain countries in the region has already begun," the Saudi newspaper Al Riyadh said, naming Israel, Jordan and Turkey as the beneficiaries. "To pretend that America's goal is not to invade Iraq and lay its hands on its oil is a new trap designed to deceive a world public opinion that has understood the mentality" of Bush, it added. Meanwhile, in an editorial titled 'one dictator wants another dictator's head," the Emirati daily *Al Bayan* compared Bush to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

25 dead, 80 hurt in Saudi road accidents: Report

RIYADH — At least 25 people were killed and 80 others injured in four traffic accidents in southwest Saudi Arabia involving two buses and several cars, a newspaper reported yesterday. Al Watan daily said 12 people of various nationalities were killed and 41 injured when their bus collided on Thursday with a truck coming from Bahrain and then overturned in a valley on the Riyadh Taif road. Three members of a Saudi family were killed and nine injured when their car overturned on another section of the same

Cat lovers of Rome unite in 'Cat Pride' march

ROME — A couple of thousand cat lovers turned out for Rome's first 'Cat Pride' march yesterday to demand protection and funding for the city's thousands of strays. Donning whiskers, bearing signs and in some cases cradling cats in their arms, protesters streamed by the Colisseum and ancient Fori Imperiali ruins, home to many 'sacred strays' which Rome declared a part of its historical heritage last year. The stray cats have been slinking through the ruins since they were first excavated and their protectors believe they are descendants of felines who stalked Roman temples in the time of Julius Caesar more than 2,000 years ago. But cat rights groups say the city's 150,000 abandoned moggies get far from imperial treatment from residents. Last year, a string of stray cat killings sparked fears of a feline serial killer and highlighted the city's love-hate relationship with domestic animals who are often abandoned on the streets

Wedding dance dispute leaves 4 dead in Yemen

SANAA — Four Yemenis were killed and 16 wounded when a dispute between rival tribesmen over who should perform the first dance at a wedding turned into a shootout, Yemeni security sources said yesterday. They said tribesmen from the Dhefani and Abu Ali tribes, in the Ebb province some 170km south of the capital Sanaa, had argued on Thursday over who should start the festivities with the Bara'a dance traditionally performed at weddings. Police have arrested gunmen from both tribes.

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Pakistan Social Club will be organising a kite-flying competition on February 28 to mark the famous 'Jashn-e-Bharan' back in the country. The 'Jashn' is celebrated to mark the advent of Spring every year. The main feature of it is Basant, the kite-flying festival which has now become one of the hottest events on the Pakistani cultural calendar. People from all over the world come to Lahore to be part of what many call 'a fun-filled festival'. The Gulf Hotel beach right up to the Inter-Con beach will be the venue where the kite-flying festival will kick off at 10am. "There will be a break of two hours between 12 noon and 2pm for Friday prayers and after that the action will continue right into the night," Mian Mohammed Riaz, PSC president told the Times of Oman yesterday. He said they were expecting a huge crowd as the event was open to people from all communities. Last year the festival turned out to be a big success and both the beaches were filled with a rainbow of colours as hundreds came out to enjoy this festival of fun.

Money-laundering

MUSCAT — The Ministry of National Economy will organise a oneday forum on money-laundering at Muscat Inter-Continental Hotel on Wednesday. Mohammed bin Nasser Al Khusaibi, secretary-general at the Ministry of National Economy, will be the chief guest. The purpose of holding the forum will be to familiarise officials working in government bodies and financial and banking institutions with the law provisions, and its execution. It is part of the efforts of the national committee for combating money-laundering to train personnel working in the field of combating money-laundering. The formation of the committee was provided for in the money-laundering law issued by Royal Decree No. 34/2002 in March 2002. The committee lays down the general policies and issues guidelines on preventing and combating money-laundering in coordination with the bodies concerned. The committee, which is headed by Abdul Malik bin Abdullah Al Hinai, undersecretary for economic affairs, also follows up relevant regional and international development, suggests recommendations on policies and propose amendments to the law. — ONA

MUSCAT — Major-General Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Riyami, assistant inspector-general of police and customs for operations, left here yesterday heading the Sultanate's delegation to the Grade 1 border authorities' meeting between the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia. The meeting comes within the context of boosting security relations between the two brotherly countries and strengthening aspects of cooperation between them in various fields, particularly in the border sphere. Major-General Al Riyami was seen off by senior ROP officers.

MUSCAT — The Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) will take part in the second annual regional conference for innovation in managing human resources strategies, which began in Dubai yes-

PSC to hold kite-flying festival on February 28

forum on Wednesday

Riyami leaves for Saudi Arabia

Omantel to attend Dubai meet

terday. The meeting will conclude tomorrow. Omantel will also participate in the training course for the Internet to be held in Dubai too.



THE SULTAN'S SCHOOL

SILVER JUBILEE FESTIVAL

The Sultan's School is pleased to announce

its Silver Jubilee Festival on Thursday afternoon,

February 27, from 3:30 to 6:15

at the School campus in Seeb.

All alumni and parents,

past and present, are cordially invited to attend.

Please call reception on 536777

for complete details and to register your name.

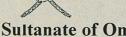
Registration deadline is February 25.

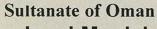


Tender No. 15/2003

a non-refundable fees of R.O. 50/-







Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Regional Municipalities,

Environment & Water Resources-Muscat

Tender Announcement

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water

Resources invites Specialized Companies/ Establishments/ Enterprises

registered with the Tender Board as Grade II and above to the following Tender:

Tender Document can be obtained from the Directorate General of

Technical Affairs, Al Khuwair, during the office hours against payment of

Tenders must be accompanied by a Tender Bond for 2% of total tender

value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank, valid for 90 days from the last date of tender submission.

Tenders must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed with red wax. The

Tender No. and name of the project shall be written on the top of envelope containing the Tender. Nothing should be written on the

Tenders should be addressed to H.E THE CHAIRMAN, INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE and deposited in the Tender Box, 2nd Floor, MRME

exterior of the envelope to display the identity of the Tenderer.

& WR Building, Al Khuwair by 10.00 AM on Saturday 8/3/2003.

The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

DRILLING & AQUIFER TESTING

PROGRAMME IN AL BURAIMI

Ministry of Regional Municipalities, **Environment & Water Resources-Muscat Tender Re-Announcement**

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources invites Specialized Consultants registered with the Tender Board as Grade II and above to the following Tender:

Tender No. 16/2003

CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR PROVISION OF TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR **DRILLING AND AQUIFER TESTING PROGRAMME IN AL-BURAIMI -AL DHAHIRA REGION**

Tender Document can be obtained from the Directorate General of Technical Affairs, Al Khuwair, during the office hours against payment of a non-refundable fees of R.O. 25/-

Tenders must be accompanied by a Tender Bond for 2% of total tender value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank, valid for 90 days from the last date of tender submission.

Tenders must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed with red wax. The Tender No. and name of the project shall be written on the top of envelope containing the Tender. Nothing should be written on the exterior of the envelope to display the identity of the Tenderer.

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The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

PAKISTAN

Nine shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI — Unknown snipers gunned down nine peo-ple at their place of worship in this southern port city yester-day evening, a police officer

"Five dead bodies were brought to Karachi's main Jinnah Hospital," said police officer Munir Sheikh.

"They were killed in a firng at Imambargah Mehdi in Malir Halt, Kehkashan Society area in eastern district of Karachi," Sheikh said.

"Some unknown gunmen opened fire at the entrance of the mosque just when people were going for Maghreb (evening) prayers," he said.

"Two men came on a motorcycle and one of them took out a gun looking like a Kalashnikov and sprayed bul lets on the people going inside the Imambargah for evening prayer," Anwer Hussain, an eyewitness said.

"We were watching a cricket match between England and Pakistan on television in a hotel adjacent to Imambargah and on the call for prayer we moved towards the worship place," Hussain said.

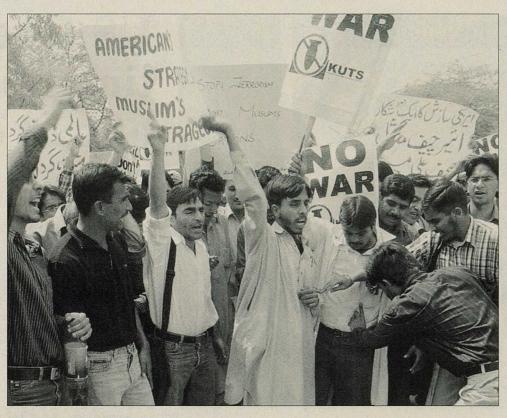
"I took shelter and did not know what was going on. After a while I saw my colleagues lying in a pool of blood," Hussain said. "I started screaming for help." "The people who have been killed are from Gilgit in northern areas of Pakistan," he said. — AFP

Bodies of air force chief, wife buried

LAHORE — Late air force chief Air Vice-Marshal Mushaf Ali and his wife were buried in their home city Lahore yesterday, two days after a Fokker plane carrying the couple and 15 air force personnel crashed in fog-covered mountains.

Hundreds of mourners attended the burial at the graveyard surrounded by cordons of soldiers and police. Ten air force officers fired a 40-round salute as Ali's coffin, draped with a national flag,

was lowered into the grave.



ANTI-U.S. RALLY: University students shouting anti-US slogans during a demonstration in Karachi yesterday. - AFP

Sharifs allowed to leave S. Arabia

political development, exiled former prime minister Nawaz has been allowed by Pakistani authorities to leave Saudi Arabia for Britain, official sources confirmed here yester-

"Sharif will shortly be going abroad for medical treatment in the footsteps of his brother and former Punjab chief minister Shahbaz," an official of the Ministry of Interior said.

Shahbaz is currently in the United States where he is recuperating from abdominal sur-

gery.
"Sharif is all set to leave for London from Jeddah on medical grounds following some heart problem," the official said. He said that Sharif has

already had an angiography following some obstruction in his heart artery in Jeddah. Subsequently he was admitted to angiography, he was shifted to

"On health grounds, the Sharif family has requested Pakistan to allow Sharif and his father to proceed to London for medical treatment for two weeks," the official said.

"The government has granted permission to both, who can fly to London at any time."
In Lahore, the hometown of

the Sharifs, there is reportedly a lot of activity and movement at the residence of the Sharifs and they were in the process of shift-

ing, probably, packing up.

It is also learnt that the Sharifs had been in contact with the United Kingdom's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for sometime. It is being speculated that the Sharif family is interested in shifting Shahbaz to London

from New York where he is under treatment for appendicitis.

Local members of the Sharifs Pakistan Muslim League party have confirmed the reports that the former premier is leaving Saudi Arabia.

They also confirmed that Pakistani government had granted permission to the Sharifs to proceed to London on humanitarian grounds.

The sources informed that the Sharifs and government had struck a new deal, paving their way to leave Saudi Arabia. It is learnt that some top Pakistani officials participated in firming

This also underlined that the Sharifs' exit to Saudi Arabia was a part of the deal under which they were supposed to stay in Saudi Arabia for two years. There has also been a visible change in the posture of the Sharifs vis-à-vis the present government and its top leadership. — Internews

Incursions by rebels continue, says retired general

ISLAMABAD — Incursions by rebels across the Line of Control (LoC) dividing Pakistani and Indian-administered Kashmir continue, a retired Pakistani general was reported as saying yesterday.

'Cross-border infiltration is continuing and while the government may not be actively participating in this, it is certainly looking the other way," retired lieutenant-general Nishat Ahmed was quoted as saying by the Daily Times

newspaper.

"We have not upheld the commitments we have made to the world."

Ahmed, who retired as a planning officer in the military's joint services staff headquarters a decade ago, made his remarks at a seminar on Indo-Pakistan relations in Lahore on Friday.

President Pervez Musharraf promised top US diplomats in May and June to permanently incursions into Indian-

administered territory.

Both India and the United States have since repeatedly said militants still slip over the 750km-long ceasefire line, although the level of infiltra-

tions had subsided temporarily.

Musharraf's pledge is credited with saving India and Pakistan, then in the midst of a high-stakes military standoff over anti-India rebels fighting an insurgency in Kashmir, from all-out war.

Three months later India began withdrawing troops from the internationally-recognised border and Pakistan followed, although both maintain a heavy military presence along the

LoC.
The nuclear-armed neighbours have fought three wars since south Asia gained independence from Britain in 1947, two of them over Kashmir.

Rebels have been fighting Indian rule in the Muslim majority Himalayan state since 1989. India says 37,500 people have been killed while Pakistan puts the toll at around 80,000.

Musharraf said in August that it was possible "rogue" mil-itants could still be crossing the LoC, but stressed they were not government-sponsored. — AFP

Indian fishermen to be repatriated

ISLAMABAD — Islamabad is to soon repatriate Indian fishermen detained from its waters as well as Sikhs who illegally entered the country, official sources said here yesterday.

"We have no intention of keeping them and will send them all back as soon as possible on a mutually agreed date," said a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Pakistan has been trying for quite some time to repatriate some 280 Indian fishermen who had strayed into Pakistan's territorial waters nearly a year back, he said. The delay has been caused by India's insistence on their repatriation from Karachi in their boats contrary to Pakistan's offer of repatriation through the Wagah border, he added.

"We don't gain any advantage by keeping them in our jails and continuing with our hospitality," said a senior Ministry of Interior official when contacted.

Meanwhile, on the issue of the detained 22 Sikh youths in a Quetta jail, the official position is that these Sikhs had entered Pakistan illegally and are being tried under law and going through their sentences.

Fund for Lahore toilets may go down the drain

LAHORE — A Rs20m budget allocation for the construction of public toilets in Lahore will lapse by the end of current fiscal year due to lack of interest of those concerned.

Seven million Lahoris face the problem of finding a public toilet while they are out of home every day.

The city government operates about 11 public toilets, and the same number is being run privately.

A source said that Lahore District Mayor Amir District Mayor Amir Mahmood was serious about the plan to build public toilets,

admitting it was a necessity. - Internews

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شرکة مصفاة صحار شمم Sohar Refinery Company LLC

Job Opportunities

Government company is setting up a grass-root refinery in Sohar, Sultanate of Oman. To fill up its requirement for competent candidates to work during the Refinery's EPC phase, applications are sought for the following positions:

01		
Position	Vacancy	Ref. No.
PROCESS MANAGER	1 .	SRC001
Engineering Manager	1	SRC002
ROTATING EQUIPMENT ENGINEER	1	SRC 003
UTILITIES & OFF SITE AREA MANAGER	1	SRC004
PROCUREMENT & INSPECTION MANAGER	1	SRC005
QA/QC MANAGER	1	SRC006
IT Engineer	1	SRC007
DOCUMENT CONTROLLER	1	SRC008

Interested candidates are invited to send their application letter with detailed CV, salary expectation, passport copy and a passport-size photograph within three weeks to:

The Administration Manager **Sohar Refinery Company LLC** P.O. Box 289, Postal Code 118, **Al Harthy Complex** Sultanate of Oman - Fax: +968 560 544 Email: recruitment@src.co.om

Please quote the reference no. of the position for which you are interested.

Summary of minimum qualifications required:

PROCESS MANAGER (SRC 001)

Role / Responsibilities

- Coordinate with EPC Contractors all matters relating to process function.
- Confirm the licensor's design package is compatible with the Project overall requirement
- Review the basic and detailed design are consistent with guarantee figures issued by any process licensors and engineering contractor.
- Review and approve the engineering drawings and documents including equipment assembly drawings as agreed with Contractors

- Sohar Refinery Company LLC, a wholly owned Review & approve any change order in process side Inspect all facilities are well installed correctly
 - Ensure the process Operating Manuals are suitable for
 - Project start-up Assist process pre-commissioning commissioning and start-
 - up (accumulate and analyze the operating data during this
 - Witness performance test Qualifications
 - University graduate (B.S.c in Chemical Engineering).
 - More than 15 years of process experience on refinery especially CDU/FCC and downstream units
 - More than 10 years of project execution experience related to
 - Fluent English communication capability
 - Experienced or able to use process simulation tools (PRO-II,
 - Able to use computer

ENGINEERING MANAGER (SRC 002)

Role / Responsibilities

- Review and approve all the standards/specifications and codes for design and engineering to meet Project requirements.
- Review, approve engineering execution plan and HAZOP Review engineering schedules prepared by EPC Contractor Review overall design and engineering activities and
- Review and approve vendor drawings and documents

products to produce Approved for Construction (AFC)

- Review bid evaluation result from the technical view point Review and check the monthly engineering progress • Arrange discipline engineers to inspect equipment or materials at vendor's shop and at site as specified in the
- Manager. Review field engineering to control field design changes /

Inspection and Test Plan (ITP) with the assistance of QA/QC

Audit construction quality with the assistance of the discipline engineers and follow up the punch clear status during construction stage

Qualifications

- University gtraduate (B.Sc in Engineering) More than 15 years of engineering experience on refinery
- especially CDU/FCC and downstream units
- More than 10 years of project execution experience related to process engineering area
- Fluent English communication capability

■ Able to use computer

- ROTATING EQUIPMENT ENGINEER (SRC 003) Role / Responsibilities Assure the design of rotating machinery is in accordance
- with process requirement and specifications
- Review technical bid evaluation of rotating machinery Review and approve vendor drawings and documents and manufacturers' manuals
- Review all critical phases such as stress analysis, sealing, lubricating, power & related considerations Witness shop inspection as indicated in the ITP (Inspection
- Check delivery schedule considering Project master schedule Monitor field construction, inspection and testing

- Assist pre-commissioning and start-up of rotating machinery
 Fluent English communication capability **Qualifications**
 - University graduate (BSC mechanical engineering.)
 - More than 10 years experience in rotating machinery engineering, inspection & maintenance in Oil and petrochemical industry with EPC work involvement
 - Fluent English communication capability
- Able to use computer

UTILITY/OFF-SITE AREA MANAGER (SRC 004) Role / Responsibilities

- Review and approve all the standards/specifications and codes for design and engineering to meet Project
- Review, approve engineering execution plan and HAZOP Review overall design and engineering activities and products to produce Approved for Construction (AFC) drawings and documents
- Review and approve vendor drawings and documents
- Review bid evaluation result from the technical view point Arrange discipline engineers to inspect equipment or materials at vendor's shop and at site as specified in the Inspection and Test Plan (ITP) with the assistance of QA/QC
- Review field engineering to control field design changes /
- change orders and Audit construction quality with the assistance of the discipline engineers and follow up the punch clear status during construction stage

- University graduate (B.S.c in Engineering).
- More than 15 years of engineering experience on refinery More than 10 years of project execution experience related to utility / off-site area
- Fluent English communication capability
- Able to use computer

PROCUREMENT & INSPECTION MANAGER (SRC 005)

Role / Responsibilities

- Overall responsibility for monitor and audit all the procurement process, activities and deliveries to meet Project quality and schedule requirement
- Review and approve the documents and procedures specified in EPC Contract including Overall Procurement Plan, Procurement Management Procedures, additional Project Vendor List, all technical bid evaluations, any critical delivery items and Spare Parts and Interchangeability Record (SPIR) but not limited to
- Interface effectively with EPC Contractor's procurement activities, including those of its vendors, subcontractors and
- Coordinate with Engineering Manager on equipments and/or materials inspection at vendor's shop and at site as specified in the Inspection and Test Plan (ITP) with the assistance of OA/OC Manager.
- Review and check monthly procurement progress Qualifications
- University graduate (B.S.c in Engineering). ■ More than 15 years of procurement experience in the area of purchasing, subcontracting, expediting, logistics and
- More than 10 years of project execution experience related to procurement area

Able to use computer

QA/QC MANAGER (SRC 006)

- Overall responsibility for monitoring and auditing the quality assurance and control activities performed by EPC Contractor in the areas of engineering, vendor shops, and
- Review and approve quality assurance and control procedure and monitor its implementation, and see to its proper
- Direct, advise, and/or instruct the field QA/QC engineers in
- performing periodically visiting the job Sites. **Qualifications**

■ University graduate (B.S.c in Engineering).

- More than 15 years of QA / QC experience on Oil and petrochemical plants
- Appropriate formal quality assurance qualification from a recognized quality assurance standards organization
- Fluent English communication capability

IT ENGINEER -DCS (SRC 007)

Able to use computer

Role / Responsibilities

- Assure the design of rotating machinery is in accordance with process requirement and specifications Review bid evaluation of DCS vendor
- Review P&ID I/O list and control scheme Review configuration of hardware and software
- Review design of console graphic configuration and database Check delivery schedule considering Project master schedule
- Witness shop inspection (FAT) and site test (SAT) Assure loop check and function test with local
- instrumentation Witness debugging during start-up

Qualifications

- University graduate (BSC in Instrument Engineering or equivalent)
- More than 10 years of DCS handling or maintenance
- Fluent English communication capability

DOCUMENT CONTROLLER (SRC 008)

Role / Responsibilities

archiving system

Able to use computer

• Responsible for control Project documents under the supervision of Project Engineering Manager in accordance with document control procedure/job coordination procedure including document numbering, document approvals, document retention, document issue and distribution and document release for revision

more than 10 years of document control experience partly in

- Focal point for all Project documents communication Maintain a proper recording and set up document filing and
- Handle all documents matters related to copying, editing etc. Qualifications ■ College/high school graduate or equivalent
- technical industries (petrochemical) ■ Fluent English communication capability
- Able to use computer
- Preferable for EDMS experience

OPINION

TIMES OF OMAN

ESTABLISHED: 1975

A cussed issue to the fore

IT is quite unfortunate that the Ayodhya issue is bobbing up yet again as the world's largest democracy is braced for elections. India's apex court on Friday put off until March 6 the hearing of the central government's plea for allowing religious ceremonies on the acquired land in Ayodhya. It was on March 13, 2002 that the court imposed a ban on religious activity on the land. It is illustrative to note that the Hindu hardline group, the VHP, an ideological ally of the ruling BJP, has begun a conclave of Hindu leaders and saints in Delhi to chalk out a massive agitation to push their demand to build a temple on the disputed site where the 16th century Babri Masjid stood. They have called for nation-wide rallies on Thursday to drum up support for their demand, and on March 27, the rallies are to converge in the Indian capital to put further pressure on the govern-

Fringe groups such as the VHP and the Bajrang Dal have been constantly in the limelight ever since the BJP came to power at the centre. There is absolutely no doubt that there is a symbiotic relationship between the BJP and the VHP which is more pronounced during elections. In the Gujarat polls, the VHP and other hardline persuasions served as footsoldiers for the saffron party. But latterly, the VHP has been vocal in criticising the BJP for not doing enough to foster their common agenda, notably the construction of a temple on the demolished spot in Ayodhya, in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

Now the question is why has the BJP government been in a hurry to apply for vacating the stay on religious activities on the disputed land. The opposite side in the case has alleged that the BJP has been under pressure to do this in view of the VHP's deadline, which was yesterday, to hand over the 67 acres of acquired land. The BJP being a national party and the leading constituent of a coalition of many-hued parties, cannot afford to be a bull in a china shop, though it is common knowledge that the party is in tune with the VHP ideology. Which is why it is trying to satisfy the fringe groups tangentially by pleading to the court to lift the ban.

Besides, perhaps most importantly, the BJP reckons it must resuscitate the Ayodhya issue to win the forthcoming elections. Several pundits in fact opine that the BJP and its saffron allies are just two sides of the same coin. It must be noted that the centre's plea to the court was for enabling the VHP to do some religious ceremonies on the disputed land. Which is why the opposition parties allege that the whole shebang is part of an election gimmick.

OTHER OPINIONS

Hate crime

THE brutal murder in Riyadh on Thursday afternoon of a 37-yearold Briton working for BAE Systems has profoundly shocked people in the Kingdom, expatriates and Saudis alike. Robert Dent's death has evoked an immense sense of sadness, as if we ourselves were somehow connected.

The Council of Senior Islamic Scholars has issued an edict forbidding attacks anywhere in the world on non-Muslims, stating that the shedding of innocent blood, be it through bombing or any other similar act, is against Islam, and that those who carry out such acts have deviated from their beliefs and must be held responsible for such crimes.

If the man arrested is found guilty, he will be executed. He has brought misery not only to the family and friends of his victim but to his own family and friends too. Such is the sheer evil of hate: Nothing good ever comes of it. It is a poison. It destroys the person who hates; it destroys those he hates.

No one is so naive as to imagine that Saudi Arabia is untainted by crime or bloodshed. Murder happens here as it happens elsewhere. And other Westerners have died - notably in car bomb blasts. But these were explained as turf wars between illegal alcohol suppliers; in other attacks people took comfort from the fact that no one was killed. Now it is different. There seems to be no two ways of looking at this crime. Here the victim was apparently selected at random, his murder a symbolic statement of sheer, vicious hate. That is why the gun attack on a bus carrying nurses and doctors in Hail the same day, shocking though it was, evoked a much less emotive response. It was not blind hate.

We have not seen this sort of thing here before, and that is what to shocking — even though we have seen it elsewhere and have been repulsed by it. It happened in the US when, in an outburst of anti-Muslim hysteria in the wake of September 11, innocent people were attacked and murdered. We were angry and are angry still when we hear of people being targeted in the US simply because they are thought to be Muslim or Arabs. But we cannot be repulsed by Islamophobic attacks there and not be angered by the equivalent here: anti-Western venom. That would be hypocrisy.

Both demonstrate the same contempt for human life. Both kill the innocent. That is why there was such sadness at the news of this killing. Saudi Arabia, so long held up as a place of great safety for all, now has to face up to the brutal reality of so much of the rest of the world. An age of innocence has gone.

There is bound to be apprehension among Western expatriates here. Some may opt to leave, as much because of this hate crime as because of the war clouds gathering over the region. But most will not. Nor should they. Saudi Arabia is extremely grateful to all the foreigners working here. They play an important part in building up and developing this country. It would be as much a tragedy for Saudi Arabia as for them if they were to give in to their fears and leave. That is what some people want. But the expatriate community is, we believe, made of sterner stuff. Of course, we need to keep things in perspective; such killings are still far more common in London or Washington than in Riyadh. We should not overreact.

But we must all stand against such evil and condemn it, much as we condemn hate crimes when we see them elsewhere. Otherwise evil will triumph. — The Arab News

Beefing up hysteria

IT is a matter of great relief that the Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress has announced the withdrawal of the controversial letters that gave rise to the rather ludicrous 'beef' campaign against Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The trivialisation of political campaigns, gimmicks and counter-gimmicks, a systematic obscuring of development issues and a mind-numbing lowering of political language have now become wearyingly routine at election time. The allegations by the Madhya Pradesh Congress are particularly cynical given the inordinate potency of the cow as a symbol of Hindu sentiment and knowing the fact that Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh has unleashed a tide of competitive Hindutva to wrest the Hindu vote from the BJP.

The centrality of cow slaughter in Indian politics — in sparking communal riots as happened in parts of Uttar Pradesh in the eighties and in social activism as seen in the campaigns of Vinoba Bhave — is well known. While taboos on beef eating remain the touchstone of Hindu dharma, yet legislative bans on cow slaughter have often failed as they also violate the right to livelihood in a plural society. Anxious for electoral victory, Diggy Raja has charged into the Hindu lexicon, vowing to destroy the parivar's monopoly on the

religion of the majority of voters.

However, the recent controversy over the beef eating allegations by the Congress is a sad pointer to the depths to which competitive Hindutva can lead India's hapless voters. At a time when the basic needs of a healthy dignified life are simply not being met, when in a state like Madhya Pradesh, for example, the network of roads have fallen into hazardous disrepair, to find politicians vying with each other to score greater points on mythology, religion and culinary choices is nothing short of farcical. What will be next in the political blame-game? Will political parties now accuse each other on not eating the best quality 'satvik' food, or not being able to recite the Gayatri mantra properly or not being able to rattle off the names of the Upanishads? However culturally important these issues may be, they should hardly be the pre-occupations of gover-

Vajpayee would have been well-advised to have maintained a statesman-like silence on this unfortunate episode rather than jump into the fray, as he did, and issue hasty denials. Such desperation on the part of accuser and accused is a caricature of not only religion, but politics, and holds grim portents for the future of modern democratic behaviour. The Congress has the freedom reinvent itself in any way it chooses but to do it by attacking the eating habits of the prime minister is utterly immature. — *The Indian Express*



FAREWELL: North Koreans waving to their South Korean relatives after the sixth inter-Korea meeting at a hotel in Mt Gumgang yesterday. Hundreds of South Koreans on Thursday travelled overland through the tense inter-Korean border for their first reunions with North Korean relatives in more than 50 years. - AFP

Mental violence can wipe out human race

VIOLENCE is not rampant in the world society, violence has become man. It can be physical or mental violence, either way man has come to personify the word. Nuclear weapon is not an answer for self-defence, however we have driven ourselves to that stage. Nuclear bomb is only an external instrument to wipe out human race; but man is already in the process wiping out himself through most dangerous weapons from within himself. Man tries to save his ego at the cost of human lives that goes to prove his deluded living. Instead of leaving a legacy before leav-ing this earth, he hands over his negative energies around the living lots. It was easy to fight wars at the time of need in the earlier era, as people, societies, nations were transparent and spoke what they meant; today the whole dialogue between people and nations are fake and full of hidden self-motivated agendas.

Can we truly find peace or harmony in a false, illusory envi-ronment? We have to clear the air of mistrust and falsehood before we could sign peace treaties. Man is fooling himself as there are parasites within him, there are nuclear eruptions in his mind that needs to be defused. Each nation screaming at each cical! People have to empty their own minds and cupboards of these dangerous weapons before they point a finger at oth-

Known and the knower

Man wants love, care, honesty and perfection and everything else that is peaceful and good. He is trying to cheat himself. We may deceive ourselves and others, but unless the old pattern is broken completely, there cannot be a radical transformation. The breaking of the pattern, both the old and the new, is of utmost importance if any order has to come out of this chaos. That is

why it is essential to understand the ways of the mind. The mind functions only within the field of the known, of experience, whether conscious or unconscious. For example, when we try to explain any new concept to people, their first reaction is total dumbness. Their mind is still moving in the known area, they feel they cannot understand Slowly you have to break through the known to the unknown. It takes a while to sink in! If we allow the soil to smear on us continuously, we can get totally buried in the world of falsehood and by the time reality hits you it is too late.

LIFE

By Vasantha Vaikunth

ness of people break out in the form of violence. The reason is lack of mental guidance, tactful action and wisdom. No change can be brought out by only effective means or a well thought out, organised non-chaotic means. It will again result in compulsion and resistance from a certain group. No change or a revolution can occur based on idea. Ideas breed further ideas, further suppressions and resistance.

Compromise

We have a sense of ownership to all our actions; however, we know that we are acting helplessly at times. Action is a move-



The fear is not of the unknown. but of the loss of the known. The unknown does not incite fear, but the dependence on the known does. Fear is always with desire, the desire for the more or for the less. We are constantly in fear of losing our hold on the known object without realising that it is bound by time and space. The mind with its incessant weaving of patterns, is a maker of time and with time there is fear, hope and death. When we witness the present social and political structure, we desire a complete change with or without bloodshed. Can we deny the fact that the change has to occur in the human mind.

The smart, rich and the daring ones rule the world. The long suppression and helpless-

ment of the past to the future or between the past and the future. Is it possible for the mind to be without a pattern, to be free of this backward and forward serving of desire? The true action is living in the now. Enjoy every moment of life without the fear of the future or guilt of the past. The moment of past is gone, the future is unknown and I have neither the ability to set the clock back, nor can I stretch the time forward to know what is in store for me. For example, we are not living, we are always pursuing death, the past or the future. Living is the greatest revolution. People accumulate wealth, then power with the hope that they are going to enjoy in future. They are blind to the physical progress of their own selves. The body,

mind, memory, hormones; everything falls apart. There is no 'yes' to enjoy your accumulations. We have to learn to live and live happily for today. We waste our time and energy in pursuit of violence and an ego builds up that has no permanent value in our lives. It is good to spend some time knowing your-self, developing the skills that has been given to you, going into the yoga of knowledge that can give you peace and tranquillity. This pursuit will improve the quality of life.

Of free mind Man is slowly erasing the cells of good genes from the race by developing negative energy from within. The mind, being the result of the past, is bringing out of itself a pattern for the new and this you call revolution. Your new life is the same old one in different clothes. They have the remembrance of life and hope of life, but they are not the living. A free mind, without fear and other self-made complexes, alone can comprehend the happi ness and inaction that is hidden in the world. Truth alone frees the mind from its bondage. Low expectation and true love alone can bring about a radical revolution or transformation in relationship. Modern man needs time-off to refresh his mind as he cannot dream of escaping from human society altogether. He needs mastery over himself and not be afraid of his surroundings. A wise man is one who loves life not only heartily but loves it with perspective. He who understands life is brave; violence and war is an act of the cowards. It is necessary for us to unite ancient wisdom and modern science. We should be able to carry out contemplative thoughts in our heart while the press, noise, media, computers and crowd of metropolitan streets throb around

US faces tough times because of bad choices

By John B. Judis

WITH the Cold War's end, many Americans thought they could close the air raid shelters and take the trillions of dollars that had gone into the military and put them into making their lives better by turning towards the pursuit of happiness rather than the defence of liberty.

And some of that did happen

in the last half of the 1990s, during the Clinton-era boom. But only three years into a new century, the United States finds itself plagued by rising unem-ployment, soaring budget deficits, constricted civil liberties, the threat of terrorist attack and the prospect of a war with, occupation of, Iraq. Americans have gone from the best of times to the worst of

The Bush administration tells us that it is entirely because of Al Qaeda and now Saddam Hussein that the Americans face these difficulties, but the dark clouds that hang over America are largely the result of Bush administration policies.

Take the economy. Sure, an economic downturn was inevitable after the speculative excesses of the '90s, and 9/11 certainly hurt airlines and hotels. But the Bush policies of enormous tax cuts directed at the most wealthy, and equally large increases in military spending, will prolong the current slump well through the decade, leaving large deficits just as baby boomers begin to retire.

The US won't necessarily be in recession, but it will suffer, as did during the high-deficit Reagan years, from above-average unemployment and belowaverage growth. And our vaunted advantage over our industrial competitors will narrow. That won't be because of Osama bin Laden; that will be because of George W. Bush.

Or take the current prospects of war with Iraq. Bad foreign policy creates bad choices, as in Vietnam in the 1960s. By the time the Iraq issue landed back in the United Nations Security Council this month, Americans had no good options about whether to go to war with Iraq. Doing so could create heavy costs down the road, increase the incidence of terrorism and split our longtime alliances; not doing so could also inspire terrorists and split other longtime

But the question is how we got to this dilemma. We got here because of bad choices.

Al Qaeda was an offshoot of the Soviet war in Afghanistan and of the first Gulf War, after which, through an act of folly we decided to maintain a majo military presence in Saudi Arabia — creating a rallying point for Al Qaeda without improving Saudi security.

Though few of Al Qaeda's recruits came from the clash of Israelis and Palestinians, that conflict remained the single greatest source of instability in the Mideast.

After 9/11, we had a clear path before us: wage war against Al Qaeda and those regimes that sustained it, while simultaneously waging peace in the Mideast by using our considerable influence to force the Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiat-

The Bush administration did wage war against Al Qaeda and the Taleban.

But instead of seeking nego tiations, the administration sided with Israeli leader Ariel Sharon, who responded to attacks against Israeli civilians by trying to destroy the Palestinian Authority - Israel's only viable negotiating partner.
That made it impossible for

the United States to win anything but grudging support from other Arab governments for our conflict with Iraq, and it also inflamed radicals.

As for Iraq, if the initial goal had been the reasonable and

important one of preventing Saddam from acquiring nuclear weapons, there was a host of options that could have been pursued, such as a demand for inspections coupled with the threat of an air campaign against any potential military target. If these efforts had failed, their failure would have created

far more support for an attack than currently exists. Instead, the Bush administration began by demanding "regime change, declaring its willingness to fight a preventive war, and sending

It took the very last, fateful step before it had taken the first. As a result, the troops are there, and we have to use them or risk a credibility crisis.

Ameicans also face the entirely predictable prospect of

an enhanced threat from Al Qaeda — exactly what the Bush policies set out to eliminate.

From Our Archives

February 1988 Oman at women's meet

MUSCAT — The Sultanate is taking part in a meeting of representatives of the Arab Women's Organisation in Tunis.

Qismat bin Mohammed bin Salim Al Ghamari, director of women's associations affairs at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and Miyan bint Abdul Jaleel Al Žawawi of the Muscat Oman Women's Association, are representing the country The organiser of the Tunis meeting is the Arab Women's

Association. This is the association's ninth meeting.

It is discussing association activities during the last year, a financial report prepared by the secretariat-general and budget estimates for the current year.

Discussions also cover activities at the Women's Rights Travel Centre, representation for women in UN organisations and the date and venue for the association's 11th conference. The meeting will select an organising committee for the conference.

READERS' FORUM

Catch'em young "ARECA NUT can be kept in the pocket but not the areca nut tree,"

thus goes the saying. If children are initiated to noble values of life from a young age, to some extent we can mould them to be ideal citizens. The values have to be pure, unbiased, logical, conclusive, unconditioned and universally applicable. The world around us is a mixture of good and evil. To keep children away from evil is an impossible task. No doubt, despite our best efforts and we ourselves becoming role models, many a time the results are very disappointing and, in some cases, most disheartening. Children imitate the elders around — parents, teachers, servants, neighbours, visitors and friends. We think that we have to spend a lot of money 'on' our children. Yes, we should spend money 'on' our children, to develop them by unfolding the talents in them. It is said that the most expensive gift we can give to our children is our time. If the present children are moulded in their attitudes, in their values and in their ideals, we can logically expect a better and more organised world. Mohan Nair Wattayah

Mummy joke turns sour

I RECENTLY happened to go to Cairo during Eid holidays to visit one of the Seven Wonders of the World — pyramids. The guide who accompanied us gave a detailed explanation of pyramids, mummies, process of mummification, etc. One of the old gentlemen in our group commented jokingly that wives always make their husbands' mummies. Though I could not give a sharp retort to him immediately, somehow I was unable to accept it and protested against it. Later, at the end of our tour the gentleman announced that he felt sorry for his comment. Do wives make their hubbys' 'mum-Well, wives make them daddies by themselves becoming mummies. Is it not a fact? Sorry, somehow I could not take it in a

• THE photographs of Omani students and expats taking part in poster-making competition on the topic, universal human values love, truth, right conduct and peace was really a delight to viewers. Once again applause to the *Times* and the 'Serve and Inspire' group for organising such events. It is really nice to know that winning entries will be exhibited to the general public. I feel if the Times could publish them, they could provide an opportunity for all its readers living outside Muscat.

 VILLAGE in TN to be honoured (Times, February 22) was really an amazing and exciting news item. It is really unbelievable to note that there had not been a single instance of social strife or tension in

Rayalpattu village in Tamil Nadu. Indeed, Rayalpattu village is not only a role model for other villages but also for the whole world in G.V.K. Durga Ravi

Work hard for exams

A WEEK to go for the month of annual examinations for the Indian schools. Students burn the midnight oil to see that they cross over to the next class. Many ransack their homes as if that is required to make it appear that they are studying. These are days of tension, anxiety and what not? But why all this? It is found that a good percentage of students never care to study systematically and consistently. This is the reason students have to mug up on the eve of the exams. If they plan properly and study as per a timetable, they could feel at ease on exam-eve. For example, mathematics is considered one of the hardest subjects to digest. Regular practice could make it easy. If they make it a practice to work out at least five sums daily, then in the long run, there would be nothing left in this subject that cannot be mastered. The dream of getting cent per cent in the subject could be achieved. (There are five Indian schools in the city. Recently, the vacation dates had been advanced by the ISM by a fortnight, which has sparked a big row. One reason I have found from the discussions was that it was for the sake of uniformity in the dates of different schools.) Now take the case of exams. Except for the exams conducted by the government boards, there is no uniformity in the conduct of exams by the Indian schools. For example when the ISM gives many days' break between the exams for the students to prepare well and write; the practice is not followed by other schools. Some schools even finish all the exams in a matter of seven days, while in the ISM it takes more than 20 days, thereby the students get a chance to write the exams at ease. Whatever it is, the students do have to work hard to study and digest the vast portions, half of which is outdated, and present their answers in a neat and convincing manner. R.K. Kuzhikatt

Wadi Kabir

Mistaken notion

I Do take offence at the writer (Readers' Forum, February 21) propping up her defence of Michael Jackson on the so-called backdrop of Rahman's Vande Mataram for the simple reason that both the issues are unrelated. However, if an attempt is made to link the two issues, it could be done only on the grounds that my defence of Rahman's

freedom to compose is misinterpreted as a defence of the superiority of Western music over Indian classical music. This is a mistaken belief especially since we all know that India has granted the world of music her system of notation, with the seven cardinal notes and the diatonic scale, all of which were enjoyed in India as early as 350BC, while it came to Europe only in the 11th century. Ajitha Rajesh Al Khuwair

Do it in regional languages I WOULD like to add one more suggestion in connection with the

letters about the quality of television commentators. Even though the Indian national channel, the Doordarshan, is telecasting the World Cup matches of India live, the commentary appears in English and Hindi alternatively. There are states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala, where most cricket loving public does not understand Hindi and in the process, misses out on some exciting moments of the game. So why not commentaries in regional languages? It will do a lot of good to the non-Hindi speaking peoples. I had listened to the Tamil cricket commentary in my tender age. They used to narrate the game with due respect to the language. They never tried to mix up English words with Tamil. For example, bat is told as 'mattai', ball as 'panthu', boundary as 'ellai' and a spinner is called as 'suzhal panthu veesubavar'. I remember, a friend of mine, once asked me how did the Tamil commentators describe the field setting, like 'short leg' and 'long leg' in Tamil. I jokingly replied him that 'short leg' means 'chinna kaalu' and 'long leg' means 'neelamana kaalu'. I could not control my laugh when my friend asked, whether 'fine leg' means 'nalla kaalu'? It would be entertaining, if cricket commentary is made in regional languages. Salih Thacher

It was a good fightback

WELL done, Indians. It was a comfortable 83-run victory over Zimbabwe. The Indians who played under pressure fought back strongly from the beginning of the game. I still wonder why these Indians behave in such an unruly way back home, burning the postures of some of these players and throwing stones at their houses! It seems they haven't learned anything after Independence. Some of them consider cricket as their religion and Sachin as their deity. Hope the Indians will win the rest of the games. Nishad Anwar

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@omantel.net.om)

TIMES BUSINESS



Sunday, February 23, 2003

S. Korea's SK Group owner jailed for illegal stock deals

SEOUL — The owner of South Korea's third-largest business group was arrested yesterday and jailed on charges he participated in illegal stock

trading.
SK Corp. chairman Chey
Tae-won was locked into a
Seoul prison on charges he
illegally traded shares of SK
Group subsidiaries.

Group subsidiaries.

TV footage showed a grim-looking Chey being escorted into a car by investigators that

was bound for jail.

The Seoul district court issued an arrest warrant for Chey, citing the seriousness of his offenses and his risk of flight or possible tampering with evidence.

Also jailed was SK Group executive Kim Chang-keun, who had an alleged role in the illegal deals, while other SK executives face questioning.

Investigators had been interrogating Chey for 34 hours once he was brought in to the Seoul district prosecutor's office Friday morning.

Prosecutors charged he had traded his stake in Walker Hill Hotel Co. for shares of SK Global, the holding company of the group, at favoured prices.

Through a stock swap with SK C and C, the group's IT service arm, Chey allegedly drained 80 billion won (\$66.7 million) from the coffers of SK C and C's other shareholders.

The stock swap also allowed him to tighten his grip on the group through the holding company

ing company.

SK has maintained the legality of the swap and said it was done under the advice of a reliable accounting firm.

Chey also faces allegations he caused some 107.8 billion won in losses to SK group's subsidiary, SK Global

Chey ordered SK Global's overseas operations to pay JP Morgan 107.8 billion won last October, when the US giant exercised a put option on shares it held in SK Securities.

shares it held in SK Securities.
SK Group purchased the shares at a guaranteed price above market value under the put option agreement, leaving SK Global's overseas units to shoulder SK group losses. The South Korean Fair Trade Commission in December slapped SK Securities with

stapped SK Securities with
1.18 billion won in fines.
Chey, the eldest son of the
group's founding family, controls the conglomerate and its
58 subsidiaries including South
Korea's top mobile phone carrier SK Telecom. — AFP

China eyeing \$35b Mideast petrochemicals market

By Palazhi Ashok Kumar

MUSCAT — Followed by the recent pushing up of its cheaper and not-so-bad consumer goods to the Middle East markets, China, a sleeping giant in the world's petrochemical and chemical industry, is now targeting to capture the region's \$35 billion petrochemical and petrochemical markets.

Currently, India, Canada and South Korea are believed to be the most active participants in the petrochemical and chemical markets of the Middle East.

Sources from Dubai told *Times Business* that there would be robust demand for petrochemical technology and suppliers in chemicals and corrosion sectors in the future. In fact, China, with its low labour and produc-

tion costs, is beginning to awaken and focus more on profitable overseas markets including the Middle East.

Moreover, most world economies welcome China's intention to speed up economic reforms to ensure sustained rapid growth and prepare the economy for increased global competition. China became a member of the WTO only recently (December 11, 2001).

In China and Hong Kong, the petrochemical and chemical sectors have over 700 companies, including multinational companies (MNCs) and local firms. Petrochemicals are a category of organic chemicals derived principally from feed stocks such as natural gas liquids obtained from natural gas processing plants, and oil refinery streams such as naphtha and light gas oil.

oil.

Available documents indicated that

active exports, government spending and foreign direct investment (FDI) have been fuelling Chinese economy for the last four years, and had achieved 7.1 per cent, 8.1 per cent, 7.3 per cent and about 7.5 per cent (provisional) growth in 1999, 2000, 2001 and

2002, respectively.

However, economists have cautiously projected the actual growth for the year 2003 at below seven per cent. Though it was reported that household deposits in banks are increasing at about 18 per cent, the unemployment pressure is increasing as the workforce potential has been registering significant growth for over three years.

cant growth for over three years.

According to sources, Chinese companies will be participating at Chemtex and Corrosion Middle East 2003, the region's only international exhibition for chemical, petrochemi-

cal, chemical process technology, corrosion control and management industries at the Dubai International

Exhibition Centre, from March 4 to 6.
In addition to China, Canada,
Korea and India will have first time
national pavilions at Chemtex and
Corrosion Middle East 2003. The
Dubai government and the Dubai
Chamber of Commerce and Industry
officially support the exhibition.

It is informally learnt that petrochemicals from India and Canada had been reportedly enjoying a good market share in the region. In fact, the Canadian petrochemical industry had shipments of about \$3 billion in 2000 and over 18 manufacturing companies,

are active in this industry.

The majority of larger firms operating in China, Korea and Canada are owned by MNCs that operate sub-

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3 Second transmission
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idiaries or joint ventures.

China is one of the largest importers of Oman crude. China had imported nearly 54 million barrels of Oman crude in 2001 and the quantity has been steadily increasing over the past few years.

Lately, China had expressed its

willingness to expand its cooperation with Oman in the petroleum and gas sector. In fact, China is one of the largest importer and consumer of oil products in the world and has state-of-the-art technologies in oil exploration and well drilling. At present, countries from the Far East are reportedly actively negotiating with the Gulf governments, including Oman for cooperating in various projects. Malaysia, one of the fastest growing Asian countries has been actively exploring investment opportunities in the oil and gas and

tourism sectors of the Gulf and Middle East. It was reported that Singapore and Malaysian investors were eyeing tourism projects in the Gulf, as they had been highly successful in tourism ventures in Malaysia. The Chinese government is encouraging Chinese entrepreneurs to invest in Oman and other Gulf countries.

The IMF had said that Beijing was rightly trying to tackle the problems of its bad loan-hit financial system, incompetent public sector enterprises and at the same time managing the social costs of the transition, making its industries, including chemical and petrochemical products competent. It was reported that in the financial sector, directors considered rehabilitating the state commercial banks and creating a strong prudential framework as the priorities.

Have multi-functions

at your finger tips

Sony to boost digital camera output in China 10-fold, says report

TOKYO — Consumer electronics giant Sony Corp. will boost production of digital cameras in China by 10-fold in the coming year to meet surging demand, a Japanese daily said yesterday.

Sony plans to manufacture 500,000 digital cameras in the financial year starting in April, a 10-fold increase over the estimated production for the current year ending in March, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun said.

Production will be boosted at Shanghai Suoguang Electro-nics Co., a Sony subsidiary, the economic daily said.

The Shanghai factory currently produces four-million-and five-million-pixel highend cameras, but will start making lower-class models in the new financial year, it said. No immediate confirmation was available from Sony. — AFP



Dubai launches giant islands development

DUBAI — The coastline of Dubai is to boast another major architectural residential project built on a cluster of islands reclaimed from the sea, developers said yesterday.

Nakheel Properties said work has already started on Jumeirah Islands, covering 300 hectares of land reclaimed from the shallow Gulf waters off Dubai.

The development will be built around canals and include "cascading waterfalls, bountiful flower gardens, romantic promenades, luxury marinas and an exclusive resort," according to Nakheel, which did not reveal the cost.

The project is aimed at

"families who are looking for a residential retreat of relaxation and unique beauty," it said, adding that both locals and foreigners will be able to purchase villas.

Construction is already well underway on two giant palm tree-shaped resort islands along the Dubai coast.

Jutting five kilometres out into the sea, each "Palm", which is to house 50 hotels, will be built in the shape of 17 huge fronds surrounded by a protective barrier reef, adding huge expanses of sandy beaches to the coastline of the emirate that is investing billions to promote itself as a tourist and lesiure hub. — *AFP*

Dow Jones launches new Islamic blue-chip index

DUBAI — Dow Jones indexes announced yesterday the expansion of its family of blue-chip indexes by adding the global Dow Jones Islamic Market Titans 100 and three subset blue-chip indexes.

"The Dow Jones Islamic Market Titans 100 has been created because of an increasing demand for social-ethical and Islamic index investment," soid Islamic demand for social-ethical and Islamic investment.

ment," said Lars Hamich, executive director of global business development for Dow Jones indexes.

The three subset indexes are the Dow Jones US Islamic Titans 50, the Dow Jones Europe Islamic Titans 25 and the Dow Jones Asia/Pacific

Titans 25, Hamich said.

"The indexes offer market participants easy access to the largest and most liquid global companies that meet requirements for non-financial,

low debt and social ethical markets," he said.

Stocks listed on the Dow Jones Islamic Market Titans 100 are screened quarterly based on their industry type and financial ratio.

Companies involved in alcohol, tobacco, meat-related products,

Companies involved in alcohol, tobacco, meat-related products, financial services, defence/weapons and entertainment are excluded, Hamich said.

Libya, Senegal sign deals

DAKAR — Libya and Senegal have signed an agreement to create a joint bank and a deal for the supply to Senegal of advantageously priced Libyan oil, the state Senegalese press agency APS said yesterday. "Libya and Senegal should promote robust and constructive cooperation that will be a model for other African countries," Libyan Information and Culture Minister Said Hafiana said during the signing ceremony, APS reported.

It gave no details of the two agreements.

It gave no details of the two agreements.

But it said Hafiana's visit to Senegal this week, at the head of a Libyan delegation, had "served essentially to confirm Libya's commitments to supply Senegal with oil products at preferential tariffs".

— AFP

Opec will do its best to avert oil shortage, says Silva

THESSALONIKI (Greece) — Opec Secretary-General Alvaro Silva said yesterday the oil exporting cartel would do its best to avert a world oil shortage and secure adequate supplies in the event of a war in Iraq.

"We don't want any scarcity of oil in the world," Silva told Greek state TV NET on the sidelines of an informal meeting of European Union energy ministers in this northern Greek city, "At Opec we are doing our

"At Opec we are doing our best to put enough oil in the market. This is our position," he said.

The secretary-general of the 11-member Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries said Opec was participating in the ministers' meeting to share its outlook on the world oil market and stress the need for cooperation.

Oil prices have soared 50 per cent in three months to \$32 per barrel for international benchmark Brent as traders absorb the threat to the two million barrels per day of exports from Iraq, the world's eighth largest oil exporter. Turning to supply disruptions, Silva said he expected strike-hit Venezuelan oil exports fifth largest oil exporter was supplying 2.7 million barrels of crude oil daily to world markets before a crippling strike in early December.

"In Venezuela's case, it is a

to return to normal. The world's

transitory problem, it is going to be solved. Opec acted quickly to the lack of oil from Venezuela and this one is coming to a normal quota," Silva said. Opec, due to hold a policy meeting on March 11, has raised

meeting on March 11, has raised output quotas twice this year to cover for the unexpected strike in cartel member Venezuela. Oil traders fear military con-

flict in Iraq could upset flows from the Middle East, which pumps nearly a third of the world's crude.

Opec, which has long experi-

Opec, which has long experience in compensating for volatile exports from Baghdad since the Gulf War, could cover any interruption in Iraqi supplies. But talk of a possible suspension of output quotas was played down on Friday by Silva.

Yesterday, he said: "We don't foresee at this moment any scarcity and high prices. We...are also working for peace." — Reuters

G7 gets ECB promise on rates, split on budgets

PARIS — The world's economic leaders yesterday got what appeared to be a promise from the European Central Bank (ECB) to cut interest rates if the economy weakened further but were split on the role for US-style tax cuts. Putting a brave face on falling growth rates and the threat of an oil price surge in the event of a war in Iraq, finance ministers from the Group of Seven industrial powers threw the spotlight on looser monetary policy at their meeting in Paris.

"We will not hesitate to act," ECB President Wim Duisenberg told a news conference half way through the meeting of the G7 powers — the United States, Japan, Germany, Italy, Britain, France and Canada.

"If anything, uncertainties about future developments have increased recently and the prospect of an economic recovery to potential growth this year is not supported by the latest information," he said.

information," he said.

A draft communique prepared for release at the end of talks yesterday evening said the G7 remained "confident in the underlying strength of our economies" despite slow economic growth rates.

Earlier in the day Horst

Earlier in the day Horst Koehler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said growth forecasts were being lowered but a short conflict in Iraq could result in a positive surprise for the global economy.

The draft highlighted collective willingness to respond as appropriate if the world economy weakens further, but G7 sources said the world's economic powers could not easily agree on the role to be played by fiscal policy — with the

Europeans particularly critical of US President Bush's tax cut plans.

The G7 sources said there was still some discussions about the final communique with the possible addition of recommendations of medium-term structural reforms in each of the member countries.

Newly appointed US Treasury Secretary John Snow, at his debut G7 meeting, presented Bush's \$695 billion tax cut plan to the group. But eurozone delegates, who are squabbling among themselves over strict limits on budget shortfalls, expressed concern about the rising trade and fiscal deficits in the US.

"We have been witnessing a rapid deterioration of the US current account position as well as the US general government deficit, especially over the past two years," Eurogroup Chairman and Greek Finance Minister Nikos Christodoulakis said

"Large twin deficits may create sustainability risks, which in case they materialise would have significant ramifications well beyond the US

The Paris talks on Friday night and yesterday took place at a difficult time, with the international community still torn over whether to wage war against Saddam Hussein to disarm Iraq and amid fears of an economically damaging surge in

President George W. Bush is campaigning for what could be rapid military action in Iraq but French President Jacques Chirac has led nations that are resisting such moves so far on the basis that there is still hope of disarming Iraq peacefully. — Reuters

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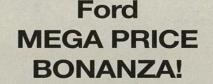




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SNIPPETS

Al Fairuz gets Terex delearship

TEREX, UK, has appointed Al Fairuz Trading & Contracting Company LLC as its dealer for Terex (Fermec) backhoe loaders in the Sultanate of Oman. Terex is one of the largest corporations in the world. Terex (Fermec) backhoe loaders are manufactured in Manchester, UK, in one of the most advanced manufacturing facilities backed up by excellent R&D Division. The Terex (Fermec) backhoe loader was launched in the first week of February at Inter-Continental Hotel. The event was well attended by more than 150 representatives from the municipalities, ministries and leading construction and consulting firms and finance companies. The demonstration of backhoe loaders enthralled the audience and emphasised the capabilities of the machine. Two Terex machines were on display for audience to have a good look at the machines and appreciate their unique features. They also announced a special offer during the launch that for each machine ordered within a week's time, Al Fairuz and Terex will organise a free trip for a person to Manchester, UK, accommodation for one person for two nights/three days and a complimentary ticket to Manchester football match. Al Fairuz Trading & Contracting Company LLC has been representing world class products in trucks and construction machinery sector for the past over 30 years in Sultanate of Oman. Apart from the head office in Muscat, Al Fairuz has five branches spread over in Oman in Salalah, Sur, Sohar, Nizwa and Buraimi and all of them, including Muscat office are fully equipped with full fledged warehouse and workshop facility to render effective after-sale-services for achieving total customer satisfaction.



LAUNCH: A demonstration of Terex backhoe loaders impressed the audience

Gulf Air's in-flight duty-free campaign
GULF Air has introduced a number of world-exclusive in-flight duty-free products with the launch of its new 'PriceLess' in-flight duty-free campaign in February. According to Gulf Air's head of in-flight services, Michael Kent, the innovative PriceLess campaign is a value-added in-flight shopping experience and is part of the airline's efforts to consistently exceed customer expectations. The campaign features a new look magazine and a comprehensive range of 82 'PriceLess' products. Of these, six are being carried by Gulf Air in a worldwide first for any airline and they include sunglasses, confectionary, skincare products, watches and cufflinks. The remaining product range is both fresh and creative, and is largely new to Gulf Air and in fact, to the region. It includes jewellery, electronic merchandise, cosmetics, fragrances, accessories, confectionary, and children's items, among others, with brand names such as Versace Escada Christian Dior and Bally. Gulf Air's in-flight duty free is operated by Aer Rianta International Middle East, and the on-board product range is reflective of the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of the airline, which is intent on exceeding the needs of its customers through the numerous innovations it is delivering as part of its three-year strategic recovery programme, says Alan Edwards, senior operations manager — in-flight, Bahrain Duty-Free.

Creative awareness programme

IDEAS Management Consultants came up with the creative awareness programme, the first module of which was launched in January. It proved to be a big success with students. The children while enjoying the activity-based Cognitive Research Trust (CoRT) lessons learnt the purpose of developing thinking as a deliberate skill. This enables them to focus and apply thinking to solve new and unfamiliar problems, which they might otherwise find difficult to tackle. The programme enlightened the students on the importance of rules in their lives, making them aware of the fact that rules could be fun. Another session of creative awareness programme was held vesterday.



ONE FOR THE ALBUM: The winners of the OUA inter-divisional cricket tournament with the trophy

OUA cricket tournament

THE Oman United Agencies LLC has held a family day out with an inter-divisional cricket tournament at the Muscat Inter-Continental grounds. The teams comprised players from eight divisions, including Moon Travels LLC and Onas Trading LLC. Each team battled their cricketing prowess against each other and the winners of the rolling trophy were the OUA Travel (A) team captained by Sudeep Joseph. The first and second runners up were the OUA Finance/Information Systems Team captained by Faiyaz Khan and the Moon Travels team captained by Vilas Gonsalves. The wonderful show of sportsmanship among the teams was hailed.

Al Tajin Grill honoured

THE Al Tajin Grill scooped up the honours in the 'Best Steakhouse' category at an awards ceremony. The relatively new fine dining restaurant, which is an outlet at the first class Radisson SAS Hotel, is known for its succulent steaks and fresh seafood. Diners who voted for the various categories by means of a voting form, which was available in restaurants around Muscat, selected the award winners. "We are very proud about winning the award and knowing that Al Tajin has made a huge impact on our patrons," said Torbjorn Bodin, general manager of the Radisson SAS Hotel. "The big thank you for the award goes to our guests who have given us this honour as indicated in the results. It gives us great pleasure to be able to provide good food and service to them and to be known as the best steakhouse in town!" *Oman Today* organised the 'Best Restaurants in Muscat' for the first time and have confirmed that this will be an annual event. Currently the Al Tajin Grill is featuring a birthday promotion, which entitles guests dining on their birthdays to a discount equivalent to their age on their individual food bill. In addition to a complimentary birthday cake, a bottle of complimentary sparkling beverage will complete the experience on that special day. The Al Tajin Grill is open from 6pm to 11.30pm



SO PROUD: The Al Tajin team with their award



SO HAPPY: Some of the winners of the contest with Al Fair officials

Al Fair price cut promo winners

AL Fair gave away prizes to the winners of the Al Fair Price Cut 2003 Contest, which was promoted in January on the Internet. This year, Al Fair introduced a permanent price cut on more than 2,000 products at all the eight Al Fair outlets. The range of products included in this permanent price cut is a blend of fresh Omani items and groceries. They comprise top selling items like Al Marai Laban, Al Marai fresh juices, Zain yoghurt, Lurpak butter, Oasis drinking water, Masafi mineral water, Modern Oman milk bread and many others. The Al Fair Price Cut 2003 Contest was designed to be very simple in which Omantel linked a speciallycreated e-mail shot to all its subscribers. This link led to a web page that contained five simple questions about Al Fair and the Price Cut 2003, which the subscribers had to answer and submit their entries to qualify in the contest. The first person to submit correct answers would win a 21-inch colour television and the next ten customers submitting correct answers would win Al Fair shopping vouchers. This contest ran for four weeks and it received an over-whelming response of 600 entries. M. Chopra was the winner of the 21-inch colour television whereas there were 10 winners of Al Fair shopping vouchers.

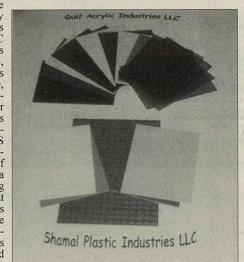
Medicom participates in Arab Health 2003

MEDICOM, the leading health information system in the Middle East and in South Africa, has participated at the mega event of the Middle East — Arab Health 2003 in Dubai — United Arab Emirates. The exhibition stall focused on creating awareness among the community and industry personnel on enterprise information systems for healthcare. Arab Health, the largest Healthcare Exhibition in the Middle East & Asia, over the last three decades, has been the meeting place for healthcare vendors across the globe exhibiting healthcare products and service-providers to equipment manufacturers. The objective of the conference was to mirror the various technological developments and growth in the healthcare arena. The conference covered a vast array of topics and specialties in the healthcare industry. Amrit S. Chopra, vice-chairman and CEO, Medicom Solutions, said: "The conference has been a major gateway to technology; provided insights into advancements in the field of healthcare informatics." Medicom is the web-enabled, enterprise ready, one-stop information management solution catering to the various functionalities of healthcare establishments. The Medicom brand is today synonymous with quality, technology and innovation.

Shamal Plastics goes online

TWO of Oman's newly commissioned plastic companies under one management, Shamal Plastic Industries LLC and Gulf Acrylic Industries LLC, have decided to take their offerings

on the newly commissioned website www.shamalplastics.com developed by InteracOman. Shamal Plastic Industries LLC and Gulf Acrylic Industries LLC offer a wide range of thermoplastic sheets conforming to international standards, meeting a diverse range of customer needs for various applications, from signage, lighting and bath tubs to panelling and furniture. In the plant located at Sohar Industrial Estate, state-of-art equipment is employed to process a wide range of poly mers form PC, PMMA and HIPS to ABS and PVC for indoor and outdoor applications. According to the general manager of the company the Internet had become a vital link with their customers and putting up the website was primarily aimed at making information about the companies available to interested parties around the world as the excellent infrastructure provided by the Sultanate of Oman enables the companies to confidently serve world



RAV4 — No. 1 in SUV fuel efficiency

THE Toyota RAV4 ranks as the most fuel-efficient sport-utility vehicle for the 2003 model

year, as stated by the US government. The Energy Department and Environmental Protection Agency had conducted their annual fuel survey for new vehicles. The report showed Toyota had the highest fuel economy cars in various categories. The topper of J.D. Power and Associates 2002 UK Car Customer Satisfaction Study, RAV4 has a full-time 4WD system to support active lifestyles with sporty and agile performance. RAV4 has evolved a new segment of 4WDs for recreation since its launch in 1994. Awards won include 'Automobile of the "Best of What's New' and 'Driver's Choice Award'. RAV4 has also topped the JD Power Initial Quality Study 2002. The 2003 RAV4 is a full time 4WD, it has a handsome, athletic form. Its sporty and agile performance is a result of its potent 2.0-litre power plant that delivers abundant power and excellent fuel efficiency. The RAV4's engine gives excellent power that takes it to the top of its class. The advanced, newly developed fuel injection system delivers cleaner exhaust emissions. The stainless steel exhaust manifolds are designed to withstand high temperatures, similarly the dual exhaust systems also contribute heavily towards higher exhaust efficiency. Solid safety measures incorporated in RAV4 offer peace of mind for entire family, on the road or off. In Oman, the Toyota RAV4 and other Toyota models come with the assurance of SBG's unmatched nationwide network of sales and service outlets. Plus, many other value-added benefits which include six years unlimited mileage Mazallat Bahwan protection, 98 per cent parts availability across the country, Free Toyota Club membership, 24 hours service, to name a few.



MODEL OF THE YEAR: Toyota's RAV4 2003

Mitsubishi sets a new trend

MITSUBISHI has unveiled its latest addition to its existing range of prestigious automobiles available in the Middle East. With the Outlander, Mitsubishi has once again delivered an outstanding vehicle designed to satisfy the ever-growing search for freedom, in town or off-road. Speaking at the launch ceremony, Muneyoshi Namba, in charge of the development of the Outlander, Mitsubishi's latest compact SUV all-terrain vehicle, commented: "Whether it is a trek to the hills for a mountain bike ride, a pick-up at the airport, or a shopping spree at the mall, the Outlander's serves its owner as a user-friendly accessory that can tame the challenges of urban life." For the Japanese car manufacturer, the new Outlander should be well positioned to respond to a growing appetite for SUV's in the region. The Outlander is an exciting, 5-passenger crossover SUV that combines bold styling, all-weather capability and urban utility in a compact package. Powered by a 4-cylinder, 2.4-litre engine delivering 146HP, the Outlander offers an ideal mix of comfort and performance in busy city streets as well as in wide-open spaces. Low RPM torque and responsive, yet fuel-efficient acceleration is just some of the features of this new SUV. The Outlander's amazing versatility is available in two distinct models, GLX and GLS, each combining a unique range of features and optional equipment. The GLX includes a myriad of standard exterior features such as rugged roof rails, rear spoiler, colour keyed door handles as well as air conditioning, power windows, central door locking system; rear intermittent wiper, reclining rear seats, and electronic immobiliser. Outlander GLS comes with such amenities as a sunroof, large rear spoiler, colour-keyed side mirrors, fog lamps, 16.5 inch spoke alloy wheels, clear tail lamp lenses, tonneau cover and cruise control. The Limited Appearance Package (LAP) exterior adds gold emblems and chrome-plated outer and inner



USER-FRIENDLY: Mitsubishi's Outlander

RO50,000 for Bank Dhofar winner

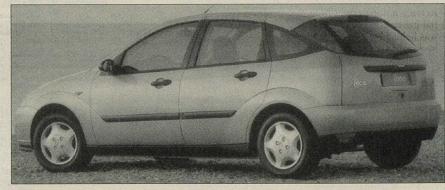
ABDULLAH Farah, deputy general manager, has given away the prize of RO50,000 to Hamad Naji Al Oaisi, the lucky winner of the monthly draw of Al Heson Savings Scheme. The draw was held at Qurum Park under the patronage of Abdullah bin Ahmed Abbas, president, Muscat Municipality. On receiving the prize of RO50,000 for the month the delightful winner mentioned that it is the first time to win such a prize. "I have never expected to win in my life, but now I trust Al Heson.



LUCKY: The winner with bank officials

Ford Focus is this year's 'All Star' car

AUTOMOTIVE magazine's coveted 'All Star' title has once again been awarded to Ford
Focus. Focus bested its traditional rivals to emerge the All Star car in the small car category for year 2003, adding to the vehicle's unbroken string of successes since its launch in 1999. Flavoured for the European small-car palate and proportioned for the international big-car appetite, the Focus is truly a car for all countries. It is currently the Best Selling Car in the World. "Superlative as the Focus remains, determining this year's best small car was no small feat," say Automobile magazine representatives. ".... But when the votes were tallied, the end-lessly amusing Focus, with its four body styles, incomparable user-friendliness, and sensible pricing, had done it again. The Focus celebrates a driver's enthusiasm while respecting his thriftiness, bringing indulgence to a segment that is all too often defined by sacrifice," they added. In Oman, Ford vehicles are marketed by Saud Bahwan Group, the No. 1 name in automobiles and they come with six years unlimited mileage protection, reliable nationwide network of service centres, over 98 per cent parts availability and Ford Privilege Card — which provides 24 hours on-road assistance from AAA, Oman's premier on-road assistance service providers and exclusive discounts from more than 300 premium establishments across the country and the UAE.



STAR PERFORMER: Ford Focus

Daihatsu Sirion: A Perfect '10'

ORDINARY words cannot describe the qualities of Daihatsu Sirion — a bestseller in Oman. 'Amazingly high' fuel economy, 'unbelievably low' price... these and many other qualities make Daihatsu Sirion a 'Perfect 10' ... a hit with customers in Oman. Indeed, so high is its appeal that the distributor of Daihatsu vehicles in Oman has been awarded the excellent sales award from Daihatsu Motor Company, Japan in recognition of excellent sales of Sirion during 2001. The Sirion may look compact but it's big on everything! its delightfully roomy interior offers plenty of space for five adults to ride in comfort. Its European tested suspension system offers extra safety; McPherson struts with coil springs provide excellent straight line stability and road feel. The trailing arm with torsion beam provides superior handling and ride characteristics. The powerful engine offers plenty of punch for thrilling drives on open highways! Powerful performance apart, the Sirion is highly environmentally friendly. A prestigious German body known as the VCD (Verkehrsclub Deutschland e.V. — German Traffic Club) ranked the Daihatsu Sirion third in its highly-competitive environmental performance rankings for 2000-2001. The survey covered both German-made and import vehicles and considered factors such as the vehicle's fuel consumption, exhaust emissions and noise. In its findings, the VCD reported that the Sirion was third in the best 10 list — made up of models, which meet the new "D4" emission standards — based on the "Euro4" limits that will take effect throughout Europe in 2005. Sirion's unique strengths arise from the fact that the world class R&D and cutting edge technology of Toyota Motor Corporation is built into its very core. Adding to the confidence levels of customers is a unique six years Enayat Bahwan protection scheme. And to top it all, the legendary back up and support of Saud Bahwan Group is behind every Daihatsu model in Oman. Indeed, Daihatsu vehicles are perfect in every way. They are on display at various showrooms located in Muscat (Wattayah), Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah and Ibra.



TEN OUT OF TEN: Daihatsu Sirion



CHEERS FOR CHARITY: The HSBC staff teamed up for a big cheer at the Terry Fox Run pledging support for cancer research

THE Muscat Securities Market (MSM) appears to be in a slumber with very little trading activity, with the MSM index drifting downwards by 0.50 points to close at 192.41 levels. As compared to the last few weeks, the overall activity, which was in the region of around 250,0000 shares, has dropped to around 100,0000 and last week it hovered under the 500,000 mark.

Also, over the past month, trading activity has receded to lower levels as the rush among investors chasing stocks for dividend-yields has now been abated. The season for announcement of corporate earnings has just begun with some prominently traded companies listed on MSM taking the lead. The earnings season so far has been a healthy one with very few earnings disappointments.

There does seem little probability that corporates will fail to meet investors' earnings and consequently, dividend expectations. After nearly touching the psychological level of close to 200, the benchmark MSM index has shown signs of weakness and closed on February 20 at 193. This is about 1.64 points down over exactly a month's period while a gain of 0.86 points on a year till date (YTD) basis.

The weakness on MSM was evident across all the market sectors, with some of the leading stocks that had an excellent run-up in recent weeks on buying interest from institutional investors, unable to hold on to the gains. Profit-taking pressures have surfaced from both retail and institutional investors. Overall, the industry sector was the chief loser, with around three per cent over the last one month while the services and banking sector indices dropped by 2.1 per cent and 0.4

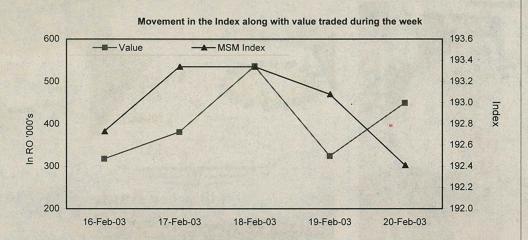
per cent, respectively While it was OIFC, which stole the limelight in December, it was the turn for Oman International Bank in January. The bank surprised the market with a quantum jump in its Year 2002 earnings, much against investors and analysts' expectations. While market intermediaries were talking of OIB earnings to be around RO11-13 million, the bank declared post-tax earnings of RO18.5 million. The substantial increase in OIB's earnings was helped by huge write-backs of loan-loss provisions and justified the bank's aggression in expediting bad-loan recoveries, a strategy which the bank has strongly advocated

The OIB scrip had already gained substantial ground in recent months, scaling up from its all-time lows of around RO1.250 and the earnings announcement further pushed the upside momentum in the stock to its 52-week high of around RO2,200. However, investors have stepped up selling pressure on the stock and consequently, the scrip has receded back to RO1.900 levels. Among other banking stocks, not much volatility was seen in NBO and BankMuscat. BankMuscat traded in a very narrow range around RO3.800 while NBO was traded around RO1.300.

since last year.

Among other prominent stocks in the financial sector, Onic Holding also saw weakness with the scrip declining from RO2.200 to levels of around RO1.900. The company declared post-tax earnings of RO3.28 million for the nine months period ended December 2002 (RO1.55 million for same period of previous year).

One of the highlights of last month's trading activity was the sharp fall in share price of United Power Company. The stock has faced intense selling pressure in recent months,



For week ending	26-Dec-02	2-Jan-03	9-Jan-03	16-Jan-03	23-Jan-03	30-Jan-03	6-Feb-03	20-Feb-03
Average Shares traded in '000's	2525	751	1561	1142	566	1096	1234	464
MSM Index Value	193.37	192.00	194.77	195.35	194.21	195.62	193.91	192.41

Movement of Indices over the last five weeks

Indices	16-Jan-03	23-Jan-03	30-Jan-03	6-Feb-03	20-Feb-03
Banks/Investment	249.1	247.6	251.4	249.4	248.6
Industry	154.7	154.4	153.7	150.7	150.2
Services	109.5	108.6	107.9	107.6	107.3

MSM WEEKLY MARKET REVIEW

TOP GAINERS	20-Feb-03	27-11-02	Diff.	% Inc.	TOP LOSERS	20-Feb-03	27-11-02	Diff.	% Dec.
OMAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE	1.60	0.69	0.91	131.9%	DHOFAR POULTRY	0.7	1	-0.3	-30.0%
GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICAL	0.34	0.15	0.19	126.7%	AL FAJAR AL ALAMIA	0.73	1	-0.27	-27.0%
MUSANDAM MARKETING & INVESTMENTCO	0.22	0.1	0.12	120.0%	AL HASSAN ENGINEERING	0.6	0.8	-0.2	-25.0%
ALMAWARID SECURITIES SO.	0.35	0.24	0.11	45.8%	OMAN PUMPS	1.5	2	-0.5	-25.0%
GULF INVESTMENT SERV	0.82	0.57	0.25	43.9%	DHOFAR INSURANCE	3.7	4.91	-1.21	-24.6%
AL JAZIRAH PIPES INDUSTRY	2.8	2.07	0.73	35.3%	OMAN AVIATION SERVICES	0.56	0.71	-0.15	-21.1%
OMAN & EMIRATES INV. HOLD.CO. (SAOG)	0.29	0.23	0.06	26.1%	UNITED POWER CO.	1.17	1,42	-0.25	-17.6%
OMAN NATIONAL LIVESTOCK	0.90	0.74	0.16	21.6%	OMAN ORIX LEASING CO	1.06	1.28	-0.22	-17.2%
OMAN INTERNATIONAL BANK	1.89	1.56	0.33	21.2%	OMAN CEMENT CO AL OMANI EUROPEAN FOOD	1.77	2	-0.23	-11.5%
DHOFAR MARBLE & GRANITE	0.12	0.1	0.02	20.0%	INDUSTRY	0.16	0.18	-0.02	-11.1%
NATIONAL MINERAL WATER	4.65	3.96	0.69	17.4%	NATIONAL BISCUIT INDUSTRIAL	2.25	2.5	-0.25	-10.0%
SAHARA HOSPITALITY SAOG	1.21	1.04	0.17	16.3%	GULF HOTELS (OMAN)	1.06	1.17	-0.11	-9.4%
ALSHALMAN SECURITIES CO.	0.74	0.66	0.08	12.1%	OMAN FISHERIES ALAHLIA CONVERTING	0.63	0.69	-0.06	-8.7%
ALKHALEEJ POLYPROPYLENE	2.33	2.1	0.23	11.0%	INDUSTRY%50	0.54	0.59	-0.05	-8.5%
MUSCAT FINANCE	3.05	2.75	0.3	10.9%	AL BATINAH HOTEL	1.12	1.22	-0.1	-8.2%
BAUSHAR CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	1.6	1.45	0.15	10.3%	OMAN UNITED HOLDING	1.75	1.9	-0.15	-7.9%
RENAISSANCE SERVICES SAOG	1.43	1.3	0.13	10.0%	OMAN HOTELS & TOURISM CO	1.5	1.62	-0.12	-7.4%
OMAN NATIONAL ELECTRIC CO.	3.9	, 3.55	0.35	9.9%	NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION	1.29	1.39	-0.1	-7.2%
COMPUTER STATIONARY	2.15	1.96	0.19	9.7%	COLLEGE	0.72	0.77	-0.05	-6.5%
PORT SERVICE CORPORATION	2.5	2.28	0.22	9.6%	MUSCAT NATIONAL HOLDING	0.74	0.79	-0.05	-6.3%
ALLIANCE HOUSING BANK	0.91	0.83	0.08	9.6%	AL ANWAR INDUS. & TRADING CO.	0.89	0.95	-0.06	-6.3%
DHOFAR BEVERAGES	1.28	1.17	0.11	9.4%	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	1.25	1.33	-0.08	-6.0%
AL JAZIRAH SERVICES CO	2.9	2.66	0.24	9.0%	NATIONAL SECURITIES CO ALBATINAH DEV &	0.64	0.68	-0.04	-5.9%
NATIONAL RICE MILLS	0.16	0.15	0.01	6.7%	INVEST.HOLDING CO.	0.33	0.35	-0.02	-5.7%
OMAN REFRESHMENT CO	7.45	7	0.45	6.4%	OMAN PACKAGING	2.7	2.85	-0.15	-5.3%
MUSCAT INDEX FUND JIA	0.5	0.47	0.03	6.4%	RAYSUT CEMENT CO.	1.1	1.16	-0.06	-5.2%
OMAN CHROMITE 50%	0.89	0.84	0.05	6.0%	ALOMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	2.45	2.58	-0.13	-5.0%
NATIONAL BEVERAGES CO	1.65	1.56	0.09	5.8%	DHOFAR INTL DEVELOPMENT	1.75	1.84	-0.09	-4.9%
MAJAN JOINT INV.FUND	0.58	0.55	0.03	5.5%	SHELL	6.5	6.8	-0.3	-4.4%
OMAN CHLORINE CO.50%	1.01	0.96	0.05	5.2%	DHOFAR CATTLEFEED	1.54	1.61	-0.07	-4.3%
TRANSGULF INV.HOLDINGCO	0.62	0.59	0.03	5.1%	SALALAH FLOUR MILLS	1.73	1.8	-0.07	-3.9%
CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS IND.	0.45	0.43	0.02	4.7%	OMINVEST	2.15	2.23	-0.08	-3.6%
TOBAZ ENERGY&MARINE	0.76	0.73	0.03	4.1%	NATIONAL GAS CO.	5.5	5.7	-0.2	-3.5%
BP OMAN	3.04	2.92	0.12	4.1%	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENTS	0.88	0.91	-0.03	-3.3%
MUSCAT GAS MANUFACTURE CO	5.45	5.25	0.2	3.8%	SALALAH PORT SERVICES 50% BANK MUSCAT CONVERTIBLES	2.47	2.55	-0.08	-3.1%
AL ANWAR CERAMIC TILES OMAN CHEMICAL INDUSTRIAL	0.31	4.01 0.3	0.14	3.5%	BOND AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HOLDING	1.05	1.08	-0.03	-2.8% -2.8%
ORYX JOINT INVE. FUND	0.63	0.61	0.01	3.3%	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF HOSPITALITY	2.24	2.3	-0.04	-2.6%
UNITED FINANCE	1.73	1.68	0.05	3.0%	BANK MUSCAT BOND	2.78	2.84	-0.06	-2.1%
AL AHLIA DETERGENT COMOAN	0.75	0.73	0.02	2.7%	REEM BATTERIES	1.47	1.5	-0.03	-2.0%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	1.17	1.14	0.02	2.6%	OMAN TEXTIL	0.52	0.53	-0.01	-1.9%
OMANI FIBRE OPTICS	1.17	1.14	0.03	2.5%	BANK DOFAR AL OMANE FRANCE	2.2	2.23	-0.01	-1.9%
AREEJ VIEGETABLE OILS	2.55	2.5	0.03	2.0%	NATIONAL ALMINIUM PROD NATIONAL PHARMACEUTICAL	1.5	1.52	-0.03	-1.3%
THE FIRST MAZOON FUND	0.59	0.58	0.01	1.7%	INDUSTRIES	0.79	0.8	-0.01	-1.3%
BANK MUSCAT	3.83	3.78	0.05	1.3%	SOHAR POULTRY	0.99	1	-0.01	-1.0%
OMAN NATIONAL INVESTMENT HOLDING (ONIC)	1.88	1.86	0.02	1.1%	OMAN INTERNATIONAL HOLDING	1.43	1.44	-0.01	-0.7%

under market expectation that earnings for this utility company will see a consistent decline over the next few years. UPC is likely to report accounting losses for a period of 2-3 years, although that period is still not known. Ever since listed on MSM more than five years back, this utility stock was always perceived as a bondtype investment with assured cash earnings and consequently, assured cash dividends of around 18 per cent. However, with the outlook of earnings decline, the sentiment for UPC stock has turned weak and this has led to consistent selling pressure on the stock. The UPC stock touched an all-time low of RO1.100 last month, but has regained some strength and is now traded around RO1.200. The dividend announcement season has started off on a good note and one expects that over the next few weeks, the momentum of announcement of

News of the week

• The government is holding talks with foreign and regional banks to raise \$1 billion for the Sohar refinery project. The total project cost of the refinery is \$1.3 billion, but construction will cost only \$879 million. The project is expected to begin from July 2003 and is to be completed by mid-2006 with its capacity expected to be 75,000 barrels per day.

• The proposed new propylene plant has named a shortlist of banks to finance \$140 million for the project. The state run Oman Oil Company will hold 60 per cent stake in the \$200m project with 20 per cent each held by ABB Lummus and South Korea's LG International.

◆ Oman government along with its private partners are negotiating with international financial institutions to raise a \$350 million loan to build a methanol plant. Three companies viz. Oman Oil Company,

Omzest and a German firm Ferrostaal will contribute around 30 per cent of the total project. Construction companies from USA, Europe, Japan and South Korea are currently competing to win a tender for its construction whose announcement is expected by March

 The board of directors of BP Oman has recommended to distribute 250 baisa as cash dividend per share.

• The EGM of Al Mawarid Securities Co. agreed on the legal steps taken by the board to execute the decisions on the previous EGM which includes merging with the other compa-

The board of directors of Al Omaniya Financial Services has recommended to distribute 20 per cent cash dividend and is also contemplating to raise bonds valuing RO5 million.

● The report has been prepared by the Equity Research Group of Al Mawarid Securities Company, SAOG.

Pakistan readies for auction of oil giant

KARACHI — In order to cover growing debts in many state-owned companies Pakistan is considering issuing bonds worth Rs15 billion before September, a senior state official has said.

Pakistan Electric Power Corp Chief Executive Javed Nizam, who is also the chief of state power giant Wapda, says the government plans to issue the bonds to pave the way for oil giant Pakistan State Oil's privatisation later this year.

Details of the bond issue are still being discussed, he told Dow Jones. The additional cash should help strengthen Pakistan State Oil's balance sheet ahead of its planned sale to strategic investors.

The Privatisation Commission said it would auction a 51 per cent stake in the company. Bids for the stake will open on April 26.

open on April 26.
Various state-owned companies, including Karachi Electric Supply Corporation and the Water and Power Development Authority, owe Pakistan State Oil close to Rs15bn.

Potential buyers want these dues cleared before the sale goes ahead.

Potential bidders include Pakistan's Fauji Foundation, Kuwait Petroleum Company and Saudi Arabia's Midroc Holding. The government owns 26 per cent of the oil company and holds another 25 per cent stake indirectly through staterun mutual funds. The remaining shares are publicly held.

A corporate source close to the Pakistan State Oil privatisation said the demand for the bond will be strong if it is guaranteed or underwritten by the government.

"We must know what the terms of this bond issue are. I think very few investors will be interested to buy this paper if it's issued by the Karachi Electric Supply Corp, which is already burdened with a huge debt," he said. International investors are carefully watching the Pakistan State Oil sale as a sign of direction for Pakistan's promised wide-ranging privatisation programme, which includes energy and infrastructure utilities. — Internews

Political factor to show direction for Wall Street shares

NEW YORK — Politics may upstage economics on Wall Street next week as the uncertainty over whether the United States will lead a military strike on Iraq keeps investors on edge and dictates the market's direction.

Expectations for war are growing.

growing.

The United States and Britain continue to amass troops in the Middle East, with the United States saying it has enough troops in the region to attack Irag.

Meanwhile, Turkey signalled on Friday it was close to a deal to let US forces deploy on Turkish soil for a possible attack on neighbouring Iraq.

attack on neighbouring Iraq.

"The market is going to continue to focus on basically the geopolitical problems and, of course, the rising price of oil," said Peter Cardillo, chief strategist and director of research at Global Partners Securities Inc.

"The main focus of attention remains and will remain Iraq until there is clarity."

The prospect of a war could move closer to reality next

Washington and London plan to present a new resolution to the United Nations Security Council saying Iraq is in "further material breach" of a UN disarmament resolution, which the two allies argue is sufficient justification for war.

The beating of war drums means next week's slate of economic figures set for release will take a back seat in trading action to the unfolding geopolitical situation.

"The market's direction will be dictated by geopolitical events, not the economic events," said Stanley Nabi, managing director at Credit Suisse Asset Management, which oversees \$55 billion in North America.

Stocks finished the week higher after staging an impressive rally last Tuesday.

Markets were closed on

Markets were closed on Monday for the Presidents Day holiday. Tuesday, the Nasdaq Composite index jumped 36.37 points, or 2.78 per cent, to 1,346.54, erasing its losses for the year.

The rally faded on Wednesday when war fears returned to the fore, and investors looked past an upbeat economic report showing low mortgage rates helped US housing starts rise unexpectedly in January.

"It's very clear the imminent outcome of Iraq has got everybody concerned, and it's halting business in this country," said Philip Dow, director of equity strategy at RBC Dain Rauscher. "The only thing that could change is when we do get some

visibility."

For the week, the Nasdaq
Composite index gained 2.96
per cent, the Dow Jones
Industrial Average rose 1.38 per
cent, and the Standard & Poor's

500 Index added 1.59 per cent.

"The market may be fairly valued at this point, but priced into it is an awful lot of uncertainty with respect to Iraq," said John Davidson, president and chief executive officer of PartnerRe Asset Management, which oversees more than \$5

billion in assets.

War worries have driven oil prices up to 2-1/2-year highs. On the New York Mercantile Exchange, crude oil for April delivery gained 84 cents to settle at \$35.58 a barrel, still in the neighborhood of the \$37-a-barrel mark that recently set nerves on edge.

In London, benchmark Brent crude oil for April delivery rose 71 cents to end at \$32.28 a barrel, again within shouting distance of a two-year high of \$33.10 hit last week.

"There are a lot of industries sensitive to oil prices, and we have extraordinarily high oil prices across the board," Davidson said.

"If they persist for a long time, they are equivalent to a tax on consumers as well as businesses." Next week's slate of economic figures will give a read on everything from consumer confidence to the housing market to durable goods.

"Even if there is good news, people say it can't really be good news because of all of the geopolitical risk," said Dow of RBC Dain Rauscher. "There's just this negative cast to everything."

thing."
A reading on February's Consumer Confidence Index is due on Tuesday. The index fell to a nine-year low of 79.0 in January, the Conference Board said, and analysts expect it to slip to 76.8 in February.

Also set for release on Tuesday are January's existing home sales figures, which are pegged to decline from December.

Thursday reports are due on weekly jobless claims, expected to drop from the week before, and new home sales for January, which are expected to slip from December levels. January orders for durable goods, which include computers, cars, office equipment, washing machines and other items meant to last three years or more, also will be released on Thursday.

Economists polled by

Reuters have forecast overall US durable goods orders for January to have risen 1.2 per cent, in contrast to a revised reading of down 0.2 per cent for December.

On Friday, Wall Street gets a

On Friday, Wall Street gets a reading on US gross domestic product, which measures total economic output within the nation's borders.

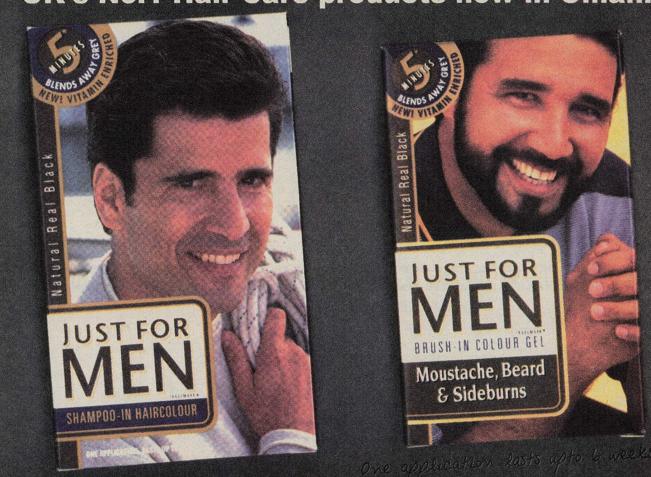
It is expected to be revised

up to an annual growth rate of 1 per cent in the October-December period from an advanced reading of a gain of 0.7 per cent.

Friday also will bring a final reading on the University of Michigan's consumer sentiment data for February, which is expected to slip to 78.9 from 82.4. — Reuters

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Two routes considered for trans-Afghan \$3.5b pipeline

healthy corporate earnings for

Year 2002 will be maintained.

ISLAMABAI

Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan are considering two separate routes for a proposed \$3.5 billion trans-Afghan gas pipeline, ministers from the three countries said after meeting here yesterday.

The proposed pipeline, on the drawing board for some 20 years, would carry gas from Turkmenistan's rich Dauletabad fields, home to the world's fifth largest gas reserves, across Afghanistan to Pakistan and possibly India.

possibly India.

"There are two possibilities for us: to have the pipeline pass through the southern route or to pass the pipeline through the northern route," Afghan Minister for Mines and Industries Juma Mohammed Mohammadi told reporters.

The northern route runs through the Afghan capital Kabul on to the northwest Pakistani city of Peshawar, while the southern route runs through the southern Afghan city of Kandahar on to the southwest Pakistani city of Quetta.

st Pakistani city of Quetta.

"Both have advantages and Pakistan's Federal Secretary of Petroleum Abdullah Yousaf

disadvantages and we thought it would be very important to know the advantages and disadvantages of both," Mohammadi said. Mohammadi, Pakistan's Petroleum and Natural Resources Minister Naurez Shakoor, Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister Yolly Qurbanmuradov and Oil Minister Tagiev Tachberdi led delegations at yesterday's talks

the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The ADB, which is pinning hopes of unprecedented prosperity and stability for the impoverished region on the mega project, has put up more than a million dollars for a feasibility study. It should be completed by

to review a feasibility study by

Pakistan's Shakoor, putting the cost of the project at \$3.5 million, said the three countries would seek India's participation. "The pipeline is coming to

Pakistan and we are requesting India to join this project," Khan said. Pakistan's Federal Secretary said the original proposal only focussed on the southern route.
"At the request of Afghanistan it has been agreed

"Because the feasibility study still has to be undertaken and it is just at that stage we are including it as an option."

to include the possibility of the northern route in the study,"

Frequent warlord clashes in Afghanistan and little government control outside Kabul has left potential investors worried about the security of the pipeline.

Afghanistan's Mohammadi dismissed security fears.
"We have no concerns about the safety of the infrastructure ...

we are reasonably confident about its security," Mohammadi said.

"The Afghanistan government has a very strong commitment to support the project and make sure that the project is successfully implemented and operated." He said his war-shattered nation was counting on job creation and revenue generation from the project. — AFP

Infosys shareholders approve sponsored ADR issue

BANGALORE
Shareholders of Infosys
Technologies yesterday
approved the sponsored
American depository receipts
issue of the company in the
range of two million to three
million shares.

The sponsored ADR issue, which is equivalent to 4 million to 6 million ADRs, was approved at an extraordinary general meeting held here.
"We believe the ADR con-

version will make Infosys stock have more liquidity and make it to one of the mainstream stock in the United States. "We believe our stock would be covered by mainstream analysts and held by well-known long term players," Infosys Technologies chairman and chief mentor N. R. Narayana Murthy told shareholders through a video-conference from Germany.

BUSINESS

Pakistan's central bank to keep liquidity in inter-bank market

KARACHI — The State Bank of Pakistan is to keep the national inter-bank market fair-ly liquid to enable banks to meet any eventuality in case the US attacks Iraq.
However, banking sources

said here, this does not mean the central bank fears a drawdown on rupee deposits – or for that matter on foreign cur-

rency deposits.
"Keeping the market liquid is not directly aimed at preparing banks for any specific situation but it is always good if banks have enough cash ahead of any crisis," said a senior bank official who declined to

be identified. "The bank has so far not chalked out a specific contin-of gency plan with regard to the fithreat of war on Iraq but our policy to keep banks liquid and check volatility in exchange rates is going to help banks overcome any situation," he

Bankers do agree. "These are the two corner stones of a good contingency plan and the State Bank of Pakistan has already put both in place," said treasurer of a local private 10 bank.

"In case the US attacks Iraq furand Pakistan also gets into some problem in one way or othe other there is no reason for or the public making a run on the

But a senior foreign banker lisaid he would not rule out the terpossibility that the foreigners staying in Pakistan may transfo fer foreign currency deposits problems here in the wake of a

What dilutes fear of this and other war-related drawdown on foreign currency deposits is the fact that Pakistan now has more than \$9.5b foreign exchange reserves equal to import bill of a little less than a year.

Some bankers say the actual reserves are even higher because the \$9.5b does not include \$700-\$800m worth of foreign currency deposits adjusted against trade financing by banks out of foreign currency deposits

Treasurer of a large local bank said the branches of his bank in the Gulf might also need additional foreign currency as in case of US attack on Iraq they might experience some drawdown on their deposits.
"We have made arrange-

ments to meet any demand of additional stock of foreign currency from our overseas

Treasurers of leading local and foreign banks said they were prepared to keep enough cash available not only with their overseas branches but also with local branches ahead

of a possible crisis.
"Luckily all banks have enough liquid assets these days in the form of government securities which could be used for generating cash any time,"

a bank official said. Bankers said they were not anticipating a slowdown in inflow of foreign exchange in case US went to war with Iraq. 'In that event overseas Pakistanis living anywhere in the world would surely transfer more money back home

instead of holding it abroad."

said a bank's treasurer.

Good response to Genie promotion

MUSCAT — The two-month-long promotion launched by Mustafa Sultan Electronics Co. (MSE) in association with Philips Lighting to introduce the new generation lamp called the Philips Essential 'Genie' energy saver has been a grand success, a press release received

here said.

The exciting scheme was designed by a team of experts to create awareness not only about cost and energy saving but also environmental care in a country striving all out to avoid any pol-

lution whatsoever.
"The response to the novel scheme has been overwhelming," says Vasan, business unit manager of MSE (Lighting Division) adding it had surpassed all expectations, judging by the mass appeal of the scheme in which everybody

The Philips Genie CFL represents the aspiration of discerning customers wanting to have a super-slim alternative to the everyday GLS bulb.
"Philips Genie is friendlier

n terms of energy usage and illumination strength," explained Vasan adding that with an average lamp life of 6,000 burning hours or three years based on usage of 5.5 hours per day. Genie cuts up to 80 per cent of electricity costs.



DRAW: Mustafa Sultan Electronics Co. and Philips officials during the draw

The scheme could not be simpler and easier. All a customer had to do was purchase an original Philips Genie energy saver lamp from authorised dealers, outlets of Philips lighting.

lucrative as a free return air ticket to Amsterdam on KLM Royal Dutch Airlines, a host of VCD

players, cameras and electric irons. The draw took place on December 31 at the MSE showroom in Al Khuwair in the presence of Akbar Sultan, managing director of Mustafa Sultan Enterprises. The first prize, a toand-fro air ticket to Amsterdam (Holland) was won by Yakoob Y. S. Al Kindi, a customer from

Mustata Sultan Electronics Company LLC, Business Unit Lighting, a part of the diversi-fied Mustafa Sultan Enterprises group, markets and distributes Philips lighting products through a wide network of dealers, supermarkets and its own company showrooms

Visco offer winner receives prize



WINNER: Riyaz Malik receiving the keys of Honda Civic.

MUSCAT — Abdullah Riyami, corporate affairs manager of BP Oman, has presented the keys of a brand new Honda Civic to Riyaz Malik of Sohar, winner of the third and final mega prize of the BP Visco promotion that created a great deal of excitement, a press release said.

Extremely happy at the end of this promotion, Shaukath Assadi, manager for Retail Lubricants said: "This promotion did amazingly well both with the traders and consumers. Undoubtedly sales soared during this promotion period and also crossed our expectations. Being very optimistic, we

at BP definitely are looking forward for a great year

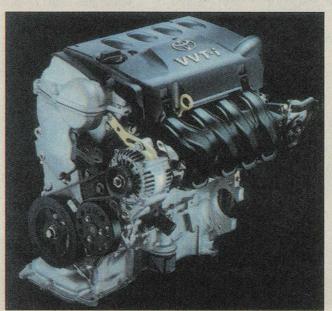
The theme of the ongoing promotion was Promise of Prize' and as the theme suggests the buyers of Visco 2000 gets a guaranteed prize instantly. The new scheme offered a 'scratch-andwin' card to every buyer of four-litre pack of Visco 2000. During the promotion BP Visco 2000 buyers were given the chance to win Honda Civic cars, latest electronic items from Panasonic and up to RO14,000 as instant cash prizes. The promotion ended on December 31, 2002

VVTi engine offers enhanced performance

MUSCAT — Toyota's R&D prowess creates technically advanced automobiles designed to make every owner's life easier, happier and smoother. And the latest break-through from Toyota's cutting-edge research called the "VVTi engine", is already making waves, worl-

dover.

The new VVTi or Intelligent
Variable Valve Timing engine offers radically enhanced operations in crucial areas. VVTi ensures high torque even at low speeds contributing to greater drivability and better response. You feel this especially when climbing uphill. VVTi also adds to legendary Toyota reliability intelligent valve operations reduced wear and tear on the engine parts. Resulting in greater value for money, for longer, VVTi technology also cuts down on fuel expenses. The VVTi engine also develops enormous power by intelligent-ly controlling the valve timing. Last but not the least, VVTi technology makes for clean, green cars. Or if you so prefer, it is more environmentally friendly. This all-new VVTi engine powers the 2003 Toyota range of vehicles, particularly the new



ECO-FRIENDLY: Toyota's VVTi engine.

Camry, Corolla and Echo. A case in point is the all-new 2003 Echo that incorporates a 1.3-litre VVTi engine. Whether in stop-and-go city driving or long-distance high-speed cruis-

ing, this engine delivers abundant power and excellent fuel efficiency. It also achieves dramatic cuts in exhaust emissions. The same happens in 2003 Corolla. The VVTi engine delivers superb fuel efficiency and

ers superb fuel efficiency and reduced emissions — in both the 1.3litre and 1.8litre versions.

In the 2003, Camry, the all-alloy engine delivers V6 levels of engine performance coupled with exceptional four-cylinder fuel economy. As a result, the manual transmission. a result, the manual transmission model accelerates from 0 to 100km/h in 9.3 seconds, while the automatic transmission version can accelerate from 0-100km/h in 10.6 seconds. In addition, the Camry engine delivers significantly improved performance, 19 per cent more power and 16.5 per cent more torque than the previous Camry

In Oman, Toyota technological superior offerings are not the only thing customers enjoy. They get the assurance of SBG's unmatched nationwide network of sales and service outlets. Plus, many other value-added benefits which include six years unlimited mileage Mazallat Bahwan protection, 98 per cent parts availability across the country, free Toyota Club membership, 24 hours service, to name a few. No wonder, nothing else comes

Snow sees 3.3 per cent growth for US this year

PARIS — US Treasury Secretary John Snow expects the US economy to grow by 3.3 per cent this year thanks to huge stimulus package, a US Treasury official said here as a Group of Seven meeting got

underway.

The official said bilateral meetings between Snow and his counterparts from France, Germany, Italy and Russia were dominated by the Europeans' questions about the US economic outlook and US President George Bush's \$674-billion (626-billion-euro) stim-

Iraq had also came up in the conversations, in the context of the uncertainty about the situa-tion, which was impacting both the economic outlook and oil

In his bilateral meeting with French Finance Minister Francis Mer, Snow stressed there should not be an assumption that war with Iraq was inevitable, the US official

Both Mer and Snow agreed that oil prices are not at alarming levels and should stabilise

Safinter chief visits Oman



HONOURED: General Food Supplies Co. LLC. officials with President of Safinter, Luis Valeriano Gonzalez.

MUSCAT — Taj-Mahal, a famous brand of saffron sourced from Spain, has been available in Oman for several decades. It is the most prestigious brand of saffron being distributed by General Food Supplies Co. LLC. Available in all leading supermarkets in Oman, the Taj-Mahal saffron is produced by Safinter S. A., Spain, a very old and leading producer of gen-uine saffron. Recently the President of Safinter, Luis Valeriano Gonzalez visited Oman, along with its Dubai-based Regional Manager,

Lakhi Sawlani. During the visit, they met the management and sales-team of General Food Supplies Co. LLC. Certificates of appreciation were awarded by Gonzalez to the sales-team for their excellent sales performance during the year 2002. During the meet-ing, Gonzalez praised the efforts of General Food Supplies Co. LLC, and also highlighted how he found Oman to be one of the most beautiful countries that he has visited.

Taj-Mahal saffron is widely used in various food preparations - rice, milk, tea, coffee, halwa, and is considered a prestigious gift during weddings and

Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio up 14pc

- Pakistan's tax-to-gross domestic product ratio has climbed to between 12 and 14 per cent, a top official said

here vesterday Riaz Malik, chairman of Central Board of Revenue, the country's top tax agency, said reforms and reduction in tax rates and duties

has laid the foundation stone for tax culture 'This is evident from the fact that revenue collection during first seven months of the current fiscal has shown 15.5 per cent

growth," he said. Admitting that better results could have been achieved but because of exemptions from taxes, distortions are bound to appear in

the economy as well as revenue collection. Malik said that some five years back the customs duty was up to 85 per cent but now it has reduced to 20 per cent. Similarly, he said sales tax rate was between 18 and 23 per cent and now it is 15 per cent in general and some

As result of these reductions in the rate of taxes and duties the collection of revenue through customs duty came down to 13 per cent from 37 per cent in 1996-97. Tax on imports, he said means tax on

industry but now the situation has took a turn where tax on consumption has risen to 57 per cent from 36 per cent five year ago.

Furthermore, he said, the government has

also abolished wealth tax and has raised the exemption for personal income from 60,000 to 80,000. Malik said tax on banking companies has been slashed to 50 per cent from 58 per cent and is expected to come down further in coming years.

Tax on private companies has been reduced to 35 per cent from 45 per cent, with

annual cut going to be 2 per cent.

All these factors, he said, has resulted in reduction of tax-to-GDP ratio by up to 4 per cent which is presently in the range of 12 to 14 per cent of the gross domestic product.

The board chief said that in 1990s the country was inflicted by two major problems, fiscal consolidation and fiscal discipline.

The rationalisation of tax rates, he said, resulted in higher budget deficit, which rose up to 7 per cent and when deficit reduced the level of poverty increased.

There was a burden of domestic debt, which was crippling the economy of the country but gradually all these issues were brought under control by adopting strict reforms during past four to five years.

Malik said taxation of agriculture income has a constitutional dimension and needs to be handled carefully.

Similarly, he said there is a need for giving legal cover to imposition of income tax in Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Provincially Administered Tribal Areas, and like agriculture tax they are also creating distortions as they breed different culture which is contrary to the tax culture. — Internews

Assets frozen in bank scandal

Supreme Court in Mauritius has frozen the assets of four individuals and eight businesses as part of an inquiry into a \$20million fraud case at the Mauritius Commercial Bank (MCB), court officials said yes-

The 163-year-old bank, the largest private bank in the Indian Ocean island state, announced on Thursday that Rs600 million (\$20 million, 18 million euros) had been illegally transferred into its accounts

from the national pension fund. At the request of the independent commission against corruption (ICAC), the court has frozen the assets of retired MCB director Robert Lesage, who is currently in prison awaiting the start of his trial tomorrow. Lesage is accused of involvement in the fraud case.

The court has also frozen the assets of former Finance Ministry official Dev Manraj,

ing Rs372.9 million.

He has been charged with steal-

ing Rs500 million and launder-

London-based Mauritian businessman Teeren Appasamy and Mauritian economist Donald Ha Yeung. The assets of eight businesses of which Appasamy is majority shareholder have

also been frozen. The bank has said the Rs600 million will be repaid to the pension fund, along with \$9 million in interest.

Trading in MCB shares, suspended on Monday after the disclosure of the serious irregularities, is to resume tomorrow.

lowed by further cut in interest

rates and favourable rupee-yen

"If these three elements show

any positive direction in the

future then car demand will fur-

ther pick up beyond 2004,"

Liaquat Jatoi hinted at a cut in locally assembled car prices,

which if actually slashed, may

result in pushing up sales.

However, market sources

said that in view of the market and business strategies, manufacturers did not tend to cut

prices when their products were

in high demand. The situation is same in the car business.

to cut prices as they know that the demand spurt will continue

blers should now bring down the

prices as imports have become

cheaper and the rupee strength-

even at the current price level.

Assemblers are dilly-dallying

The sources said that assem-

Last week, Minister of dustries and Production

Sohail said.

Industries

Vessel movement forecast at Salalah Port

places 9 to 12.5 per cent.

	10 12 1	VESSELS ALON	GSIDE			
VESSEL NAME	FLAG	DISCHARGING/LOADING	LAST/NEXT PORT	ARRIV	ED	AGENT
M/V JADE TRADER	ANTIGUA	CONTAINERS	P.SUDAN/ZANZIBAR	21.02.03	1440	MAERSK
M/V APL IVORY	SINGAPORE	CONTAINERS	COLOMBO/JEDDAH	22.02.03	0700	GAC
M/V SEA LAND MARINER	MARSHALL Is	CONTAINERS	MUSCAT/MUSCAT	19.02.03	1330	MAERSK
		ARRIVAL	S			200
VESSEL NAME	FLAG	CARGO	LAST/NEXT PORT	ARRIVA	AL5	AGENT
M/V DENHAM	UK	CONTAINERS	SINGAPORE/HODEIDAH	23.02.03	0500	MAERSK
M/V ROZEN	ST.VINCENT	D/WHEAT BRAN	DARESALAM/TBA	23.02.03	0500	SSMS
M/V MAERSK ATLANTIC	SINGAPORE	CONTAINERS	COCHIN/DRY DOCKS	23.02.03	0800	MAERSK
M/V SEALAND ILLINOIS	GREECE	CONTAINERS	T.PELEPAS/SUEZ	23.02.03	1430	MAERSK
M/V LIDAN	CYPRUS	L/CEMENT BULK	MUKALLA/TBA	23.02.03	2200	SSMS
F/T OCEAN NO 22	KOREA	FROZEN FISH	SOMALIA/SOMALIA	23.02.03	TBA	OSSC
M/V PHOENIX	ANTIGUA	CONTAINERS	HODEIDAH/JEBEL ALI	24.02.03	0100	GAC
M/V INGA S	ANTIGUA	CONTAINERS	JEBEL ALI/ADEN	24.02.03	0400	GAC
M/V GLASGOW MAERSK	DENMARK	CONTAINERS	MUMBAI/JEDDAH	24.02.03	1400	MAERSK
M/V SIELTOR	CYPRUS	CONTAINERS	DJIBOUTI/OFF HIRE	24.02.03	1400	MAERSK
M/V FRANCISCA SCHULTE	CYPRUS	CONTAINERS	PORT QASIM/PORT QASIM	24.02.03	1430	MAERSK
M/V HANSA STAVANGER	LIBERIA	CONTAINERS	MOMBASA/OFF HIRE	25.02.03	0100	MAERSK
M/V SEALAND MOTIVATOR	MARSHAL Is.	CONTAINER	SUEZ/JEBEL ALI	25.02.03	0900	MAERSK
M/T WADBANNAQA	PANAMA	D. BULK FUEL	M.ALFAHAL/ M.ALFAHAL	25.02.03	PM	SSMS
M/V OPTIMA ACE	PANAMA	STEEL PIPES	TBA/TBA	25.02.03	2200	GAC
M/V AZEEZA	ST. VINCENT	L. CEMENT	SOMALIA/SOMALIA	25.02.03	TBA	OSSC
M/V TELEMON	CYPRUS	CONTAINERS	COCHIN/COLOMBO	26.02.03	1000	MAERSK
M/V GOSPORT MAERSK	UK	CONTAINERS	MUMBAI/SUEZ	26.02.03	1800	MAERSK
M/V SEALAND VIRGINIA	GREECE	CONTAINERS	JEDDAH/PORT KELANG	26.02.03	2300	MAERSK
M/V MAERSK DUBLIN	ANTIGUA	CONTAINERS	JEDDAH/JEBEL ALI	27.02.03	0900	MAERSK
M/V DAGMAR MAERSK	GERMANY	CONTAINERS	JEDDAH/JEBEL ALI	27.02.03	2300	MAERSK
M/V TAISEER M	SYRIA	L. CEMENT	SOMA.IA/SOMALIA	27.02.03	TBA	OSSC
M/V SIRIUS	ANTIGUA	CONTAINERS	DURBAN/P.LOUIS	28.02.03	0600	MAERSK
M/V SEALAND FREEDOM	MARSHALL Is	CONTAINERS	MUSCAT/MUSCAT	28.02.03	1200	MAERSK
M/V WHER OTTENSEN	MARSHALL Is	CONTAINERS	MOMBASA/DARESALAM	01.03.03	2100	MAERSK
M/V DENHAM	UK	CONTAINERS	DJIBOUTI/HOEDIDHA	02.03.03	0600	MAERSK
M/V MAERSK ABERDEEN	SINGAPORE	CONTAINERS	COLOMBO/COLOMBO	02.03.03	1000	MAERSK

REMARKS: 1. M/V APL CAIRO SAILED FROM NO 01 AT 1335 HRS ON 21.02.03 2. M/V MASTRAL MAERSK SAILED FROM NO 03 AT 1655 HRS ON 21.02.03 3. M/V APL IRELAND SAILED FROM NO. 02 AT 2100 HRS ON 21.02.03 4. M/V MAERSK ITAJAI SAILED FROM NO.04 AT 0030 HRS ON 22.02.03

Shipping schedule at Port Sultan Qaboos

ANCHORAGE Flag Tonnage Vessel Arrived Cargo Agent AMI Omn Al Shahaba 29.01 Loading Oil 21.02 AMI Repair Addriyyah Seu 21.02 Containers KN **CONFIRMED ARRIVALS** GAC 22.02 210 Vehicles Modern Peak

	STATE OF THE STATE OF	FORWARD	ARRIVALS	3	100000
Flag	Vessel	Arrv. date	Tonnage	Cargo	Agent
Khm	Aziza	23.02		Cement	AMI
Tur	Sima Bahar	23.02	100	Containers	UST
Pan	MSC Maeva	23.02		Containers	SHS
Fra	Primauguet	23.02	100 Mar 100	Visit	ISS
Mlt	MSC Himalaya	23.02		Containers	SHS
Pan	X-Press Kailash	23.02	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	Containers	KR
-	MSC Rita	23.02	-	Containers	SHS
Сур	Gulf Harmony	23.02		Containers	- 9
Atg	German Sky	24.02	-	Containers	AST
Rus	STK-1026	24.02	A 305 - 100 -	Containers	SSS
Mhl	SL Mariner	24.02	-	Containers	MSK
Cyp	Telemon	24.02	-	Containers	MSK
Mlt	Sea Wave	24.02	204	Vehicles	HB
Atg	Ibn Zuhr	25.02	-	Containers	HB
Сур	MSC Sardinia	25.02	-	Containers	SHS
Pan	Global Prosperity	26.02	-	Containers	KR
Сур	Cem Ceribe	26.02	-	Cement	KR
Pan	Star Sea Bird	26.02	-	Bulk Cargo	ISS
Pan	Calfornia Highway	28.02	742	Vehicles	HB
Сур	Cap Ann	01.03	-	Containers	- No. 10
Сур	MSC London	01.03	- 1	Containers	SHS

Car sales rise in Pakistan

KARACHI — Pakistanis' love with cars is holding strong despite high costs and growing fees, resulting in escalating car sales. Sales during July-January 2002-03 rose by 34 per cent.

The entire auto sector showed an impressive performance in the last seven months of the current fiscal year as sales of bikes increased by 39 per cent followed by 77 per cent rise in truck and bus sales, 13.6 per cent in tractors and 58 per cent in light commercial vehicles.

In cars, new models continued to attract buyers' attention as people bought 34 per cent more cars, flaring up sales to 30,855 units of Japanese and Korean cars in July-January 2002-03, from 23,032 units in the same period of 2001-02, the figures, compiled by the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers

Association, reveal. "Depressed interest rates and entry of more financial institutions in the car financing market have contributed to car sales," Invest Cap and Securities Research Head Mohammed

remittances from abroad contin-

Sohail said.

"I think the boom in car sales will stay for two more years if the current buying trend persists," he said. The sales will further pick up in future if the home

ened against the yen and dollar. In the meantime, half-yearly results of some of the leading assemblers have been announced and more are expected next week. Indus Motors declared an interim dividend of Rs2 per share along with its first half 2002-03 results. - Internews

AMERICAS

Transsexual father wins child custody

CLEARWATER (Florida) — A man who was born a woman won custody of two children yesterday, with the judge ruling he is legally a male and his marriage to their mother did not violate Florida's ban on same-sex unions.

The 800-page ruling gave Michael Kantaras sole custody of the 14-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter born to his ex-wife.

ex-wife.

"It's the first time there has been a transsexual custody case where the court had medical testimony presented," Kantaras' attorney Collin Vause said. "The judge found that Michael is medically, socially and legally a male."

Kantaras, 42, was born

Margo Kantaras and underwent surgery and hormonal treatment to become a man in the 1980s, legally changing his name to Michael in 1986. He married Linda Forsythe Kantaras in 1989 and adopted her baby son from a previous relationship.

Later, Linda Kantaras was

Later, Linda Kantaras was artificially inseminated with sperm donated from Michael's brother and the couple had a daughter. They divorced after Michael became involved with another woman, and have battled in court for more than four years over custody of the children. Before he could resolve the custody issue, Circuit Judge Gerard O'Brien had to decide whether the marriage and the adoption of the older child were legally valid.

Attorneys for Linda Kantaras, who knew before marrying him that her husband had a sex change, argued that Michael was genetically a female and therefore the marriage and adoption were fraudulent. Florida law prohibits same-sex marriages and bars homosexuals from adopting children. Her attorneys also argued that being raised by a transsexual would be detrimental to the children. Three medical experts testified that Michael was a male. Testifying in January, he told the court "I may have been born in one body, but my mind and my soul and my heart is that of a male."
"You don't need certain

"You don't need certain body parts to be a good person and a good parent," he said. A court-appointed psychol-

ogist recommended that Michael, a bakery manager, be given custody of the children. The judge also met privately with the children before ruling.

"These children are innocent and have been intentionally drawn into this adult conflict over transsexualism," he wrote in his ruling.

O'Brien said Florida law

O'Brien said Florida law did not require marriage licence applicants to prove their gender and that a narrow and rigid interpretation of the marriage statute could lead to 'calamitous results for these children'. — Reuters

Rebels claim abduction of 3 Americans

rebels claimed responsibility yesterday for the kidnapping of three Americans who disappeared on February 13, accusing them of working for the CIA in a statement broadcast by radio. In the statement, broadcast by the private Radionet station, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) demanded an immediate end to military and search operations in the southern region of Florencia "to guarantee the life and physical integrity of the three American officers".

The three hostages are believed to be the first US government employees kidnapped by Colombian rebels during the country's four-decade civil war. The three went missing after their small plane was shot down in southern Colombia last week. Two others, one American and one Colombian, were found dead in the wreckage. — AFP

Volcano in Mexico erupts again MEXICO CITY—A

Mexican volcano has erupted for the second time in a week, sending tremors through the surrounding area and incandescent ash and smoke more than a mile into the night sky.

The eruption of the Popocatepetl volcano, was clearly visible from the capital, 60km to the east. The National Disaster Prevention Center termed it a 'localised and temporary' eruption and declared a yellow' alert, which kept the public from within 12km of the foot of the 5,465metre peak. The volcano had been dormant since 2000, when eruptions forced the evacuation of thousands of residents from the area. Because of Mexico City's heavy pollution, Popocatepetl is only visible from the capital a few days out of the year, and Friday was one of those days, thanks to winds that swept the 3km city



HONOUR: Irish singer Bono, left, of the group 'U2', accepting the Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences Musicares Person of the Year award from former United States president Bill Clinton, in New York. Bono was honoured for his accomplishments as a musician and as a humanitarian. — Reuters

Death toll nears 100 in nightclub blaze

WEST WARWICK (Rhode Island) — The death toll rose to nearly 100 yesterday from the inferno that engulfed a packed nightclub after a firework display during a rock concert went tragically wrong.

Special effects used by the band sparked the blaze inside The Station concert club late on Thursday, killing at least 96 people and injuring nearly 200 others. The walls caught fire, forcing the club's 300 patrons to rush the exits and kick in windows as they waded over bodies four deep.

Many patrons mistakenly believed the fire was an intentional part of special effects being used by the band. Survivors said the blaze spread so fast that the entire club in West Warwick was engulfed in flames within three minutes, as people crushed each other in a desperate bid to escape.

Some victims were burned to death or died of smoke inhalation, while others were trampled underfoot or killed as the building collapsed, firemen said.

The capacity of club was 300, but Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri estimated that there were close to 350 people inside.

"If you were not out of that

building in 30 seconds you didn't have a prayer," Carcieri said. An investigation into the cause of the fire was underway, but officials said their first priority was finding and identifying the bodies, many of which had been burned beyond recognition.

The disaster was triggered by a firework display which was part of the act put on by the 1980s hard rock band Great White. When it became obvious that the club itself was on fire, the clubbers panicked and headed for the doors.

The band's lead guitarist was among the missing. Fire officials said the club did not appear to

have had the certificate of competency or the permit needed to stage a firework display. "It was an old building, not a high-ceilinged building, so I would say that to let off pyrotechnics inside you were asking for trouble, Governor Carcieri said.

"Somebody made a bad decision and we don't know whether they were permitted or not. It didn't need to happen. It shouldn't have happened," he said. "People were here to dance and enjoy themselves."

enjoy themselves."

The worst nightclub fire in the United States was in 1942, when 492 people perished at a club in Boston. — AFP

Should celebrities speak out over Iraq?

LOS ANGELES — Sheryl Crow was ridiculed for wearing a "War is not the answer" T-shirt to an awards show, Sean Penn was castigated for visiting Baghdad and Martin Sheen was slammed for exploiting his TV role as a fictional US president by fronting an anti-war television snot

fronting an anti-war television spot.

Millions around the world have marched in protest against any war with Iraq, Nobel peace laureates have spoken out, and popes and poets have urged restraint. But when Hollywood — or some of it — started using its media muscle to further the anti-war rhetoric, it prompted a storm of controversy that reflects America's love-hate relationship toward its pervasive celebrity culture.

"The media created us, puts us on the air, and then says 'How dare you use your rights as a celebrity?'," said television producer Robert Greenwald, founder of the fledgling Artistes United to Win Without War.

"I have been surprised at the vehemence. We got a whole bunch of hate mail after our news conferences. Some of these talk radio shows go for days trying to viciously demean and demonise and marginalise these very eloquent and committed patriots among our group." Greenwald said.

among our group," Greenwald said.

Derided as "limousine liberals", or for being unpatriotic, the actors and musicians who have spoken out are now forced to spend as much time defending their free speech rights as detailing their opposition to a war.

"We are not experts. What we are is citizens in a democracy. We are using our patriotic rights and our ability to get the attention of the media," Greenwald said.

Yet many Americans seem more comfortable, or more accustomed, to hearing their stars gushing about gowns on the red carpet than expressing political opinions with a passion not seen since Jane Fonda visited Hanoi during the Vietnam War.

A CNN talk show this week called *Star Wars* carried the tag "What does Hollywood know about politics?" and "Are their views anti-American". A columnist in Utah's conservative *Deseret News* asked if it was wise "to take advice from people who generally don't begin to grow up until their late 40s or early 50s."

Actress and comedian Janeane Garofalo, one of the leading lights of Artistes United to Win Without War, says the word celebrity 'makes my skin crawl'.

"Regrettably, the majority does not hold the opinions of actors in high esteem. I don't know why it persists. Then there is this perceived wealth issue — the 'limousine liberals'. I don't see any reason why there should be a salary cap of \$30,000 a year before you wade in on a political issue," Garofalo said. Artistes United was launched in December with a simple statement urging President George W. Bush to let United Nations weapons inspections work and not to rush to war against Iraq.

The group counts some 130 supporters — only a tiny proportion of Hollywood's elite — including Kim Basinger, Robin Williams, Gillian Anderson, Matt Damon, Susan Sarandon, Sarah Jessica Parker and Kirsten Dunst.

It is part of an anti-war coalition of some 30 groups that includes Greenpeace, the National Council of Churches and Oxfam America.

None however have enjoyed or endured the kind of publicity given to the celebrities, including the likes of Dustin Hoffman, Woody Harrelson and Richard Gere whose anti-war views have made world headlines but who have not signed up to Artistes United. Actor Martin Sheen is rapidly emerging as the public face of the coalition and will front a nationwide TV spot that urges Americans to write, fax and e-mail Washington to protest an invasion of Iraq. — Reuters

Prehistoric horse most complete in Americas

LIMA (Peru) — Peruvian geologists have discovered the most complete horse fossil in the Americas, a reminder that the hoofed mammal existed in the New World long before the Spanish brought horses in the 1500s.

"Horses were reintroduced to South America. With this (find) we hope to remind people this animal did exist here, but died out some 10,000 years ago," Rodolfo Salas, head of Peru's Natural History Museum's palaeontology department, has said.

A team from the museum discovered the preserved skeleton of an Equus (Amerihippus santaeelenae in July 2002 in the arid department of Arequipa, some 1,000km south of Lima.

The horse, unearthed in an area full of volcanic ash and mud flows, had its head arched back and its front legs splayed out in front of its body. It was to be put on public display in the capital Lima on February 28.

"Without a doubt, this is the

"Without a doubt, this is the most complete horse fossil that exists in the Americas. Absolutely all the bones have been preserved," Salas said.

Compared to today's horse,

the Equus santaeelenae had a large head, a thick neck and short legs. — Reuters

VaxGen to detail first Aids vaccine result

WASHINGTON — Longawaited results for the first human test of a vaccine against the Aids virus will be announced tomorrow, vaccine maker VaxGen Inc. said.

Data from the trial, which began in 1998, is being analysed over the weekend, the Brisbane, California-based company said. It will be the first peek at the possible human benefits of a vaccine against the deadly virus, which has killed 25 million people around the world and has

infected 40 million more.

There is no cure for HIV and drugs that keep it under control are only available to patients in

industrialised countries. All experts agree that a vaccine is the only hope for controlling HIV. VaxGen has immunised two-thirds of 5,400 volunteers for the Phase III trial of the vaccine, called AidsVAX. They include 5,000 homosexual or bisexual men and 400 women considered to be at high risk of getting HIV. They have been watched since 1998 to see who

becomes infected.

The hope, is, obviously, that fewer people who got the vaccine will have become infected with HIV. "Many scientists have expressed deep scepticism about the ability of AidsVAX to pre-

vent HIV infection. They may be right. They may be wrong," the Aids Vaccine Advocacy Coalition, which has been carefully watching the trials, said in a statement.

"At best, doctors now hope that one or more of the vaccines may simply help people to live a little longer with the virus, or perhaps to reduce the ease with which it is transmitted from person to person."

VaxGen's AidsVAX vaccine is based on some of the earliest knowledge of HIV, the virus that causes Aids. It is the only HIV vaccine to have completed Phase III clinical trials — the last step

before a vaccine or drug maker can seek approval from the US Food and Drug Administration. About 30 other vaccines are in earlier stages of human testing.

AidsVAX uses two proteins, based on the GP-120 protein found on the outside "envelope" of the virus. The hope is the body's immune system can become sensitised to anything carrying GP-120 and will mount a response to the virus.

a response to the virus.

VaxGen's shares, which fell
21 cents, or 1.6 per cent, to settle
at \$13.02 on the Nasdaq
exchange, were halted after the
market close on Friday for news
pending — Reuters

PHILIPPINES

Manila stresses US troops not in combat role

MANILA — The Philippines insisted yesterday that US troops coming to the country to help local forces battle a rebel group would be barred from engaging in offensive combat operations.

Around 1,750 US troops are heading to the southern Philippines including 350 elite Special Operations soldiers who will be deployed on the island of Jolo, one of the lairs of the Abu Sayyaf. The group is linked to Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda network, blamed for the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US.

On Thursday, Pentagon officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the American forces would be involved in an offensive role. "They are going to conduct joint operations to disrupt and defeat the Abu Sayyaf group," one official said.

The Philippine constitution

The Philippine constitution bars foreign troops from engaging in combat and local military chiefs have rejected talk of a pro-active American role in fighting the Aby Savyer

pro-active American role in fighting the Abu Sayyaf.

"The position of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is that the US forces are here only to give training, advice and assistance," said a senior Philippine military official, who declined to be named.

Earlier presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye, who called the Pentagon reports misinformed, stressed that American troops would be under the command of Philippine army chiefs at all times and their activities would be 'strictly in accordance with our laws and constitution'.

our laws and constitution'.

Manila has been a strong supporter of the US-led war on terror but left-wing groups fear the country is becoming too closely allied with Washington. Some politicians also doubt government assurances that the American forces would not be used in a combat role.

"If US forces will be involved in combat operations

and possibly kill Filipinos they will be violating our sovereignty," warned Vice-President Teofisto Guingona at a media briefing on Friday. Guingona has been at loggerheads with the Arroyo government over the US military presence and was stripped last year of his second post as foreign minister.

Philippine Defence Secretary Angelo Reyes, who has declined to confirm or deny the reports from Pentagon sources, is heading to Hawaii today for talks with US military planners on the coming exercises.

After that he heads to Washington to meet US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Around 1,000 US troops conducted counter-terrorism exercises with local soldiers in the southern Philippines last year. They accompanied local troops in the field but stopped short of fighting although they were allowed to fire back in self-defence.

Bunye said the same conditions would apply for the latest exercises. "Commonsense dictates that (firing in self-defence). It's essentially the same terms and conditions as previously,"

The Abu Sayyaf is one of several groups in the southern Philippines claiming to be fighting for a homeland, although they have been branded a mere kidnap-for-ransom gang after a series of hostage-taking incidents in the past three years.

Our Correspondent adds: Senator Aquilino Pimentel said Reyes should be called back to the Senate by the oversight committee on the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) for turning the country into a 'deadly laboratory for the testing of the effectiveness of US troops, tactics and weaponry' against terrogists

Pimentel had said Reyes denied on television that there was any intention to involve US troops in the fight against Moro insurgents in Sulu in the guise of Balikatan-03.

"Now the cat is officially out of the bag!" Pimentel said, referring to official Pentagon announcements reported in the February 20 issue of the New York Times and the Washington Post that the US soldiers will engage in actual combat against rebels.

Pimentel accused Reyes of conspiring with the American military on this matter.

— Reuter:

Locals not consulted

From Our Correspondent

MANILA — The local officials and the people of Sulu were not consulted by Philippine and United States authorities when they decided to hold the third phase of the Balikatan military exercise there

Senator Aquilino Pimentel said this yesterday as he deplored the 'utter disregard' by the two governments on the sentiments of the people of Sulu and the misunderstanding of local culture and history.

He said that even Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao Governor Parouk Hussin, a Tausug from Sulu, was kept in the dark about the plan to hold the war games.

Pimentel said that he had objected to the planned deployment of American troops to Sulu for the joint RP-US military exercises as early as last year as this would provoke hostile feelings among the people and aggravate tension in the wake of the brewing war in Iraq.

Iraq.

He said the arrival of several companies of American troops would be viewed by the people of Sulu as nothing less than an intrusion into the Moro land, Sulu being the hotbed of insurgency.



Sultanate of Oman ROYAL OMAN POLICE NOTICE

The Royal Oman Police, Directorate of Public Relations, hereby announces a Public Auction for the sale of Used Police Vehicles at Dhofar Governorate at 9.00am on Sunday 2nd of March 2003.

Vehicles for sale can be inspected on auction day morning. Auction will be held according to the following conditions:-

The successful bidder should pay the vehicle value in cash.The successful bidder will bear the

auction commission.

— The successful bidder should remove

the vehicle within three days of the auction date, failing which he will have to pay a penalty of RO 5/- per day of delay.







Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment & Water Resources-Muscat <u>Tender Announcement</u>

The Ministry of Regional Municipalities, Environment and Water Resources invites Specialized Companies/ Establishments/ Enterprises registered with the Tender Board and concerned Ministries to the following Tender:

Tender No. 14/2003

Supply of Manpower for the Maintenance and Operation of Sewage Treatment Plants and the Sewerage Facilities at the Regions/Wilayats

Tender Document can be obtained from the Directorate General of Technical Affairs, Al Khuwair, during the office hours against payment of a non-refundable fees of R.O. 100/-

Tenders must be accompanied by a Tender Bond for 2% of total tender value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank, valid for 90 days from the last date of tender submission.

Tenders must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed with red wax. The Tender No. and name of the project shall be written on the top of envelope containing the Tender. Nothing should be written on the exterior of the envelope to display the identity of the Tenderer.

Tenders should be addressed to H.E THE CHAIRMAN, INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE and deposited in the Tender Box, 2nd Floor, MRME & WR Building, Al Khuwair by 10.00 AM on Saturday 8/3/2003.

The Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Two top tribal leaders arrested

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM - In a significant development, two top leaders of the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha who led the tribal agitation for land rights at Muthanga, were arrested even as the dawn-todusk hartal called by Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samiti evoked lukewarm response in the state.

C.K. Janu and M. Geethanandan were picked up from Nambikkolli yesterday with the help of locals, police said, adding that one Gothra Sabha supporter K.K Surendran, a lecturer from Sulthan Bathery, was also taken into custody.

Janu and Geethanandan had

gone underground after Wednesday's violence and police firing at Muthanga in Wayanad district, leading to the deaths of a policeman and a

The arrested persons were likely to be produced before a magistrate on Saturday, police

The state DGP, K.J. Joseph, told reporters at Kannur that so far at least 300 people had been taken into custody in connection with the clashes. Materials gathered from the incident site indicated that the Gothra Sabha had support from extremist agencies, he said. — PTI

Poverty alleviation can stop communal strife: Kalam

TIRUPUR — Communal strife in the country can be stopped by imparting proper education and removing pover-Kalam has said here. , President A.P.J. Abdul

Replying to a student's query on Friday as to why communal clashes were on the rise in the country, Kalam said lack of education and prevalence of poverty are the main factors for such strife in the

The president said 260 million people in the country were living below poverty line but once poverty is removed, there would be a difference in approaches. The growth of a nation, moreover, depends on education and removing deficiency, he said.

Once people are literate, there would be a unity, which would pave way for creating a great nation, Kalam said in reply to another question dur-ing an interaction with students. On need to bring in a change in the existing education system to achieve his goal of Vision 2020, Kalam said the vision would be achieved in es through five-year plans which would create job opportunities and result in scientific developments.

Clinton to address conclave via satellite

NEW DELHI - Former US president Bill Clinton, whose visit to India was cancelled due to serious security considerations, will address the India Today conclave live via satellite on March 1.

Clinton was scheduled to

Visit New Delhi for his keynote address to the conclave, but a statement from former American president's office said the United States secret services had requested him to cancel the visit because of serious security considerations, a release from the India Today group said here yesterday. He is expected to speak for

which is being held in the national capital from February 28 to March 3 and would feature a galaxy of international and national leaders, including resident A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Sri Lankan Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and Pakistan MP and former Pakistan cricket team captain Imran Khan, the

90 minutes in the conclave,

MLA, 130 people held MADURAI — Vandavasi PMK MLA Murugavelrajan

and 130 people belonging to Devendirar Ilangar Sangam were arrested yesterday when they attempted to take out a rally defying police order and block the road traffic in the city. The members of the Sangam were protesting the assault of the MLA allegedly by the supporters of the Congressmen K.K. Balasubramanian and M.

Ayodhi at Thirubhuvanam near here on February 13, police said, adding that they also demanded the arrest of both the Congress leaders.

The Congress partymen, who were waiting to receive their leader G.K. Vasan, had allegedly hit the MLA, after a wordy duel over hooting the air-horn when his (MLA's) convoy passed on the way. - PTI

Achuthanandan asks Antony to step down





INSPECTION: Communist Party of India (Marxist) MLAs, led by state secretary Pinarayi Vijayan, inspecting the weapons seized from the Muthanga tribal colony being displayed at the Forest Range Office; right, opposition leader V. S. Achuthanandan and MLAs Binoy Viswam, V. C. Kabeer, Kovoor Kunjumon, K. P. Rajendran, A.C. Shanmughadas and Abdulla Kutty, MP, visiting the tribal colony.

From Our Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM Kerala opposition leader V.S. Achuthanandan has asked Chief Minister A.K. Antony to step down, for taking moral respon-sibility of the Muthanga inci-

Addressing a press conference at Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad district after visiting Muthanga where clashes between tribal agitators and police killed two people, the opposition leader demanded a judicial probe into the incident. Only a judicial enquiry would bring out the whole truth, he said. Achuthanandan said it was for the first time in the history of Kerala that a tribal man was killed in police firing. The chief minister says the tribal people had cheated the government This was a land where tribal people were dying of starvation. It is in the same land where one tribal man named Jogi was killed in police firing. The chief minister should take the responsibility of this and step down, Achuthanandan said.

Achuthanandan alleged the police had burnt the dead bodies of the tribal agitators who were killed in police firing. He also alleged that the cops had buried the dead tribesmen inside the forests. The chief minister has given

contradictory figures on the death toll, he said. It was also surprising that the notorious police officer from the Kerala Armed Police Battalion was

called in to suppress the agitation. The chief minister told the assembly the police had fired 18 rounds. But the media persons who were witness to police action say they had fired several rounds, he alleged.

Police had opened fire at unarmed tribal people. There was no accuracy in the number of those who killed in firing. The truth must be brought to light. Only a judicial probe would bring out the truth.

Achuthanandan visited the injured Adivasis at the Sulthan Bathery Government Hospital along with CPM state secretary Pinarayi Vijayan, Kodiyeri Balakrishnan, V.C. Kabeer and A.C. Shanmughadas.

Kerala Forest Minister K. Sudhakaran and DirectorGeneral of Police K.J. Joseph had also visited the area.

Sudhakaran said the government would not hesitate to ban the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha in the context of the violent incidents at Muthanga. The government would not tolerate armed struggles in the state, he said.

Meanwhile, the Sulthan Bathery first class magistrate remanded 132 tribal agitators to custody for 15 days.

The police shifted 99 of those who were remanded to custody by the court to the Kannur Central Prison on Friday evening. They include 37 children. They were brought to Kannur from Wayanad in two police vans and two stateowned transport buses.

The police firing against the tribal agitators at Muthanga triggered violent incidents at Kolencheri in Ernakulam district. A group of youngsters claiming to be Ayyankali Pada, a tribal extremist group, attacked the Aikaranad village office and burnt the files there. They said the police had burnt

the tribal people at Muthanga

and that this was in retaliation

to that. The incident sent shock-

waves in the government offices in the area as there are so many tribal outfits in the district. The Adivasi-Dalit Samara Samithi told reporters here that more than 20 tribal agitators had died in police firing at Muthanga. They demanded release of dead bodies after post

mortem examination for funer-

al. They threatened to stage a sit-in by the families of those killed in police firing in front of the government secretariat if the government did not release the dead bodies

They said there were 2,000 tribal people from 110 families in 800 huts at Muthanga in Wayanad district. Out of this, police had arrested 240 people. Thirty families had surrendered. The tribal leaders asked where the remaining tribal people were. They would have withdrawn to the dense forest. The police should allow them to come out and return to their homes, they demanded. They also demanded the chief minister should resign as the government had sent police force to massacre the tribal people.

KPCC chief admits mistakes

THIRUVANANTHAPU-RAM — Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) president K Muraleedharan said the government had committed mistakes in handling the tribal agitation.

Talking to reporters here, he said the government was wrong in the beginning itself in dealing with tribal agitators. It was that mistake that culminated into violent incidents and the police fir-

Muraleedharan said the government should not have given recognition to a person like C.K. Janu as the leader of the tribal people.

That was the biggest

mistake. Janu was not a tribal leader. She was being controlled by some

He had brought this to the notice of the government but to no avail. Instead, the government recognised her as the leader of the tribal people and signed an agreement with her, he

The KPCC president said he represented the Lok Sabha constituency as an MP that covers areas, including Muthanga in Wayanad district. The government had not held discussions with him or the legislators from Wayanad like Radharaghavan or K.K. Ramachandran Master on the tribal issue.

BJP president escapes miraculously as chopper makes emergency landing

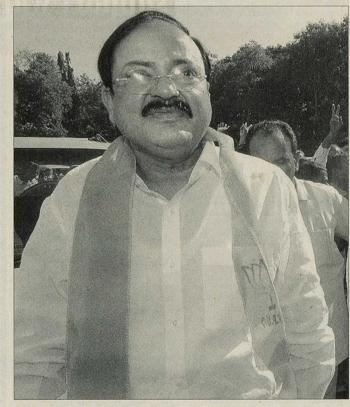
NEW DELHI — BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu had a providential escape yesterday when the helicopter he was travelling in developed a serious technical snag and had to make an emergency landing at Tuenseng in the northeastern state of Nagaland.

Naidu, who is on a threeday campaign tour of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura on an assembly election campaign is safe and there is no reason to worry, party general secretary and spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said here.

The private chopper developed some problems minutes after it left Chizami where Defence Minister George Fernandes, who was accompanying Naidu on a joint campaign, disembarked to address a public meeting, he said.

Fernandes later left for Dimapur in an Indian Air Force plane, Naqvi said.

While all other scheduled meeting of Naidu for the day has been cancelled, another chopper is being sent to enable Naidu to continue with his campaign, he said. — PTI



SCARE: Venkaiah Naidu

Two killed, six hurt in fire in ship at Alang

BHAVNAGAR — Two people were killed and at least half-adozen others sustained burn injuries in a major fire that broke out in a ship at the Alang ship breaking yard, near the western Bhavnagar coast in Saurashtra, official sources

The fire was noticed at plot No. 94 in the yard yesterday when some labourers were in the process of removing oil from the engine and it rapidly spread to upper portion of the engine chamber, where the crew cabin is located.

Bhavnagar district superintendent of police, Anupam Gehlot said that one Rajnikant succumbed to burn injuries while others were hospitalised with 20 per cent burns. The other deceased, identi-

fied as Manu Patel, a resident of Talaja village in the district, who jumped from the ship due to panic.

He was reportedly part of a business group that was inside the ship to purchase several articles before the auction, official sources added.

Gehlot said fire-fighting units had been able to control the leaping flames by this evening but the dousing operations were still continuing, he added. — PTI

Congress will form govt in HP: Shinde

SHIMLA — Maharashtra Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde yesterday claimed that the Congress was set to return to power in Himachal Pradesh as the people were fed up with the anti-people policies of the

Talking to media persons here, he claimed the record of Himachal government had been dismal on employment and development front and added that Himachal had an alarming number of 1.1 million educated unemployed while the much bigger state of Maharashtra had only 2.5 million unemployed youth registered with the employment exchanges.

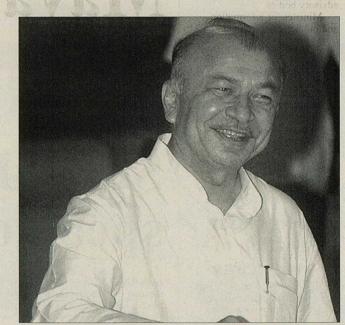
He said that party's manifesto was a commitment for the Congress party and the AICC president Sonia Gandhi was closely monitoring the implementation of the programmes, especially for the welfare of the poor and downtrodden.

Shinde said Congress chief ministers were sending their bimonthly progress report to the high command and Sonia Gandhi was convening meeting of chief ministers every six months to ensure that there was no laxity on the part of the Congress governments.

Taking on the NDA govern-ment for lapses during Kargil conflict, Shinde said that it was a monumental intelligence failure which fully exposed the lack of coordination between various securities agencies. Shinde said while power tar-

iff had been raised substantially in Himachal during the past five years, the Maharashtra government was giving subsidy of Rs3 to five per unit to con-He said the employment

guarantee scheme of Maharashtra could be replicated in Himachal Pradesh if the Congress returned to power and



CONFIDENT: Sushil Kumar Shinde

expressed hopes that it would open vast avenues in selfemployment sector.

He said the Congress government would also provide single window service for film units coming to Himachal for shooting and added the Maharashtra government would also assist the state in development of tourism and information technology industry. Meanwhile, Prime

Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on board special Air-India flight yesterday said the Congress was initially ahead of the BJP in the Himachal poll campaign but by now his party had caught up with the main opposition.
"First the Congress was

ahead, but now it is an equal fight," he said, adding that in the coming days before the elections BJP has to work hard. Talking to reporters on board a special flight en route to Kuala Lumpur, Vajpayee termed as crude an allegedly Congress pamphlet in Madhya Pradesh accusing him of eating beef and regretted that no one from that party has condemned this slanderous propaganda to date.

"I have seen it but no Congress leader has said so far that it should not have been done," he told reporters en route to the Malaysian capital to attend the NAM summit.

He wondered where the slanderous campaign would lead the Congress. Asked if the BJP was playing Hindutva card in Himachal Pradesh, he, in an apparent reference to the beef issue, said someone should ask Congress president Sonia Gandhi what kind of game she was playing. — PTI

Pakistan issue may figure

NEW DELHI Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said yesterday that what he claims is Pakistan's support of terror could figure in discussions at next week's Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)

"Those countries fighting global terrorism are not able to fight the menace of terrorism in their own country," Vajpayee told reporters before his departure to Kuala Lumpur for the two-day summit of the 114nation grouping beginning tomorrow

"The issue is likely to come up during our discussions," he said when asked if India would

NAM meet on the grounds of New Delhi's claims Islamabad is aiding and abetting terrorism. India and Pakistan both

signed up to support the US-led campaign against global terror immediately after the September 11, 2001, attacks on

New York and Washington.

Another subject likely to dominate the NAM summit is the near-certain US-led war against Iraq, also a member of

Both the outgoing and incoming heads of the NAM -South Africa and Malaysia are strong opponents of threats by the United States to lead an invasion to disarm Iraq without the support of the UN Security Council.

Vajpayee said he did not expect any "difference of opinion on Iraq ... All nations have a common approach on the

The premier said the NAM meet was coming at a crucial stage in its history as it sought to define its role in a changed world order

"It (NAM) has to fashion an effective economic agenda which will project the concerns and protect the interests of developing countries in the face of globalisation," he said. — AFP

ON ALERT: Paramilitaries of the Border Security Force standing guard at the Indo-Bangladesh border yesterday near Agartala, capital of Tripura. Tripura will be holding its state assembly elections on February 26. Security at the border has been tightened to prevent infiltration by rebels during the election. - AFP

at NAM meet: Vajpayee try to isolate Pakistan at the

INDIA

New Delhi moves to evacuate NRIs from Gulf states

NEW DELHI — The state-run airlines are on alert to evacuate some of the three million Indian workers in the Gulf if war breaks out in Iraq, Aviation Minister Syed Shahnawaz Hussain said yesterday.

"We are fully prepared for an evacuation," he said. "Both Air-India and Indian Airlines planes will be drafted."

But he said the airlift was unlikely to be as large as one in the 1990 Gulf War, when India flew home about 100,000 people.

ple.
"This war, if it takes place, may not last too long. So the evacuation won't be as big as last time," Hussain said.

Yesterday's Indian Express newspaper reported the two state carriers would fly into Dammam in Saudi Arabia. Most Indians in the Gulf

region live in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Kuwait, working as domestic staff as well as managers and doctors and in other skilled positions. Only about 100 are to be in Iraq, compared with 10,000 in 1990.

Chief UN arms inspector Hans Blix has given Iraq until next Saturday to start destroying dozens of missiles and warheads as the United States made clear its forces were ready to be unleashed on Iraq.

Rajasthan institutes award for women scribes

JAIPUR — Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot yesterday announced the institution of Indira Priyadarshini award for women scribes.

The award, comprising a cash prize of Rs21,000, would be given every year to a woman journalist for her contribution in media, Gehlot said while launching the Rajasthan media women's group here.

He said the state government would also take steps to give more representation to women journalists in various advisory bodies.

Minister for information and public relations Jitendra Singh said the state government would extend all assistance to the media women's group to help them realise their potential.

Giridhari Lal Bhargava, MP from Jaipur, announced a financial assistance of Rs200,000 from his MP local area fund for construction of a separate wing for women journalists in the pink city press club.

Noted writer Nasira Sharma in her keynote address expressed happiness that young girls were not only joining the profession of journalism in great numbers but also doing

President of the group Shashi Patni asked the government to provide them official accommodation for their office and to start a separate Women's Press Club in Jaipur.

Fate of aliens uncertain; 10 more arrested

SILIGURI — With the fate of six Bangladeshis stranded on no-man's land in Dakshin Dinajpur remained undecided for the fourth day today, another 10 were arrested in the northeastern Murshidabad district for overstaying in India.

The six Bangladeshis, including a woman and two children spent another night in the open at Dakshinpara in Hilli subdivision with the BSF having written to the BDR, who have been refusing to take them back after pushing them in on February 19, BSF sources said.

BSF 5 battalion commander D.S. Rathore has written to his BDR counterpart asking him to take back the Bangladeshis.

Indian villagers, themselves poor, taking pity on the plight of the bangladeshi family, particularly two 18 month old children, had been giving them bread and milk to survive, Additional District Magistrate Goutam Ghosh said.

The BDR at a flag meeting on Thursday refused to take back Mohammed Kamal (27), his wife Sajida (23) and their three children residents of Bangladesh's Rangpur district, and a family friend Mohammed Sahidul Alam (31) of Khulna district.

Meanwhile, another ten Bangladeshis were arrested from Pallishree area of Murshidabad district on Thursday night for overstaying in India, Superintendent of Police Birendra said today.

Police Birendra said today.

The ten, who were Hindus, were produced in a local court yesterday, which remanded them to police custody for

three days.

They had crossed over into the country in batches over the last one year, Birendra said.

— Reuters, PTI

Rhetoric, peaceful agitation plan mark VHP's conclave

NEW DELHI — Under apparent goading from the RSS and the government, the VHP yesterday toned down its aggressive stand at the 'Dharam Sansad' merely announcing a programme of peaceful agitation on the Ayodhya issue shifting its scene of action from the temple town to New Delhi.

Preceded by months of declarations of a now-or-never plan and speculation that a date for beginning the temple construction would be announced, the two-day meeting of the Hindu religious leaders merely called for country-wide sit-ins and demonstrations on February 27, the first anniversary of the Godhra train massacre, to fulfil the resolve of 'Ram sewaks' to build the temple.

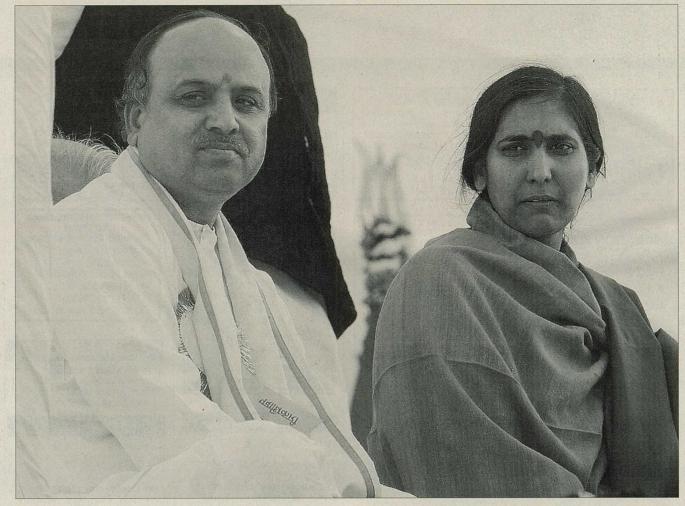
The Sangh Parivar outfit had earlier set the February 21 deadline to the government to hand over to the Ram Janambhoomi Nyas, the undisputed land acquired by the centre at Ayodhya, or else it would build the temple by force.

Unlike in the past when Ayodhya used to be the rallying point of all VHP programmes, including the abortive 'Shiladaan' ceremony last year, the meeting, in the first phase of the stir, announced a 'Satyagraha' programme in Delhi from March 27 to be preceded by a country-wide 'Dilli chalo' (march to Delhi) awareness programme from March 5-24

The dilution of VHP's aggressive posture was believed to be the outcome of hectic parleys senior cabinet ministers, including Murli Manohar Joshi and the RSS top brass had with the VHP leadership over the past couple of days, sources said.

However, there was no short-

However, there was no shortage of rhetoric with VHP leaders attacking the government charging it with appeasing Muslims and forgetting its ascent to power. Asked why no date for beginning temple construction was announced, VHP senior vice-president Acharya Giriraj



RALLY: Vishwa Hindu Parishad general secretary Praveen Togadia with VHP leader Sadhvi Rithambra during a rally in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

Kishore said: "How could we build without getting the land?"

The Dharam Sansad announced that religious yatras and meetings would be organised from March 5 to 24 to oppose the government's indifference, inaction and negligence in removing the hurdles in the path of temple construction.

It also announced a target of recruiting 2000 'Ram sewaks' (Hindu volunteers) at the block-

level and a team of 50 religious leaders would tour every state and organise meetings in support of temple construction.

Interestingly, the outfit which had earlier distanced itself from its firebrand secretary-general Praveen Togadia's demand for even the disputed site, yesterday asked the government through the Dharam Sansad to make suitable arrangements to handover to the

Ram Janambhumi Nyas (Trust) the entire complex, including the disputed site where the makeshift temple exists.

Vowing to launch the last fight for construction of the temple through countrywide agitations, the meeting of at least 10,000 religious leaders from India and Nepal also demanded renaming of India as 'Hindustan' and declaring it as Hindu Rashtra to restore honour

of Hindu society besides banning of cow slaughter and protection of River Ganga. The conclave warned the government that its slackness over the temple issue would cost it dearly.

"The temple construction is the main goal. But the fight will go beyond that," declared Togadia, adding: "The VHP and saints cannot wait for the court decision as it had already taken a lot of time and we can get the

VHP calls for Sonia support

Cong. leader told 'way to Delhi is through Ayodhya'

NEW DELHI — The Viswa Hindu Parishad (VHP) yesterday sought cooperation of opposition Congress president Sonia Gandhi in its pursuit to construct a temple at Ayodhya and promised support to her party in elections.

"Soniaji should know that the way to New Delhi is through Ayodhya and not Lucknow," firebrand VHP general secretary Praveen Togadia told reporters on the sidelines of the 'Dharam Sansad' (religious congregation) here.

Sansad' (religious congregation) here.
Inviting her to help in the construction of temple, Togadia said: "She and her party can get Hindu support. Anybody supporting our temple cause will get Hindu support. We will ensure that."

Polarisation has already taken place in the country, not only on temple issue, but other matters related to Hindus, he said. He made the comments while stating that parliament could help clear all hurdles in the path of temple construction, as they cannot wait for a court decision.

The VHP leader was critical of the Bharatiya Janata Partyled government over its moves on Ayodhya issue, saying we do not keep the government or its working in mind.

The saints are extremely angry and determined to launch a struggle for temple construction and even beyond that, Togadia said, adding that it is going to be more than a decisive fight. — *PTI*

land through parliamentary enactment for which we will create pressure."

In the blistering attack against the BJP-led government, Togadia, VHP working president Ashok Singhal, Mahant Avaidhyanath, Acharya Dharamendra, Mahant Parmanand and several others charged it with cheating and committing deceit with the saints. "Had there been no deceit, Godhra would not have taken place," thundered Acharya Dharmendra.

"We have given them Hindu

agenda, but now nobody is listening to us," Singhal said referring to the BJP and asserted it is time to make them listen.

On the Gujarat assembly polls, he claimed that the BJP

had got the sweeping victory due to Hindutva and it was triumph of the Hindutva. He regretted that uniform laws were not in force in the

laws were not in force in the country.

He alleged that Hindus were

being converted by force of through cheating and millions of foreign funds were being used in this. — PTI

Paswan for dismissal of Mayawati government

CHANDIGARH — The Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) yesterday demanded dismissal of the Mayawati government in Uttar Pradesh alleging it was using "repressive" measures against anyone "who dares to unmask its misdeeds in public".

"We condemn Friday's incident (in Lucknow) in which several Samajwadi Party workers were thrashed by police. We demand that a judicial inquiry should be ordered into the incident," party chief Ram Vilas Paswan said.

He alleged that Mayawati was "deliberately delaying" holding of the assembly session as she knows that her government is actually in minority and can be exposed any day.

Paswan alleged that the BJP was using Mayawati to "further their own (BJP's) vested interests. The UP government is a mere puppet in BJP's hands and is dancing to their tunes".

Lashing out at the UP government, he said even sugarcane farmers had not got their due. "While Rs110 per quintal (sugarcane) price is being paid in the neighbouring Haryana, the farmers in up get only around Rs35 to Rs40 for their produce," he claimed.

He also demanded scrapping of the anti-terrorism law — Pota — saying: "It has been misused"

"We have seen Pota has been used not to catch terrorists, but



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to settle (political) scores. Take small state of Jharkhand as example, there, 3,200 people

ake have been booked under Pota as which includes a journalist and a ople district forest officer. We still do not know why they had to be booked under this (Pota)," he said.

Attacking BJP for allegedly raking up the "temple issue" just before the polls, Paswan said "basically, VHP, BJP, RSS and Bajrang Dal have a common goal only to befool people by playing with their religious sentiments".

Now they are trying to create

the whole controversy of disputed and undisputed land (in Ayodhya) to further their narrow interests, but least do they realise that temple issue is only bound to give a boost to terrorist activities in the country," he added.

Paswan, who later left for

Paswan, who later left for Nahan in Himachal Pradesh for poll campaigning, said that his party would be contesting on 29 seats in the state. He also lashed out at the

He also lashed out at the BJP leadership for "befooling people of Himachal by not touching local issues. Instead, they want to mislead them by talking of Ayodhya and other issues, which do not concern them".

Paswan said that his party would support any "non-BJP" government in Himachal in case no single party was able to form the government on its own. He also criticised the state government for allegedly ignoring the interests of Dalits and other downtrodden sections of the society during his five-year tenure. — PTI

US offers Delhi \$2.5 billion, oil to support war, says report

NEW DELHI — The United States has offered to give India the \$2.5 billion owed to it by Iraq and assure its oil supply for unambiguous support of its war against Baghdad, a report said yesterday.

The Asian Age newspaper said

Washington would also award New Delhi a major chunk of reconstruction activities in post-war Iraq in exchange for unconditional backing. The report did not specify when or

through what channels Washington's offers were conveyed to New Delhi, but said State Department officials had told visiting Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal that US and Indian interests could converge after the war.

It said oil remained a major lure,

with Washington making clear that all countries clearly standing behind the United States would get a share in the proceeds of the war and removal of Saddam Hussein.

India imports most of its oil and gas

and its projected requirement in the fiscal year to March is 108 million tonnes of crude oil, against local production of 33 million tonnes.

Estimated consumption of 55 million

tonnes of natural gas compares with domestic production of 24 million tonnes.

Last year India imported 78 per cent of its requirement of 100 million tonnes of crude oil. Prime Minister Atal Behari

Vajpayee repeated India's long-held position on Friday that the Iraq crisis should be resolved through the United Nations rather than "by one or two countries". — AFP

Illiteracy biggest challenge, says Kasturirangan

NEW DELHI—The single largest illiterate population in the world coupled with poor educational provisions was the greatest challenge facing the country in the emerging world order, noted space scientist K. Kasturirangan said yesterday here.

Educating the whole nation, across the entire cross-sec-

tions of society, spanning all ages and different walks of life, is the new world order, Kasturirangan said at the 14th convocation ceremony at the Indira Gandhi National Open University here.

India faced the greatest challenge with its largest illiterate population and poor educational provisions, he said.

erate population and poor educational provisions, he said.
Kasturirangan was conferred on the degree of doctor of science by the university and Sir John Daniel, assistant director-general, Unesco, the degree of doctor of letters.

Their challenge was both of quality and quantity at all levels of education, he said, adding that the issue was to keep the nation updated.

In this endeavour, Ignou, one of the fastest growing educational systems worldwide, had been playing a major role by providing opportunities for higher education to a large segment of the population, he said.

Isro was also playing its role by bringing the satellitebased communication and broadcasting infrastructure to meet the needs of tele-education.

The dedicated education satellite Edusat, which Isro

planned to launch, would enable a nationwide outreach for programmes related to education, training and enrichment.

Delivering his address, Daniel appreciated Indian efforts in the area of education by enshrining the right to education in the constitution.

"Education is a human right, and I applaud India for enshrining that right in the constitution," he said, adding that the right to education was the key to unlocking other human rights.

Where the right to education is guaranteed, people have a greater chance to access and enjoy other rights, he said. Daniel said that open universities are revolutionary because they have broken the eternal triangle of quality, access and cost. Conventional teaching methods cannot deliver that combination, he said.

With conventional methods quality tends to go down when access is increased or cost is reduced, Daniel said and added the Ignou had provided wider access to education as well as brought down the cost. — PTI

Nineteen injured in clashes inside Golden Temple complex

AMRITSAR — Nineteen people were injured, two seriously, when All-India Sikh Students' Federation supporters clashed with members of Shiromani Khalsa Panchayat inside the SGPC complex adjoining the Golden Temple shrine here yesterday, police said.

The clash took place when 300 activists of AISSF led by Gurcharan Singh Grewal confronted 500 workers of the SKP who thronged the complex protesting the removal of Akal Takht Jathedar Gaini Joginder Singh Vendanti for adopting a liberal attitude towards chief of Vishwa Noor Roohani Satsang of Nawan Shahar Baha Dhanwant Singh allegedly involved in a rape case. A police spokesman told reporters here yesterday that 11 people belonging to the two organisations were arrested under various scottors of IBC.

various sections of IPC.

The injured were taken to the Guru Ram Dass Hospital where they were discharged after first aid. The SKP activists attacked AISSF workers with swords and spears when the latter tried to stop them from holding a protest inside the SGPC complex. — PTI





CLASHES: A man from the Khalsa Panchayat faction threatens members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandak Committee with a sword; right, members of rival Sikh factions clashing outside the Golden Temple in Amritsar vesterday.



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Young Indian, M.com, computer literate (Tally-es) knowledge of Arabic language seeks suitable placement. Contact 9035707 B.Com with experience of one

Zubair Auto power past

By Our Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — Defending champion Zubair Auto powered past Oman-UAE Exchange 94-80 on Friday night at the Ghala Church Compound Basketball Court.

The auto team drew awesome firepower from team captain, Ariel Manacling and Aris Samson who scored 39 and 26 points respectively.
Point guard Levi Silvio

came out of his shell with 10 big points and jolted Mon Raagas and Harold Vibal who scored 8 and 6 points respec-

tively.

The score was tied at 41all at the half time and the second half saw the auto team edging away. Ariel Manalang with 12 rebounds, Men Raagas with 11, Levi Silvio and Harold Vibal hauled 10 boards each were the key players in the winning side. Rudy Castress of OUAE

has a game high of 25 points. Jun Valientes and J.P. Garcia with 15 and 14 points, respectively, were the other scorers.

The winners led the points

table with five wins and five loses while for the losers this was their sixth defeat in 10

In another match, Nizwa Club handed Al Rawabi another defeat 131-57. For Rawabi this was their eighth defeat in 10 games.

Seeb Club thrashed OIB-RCBC 117 – 36. Seeb Club

took control of the game right from the opening buzzer as they lead 60 -18 in the first 20 minutes of the game. It was pretty much the same story in the second half as OIC-RCBC scored the same number of points they made in the first

Zaki Said led the rampag-ing Seeb Club with 30 points and 10 boards with scoring support coming from Abdullah Mohd with 13 markers. P. Bacalso and B. points, respectively for OIB-RCBC.

PDO swept past Golden Cinema 58-49. Jojo Yap of Golden Cinemas' 9 points paved the way for the first half of the game. However in the second half of the game, A.R. Mahmoud of PDO pounded Golden Cinema with 23 points with the able support of D. Rayes contributing 12, while A.R. Rashid had a fall day under the board with field day under the board with 20 rebound. The golden boys tried in vain to secure the lead, led by A. Garcia with 12 points and 9 rebound supported by J. Zamora 11 points and

J. Joven 10 points. Golden

Cinema this was their sixth

By Our Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — Muscat Keralites

will be organising the Challenge Cup 2003 eight-a-side Football Tournament at the

Oman Club in Al Khuwair on

Friday.
This unique one-day tourna-

ment has been gaining popular-

ity in recent times with the

Muscat-based Goans also

organising similar tournaments.

Cup was held at the Saj

Restaurant under the auspices of Varghese Mathew, the

restaurant's general manager

and the organising committee members M.K. Chandran, Rajeev Kumar, Gangadharan

the fray, which included the

In all sixteen teams are in

Nair and Prince Joseph.

The draw for the Challenge

loss in 10 games.

OUAE

By Our Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — Raha Cricket Team — aided with valiant tons from Sultan Ahmed and Sajjad Ahmed — scored a comfortable six wicket victory over Al Hajara Al Nafeesa Jewellers in the Muscat Pharmacy-sponsored 'A' division game of the His Highness Sayyid Abbas bin Faisal Memorial cricket league at the OAC II ground on Friday. The Jewellers survived an

early setback through a second wicket stand of 185 runs in 22 overs between Rafi-ul-Allah and Umair-ul-Hassan. Both perished at the same score, the latter for 100 runs made from 70 balls with the help of 10 fours and 2 sixes. Rafi scored 81 runs also from 70 balls with 9 fours. Awal Khan then defied the Raha attack to score 65 runs as the Jewellers posted a mammoth total of 341 for 8 wickets in 50

For Raha, Tariq Hussain claimed three wickets while Mohammed Asif and Aamir Ali shared two wickets each.

While Raha lost two wickets cheaply but Sajjad and Sultan stemmed the rot by adding 228 runs for the third wicket in 27 overs when Sajjad left after scoring 111 runs from 77 balls with 16 fours. Aamir added a further 31 runs with Qaim before returning to pavilion after facing 98 balls for his 123 runs which contained 14 fours. Qaim, however, stood his ground and was unbeaten on 53 runs when victory was achieved in only the 38th over with 6 wickets in hand.

Farhan Khan claimed two

Brief Scores: Al Hajara Al Nafeesa Jewellers 341/8 in 50 overs (Umair-ul-Hassan 100, Rafi-ul-Allah 81, Awal Khan 65, Farhan Khan 30, Tariq Hussain 3/56, Mohammed Asif 2/52, Aamir Ali 2/66) lost to Raha Ad4/4 in 38 overs (Sultan Ahmed 123, Sajjad Ahmed 111, Qaim Hussain 53 not out, Farhan Khan 2/63).

Easy for RBK Heinz: The

Ramniklal B. Kothari Heinz (RBK Heinz) registered an easy victory over PDO in the Raha Polyproducts-sponsored 'B' division game at the PDO

Batting first PDO were restricted to 153 runs in 26.2 overs as RBK Heinz's Sameer



MEN OF THE DAY: Sultan Ahmed, left, Sajjad Ahmed, centre, and Sameer Mohammed

Mohammed ripped through the middle order removing three batsmen cheaply and reducing the side to 57 for 5 wickets in the 10th over. PDO could recover from the set back. Pramod Prabhakar and Jaigopal Mehta took two wickets each. Only Mohammed Ismail showed some resistance and top scored with 40 for PDO.

In reply, the RBK Heinz, lost Chetan Thanki for 20 runs, recovered through a second wicket stand of 97 runs in 10 overs between Anil Mandalia and Pramod Prabhakar (41).

Raghu Krishnan added 28 runs with Anil before leaving at 148 for 3 wickets. Anil who was in superb nick ensured a win for his side in the 16th over with 7 wickets remaining. Anil was unbeaten on 68 made from 42 balls with 8 fours.

Sultan, Sajjad slam centuries for Raha

Brief Scores: PDO 153 all out in 26.2 overs (Mohammed Ismail 40, Sameer Mohammed 3/30, Pramod Prabhakar 2/36, Jaigopal Mehta 2/41) lost to RBK Heinz 154/3 in 15.2 overs (Anil Mandalia 68 not out, Pramod Prabhakar 41, Chetan Thanki 20).

Jaideep spins Muscat Finance to victory: A fine spell Swaminathan took Muscat Finance to victory over Al Hatmy in a Oman National Electric Co-sponsored 'D' divi-sion game at the OAC IV

Ramesh V. and Ajit Engineer were associated in a 93-run second wicket stand for Muscat Finance who opted to bat first. Ajit missed half century by one run. Ramesh made 73 runs from 61 balls with 6 fours. Later with O. V. Firoz (21) and

Shivnarayan (27 not out) also scoring useful runs Muscat Finance reached a formidable score of 220 for 6 wickets in 25

For Al Hatmy Rafeeq Mohammed claimed three wick-ets and Ibrahim took two.

In reply, Al Hatmy openers Imtiaz Patel (37) and Naeemuddin's (32) stand of 68 runs in eight overs went in vain as with Jaideep Swaminathan struck four times. Ajit Engineer took two more wickets as Al Hatmy fell 31 runs short of the

Brief Scores: Muscat Finance 220/6 in 25 overs (Ramesh V. 73, Ajit Engineer 49, Shivnarayan 27 not out, O. V. Firoz 21, Rafeeq Mohammed 3/38, Ibrahim 2/44) beat Al Hatmy 190 all out in 24 overs (Intiaz Patel 37, Naeemuddin 32, Tanveer 24, Irshad 24, Shaukat Khan 24, Jaideep Swaminathan 4/30, Ajit Engineer 2/35).

Bank Dhofar beat Circle Freight: Circle Freight despite restricting Bank Dhofar Al Omani Al Fransi to a low score lost the Al Ansari Trading Enterprise sponsored 'E' diviThe bank team batted first and the top order comprising Khalid Moosa (47), Mohammed Ali (55) and Amin Abdul Hussain (32) contributed useful runs but with the later batsmen showing no inclination to stay long at the wicket, Bank Dhofar was dismissed for 185 runs in 24.2 overs. Ronald Rangel and Praveen Louis shared three

wickets each In reply Circle Freight top order failed to deliver the goods and the side collapsed to 59 for 7 wickets in the 12th over. The Cirle Freight tail, however, made a valiant attempt to revive the side but only managed to reach 120 runs in the 20th over. The last Circle Freight batsman Umeshdas Kotian with 18 runs

was the top scorer.
For Bank Dhofar Abdul
Nassir claimed 3 wickets and
Ahmed Habib chipped in with 2

Brief Scores: Bank Dhofar Al Omani Al Fransi 185 all out in 24.2 overs (Mohammed Ali 55, Khalid Moosa 47, Amin Abdul Hussain 32, Praveen Louis 3/10, Ronald Rangel 3/20) beat Circle Freight 120 all out in 19.3 overs (Abdul Nassir 3/24, Ahmed Habib 2/26).

Saleh pips Malcolm at the post

By Our Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — A superlative performance in the last lap helped Saleh Al Wahaibi emerge champion of the Muscat Road Runners (MRR) Half-Marathon Championship.

Slaeh completed the gruelling 21.1km in one hour 32.01 seconds pipping Malcolm Dransfeld who was outpaced by the champion in the final stretch and was forced to content with the second place with a time of 1:32.22s.

Malcolm in the lead until the Omani overtook with hardly 1000m to complete was obviously disappointed and was also drained out at the end of the

The competition was held around the hilly PDO Loop. MRR organisers claimed

that the four laps of the gru-elling course made it one of the most fearsome half marathons in the world: In all 22 competitors took

part and were up against not only the difficult terrain but strong winds too made it diffi-cult for the runners.

Malcolm opened up a one minute advantage initially followed closely by Steve Hall. The trio of Saleh Al Wahaibi, Jan Saeby and Bert

Michels were keeping the pace in the third bunch. Blair Christink and Munir Al Luwatia were among the



MRR CHAMPION: Winner Saleh Al Wahaibi, right, with runner-up Malcolm Dransfeld.

Challenge Cup soccer on Friday

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CHALLENGE CUP

Also in the fray are the top Goan teams, which hands a

mixed flavour to the tourna-

DRAW: Chief guest Varghese Mathew and the organising com-

mittee members at the draw for the Challenge Cup 2003.

high-flying team of the Indian Social Club's Kerala Wing and

the most popular FC Kerala.

NEW MENU WITH MORE THAN 25% REDUCTION

At the end of second lap, Malcolm still leading while Saleh and Jan joined Steve in the second position.

Bert dropped back as Munir left Blair leaving him in the company of Michel Le Fur and Francis Clayton. Malcolm held the upperhand till the last lap when Saleh who was getting quicker with every lap overtook to take the honours.

It was a great end to a well contested race. Jan Saeby, Jim Freestone, Jon Noad, John Edwards and Hamad Al Thohli were the debutants among the

Today's social run is being organised by Duncan Snell from the RAFO Ghala car park at 5.30pm. Next Tuesday's run is the

3K/5K ministries begins at 5.15pm from festival site car park opposite to the BMW showroom.

Results: 1. Saleh Al Wahaibi (1:32.01s), 2. Malcolm Dransfield (1:32.22), 3. Steve Hall (1:34.36), 4. Jan Saeby (1:36.29), 5. Munir Al Luwatia (1:41.10), 6. Francis Clayton (1:46.13), 7. Jim Freestone (1: 48.33), 8. Alan Boyd (1:48.45), 9. Rob Gardner (1:49.54), 10.

ment. ISC Kerala Wing's foot-

ball team has been making

waves in recent competitions

and the organisers are expect-

ing the team to do well in this

have entered the tournament are

Salcette Strikers, Verna United, Navelim, United Goans, Curotium, Arbital FC Siolim,

Chandor, Chinchinim, Keegan

Sporting, Saligao Sporting,

ed into four groups and this one-day event will be played on

a league-cum-knockout basis.

The teams have been divid-

The first match will kick off

at 8.30am and the final match is

scheduled tentatively at 8pm.

The tournament is likely to

attract big participation of

sports enthusiasts as in the past.

The leading teams which

tournament as well.

Zuari and Divar.

Ruthless Siddig thrashes Yuichi

By Our Sports Reporter

MUSCAT — Siddiq Al Hasmi proved to be in ruthless form as he dismantled the challenge from Yuichi Kanda with a 6-0, 6-1 verdict in the men's singles second round of the 20th Hotel Inter-Continental Muscat Annual Open Tennis Championship. In the first round men's singles matches, Y. Sawamura eased past K. Imabyashi 6-2, 6-2, while Arend Roggeveen 2, while Arend Roggeveen blanked Erwin Soriano 6-0, 6-0.

In the women's singles, Nikita Chengapa defeated Wendy Crofts 6-1, 6-2 to ease into the second round, while Miyuki Sakagushi also won her first round match beating Pipa Hackett 6-4, 6-2.

In the mixed doubles, Umi Hassan and Danny Abordo struggled past Bud and Gaye Mitchell 7-5, 7-6, while Sohaib and Kathy Danielson steamrollered the combo of Zeid Harb

and Misha Daud 6-0, 6-0.
In the only veteran's doubles first round match, K. Sonodo and T.Shoji beat P. Bagshaw and C. Lazarus 6-2, 6-1. Other results: Under-12

boys singles (second round): Hatem Sadiq bt Tareq Malzer 6-4, 7-5; Suneet Fernandes bt Jarryd Menezes 6-1, 6-0; Sarhud Vaidya bt Areeb Usman

First round: Basim Habib bt Michael Karisen 6-0, 6-0; Patrick Stockl bt V. Sanjeeb 6-2, 6-3; Rohan Negi bt Nalin Dennison 6-0, 6-3; Sivaram Sridharan bt Adarsh Muthappa 7-5, 6-3; Ashwath Raman bt Bastian Mueller 6-0, 6-0.

Kamathi, Masai beaten in Kenya

NAIROBI — World 10,000 metres champion Charles Kamathi fell by the wayside as John Cheruiyot Korir won the men's 12-km race at the Kenyan cross country championships yesterday.

There was also another defeat for world short course cross country champion Edith Masai also suffered a defeat, who finished second to Isabella Ochichi in the women's 4km.

Kamathi pulled out of the race in the final lap. - Reuters



as lightning strikes

KUALA LUMPUR — Arjun Atwal of India bolted into a four-shot advantage yesterday at the Malaysian Open before a lightning storm brought the third round to an abrupt end.

After completing his rain-interrupted second round yesterday morning in six-under-par 65 for a three shot edge over world No. 5 Retief Goosen, Atwal extended his advantage by one stroke in the afternoon. When play was suspended at 5:45pm (1045 GMT), the Indian

star was two-under-par after eight holes of his third round, well ahead of the former US Open winner Goosen and Thailand's Thammanoon Srirot. No players completed the

Goosen, the reigning two-time European Tour No. 1, was one-under for his round while Srirot joined the South African star on 13-under for the tourna-

ment by cruising to three-under after eight holes. But Thammanoon is set to

McGrady breaks 50-point barrier as Magic rout Bulls

drop at least a shot on the ninth after hooking his tee shot into the jungle before eventually hitting the green with his fourth shot when play was stopped at the Mines Resort and Golf Club.

He will have a 14-foot putt for bogey Sunday morning.

The third round of the

Carlsberg Malaysian Open, jointly sanctioned by the Asian PGA and European Tours, was to resume early today. The fourth round, to use the

same pairings as yesterday, is scheduled to start at 9:45 am with the last pairing due off at 11:50 am.

"I'm actually not bothered by this delay. I played 11 holes this morning and finished eight in the afternoon, so I'm not too upset," said Atwal.

"It's nice to be in front by four and I'm just going to try to keep doing the same thing and keep playing within myself. I'm concentrating well and I keep telling myself that I've been in this situation before and that I've won four times on the Asian PGA Tour. If someone is going to beat me, he's got to shoot bet-Atwal's two-day total of 15-

under 127 was the years lowest 36-hole score on the Asian PGA and European Tour. He also matched Ernie Els low tworound score, in relation to par. Goosen had two birdies and a lone bogey in his eight holes.

But he was somewhat relieved that play was stopped and said that he wasn't striking the ball

well. "I didn't play all that solid, so hopefully it will be better tomorrow. I had a bad bogey on the fifth as I had just a soft nine

iron in," Goosen said. "Arjun has a great swing and obviously very mature. He is playing really well. "If it becomes a three-round tournament, I will really struggle. My only hope is a four round tournament unless I can shoot another 29 on the back nine," said the

South African. — AFP

Woods shoots 68 to remain in the hunt

LOS ANGELES — Tiger Woods, seeking his first victory in his hometown tournament, fired a three-under 68 on Friday to remain in the hunt at the halfway point of the \$4.5 million PGA Nissan Open. The 27-year-old American got off to a sparkling start on Friday with four birdies in the first nine holes at the Riviera Country Club after shooting a one-over 72 in the first round.

He is four strokes back of leader Charles Howell who shot 65 on Friday. Woods, who won his season-opening event in San Diego last week, is at two-under 140 after 36 holes.

"I played really well," said the reigning Masters and US Open champ. "I'm in a real good spot. I am very satisfied. I hit one really bad shot over on seven which ended up costing me a couple of shots. Woods started his round on the easier back nine on Friday and took advantage of it. "I've won my share of tournaments so I understand

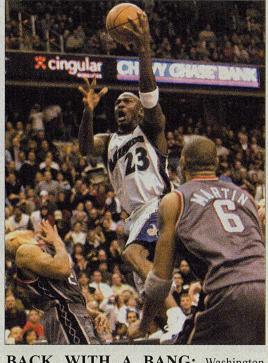
how to play my way into contention and hopefully win," said Woods. "The back side definitely gives you a better chance at scoring." Woods, who grew up in nearby Cypress, missed the first five events of the season following surgery on his left knee.

In 1992, 16-year-old Woods received an exemption to play in his first PGA Tour event here and shot 72 and 75 to miss the cut.

Woods has competed here five times without winning making this the tournament that has eluded him the longest. 'This is a tournament that I've always wanted to win because it is right down the road from where I grew up," said Woods. "On top of

that this is where it all started for me. Woods had the most trouble on Friday on the seventh hole (the 16th of the round). He registered a rare double bogey after getting his

ball buried in the deep grass. His final birdie of the day came on his 17th hole when he sank a 20-foot putt. But he missed a 12-foot putt on the final hole for a bogey



BACK WITH A BANG: Washington Wizards' guard Michael Jordan (23) goes up for the game winning point against the New Jersey Nets, in the final seconds of the game at the MCI Center in Washington. Watching Jordan are New Jersey forwards Richard Jefferson, left, and Kenyon Martin (6).

ORLANDO - All-star Tracy McGrady had a career night, pouring in 52 points in just three quarters of play as the Orlando Magic thumped the Chicago Bulls 110-96

in NBA play on Friday.

McGrady was 15-of-32 from the floor, including 6-of-13 from threepoint range.

His previous high was 50 points against Washington last March. Only Shaquille O'Neal has had a better night for the Magic, getting 53 against Minnesota in 1994.

Drew Recently-acquired Gooden, who began the week with Memphis, was next best for Orlando with 22 points as well as 11 boards. Jay Williams counted 20 points

to pace Chicago, which fell to 3-28 on the road. Tyson Chandler added 16 points and a team-high 10 In Washington, it was like old times for Michael Jordan, who

notched 43 points in 43 minutes on the floor as the Wizards upset the Atlantic Division-leading New Jersey Nets 89-86. He became the first 40-year-old score 40 points in an NBA game,

having celebrated his 40th birthday

on Monday. Richard Jefferson

topped the Nets with 25 points, with

Kenyon Martin adding 14 and grabbing 12 rebounds.

The Nets had won all three pre-

vious meetings between the teams this season, with Jordan scoring a total of 41 points in those three

In Toronto, veteran Antonio Davis notched 22 points— including the final four-on 9-of-12 shooting as the Raptors rallied to down the Phoenix Suns 92-89. Davis, the subject of recent trade

rumours, also grabbed 12 boards, one fewer than team mate Jerome Williams.

All-star Vince Carter, who last week said the Raptors still had playoff hopes, added 13 points.

Stephon Marbury had 22 points to pace Phoenix, clanking a halfcourt, three-point try off the rim with time about to expire. Shawn Marion grabbed 12 rebounds for the Suns. In Cleveland, all-star Allen Iverson matched a season best as he counted 41 points as the Philadelphia 76ers pounded the

Cavaliers 119-99. It was Iverson's 174th straight game in double figures, the longest current run in the league. Keith Van Horn was next best for the Sixers with 22 points.

Five Cavs were in double figures, with Zydrunas Ilgauskas the best of the bunch with 19.

Cleveland is an NBA-worst 10-45 and in danger of setting a clubrecord for futility.

In Minneapolis, Kevin Garnett poured in 34 points, 11 in the final quarter, and snared 16 rebounds as the Minnesota Timberwolves edged the red-hot Detroit Pistons 103-96. It was Garnett's 12th doubledouble in his last 14 games.

Wally Szczerbiak chipped in with 20 points as Minnesota won for the 17th time in 22 games. Both Chauncey Billups and Richard Hamilton had 23 points to pace the Pistons, with Ben Wallace adding 16 and 12 boards.

Detroit had won nine of its previous 10 games.

New Orleans, Jamal Mashburn counted an even 50 points, including the game-winning bucket with a second to play in overtime, as the Hornets edged the Memphis Grizzlies 125-123.

In Houston, Dirk Nowitzki had 34 points and 11 boards as the Dallas Mavericks swept their season series with Houston with an easy 100-85

It marks the first time Dallas has

gone 4-0 against Houston in a sea-

In Los Angeles, Kobe Bryant overcame a bad knee to notched his eighth straight 40-point game as the Lakers downed the Portland Trail Blazers 92-84. Bryant's streak is the longest since Michael Jordan managed the feat in nine straight games

games that season. Shaquille O'Neal added 24 points and 12 rebounds after being sidelined for three games with knee and toe problems.

Bonzi Wells had 25 points to top

in 1986-87; Jordan had 37 40-point

Portland, with Rasheed Wallace net-23. Philadelphia's Wilt Chamberlain scored 40 or more points in 14 straight games back in 1961-62. He had a phenomenal 63 40-point games that campaign. In Oakland, Antawn Jamison

counted 31 points as the Warriors rallied to edge the New York Knicks In Seattle, the SuperSonics, playing with just eight men, all of whom saw action, held the Milwaukee

Bucks to a franchise low 58 points in an 88-58 rout. Rashard Lewis led Seattle with

20 points, with rookie Reggie Evans grabbing 14 rebounds. — Reuters

to cap a roller-coaster finish to his day. — AFP

Jordan turned 40 years old this week. - Reuters

TIMES SPORT

Sunday, February 23, 2003

Coria upsets Nalbandian

BUENOS AIRES — Guillermo Coria stunned second seed and last year's Wimbledon runner-up David Nalbandian 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 to reach the Buenos Aires Open semifinals on Friday, then tearfully thanked the friends who stood by him during a seven-month doping ban. Coria will face fourth-seed and compatriot Gaston Gaudio, who beat Jose Ignacio Chela 6-3, 6-4. Former world No.1 Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil became the first non-Argentine into the last four when he beat Spain's Felix Mantilla 6-2, 6-7, 6-1. — Reuters

Henin spoils Seles party Arsenal roar clear as United stumble

DUBAI — The seventh title of Justine Henin-Hardenne's career proved the hardest to win after she was forced to save a match point and battle for two and three-quarter hours before overcoming Monica Seles in the final of the Dubai Open tennis yesterday.

The top-seeded Belgian beat the former world number one from the United States 4-6, 7-6 (7/4), 7-5, although Henin had seemed to be heading for a straightforward defeat at 4-5 and 30-40 on her service in the second set.

It was her first triumph as a married woman and a belated Valentine's present, she said, for her husband Pierre-Yves whom she married three months ago.

"It was unbelievable because it was very close and physically very hard for me, and at the end of the first set I could feel I was tired from yesterday," said Henin, who had had a three-set semifinal against another former world number one, Jennifer

Capriati.

"My leg was hurting a little bit and I couldn't push on it as I wanted to, but at the end of the second set and in the third I forgot about everything."

The second set match point produced the longest rally of the contest thus far-a 35-stroke sequence of parabolas and angles which ended with a Seles backhand drive just clipping the top of the net.

Seles had done very little wrong to lose that wonderful point, but it was still the kind which can change the psychology of a contest, and sure enough Henin got on to a roll after win-

ning it. She held serve twice, immediately went a mini-break ahead in the tie-breaker, captured it 7-4, and looked more secure on her serve throughout the final

But then the variable standard of the opening games had been elevated tremendously, and the contest developed into a contrast of speed of foot versus weight of shot, and burgeoning versus enduring resilience, which produced fas-



CUP OF JOY: Justine Henin-Hardenne of Belgium kisses the Dubai Open trophy. -AFP

cinating rallies of attack and counter-attack.

But there was a topsy-turvy finish before the 20-year-old edged out the nine-time Grand Slam winner who was playing in 85th final.

First Seles slipped to love-40 at 3-4 and escaped with some fine serving, then Henin dropped serve with a double fault which leapt wide from a net cord to go 4-5 down, and then Seles failed to close the match out, producing as indifferent a service game as she had all match.

This seemed to puncture some of her self-belief and although she once again recovered from love-forty in the final game, it was only as far as advantage point, and she lost the match with a counter-hitting backhand into the net after yet another of many well-worked

"It was emotionally hard when you are close to winning,'

Seles commented on the missed match point. "And it's tough to lose after being out there so

Henin said she hoped to use the win as a platform to close the gap on the Williams sisters. "They are great champions but maybe we have to change the way we think about them," she

Earlier Martina Navratilova, the winner of more titles than any player in the history of the game, took her third in less than two months when she captured the women's doubles at the age

Navratilova and Svetlana Kuznetsova, a Russian almost 30 years her junior, overcame the top-seeded Cara Black of Zimbabwe and Elena Likhovteseva of Russia by 6-3,

It was Navratilova's 168th doubles title of her career and her 335th altogether. — AFP

LONDON - Arsenal roared

five points clear at the top of the English Premier League yesterday with a 5-1 thrashing of Manchester City after second-placed Manchester United were held 1-1 at Bolton

Goals by Dennis Bergkamp (4), Robert Pires (12), Thierry Henry (15) and Sol Campbell (19) ended the game as a contest almost before the players had even broken into a sweat.

Patrick Vieira made it 5-0 after 53 minutes, as City's defence was torn to shreds. They were never in any position to do their title-chasing neighbours any favours on a day that could prove to be decisive in the race for the championship.

A win for United and defeat for Arsenal would have left them level on the same number of points at the top. As it is, Arsenal have taken a huge leap

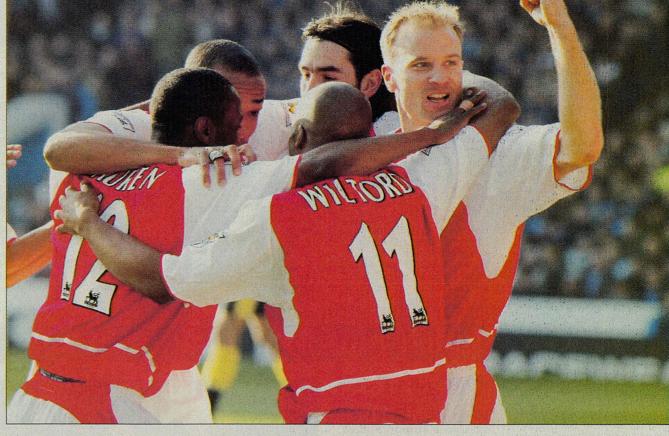
The pick of Arsenal's goals was Henry's — his 25th of the season. He collected a 60-metre pass from Martin Keown on the edge of the City box, and deftly controlled it before arcing it home past City keeper Carlo

City, who drew 1-1 with Manchester United in their last game, were totally outclassed

by the champions in this one.
But they did come more into it in the later stages and just about deserved a late consolation from former Arsenal striker Nicolas Anelka who scored a simple tap-in just before the

The win, Arsenal's best in the league this season, lifted the champions on to 60 points from 28 games, five points more than United, who needed a last-gasp leveller by Norwegian striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer to salvage a point at Bolton.

Bolton, still not free of relegation worries, deservedly took the lead through Bruno Ngotty, who headed home a Youri Djorkaeff free kick after 61 minutes. The home side made more chances than United who needed a fine display from goalkeeper Fabien Barthez to



JUBILANT: Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp, right, celebrates scoring with teammates against Manchester City during their English Premier League match yesterday. - Reuters

keep them in the match, but were finally breached 15 seconds from the end of normal time when David Beckham

crossed for Solskjaer to score Newcastle are third on 52 points after Kieron Dyer's dou-ble and a header from Alan Shearer helped them to a superb 3-0 victory at Leeds United who were totally outclassed by the visitors. But fourth-placed Chelsea, on 48 points, lost ground after a 2-1 home defeat by Blackburn Rovers where all three goals came in the last seven minutes of the game.

Unmarked substitute Dwight Yorke headed Blackburn ahead after 86 minutes and David

Dunn ensured Rovers' victory with a second goal in stoppage time. Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink scored Chelsea's only goal direct from a 25-metre free kick after that — but it was too little too late for the home side who could not mark Gianfranco Zola's 300th appearance for the club with a win.

There were late goals too at Goodison where Tomasz Radzinski scored after 83 minutes and in the third minute of stoppage time to give fifthplaced Everton a 2-1 victory over Southampton and move them on to 48 points — the same number as Chelsea.

Southampton went ahead

through James Beattie after 33 minutes but finally succumbed after almost relentless secondhalf pressure from the Blues.

Charlton Athletic made it five successive league wins with a 3-0 victory over Aston Villa to move on to 45 points and the improbably high position of sixth. Bottom club Sunderland's

misery was compounded when they lost their fifth successive league game, beaten 3-1 at home by near neighbours Middlesbrough.

Chris Riggott (2) and Malcolm Christie, who both joined Boro from Derby during the January transfer window,

scored Boro's goals with Kevin Phillips replying for the home side who are beginning to run out of matches to save them-

selves from the drop.
The defeat left Sunderland rooted to the foot of the table with 19 points from 28 games. West Ham and West Bromwich Albion, the two teams immediately above them in the relegation zone meet today. In other action today, relega-

tion-threatened Birmingham are at home to Liverpool while Tottenham Hotspur, in the bunch of clubs chasing a UEFA Cup place, face Fulham at White Hart Lane tomorrow

Roddick leads US charge

MEMPHIS — Top seed Andy Roddick led a quartet of American players into the semifinals of the Kroger St Jude Tennis Championships on Friday.

Roddick is joined in the last four by Brian Vahaly, Taylor Dent and

Vincent Spadea, in the first all-American semifinals at an ATP event Defending champion Roddick, the only seeded player still in the competition, defeated fellow American Robby Ginepri 6-4, 6-4 in the

last match of the day. "I bet an American is going to win," Roddick quipped. "It's very

positive and I think it's a good time for American tennis."

His next opponent is the 23-year-old Vahaly, who defeated Georgia's Irakli Labadze 6-3, 4-6, 6-4 to reach his first ATP semifinal. The other semifinal pits the hard-serving Dent against Spadea, who eliminated Mardy Fish 6-2, 4-6, 6-3. It will be their first ever

Dent swept aside Vladimir Voltchkov of Belarus 7-6, 6-2 to move one match away from the final.

Not since 1995 have four Americans squared off in the semis of an

ATP event when Andre Agassi, Michael Chang, Jim Courier and MaliVai Washington made up the final four in San Jose. In the women's event, third-seeded Amanda Coetzer of South

Africa earned a berth in the final with a 6-4, 6-1 defeat of sixth seed Laura Granville of the US. The South African will vie for her first title since 2001 in Acapulco. — Reuters, AFP

Armstrong announces split from wife

TEXAS - Four-time Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong announced yesterday he was separating from his Kristin after four-and-ahalf years of marriage.

'We're looking to sort out some delicate questions in the way that we've confronted other obstacles in our life together and with determination and commitment," the couple, who have three children, told yesterday's edition of the American-Stateman.

The 31-year-old US Postal rider, who has overcome testicular cancer and who made a particular point of sharing the Tour de France podium each year with Kristin and his children, leaves his home state of Texas tomorrow for Spain and the start of a new season which will centre on a fifth consecutive Tour de France crown.

MELBOURNE — The personal life of Olympic 400 metres champion Cathy Freeman took

another twist yesterday when the Australian announced her split with husband Alexander Bodecker.

Freeman, 30, withdrew from the Manchester Commonwealth Games team last year to help her husband since 1999, a US Nike executive, in his fight against throat cancer, before entering the 4x400m relay at the last moment with his blessing.

"I have decided to split, effective immediately, from Alexander Bodecker," Freeman said in a statement.

"As a couple, we have had our shares of highs and lows and through that both our lives have

changed.
"It was always going to be difficult with one of us living in the United States and the other in Melbourne and our respective careers have put extreme pressure on the relationship and this has led to a decision to sepa-

A spokesman for Freeman



Olympic champion Freeman splits with husband

ALL OVER: A file photo of Cathy Freeman, left, and her husband Alexander Bodecker. - Reuters

said she would remain here to train for the Paris World Championships in July.

Bodecker, cleared of throat cancer late last year, had returned to the United States to

"Even though this is a traumatic thing to have happened, it hasn't affected her racing,' spokesman Peter Mahon said.

"She has a very big network of family and friends who are obviously very supportive of

Rumours of the marriage bust-up had been circulating since early this month when Freeman appeared as a guest conductor of the Melbourne Symphony concert without her wedding ring.

Freeman had been scheduled to compete in Canberra yesterday but pulled out because of a

Freeman, Australia's most prominent Aboriginal athlete, took a year's break after winning gold at the 2000 Sydney Games and was hampered by a thigh injury last year.

Freeman, who became an icon of Aboriginal pride when she wrapped herself in an Aboriginal flag at the Victoria Commonwealth Games in Canada in 1994, has been dogged with personal strife. Her relationship with her for-

mer manager and lover Nick Bideau ended in a protracted court battle, which was finally settled out of court in November

Freeman said yesterday she looked forward to getting on with the rest of her life and was optimistically looking to the future.

"I ask everyone to respect my wish for privacy as I deal with this and go about my life," she said. — AFP, Reuters

win at last BERLIN - Bayern Munich

Leverkusen

opened up a ten-point lead at the top of the Bundesliga by notching up a 2-0 home win over Nuremberg yesterday while their closest title rivals Borussia Dortmund were held by Schalke 04.

Meanwhile crisis club Bayer Leverkusen finally won a match, their come-from-behind 2-1 victory at Hanover lifting them out of the bottom

Bayern's first goal came from a Bixente Lizarazu header after 17 minutes following good work from Mehmet Scholl.

Brazilian striker Giovane Elber's left-foot shot just before the hour sealed coach Ottmar Hitzfeld's 100th victory

at the club. "This was a win we had to get today," said Hitzfeld. "The game was won after the second goal." Told about Dortmund's draw, Hitzfeld said: "The only

thing we worry about is ourselves, not our opponents." Dortmund went two goals behind in the space of three minutes at Schalke after Belgian internationals Sven Vermant and Nico van Kerckhoven struck in the 13th

and 16th minutes. Giant Czech forward Jan Koller pulled a goal back with a trademark 52nd-minute header from Dede's cross and six minutes later another Brazilian, Ewerthon, grabbed the equalis-

But with the match ending 2-2, Matthias Sammer's side moved to 40 points to Bayern's 50. Schalke meanwhile move up to third, equal on 36 points with Stuttgart, who play Borussia Monchengladbach today.

Leverkusen sacked Klaus Toppmoller as coach after slipping into relegation trouble but new coach Thomas Horster achieved his first victory thanks to goals from two of their lesser-known players.

Romanian Gheorghe Popescu put Hanover ahead after 14 minutes but Sebastian Schoof and Jan Simak struck in the 80th and final minute to move last year's Champions League finalists up to fifth from bottom. Cashstrapped Kaiserslautern failed to move off bottom spot in the table despite beating S.V Hamburg 2-0 at home thanks to goals from Vratislav Lokvenc and Miroslav Klose.

It was only their fifth win in 22 matches. — AFP

World bests for Gebrselassie, Feofanova in Birmingham

BIRMINGHAM — Ethiopia's Halie Gebrselassie and Russian pole vaulter Svetlana Feofanova lit up the Birmingham Grand Prix with two world records falling on Friday.

Gebrselassie smashed the world indoor two-mile record by over five seconds while Feofanova increased her own best mark by one centimetre to 4.77

metres.

"The inspiration was the crowd and the stadium. The race went to plan and the pacing was excellent," said Gebrselassie after clocking eight minutes, 04.69 seconds to eclipse the mark of 8:09.66 set by compatriot Halyu Mekkonen in Birmingham three years ago. The 29-year-old four-time world and double Olympic champion was roared on by a capacity crowd, including 200 members of the Ethiopian Community in Britain, which runs a fan club for the African country's most famous sporting son.

"I'm so happy. It is a fantastic feeling," added Gebrselassie after setting his 16th world record on the track in a long and distinguished career.

Feofanova, as she had done in Glasgow earlier this month, went higher indoors than any woman before.

The 22-year-old European outdoor champion earned a \$50,000 bonus from the event sponsors for her efforts, but the Russian failed in two attempts to leap 4.82m, which would have been the highest ever mark achieved by a woman, indoors or outdoors.

Both Gebrselassie and Feofanova

earned standing ovations but Briton Colin Jackson received the biggest reception of the night in his last ever Grand Prix before retiring next month. The 36-year-old former world 110m

7.51s in a fine dress rehearsal for next month's world indoor championships at the same venue, after which the Welshman will hang up his spikes for good. "It was very special to win in Birmingham," he said. "I hope I can sign off next month with a gold medal." Briton's Jason Gardener stormed to victory in the men's 60 metres, but com-

hurdles champion breezed to victory in

patriot and European 100 metres outdoor champion Dwain Chambers failed to qualify for the final. European indoor champion Gardener was never headed from an explosive start in winning in 6.49s, a season's best. American Ramon was second in 6.57 and Briton Mark Lewis-Francis was third in 6.59. But there was huge disappointment

though for 24-year-old Chambers, who said this week he had set his sights on breaking Tim Montgomery's world 100 metres record this season. He clocked a rusty 6.68s to finish

fifth in his heat in his first competitive race of the season and his first indoors for two years.

Just two sprinters will form the British challenge in Birmingham next month, with Gardener and Lewis-Francis favourite to take the spots. "That was not a reflection of the kind

of shape I am in," said Chambers, who pulled out of the indoor meeting in

Boston earlier this month with an unspecified injury.
"I have no idea what went wrong. I

have not seen the race and I don't want to see it." Olympic and world champion Jonathan Edwards's dominance of the triple jump in recent years has been threatened by the emergence of Sweden's young pretender Christian

But the Briton put his great rival firmly in his place with a winning leap of 17.44 metres, the best in the world this year, while an underperforming Olsson managed just 16.92 metres, good enough only for fourth place. 'Christian looked as if he was a bit

tired after Stockholm (where he jumped 17.40m)," said Edwards, who now leads Olsson six-five in their last 11 meetings. Ukraine's world 100 metres champion Zhanna Pintusevich-Block breezed to

victory in the women's 60 metres, but

afterwards said she had not made up her

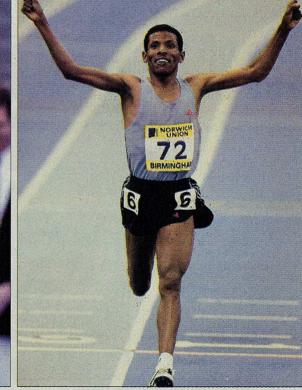
mind on whether to compete in

Birmingham. World indoor 400 metres champion Daniel Caines set the fastest time in the world this year to underline his form ahead of his title defence next month. The 23-year-old Briton clocked 45.75s to win ahead of Belgium's Cedric van Branteghem and Pole Marek Plawgo.

pion Jolanda Ceplak failed in an attempt to break Maria Mutola's four-year-old 1000 metres world indoor record, finishing nearly eight seconds adrift of the mark. - Reuters

European 800 metres outdoor cham-





RECORD PERFORMANCE: Russia's Svetlana Feofanova, left, celebrates after breaking indoor pole vault world record and Ethiopa's Halie Gebrselassie on way to world indoor two-mile record at the Norwich Union Grand Prix athletics event at the National Indoor Arena in Birmingham. - Reuters





www.timesofoman.com

Sunday, February 23, 2003

Unlikely hero Anderson wrecks Pakistan

CAPE TOWN - England's latest fast bowling discovery Jimmy Anderson sent Pakistan crashing to a 112-run defeat with an inspired burst in a key World Cup match at Newlands here yesterday.

The 20-year-old from Lancashire took four for 29, including the wickets of Pakistan's two leading batsmen Inzamam-ul-Haq and Yousuf Youhana off successive deliveries in the day-night match.

The emphatic win gave England a chance of reaching the Super Six stage despite forfeiting a match against Zimbabwe. Pakistan will have to beat arch-rivals India at Centurion next Saturday to keep their hopes alive.

Anderson bowled at a brisk pace and made the ball swing away from the right-handed

Inzamam was caught at third slip and Youhana bowled by a swinging yorker as Pakistan crashed to 17 for three in reply to England's 246 for eight.

Anderson followed up with the wickets of Saeed Anwar and Rashid Latif as Pakistan were dismissed for 134, with conditions under the floodlights helping swing and pace bowling far more than had been the case when England batted first after winning the

"The ball was swinging and it continued swinging for 20 overs and we had them in a lot of trouble," Anderson said after being named man-of-the-

match.
"We had talked about their batsmen last night and we said that if the ball was swinging we would pitch it up and throw in the odd yorker."

Craig White, who took over from Anderson, grabbed three quick wickets for 33 runs. His figures were spoilt by some big hitting by last man Shoaib Akhtar, who hit 43 off 16 balls with three sixes and five fours.

Shoaib and Mushtaq put on 54 for the last wicket to show the insipid top order how to bat.

England captain Nasser Hussain praised his bowlers for winning the match.

"I am very pleased with the way we played," Hussain said. "It was a great opening spell from the young Anderson) and the old man (Caddick). There was no loose stuff. The bowling was spot on and it was a good overall per-

"It's a special ground and we put in a good performance.



MAN OF THE MATCH: England's James Anderson, left, celebrates taking the wicket of Pakistan's Inzamam-ul-Haq during their Group A match at the Newlands Stadium. - Reuters

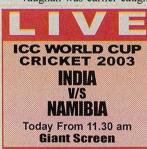
We bowled well and everyone hit their straps early. haven't lost a match in the tournament so we're doing alright," Hussain said.

Michael Vaughan and Paul Collingwood hit half-centuries for England but Pakistan's varied bowling attack kept England under pressure as

wickets fell at steady intervals. Shoaib bowled a delivery timed at 161kmh (101.2mph), the fastest recorded since speed guns were introduced, but he was also Pakistan's most expensive bowler, conceding 63 runs in nine overs.

Shoaib took the wicket of Vaughan, who was caught low down at backward point after

scoring a stylish 52 off 64 balls.



off a no-ball before he had scored when he top-edged a

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Vaughan was earlier caught

pull against Wasim Akram to

It prevented Akram from becoming the first bowler to take 500 One-day International

when England opener Marcus Trescothick was caught behind for one in the third over.

Akram took his 499th wick-

No partnership lasted more than ten overs but England's batting depth proved useful, with Collingwood (66 not out) shepherding the lower order to a respectable total.

England captain Nasser Hussain returned to his side after missing the match against Namibia because of a sore neck but made only eight before trying to cut a ball frtom Wagar Younis that was too close to his body, falling to a diving catch by wicketkeeper Rashid

Waqar's tactics were surprising. With his team in danger of failing to bowl their overs in time, he did not return to the bowling attack after taking two for 37 in a seven-over opening spell, preferring to use Shoaib in the closing overs in tandem with spinners Saqlain Mushtaq and Shahid Afridi

before Wasim came back at the end.

Pakistani captain Waqar Younis, while praising England's better display, said: "The conditions changed under the lights and the ball was

swinging for them a lot more than it did earlier."

"Anderson bowled an excellent spell but there are three more games to go for us and we have to put our heads together and come back tougher." — AFP

COREBOARD

Engla	and
	escothick c Latif b Wasim1
	night c Razzaq b Waqar15
M. Va	aughan c Younis b Shoaib52
N. Hu	ssain c Latif b Wagar8
	ewart b Afridi30
P. Col	llingwood not out66
A Fli	ntoff st Latif b Saglain26
	hite c Younis b Afridi
	les c Afridi b Saglain
	ddick not out
Extra	is: (lb1, w7, nb5)
Total	(for eight wickets)
	of wickets: 1-7, 2-45, 3-59, 4-110, 5-118, 6-160, 7-194,
8-223	
The state of the state of	ing: Wasim 10-1-37-1, Shoaib 9-1-63-1, Waqar 7-0-37-
	glain 10-0-44-2, Afridi 8-0-36-2, Razzaq 6-0-28-0
Pakis	
	Anwar lbw b Anderson
	d Afridi c Stewart b Caddick
	nam-ul-Haq c Knight b Anderson0
Yousi	of Youhana b Anderson0
Youni	s Khan c Stewart b Flintoff5
	Razzag b White
	d Latif c Stewart b Anderson0
	n Akram c Giles b White
of williams and con-	in Mushtag not out
Waga	r Younis c Knight b White2
Shoai	b Akhtar b Flintoff43
	is: (b4, lb4, w11)
Total	(all out in 31 overs)
Fall o	of wickets: 1-13, 2-17, 3-17, 4-52, 5-59, 6-59, 7-71, 8-
78, 9-	
Bowli	ing: Caddick 7-0-27-1, Anderson 10-2-29-4, Flintoff 9-
2-37-	2. White 5-0-33-3
	t: England won by 112 runs. — AFP
7507 19 F 18 W	



CLOSE CALL: England's Paul Collingwood, right, survives a run-out attempt by Pakistan's Rashid Latif, left. - Reuters

POINTS TALLY



Standings in the World Cup after yesterday's matches (played, won, lost, tied/no result, points, net run-rate):

Pool A						
Australia	3	3	0	0	12	+2.34
England	4	3	1	0	12	+2.08
India	3	2	1	0	8	+0.33
Zimbabwe	3	2	1	0	8	+0.04
Pakistan	3	1	2	0	4	-0.13
Netherlands	3	0	3	0	0	-2.04
Namibia	3	0	3	0	0	-2.49
Pool B						
Sri Lanka	3	3	0	0	12	+3.17
Kenya	3	2	1	0	8	-1.32
New Zealand	4	2	2	0	8	-0.08
South Africa	4	2	2	0	8	+2.14
West Indies	3	1	1	1	6	-0.22
Canada	3	1	2	0	4	-0.68
Bangladesh	4	0	3	1	2	-2.64

Three teams from each group will advance to the Super Six round.



TODAY'S SCHEDULE

India vs Namibia at Pietermartzburg, 12 pm West Indies vs Canada at Centurion, 12 pm (Oman times)



Shoaib bowls fastest ball in history

.... but shrugs off the feat after a bad day in office

CAPE TOWN - Shoaib Akhtar bowled the fastest ball recorded in cricket history yesterday, but it did not do him much good.

'Rawalpindi Express' sent down an exocet at England opener Nick Knight with the final delivery of his fourth over in the World Cup Group A daynighter. Knight blocked, the

161.3kmh (100.23mph), the crowd cheered and Shoaib granted them a little wave of the hand. Nine overs later, however, Shoaib had conceded 63 runs for Michael

Vaughan's wicket. His fig-

showed

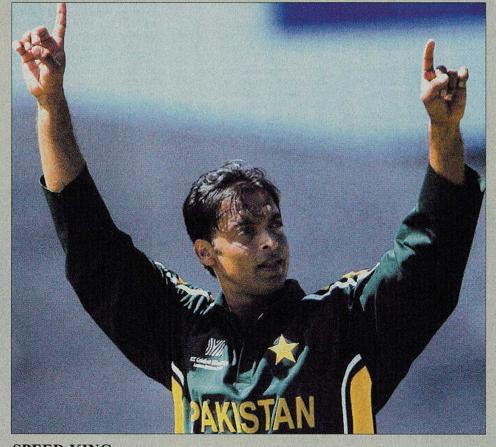
scoreboard

ures were the most expensive of the innings. "I'm pleased with that delivery - I bowl it with a different action, taking the arm right back to get more power - but I'm not that happy overall," he said. "I

bowled really badly." Speed guns are not officially recognised by the International Council, although they appreciate that they help popularise the game.

Shoaib has the same effect. He first broke the 100mph barrier in April last year in a One-dayer against New Zealand in Lahore, when he was timed again unofficially - at

161kph (100.04mph). The 27-year-old, how-ever, appears to have one advantage over his speed rivals, an abnormally flexible elbow which has led to him being called for



SPEED KING: Pakistan's Shoaib Akhtar acknowledging the crowd's cheers after bowling the fastest ball ever during the match against England yesterday. - Reuters

throwing on three occasions.

Many people believe Australia's Jeff Thomson was the fastest bowler of all time. Using different, less reli-

able technology, he was timed at 99.8mph (160.5kph) in a specially arranged net session in the mid-1970s.

Australia Brett Lee, Shoaib's nearest current rival

and regarded as more consistently quick than the Pakistani, was clocked at 99.4mph (159.93) against South Africa in Cape Town

Both Shoaib and Lee, have recently however, stressed they are more interested in taking wickets than speed limits.

"I'm also thinking about line and length and sticking to a more consistent line. You can't be a quality bowler without that," Shoaib had said just before his first 100mph ball.

He and Lee have fearsome weapons of pace, but both also know that the faster they bowl, the faster the ball leaves the bat. — Reuters

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Pride is passion for Canada

CENTURION (South Africa)
— Canada will be looking to recover their self-respect when they take on the West Indies in their World Cup group B match here today

Bowled out for a world record One-day International low of 36 by Sri Lanka on Wednesday, the progress made in a dramatic opening win against Bangladesh and competitive defeat against Kenya, is threatening to be undone against the group giants.

Canada, coached by former West Indies batsman Gus Logie, are desperate to bounce back against opponents they know better than most even though they have never before played a One-day International against them. "Six of our squad have Caribbean connections,'

Canada manager Karam Gopaulsingh said. "And we know some of their players because we've been participating in the Red Stripe Cup (the West Indies' domestic Oneday competition) as recently as

last August.
"We always knew it would be tough when we played the major sides but we are determined to compete against

them."

The match promises to be an emotional occasion in particular for Canada captain Joseph

He played six first-class

Form Guide

CENTURION (South Africa) — Form guide for West Indies and Canada ahead their World Cup Group B clash here today: West Indies (won 5, lost 3, NR 2)

Feb 18 2003, Benoni: v Bangladesh No Result Feb 13 2003, Port Elizabeth: lost to New Zealand by 20 runs

Feb 9 2003, Cape Town: beat South Africa by 3 runs Dec 3 2002, Dhaka: beat Bangladesh by 86 runs Dec 2 2002, Dhaka: beat Bangladesh by 84 runs

Nov 29 2002, Chittagong: v Bangladesh No Result Nov 24 2002, Vijayawada: beat India by 135 runs Nov 21 2002, Jodhpur: lost to India by 3 wickets Nov 18 2002, Baroda: beat India by 5 wickets

Nov 15 2002, Ahmedabad: lost to Índia by 5 wickets Canada (won 1 lost 2)

Feb 19 2003, Paarl: lost to Sri Lanka by 9 wickets Feb 15 2003, Cape Town: lost to Kenya 4 wickets Feb 11 2003, Durban: beat Bangladesh by 60 runs

Note: There are no head to head records as Canada is associate

matches for Barbados in the 1988/89 season, primarily as an off-spinner, but made little impact and subsequently moved to Canada.

But Harris was doing his best to keep himself and the team on an even keel. "We have to be realistic. We're not professional cricketers and we're coming in from five months of winter.'

However, a respectable performance today will do wonders for Canadian confidence as they approach a daunting climax to their group campaign with matches against West Indies, South Africa and New Zealand. For Carl Hooper's side today's match has its own importance too. A washout against Bangladesh cost them an all but guaranteed victory and

threw the group wide open. The West Indies are now fourth in the table on six points with Sri Lanka, Kenya and New Zealand all ahead of them.

As only three teams from the group go through to the tourna-ment's Super Six second phase, the West Indies need a winning run from here on in and with run-rate possibly a deciding factor, a crushing victory would be the perfect result.

While star batsman Brian Lara helped get the West Indies off to a superb start with a majestic century in their opening victory against South Africa, the form of the men above him in the order has been poor.

The lack of a truly worldclass opening partnership has been a major achilles heel for the West Indies since the Gordon Greenidge/Desmond Haynes partnership came to an end in 1990. Current openers Chris Gayle and Wavell Hinds have managed stands of just four, 34 and 19 in three matches here having looked like the real deal during a One-day series in India

last year.
"We've been losing early important we get wickets. It's important we get some decent starts," said "But I think they'll

West Indies (from): Carl Hooper (capt), Ridley Jacobs, Shivnarine Chanderpaul, Pedro Collins, Corey Collymore, Mervyn Dillon, Vasbert Drakes, Chris Gayle, Marlon Samuels, Wavell Hinds, Brian Lara, Jermaine Lawson, Nixon McLean, Ricardo Powell, Ramnaresh Sarwan

Sarwan.

Canada (from): Joseph Harris (capt), Ashish Bagai, Ian Billeliff, Desmond Chumney, Austin Codrington, John Davison, Nicholas de Groot, Nicholas Ifil, Davis Joseph, Ishwar Maraj, Ashish Patel, Abdool Samad, Fazil Sattaur, Barry Seebaran, Sanjayan Thuraisingam.

Umpires: Asoka De Silva (Sri) and Darrell Hair (Aus)

TV umpire: Nadeem Ghauri (Pak)

Match referee: Ranjan Madugalle (Sri). — AFP



FIELDING PRACTICE: West Indies' Brian Lara throws at the stumps while practising at Supersport Park in

Canada SOS to leading nations

CENTURION (South Africa) — Canada captain Joe Harris says the leading nations need to give more help to lesser teams for cricket to become a truly global sport.

Harris said the International Cricket Council's (ICC) decision to allow developing nations to compete at the World Cup was not

enough.

"The only way the ICC is going to develop the sport is to allow us to play in these tournaments," he said.

But I think there are opportunities for teams to go and visit test nations and go on tours ... not necessarily to play against the full sides, but maybe 'A' sides and first-class sides

"That would be crucial."

Harris, whose team celebrated their first ever win at the World Cup against Bangladesh only to collapse for a record-low 36 against Sri Lanka, said countries like Canada had the potential to compete.

Canada already play in the West Indian-run Red Stripe competi-tion but Harris argued they needed more regular contact with major sides. "Canada has a huge population of immigrants from cricketing countries so there is potential there and hopefully after this World Cup we won't be forgotten," said Harris, who was born in India but played as an off-spinner for Barbados.

"I don't think we will, the ICC's developing nations programme is already very good, but there's still more to be done.

"I think South Africa is helping out Namibia and we go to Red Stripe, but that's not sufficient because it's only four games, so we need a lot more of that to really get these countries to first-class level,

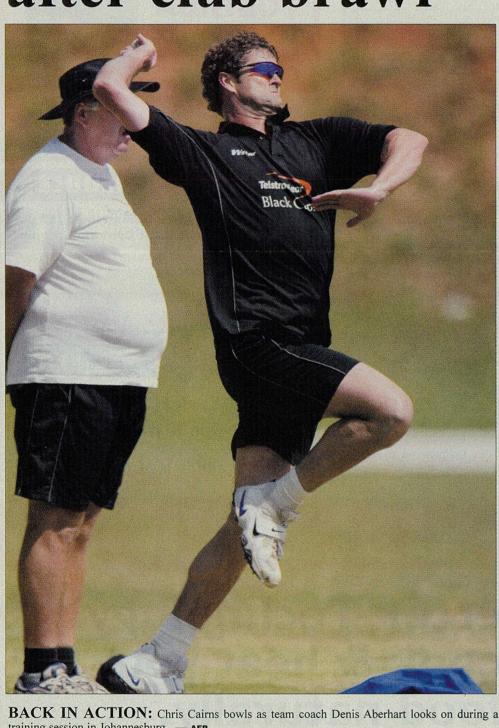
He said Canada's Sri Lankan defeat had "put a dampner on things", adding: "Losing is one thing but to lose like that got the spir-

We went into a shell, once we started losing wickets the fellows went into survival mode rather than hit the ball

"We know (the bigger teams) want to qualify for the second round and they want to improve their net run-rate so they're going to come at us hard and not give us any breaks.

"But I told the fellows test teams have been bowled out for a similar totals, so it happens to the best of us and we just need to forget

Cairns in the clear after club brawl



training session in Johannesburg. — AFP

JOHANNESBURG — New Zealand all-rounder Chris Cairns emerged from the hangover of his nightclub brawl shame yesterday with his place in the World Cup team seemingly assured.

Cairns, who lay low on Friday following the embarrassing rumpus at a Durban club where he ended up with cuts and bruises, trained with the rest of the Black Caps ahead of their next game against Bangladesh in Kimberley on Wednesday.

"There is an internal inquiry being carried out by the team manager Jeff Crowe into the incident and that should be concluded early next week," said a team spokesman.

"But as far as I am aware there is no disciplinary action planned against Chris Cairns and he remains available for selection for the game with Bangladesh.'

Cairns, seen as a vital part of the Kiwis' hopes of progressing in the tournament, batted and bowled in the nets during the training session held at the Pirates Sports Club here yester-

However, he refused to discuss the Durban incident with

The row intensified yesterday when it was claimed that the fracas which left Cairns injured was sparked by a rendition of

the traditional haka war cry. Cairns was knocked to the ground and suffered a cut on the

mouth after being punched from behind following a scrap at the 'Tiger, Tiger" nightclub in Durban in the early hours of Friday.

Johannesburg-based Star newspaper quoted witnesses as saying Cairns and a few other players removed their shirts and thundered out the All Blacks' famous rugby war cry.

Club owner Guy van der Post, who ordered the players out of the premises, said they were drunk, the newspaper said.
Some of the guests at the

club took offence to the performance of the Haka and insulted the Kiwis when they went out of the premises, the report

New Zealand had left South African cricket fans in a state of shock when they defeated Shaun Pollock's home team at the Wanderers here last Sunday.

The newspaper quoted a police source as saying the man who hit Cairns was a known troublemaker and had been banned from other clubs in Durban.

Armed security guards, employed by World Cup organisers to protect the team, rushed the players back to their beachside Durban hotel.

Ironically, the Kiwis were scheduled to play their World Cup game against Kenya in Nairobi on Friday, but were forced to take a break in Durban after refusing to travel for secu-

Cairns did not accompany the rest of the New Zealand team which flew in to Johannesburg later Friday with a team official saying the player had stayed in Durban for "business reasons" Team manager Jeff Crowe

refused to lodge a formal police 'The incident happened out-

side the nightclub," a statement from New Zealand Cricket (NZC) quoted Crowe as saying. "Cairns had been asked to

leave by bar staff after reported loud behaviour by several members of the team. 'I have been advised by the police that the incident was

to any issue between Cairns and the person who assaulted him." This is not the first time the Kiwis have got themselves into

unprovoked and was not related

trouble in South Africa. In 1994-1995, three players, Dion Nash, Matthew Hart and Fleming were hauled up for reportedly smoking dope by the poolside in Paarl and were temporarily suspended from the

Meanwhile, a report from Auckland stated that New Zealand Cricket is to investigate the incident outside the nightclub in which Cairns was injured when members of the team were caught up in a drunken melee.

New Zealand Cricket will take several days to probe the fracas and the player behaviour which preceded it. — AFP

Unfinished business for up-and-down Canada

experienced a roller-coaster World Cup ride but they still have unfinished business to complete before they exit crick-et's showpiece event on March

The North Americans produced the first major upset of the tournament with a 60-run win over Test nation Bangladesh in their cup opener before being skittled by Sri Lanka for 36 the lowest total in One-day International history.

They now face the might of twice champions West Indies

today, pre-tournament second favourites South Africa and inform New Zealand in their final three Group B games.

Hardly a soft run-in for Canada, who will need to be in

damage-limitation mode, but captain Joseph Harris has a clear strategy in mind.

"Our job is not yet done at this tournament," said the for-mer Barbados off spinner. "We still have goals and objectives at this World Cup and our intention is to meet them

"Against the big teams we meet in our last three games, we aim to be competitive, to put up good targets and defend them well. "But we have to be realistic. We're not professional cricketers and we're coming in from five months of winter in Canada."

Canada played their first World Cup in 1979 but lost all three games, including being bowled out for a paltry 45 by England at Manchester.

They had to wait until this

year for their second appearance at the tournament, qualifying with a third-place finish at the

2001 ICC Trophy.

Although the Canadians had not played cricket for five months as they emerged from a harsh and biting North American winter, they set the World Cup alight with their shock win over Bangladesh in Durban.

Dreadlocked plumber Austin Codrington took five for 27 as the Asian test side, chasing Canada's modest 180 all out, were dismissed for 120 in 28

"That victory was fantastic for us," said Ian Billcliff, who top-scored for Canada with 42 and 71 in their first two games. "We only scored 180 but we bowled and fielded really well.

"Bangladesh and Kenya are

the two teams more at our level in this tournament so obviously there was a big focus on the Bangladesh game.
"Having a good result there was excellent and it's been great

for the Canadian set-up back at home. "It all helps to raise the awareness of Canadian cricket, which is important because it's a bit of a struggle for us with base-ball being the main summer

Canada's fast start to the tournament was soon put into perspective, though, as they lost their second match to Kenya in Cape Town last Saturday before their humiliation at the hands of Sri Lanka in Paarl.

Despite Billcliff's patient 71, the Canadians could only muster 198 against Kenya and were eventually beaten by four wickets with nine balls to spare At Paarl, they collapsed to 36

all out in 18.4 overs before Sri Lanka eased home in just 4.4 overs, completing the second fastest run-chase ever in limitedovers internationals. "When we came here to this

tournament, we knew that the

test nations would be a tough ask

but we didn't expect to fold up like this," a grim-faced Harris But Canada still have three

games to play — starting with West Indies at Centurion tomorrow — and, for their captain, that means unfinished business. "We just have to look at the

last three matches as a challenge and do as well as we can," he said. "We can't be overawed by reputations and we have to do ourselves proud." — Reuters

Gillespie making up for lost time

JOHANNESBURG

Australian quick Jason Gillespie has vowed that the years of injury-induced misery he has endured will serve as the idea platform for his personal assault on the World Cup

In three games so far, the 27-year-old has snared six wickets including a fiery 3-13 of 10 overs that ripped the heart out of India's batting at the Centurion a week ago.

His performances have also outshone those of fellow pacemen Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee, both of whom were widely touted to be the men causing the real damage at this tournament.

"With my past, I've missed a lot of cricket and I'm trying to make up for lost time, so to speak. I don't want to have any bad games. I want to be very consistent," said Gillespie who has endured extensive periods on the sidelines since making his debut in 1996.

"I just want to play a big part in victories, obviously with the ball, but if I can contribute with the bat and in the field, that's what I want to do," added the man who spent almost a year out of the game after the 1997 Ashes Series with stress fractures in his back. - AFP

Hayden keen to focus on cricket, not politics

 Australia batsman Matthew Hayden is determined to focus on cricket rather than politics as the defending champions prepare for their World Cup Group A match against

Zimbabwe tomorrow. The build-up to the tournament has brought plenty of coverage about the political and economic problems affecting Zimbabwe, with security concerns resulting in England forfeiting their match in Harare.

Hayden expressed reservations about the situation before Australia departed for southern Africa, but on Friday he said he was comfortable with the match going ahead and was looking forward to it.

"While there are enormous difficulties and troubles in the country, the ICC (International Cricket Council), the ACB (Australian Cricket Board) and the players have taken that into account in our decisions," he told reporters.

"Now we are really looking forward to showing 6000 people at the ground a great game of cricket and, hopefully, it will be

POTCHEFSTROOM (South a relief in their desperate situaback of such good form Hayden

"We are very comfortable as we have had extensive briefings from Michael Brown (the ACB's Cricket Operations General Manager) and also there was a trial run with India playing Zimbabwe and there were no hassles whatsoever.

"Player safety was the number one issue for us and the Board but we feel quite comfortable now and we have put a few overhanging issues to bed. "My feelings remain about

the political situation but we are international cricketers, we love playing cricket for our country, we want to win the World Cup and we are going there to do that," he said. "We have a responsibility as

cricketers to play right across the world and it wouldn't be a World Cup if we didn't go there." Australia will head to Bulawayo today with three straight wins under their belts, against Pakistan, India and the Netherlands.

They have looked comfortably the most impressive side in the tournament, but even on the

was reluctant to commit to the belief they could go through the tournament unbeaten.

"It is too early to talk about that," he said. "But we are playing good cricket and have been for the past 12 months.

"Now it is all about playing the big matches well and our next one against Zimbabwe is a big match. If we can do that then we can continue to build momentum and we are a great side when we have momentum,"

Australia's progress has been even more impressive as it has come in the absence of leg-spinner Shane Warne who returned home to face the ACB's Anti-Doping Committee, but the way the side has performed has not surprised Hayden.

"Warney leaving our squad was a huge loss but that is the strength of our side, we really have dragged together," he said.

"We have been in a unique situation, playing with 14 players, but it has just been a case of getting on with the job, something that is a great Australian attitude. — Reuters

to break his duck

Nick bids

CENTURION (South Africa) - Canada's Nick de Groot will take guard against West Indies in World Cup Group B today with limited ambitions. Hitting the ball would be

nice. Scoring a run, though, considering his recent record, might be to expect too much. The unfortunate 27-year-old right-handed batsman has made three ducks in his three innings

in the tournament

He has faced 10 deliveries in all, putting bat to ball five times once to give a catch - during 21 torrid minutes at the crease. De Groot was the only team member not to trouble the scorers in the shock win over Bangladesh or the four-wicket

defeat by Kenya. At least he was not so isolated against Sri Lanka, when six batsmen failed to get off the mark as the Canadians were skittled for 36, a world-record

One-day International low. De Groot, though, is no mug with the bat, as some of his opponents today will know.

Born in Ontario, he learn his cricket in Guyana and played as an opening batsman for the island. - Reuters

No worries for Bevan

POTCHEFSTROOM (South - Australia batsman Michael Bevan says he is not frustrated despite a lack of opportunities so far at the World

Bevan, who was recovering from a groin injury at the start of tournament, has played in the last two matches against India and the Netherlands, but has still yet to bat as Australia have lost just three wickets. Despite his situation the left-

hander, an almost permanent fixture in the side's number six position for the past decade, remains philosophical and clearly motivated to do well. After staying behind to have

extra fielding practice for a second successive day following team training he told reporters he preferred to see things from a team perspective. "The World Cup is yet to start for me really, I'm still waiting," said Bevan yesterday.

"Batting at six when the team is

doing well you have just got to

accept your role and make sure

when you get that chance you

are ready to go.

"If I am not getting a chance it means the team is playing well and that has to be a good thing.
"Hopefully, my World Cup
won't start for a little while

either because that would mean we keep winning.
"I would like to hope we would win all the matches in our

round so we get the best possible

position in the Super Sixes.

"I know realistically I will be called on at some stage, but as to when that is I am not too sure at this stage," he added. Bevan's last innings was against England in Melbourne

on January 25 and it almost cost him his World Cup place. Taking a quick single, he crumpled to the ground in agony with a torn groin muscle and left

the field on a stretcher. "My lack of opportunity hasn't got to the stage of frustration yet because I am just ecstatic to make the tour," Bevan said.

"When I did the injury it was

it didn't feel too good and I wasn't too hopeful. "The moment of truth came the next morning when I woke

up in the air for me all that night,

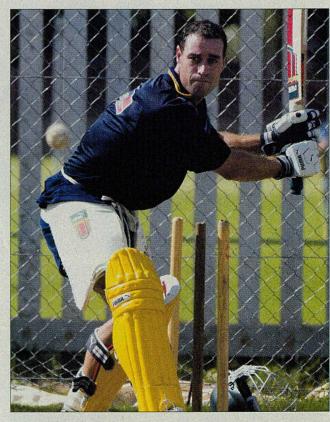
up and took my first couple of steps. I thought that if there was a heap of aggravation it wouldn't be looking too flash. "Thankfully, it had loosened

up a bit during the night and I was a little bit more hopeful.' Ironically, the injury may

well have helped Bevan's state of mind because it has meant he has not had had his fill of practice. "For the first two weeks of the trip it was just a case of recovering from my groin injury and that meant I had to put a lot of time and energy into getting that better.

"I had to make sure I was ready to go even before I hit the nets so it has only been in the last week or two that I have concentrated on net play.

The injury has also sharpened his focus as in his absence Andrew Symonds laid claim to a spot in the middle order with a Pakistan. With Bevan fit again and no new injury problems, it means a real selection headache for Australia, but the player does not feel under undue pressure.



KEEPING FIT: Michael Bevan during a training session at North West Stadium in Potchefstroom, South Africa. — Reuters

WORLD CUP

Namibia hold no fright for India

PIETERMARITZBURG (South Africa) — India will win their next World Cup game against minnows Namibia, captain Saurav Ganguly predicted yesterday, saying only rain could save his rivals.
"I have followed their games

and we should beat them comfortably," Ganguly said ahead of yesterday's Group A match at the Pietermaritzburg Oval.

Ganguly's confidence stems from the 83-run victory over Zimbabwe on Wednesday which gave India two wins from three matches and revived their hopes of making the Super Six.

Besides Namibia, India will also have to defeat England and arch-rivals Pakistan to ensure a place in the next round.

The weather finally cleared after three days of rain, but cloudy skies have been forecast for today.
"It will be unfortunate if the

weather intervenes because we want to get full four points here," Ganguly said.

Namibia, playing in their first World Cup, have lost all their three matches so far, but their determination to fight all the way has been a feature of

this tournament.

They rattled England in Port
Elizabeth on Wednesday by
bowling them out for 272 before Jan-Berry Burger smashed 85 to bring Namibia within 55 runs of a stunning upset.

Ganguly, however, said his team's batting remained a worry after being shot out for their lowest World Cup total of 125 by Australia last weekend.

"We are still not playing to our full potential," the Indian

captain said.
"Hopefully this match against Namibia will help us iron out some of the problems before the big games come." Sachin Tendulkar is the only

batsman to hit form, top scoring with 52, 36 and 81 in the first

FORM GUIDE

PIETERMARITZBURG (South Africa) — Form guide for India and Namibia ahead of their World Cup Group A match at the Pietermaritzburg Oval

here today:

India (won 4 lost 6)
Feb 19, 2003, Harare: beat
Zimbabwe by 83 runs
Feb 15, 2003, Centurion: lost to
Australia by 9 wickets
Feb 12, 2003, Paarl: beat
Netherlands by 68 runs
Jan 14, 2003, Hamilton: lost to
New Zealand by 6 wickets
Jan 11, 2003, Auckland: beat
New Zealand by 1 wicket
Jan 8, 2003, Wellington: beat
New Zealand by 2 wickets
Jan 4, 2003, Queenstown: lost
to New Zealand by 7 wickets
Jan 1, 2003, Christchurch: lost
to New Zealand by 5 wickets

Jan 1, 2003, Christchurch: lost to New Zealand by 5 wickets Dec 29, 2002, Napier: lost to New Zealand by 35 runs Dec 1, 2002, Auckland: lost to New Zealand by 3 wickets Namibia (won 0 lost 3) Feb 17, 2003, Port Elizabeth: lost to England by 55 runs Feb 16 2003, Kimberley: lost to Pakistan by 171 runs Feb 10 2003, Harare: lost to Zimbabwe by 86 runs (D/L) Note: There are no head to heads as Namibia is an associate member — AFP

three games.

Having won his sixth World Cup man-of-the-match award on Wednesday, a tournament record, Tendulkar will be looking for a century against Namibia to emulate Australian Mark Waugh's record of four World Cup tons.

Tendulkar missed the symbolic 15-minute ride on the Gandhi memorial train on Friday to keep an appointment with a local doctor to treat a minor bruise on the left hand.

"It's not serious and he was at the nets and will play the match," team official Amrit Mathur said. "He had to miss the ceremony because the doctor

was not available any other time."

India have abandoned the idea of blooding 17-year-old wicket-keeper Parthiv Patel in a bid to give Rahul Dravid a rest behind the stumps.
"It is important to win well

and improve the net run-rate that could play a decisive role in the

end," Mathur said.
"The best team needs to play to achieve that."

Namibia, coached by former England all-rounder Dougie Brown, hope to carry over the good work against England to

the India game.

"This is what the World Cup is all about, playing against the best teams," Brown said.

"The boys will be ready, they'll give it their best."

If the Indians are regarded as being vulnerable against pace, Namibia have Rudi van Vuuren to take advantage of that. Van Vuuren, who also repre-

sented Namibia in the rugby World Cup, showed his medium-pace bowling skills by grabbing 5-43 against England.

bing 5-43 against England

India (from): Saurav

Ganguly (capt), Rahul Dravid,

Virender Sehwag, Sachin

Sadulkar, Anil Kumble,

Lavagal Tendulkar, Anil Kumble, Harbhajan Singh, Javagal Srinath, Zaheer Khan, Ashish Nehra, Dinesh Mongia, Parthiv Patel, Sanjay Bangar, Ajit Agarkar, Yuvraj Singh,

Agarkar, Yuvraj Singh,
Mohammed Kaif.

Namibia: Deon Kotze
(capt), Jan Burger, Louis Burger,
Sarel Burger, Morne Karg,
Daniel Keulder, Bjorn Kotze,
Lennie Louw Bryan Lennie Louw, Bryan Murgatroyd, Gerrie Snyman, Stefan Swanepoel, Burton van Rooi, Melt van Schoor, Rudi van Vuuren, Riaan Walters.

Umpires: David Shepherd (Eng) and Aleem Dar (Pak) TV umpire: Kevan Barbour

(Zim)

Match referee: Wasim Raja
(Pak). — AFP



TAKING A BREAK: India's Zaheer Khan, left, and Harbhajan Singh jump to smash a ball in

Cup stats far from average

JOHANNESBURG — There may be lies, damned lies and statistics but the latest round of World Cup averages have already thrown up some interesting tales.

The figures do indicate some significant trends with perhaps the most important being the bowling performances of amateur sides Canada, Namibia and the Netherlands.

For example, while there are two Canadians in the bowling top ten - spinner John Davison (fourth) and pace-man Austin Codrington (ninth), the highest-ranked West Indian is fast bowler Vasbert Drakes at 19th.

But Canada team manager Karam Gopaulsingh was quick to put Davison and Codrington's figures into per-

"Austin had one excellent game (against Bangaldesh when he took five for 27 in Canada's shock opening 60 run win against Test side Bangladesh).

"But against Sri Lanka he didn't really have a chance," said Gopaulsingh referring to Wednesday's match where Canada were bowled out for a world record one-day international low score of 36.

"John Davison is a very experienced, very economical bowler," added Gopaulsingh of the South Australia slow man. "He had a great game against Kenya (three for 15). "They've both had one very good game out of two—you can't count the Sri Lanka match for the purpose of

bowling figures - so that should be reflected in the aver-

But equally some of the figures of the leading per-formers have been embellished by outstanding individual efforts against weaker sides.

Sri Lanka paceman Chaminda Vaas tops the bowling figures with nine wickets at an average of just 6.88. But against Bangladesh alone he took six for 25. including an unprecedented hat-trick with the first three balls of the match.

Similarly Zimbabwe's Craig Wishart can never have realistically expected to find himself heading the tournament batting averages

But his figures of 184 runs at an average of 184 include a career-best 172 not out against Namibia in what was the amateurs' first World Cup match back on

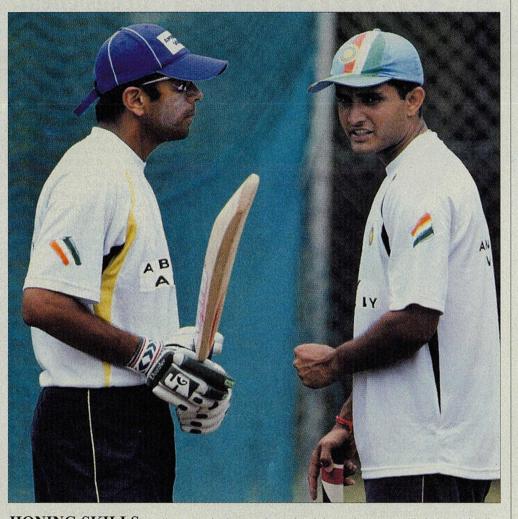
Africans dominate the batting line-up with South Africans Herschelle Gibbs and Gary Kirsten, second and third respectively and Zimbabwe's Grant Flower fourth. But world champions and tournament favourites

Australia have more class players to call upon than most and one of their true thoroughbreds is already into his Fast bowler Jason Gillespie has been outstanding in their three straight victories so far, his six wickets coming

at a mere eight runs apiece.

Against a powerful Indian batting line-up Gillespie, sometimes overshadowed by fellow Aussie quicks Glenn McGrath and Brett Lee, took three for 13 in 10 overs to set up a crushing nine-wicket win.

And those figures do not lie. — AFP



HONING SKILLS: India's captain Saurav Ganguly, right, and teammate Rahul Dravid discuss finer points of batting during a team practice session in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. - Reuters

Mind your language, Srinath tells TV stars

PIETERMARITZBURG (South Africa) — India's pace spearhead Javagal Srinath yes-terday blamed ex-players turned television commentators for inciting fans back home to rubbish the current team.

"The attitude of these exstars is very disappointing," Srinath said ahead of today's World Cup match against Namibia at the Pietermaritzburg Oval here.

"In fact, the unhappy incidents after our defeat in the match against Australia can be attributed to their comments.'

Angry fans burnt effigies of captain Saurav Ganguly and threatened violence against families of the players after India were shot out for their lowest World Cup total of 125 by the champions reigning

The nine-wicket defeat against Australia followed India's failure to last 50 overs against the Dutch newcomers, but Ganguly's men made amends by whipping Zimbabwe by 83 runs on Wednesday. The Indians must, however, still defeat both England and archrivals Pakistan in their last two league matches to seal a place in the Super Six rounds. — AFP

Harbhajan may be rested against African minnows

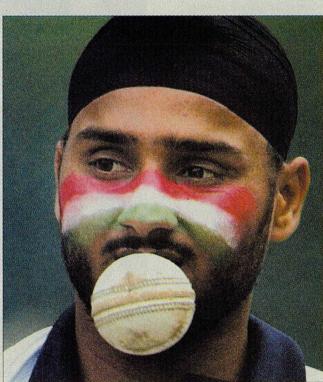
PIETERMARITZBURG (South Africa) — India may rest off-spinner Harbhajan Singh for today's World Cup match against minnows Namibia in a bid to keep him fresh for the tougher games ahead.

Leg-spinner Anil Kumble is expected to come in for Harbhajan while one of the seam bowlers could also stand down, leaving the way clear for Ajit Agarkar's first appearance in this tournament, team officials said. The batting, however, will remain untouched as India

attempt to improve their net run-rate as well as gaining the expected four points for a win. Besides defeating Namibia,

India will also have to overcome England and arch-rivals Pakistan in their remaining group matches to seal a spot in the Super Six.

Out-of-form Indian captain Saurav Ganguly, who practised against wet tennis balls to sharpen himself against shortpitched deliveries, said the Namibia game gave his side the chance to iron out their weak-



REST TO GET TOUGH: Harbhajan Singh tosses the ball during practice, but he is set to rest today. - Reuters

Ganguly confirmed that Sachin Tendulkar, who top scored in all the three previous matches, will take the field after being treated for bruises on his left hand yesterday.

Namibia, playing in their first World Cup, have lost all their three matches so far, but their determination to fight all the way has been a feature of the tournament They rattled England in Port

Elizabeth on Wednesday by bowling them out for 272 before Jan-Berry Burger smashed 85 to bring Namibia within 55 runs of a stunning

"If we dont believe we can beat India, then why compete?," Namibia captain Deon Kotze

"We are all excited to compete against India. It's going to be a huge learning opportunity.

"Having said that, we have epared well and we can win. It will take a huge effort but no matter who we play, we play to

Kotze hoped India's bowlers would give his batsmen an opening, just as England had

Sheraton Oman

WAILAAUTAHUAHAHUI

SOUNDBITES

"I FEEL I am a victim of the anti-doping hysteria. I want to repeat I have never taken performance-enhancing drugs and never will." — Shane Warne after being lowing his positive drugs test

"THERE is an internal inquiry being carried out but as far as I am aware there is no disciplinary action planned against Chris Cairns and he remains available for selection." - New Zealand spokesman on the notorious Durban nightclub fracas which left the Kiwi allrounder nursing cuts and bruises

"I HAVE followed their games and we should beat them comfortably." -Indian skipper Saurav Ganguly tempting fate ahead of today's Group A match against Namibia at the Pietermaritzburg Oval

"EVEN though we didn't win a game against them we gave them a fright. It's given us a lot of confidence that Australia have come over and beaten two sides we have to play - Pakistan and India — very comprehensively." — England coach Duncan Fletcher unmoved by having to face Pakistan at Newlands. — AFP

Aravinda hopes lightning will strike twice

NAIROBI — Aravinda de Silva will take to the field against his favourite World Cup opponents tomorrow hoping that lightning strikes twice

The Sri Lanka batsman, one of the game's greats and the third highest run-scorer in Oneday International history, has yet to make a mark on the 2003 tournament. But minnows Kenya should

offer him the perfect opportunity in their Group B clash — as long as Sri Lanka's top-order allow him to get to the crease. In his fifth and last World

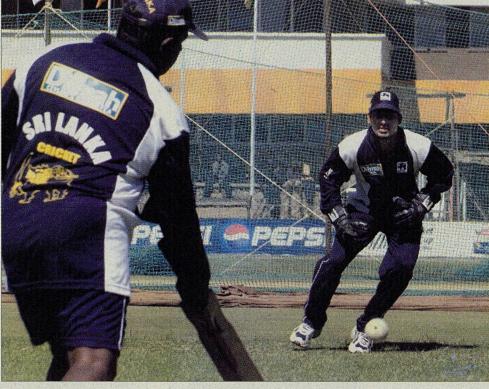
Cup, the 37-year-old de Silva has only taken guard once in South Africa. He made 12 against New Zealand, even then only getting into the action just before the

start of the slog overs, Sanath

Jayasuriya (120) and Marvan Atapattu (81 not out) having set up a winning total. His batting services were not required in the 10-wicket and nine-wicket victories over

Bangladesh and Canada. For the rest of the time, de Silva, arguably the slowest mover in world cricket, huffed and puffed about the field as Sri

Lanka's bowlers made hay. If captain Jayasuriya does decide to shuffle his batting order in Nairobi in an attempt to share around the runs, he could not choose a better man than de



TRAINING SESSION: Sri Lanka cricket team coach Duleep Mendis, left, and Chaminda Vaas during a training session in Nairobi, a day before they play against Kenya. - AFP

Silva to come in at first down. In 1996, de Silva hit a careerbest 145 off 115 balls against the Kenyans in Kandy, including 14 fours and five sixes. Sri Lanka made 398 for five that day, the

highest total ever made in a

World Cup. That performance gave him one of his four man-of-the-match awards in the 1996 event. He completed the set in the final. with a century in Sri Lanka's defeat of the Australians.

Sri Lanka coach Dav Whatmore, however, suggested there would be no batting experimentation. "It is a game we have to win.

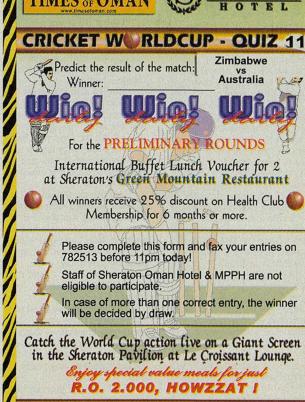
We have played pretty well in the last three games, we need to keep the good bits up," he Kenya will remember that

day in 1996 in Kandy with some satisfaction themselves, having replied with a respectable 254 for seven, 96 of those runs coming from Steve Tikolo. The teams also met in 1999,

when Sri Lanka won by 45 runs. Again, Kenya batted impressively, making 230 for six against an attack containing both Chaminda Vaas and Muttiah Muralitharan. Maurice Odumbe made 82 that day.

Sri Lanka have won their opening three games to lead Group B with 12 points.

New Zealand are second on eight points with two wins in four games — they forfeited their match in Nairobi over security concerns - while Kenya are in third, also - Reuters



TIMES of OMAN

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DAMINA AVIANVANANVA





Warne banned for one year A wake-up call for all: Ponting

I am a victim of anti-doping hysteria, says Aussie spin king

SYDNEY — Australian spin king Shane Warne claimed he was a victim of "anti-doping hysteria" yesterday after being banned from cricket for 12 months for taking a prohibited

diuretic drug.

Warne said he would appeal the ban, which fell far short of the possible two-year suspen-sion he could have faced under the Australian Cricket Board

(ACB) anti-doping policy. Australian Test captain Steve Waugh raised doubts the spinner would ever return to international cricket while Warne himself was clearly shaken and described the penalty as very harsh.

"I am absolutely devastated and very upset at this decision to suspend me for 12 months and will appeal," Warne told

reporters. "I feel I am a victim of the anti-doping hysteria. I want to repeat I have never taken performance-enhancing drugs and never will," he said, reading from a prepared statement and refusing to take questions.

The punishment bars Warne from all levels of cricket, ending his role in the current World Cup in southern Africa and upcoming series against the West Indies, Bangladesh,

Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka. It is also likely to end Warne's quest to overtake West Indian Courtney Walsh as the most prolific wicket-taker in



Warne facing the media in Melbourne yesterday.

Test history.
Warne's legal team is believed to have argued his case fell under an "exceptional circumstance" clause in the ACB's anti-doping policy, although the ACB said it found no circumstances that warranted dropping the charges.
The 33-year-old leg-spinner

made a shock exit from the World Cup earlier this month after being told he had tested positive for drugs ahead of a match in Sydney in January.

He admitted taking a diuretic pill, which media reports said was given to him by his mother, who wanted her son to look good at a news conference prior to the team's departure for the World Cup last month.

Seven witnesses appeared at an eight-hour hearing on Friday, four for the prosecution and three for the defence, including Warne's mother

Australian Olympic Committee chairman John Coates, a strong anti-drugs campaigner, expressed surprise that the ACB had reduced the penalty from two years to 12

"Certainly under the Australian Olympic Committee anti-doping policy it would not be," he told Sky News.

Australian Test captain Steve Waugh said it would be difficult for Warne to return to Test cricket after such a long absence.

"I am sure that Shane will initially say to himself 'I want to get back in there and back on the field,' but as time goes by his mind will be in different places," Waugh said.

"But it is really his decision, and he has got to have the motivation to continue."

One-day captain Rickie Ponting said that Warne had been "very naive" but expressed hope that the ban would be reduced on appeal.

Australian chairman of selectors Trevor Hohns said Warne's absence would "leave a big hole" in the team. Hohns said Warne's replace-

ment in Australia's 15-man World Cup squad would be named by today at the latest,

playing at an elite level does not know the doping rules, particularly Australians who have been told the rules individually and been very vocal on the issue," he said.

ABC radio commentator Tim Lane said Australian cricket would have been subject to



believed to be Queensland offspinner Nathan Hauritz or New South Wales leg-spinner Stuart

Hohns said he hoped Warne would return to international cricket but the final decision was in the spinner's hands.

World Anti-Doping Agency board member David Howman said Warne must have been aware the pill he took contra-vened the rules. "I would be absolutely

astonished if any sportsman

international derision had Warne escaped punishment.
"The whole Australian cricket community would have

been wounded," he said. Warne has spared no expense fighting the charges that he is a drug cheat, hiring a top public relations firm and a legal team reportedly costing A\$25,000 (US\$14,750) a day to present his case.

He must formally lodge his appeal within seven days.

Australia's World Cup captain Ricky Ponting yesterday described Shane Warne's sus-pension for using a banned drug as a wake-up call for athletes in all sports.
The star leg-spinner was he was to skipper the side.

slapped a one-year ban by the Australian Cricket Board (ACB) earlier yesterday after testing positive for an outlawed diuretic. Warne, named one of the five cricketers of the century by the games's bible Wisden, has said

"Obviously he was very naive with it and I think it's a big wake-up call, not just for cricketers but for sportsman all around the world," said Ponting. "You have to be very careful

he will appeal, claiming he was a victim of the "anti-doping hys-

JOHANNESBURG

with the things you put in your mouth and Shane obviously has learned a very hard lesson.

"I think everyone feels very disappointed for Shane and we are all disappointed for him. Obviously it's been a very tough time for him over the last week-and-a-half. I believe he'll appeal this thing and, hopefully, the suspension will be lessened."

Indian captain Saurav Ganguly, preparing for today's match against Namibia at Pietermaritzburg, said he felt sorry for Warne.
"I feel sorry for him, he's a

legend," Ganguly said.

"This is a big thing in his career and it has come in what was his last World Cup. He's a champion performer." South African captain Shaun Pollock was equally sympathetic, but insisted rules had to be followed.

"Rules are rules," Pollock

said. "But with 500 Test wickets in sight, I am sure Warnie would want to come back after a year and finish his career on a high

Warne had been expected to return to play for English county Hampshire later this year where

Hampshire chairman Rod Brangsgrove made it clear that, whatever the outcome of his appeal, Warne would still be welcome at the club in 2004 in the event his ban was upheld.

"We continue to stand by him and look forward to having him at the Rose Bowl in 2004 such is the standing of the man. We will have to await the outcome of the appeal," said Bransgrove.

Former Australian wicket-keeper Ian Healy, here as a television commentator, said the last had not been heard of the affair. "No one is happy about it,

neither the judiciary, nor the ACB or Warne," Healy said.

"The appeal will perhaps throw up some new evidence. It may lead to a lighter or heavier sentence. I would like to know how much of the banned substance was in his sample.'

But leading sports officials said cricket's biggest doping scandal was a timely warning to all athletes to take more care over what they eat and drink.

"I'm a little bit surprised and, in some ways, shocked," Australia Test captain Steve Waugh told reporters in Perth. "But I feel sorry for Shane. It is a long time out of sport, particularly for a guy who loves play-ing at the top level."

"Having 12 months without

cricket is going to be very diffi-

cult for him. But he loves playing cricket, that is what he is best at, and I hope he comes back." Test batsman Justin Langer was also sympathetic.

"It is a huge shock obviously as a friend of Warney," Langer told reporters in Perth. "I feel very upset for him and his family, particularly his wife, Simone, and his kids. It will have a huge impact on their life but in the same breath he obviously made

a silly mistake." Australia chairman of selec tors Trevor Hohns told Australian Associated Press: 'Twelve months — that's the decision and everyone has to get

on with it. Australian Committee president John Coates was one of several leading sports officials to use the case as a message to all athletes.
"This is a stark reminder to

everyone that you have to know what's inside your body and you're responsible for what you take, he told Sky television. The Australian Sports Drug Agency (ASDA) tested Warne's A and B samples and their chief

executive agreed with Coates. "What this is, is a message to

all athletes. You've got to know the rules," John Mendoza told Channel Nine television. World Anti-Doping Agency chairman Dick Pound earlier

this week criticised Australia's stand on drug cheats and demanded that Warne receive a heavy ban if found guilty.
"Athletes, particularly top

Athletes, particularly top athletes, have a responsibility to themselves, to their sports, to their country," the Canadian lawyer told told Melbourne radio yesterday - AFP, Reuters

Warne is no

Flower, Olonga battle for Cup survival



FACING THE AXE: Andy Flower

BULAWAYO — Zimbabwe cricketers Andy Flower and Henry Olonga were warned yesterday to either drop their black armband protest or face being axed from their country's World Cup

squad. The two men were called seperately to attend a specially convened meeting of the Zimbabwe Cricket Union (ZCU) executive board here and emerged grim-faced after being told to abandon their

Olonga and Flower won world-wide praise for their courage when they wore black armbands in their country's opening World Cup clash against Namibia on February 10 and issued a powerfully-worded statement condemning the regime of President Robert Mugabe and the deteriorating conditions in the country.

The Zimbabwe team are in Bulawayo to play world champions Australia tomorrow. Flower and Olonga had been reported to the International Cricket Council by their own fed-eration but the world governing body decided not to take action against the pair.

In the match against India, the duo, having been told to drop the armbands, donned highly-prominent wristbands instead.

Although yesterday's ZCU ultimatum was not from the disciplinary committee, it is understood that both men were warned to cease their protest in the match against Australia. "I expected the matter

to be dealt with after the tournament," said Flower. 'But I can't comment

on the meeting today." Olonga, who on Thursday was sacked by his Takashinga club for his protest, also refused to comment yesterday.

Donald looks on as SA rout Bangladesh

BLOEMFONTEIN — South Africa left Allan Donald on the sidelines as they kept alive their hopes of qualifying for the World Cup's Super Six stage with a 10-wicket demolition of Bangladesh yesterday. In reply to Bangladesh's 108 all out in 35.1 overs, South

Africa raced home in only 12 overs, Herschelle Gibbs scoring 49 not out and Gary Kirsten hammering a 30-ball half-century at Goodyear Park. "I thought we bowled well today and then to knock up the

said South Africa captain Shaun Pollock. "I think the guys did a good job with the ball, the disciplines were there and we hit the right areas."

However, South Africa's team sheet caused a stir when 36-year-old fast bowler Donald was left out in favour of 20year-old paceman Monde Donald, who had been des-

perate to play on his home ground, has been struggling for form and his omission could well signal the end of the road for South Africa's most successful Test and One-day Donald or no Donald,

Bangladesh never looked likely to mount a serious challenge. For skipper Khaled Mashud, a poor start by his batsmen in the Group B encounter set the tone. "I think we played too many shots too soon," he said.
Pollock said Donald's omis-

sion from the South Africa side did not signal a premature end to the fast bowler's World Cup. "I think it's important for

Allan to have another run to try and get some confidence going," said Pollock, after his team's second victory in four Group B outings.
"But it's also important

from the perspective of our (15-man squad) to give everyone a chance.
"I think the guys who had

an outing are really happy with the way it went. It was nice to get some overs in the middle for them." For Pollock, the single

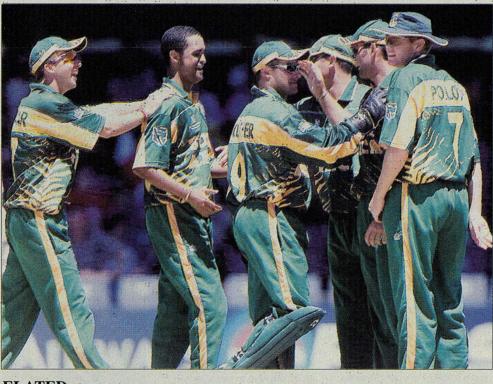
blemish in South Africa's rout of Bangladesh was the high extras tally of 20, including eight no-balls and eight wides. That was the only disappointing part today - the

wides and no-balls - and that is something we need to address," he said. 'We would have liked to have bowled them out as

cheaply as possible - that's our aim in every game. But the ball did get a lot softer and the wicket started to play really "So I suppose you can be a little disappointed but they had quite a few plays and misses

and, if we wanted to keep them below 100, we would have been happy with 108 (all out)," In reply, the South African

openers were in flowing form



ELATED: South African players celebrate after Bangladeshi Sanwar Hossain is caught out at the Goodyear Park in Bloemfontein. - Reuters

against a toothless Bangladeshi attack and Gibbs brought up the team's fifty in only the sixth over, hammering Khaled Mahmud through the covers for his fifth boundary.

Kirsten moved to his own half-century with two fours and a six off consecutive deliveries from the left-arm spin of Mohammed Rafique, his 52 including nine boundaries and a

Gibbs faced 40 balls, hitting eight fours and a six. Their century partnership

Shaun Pollock 2-8.

to his name.

ics on his home ground.

paceman Allan Donald pledged yesterday to

bounce back after being dropped for the second

time in the World Cup.

Donald, 36, sat out the Group B match against Bangladesh at Goodyear Park here and watched his

teammates bowl out their opponents for just 108 off

replacement Andrew Hall grabed 2-15 and skipper

"A lot of people have been telling me this week how I should be bowling and in the nets I have felt very relaxed," said Donald who was denied the

opportunity of answering his growing army of crit-

will get another chance to put it right out there on the pitch. In a perfect world, I would be playing but

es in the tournament after conceding 54 runs in nine overs against the West Indies and 52 against New Zealand from 5.5 overs with just one wicket

He was also dropped for the match against Kenya which his side won comfortably in

Potchefstroom on February 12. - AFP

the team comes first and they all did a great job."

Things went well in practice and hopefully I

Donald had been under fire for his performanc-

Makhaya Ntini took 4-24, while Donald's

was their ninth in One-day Internationals, moving them into third place above Australia's Mark Waugh and Adam Gilchrist in the all-time

standings. India's Sachin Tendulkar and Saurav Ganguly head the list with 17 hundred partner-ships, with the West Indian pair of Gordon Greenidge and Desmond Haynes second on

South Africa delivered a professional all-round display, having set their stall on improv-

I'll be back, says Allan

ing their net run rate to enhance the side's prospects of securing a place in the tournament's sec-

ond phase. Earlier, Makhaya Ntini took four for 24 as the Bangladeshi batting collapsed for the third time in four matches, captain Mashud (29) and Mahmud (23) the only batsmen to offer much resistance. Bangladesh's only points

have come in a washed-out match against West Indies. Their troubles began early

when opener Al Sahariar played

CONFIDENT: Allan Donald



LITTLE CAMEO: South Africa's Herschelle Gibbs hitting a boundary against Bangladesh yesterday. - AFP

a flat-footed, reckless swipe at Pollock and was comfortably caught by Robin Peterson at mid off to depart for a duck.

Medium pacer Andrew Hall and Zondeki maintained the pressure, snapping up three more wickets as Bangladesh slumped to 33 for five.

However a partnership of 23 for the sixth wicket between Mashud and Tushar Imran (nine) took the Bangladeshis Mashud continued his defi-

ance with Mahmud, the pair

adding 35, before Mashud was caught behind in the first over of Ntini's second spell.

After Rafique was run out after a farcical mix-up with Mahmud, Ntini had Manjurul Islam well caught by Boeta Dippenaar at third slip for a

Mahmud weighed in with some powerful blows to guide Bangladesh past 100, but handed Ntini his fourth wicket when he carved the fast bowler straight to third man to end the innings. — Reuters

SCOREBOARD

Bangladesh

Al Sahariar c Peterson b Pollock0 Mohammed Ashraful c Boucher b Ntini6 Sanwar Hossain c Kallis b Hall11 Fall of wickets: 1-3 2-14 3-21 4-33 5-33 6-56 7-91 8-93 9-Bowling: Pollock 6-2-8-2 (nb-3), Ntini 7.1-1-24-4 (nb-2),

Zondeki 5-1-17-1 (w-4), Hall 6-2-15-2 (nb-2, w-3), Kallis 5-0-19-0 (nb-1, w-1), Peterson 6-0-21-0. South Africa

Bowling: Manjural Islam 4-0-26-0, Talha Jubair 2-0-24-0 (w-

6), Khaled Mahmud 2-0-20-0 (w-1), Mohammad Rafique 2-

0-20-0, Alok Kapali 2-0-18-0. Result: South Africa won by 10 wickets. — Reuters

drugs cheat, claims Lara CENTURION — West Indies

batsman Brian Lara spoke out in defence of Shane Warne yes-terday by declaring the Australian leg-spinner was not a drugs cheat. "He's a personal friend of mine. I'm sure, knowing Shane — I'm putting my head on the block — it has nothing to do

with enhancing his performance," he said. Warne, who had been due to play in the World Cup but flew

home without playing a game after his failed test, was banned for 12 months earlier yesterday Australian Cricket Board Anti-Doping Committee for taking diuretics, which can be used to mask other illegal drugs.
West Indies officials had ini-

tially said Lara was not ready to make a statement but the player one of the world's leading left-handers, returned to seek out reporters on the eve of the World Cup Group B match against Canada.

"I want to contact him personally," he said, adding he would phone the leg-spinner immediately. "His performances over the years are due to his ability and his commitment to cricket," Lara added.

"We have got to be very careful with what we are saying to the world."

"This is cricket. We know guys go out there who play their careers, their life for their coun-

try."
"I still have my fingers crossed it works out for him."
West Indies captain Carl Hooper echoed Lara's senti-ments. "Shane's an icon to world cricket," he said. "Everyone has his own opinion but I think I know him well enough to know that he did not do it." — Reuters

Career statistics SYDNEY - Shane Warne's

international cricket record: Name: Shane Keith Warne
Born: September 13, 1969
Teams: Victoria, Australia,

Hampshire
Batting: Right hand bat Batting: Right nand oat
Bowling: Leg-spinner
Test debut: Australia v India at
Sydney, 3rd Test, 1991/92
Latest Test: Australia v
England at Pert, 3rd Test 2002/03
ODI debut: Australia v New
Zealand at Wellington, 3rd ODI,

1992/93
Latest ODI: Australia v
England at Melbourne, Triangular
Series, 2002/03
First class-debut: Victoria v
Western Australia, Melbourne,
1990/91
Wisden Cricketer of the Year:

Joined Hampshire (Eng): 2000 One of Wisden's Five Cricketers of the Century: 2000 Test match record

Batting: M:107 I:146 NO:13
R:2238 HS:99 Av:16.82 100s:0

Bowling: O:4979.3 M:1417 R:12624 W:491 Av:25.71 BB:8-71

R:12024 W:491 AV:23.71 BB:8-71 5w:23 10w:6 One-day Internationals Batting: M:193 I:106 NO:28 R:1016 HS:55 Av:13.02 100s:0

Bowling: O:1766.4 M:110 R:7514 W:291 Av:25.82 BB:5-33 5w:1. — AFP