

West Indies need soul-searching

- World Cup '96

TIMES OF OMAN

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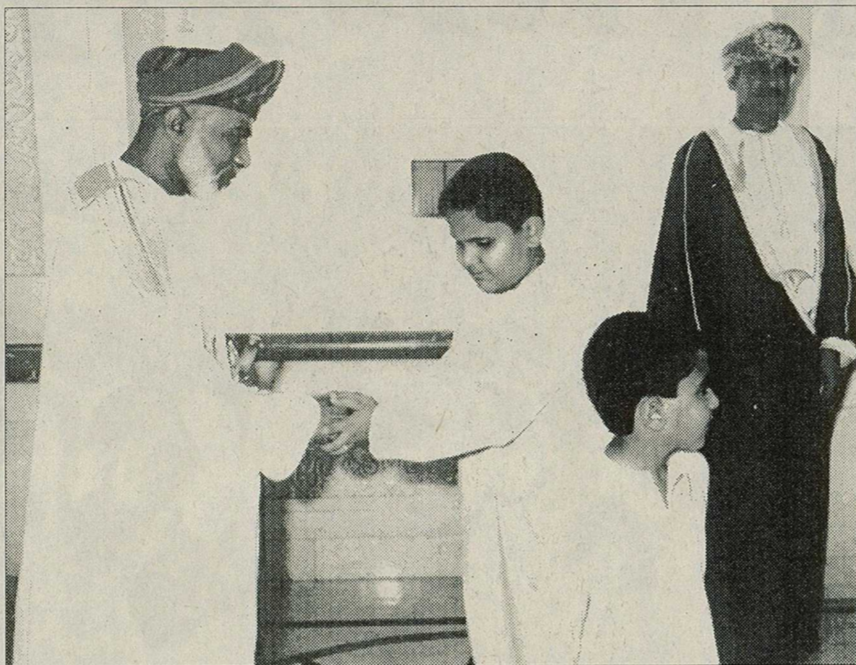
IMF to police Russian loan

TIMES OF OMAN **LEISURE**

Emma senses more success in Oscars



His Majesty offering Eid prayers.



His Majesty receiving greetings from a young citizen.



A section of the large crowd thronging to greet His Majesty. — Photos by Mohd. Mustapha

HM greets King Fahd, Sheikh Jaber

MUSCAT — His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said has sent a cable of greetings to the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin Abdulaziz of Saudi Arabia on the occasion of his resumption of duties. His Majesty prayed Allah the Almighty to preserve the king's health and bestow blessings and prosperity upon the Saudi people under his wise leadership. His Majesty also prayed God Almighty to provide the king with long life and protect him from any misfortune so that he could continue his efforts in the service of Arab and Islamic societies.

His Majesty watches Eid festivities

SALALAH — His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said watched Eid festivities of Al Badiyah residents (Hubat Al Badiyah) at Al Hisn Al Amr Palace yard here on Thursday. Also present with His Majesty on the occasion were members of the Royal family, ministers and advisers.

The Al Badiyah residents of Dhofar Governorate turned up in large numbers at the palace yard carrying guns and swords and chanting folkloric songs. They thus expressed their overwhelming delight over meeting His Majesty the Sultan as well as at the advent of the Eid Al Fitr.

The people renewed their loyalty and allegiance to the leader of Oman's great renaissance, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said. Poets expressed through their deep allegiance to His Majesty and hailed the achievements of the blessed era of the

Sultanate under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan. The music bands of Royal Guard of Oman and Royal Oman Police later put up an enchanting display of various music notes.

On Wednesday, His Majesty watched Hubat Al Aryaf of the palace yard. Large number of people from the rural areas of Dhofar Governorate participated in the festivities wearing traditional costumes and wielding swords in the air. Other dignitaries were also present.

Earlier on Tuesday, His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said offered the Eid Al Fitr prayers at Hayy Al Shatti prayer grounds. The prayer was led by Sayyid Mohammed bin Ahmad Al Busaidi, adviser of His Majesty for religious and historic affairs. Al Busaidi, in his speech given thereafter, urged Muslims to perform good deeds always and

thanked Allah the Almighty for His blessings.

His Majesty later received at Al Hisn Al Amr Palace in Salalah various groups of people ranging from members of the Royal family, ministers, advisers, members of Majlis Al Shura, senior commanders of the Sultan's Armed Forces and Royal Oman Police and senior civil and military officials came to greet him. His Majesty also received sheikhs, dignitaries and citizens from Dhofar Governorate who extended greetings and best wishes to him on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr.

His Majesty later held a luncheon at the palace which was attended by members of the Royal family, ministers, advisers, undersecretaries, members of Majlis Al Shura, senior civil and military officials, walis, sheikhs and dignitaries of Dhofar Governorate. — ONA

Federation police enter Serb suburb

SARAJEVO — Muslim-Croat federation police entered the Serb suburb of Vogosca yesterday — to take control of a ghost town.

The first three federation vehicles pulled up in front of the municipal police station in a light snow at about 0720am (0620 GMT), to be greeted by UN police commissioner Peter Fitzgerald. They climbed the station steps and disappeared into a warren of filthy rooms abandoned by Serb police on Thursday.

Overturned desks, stacks of old folders, bedding, the odd battle helmet and gas mask, a few hand grenades and scattered boxes of bullets littered the building.

At one point six Italian Nato soldiers, black feathers sprouting from their helmets, entered the station and soon left, carrying trays of explosives away for disposal.

Vogosca is one of five Sarajevo suburbs being transferred from Bosnia's Serb republic to its Muslim-Croat federation and the first to come under non-Serb police control.

Fearing reprisals for the 43-month Serb siege of Sarajevo, thousands of Serb residents fled the town this week ahead of the Muslim-Croat police arrival. Nato sources reported Vogosca quiet overnight with only one or two fires and no serious incidents.

Fitzgerald said his men, who work unarmed, had spotted a group of about 10 armed men west of the town overnight. Subsequent Nato and UN police patrols did not see them again.

"It is tragic that the population here has fallen from 17,000 to about 2,500," the UN police commissioner said of the Serb exodus.

Kris Janowski, spokesman for the UN high commissioner for refugees, blamed Bosnian Serb leaders for the Serb flight.

"They didn't have to go. They were incited to go by their own authorities," Janowski said. "They were incited by a regime previously responsible for expelling tens of thousands of people and killing many others."

For Bosnian Serb leaders who fought a war for ethnic separatism, the notion of a multi-ethnic Sarajevo is anathema. Their scare tactics and the federation's late and rather lame assurances of personal safety for Serbs provoked a stampede which saw hundreds of Serbs without transportation walk out of town through the mountains on Thursday.

UN police commissioner Fitzgerald said the new federation police force in Vogosca had been screened by his men for its professional qualifications and ethnic mix.

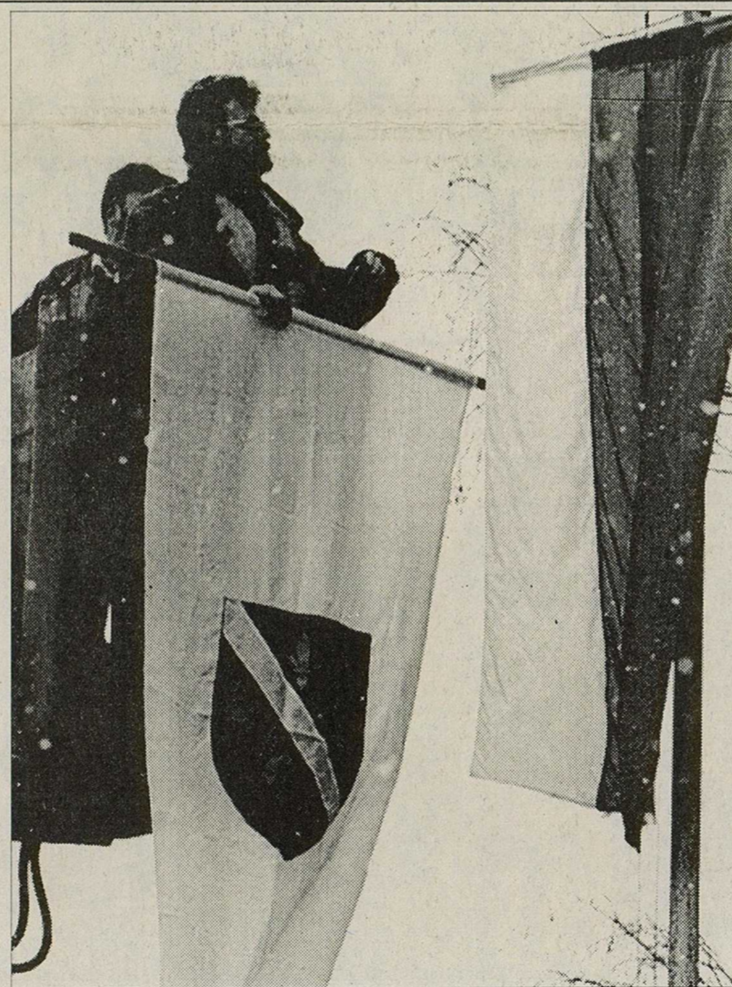
The first federation list of 85 candidates submitted for UN approval for the Vogosca force contained 84 Muslims and one Croat, UN sources said. The final, approved first shift in the town was to include 16 Muslims, 14 Serbs and two Croats — a mix roughly mirroring the town's pre-war ethnic breakdown.

Asked what the federation police would be doing on their first day at work, Fitzgerald replied: "I can tell you what they won't be doing. There won't be any witch-hunts, there won't be any widescale searches or arrests. We'll be with them."

Two unarmed UN police monitors were on hand for every federation policeman, along with roving patrols of Nato troops in armoured vehicles. Given the recent peace accord and the number of reporters, UN monitors and Nato soldiers watching every move of federation police yesterday, Vogosca had probably never been so safe since the Bosnian war began in April 1992.

That was little comfort to those Serbs still stranded in the town and keen to leave.

A bus stood opposite the police station as the federation police arrived. Serbs — mostly women, the very old and the young — clambered aboard quietly. — Reuter



A policeman of the Muslim-Croat Federation with the federation's flag outside the police station of the Vogosca suburb in Sarajevo yesterday, to replace the Serb flag. — AFP

Yeltsin warns government on reform

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin, anxious to keep Communists out of the Kremlin, warned the Russian government that its days were numbered if it failed to soften the blows of economic reform.

"The government will either carry out its duty to defend the social and economic rights of people or this will be done by another government," Yeltsin said in a "state of the nation" address less than four months before a presidential election.

The 65-year-old leader, looking resolute and showing no sign of the heart problems he suffered last year, threw down the gauntlet to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin with a stinging rebuke over failure to support living standards. "The government, which is focusing on financial stabilisation, has forgotten about people living on wages and pensions," Yeltsin said.

"If we do not guarantee the social and economic rights of the people, if political instability starts, everything may be lost and we will be thrown back."

Yeltsin, struggling to make up ground on his Communist foes' ahead of the June 16 election, distanced himself from the government and raised the grim spectre of a return to the old days of Soviet-style repression.

Speaking one day after the International Monetary Fund said it would lend Russia \$10.2 billion if it stuck to reform plans, he said the patience of ordinary Russians was wearing thin.

"We called on people for a long time to tighten their belts, and people did this, but their patience is exhausted," he said.

"Our task is to develop a market and at the same time to reduce the (social) cost of this process."

Yeltsin, clearly using the podium to score pre-election points, said the June election may be Russia's last chance to allow the roots of a free democratic society to grow. — Reuter

Saddam's sons-in-law slain: Report

BAGHDAD — Iraqi General Hussein Kamel Hassan, a former industry minister, and his brother Colonel Saddam Hassan, were killed yesterday, said a television station run by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son.

The two brothers, both sons-in-law of Saddam's, and their wives returned to Iraq on Tuesday from Jordan, where they had defected last August.

The report came only hours after television announced that their wives, Saddam's daughters, had divorced them.

The report said the two women had been unaware of the men's "treason."

"Raghad and Rana have filed for divorce and got it," the television station run by Saddam's eldest son Uday said. The generals had called for Saddam's overthrow at his only press conference in Amman a few days after their arrival six months ago. The women reportedly said they were "misled and did not know their husbands' intentions." — AFP

• See also Page 3

Clinton phones Major, Bruton

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE — President Bill Clinton phoned British Prime Minister John Major and Irish Prime Minister John Bruton for brief talks yesterday to keep abreast of the Northern Ireland peace process.

The separate 5-10 minute calls, made as Clinton winged his way to California, came as Major, under pressure to restart the bomb-damaged peace process, met with US envoy George Mitchell in London ahead of talks with key Ulster politicians.

"The president called to check in with each, and to see how things are moving," said national security adviser Anthony Lake. "They did not get into detailed discussion of the specific issues, and said that they might be talking to (Clinton) him next week."

But Lake said Bruton and Major each had told Clinton "they think they are making progress." Mitchell in London condemned the two IRA bombs that have exploded in London since February 9, but said he had not been surprised. "It is a difficult situation, made more difficult in recent weeks," Mitchell said on leaving 10 Downing Street, referring to a renewed Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing campaign in London.

Mitchell, who headed an international commission that proposed steps for decommissioning paramilitaries in Northern Ireland, said he was "convinced" the Northern Ireland parties "are determined to move forward." — AFP

Major vows to soldier on for another year

LONDON — Prime Minister John Major vowed yesterday that his government would soldier on for another year despite the shock defection of a Conservative member of parliament, the third to leave the ruling party in four months.

Peter Thurnham said he will sit as an independent, dealing a heavy blow to Major by cutting his majority to just two ahead of an important parliamentary vote on government probity on Monday.

Major told reporters he was "saddened and disappointed" by Thurnham's move. But it made no difference to his determination to wait until the last possible date in May 1997 before calling a general election.

"I always expected to go right through until 1997," he said.

One Conservative MP, Sir Teddy Taylor, predicted Major, whose party is over 20 points adrift in the opinion polls, would be forced into an election in October. Bookmakers Ladbrokes cut the odds on an election in 1996 to 11-8 from 2-1.

Thurnham, in parliament for 13 years, said he had been affronted by "malpractices within the Conservative Party." He announced his defection after Major failed to persuade him to stay loyal in lengthy talks on Thurs-

day night.

"I don't quite know what happened after I finished my meeting," Major told reporters yesterday. Thurnham's decision placed in the balance the government's chances of winning Monday's vote on a report into sales of British arms-making equipment to Iraq in the 1980s. The report by a senior judge severely criticised two senior ministers.

Thurnham said he was "very inclined to vote against" the government following the debate. He said the bungling and top-level manoeuvring highlighted by the report had triggered his defection.

At least two Conservative MPs are considering deserting Major in the vote, but he may get support from Protestant Ulster Unionists. If he loses, he may call a vote of confidence.

Thurnham's move follows defections by legislators Alan Howarth to the main opposition Labour Party and Emma Nicholson to the centrist Liberal Democrats last year.

"We are now seeing a haemorrhaging of support from the parliamentary Conservative Party," said Labour's parliamentary business manager Donald Dewar. "It suggests the government is in a state of very, very poor morale and beginning to break apart."

Conservatives in Thurnham's constituency, part of the northern English town of Bolton, said his decision was prompted by a failure to become the candidate for rural Westmorland, where he lives, at the next general election. His current seat, whose electoral make-up has been affected by boundary changes, looks certain to be won by Labour.

Thurnham denied this was his reason for quitting, although he said his attempt to find a new seat "has certainly opened my eyes to malpractices within the Conservative Party." The arms-to-Iraq report, compiled by senior judge Sir Richard Scott, says that William Waldegrave, now number two at the treasury, repeatedly misled MPs in parliamentary answers in which he said export guidelines had not changed. It criticised chief government law officer, Sir Nicholas Lyell, for advising ministers to sign "gagging orders" in an attempt to withhold government papers from the defence in a trial of three company executives accused of breaching export rules. There are 324 Conservative MPs in the 651-seat Commons and 322 opposition MPs. The Conservatives have held power since 1979. — Reuter

Russia suspends sanctions against Serbs

MOSCOW — Russia yesterday pulled out of UN-imposed sanctions against Bosnian Serbs following a decree signed by President Boris Yeltsin, his office said.

Yeltsin made the decision after the Bosnian Serbs complied with conditions outlined by UN Security Council Resolution 1022, the decree said.

Resolution 1022, which was adopted by the council on November 22, provides for the suspension of sanctions against Bosnian Serbs after an announcement by the commander of the peace Implementation Force (IFor) that Serbs had withdrawn from separation zones established by the Dayton peace accord.

In New York, Russia's ambassador to the United Nations announced the effective unilateral suspension of UN sanctions against Bosnian Serbs, breaking ranks with the other members of the Security Council.

Russian ambassador Sergei Lavrov told reporters that Moscow was simply observing the terms of the UN resolution which provides for the sanctions suspension if certain conditions are met.

Indian court asks report on Rao's involvement in bribery scandal

NEW DELHI — An Indian court yesterday ordered federal detectives to report on charges that Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao had accepted bribes from the chief suspect in the country's worst corruption scandal.

The Delhi High Court ordered the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to file a report on allegations that Rao had accepted money to buy support during a crucial opposition-sponsored vote of no-confidence in parliament in 1993.

The case, filed by activist Ravinder Kumar, alleged that Rao had paid huge amounts of money to opposition MPs who voted in favour of his Congress (I) government on September 28, 1993.

The government survived by a slender margin of 14 votes with 265 lawmakers voting against the motion and 251 voting for Rao's ouster.

Kumar, a leader of the Rashtriya Mukti Morcha (National Freedom Front) group, said the prime minister had deposited Rs3 million (\$96,774) in the account of opposition MP Suraj Mandal, who opposed the motion along with others.

Opposition parties have accused the beleaguered Rao of accepting at least \$3.5 million from the prime suspect in the scandal, a businessman named Surinder Jain. The Congress party has denied the charges.



Jain, in a statement to the CBI said he "had agreed to pay Rs30 million ... these payments were required for the purpose of engineering defections of some MPs in support of the Congress party which was being planned by (Congress heavyweight) Satish Sharma and Chandraswamy." Chandraswamy, a controversial figure who reportedly counts the Sultan of Brunei, Elizabeth Taylor and Rao as his followers, was one of the conduits for the prime minister with Sharma, a sitting minister, Jain said.

overseas. He has also claimed paying bribes to former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi.

The \$21-million-scandal erupted four years ago when a random raid on Jain's plush country retreat near Delhi unearthed coded payments made to 115 top politicians and bureaucrats between 1988 and 1991 in exchange for favours.

The snowballing scandal has rocked the political spectrum with seven federal ministers resigning after being implicated. Twenty-four politicians have been formally charged and more heads are likely to roll.

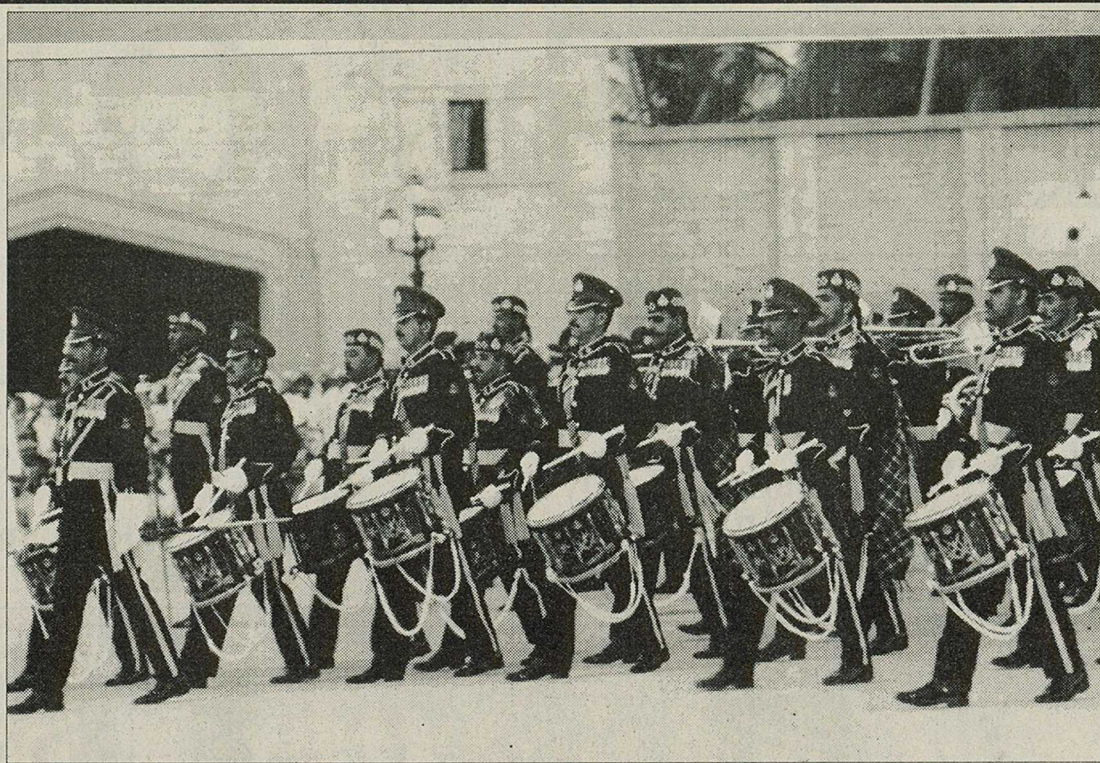
The charges have undermined the credibility of the Congress, the main opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party), all serious contenders for power in upcoming parliamentary polls, expected in April.

Meanwhile, the CBI has said there was "insufficient" evidence to incriminate two unspecified people in the scandal amid intense speculation that one of the individuals was Rao, touted as the "Mr Clean of Indian politics" by his party.

Opposition leaders have charged Rao with stage-managing the probe to absolve himself of alleged guilt and force the resignations of his rivals within the party to shore up his tottering image. — AFP



Folk songs, dance and various other cultural activities marked Eid celebrations in Oman. — Photos by Mohd Mustapha



MY DAY



JULIE B. JIMENEZ

I CATCH her on a not-so-busy day in an unusually busy week. Julie B. Jimenez is in charge of a stall at the Eid Fair '96. Being a Friday, the Oman International Exhibition Centre was closed in the morning.

Otherwise, during this festival, Jimenez is more in a rush than during a usual working week.

In a miniature Body Shop she takes time off to talk to *Times of Oman* about her day.

We interrupt our conversation many times to give space to the customers who are magnetised to stand number F17 by attractive discounts on the perfumes in particular.

"This is definitely different from working in the shop," Jimenez says about the festival.

"You meet lots of different people who do visit the Eid Fair, but don't frequent The Body Shop. Here businessmen, too, show interest in our products. Those who don't know The Body Shop will get to know it here," Jimenez hopes.

And away she is, to help out a young Omani woman who is carrying her mobile phone with her and wants to try out the "Woody Sandalwood" perfume.

It is 5.15pm but already pretty crowded in the exhibition hall. Jimenez laughs, saying this is nothing. It will get really chock full around 8.30pm. "When the fair is nearly closing around 10pm, people start rushing and buying. Even after the organisers have already turned the lights off."

Jimenez usually programmes her alarm for 6am. After morning prayers and preparing for the day, she arranges her room and spends some time reading books.

"Sometimes I talk to my plants," she says. Around 8.30am she heads for work, except on Thursdays. "We start early on Thursdays for our weekly meeting, and sometimes for training." "We" means The Body Shop staff of nine.

During this exhibition-week, Jimenez goes to the shop first. She gives in the money of the sales and takes a new stock of products to sell at the fair. "We have to be at the exhibition centre 30 minutes before the fair opens. We clean the display stand and prepare special offers. Before visitors start coming in we have to be ready," Jimenez says.

This time "We" refers to herself and three Omani trainees from the Oman Training Institute, who are "very, very hopeful and interests..."

She teaches the three girls how to deal with customers.

"Sometimes customers can be difficult. I tell the trainees to always smile and to just try to get the customers to buy the product," is Jimenez's advice.

Other themes for the trainees are merchandising products and giving information about the products to customers. Very important for future personnel is to learn about the values of The Body Shop, as it is a business with a message. The most important issue at the moment is animal testing.

A morning at the fair runs until 1pm. The stall reopens at 5pm and closes at 10pm. Jimenez tries to dedicate her spare time to a professional management course. Computer, business administration management and communication are the main subjects.

On Mondays Jimenez takes lessons to learn Dutch. "I have many Dutch friends, but not all of them speak English," she explains. "I want to be able to communicate with them in their own language."

Does she already speak the language? Yes: "Een beetje" (A little bit).

— By Marja Kooreman

They all stayed here to discover the home delights

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — Many locals and expatriates told *Times of Oman* yesterday that they had stayed in the Sultanate during Eid holidays because there was enough entertainment here.

Although many agreed that this year the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had an added attraction in the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF), they said that they decided against going to Dubai because Eid was an occasion for family get-together.

Some of them said that going to the UAE during Eid did not quite benefit tradition.

A few said that there was a 'risk' factor going to the UAE by road, and it was better to be safe than sorry. Others said that there were visitors to Oman from the UAE, so it was not exactly a 'one-way traffic'.

The Sultanate offers a unique opportunity to commune with nature. The nature lovers spoke to said that they had explored wadis and mountains during the holidays.

All Nami Jaffer, photographer: I had a well-deserved rest during the holidays. Yes, I stayed here (Oman) and spent time with my family. I did not go to Dubai; it is too hectic there. I believe in staying home during Eid. Also, I think it is dangerous (if you are going to Dubai by road). Most people cross speed limits and I think it is much more safe in

Oman. There are plenty of places to see here. Visitors from all over the world are coming to enjoy the diverse beauty of the Sultanate and I think instead of running off to other places, one should stay here. I went into the interior and visited many tourist spots.

Essam Mohammed, librarian: I really like Oman during Eid, because celebrations here are steeped in tradition. I don't think it is good to go out of the country during such an auspicious occasion. My family is here and I make it a point to stay with them and enjoy Eid. I did not go to Dubai (or anywhere) last year, and this year, too, I stayed put.

Dubai is an attraction, especially during the Shopping Festival, but I don't believe in going out of the country during Eid. I might go to Dubai later.

During the holidays, I took my family to the Naseem Garden and then attended a birthday party of my friend. I had a very enjoyable time.

Othman Al Raisi, circulation supervisor: Why do I have to go to Dubai during Eid? Shopping Festival? But everything is available in Oman, I don't understand this 'Dubai rush'. Yes, I stayed home with my family, and I have done the same last year, too. Eid is such an auspicious occasion, so why head for Dubai then? I celebrated it (Eid) here. On the first day of Eid, after prayers and Eid greetings, we all put on our new clothes; and I took my children out. Later, vis-

itors, who included my brothers, cousins and friends, streamed in. I truly enjoyed it here.

Zubaida Habib Al Zadjali, receptionist: I stayed in Oman. Why? There is so much happening here. In fact, during Eid, it is better here. Yes, I know many people from here went to Dubai, but so what, I preferred to stay here. I had a great time here. I went to exhibitions and other Eid parties.

Aziz, media executive: Of course, I stayed in Oman during Eid. We spent the holidays here. There was more than enough entertainment to occupy us. We went to a farm house in the interior and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. I wanted to relax and rejuvenate myself after a heavy grind at work. Besides, I did not like the idea of going to Dubai during the holidays. There is too much rush there.

I don't think everyone heads for Dubai during Eid holidays; specially when there are plenty of entertaining programmes here. Last year we camped in wadis. This year some of my friends went to Wadi Dayikah and Sifa beach.

Rubin Jamil, copywriter: People did go to Dubai this time. It's all happening there, and people will naturally be attracted. Entertainment is an year-round activity in Dubai ... and since city and night life is thriving there, it is an attraction for the youth. This time, coupled with the Shopping Festival, more people would have gone there.

But, no, I did not go. I decided not to go because of the rush. I spend Eid quietly with my family and friends.

Suresh Unnithan, sales supervisor: We went 'wadi bashing' and trekking up the mountains. We could not go to the desert this time. Yes whenever we get holidays we head for the interior, to the wadis, mountains, deserts ... Dubai? Whatever for? It's paradise here ... I can't wait for my next holidays!

Akbar Miran, driver: I stayed in Oman, I celebrated Eid with my family and friends. No, I did not go to Dubai, because I can't afford it also, why should I? There are many activities here. And yes, it's not a one-way traffic; people from Dubai are also coming here. In fact my friends from Dubai were here.



Children (above) along with their families (below) enjoy a beach outing. — Times photos



Beaches become beehives

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — The golden beaches of Oman turned into beehives of revelling picnickers during Eid holidays.

Crystal-clear water, calm waves, soft, clean sand and the cool, pleasant weather — all lured families away from their television sets.

And as usual, beaches in and around the city were the most sought-after picnic spots.

The huge queues of vehicles around the parking lots of the city beaches, were an indication of the popularity of beaches in Oman.

Families started flocking to the beaches on the first day of Eid itself.

Though camping on the beaches is very rare in the city, picnickers spending an entire day on the beach is not unusual. However, limited picnic spots on the beaches forced picnickers to start early in the day to grab the best picnic spots.

Favourite pastime at the beaches is snacking and soozing, an occasional game of cricket or football and a refreshing swim in the cool waters. Families come well prepared — boxes of lunch, packets of snacks, flasks of coffee/tea and ice boxes filled with water and soft drinks.

Many find beaches ideal for barbeque. Since only a few beaches in the city are equipped with permanent barbeque stands, picnickers relying

on the barbeque food for lunch, usually carry their own sets along with marinated meat. The adventurous few count on their fishing skill and prefer to barbeque the fish caught by them.

Barbeque or not, fishing, too, is a favourite pastime. But this, however, is restricted to line-fishing.

Besides Al Bustan beach, Al Jussa beach, Qurum beach and the Qantab beach — endowed with numerous breath-taking islands sought-after by picnickers escaping crowded beaches — the Yiti beach, Sifa, Al Sawadhi and several other scenic beaches, dotting the suburbs of Muscat, were also preferred by people looking for quiet spots.

Prayer timings	
Dhuhr	12.25
Asr	03.36
Maghrib	06.12
Isha	07.37
Tomorrow	
Fajr	05.12

OMAN TV	
08:00	Royal Anthem
08:03	Holy Quran
08:21	News
08:30	Cartoons
09:23	English film for Children: Captain Johnno
11:00	News
11:10	Musical Varieties
11:31	Comedy Prog: Laurel & Hardy
12:25	Azan of Dhuhr Prayer
02:00	News
02:16	Arabic Serial
03:00	Songs
03:18	Crystal Maze Contest
03:36	Azan of Asr Prayer
04:12	National Festivals
05:00	Tattoo Show
06:00	News
06:12	Azan of Maghrib Prayer
06:40	Arabic Serial
07:25	Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations in Dhofar
07:37	Azan of Isha Prayer
08:00	English News
08:21	Home Video
08:46	Arabic Serial
09:39	Poetry
10:00	News
10:39	Arabic Prog.
11:28	Varieties
01:00	News
01:15	Holy Quran
01:20	Royal Anthem

EVENTS	
●	THE Ministry of Health will organise a workshop on health problems in wilyats at Majan Hotel on Monday.
●	LAKSHMAN Kadirgamar, Sri Lankan foreign minister, will arrive in Muscat on Tuesday, heading a trade delegation.
●	THE Educational Activities Department of the Ministry of Education will begin assessment visits to schools from March 2.

Huge crowd relishes Eid Bonanza

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — A huge crowd thronged the 'Children's Eid Bonanza' at the Civic Piazza yesterday.

The exciting event, jointly organised by *Ashbal Al Shabiba* and the Muscat Municipality, got off to a splendid start with a bird show.

The Wonder Birds show, which has enthralled public at the Qurum Natural Park, set the mood. The crowd began streaming in at 4pm, and all prominent spots were 'booked', immediately.

The mood turned upbeat once the famous magician, Samala Venu got on the stage to perform some dazzling tricks.

The performance of the twenty-eight-year-old Venu, who has gained entry into the *Guinness Book of Records* and *Limca Book of Records* with his various feats, thrilled the crowd.

Other exciting events during the evening included a quiz programme, dance and songs.


The music band 'Al Basma' added spice to the evening with lilting tunes.

The whole show was compered by the well-known TV personalities, Mama Kaltham, and Abdulla Al Dhohi.



Samala Venu performing at the children's Eid Bonanza and (left) the crowd screaming for more. — Photos by Rodolfo Alfonso





SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DIRECTORATE OF EDUCATION, MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Directorate of Education, Musandam Governorate, announces the sale of its boat named *Ghazel* (length 14.50 meters, width 4.20 meters, engine capacity 105 HP) in public auction to be held at the directorate premises on Monday 26 February at 12.00 noon.

Interested persons can participate in the auction subject to the following terms and conditions:-

- 1) A temporary refundable guarantee of RO.200 should be paid. It will be added to the auction value.
- 2) The auctioned boat should be removed by the purchaser within seven days from the auction. Or else, the directorate will have the right to reacton it, costs of which should be borne by the first purchaser.
- 3) The successful bidder should pay a brokerage fee of 2% of the auctioned value.
- 4) The successful bidder should pay the amount in cash.
- 5) The boat offered for sale can be inspected at Bakha seaport or by contacting the transport division of the directorate during official working hours on 828561.

Ahmed bin Ali Al Sagheer
Director of Education, Musandam Governorate.



An Israeli border policeman checking the papers of Palestinian passengers on a bus at the Bethlehem checkpoint yesterday. — AFP

Israel lifts closure of Gaza, West Bank

JERUSALEM — Israel lifted an 11-day closure of most Palestinian territories yesterday to allow in more than 50,000 workers, but imposed curbs on Israeli civilian movements in the West Bank, the army said.

Palestinian sources said the army also reimposed a prohibition on Palestinians leaving or entering the town of Daharia, south of Hebron.

The Israeli army said Daharia was being put off limits to Israelis because of an overnight incident in which an Israeli soldier was slightly hurt by a stone thrown by a Palestinian.

But local residents said Israeli roadblocks were preventing Palestinians from entering or leaving the town.

The West Bank and Gaza Strip had been sealed off since February 12 following intelligence reports that Palestinians opposed to the Israeli-PLO peace process were planning car-bomb attacks.

The closure prevented 56,000 Palestinians with Israeli work permits from getting to their jobs at a cost estimated by Palestinian authorities of some six million dollars per day in lost earnings.

The army was also keeping Israelis out of two other autonomous

West Bank towns, Nablus and Qalqilya yesterday, but it lifted a four-day ban on Israelis going into Jericho.

Israeli radio said the overall closure of the West Bank and Gaza was lifted despite continuing reports that militants were preparing new anti-Israeli attacks.

In another incident, the army reported that a joint Israeli-Palestinian police patrol was fired overnight with automatic weapons in the Gaza Strip, damaging a Palestinian jeep.

The patrol fired back but did not report hitting any of the attackers. — AFP

Saddam's daughters back home, divorce husbands

BAGHDAD — Two daughters of President Saddam Hussein married to top defectors who returned from Jordan have divorced their husbands, Iraqi state television announced yesterday.

"Raghad and Rana have filed for divorce and got it," a television station run by Saddam's son Uday said.

General Hussein Kamel Hassan, former industry minister, and his brother Colonel Saddam Hassan returned on Tuesday after defecting to Jordan six months ago together with their wives.

Uday's Youth TV reported that the two sisters said they were "not aware of the treason" of their husbands. — AFP

Palestinians, Israelis exchange fire

GAZA — Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen exchanged fire in the Palestinian-ruled Gaza Strip yesterday, the Israeli army said.

Palestinian sources said they did not know of any casualties. An Israeli army spokeswoman said no Israelis were hurt.

"The incident happened after a number of shots were fired from the autonomous area at an Israeli patrol," the spokeswoman said. She said the gunmen escaped into the Palestinian-ruled area.

The spokeswoman said one Palestinian gunman might have been injured but none of Gaza's hospitals had received such a casualty.

A Palestinian border guard officer said there was heavy shooting from both sides at 4:00am. He said police were not involved in the shooting and were still searching for the gunmen hours later.

The guard, Shafiq Abu Leileh, said: "Our checkpoint is 600 metres from where the Palestinians opened fire on the Israelis. The Israelis opened fire indiscriminately. They shot towards us."

He said the police at the checkpoint could not report the shooting to the Israeli-Palestinian district coordinating office because they lacked means of communication or transportation.

Abu Leileh said some 200 empty bullet cartridges were found afterwards, from weapons used by both sides.

Israel opened its borders with the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to Palestinians yesterday after an 11-day closure.

Most Israeli troops withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 1994 under terms of the Israel-PLO peace deal that launched Palestinian self-rule. Some soldiers still protect Jewish settlements in the strip and patrol jointly with Palestinian police. — Reuters

US offers compensation for downing Iran plane

TEHRAN — The United States has agreed to pay \$101.8 million in compensation for the US Navy's 1988 downing of an Iranian airliner with 290 people on board, an Iranian official said yesterday.

Eftekhari Jahromi, head of the office for international legal affairs, said \$61.8 million of the amount would go to relatives of the victims and the rest in compensation for the downing of the Airbus A-300.

The USS Vincennes shot down the airliner on July 3, 1988 as it was on a flight from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas to Dubai.

The United States said the plane had been mistaken for an F-14 fighter jet, but Iran insists the attack was intentional.

The US State Department said on Thursday that the two countries had been able to settle the claim after the International Court of Justice dismissed a lawsuit filed by Tehran.

Washington had suggested paying about \$300,000 to the families of each victim right after the downing, but a decision was held up by the lawsuit. Families of 42 non-Iranian victims have already received compensation.

The Iranian official said \$300,000 had been set aside for each victim who was a "bread earner" and \$150,000 for each of the others. He made no mention of the rejection of the Iranian lawsuit.

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns announced on Thursday his country would pay \$61.8 million to the families of the victims, but "no money will be paid to the government of Iran under the settlement."

He was apparently ruling out compensation for the downed plane, which was owned by the state-owned Iran Air. — AFP

Turkish alliance talks continue

ANKARA — Turkish Islamist and conservative aides were due to meet yesterday for a third time to share out ministries in a planned coalition that would give the 73-year secular republic its first Islamist premier.

The aides, who failed to conclude talks on Thursday in the drawn-out alliance negotiations, are due to meet in parliament, the Anatolian news agency said.

The prolonged talks delayed a meeting of Welfare Party leader Najmuddin Erbakan and Motherland Party leader Mesut Yilmaz, which was set for yesterday. The meeting, their seventh, is expected to take place today.

Erbakan and Yilmaz had earlier this week moved closer to agreement, announcing they would rotate the premiership of their coalition government. — Reuters

Amend outdated charter, says Abu Mazen

BEIRUT — Senior PLO official Mahmoud Abbas said his organisation should amend its charter as demanded by Israel because it is has been overtaken by events, in an interview published yesterday.

"How can we keep an old charter which has been overtaken by time and which calls for the use of arms against Israel, a country with which we have concluded a peace agreement?" he asked.

Abbas — architect and signatory of the autonomy accords with Israel — told the Saudi newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat* that the PLO charter "represents a part of our past history."

"We have entered a new phase with which our future political and ideological positions must correspond. We have embraced international legitimacy and made a number of pledges before the world."

"Therefore we must adopt a constitution, a resolution or a charter which carries the weight of the importance of these pledges," he said.

Abbas, who is also known as Abu Mazen, said from the PLO offices in Tunis that his organisation had already recognised the state of Israel unlike its charter.

"We have no other choice but to change the charter ... otherwise you enter a phase of confrontation with Israel," he said. — AFP

Peres maintains lead despite Likud tricks

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Shimon Peres and his Labour Party solidified their lead in opinion polls over the conservative opposition this week despite a right-wing campaign of personal attacks against him, two new surveys showed yesterday.

Peres published by the dailies *Yedioth Ahronoth* and *Maariv* both gave Peres 49 per cent of the vote in the race for prime minister compared to 34 per cent for Benjamin Netanyahu, head of the main right-wing party Likud.

Former Likud number two David Levy, who this week formed a break-away centrist party called Gesher, or the Bridge, was given four-to-five per cent of the vote and 12-13 per cent of voters remained undecided.

In the elections scheduled for May 29, Israelis will for the first time directly elect the prime minister at the same time they choose a new parliament, or Knesset.

The latest surveys were conducted after Likud and its ultra-nationalist ally Tsomet launched a joint election campaign on Sunday centred around personal attacks against Peres.

Their campaign slogan was "Peres will divide Jerusalem," accusing the prime minister of planning to hand annexed east Jerusalem to the Palestinians despite a broad national consensus in Israel that the whole city is the "eternal capital" of Israel.

Peres and other ministers spent the week denying this and a string of other allegations that if re-elected the Labour government would offer a host of concessions to Palestinians in upcoming negotiations on the future of east Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Yesterday's polls indicated that the Likud offensive could be backfiring with Peres gaining two to three points over Netanyahu from identical surveys published by the two dailies a week ago.

Two smaller surveys broadcast on television on Thursday also showed Peres maintaining a solid lead over Netanyahu, although they showed the gap between the two men narrowing slightly to around 10 points.

In the latest polls, Likud was also shown losing ground in the Knesset race despite its electoral alliance with Tsomet.

The papers give Likud-Tsomet 34 or 35 seats in the 120-member Knesset, compared to the 40 seats they won in the previous elections in 1992.

Labour was shown gaining over one or two seats from the 44 deputies it elected in 1992, although its left-wing coalition partner Meretz loses

five of its 12 seats, implying that even if it comes out ahead in the new polls, the left will have to seek new coalition partner, possibly Levy's Gesher which is given two-to-three seats in the surveys.

Meanwhile, Hanoch Smith, who runs one of Israel's main polling institutes, said one of the biggest question marks is how the country's Russian immigrants will vote.

In 1992, most of the 240,000 voters from the former Soviet Union largely backed Labour, but Smith said this was in big part because the Russians "are basically oriented toward voting against the government" which was Likud at the time.

This year there are expected to be 450,000 Russian immigrants eligible to vote, or 11-12 per cent of the electorate.

Smith suggested that many would back the new immigrant party formed by former refusenik Natan Sharansky in the Knesset polls, but their allegiance in the prime minister's race was uncertain.

"The Russian vote is completely unpredictable," Smith said.

He also stressed the weight of young first-time voters, expected to number more than 200,000. "What we don't know is how lasting this shift will be," Smith said. — AFP

Some issues are so controversial that you don't want to mention them," said Descoutures.

"We cannot preclude some subjects will not be brought up. If both sides want to build an equal partnership, a real listening is important," he said. "It will be a golden opportunity for all leaders and could defuse tensions."

Banham told reporters on Thursday that sensitive issues should be avoided because this was the pioneer summit between the two regions. ASEAN member Indonesia has also said it does not want controversial topics raised at the meeting.

"The world is not perfect. We have to achieve a lot more. The Uruguay Round has been a major success. Now we look to the World Trade Organisation meeting this year to make the playing field more level," Descoutures said.

Discussions on nuclear test bans and the southeast Asian nuclear weapons free zone would figure prominently at the summit and at bilateral meetings between heads of government, he added.

"Nuclear non-proliferation will figure in the language in the final (summit) communique," he said.

On farm trade disputes and de-

Thousands of Egyptians celebrate Eid Al-Fitr on a Nile tour on Thursday. — AFP



EU keen to discuss labour, rights issues with Asia

BANGKOK — The European Union sees the March summit of leaders with East Asia as a golden opportunity to thrash out sensitive political and economic issues, a senior official of the grouping said yesterday.

The charge d'affaires of the EU's mission in Bangkok, Daniel Descoutures, said it would not help both sides build an equal partnership if such issues were left out, as mentioned by host Thailand.

Among issues deemed sensitive and irrelevant by summit chairman and Thai Prime Minister Chuanricha Silpa-archa were those related to child labour, human rights, Indonesia's occupation of former Portuguese colony East Timor, unfair trade practices and nuclear testing.

The summit from March 1-2 will be the first between leaders of 10 east Asian nations and the 15-member EU.

Asia will be represented by the seven-member Association of South-east Asian Nations (Asean), China, Japan and South Korea.

Asean groups together Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

"You don't want to gather 25 heads of governments and deem

some issues are so controversial that you don't want to mention them," said Descoutures.

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On farm trade disputes and de-

mands by Asians for greater access and lowering of tariff barriers for their commodities, Descoutures said agriculture was a special case for the EU.

The EU had agreed to dismantle some farm tariff barriers at the Uruguay Round and was in the process of revamping its common agriculture policy and price supports for farmers.

"Agriculture is a special case and we need some time to reduce barriers. This is because agriculture cannot follow the industrial cycle because much depends on weather and some special circumstances," he said.

Descoutures noted that the EU was concerned that Japan was not liberalising its trade and markets as fast as it was expected to. "The EU's greatest trade deficit is with Japan and it cannot continue," he said.

On the political and security front, the EU was keen to see stability in the booming Asian region for mutually beneficial reasons. There were flashpoints in the South China Sea, in Taiwan and on the Korean peninsula that could erupt and reduce Asia's economic strength, he added.

— Reuters

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China has warned that if Taiwan declares independence, it will attack the island. It also seeks moves by Taiwan to expand its international profile as an attempt to seek independence.

Speaking a month before key presidential elections, Lee expressed strong confidence in the island's armed forces, saying "they are monitoring the situation closely ... confident and well prepared."

But he stopped short of saying what moves he would take as commander-in-chief, if China should invade Taiwanese territory.

Lee, whom Beijing suspects is steering the island towards independence, is running for a second term as the champion of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT).

Lee's unofficial trip to the United States last June infuriated Beijing, which considers the island part of its territory. China subsequently launched two missile drills and large-scale manoeuvres off Taiwan's coast between July and November as a protest.

The 73-year Lee is joining the presidential race with millionaire premier Lien Chan as his running mate.

The move contrasted with his remarks, made at least twice, in 1990 and 1991, that he would retire after the current term ends in May.

Meanwhile, Lee's campaign opponent, Peng Ming-min of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, yesterday announced if he was elected, he would immediately declare independence should China attack the island.

He said he was willing to hold talks with China on a country-to-country basis and invite Chinese President Jiang Zemin to visit Taiwan. — AFP

Japanese govt unveils quake crisis manual

TOKYO — The Japanese government, stung by criticism of its response to the Kobe earthquake, yesterday unveiled a crisis management manual outlining what should happen in the event of a massive quake in Tokyo.

But the manual, endorsed by Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at an informal cabinet meeting, made no mention of measures to deal with eventualities such as a cut in basic utilities. It only gave advice to ministers.

Speaking to reporters, Chief Cabinet Secretary Sei-iro Kajiyama said Hashimoto and his ministers had agreed on "rules on how the cabinet should deal with an initial stage with a quake that directly hits Tokyo."

If the prime minister were to die in an earthquake, he would be replaced — in order of precedence — by the deputy prime minister, the chief cabinet secretary, and the national land agency chief, the manual said.

Once a tremor had struck, it added, ministers should "voluntarily gather at the prime minister's office by every possible means."

Officials would also be allowed free access to television, radio and police channels to contact their

ministers.

The manual's release comes after severe public criticism of the slow government response to the quake on January 17 last year that killed some 6,000 people in Kobe and its vicinity in western Japan.

Despite widespread fears that the "Big One" may hit Tokyo, at any time, the government had never issued guidelines in the event of the death of the prime minister or the destruction of his office.

A researcher at the Disaster Prevention Research Institute said the manual had only listed "matters of course," but said the cabinet would be working out further details soon.

"The government needs to make closer contact with the Self-Defence Forces," which are trained for crisis management, said Hiroshi Fukuoka, associate researcher at the institute, which is affiliated to Kyoto University.

He also noted the cabinet should set up an office solely devoted to crisis management staffed by people with a scientific background.

Tokyo University professor Keiichi Kasahara noted that the usual 75-year cycle between earthquakes in the area had come around again.

"Massive quakes occur in every 70 to 80 years in the Kanto region," the seismologist said.

Known as the Great Kanto Earthquake, a massive temblor registering 7.9 on the Richter scale decimated Tokyo in 1923, killing more than 140,000 people.

In September last year, a conference entitled "Preparing for the Big One in Tokyo", heard that a major quake in Tokyo would leave between 40,000 and 60,000 dead, causing economic losses of up to three trillion dollars.

"Even a big one in the (neighbouring) Tokai region could damage the capital," he said.

"An earthquake with the magnitude of the Great Kanto Earthquake would paralyse the capital's functions and claim many lives," Kasahara said, adding that his estimates put the possible number of dead in metropolitan Tokyo at up to one million.

"The most important thing in the event of a disaster is to secure channels of information transmission," he said.

"We also need to keep electricity, gas and other so-called life lines as well as routes for food supply," he said. — AFP

Cambodia defends Sirivudh trial

PHNOM PENH — A Cambodian government spokesman yesterday defended the conviction of Prince Norodom Sirivudh, who was sentenced in absentia on Thursday to 10 years in prison for allegedly plotting to assassinate co-premier Hun Sen. Human rights activists and foreign lawyers have complained that the evidence against King Norodom Sihanouk's half-brother was not nearly enough for a conviction and that the proceedings were evidence that Cambodia's courts were not independent.

They noted that Hun Sen said earlier this month that the prince, who has proclaimed his innocence, could return from exile in France to stand trial but that he would spend a long time in prison afterwards if he did. But Information Ministry spokesman Sieng Lapresse said the government was in no way involved in the case and had not interfered in the judicial process.

"The executive branch gave this to the judicial branch," he said.

Prince Sirivudh, Cambodia's former foreign minister who was exiled in December after being arrested on Hun Sen's demand in November, called the trial a "mockery of justice" and said it "shattered" the dream of political plurality in his home country. — AFP

No immediate unification, feels Taiwan

TAIPEI — Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui yesterday said China was afraid of immediate reunification with Taiwan because of its own internal problems.

"They (China) have their own problems, even more serious than ours. They are afraid to have immediate unification with (Taiwan) if they are asked to do so," Lee told some 150 foreign and local journalists in a press conference, his first at his office in almost two years.

Lee said Taiwan would not give up its efforts to increase substantive ties with other countries even though the move would anger China, which is massing some 150,000 men for a large-scale military exercise off Taiwan's doorstep to intimidate the island ahead of its presidential elections.

"The Chinese communists should not find fault with our pragmatic diplomatic policy. They shouldn't think our ties with others would hamper their development," he said.

He said Taiwan removed its state of emergency in 1991 to ease hostility with China, but until now, Beijing has made no action to respond to this move.

He said Beijing had criticised him for only paying lip service to the reunification issue, but even if Taiwan asked for unification with China immediately, Beijing would be unable to do so because it has too many internal problems.

He said a "peace treaty" between the Taiwan and China was essential for improving mutual ties and eventual reunification.

He said progress towards democracy on this nationalist island had scared China and forced it to resort to military threats in a sign of its own weakness.

Lee said that Beijing was left with no choice but to accuse him of seeking to promote independence since Taiwan's progress towards democracy — which accelerated under his presidency — had left the mainland powerless to fight back.

"Our ability to break out of (diplomatic confinement) and show ourselves in the international arena ... the fact that Taiwan can breathe now ... (this) scares

the Chinese communists," he said.

Taiwan and China separated after the end of a civil war in 1949, but both the nationalist and the communist governments, despite denouncing each other's sovereignty claim over all of China, have agreed that the two sides should reunite eventually.

China has warned that if Taiwan declares independence, it will attack the island. It also seeks moves by Taiwan to expand its international profile as an attempt to seek independence.

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But he stopped short of saying what moves he would take as commander-in-chief, if China should invade Taiwanese territory.

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EXCELLENT INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR NON-RESIDENT INDIANS

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Bangalore: Independent Duplex villas near Yeswantpura. 1000sq.ft./1500sq.ft. built-up. Cost ranging from Rs.8.5 lacs onwards. Payment terms - 24 monthly instalments with 20% down payment.
Farm House Land - Nelmangaga. 5000 sq.ft. Cost Rs.4.0 lacs. Payment terms 36 monthly instalments.

Mysore: 5000/1000sq.ft. Plantation Sites. (Fully developed 500 acres land) with annual returns and long-term returns exceeding Rs.18/36 lacs. Cost Rs.95000/Rs.2,20,000 payable in 7/10 monthly instalments.

Hosur: Residential Sites/Farm Land. 40X60 sq.ft. Rs.48,000. Also available in sizes of 60X90 sq.ft., 1/4 & 1/2 acre land. Payment terms 36 monthly instalments.

Meet Directors of Meenakshi Garden Resorts & Dee Estates & Properties at Oman Sheraton Hotel, Muscat 23rd to 26th February 1996.

Note: Members in Bountiful Land Project Mysore may collect their Annual Returns cheques.

IN BRIEF

Keys to Windsor Castle missing

LONDON — A major hunt for the keys to the grounds of Windsor Castle — one of Queen Elizabeth's residences — was under way yesterday after a vehicle belonging to a member of the Royal Protection Squad was stolen. Three keys, which open security gates at entrances to the castle, were among security items locked in the car. The theft happened early on Thursday when the policeman was asleep at his home in Windsor, as the neighbouring town west of London is also called. A police spokeswoman said the car also contained correspondence about two past and one future events which are open to the public (in Windsor Castle grounds) and passes to park within the facility of the castle.

Award for Di interviewer

LONDON — Martin Bashir, the reporter who persuaded Princess Diana to give the candid BBC television interview which sent shock waves through Britain late last year, scooped two major media awards here on Thursday.

Bashir won the Interview of the Year and Journalist of the Year prizes at the Royal Television Society Awards at the London Hilton hotel. His BBC Panorama programme — in which Diana spoke of her husband Charles' adultery, her own extra-marital affair, her self-mutilation and bulimia — was watched by more than 23 million Britons last November and millions more around the world.

French actor 'suns' incognito

CARACAS — French actor Gerard Depardieu admitted spending three days sunning himself incognito on Venezuela's beaches, in an interview with the *El Universal* daily. Despite his efforts at avoiding detection, reporters spotted the brawny star of *Cyrano de Bergerac* at a Caracas hotel and promptly ended his idyllic vacation, he said.

Before leaving to meet some friends in Cuba on Thursday, Depardieu said he would work on a new film by director Gerard Louzier when on his return to France, and that he was looking forward to the opening of his last three movies in which he worked with US actors Whoopi Goldberg and Robin Williams and British film star Kenneth Branagh.

Phil Collins to write for 'Tarzan'

BURBANK (California) — British musician Phil Collins will write the songs to Walt Disney's upcoming feature-length animated adaptation of *Tarzan* it was announced on Thursday.

"We feel that he will bring something very special to the creative process," said Peter Schneider, president of Walt Disney Feature Animation. It will mark Collins' first collaboration on an animated feature. The former member of Genesis won an Oscar nomination for his title song in the 1984 film "Against All Odds," and has contributed songs to the films *White Nights* and *Burster*.

Zoo keepers ruffle feathers

PALERMO — Six zoo keepers, who say they have not been paid for over a year, locked themselves in a cage full of birds and vowed not to come out until they received their pay cheques.

The six keepers moved in with the zoo's geese and herons in the Sicilian capital's famous Orléans park and said if their demands were not met they would also start a hunger strike. "The local authorities take care of the animals but don't do anything for us," said one of the workers. The small Palermo zoo is owned by regional authorities who pay a private operator, Salvatore Lauricella, to run the park.

Iglesias' ranch to be auctioned

BUENOS AIRES — An Argentine judge has ordered that a ranch owned by Spanish singer Julio Iglesias be auctioned on March 1 unless he pays a local songwriter \$300,000 for plagiarism, a court official said.

Songwriter Larry Moreno sued Iglesias in 1987, alleging his song *Morrinas* bore a close resemblance to his own tune *Yolanda*. Civil court judge Carmen Ubiedo ruled in 1993 that at least eight consecutive bars of the song were taken from *Yolanda* and ordered Iglesias to pay damages. Iglesias appealed and lost.

'Convicts were not replaced'

CARACAS — Venezuelan officials have denied that the government replaced prisoners with police when Pope John Paul II blessed convicts at a prison on his recent visit.

They said police were present on security duty, not to impersonate prisoners as some Venezuelans have charged.

"Yes, there were police officers there. They were there for security reasons," said a Justice Ministry official who asked not to be named. Church leaders, who hoped the stop at Catia would draw attention to human rights abuses in Venezuela's overcrowded jails, later accused the government of spoiling the event by removing prisoners from the windows facing the pontiff. — *Reuter*



Princess Diana and Jemima Khan pull scarves over their heads during a reading from the Holy Quran at the Shaukat Khanum Hospital in Lahore. — AFP

CALL FOR 3-DAY NON-COOPERATION CAMPAIGN

Fear grips Dhaka ahead of strike

DHAKA — Residents in the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka said they were worried and afraid yesterday ahead of a three-day "non-cooperation" campaign called by major opposition parties in their latest effort to topple the government. "We are facing lot of queries about what will happen. People say they are scared and worried about their personal safety," a newspaper editor said. The "non-cooperation" with the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) will begin today immediately after Bangladesh emerges from a four-day holiday at the end of Ramadan.

Opposition leaders including Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League said everything from transport to ports, offices and factories would be shut during the campaign, called to protest general elections held on February 15 in which the BNP won an overwhelming victory. Main opposition groups boycotted the poll, which they said was pre-

designed to ensure the BNP's victory. Officials reported a poor voter turnout as widespread violence killed 16 people and wounded 500. Three more people died in post-election clashes. "This is going to be another strike, like many more organised by the opposition since December 1994, but with wider impacts," she said. Opposition politicians resigned from parliament in December 1994. "Usually lawlessness becomes the order of the day in such a situation... and police can hardly help," she said. Government employees were in a bind because non-cooperation could mean they would be fired. Opposition parties had asked Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia to step down and allow a neutral caretaker administration to supervise the polls. Khaleda refused, and later dismissed allegations that the elections had been rigged on behalf of her party. — *Reuter*

French troops to remain in Africa

PARIS — Defence Minister Charles Millon, speaking after President Jacques Chirac announced a big cut in the size of France's armed forces, said yesterday that French troops would stay in Africa at their current strength. "France has cooperation agreements with a number of African countries. We will respect them and that is why the size or the numbers of (French) troops pre-positioned in Africa will not change. The reorganisation will affect units in France and in Germany," he told radio Europe-1. Chirac said late on Thursday that France would cut its armed forces to 350,000 personnel from the current half a million over the next six years, but he made no mention of the fate of forces based overseas. There are 8,200 French soldiers in the independent states of Senegal, Gabon, the Ivory Coast, Chad, the Central African Republic and Djibouti with a further 5,200 nearby on the French Indian Ocean islands of Reunion and Mayotte. Millon said earlier this month Paris would not dismantle any bases in Africa but added that it was possible the size of forces there would be altered. Specialists had said they believed Paris would concentrate its troops in Africa on three main bases, leaving only small contingents in other present garrisons. There was no immediate explanation for the change except that former African colonies whose independent governments are allied to Paris are known to have been worried at intentions to cut the number of French troops on their soil. French newspapers have said several worried African leaders pleaded with Paris in recent weeks not to reduce or dismantle garrisons for fear this would be taken as a signal that France was no longer willing to intervene to help them in case of foreign or domestic threat. Millon also said yesterday that Paris would maintain current troop levels in its remaining far-flung overseas possessions "because France has a world vocation when it comes to guaranteeing peace."

There are close to 18,000 French soldiers in such territories, which include islands in the West Indies and the Pacific Ocean. French bases in Africa were either there before independence or were established soon afterwards, in the 1960s, to prop up governments friendly to Paris and check the southwards advances of Libyan troops or Libyan-backed militants. French troops saved a string of African governments since the first such intervention in Gabon in 1964 when a deposed president was re-instated by French paratroopers. Paris' best-known recent African foray was in 1977 when foreign legion paratroopers defeated Angola-based, Cuban-backed rebels who invaded Zaire's mineral-rich Shaba province, threatening to topple President Mobutu Sese Seko. — *Reuter*

Serbs urged to stay in Vogosca

VOGOSCA, (Bosnia-Herzegovina) — The UN police force in Bosnia tried yesterday to encourage Serb citizens of this Sarajevo suburb to stay in the district despite a handover of police jurisdiction to the Muslim-Croat Federation. Shortly after the first federation police arrived in Vogosca, situated north of the Bosnian capital, police chiefs from the UN's International Police Task Force (IPTF) urged locals to trust the new police. "We will do our best to monitor all patrols in whatever area," the IPTF's chief of staff Detlef Buwitt told local Serbs who had gathered in front of the police station recently taken over by federation police. "If there are any substantial complaints they can be made to the IPTF station," he added. But Buwitt's words appeared to be having little effect on the crowd of whom had already boarded two buses ready to take them off to Serb-controlled territory. "We will have four or five buses and all of them will be full," one prospective passenger said. Yesterday's deadline for the handover of jurisdiction from Serb police to federation units had already triggered an exodus from Vogosca of thousands of Serbs, with IPTF personnel estimating that as few as 1,700 citizens of the suburbs former 17,000-strong population remained. The exodus has raised alarms over the prospects of success for the Dayton peace accord, which is built on a cornerstone of multi-ethnic communities in Bosnia. — *AFP*

Filipinos stage rally to mark fall of Marcos

MANILA — Thousands of veterans of the fight against Ferdinand Marcos took to the streets yesterday to mark the 10th anniversary of his fall, warning President Fidel Ramos against authoritarian rule. Yellow confetti rained from high-rise blocks in the Makati financial district as the crowd, estimated by police at 5,000, waved banners and chanted slogans in scenes reminiscent of the end years of Marcos' 20-year rule. Cars honked at the street intersection under a giant statue of Marcos' arch political foe, Benigno Aquino. Aquino's assassination by the dictator's soldiers in 1993 sparked massive protests, goading the previously apathetic middle and upper classes to join the anti-Marcos fight. The regime finally collapsed during the popular uprising between February 22 and 25, 1986. Yellow was the dominant colour of the anti-Marcos campaign. "Ten years after freedom and de-

mocracy's rebirth, the spectre of state oppression rears its ugly head again and stalks the land," the protesters led by the Freedom Coalition said in a statement. "Past evils return in the guise of anti-terrorism bills... escalating prices and galloping inflation," it added. "The spirit of EDSA is dead," protest leader Renato Constantino told the crowd. He was referring to the 1986 uprising when a million unarmed Filipinos turned back Marcos' battle tanks along the Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA) sent to crush an army mutiny led by then deputy military chief Ramos and then Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile. Marcos and his family fled to exile in Hawaii on February 25, 1986 and Marcos died there in 1989. But several of his former associates are now powerful officials under the Ramos government. Congressman Wigberto Tanada and Makati Mayor Ejomar Binay led the protesters in assailing Ramos for

an increase in domestic oil prices early this month, a 10 per cent expanded value added tax and the hiring of former generals in the country's bureaucracy. They also denounced a proposed anti-terrorism bill that allows the police to arrest suspects without warrants, look into bank accounts and tap phone lines, saying it bore the hallmarks of "martial rule." Ramos has denied wanting to reimpose authoritarian rule, saying it would negate the country's modest economic gains under its restored democracy. He said on Tuesday that the proposed anti-terror bill had been shelved. The protest coincided with a transport strike that paralysed traffic in some parts of the capital. Key leaders of the rebellion such as former army colonel turned Senator Gregorio Honasan and the junior army officers that formed the core of the anti-Marcos military would not join 10th anniversary festivities tomorrow. — *AFP*

Imran raises \$160,000 with Diana's visit

LAHORE (Pakistan) — Princess Diana shrugged off her reclusive image as she signed autographs for 35 minutes at a special dinner that raised \$160,000 for a cancer hospital run by former Pakistani cricket star Imran Khan. The princess left Lahore yesterday, the morning after the dinner, the highlight of her two-day private visit to help the hospital. The princess made no speech to the 600 guests who were served traditional Pakistani food at the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Hospital named after Imran's mother, who died from cancer. But Diana was pressed into service to sign autographs after Imran said women guests could approach. Khan said: "I am very grateful to the princess for coming here and I hope she will visit us again." He said people who attended the function were mostly those who had contributed to the hospital in the past. "I hope they would continue to support this hospital," he added. Then Khan said women guests would be allowed to approach the princess and soon after, the estranged wife of Prince Charles was surrounded. It took her about 35 minutes to sign all the books and she also spoke with some of the women. Diana, again wearing Pakistani-style salwar kameez, this time in off-white, arrived at the dinner and left again at midnight. The dinner was also attended by Imran's close family and his mother-in-law Lady Anabel Goldsmith. Businessmen, lawyers, hospital consultants and other guests paid Rs10,000 (\$290) each. Diana sat with Khan's wife, Lady Jemima, Lady Anabel and the hospital's chief executive Dr Nausheran Burki. She did not address the

guests but appeared very relaxed. It was a typical Pakistani atmosphere. Waiters, clad in traditional Pakistani dresses wore turbans. A famous Pakistani Kathak dancer, Professor Saga, performed while youngsters presented folk dances. Imran who wore white Pakistani dress and a black jacket, looked very happy and relaxed while security outside remained tight. Diana left Lahore in a private jet owned by Anglo-French tycoon Sir James Goldsmith, Khan's father-in-law. Diana's arrival on Wednesday on what was described as a two-day humanitarian trip had raised speculation that Khan had invited her to boost his political ambitions. Khan, 43, who led Pakistan to the victory in the 1992 cricket World Cup has frequently criticised the country's political system as corrupt and declared his intention to lead a crusade for reforms and human rights. Popular among the country's youth, Khan who has not yet formed his own party, is widely regarded as a potential alternative to Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto was not invited to the dinner and state run television screened only a few seconds of footage showing Diana with her friend Jemima on her arrival at the Lahore airport lounge. The princess told reporters her visit was to help raise funds for Khan's hospital. She said she would also try to raise support for the hospital in Britain. She was escorted to the airport by Imran Khan and his family. Police officials said she was heading for Istanbul, Turkey, but had no knowledge of her movements beyond that. — *AFP*

Yeltsin 'no' to unconditional pullout from Chechnya

MOSCOW — President Boris Yeltsin yesterday ruled out an unconditional pullout of the Russian army from Chechnya and called for the tiny southern republic to be granted special status within the Russian Federation, Interfax reported. "To demand of the president that he stop the war or that he pulls out the army, this is not a solution, this is not even a road towards peace but a direct route to the extension of the conflict to the whole of the Caucasus," Yeltsin said in a speech to parliament. An advance copy of the text was supplied to the press. Yeltsin called, however, for a special status for Chechnya within the Russian federation but did not make clear what this would entail. "We are ready for compromises on the question of the status of Chechnya in the context of Russia, but not at the expense of security of citizens," he said. Yeltsin, who announced last week that he would run for a second term in June's presidential elections, is seeking a way out of the way out of the 14-month war which has killed an estimated 30,000 civilians and decimated its population. Since declaring his presidential bid, Yeltsin's statements on Chechnya have been marred by inconsistency as he responds to pressure from hawks and doves alike. He does, however, admit that his chances of success in the June polls would be jeopardised if fighting continues. Last week he conceded that the war had been "perhaps" a mistake. Yeltsin's advisers are said to have drawn up seven secret plans to solve the Chechen crisis, which the Kremlin says range from withdrawing troops to waging an all-out scorched-earth offensive. Yeltsin had promised to pick one of the plans and announce it soon. — *AFP*

ENDING ETHNIC CRISIS IN SRI LANKA

Devolution package is last solution: Minister

COLOMBO — Sri Lanka's justice minister said yesterday a devolution package for minority Tamils was the last chance to find a political solution to the country's ethnic crisis for the next 20 years. Professor G.L. Peiris, a key figure behind many of the proposals, said there were bound to be hurdles as the legal draft fights its way through an All-Party Parliamentary Select Committee, parliament and then a national referendum. "There are stumbling blocks of different kinds," he told a cabinet press conference. "The first is the polarised nature of Sri Lankan politics which has been the principal reason why a solution has been difficult to arrive at

over the years." But now, he added, there was wide recognition on all sides of the need to lift the problem away from confrontational politics and find some kind of consensus. He said it would not be useful to consider failure. "I am bold to announce that if this fails, for the next 20 years there will be no political solution," he said. "Everyone is aware of the need for a political solution... there is a spirit of goodwill. Minorities realise that extravagant demands will be impracticable." The peace package offers wide-ranging executive and legislative powers to Tamils who make up about 17 per cent of majority-Sinhalese Sri Lanka and who have

long complained of discrimination in language, education and employment. Right-wing Sinhalese and many Buddhist monks criticise the plan for in effect breaking up the country and rewarding the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who have fought for a homeland in the north and east since 1983. Moderate Tamil parties have cautiously welcomed the proposals but warned against any attempt to dilute them to appease right-wing critics. The main opposition United National Party (UNP), which has 85 seats in the 225-seat parliament, can block the plan, which needs to be passed by a two-thirds majority in parliament. The ruling people's alliance, which knocked the UNP from 17 years in power in 1994, has 113 seats. The proposals go before the select committee, where they need a simple majority, on March 7. The UNP has yet to make its views on the package known but Peiris said UNP leader Ranil Wickremesinghe had made clear the UNP regarded the ethnic crisis as a national rather than party-political problem. This weekend Peiris will meet five Tamil parties and members of his own alliance coalition, including communists, and next week he meets Wickremesinghe, a former prime minister. The package is due to be part of a new constitution that would also see the abolition of the executive presidency, electoral reforms and guarantees of fundamental rights. The LTTE, now attacking military and government targets in the east after being run out of their northern Jaffna town stronghold by the army in December, has rejected the package. — *Reuter*

Tamil Tigers attack villagers, 19 killed

COLOMBO — Tamil Tiger guerrillas stormed a Sinhalese village in north-central Sri Lanka and killed nine people for the loss of at least 10 of their own cadres, the military here said yesterday. Gunmen of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) carried out the overnight attack against the remote village of Mahanikawewa in the district of Anuradhapura by attacking two soldiers and a constable guarding it. The chief military spokesman Sarath Munasinghe said the Tigers then killed six civilians but were driven out by military reinforcements which killed at least 10 guerrillas. Five automatic rifles were recovered from the rebels. "This is a big set back to the Tigers," Munasinghe told reporters here. "They are losing heavily because security forces and the civilians reacted promptly to the attack and took counter measures."

The latest massacre came four months after a spate of similar attacks against Sinhalese villages, killing at least 125 civilians. The separatist LTTE has been accused of killing Sinhalese civilians in a bid to drive them out of the northern and eastern regions which they claim as their traditional homeland. In another development, two soldiers died in a pressure mine explosion in the northern peninsula of Jaffna late on Thursday, Munasinghe said. — *AFP*

Ex-white-only school's bid to keep blacks out

JOHANNESBURG — A former whites-only school at the centre of a race row over its exclusion of black children had applied to South Africa's most powerful court in its attempt to keep blacks out, officials said yesterday. Constitutional court official Martie Nienaber said the court, the highest in the land, would hear an application on the matter at 10am on Monday. The management committee of the school in Potgietersrus, 250km north of Johannesburg, lodged the papers with the court after Supreme Court judge Tjibbe Spoelstra refused to grant permission for an appeal against his ruling which forced the school to admit black children. Spoelstra told the Pretoria Supreme Court on Wednesday there

was no reasonable likelihood of the constitutional court interfering with his judgment. *Beeld* newspaper said the school's application would be based on the belief that Afrikaners, as a minority group, had a right to self-determination, in international law. "That right includes the right to protection and the improvement of quality of life, economic growth, development, social justice, cultural life, language and religion of the group," it said. The newspaper said the application argued that these principals were recognised in the constitution. "The state has an obligation to see to it that these rights are protected and developed."

"The school's argument is that the culture of Potgietersrus primary school is Eurocentric. The culture of the black parents, and so also their children, is Afrocentric. "The difference between the Afrocentric culture and a Eurocentric culture is so big that the parents of the school were justified in taking a decision that the dominant culture and character or ethos of the school was maintained and protected." On Thursday, the first black children started classes at the school, sparking a boycott by most of the 600 white pupils. The case is the first where white attempts to preserve the status quo have been tested since all-race elections in 1994 ended nearly 50 years of institutionalised racial segregation. — *Reuter*

Zimbabwe's bid to curb Aids boom

HARARE — Zimbabwe, faced by one of the worst Aids epidemics in sub-Saharan Africa, is considering making the deliberate infection with HIV a criminal offence, parliament was told on Thursday. The Criminal Law Act is being amended so that a person who is HIV positive and deliberately infects others would be charged with a criminal offence," said Deputy Health Minister Tsungirayi Hungwe. The proposed legislation would apply to spouses who did not disclose they had the virus to their partners and assault of minors. Many of the cases of assault on children reported recently have revealed that the victims are infected with the deadly virus during commission of the offence. A tenth, or one million of Zimbabwe's 10.4 million people are infected with the Human Immune-Deficiency Virus (HIV) which causes the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (Aids) and the government has reported Aids deaths of an average of 42 people daily. — *AFP*



Rallyists gathered at an intersection of Makati City yesterday to mark the 10th anniversary of the revolt that ousted the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. — AFP

Mandela to meet Swaziland king

JOHANNESBURG — President Nelson Mandela will meet Swaziland's King Mswati III in South Africa on March 1, presidential spokesman Parks Mankahlana said yesterday. The talks are expected to focus on the unrest that hit Swaziland last month as workers and students took the streets demanding an end to absolute monarchy and a restoration of freedoms suspended by a 1973 state of emergency. Mankahlana, however, would only say that the president had invited Mswati "for conversations on pertinent issues", adding that Mandela did not want to be seen as meddling in Swaziland's internal affairs. Mandela had advised Mswati to engage democratic reforms when the king visited Pretoria last year. The Swazi ruler said after the general strike that crippled his country for a week last month that he would restore constitutional rule, but on his own timetable. — *AFP*

Taj Mahotsav: a glimpse into the past

AGRA — Come February, and it's springtime, when nature unfolds all its colourful splendour and Agra, the city of Taj, bursts into life.

For 10 days there was sheer celebration in Uttar Pradesh's rich heritage of arts, crafts, culture, cuisine, dance and music.

Yes, it was Taj Mahotsav (Taj festival) again.

Organised by Uttar Pradesh tourism and held as an annual event at Shilpagram, literally next door to the magnificent Taj Mahal, the Taj Mahotsav which concluded yesterday, was indeed a fitting tribute to the legendary skills of mastercraftsmen and other exponents of art, music and cuisine.

Not only this, it exhibited the rich heritage and extraordinary legacies of this wonderful land.

The festivities commenced with a spectacular procession from Taj Mahal to Shilpagram.

Bedecked elephants and camels, drum beaters, folk artists and mastercraftsmen...recreated a visual delight reminiscent of the golden era of the Mughal darbars.

A major attraction of the Mahotsav was the exquisite marble inlay work, the origin of which can be traced back to the tomb Itmad-ud-Daulah of Mughul emperor Jahangir's wife Nurjehan between 1622-1628 A.D.

The work was on display as casements, artefacts, table-tops, other close-to-home articles.

Marble inlay apart, the festival brought forth an array of other fine crafts like wood carvings, brass and other metalware of Moradabad, handmade carpets of Badohi, the blue pottery of Khurja, the chicken work of Lucknow, the silk of Banaras...to name a few.

Throughout the mahotsav, there was a profusion of folk music and dance — folk dances of Bundelkhand, Saper (serpent) dance of Rajasthan, Lavani (folk dance) of Maharashtra, Raasilila of Brajhoonim, Nautanki, Garhwali and Kumaoni folk...performed just the way they used to be centuries ago.

The pick of the mahotsav were the savoury delicacies that were favourites of 16th century royalty. The art of cooking over a slow fire — the dum pukht — a legacy of the nawabs to the world; the Mughlai cuisine...preferred by the royalty for centuries and the typical preparations from the interiors of the state. — PTI

Men in Kutch villages are prey to kidney disorders

DHAMADKA (Kutch) — Males out of 60 families comprising mostly of the finest craftsmen in cloth printing in this small bustling village 55km from Bhuj are suffering from a strange combination of kidney disorders worsened by abdominal pain.

What baffles the doctors is that this ailment known as urolithiasis, i.e., stones in urinary tract starting from kidney to ureter, bladder to urethra is not affecting the women in the village, though it catches even the infants. Doctors visiting the village have no medical explanation to it. And, as surgery is the only remedy, most of the villagers carry scars on their body.

Doctors treating the villagers most-

ly consisting of the Khatri community are baffled at the consistency in the occurrence of this disease as some patients are just two or three years old. As urolithiasis is not a hereditary disease, the presence of kidney stones, especially among the kids has evoked the interest of many doctors to study the general health and living environment of the villagers to determine the causes of this disease.

Abdul Karim, a provision store owner had two operations already, was reclining on his bed as he was again having pain in the bladder.

"I had one operation about four years ago and another two years ago. Now the pain has started again and I

am taking medicines for temporary relief. We cannot just leave our jobs and take rest for a long time. But this disorder is really rendering our artisans and craftsmen devaluated," he said.

"The efficiency has gone down in some while some simply refuse to work after four or five hours complaining of exhaustion and pain in abdomen." The case of Sumar Ayub Khatri a cloth dyer, is interesting indeed. Five of his grandsons have already had operations to remove kidney stones in the past one year. "We had to spend so much money on them and there are only a few earning members along with me. And out of the five grandsons operated upon, four of them

still have the problem," Ayub said.

A couple of doctors are already conducting research here, studying the diet, eating habits and, significantly, the salinity of water which many believe is the cause of the disorder. "It has to be either their staple food that is resulting in the stones or the excessive salinity in the water, otherwise how does one explain the disorder in infants?" hypothesises Dr. Yogeshbhai Velani, who is treating the villagers and has performed about 40 operations till now. "I am trying to find out the cause for the occurrence. The water could be the source as the total dissolved salts in this village's water source is 1,000 units while the World

Health Organisation has stipulated that only 300 units is safe drinking water for humans. The excessive salts in the body are, I think, the main reason for the formation of stones in the body," he observed.

"The Khatri's staple food is mainly non-vegetarian and bajra," informed Ismail hammed, tinted cloth trader. "If food or water is the cause of the malady then why don't our women suffer," he asks. He, too, has undergone two operations to remove gall bladder stones and was in great pain as he apart from the Khatri's, a few families belonging to the Khumbhar community also reside in the village.

"Although there have been patients

that does not reveal why the women are not affected by it," Dr. Velani said.

The youngest to have undergone an operation to remove the stone is two-year-old Anas. Most of the villagers have compounded their problems by consulting quacks for quick relief medicines. "Some are ignorant as to how dangerous it can become and try all sorts of medicines. An 80-year-old man died recently after suffering for a longtime," said Abdul Karim. With medical facilities and expenses out of reach, this village is now banking on the time-tested nature's cure of having barley water and drinking the juice of wheat grass which prevents salt formation.

However, the Indian BSF spokesman said the shooting across the militarised border involved only medium and light machine guns in what he said was an exercise to provide cover "for Kashmiri militants and Pakistani terrorists trying to enter Kashmir."

"No one was injured in the attack," he said.

Pakistan denies the charge but provides moral and diplomatic effort to the insurgency.

On January 27, tensions between the two nations soared when an Indian rocket attack had killed more than 20 people in the border town of Rawalakot. India rejected the Pakistani charge as "baseless."

The escalating clashes over Kashmir and an Indian missile test have also increased Washington's concern over tensions on the subcontinent.

US officials fear Pakistan might respond to India's test-firing of the nuclear-capable Prithvi missile by deploying nuclear-capable M-11 missiles of its own.

In the case of Indian nuclear test, the United States warned in January that far-reaching economic sanctions would follow such a move.

India conducted its first and only nuclear test in 1974 and has denied plans to conduct others.

Neither India nor Pakistan has signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The declared nuclear powers are Britain, France, Russia, and the United States.

US officials are currently considering imposing sanctions on China for transferring nuclear technology to Pakistan. — AFP

KHURANA QUILTS AS CHIEF MINISTER

BJP squabbles over successor

NEW DELHI — The main opposition party was embroiled in civil war yesterday after one of the top leaders quit as New Delhi's chief minister over a bribery scandal, damaging its hopes of winning upcoming general elections.

Madan Lal Khurana, a high-profile leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), resigned on Thursday as the capital's chief minister after being named in the snowballing corruption scandal.

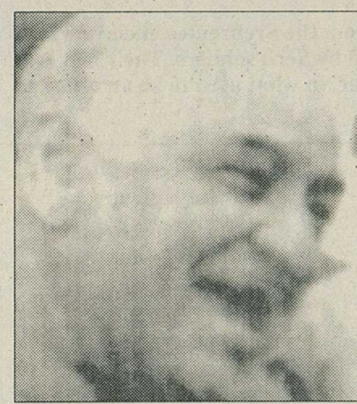
He was one of 14 politicians accused by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Thursday of accepting bribes from Surendra Jain, a businessman at the heart of the scandal which has sullied the image of virtually every Indian political party.

The BJP went into crisis session yesterday to elect a successor to Khurana, and BJP sources said the otherwise disciplined party was divided into at least three factions.

The BJP and political sources said the corruption accusations against Khurana, which follow last month's resignation of BJP president Lal Krishna Advani from parliament on similar charges, had dealt a severe blow to the party.

BJP, which governs three states in addition to the city of Delhi, had been planning to make corruption a major issue in parliamentary elections expected in April.

But the involvement of Advani and Khurana in the scandal, in which 115 politicians and bureaucrats have been accused of taking bribes from Jain between 1988 and 1991 in exchange for



MADAN LAL KHURANA favours, has upset the BJP's plans.

"We have suffered a setback," said BJP spokesman Krishan Lal, another BJP MP added: "It would be very difficult for us to go to the people and claim we are different from the ruling Congress Party."

The BJP sources said the party's influential New Delhi chapter was squabbling over who would succeed Khurana as chief minister, and a party leader described the situation as "very serious."

In the race for the powerful post were a former governor of Kashmir, Jagmohan Malhotra, party spokeswoman Sushma Swaraj, and the deputy in the New Delhi government, Sahib Singh Verma.

The BJP's involvement in the scandal comes on the heels of un-

precedented infighting in several of the party's provincial chapters in a departure from its traditional regimented image.

BJP has vowed to take power in the general elections expected in April by contesting a record 500 of the 545 seats at stake in the lower house, the Lok Sabha.

On Thursday, Khurana, who has headed the city government here since November 1993, denied the charges of corruption levelled against him, and vowed to step up the campaign against Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao.

Rao's Congress Party has not been spared from the scandal and seven of his ministers have resigned so far after detectives charged them with taking bribes from New Delhi businessman Jain.

On Thursday, the CBI filed corruption charges against 14 more politicians, including four former ministers in Rao's government.

But political analysts said the scandal could be potentially more damaging to the BJP than to Rao's Congress since the opposition party had planned to make corruption a main plank of its election campaign.

"The scandal exposes the BJP, which claims to be a unified and non-corrupt party," said Muqumuddin Farooqi, a communist politician. "The BJP is now on the defensive."

The Pioneer daily said it would be no easy task for the BJP to find a successor to Khurana. "The scandal... seems to have left the party (BJP) completely dazed," it said. — AFP

Indo-Pak conflict threatens international peace: US

JAMMU — Troops from India and Pakistan exchanged heavy fire along the disputed Kashmir border as the United States' Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) warned the two nuclear-capable nations posed the biggest threat to international security.

Pakistani troops fired "over 2,000 rounds" on Indian troops late on Thursday from South Charva post in Samba sector, 45km from this winter capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, Indian officials said yesterday.

The firing occurred as CIA Director John Deutch told the Senate Select Intelligence Committee in Washington that "the Indian subcontinent... presents the greatest threats to world security."

Deutch said military confrontation between the two nations needed to be avoided at the risk of triggering a nuclear arms race between New Delhi and Islamabad.

"We are concerned that India is considering the possibility of a nuclear test. And we have judged that if India should test, Pakistan would follow," he said.

Relations between India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars since 1947, remain "unsatisfactory," Deutch said, adding that "the potential for conflict is high."

"Since each of these nations possess nuclear capability, every effort must be made to support our US policymakers who are seeking to avoid military confrontation," he said.

"We are especially concerned about Pakistani efforts, some in cooperation with China, to acquire additional nuclear technology," he added.

When his attention was drawn to his earlier statement on misappropriation of funds by government officers in the state, Farooq, who is also National Conference chief, said "corruption has extended in all the districts of Jammu and Kashmir."

He said the authorities had unearthed only one major scandal involving over Rs1,405 billion in the Anantnag district of the Kashmir Valley so far and there could be many more such scandals in the administration.

The government must ire into these sensitive matters and take action against the erring officials, he said.

About the hawala scandal, the former chief minister said everybody knew that money from foreign countries was coming to India, but nobody knew for what purpose it was being sent to India.

Hawala matters have thrown light about the involvement of people in anti-national activities, he said adding "it is only one channel that has come to light and there is a possibility of many more channels about foreign funding to militancy in India."

Abdullah refused to comment on the offer of unconditional talks by four top Kashmiri militants with the federal government saying that

it was for the Indian government to look into it.

Addressing reporters yesterday, he said "Indian security forces have the capacity to get them released from their captors within 24 hours, but the action may involve ten per cent risk." The Al Faran group kidnapped the four tourists in July and killed a fifth hostage in August.

The hostages are two Britons, a German and an American.

"The representatives of the countries to whom these hostages belong should take a decision whether they are interested in any action for getting these hostages released soon," Abdullah said.

The National Conference leader regretted that the Al Faran had continued to hold the hostages despite appeals from various religious, social and political organisations including the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

There has been no word from the Al Faran which had maintained intermittent contact with authorities about their demand. The government had rejected its main demand of releasing jailed separatists in return for the hostages. It also ruled out a military operation to rescue the tourists even as the Al Faran held out repeated threats of executing the hostages unless its demand was met. — PTI

Tension flares over NTR museum plot

HYDERABAD — Tension flared up yesterday over ownership rights of a museum complex dedicated to the late Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao.

Trouble started when three of Rama Rao's sons along with some supporters and policemen entered the complex claiming ownership amidst vociferous protests from legislators of Rama Rao's faction of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP).

Three sons of NTR — N. Ramakrishna, N. Jayashankar Krishna and N. Saikrishna — arrived at the complex, comprising three buildings spread over 3,000 square yards in the Banjara hills area, with police protection to "resume the activities of NTR charitable trust and realise his dreams". Rama Rao died in January.

Minutes after the group entered the well fortified compound situated right opposite NTR's residence, followers of Rama Rao's widow, Lakshmi Parvathi, including some legislators, gathered and started raising slogans condemning what they called illegal entry by rowdy elements with connivance of the police.

Parvathi and the party's working president, Dr V Venkateswara Rao, who are away in Bangalore, were expected here later in the day, yesterday.

Both the warring groups have been staking claims over the trust while NTR's faction contending that Parvathi was the chairperson of the trust while NTR's sons argued that she had nothing to do with the trust. — PTI

Tension flares over NTR museum plot

Settle issues before polls, Farooq urges government

Kerala to celebrate liberation day

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM — The Kerala government would observe March 31, the day before the total ban on liquor comes into effect in the state as "liberation from liquor day."

State Chief Minister A.K. Antony said the ban on alcohol and the campaign against drinking were important steps before enforcing total prohibition in the state.

It was to discourage drinking that government had hiked the excise duty on one litre arrack from 20 per cent to 200 per cent ad valorem, he said. Committees to monitor the implementation in all districts with the district collectors as chairmen. — PTI

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Doordarshan to cover all remote areas

BANGALORE — India's state-run television, Doordarshan, will soon be able to cover events even in the remotest corner of the country at short notice, with the acquisition of Outside Broadcast (OB) system.

This is made possible with the public sector Bharat Electronics (BE) Ltd, handing over the first flyaway Outside Broadcast (OB) system to Doordarshan.

The flyaway OB system, a modification of the earlier OB system, is a fully equipped television studio which can be packed in boxes and carried from place to place by air and can be deployed within a short time in any open space, according to a press release in this southern city on Friday.

Aimed at imparting full mobility to Doordarshan outdoor TV production requirements, the new system is fitted with eight state-of-the-art Charged Coupled Device (CCD) cameras for video recording, besides the other commonly used studio equipment.

So far the BE has supplied 13 colour OB vans to Doordarshan for TV coverage, generally used for covering events like sports, Republic Day parades and parliamentary proceedings.

The 13th OB van supplied by the BE in 1993 is the Asia's largest, equipped with nine CCD cameras for coverage of outdoor TV productions.

BE has also supplied Doordarshan with transportable C-band TV uplink terminal. Currently, about 80 per cent of Doordarshan transmission hardware equipment requirements are met by the BE. — PTI

India's child development services praised

WASHINGTON — The World Bank has praised India for its Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme offering early child education alongwith supplementary nutrition.

In a publication on early childhood development, the bank said the programme, now in virtually all states, offers supplementary nutrition for children up to six and for pregnant and nursing women.

It also offers pre-school education, immunisations, health checkups and medical referrals services for pregnant and lactating women. It offers health and nutrition education. A recent review of nearly 30 nutritional impact studies confirmed that the ICDS programme had had a positive impact on children under six. — PTI

Amitabh, the commando

BOMBAY — India's megastar Amitabh Bachchan, now on his comeback trail, plays the role of a commando fighting against the corrupt and anti-national in his second movie launched on Thursday in this film city.

The actor faced the camera at Fil-malaya studios for the mahurat (launching) shot of *Mrityuudaata* pro-

duced by Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited (ABCL) and directed by Mehul Kumar, maker of two recent successful films *Tiranga* and *Krantiweer*. The 50 plus thespian, who towered over the film horizon with his electrifying performances in the 80's, emerged on the stage against the backdrop of the national tricolour to render dialogue writer Jaleez Sherwani's couplet—*Har modh par insaan bikh raha hai, kahin noton ke naam par, Kahin dharam ke naam par.* (Everywhere the man is being auctioned, somewhere on the name of rupees, somewhere on the name of religion.)

He stars opposite Dimple Kapadia in the film, which also has Karisma Kapoor, Pran and Pooja Rawal in the cast.

Earlier this month, ABCL launched a film directed by Indra Kumar, featuring Amitabh as the hero.

The shooting of *Mrityuudaata* gets underway from today with a seven-day schedule and the film would be completed within seven months and be the actor's first release after four years. — PTI

Laloo accused of patronising corrupt officials

PATNA — The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alleged Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, of patronising corrupt officials responsible for the animal husbandry scam by extending their services in utter violation of established norms.

Addressing a press conference here, BJP national secretary Sushil Kumar Modi, charged the chief minister with "using the vigilance department as a tool to blackmail the corrupt officials."

Modi alleged that despite a communication from the vigilance department to the secretary of the animal husbandry department on November 27, 1993 stating that criminal cases were pending against ten officials with the vigilance department, they were promoted and posted in important districts.

He released a document purported to have been written by the secretary of the animal husbandry department to the chief minister stating that since a vigilance case was pending against a former manager rank official, Dr Gijranand Sharma, he was not fit for re-appointment. "Notwithstanding the adverse remarks of the department secretary Sharma, who was alleged to be involved in defalcation of Rs340,000 was reappointed for six months by the order of the chief minister," he alleged.

Similarly, Modi alleged that several other corrupt officials against whom the vigilance department had filed cases were granted extension of service.

The BJP leader released a circular of the former chief secretary, Kamala Prasad, of April 1, 1991 to the departmental heads and district magistrates that an officer would stand retired unless an order was passed by the government before his scheduled date of retirement to extend his service or reappoint him after such a proposal was prepared by the finance department and duly endorsed by the state cabinet.

He, however, said senior officers of the department including Dr S.B. Sinha, Dr R.K. Das, Dr P.S. Prasad and Dr Gijranand Sharma were given extension or were reappointed without a formal proposal from the finance department and approval by the state cabinet.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Jagannath Mishra, held Chief Minister Laloo Prasad, "technically, morally and ethically responsible" for the multi-crore animal husbandry scam which has rocked the state.

"Laloo Prasad being the chief minister and also holding the finance portfolio cannot escape the responsibility for the scandal," he told a news conference here.

Joining issue with his cabinet colleague, Union Minister of Chemicals and Fertilizer, Ramlaksh Singh Yadav, for his reported statement that he (Dr Mishra) and Laloo Prasad were against institution of a CBI inquiry into the case, Dr Mishra said, "does he (Yadav) know what is CBI and how it functions." — PTI



Eid prayers
The faithful congregate outside the Bandra mosque in Bombay for Eid prayers.

600 delegates gather in Goa to discuss urine therapy

PANJIM — Hundreds of scientists and doctors inaugurated a global conference yesterday devoted to what organisers say is a potential free cure for a host of killer diseases including Aids — human urine.

Nearly 600 delegates from 17 nations gathered in the capital of Goa for the first World Conference on Auto-Urine Therapy.

The three-day meeting, organised by the Indian chapter of the Water of Life Foundation, brought together leading proponents of a 5,000-year-old therapy considered taboo in much of the world because it involves drinking one's own urine.

"I once thought it was a strange practice," said retired Admiral L. Ramdas, former chief of India's

Navy. "But it gives me and my wife tremendous energy and stamina."

Delegates came from Austria, Australia, Britain, China, Dubai, France, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland and the United States. More than 70 came from outside of India.

The conference's poster depicted a young boy urinating into a glass.

Participants paid tribute to former Indian prime minister Morarji Desai, who stunned the world when he revealed that he drank a glass of his own urine every day. He died last year at the age of 99.

Actress Sarah Miles swears it improves her health.

Doctors and therapists who recommend the treatment say urine

contains hormones, enzymes, vitamins and minerals that can cure diseases from heart disease to cancer.

But many mainstream doctors debunk the claims, saying small doses of urine are not harmful but surely no magic medicine.

Wilfred D'Souza, health minister of Goa state and a surgeon, said the number of participants in the meeting proved urine therapy's wide following, but doubts needed to be put to rest.

"Now you have to find the scientific answers," he said.

Urine therapy was advocated in ancient Hindu scriptures. The Bible says: "Drink waters out of thy own cistern." Modern proponents, many of them keen on holistic medicine, argue it is drug-free, costs nothing

and is always available.

Briton J.W. Armstrong wrote a book in 1944 called *The Water of Life* in which he claimed to have cured himself of tuberculosis within six weeks. He said he subsequently treated patients for gangrene, cancer, leukaemia and heart disease.

The most widely recommended treatment combines one or more glasses of fresh urine a day, regular body massages by using stale urine at least four days old and a strict diet barring alcohol, tobacco, tea, coffee and meat.

Dr G.K. Thakkar, president of India's Water of Life Foundation, said urine therapy cured him of amoebic dysentery and eczema, while transforming him into a "bold orator". He said urine is es-

pecially well-suited for tooth and eye problems.

"Most diseases ranging from the common cold to cancer and arthritis to Aids are curable by urine therapy," Thakkar said.

Other doctors said urine therapy had relieved many patients of painful Aids symptoms but there was no proof it could cure Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.

Tara Aust, a German-born devotee living in Australia, told the conference that she was diagnosed with cancer of the lymph nodes, intestine and liver in 1988. She passed up chemotherapy for urine therapy and survived.

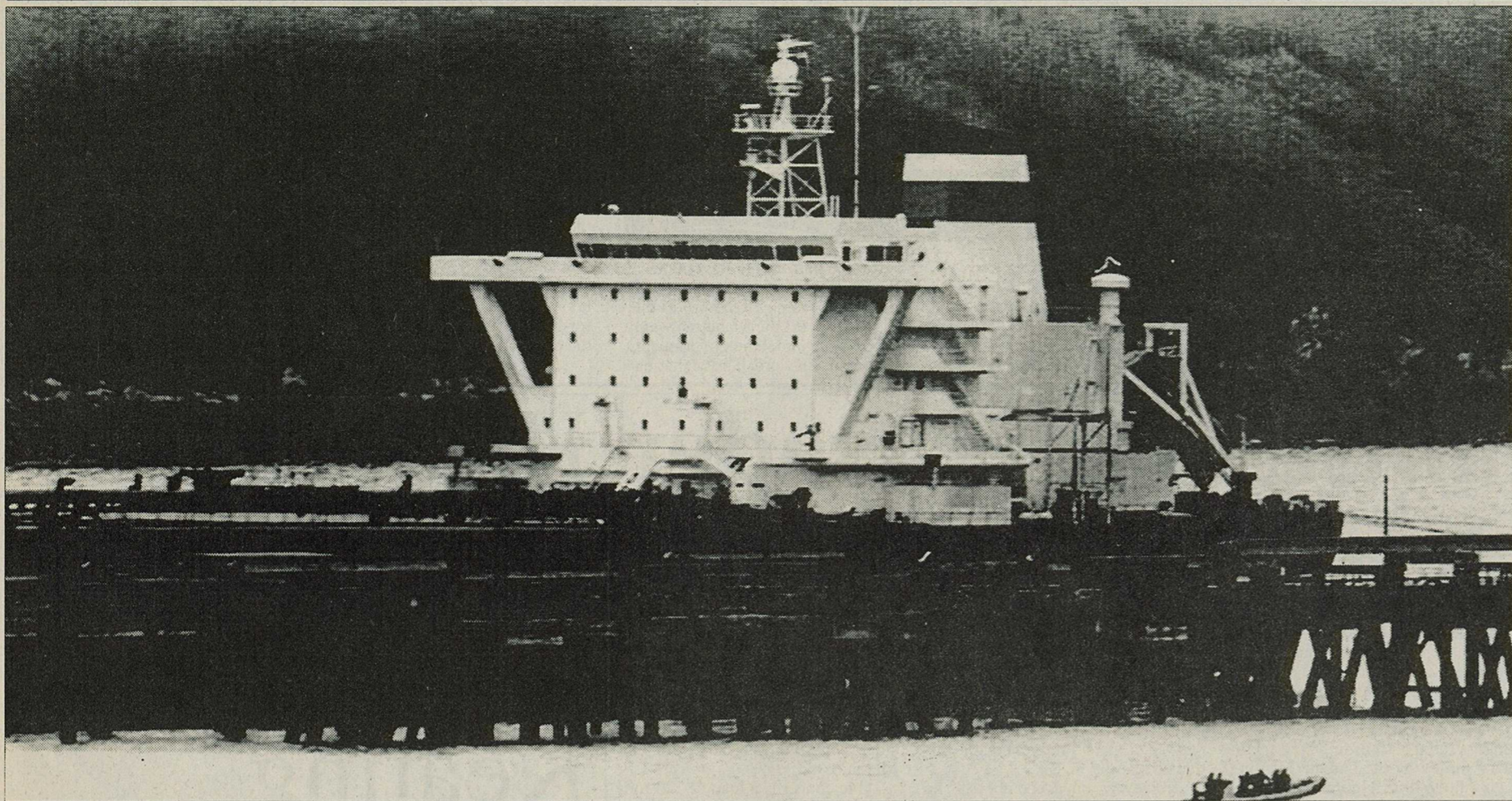
"This is part of loving yourself," she said. "What is wrong with your body functions? It is part of yourself." — Reuter

Dilip Kumar to be honoured

VISAKHAPATNAM — Veteran Indian film actor Dilip Kumar, his wife Saira Banoo and leading cinema personalities Madhuri Dixit, Meenakshi Seshadri and Kavita Krishnamurthy (play back singer) are among those to be honoured with 'Ugadi Puruskars' (awards) in this port city of south India. The Madras-Telugu academy, organisers of the programme, would also present scholarships of Rs6,000 each to 32 students who had secured first position in the tenth class in 1994-95 of different states and union territories, a press release said here yesterday.

The awards would be presented at a function in Madras on March 17 by the Federal Information and Broadcasting Minister, Purno Sangma at the music academy auditorium.

The academy has instituted the awards to bring students from all corners of the country under a common platform, symbolising national integration. — PTI



The Liberian-registered supertanker Sea Empress is docked by a jetty at Milford Haven a week after smashing onto rocks off the Welsh coastline. —AFP

Labour slams gov't for sloppy response to tanker mishap

LONDON — Britain's opposition Labour Party has accused the government of negligence after a tanker caused an ecological disaster by spewing some 65,000 tonnes of oil into the sea off southern Wales.

London, Paris stocks higher

LONDON — Share prices in London moved slightly higher early yesterday, taking their lead from a strong overnight performance on Wall Street and with sentiment underpinned by positive German M3 money supply data.

Euro rate cuts in offing?

FRANKFURT — Prospects for cuts in European interest rates and a rally for the dollar suddenly strengthened yesterday with the publication of German M3 money supply figures which, while high, were weaker than had been expected.

would be repeated throughout Europe "with the exception possibly of Switzerland". At Hypo-Bank, analyst Oliver Schlick took the same view, holding to his forecast that the Bundesbank would reduce its rates during the second quarter.

Taiwan, HK stocks up; Nikkei drops

HONG KONG — Taiwan stocks closed sharply higher yesterday in a bright start after the Chinese Lunar New Year holiday but Japan shares sank for the seventh straight day. Hong Kong stocks closed a day of wild swings moderately higher, while in Singapore the blue-chip index ended slightly firmer.



Rogue financial trader Nick Leeson arriving at Singapore's Changi airport surrounded by police after being expelled by Germany to stand trial on charges of fraud and forgery over the collapse of Britain's Barings Bank in February 1995 (file photo).

NATIONAL BANK OF OMAN LIMITED (S.A.O.G.) Head office: P.O. Box 751, Ruwi. Postal Code: 112, Sultanate of Oman. Tel: 708894, Fax: 707781, Telex: 3281 NBO ON, Cable: NATBANK

Exchange rates table with columns: Foreign currency for one Omani Rial, Omani Rial per one unit of foreign currency, Selling, Buying, Currency.

MARKET ROUNDUP

Table of retail prices for livestock and fish, including items like Australian sheep, Omani cows, and various types of fish.

S'pore may cut corporate tax

SINGAPORE — The Singapore government is expected to announce a cut in corporate taxes along with a package of goodies for the public in its upcoming pre-election budget, analysts said.

GDP growth slows down in US

WASHINGTON — The US economy grew at a slower than expected annual rate of 0.9 per cent in the fourth quarter of 1995, down from a revised 3.6 per cent in the third quarter.

TENDER BOARD

Table of tenders with columns: Tender No., description of work, date opened, list of tenderers.

Carbon tax accord on the horizon

ABU DHABI — Gulf Arab states and the European Union have made headway in attempts to end a dispute over a controversial oil tax that could hurt regional economies, a Gulf Arab official said yesterday.

Mushtaq Saleh, ambassador of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) to the Brussels-based EU, said the two sides had held several meetings on the carbon tax and more talks would take place this month.

He told the United Arab Emirates (UAE) daily *Al-Itihad* that economic and financial experts from the two strong commercial partners had finalised a report on a 'constructive' bilateral relationship.

"The report includes positive aspects for laying down a common ground for the relations between the AGCC and the EU," he said.

"During our meetings, we felt that the EU is trying to ease the impact of the carbon tax after member states failed to reach a consensus on it."

The EU has proposed a tax of \$3 on each imported barrel of oil as from 1993, to rise gradually to \$10 by the year 2000.

But member states have failed to reach a collective agreement on the project, leaving each member to take its own decision on the tax.

AGCC states have repeatedly voiced concern over the tax on the grounds it will slow down growth in oil demand and depress their income, already slashed to nearly one third from its 1980 level due to weak crude prices.

The EU has defended the tax as an environmental measure aimed at curbing the emission of carbon dioxide, blamed for global warming. But AGCC countries and other oil producers have contended industrial nations were only seeking additional revenues as crude oil is already heavily taxed there.

He said oil producers were now earning an average 17 cent per dollar from the sale of oil while 60 cents were earned by the government in consumer countries and the rest were in storage and shipping costs.

"Any additional taxes on oil, which is already heavily taxed, simply means a further decline in our income. This will adversely affect our purchasing power and our investment in oil production and technology, and consequently this will affect the social conditions in our countries," Saleh said.

AGCC states — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE — produce around 13 million barrels per day (bpd) of oil, accounting for nearly one fifth of the world's total crude supplies.

Oil exports provide more than 80 per cent of their total earnings and this has made their economies highly vulnerable to crude price fluctuations.

AGCC's annual oil export revenues have averaged around \$70 billion over the past five years, nearly one-third of their 1980 level. But in real terms, their value does not exceed 15 per cent due to global inflation and the decline in the US dollar, the official price of crude. Saleh said AGCC states, which control around 45 per cent of the world's total proven oil reserves, were the fifth biggest trade partner of the EU and supplied it with more than 25 per cent of its oil imports.

He said the EU was benefitting from its relationship with the AGCC countries, in an apparent reference to the large surplus in its trade balance with them, estimated at more than \$10 billion in 1994. — AFP

Du Pont to set up subsidiary in India

BOMBAY — US chemicals giant Du Pont Co. plans to set up a wholly-owned subsidiary in India to produce agrochemicals, *Economic Times* reported yesterday.

The newspaper said the \$39-billion group, the world's largest chemical company planned to invest about \$2 million in the venture this year and between \$6 million by 2000.

"A string of new products will be introduced, with a formulating and marketing unit," the *Economic Times* said.

"An agriculture research and development centre of world standards will also be set up to establish its agricultural products business here," it added.

The newspaper said Du Pont saw India as a potential site for global sourcing and estimated an additional investment of between \$20 million and \$40 million by 2005.

The research and development centre would biologically evaluate and field test potential products, formulate development studies to suit crop protection requirements in Indian conditions and provide crop protection training to farmers utilising Du Pont's global resources.

Du Pont, which has tied up with India's Thapar business house "to produce nylon in India, was chased out of the western state of Goa last year by environmentalists and local activists who alleged that a proposed factory would cause pollution.

The Thapar-Du Pont joint venture later decided to relocate in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, but local environmentalists and activists have launched a protest movement against the factory. — AFP



A delivery boy loads a couple of pizzas into his bicycle in front of Pizza California, the first restaurant in Beijing to offer home delivery. The Chinese-Japanese joint venture has been trying to expand its business by offering previously unheard of services such as food delivery and staying open every day during the seven-day Lunar New Year holiday. — AFP

India on target for deficit cut: Montek

NEW DELHI — India's Finance Secretary Montek Singh Ahluwalia said that the government is "in reasonably good shape" towards meeting its target of a fiscal deficit of 5.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the fiscal year to end March 31.

Speaking to reporters, Ahluwalia said that tax revenues have grown strongly, and the government will also benefit from large inflows in licence fees from the privatisation of telecommunications.

He declined to provide a specific estimate for the fiscal deficit, however, noting that the government is currently preparing a report for parliament and will present it soon.

The government is likely to announce the figure at the end of February, when it holds a vote on a temporary spending measure.

Ahluwalia also said that the government is not currently considering any measure to increase the ceiling on foreign investor shareholdings in listed Indian companies, which is currently set at 24 per cent.

"We do not envisage any change at present," he said.

In recent weeks, Indian stock markets have seen large inflows of foreign funds, and a few small-capital stocks have reached their 24 per cent

limit on foreign holdings. That has prompted some calls for an increase in the ceiling.

But Ahluwalia said the government wasn't likely to raise the ceiling for the time being.

"We don't envisage any changes at present," he said.

However, Ahluwalia said the government was considering slightly modifying guidelines on companies that issue global depository receipts (GDR) to make it easier for them to bring funds raised abroad into India.

In response to some requests from companies, Ahluwalia said the government was considering allowing

more than the current ceiling of 25 per cent of GDR proceeds to be brought into India immediately for working capital use.

Currently, 75 per cent of the proceeds from a GDR issue must be kept abroad until the company is ready to use the funds for an investment project.

He added that the government has exceeded its \$5 billion cap for the fiscal year on approvals for foreign commercial borrowings by companies.

He said that because some approved loans haven't been executed, the Finance Ministry has decided to approve some additional loans, and said approvals currently

stand at about \$6 billion.

Ahluwalia also noted that the Indian rupee has remained quite calm in recent weeks, following a recent move by the Reserve Bank of India to stabilise the currency.

He downplayed some concerns over recently high forward premiums for dollars, arguing that they mainly showed that India's forward foreign exchange market isn't highly developed and thus doesn't accurately reflect market sentiment toward the rupee.

"The forward premium is not a good indicator of what sentiment is," he said.

German and Indian firms in locking system tie-up

NEW DELHI — German automotive lock major Hulsbeck and First Gmbh (HUF) has tied up with Minda Switch Auto Limited to tap the burgeoning Indian automobile market.

Announcing the tie up in the national capital, U Hulsbeck, managing director of HUF said it will have an equity stake of 36.75 per cent, while Minda will hold 38.25 per cent in the new joint venture, Minda HUF.

Hulsbeck said this is the first joint venture in which HUF holds less than 50 per cent holding. HUF has production facilities in Spain, Portugal, UK, US, Brazil, South Korea and China, besides Germany.

He said HUF agreed to a minority holding in its Indian joint venture taking into consideration Minda's track record in auto component industry.

Ashok Minda, managing director, Minda Switch Auto said the new company plans to export 20 per cent of its total sales by the year 2000, which he said would be in the range of Rs160 million.

Minda said apart from its existing customers, which include most of the majors in the auto industry, Minda HUF has bagged orders from DCM Daewoo and General Motors India for the manufacture and supply of locking systems.

He said the company is also negotiating with Mercedes Benz and Ford in India. HUF is the main supplier of locking systems for Benz and Ford worldwide.

The DM 350-million HUF is the largest manufacturer of locking systems in Europe with a market share of over 30 per cent. While Minda is the largest manufacturer of automotive locks and switches in the country. — PTI

IMF to police Russian loan

MOSCOW — A \$10.2 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund will help Russia's economic recovery but the IMF will police the deal tightly to ensure conditions are met, managing director Michel Camdessus said yesterday.

Camdessus, on his second visit to Moscow in just under a year, said the funds would be released only if Russia met targets on spending, revenues and monetary growth.

"They know perfectly that if they exceed the monthly budgetary limits established in our programme we would interrupt disbursements," he said. "That is the beauty of monthly monitoring."

The IMF loan is a clear vote of confidence in Russia's economic performance before President Boris Yeltsin faces a strong communist challenge in June's presidential election.

One IMF official said Russia could receive up to four \$300 million tranches of the loan before the election.

But Camdessus said the loan was for Russia, not for Yeltsin, and he hoped a future government, even a communist one, would adopt policies that would allow the IMF to keep paying out.

"I am not here to buy votes for President Yeltsin," Camdessus said. "I am here to design the financing programme to bring Russia to a full-fledged market economy."

Russia has already taken many steps to dismantle the Soviet-era centrally-planned economy and create a market economy, but the transformation has driven millions below the poverty line.

Yeltsin said yesterday that policies to protect the poor should be given priority now.

"We called on people for a long time to tighten their belts, and people did this, but their patience is exhausted," he told parliament in his annual state of the nation address.

In a clear warning to Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, he said: "the government will either carry out its duty to defend the social and economic rights of people or this will be done by another government."

Chernomyrdin, the former head of state gas monopoly Gazprom, has emerged as the main guarantor of economic reform after Yeltsin sacked reform chief Anatoly Chubais in January.

Camdessus said Chernomyrdin welcomed the monthly monitoring of the IMF programme.

"Chernomyrdin sees this as an instrument which is useful for him," Camdessus said. "He is very proud -- and rightly so -- to have complied with our agreement in 1995 and he intends to continue it in 1996."

The spending and revenue targets are one condition of the IMF loan, but Camdessus said Russia had also promised to improve banking supervision, scrap export tariffs on oil and gas and eliminate "stabilisation funds" at Gazprom and other firms.

Economists said the firms used the funds to hide profits and avoid taxation.

Camdessus said Russia had to do more to ensure taxes were paid, especially to fund increased social spending. "Russia has allowed a culture of tax evasion to develop and must fight this," he said. "If you are serious about social policy, you must be serious about tax collection."

— Reuter

Power project work to resume on May 1

BOMBAY — Work will resume on May 1 on the power station being built in the Indian state of Maharashtra by Enron Development Corp. of the United States, the head of the state-owned electricity board said yesterday.

State electricity board chairman, M.P. Pinto said that agreement had been reached with the Houston-based Enron in the terms of an amended power purchase agreement.

"We have reached an agreement," he said. "The details will be sent to the state cabinet and to the federal government now and we expect work to restart by May 1."

Maharashtra's government scrapped the \$2.8-billion agreement with Enron in August, arguing that the costs of the project were too high, but agreed to a renegotiated deal earlier this year.

The renegotiated deal pegs the tariff per unit of electricity at Rs1.86, down from the original Rs2.40 per unit.

State electricity board officials said the amended power purchase agreement had increased the capacity of the first phase of the project to 826 megawatts from the original 695 megawatts, while the second phase would generate 1,624 megawatts.

The power station being built in the port of Dabhol, south of Bombay, is India's largest private power project and the largest single foreign investment since New Delhi began free-market economic reforms in July 1991. — AFP



Workers shout slogans and hold banners as they march past the Greek parliament building during a strike organised by the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE). They demand pay increase of more than 10 per cent. — AFP

Euro-Palestinian trade fair

BETHLEHEM — European companies sounded out the prospects of doing business on the Palestinian market here yesterday at the start of a two-day fair in the autonomous West Bank town of Bethlehem.

"Foreign investors are still hesitant to invest in Palestine and so we are trying to give them confidence," said the director of the Palestinian Economy Ministry, Samir Hleil.

Economy Minister Ahmad Korei said the main problem was high unemployment in the Palestinian territories. "If the rate does not slow

down, the whole peace process will be in real danger," he warned.

The fair at the Bethlehem University campus, organised by a Palestinian-European chamber of commerce, also drew participants from Arab countries, especially Jordan.

Stands from Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary were the centre of attraction. "Their products are much less expensive than, for example, France or England," explained east Jerusalem merchant Ahmad Awad. "But I won't be signing any contracts just yet. For now, I want to study what's on offer."

Patrick Vincent of the French company Socopa, which imports and exports livestock and meat, said he came looking for new customers. "I already have a few clients in Palestine. I came to see them and to try and find new ones. Palestine is a small market but it has the capacity for development," he said.

For Mohammad Berrada, managing director of the Moroccan company Somagaz, which deals in household goods and textiles, the Bethlehem fair was "just a chance to make contact with the Palestinians." — AFP

Worker shortage hits oil palm revenue in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR — Malaysia's oil palm plantations lost 1.3 billion ringgits (\$520 million) in revenue over the past two years due to an acute shortage of workers, officials were quoted yesterday as saying.

"The sector's target revenue dropped by 700 million ringgits last year and 600 million ringgit in 1994," said Abdul Rahman Teh Mohamad, chief executive of the United Planting Association of Malaysia.

The oil palm and rubber plantations needed another 22,836 workers, about 15 per cent of the total necessary work force, Abdul Rahman was quoted as saying by the *New Straits Times*. The country's growing economy, which has expanded by more than eight per cent annually since 1987, has resulted in an acute shortage of workers in the agricultural and construction sectors.

Malaysia's palm oil production accounts for 52 per cent of the world's total output and 64 per cent of the country's total exports. It exported 11 billion ringgit worth of palm oil and palm oil products last year. The oil palm plantations needed 80,377 workers but could only attract 68,160 last year, out of which 43 per cent were foreigners, said Abdul Rahman quoting a recent study carried out by the association.

The total area planted with oil palm was 76,330 hectares.

Abdul Rahman said the rubber estates required 68,507 workers but could only get 57,888 last year to work on the 283,300 hectares of land.

Out of this figure, more than eight per cent were foreigners. — AFP



Russian women selling food and cigarettes in Moscow yesterday (left), as IMF chief Michel Camdessus and President Yeltsin talk after signing the loan accord. — AFP



IMF chief Michel Camdessus and President Yeltsin talk after signing the loan accord. — AFP

Russia, De Beers in diamond deal

MOSCOW — Russia signed a cooperation agreement with South African diamond giant De Beers yesterday after months of negotiations, ensuring the company's position as sole buyer of all Russian rough diamond exports.

A joint statement received by AFP said Russian Finance Minister Vladimir Pankov and De Beers Deputy Chairman Nicholas Oppenheimer signed the deal here, which outlined "the general principles which will govern the future relationship between the Russian diamond industry and De Beers."

"The memorandum recognises and takes full account of the requirements of the important Russian cutting industry. It also provides for De Beers' position as the sole and exclusive buyer of all rough diamond exports," the statement said. The general principles would be expanded into a formal three-year trade contract "as soon as possible," the statement said.

The Almaz Rossil-Sakha joint stock company, the sole agency authorised to export through rough diamonds from Russia, will negotiate the trade agreement with De Beers, the statement added.

Russia has been renegotiating an export contract with De Beers to permit the De Beers' selling arm, the Central Selling Organisation (CSO), to handle 95 per cent of sale of Russian diamond exports.

The present contract, which expired in December, was extended until March 1996 to give time for the two parties to consider a new deal. Russia has grown increasingly dissatisfied with what it considers low prices for its diamonds during the last few years and has begun to sell some stones on markets in Antwerp and Tel Aviv, where they command higher prices.

In London, De Beers confirmed that Russia had signed a cooperation agreement with the South African diamond giant yesterday, after months of negotiations.

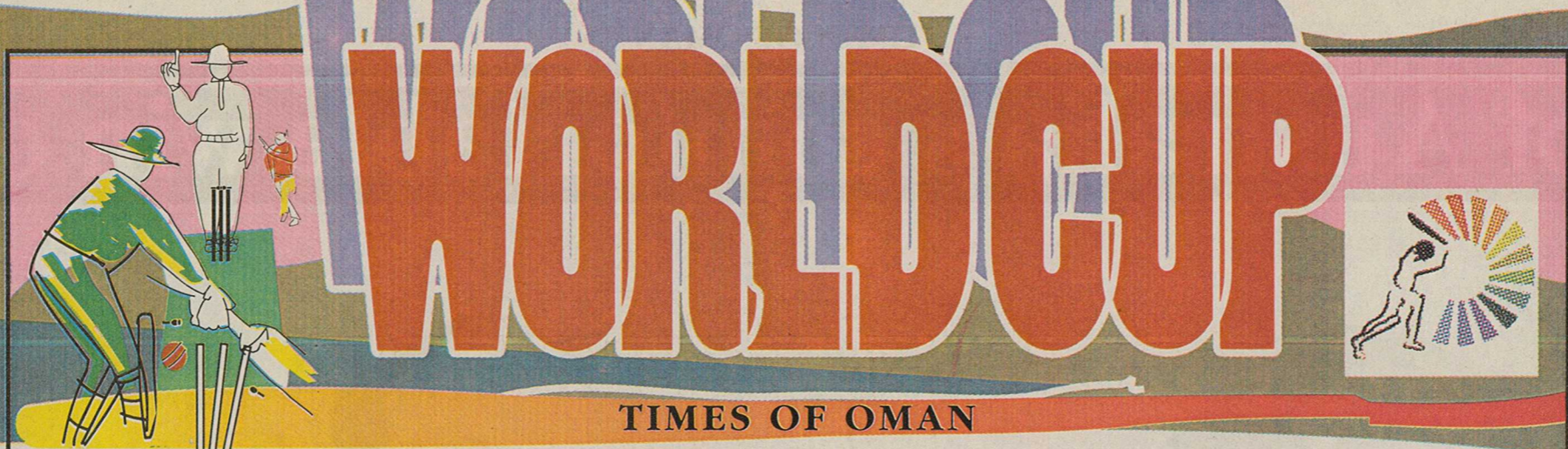
The Russian government and De Beers "have signed a memorandum of the general principles which will govern the future relationship between the Russian diamond industry and De Beers," the South African company said in a statement.

De Beers added that the outline agreement would be expanded "as soon as possible" into a formal three-year contract. Talks between De Beers and Almaz Rossil-Sakha, the Russian diamond export body, will commence next week. — AFP

BOMBAY STOCKS

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 1996

Table of Bombay Stocks with columns for stock names, prices, and indices. Includes sections for BSE Sensitive Index (3492.95), BSE National Index (1606.88), and various stock listings.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1996

Waugh twins open Aussies' campaign in style

VISHAKHAPATNAM — Twins Mark and Steve Waugh piled up a record World Cup stand on Friday as Australia began their controversial campaign with an easy 97-run victory over minnows Kenya.

But the easy win was dampened by the news that top strike bowler Craig McDermott may miss the rest of the World Cup after tearing a calf muscle while bowling in Kenya's innings.

Mark Waugh hit 130 - his first World Cup century — and Steve chipped in with 82 during a 207-run stand for the third wicket as the favourites ran up a mammoth 304 for seven.

Kenya managed 207 for seven in reply. The highlight was a 102-run stand between opener Kennedy Otieno, who made 85 between an



Steve Waugh: Glorious run continues

off 60 overs against Sri Lanka in the inaugural World Cup in 1975.

Mark Waugh's sixth one-day hundred — his third as an opener since moving up the order earlier in the season — made him Australia's third highest century-maker behind Geoff Marsh (nine) and Dean Jones (seven).

The brothers showed no signs of rustiness after a forced lay-off since Australia's last international in the World Series at home a month ago. Mark Taylor's men were scheduled to open the World Cup campaign against Sri Lanka last Saturday, but forfeited the match in strife-torn Colombo because of security fears to the players.

But what was expected to be an easy outing at the crease began horribly as skipper Mark Taylor and Ricky Ponting fell cheaply to make Australia a shaky 26 for two by the eighth over.

Taylor, who said earlier he was "sick of net practice", saw his stint in the middle last only 13 deliveries as an upish drive off seamer Martin Suji was well held in the covers by Hitesh Modi.

Ponting, stepping into retired David Boon's shoes at number three, made six off 12 balls before edging seamer Rajab Ali into the gloves of wicketkeeper Kennedy Otieno.

But Kenya, who gave Australia first strike on an easy-paced wicket, chased leather thereafter as the Waugh brothers flayed the inexperienced attack before departing in the space of seven balls in trying to step up the run-rate.

Martin Suji had a hand in both

dismissals, catching Mark at point off Ali before taking a brilliant return catch in the next over. Ali also bowled Michael Bevan for 12 to finish with three wickets. Australia lost Stuart Law and Ian Healy cheaply before the overs ran out.

Kenya, who lost their opening match to India by seven wickets, play Zimbabwe next in Patna tomorrow.

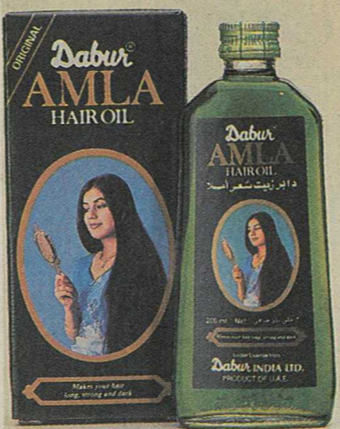
Australia take on India in Bombay on Tuesday.

Mark Taylor said: "We were disappointed to lose Craig - that's a bit of a blow for us. We were a bit rusty but, all in all, it was a fairly convincing win and we couldn't ask for more. Kenya gave us a very good game. We are going to need that before taking on India. The better the opposition, probably the stronger it will make us for the future games."

He said the India match would be "a very good game. I dare say there should be a full house."

Maurice Odumbe said his side had had no answers to the Waugh brothers. "We just could not contain them. We played pretty well but unfortunately our batting slowed down towards the end. We had hoped to get around 240."

Mark Waugh revealed he had not realised he and his twin had broken a record, adding: "They are certainly good batting wickets over here and you are going to see a lot of runs. Hopefully in the next game in Bombay there might be a few runs from our guys and not too many from Sachin Tendulkar." — AFP



SCOREBOARD

Australia	
M. Taylor c Modi b Suji	6
M. Waugh c Suji b Ali	130
R. Ponting c Otieno b Ali	6
S. Waugh c and b Suji	82
S. Law run out	35
M. Bevan b Ali	12
I. Healy c E. Odumbe	17
P. Reiffel not out	3
S. Warne not out	0
Extras (b-1 nb-2 w-10)	13
Total (seven wickets - 50 overs)	304

Did not bat: C. McDermott, G. McGrath
Fall of wickets: 1-10 2-26 3-233 4-237 5-261 6-301 7-301
Bowling: Suji 10-1-55-2, Ali 10-0-45-3 (1nb, 4w), Oduyo 8-0-58-0 (2w), E. Odumbe 4-0-21-0 (1nb, 2w), Karim 10-1-54-1, M. Odumbe 4-0-35-0 (1w), D. Tikolo 3-0-21-0, S. Tikolo 1-0-14-0 (1w)

Kenya
K. Otieno b McGrath 85 || D. Chudasama c Healy b McDermott | 5 |
S. Tikolo c Ponting b Reiffel	6
M. Odumbe c Reiffel	10
b Bevan	50
H. Modi b Bevan	10
E. Odumbe c Bevan b Reiffel	14
D. Tikolo not out	11
T. Oduyo st Healy b Warne	10
M. Suji not out	1
Extras (lb8, nb2, w5)	15
Total (7 wks)	207

Did not bat: A. Karim, Rajab Ali
Fall of wickets: 1-12 2-30 3-132 4-167 5-188 6-195 7-206
Bowling: McDermott 3-0-12-1, Reiffel 7-1-18-2, McGrath 10-0-44-1, Warne 10-0-25-1, S. Waugh 7-0-43-0, M. Waugh 5-0-23-0, Bevan 8-0-34-2

Result: Australia won by 97 runs
Man of the match: Mark Waugh. — Reuter, AFP



Mark Waugh receiving the man-of-the-match award for his magnificent 130.

Taylor sticks to Lanka decision

VISHAKHAPATNAM — Australian captain Mark Taylor said he still believed his team made the correct decision in not travelling to violence-hit Sri Lanka for their scheduled opening World Cup game in Colombo.

Taylor revealed that a private chat with West Indies skipper Richie Richardson had convinced him Australia were right to forfeit the points from the game because of doubts about the team's security.

The Australian players watched television coverage of Sri Lanka's belated first World Cup outing against Zimbabwe in Colombo on Wednesday, but Taylor said no one connected with his squad had been having second thoughts.

"As I said at the time, no one likes to pull out of games of cricket," said Taylor. "But when I had a chat with Richie after the opening ceremony in Calcutta I found their players were thinking exactly the same as we are."

"There was a rumour going around that the players wanted to go but the West Indian board forced them not to play. Well, that wasn't true. They weren't comfortable with going either."

"I think we reassured each other. Obviously you think 'have we made the right decision?' No one will ever know if we have, but we thought it was right at the time and I still think it was right. We stuck by it and so did the West

Indies." Australia and West Indies pulled out of their Cup matches in Sri Lanka after more than 80 people were killed in a bomb attack by suspected rebels in Colombo on January 31.

Handing Sri Lanka the initiative in Group A has nevertheless given Australia little margin for error in their other matches over the next two weeks against Kenya, India, Zimbabwe and West Indies.

"Really we haven't got too many easy games, but if we win three I don't see a problem," said Taylor, who believes his side's confidence has been lifted by the Indian public. "When we first got over here we were a little bit concerned but the people of India have made us feel very comfortable. The people over in Bombay were fantastic...everyone at the grounds and on the buses just want to see the cricket too. At the moment I think the main emotions we're feeling are relief that we're finally going to play and excitement. We just want to play the game. We know World Cups only come around every four years, so we want to give it our best shot and hopefully win it."

Taylor believes the presence of Kenya and the other non-Test playing countries will have a beneficial effect on the World Cup's future development. — Reuter



attack of cramps, and skipper Maurice Odumbe (50).

The 30-year-old McDermott limped off the field after sending down just three overs, during which he dismissed Deepak Chudasama. Team officials feared he may be out of action for at least a month.

Coach Bobby Simpson said it was too early to take a decision on McDermott's future in the tournament but hinted he was unlikely to play in Tuesday's key clash against hosts India in Bombay.

"He has torn a calf muscle and the physiotherapist is having a look. It looks bad but I can't say anything right now how the injury will progress," Simpson said.

The Waugh brothers stand as the highest in the World Cup, surpassing the undefeated 195 for the third wicket between West Indians Gordon Greenidge and Larry Gomes against Zimbabwe at Worcester, England in 1983.

The total fell just 24 short of Australia's best of 328 for five, made

Today's Match

Pakistan vs UAE

PREVIEW ON PAGE IV



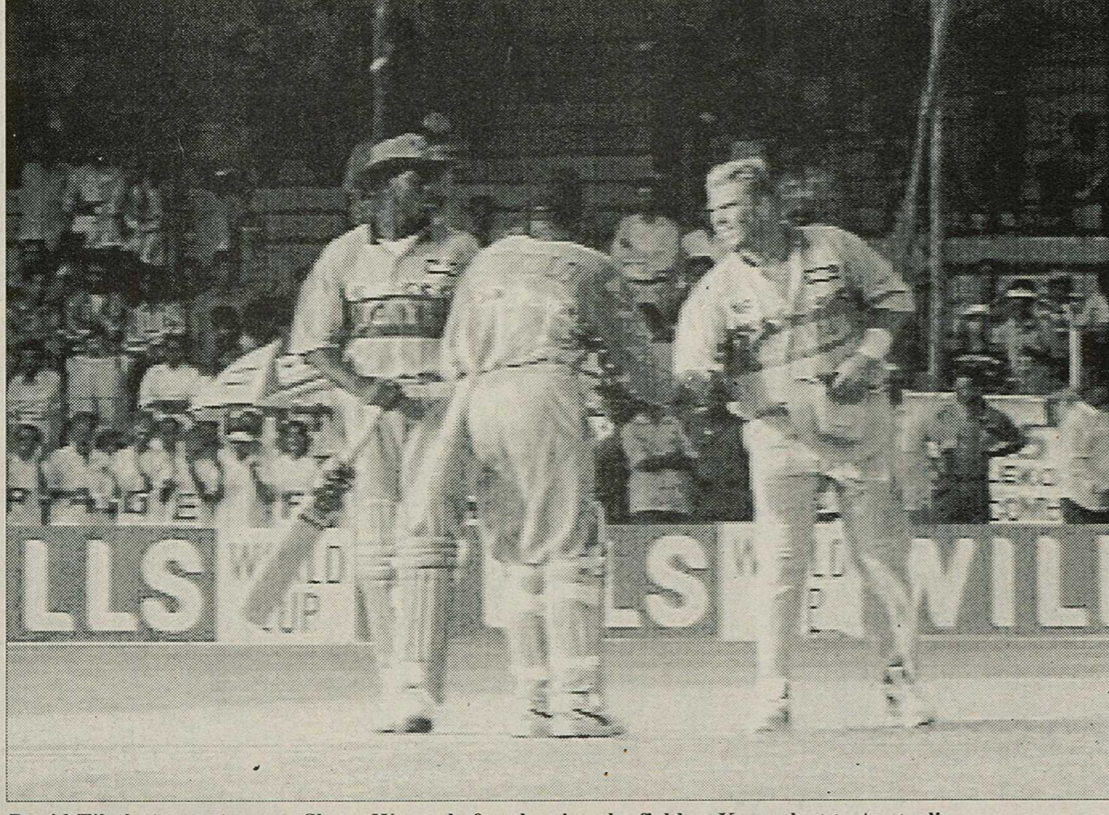
POINTS TABLE

GROUP A

	M	W	L	T	P
Sri Lanka	3	3	0	0	6
India	2	2	0	0	4
West Indies	3	1	2	0	2
Australia	2	1	1	0	2
Kenya	2	0	2	0	0
Zimbabwe	2	0	2	0	0

GROUP B

	M	W	L	T	P
South Africa	2	2	0	0	4
New Zealand	3	2	1	0	4
England	3	2	1	0	4
Holland	2	0	2	0	0
UAE	2	0	2	0	0
Pakistan	0	0	0	0	0



David Tikolo (centre) greets Shane Warne before leaving the field as Kenya lost to Australia.

Warne worried over long-term future

VISHAKHAPATNAM — Shane Warne has admitted to long-term concern about the state of his spinning finger.

Hailed by Pakistan's Abdul Qadir last week as the best leg-spinner in history, Warne is to have a bone scan after the tournament and has even discussed the possibility of surgery.

Warne had two cortisone injections during the last Australian summer and had another just before leaving for the sub-continent earlier this month, but has continued to experience difficulties.

"Yes, I am worried about it long-term," said Warne, who in December became the first bowler in Test history to take 50 wickets

in a calendar year for three years in succession.

"Everybody's got little niggles but this is worse than a little niggle. The doctors think it's a little bit of arthritis and that there are some torn and stretched ligaments in there, but no-one really knows the full thing. When I get back I'll be having a bone scan, so we'll have to wait and see."

Warne, 26, claimed his 200th Test wicket in only his 42nd Test in the first Test against Sri Lanka in Perth last December but admitted he experienced increasing discomfort during that series.

"Rest doesn't necessarily work. I think rest helps the body but it doesn't help the finger too

much. I think the more I keep going the better. When you leave it and come back it's really hard. At the moment it usually takes seven or eight balls to start warming up. Once it's done that, it's okay."

"It was a big inconvenience last summer. I suppose in the latter half of the year, the effect of the cortisone was beginning to wear off."

"I didn't bowl all that well in the last Test, but I never have in Adelaide. Even so, statistically-wise it was one of the best summers I've had."

"It is a bit of a worry to me. There's been a little bit of talk, but I'd be pretty reluctant to have any surgery."

Warne has also spent two days

Sachin is best: Lara

NEW DELHI — Brian Lara lavished praise on the batting skills of India's Sachin Tendulkar yesterday, even suggesting he may be the best in the world at present.

"He is a very good batsman. Perhaps he is the best in the world now," Lara was quoted as saying by the *Asian Age* newspaper.

"If he plays consistently, he will go down in history as a great cricketer," Tendulkar played a key role in India's five-wicket triumph against West Indies at Gwalior on Wednesday, scoring a dashing 70. Lara, holder of the world individual record scores for test and first-class cricket, managed just two. — Reuter

in bed in India with a stomach complaint, and on Christmas eve shut the same troublesome finger, the third on his right hand, in a door at his Melbourne home.

Australia's World Cup campaign has already been beset with problems off the field, and having forfeited their scheduled first game against Sri Lanka in Colombo.

There is tight security around the Australians' beach-front hotel, but Warne insists the squad have put the controversy of recent weeks behind them.

"The concerns I had were the ones everybody had," said Warne. "I think the West Indies had the same concerns and that's why they didn't end up going to Sri Lanka." — Reuter

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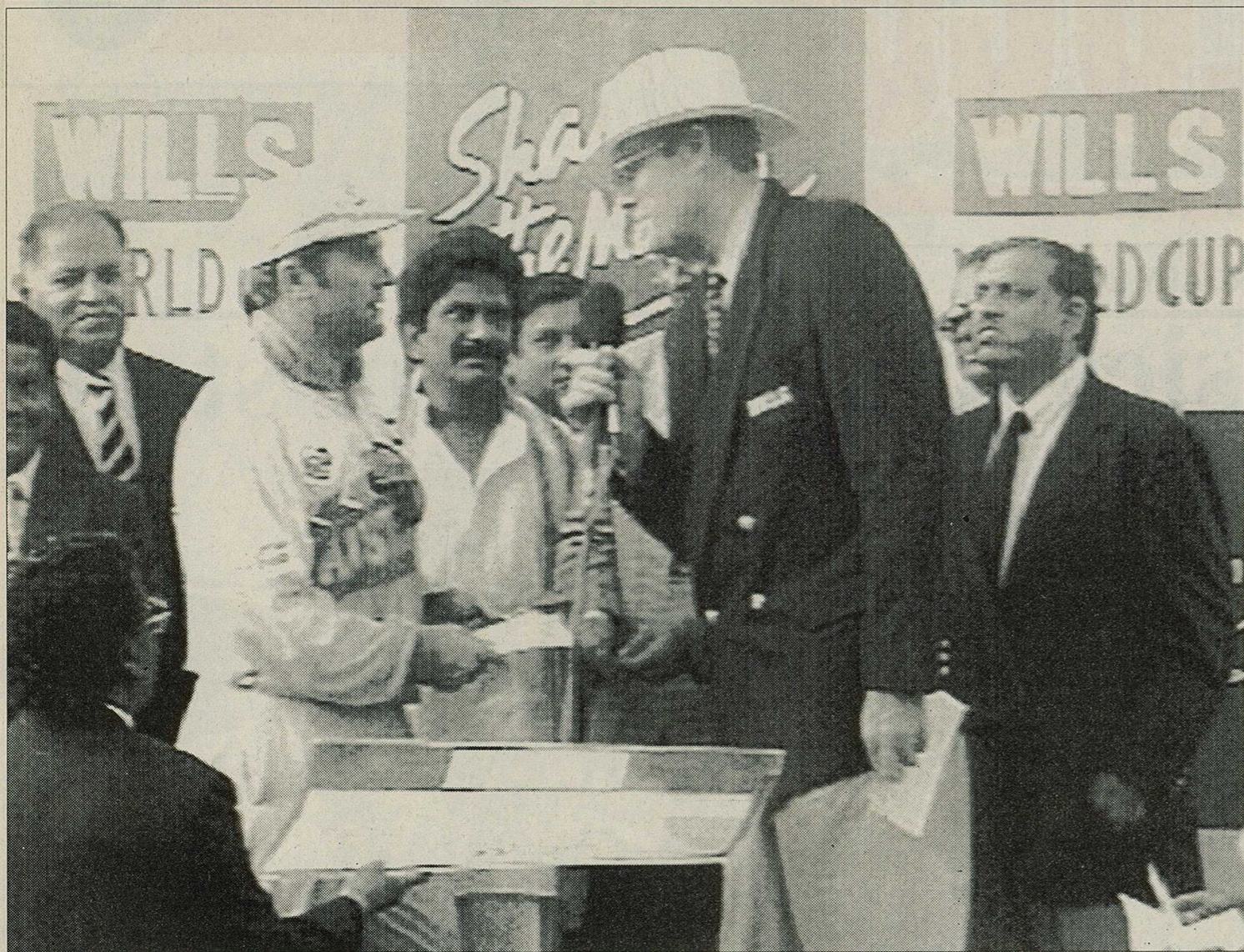
Occupation: Tel: Age: Nationality:

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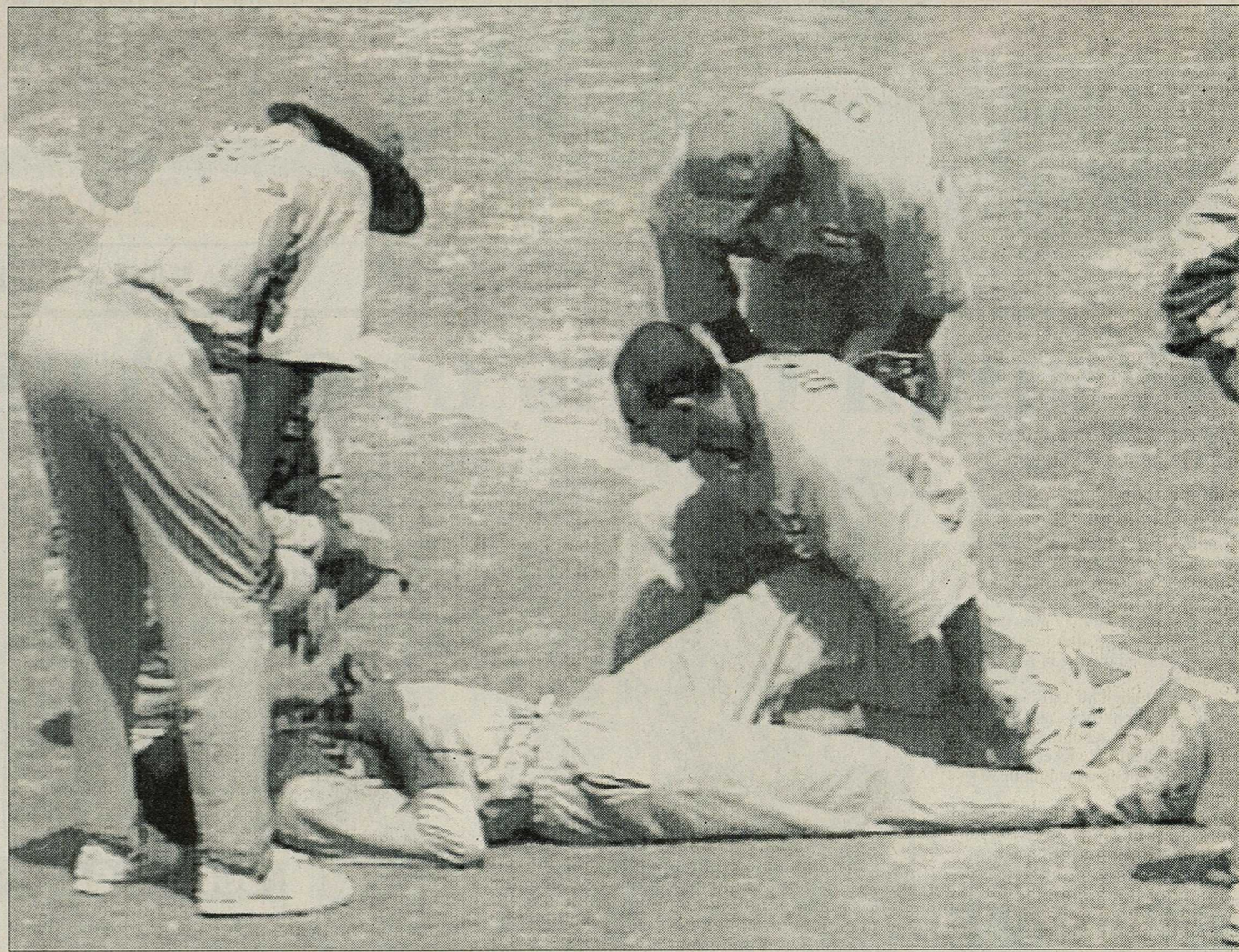
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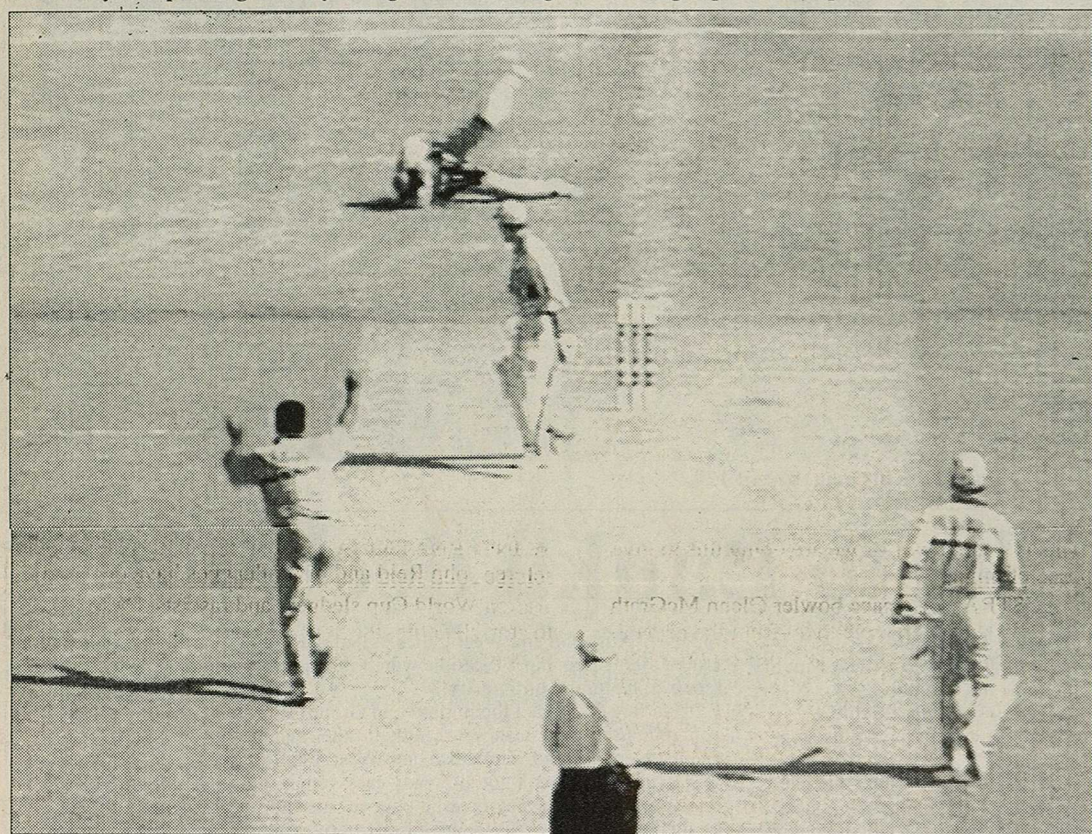
Glimpses of Australia's comfortable win over Kenya



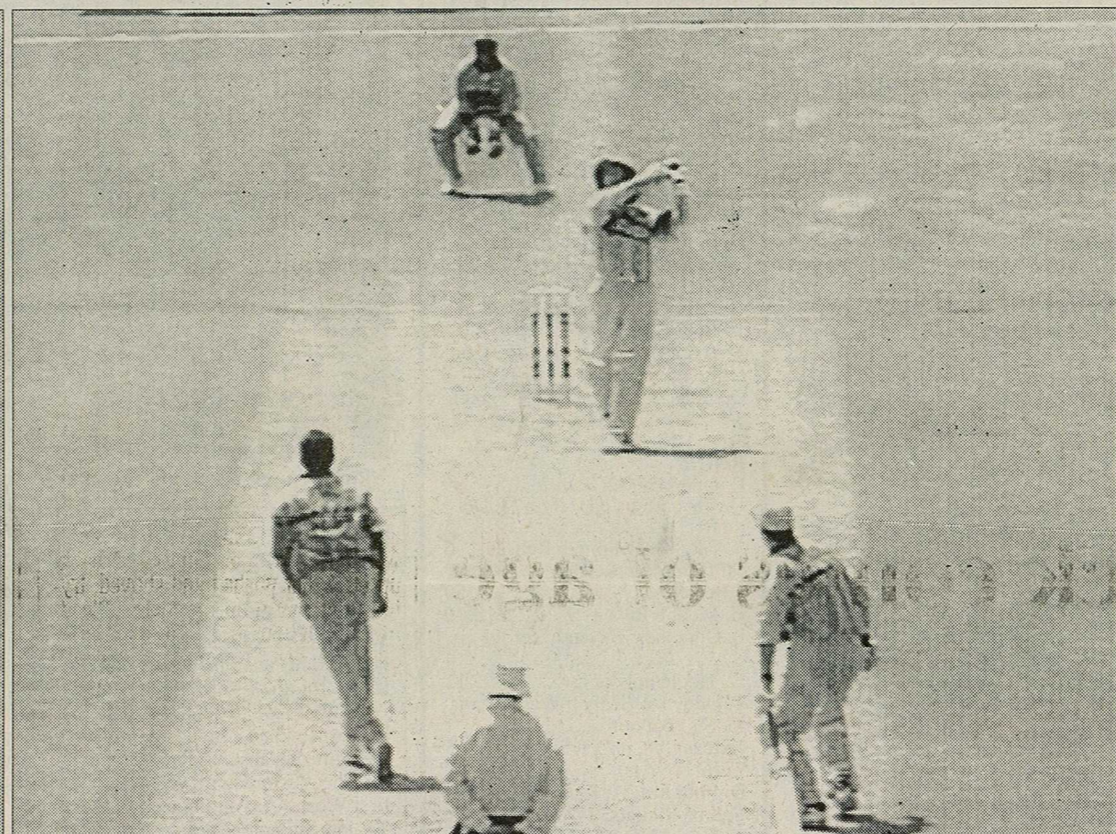
Mark Taylor speaking to Tony Greig after receiving the winning captain's cheque.



Asif Karim of Kenya falls prey to heat as teammates try to help out.



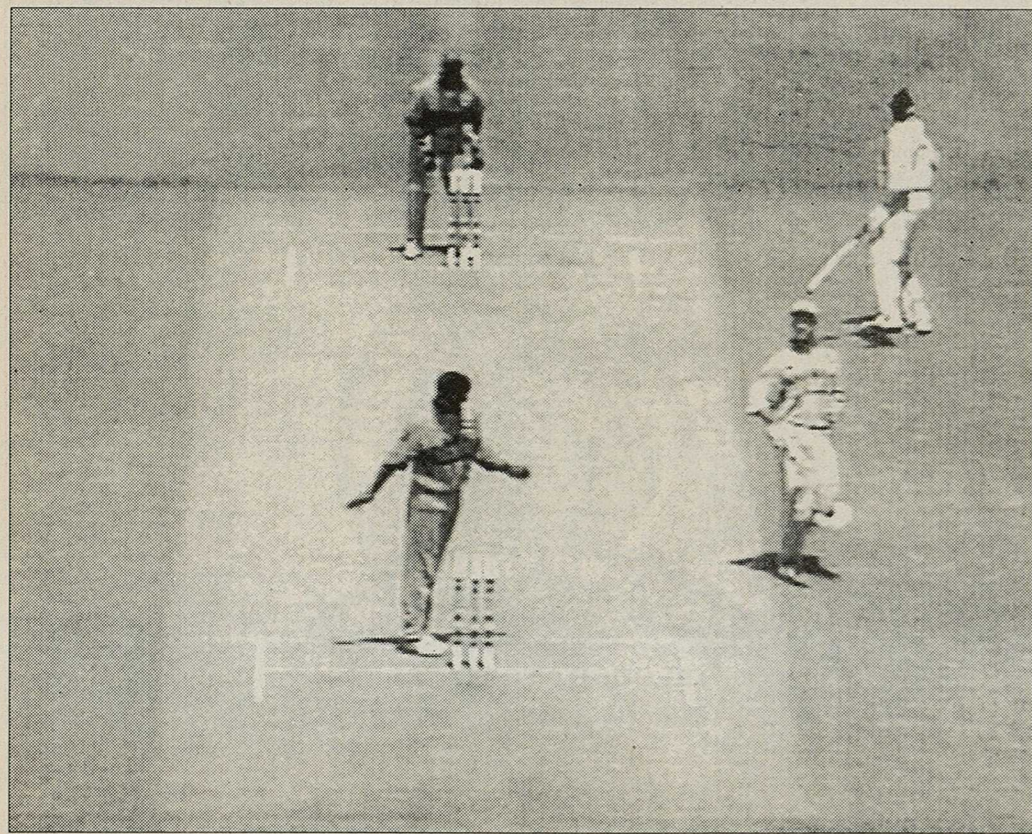
Ricky Ponting is superbly caught by wicketkeeper Otieno.



Mark Waugh lofts the ball in the air to be caught at long-on.



Bevan looks disappointed after getting out cheaply in World Cup debut.



Stuart Law falls prey to a direct throw.



Kennedy Otieno raises his bat after completing his half-century.



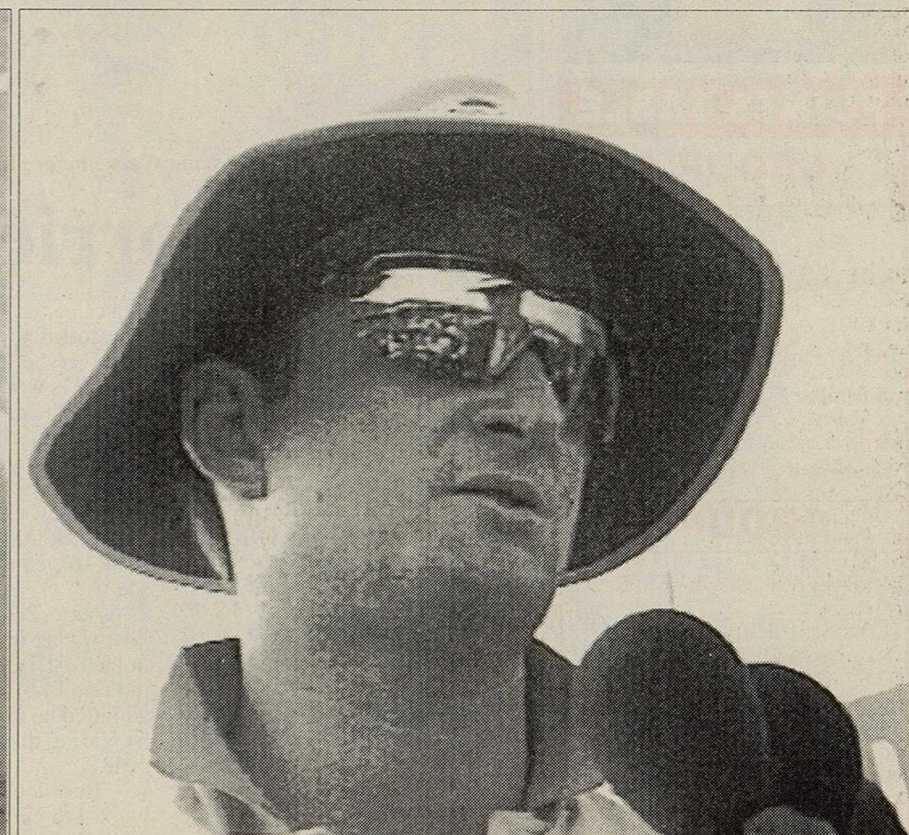
Hitesh Modi is bowled around his legs by Bevan.



Edward Odumbe coming off the ground.



Bevan (left) and Taylor look quite happy after their first World Cup win.



Mark Waugh speaking to the press after the match.

Miracle-man Wasim ready to lead from the front

GUJRANWALA — All eyes will be trained on Wasim Akram as reigning champions Pakistan make their long-awaited World Cup entry against the United Arab Emirates here today.

The result, a foregone conclusion, will be irrelevant. The tone of his leadership will not. Pakistan, twiddling their thumbs on the sidelines for ten days since the start of the tournament, could not lose to the Emirates even if they batted with rusty saucers and bowled slow full-tosses with tennis balls.

But the success of Wasim's position as the hub of the team — as strike bowler, aggressive lower-order batsman and, most importantly, as captain of a team of captains — will be vital for the tougher matches to come.

Pakistan's squad contains six former team leaders but coach Intikhab Alam, himself sacked at the start of the year before being reinstated, is not concerned. "It will not make any difference. All the players have been told what to do. They have to follow the game plan which Wasim Akram wants to implement (...). There is great understanding among all the players," Intikhab said.

In recent years, squabbles, sackings and player revolts have regularly affected a team widely regarded as the most talented yet most undisciplined in the world.

There was also unsubstantiated rumours of players being asked to

swear under oath that they were not involved betting syndicates wagering on results.

Even the legendary Imran Khan, who led the side to the 1992 trophy, admitted worries a few months ago after a dreadful year of results that included a Test defeat to Zimbabwe and a series reverse against Sri Lanka.

"I feel so sorry for Wasim Akram. The side is riddled with cliques, there's been this constant squabbling over the captaincy and other issues," he said. "The talent has been squandered. I don't see how they can rebuild in time for the World Cup."

Imran and the rest of the world, however, soon began to change their minds. The key moment came in Australia in December, with the team 2-0 down to Australia in a Test series — the games lost by massive margins of an innings and 126 runs and by 155 runs — and on the verge of disintegration.

Somehow, Wasim wrenched the crisis around and inspired a miracle tournament. Mushtaq Ahmed took nine wickets for the second game in a row, Pakistan won and Wasim enthused.

"The morale is back, we are all together, they're working for each other," he said. The crucial ingredient that day — and now — was national pride.

The Emirates, branded the worst cup team by country mile,

are likely to get a pounding on Sunday because of it. The only issue is whether they will lose by more than the 169-run margin against South Africa or the eight wickets against England.

The prospect of a bowling attack led by Wasim, Waqar Younis and leg spinner Mushtaq Ahmed, Pakistan's version of Shane Warne, would leave any opponents quaking. Paceman Aqib Javed and promising off-spinner Saqlain Mushtaq offer back up.



If Pakistan have any flaws, it may rather be in the batting, which has been unpredictable over the last 12 months but Amir Sohail, Saleem Malik and Inzamam-ul-Haq would all challenge to get into most teams.

Then there is a prospect to relish, the return of former captain

Javed Miandad at 38 years of age after retiring two years ago for an unprecedented sixth World Cup. To many people's surprise, he has impressed during the warm-up games. His relationship with Wasim and the rest of the team will be as eagerly watched as his majestic square cuts.

"We are eagerly looking forward to getting down to business," said Pakistan captain Wasim Akram, setting his sights on emulating the feat of his idol Imran Khan who led the team to World Cup glory in Australia four years ago. "We know our track record in the past five months has not been that encouraging, but this time we are mentally better prepared and the team is also strong and experienced."

While other cup teams have played as many as three matches, the Pakistanis will be making a belated entry into the tournament. Pakistan have also not played any competitive cricket since returning home from the tour of Australia and New Zealand in late December.

Akram insists this could be to Pakistan's advantage because they have had more time to prepare for the tournament and are fresh for the battle ahead.

"This has been a long break but we've been training hard for the tournament and the players are simply raring to go into the contest," he said. "Others may have grown a bit stale but we'll be

making fresh start." Javed Miandad is set to become the only cricketer to play in all six World Cups since the premier limited overs tournament began in 1975. At 39 he is the second oldest player in the competition after 47-year-old Nolan Clarke of the Netherlands, but Miandad remains a batsman who can destroy any attack and turn a match within the space of few overs.

His career record is rich testimony to his prowess. In his 228 one-day internationals he has scored 7,327 runs, including eight centuries and 50 half-centuries. Miandad fought back with characteristic determination to clinch a place in the Pakistan squad after a knee injury and indifferent form kept him out of the game for two years.

Akram said Pakistan would open their batting with dashing left-handers Amir Sohail and Saeed Anwar and Miandad would come in at number four or five.

Anwar was sidelined with typhoid at the start of the 1995-96 season but regained his place with three successive centuries in the domestic one-day championship. This means experienced right-handed opener Ramiz Raja, who scored a fine century in a warm-up match last week at Karachi, may not play today.

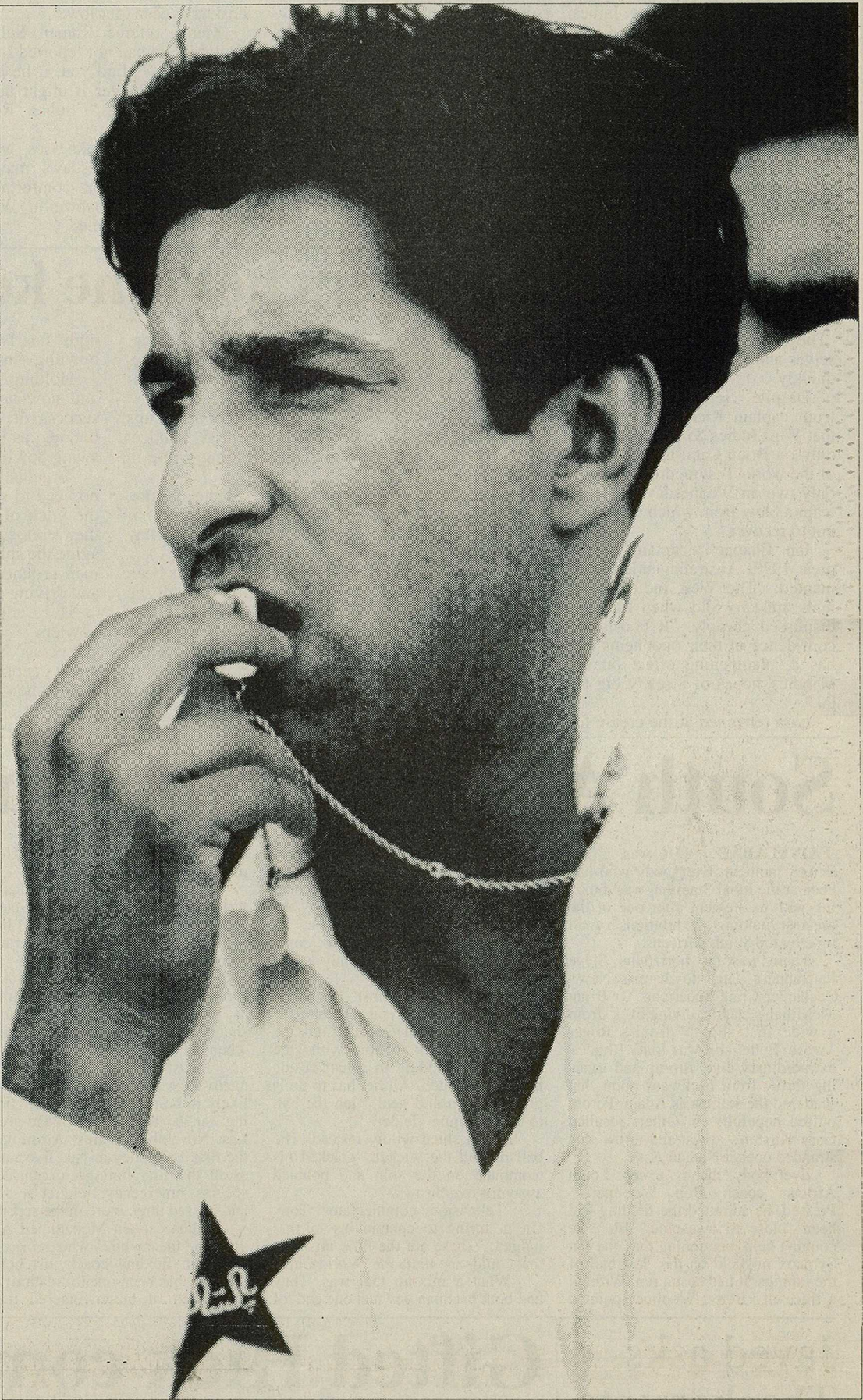
The UAE are resigned to going down to their third successive defeat "What can I say about Pakistan? They are obviously the world champions and one of the strongest outfits in the competition. Perhaps we may learn some new skills from them," said UAE captain Sultan Zarwani.

The Cup organisers, stunned by poor crowds at some of the early matches, are hoping today's game will attract a big turnout from Pakistani fans keen to see the home side go into action.

Teams from: Pakistan - Wasim Akram (captain), Aamer Sohail, Javed Miandad, Salim Malik, Inzamam-ul-Haq, Ramiz Raja, Saeed Anwar, Ijaz Ahmed, Rashid Latif, Waqar Younis, Aaqib Javed, Ata-ur-Rehman, Mushtaq Ahmed, Saqlain Mushtaq.

UAE - Sultan Zarwani (captain), Saeed Al-Saffar, Vijay Mehra, Saleem Raza, Shahzad Altaf, Shaukat Dukanwala, Ganesh Mylvaganam, Azhar Saeed, Mazhar Hussain, Arshad Laiq, Muhammad Aslam, Johanne Samarasekera, Imtiaz Abbasi, Ishaq Muhammad.

— AFP, Reuter



Wasim Akram: Determined to keep the cup

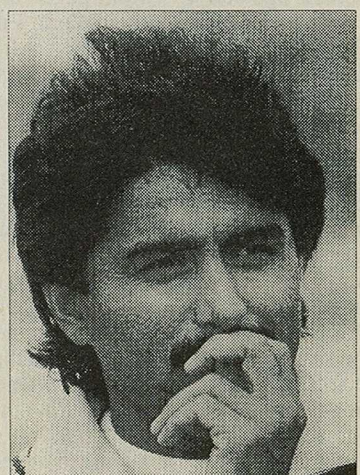
Miandad hits the perfect six

GUJRANWALA — There seems to be no half-way house with Pakistan's most controversial cricketer. Some love him and some loathe him.

What nobody tries to do, however, is to bowl short outside the off stump to Javed Miandad. One wristy square out and a few microseconds later and the ball invariably rattles into the boundary boards just behind square.

They say that Miandad, who was expected to survey the World Cup from an armchair in an old people's home rather than from the crease, still has the touch that has earned him almost 9,000 Test and 8,000 one-day runs and a place among the greats.

That touch earned him a late, unexpected call-up for his sixth world tournament in a row, a feat that will probably never be equalled, let alone surpassed. Even Imran Khan could only manage five. "Public pressure persuaded me



JAVED MIANDAD

back," said Miandad. "If I thought I might not be up to it, then I would have stayed at home. His chances of getting bat against the United Arab

Emirates' peashooter attack look slim, since Pakistan's openers are unlikely to return early to the pavilion.

That will give him the chance to save his legs for the tougher battles to come... and to reminisce quietly while younger men do the donkey work.

He should have plenty of memories. At 17, he was scoring over 300 in a first-class match for the Karachi Whites. At 19 he was making his Test debut, scoring 163 against New Zealand and, two matches later, becoming the youngest man to score a double Test century.

There have been more controversial moments, however, including his infamous face-off with fired-up Australian paceman Dennis Lillee in the middle of the pitch in the early eighties. Then there was the altercation with Mike Gatting after the England skipper had waved him off to the Pavilion after being

given out lbw.

Miandad will want to avoid controversy this time, after making the tournament by the skin of his teeth. Pakistan delayed naming their World Cup squad, reportedly because of differences between selectors over whether Miandad should be included. Checks were hurriedly made on his fitness before the shock summons was made.

Miandad, who revealed Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto had also played a part in his revoking his retirement "I cannot say no to the country's prime minister" — will also want to quit the international stage with a bang rather than a whimper.

The fire to perform, it seems, it still there: "My aim is still to perform and I love to score more than anyone else, more than the opposition, more than my own teammates. And after the World Cup I will be gone." — AFP

Charges against Pilcom have political overtones: Bindra

NEW DELHI — Indian cricket board chief Inderjit Singh Bindra said yesterday the tax evasion charges being levelled against the World Cup organiser, Pilcom and its convener, Jagmohan Dalmiya, had "political overtones".

"In the process, Dalmiya is being made a scapegoat. I can say with authority that all these allegations are politically motivated, mischievous and baseless," Bindra told Press Trust of India on phone from Chandigarh.

Bindra said the Board of

Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and its transactions were totally transparent and nothing had been concealed from anybody. "Besides, necessary permission for all the transactions for the current World Cup had been obtained from the Reserve Bank of India."

"The fact that the reports are appearing in a very small section of the press proves that somebody is trying to act funny for extremely petty reasons," he said. As far as the transactions were concerned, Bindra said, the position was no different from what it was in 1987

when India and Pakistan jointly hosted the reliance World Cup.

He, however, confirmed that a letter had been received from the income tax department and the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and its counsel had replied to it in the normal course. After that, there has been no query or notice from the authorities, he said.

Referring to Australia and West Indies' refusal to play their respective matches in Sri Lanka on security grounds, Bindra reiterated that the two teams were bound to

pay a penalty of \$3 million each besides forfeiting their respective matches as per the resolution which was binding on all the playing countries. The matter has been discussed threadbare with the International Cricket Council, he said.

Bindra also rejected all criticism of the opening ceremony at the Eden Gardens in Calcutta. Refuting the charge that it was a fiasco, he said except for a brief disruption of the laser show because of the strong wind and a couple of mistakes by the compere, the ceremony was a

'grand success'.

He said the TV networks which beamed the ceremony all over the world, had told Pilcom that it was received extremely well by viewers.

Besides, the board too had received thousands of messages from cricket fans all over India. Referring to a complaint of some journalists of not being provided official facilities, Bindra said it had happened only in the case of non-sports journalists who were, in any case, not covering the matches. — PTI

S. Africa aim to make Atherton eat his words

RAWALPINDI — South Africa plan to ram a few of Mike Atherton's words right back down his throat when the World Cup rivals meet here tomorrow.

Atherton's verbal attack on Hansie Cronje's men — just after they had beaten England 1-0 in a Test and when annihilated their 6-1 in the one-dayers — will not have been forgotten.

The English opening batsman had claimed that there was "little room for flair within the Afrikaner mentality" and that they layed "attributional cricket." Cronje merely laughed off the jibe at the time. He and his side, however, will be looking for the last laugh tomorrow.

All the signs are that they will succeed with a vengeance. While Atherton and Co have stumbled and groped from one crisis to another since the start of the year, the South Africans have honed their squad into a world-class unit.

The side's bowling and fielding in the victory against New Zealand left most experts fighting over superlatives and flicking back through the archives in a forlorn search for a performance to match it.

Cronje — despite the burden of his Afrikaner mentality — followed his gameplan to perfection. Allan Donald was wisely held back as a change bowler and went on to take three for 43. Left-arm spinner Pat Symcox was brought in to check the Kiwi left-handers and responded with ten overs for a mere 25.

Then the South African captain defied convention by launching a personal blitzkrieg with the bat, making a thumping 78. A more cautious skipper would have paced his innings but Cronje's tactics immediately knocked the stuffing out of the New Zealand resistance.

The Group B table show England and South Africa are equal, with four points each. About as equal as diamonds and cut glass. What will worry English fans is that Atherton's Lancashire mentality has not exactly been bursting with World Cup flair itself.

The 27-year-old's qualities as a defiant batsman are unquestioned — his 185 not out in the Johannesburg Test was proof enough. More worryingly, however, it is his judgement that is increasingly in doubt.

His attack on Cronje's side, apart from sousing ungracious, prompted South African coach Bob Woolmer to brand the comments "unfair and naive." He added pointedly: "Hansie Cronje is an astute captain and I think if Mike is prepared to say that, then he has underestimated Hansie (...). This may have contributed to England's relative lack of success against us."

A wider trawl through captain Atherton's recent sayings do not offer convincing evidence that he is any more on top of the game now. Instead of learning something from the South African debacle, Atherton blamed it on end-of-tour tiredness. "I believe those matches will have very little relevance to what happens out here," he added.

Before the New Zealand game, he argued: "If we hammer New Zealand in our first World Cup match, everything that happened in South Africa will go out of the window. England lost but still no humble pie."

And after Thursday's win over the Dutch — a clear improvement but with plenty of glaring faults still to remedy — Atherton again seemed to strike the wrong tone, a win over the minnows prompting the judgement: "I was pleased, generally. We are feeling confident. We can beat most teams."

It is surprising that a man who has scored 1,200 and 10 in his first three World Cup innings (following a dreadful run in the South African one-dayers after an early 85) and who has also demoted himself down the order, can find anything at all to feel good about.

Atherton seemed closer to the mark when he admitted in South African that England had "got into a bit of a rut. We have slid into mediocrity."

What he really needs is actions rather than words. As Cronje will want to prove tomorrow, they really do speak louder.

However, South Africa's teenage spinner Paul Adams, who tormented England on their recent tour to the republic, is likely to be back in action against Mike Atherton's men tomorrow.

Atherton has been playing down the threat posed by Adams and insists England can bounce back from a run of mediocre form in one-day matches to beat the highly-fancied South African team. "We know they are a competitive side, a very good fielding unit who bowl tightly, but I think their

batting is suspect and, as with any side, if you get two or three wickets you can put them under pressure," he said.

The England skipper said Adams would pose a threat only if the pitch at the Pindi stadium turned. "If the ball turns Paul Adams will be a decent bowler, but if there is no turn he'll be there to be whacked just like anyone else," said Atherton.

Adams, 19, who will make his World Cup debut if he plays tomorrow, was a key member of the South African side that crushed England 6-1 in the one-day series in the republic last month.

"There is no psychological problem playing South Africa, even though we lost 6-1 in the one-day series. That's got no relevance to the World Cup," he said. "These are different conditions. This is a different scenario and we are looking to turning the tables."

South Africa are not impressed by England's chequered performances in the Cup so far. "Whether they have got their act together is very doubtful, looking at what they have been doing here," South African coach Bob Woolmer told reporters. "They will have to play very well to beat us," he said.

Woolmer said South Africa's main objective was to maintain their drive and commitment after two fine displays in all departments in beating the United Arab Emirates and New Zealand.

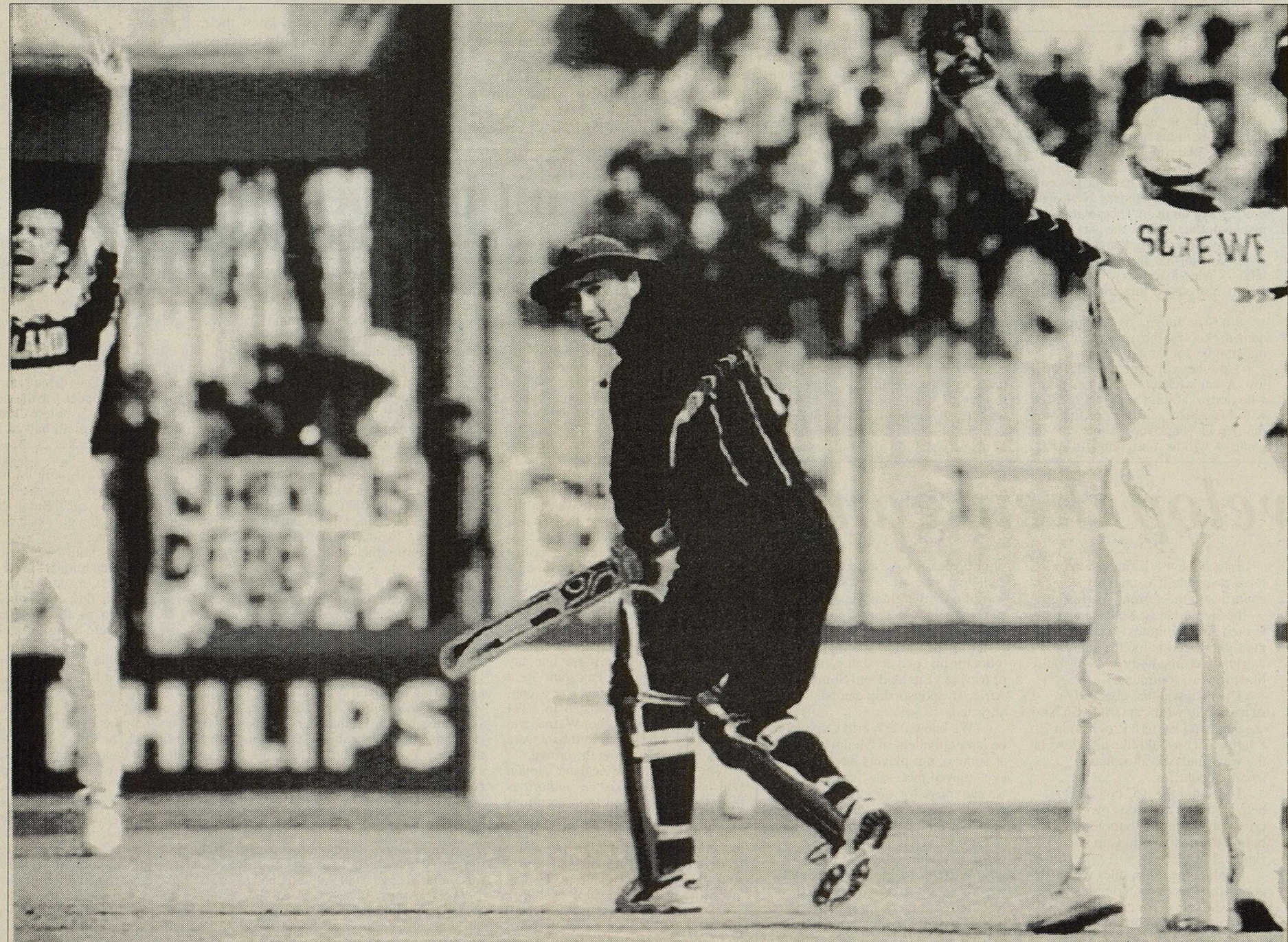
South Africa's brilliant fielding has been one of the highlights of the tournament, with the swooping Jonty Rhodes the scourge of batsmen seeking a quick single.

Both sides plan to announce their line-ups after they have inspected the pitch just before the match. It is expected to be typically slow.

Teams (from): England - Mike Atherton (captain), Alec Stewart, Neil Smith, Graeme Hick, Graham Thorpe, Robin Smith, Neil Fairbrother, Jack Russell, Darren Gough, Dominic Cork, Phillip DeFreitas, Richard Illingworth, Dermot Reeve, Peter Martin.

South Africa - Hansie Cronje (captain), Gary Kirsten, Andrew Hudson, Steve Palfraam, Darryl Cullinan, Jacques Kallis, Jonty Rhodes, Brian McMillan, Shaun Pollock, Pat Symcox, Craig Matthews, Fanie de Villiers, Paul Adams, Allan Donald.

— AFP, Reuter



Graham Thorpe of England is trapped leg-before-wicket by Netherlands' Roland Lefebvre for 89 during their World Cup game in Peshawar. England won the match. — AFP