

Kuwait-China arms deal?

KUWAIT — Kuwait is close to reaching a defence accord with China, a Kuwaiti newspaper said yesterday.

Temple collapse kills six

NEW DELHI — A Hindu temple under construction in Gujarat collapsed yesterday and up to eight people were buried under the rubble, feared dead.

Chiller's New Year

ANKARA — Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Chiller will celebrate the New Year in Diyarbakir, capital of southeast Turkey where Kurdish separatists are fighting a bloody nine-year-old revolt.

New Year in Manila

MANILA — Manila police were ordered on the streets of the Philippine capital yesterday to try to curb the rash of deaths and maimings that greet each New Year.

Opium seizure in Vietnam

HANOI — Police seized 129 kilograms of opium in northwestern Vietnam and arrested six people on trafficking charges, including an employee of a state bank, an official newspaper reported.

Major's claim on recession

LONDON — Prime Minister John Major said on Saturday that Britain was leading Europe out of recession and could look forward to strong growth and low inflation in 1994.

1994 - Year of Oman's Heritage

India-Pakistan talks today

ISLAMABAD — India and Pakistan begin 1994 with fresh talks on Kashmir. But neither side appears willing to budge.

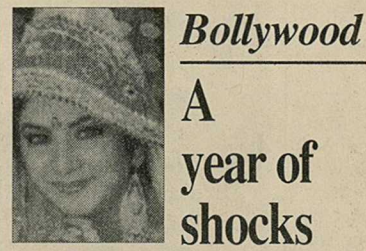
Rao rejects Singh's resignation

NEW DELHI — Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao yesterday rejected Finance Minister Manmohan Singh's resignation ending the week-long uncertainty over his continuance in the ministry.

Vol. 19, No. 268 Saturday January 1, 1994 18 Rajab 1414 Price: Baisas 100



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Raging bull run

Asian stocks end 1993



BUSINESS/Page 8

Basketball

Hornets snap Bulls' winning streak



SPORTS/Page 11

AS DECLARED BY H.M. ON NATIONAL DAY

'YEAR OF OMAN'S HERITAGE' BEGINS TODAY

By A Staff Reporter MUSCAT — As declared by His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said on the occasion of the 23rd National Day last November, Oman today begins the "Year of Oman's Heritage".

His Majesty had declared during National Day celebrations at Muscat: "Oman has not neglected its glorious heritage in its endeavours to build a modern state through science and technology."

"The Year of Oman's Heritage" begins today, after the "Year of Youth" came to an end yesterday, having achieved all the targets that were set for it, like more attention to the Omani youth from both the private and public sectors and the Omani youth contributing positively for the country's development.

Internal and external policy achievements last year

By A Staff Reporter

MUSCAT — The year 1993 was full of major achievements for the Sultanate of Oman in internal and external fields, which strengthened the country's position in these sectors.

year as a necessary element in the political life of the country.

It held a number of sessions, which highlighted the democratic presence in the Sultanate.

Al Hayat hails Majlis A'Shura

LONDON — The London-based newspaper Al-Hayat considers the dedication of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said towards the success of the Majlis A'Shura during 1993, "as one of the most important events in the Gulf."

price and the declaration of the Sultanate about its readiness to decrease its oil production from January 1 as among the prominent Gulf events and among the important Arab & international events.

its border by the Security Council, its defence agreement with Russia, following that with America and Britain, and the joint exercises of Kuwaiti forces with America, France, Russia, Britain and Italy.



HIS MAJESTY SULTAN QABOOS BIN SAID

Shanfari to tour Mexico, Malaysia and Brunei



DUBAI — Oman's Oil Minister Said bin Ahmed al-Shanfari plans to visit Mexico, Brunei and Malaysia on a second tour of non-Opec oil producers, the Oman News Agency (ONA) reported.

which are not members of Opec.

He has been trying to persuade them jointly to curb production in an attempt to strengthen oil prices brought down this year by factors including world recession and record crude production by North Sea states Britain and Norway.

The 12-member Opec, which is dominated by Saudi Arabia and produces about 40 per cent of the world's crude oil, has said it will not reduce its output unless non-member producers also agree to make cuts.

Oman, a non-Opec producer which is acting as an intermediary between the organisation and other non-members, has already said it will cut its output five percent from January.

The ONA reported earlier on Thursday that following Shanfari's visit to Moscow, Oman and Russia agreed to set up a joint action team to discuss action on prices.

But a Russian oil ministry spokesman told Reuters in Moscow, "I don't think it is in our interests (to reduce production or exports). On the contrary."

Russia currently produces about seven million barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil, but only 1.6 million bpd of this is sold abroad for hard currency.

Shanfari's tour this week also took him to small independents Egypt, Yemen and Syria, who said they were prepared to cut their output, and to major North Sea producers Britain and Norway, who declined to make any pledges of curbing theirs.

"It is hard for some of the industrial countries to step out of their economic and other commitments...but they understand the unsatisfactory situation," Shanfari told ONA. —Reuter

Setback for Iranian opposition

NICOSIA — The leader of the Iraqi-based Iranian opposition group Mujahideen Khalq has protested over a French decision to reject a Swiss request to extradite two Iranians sought for the 1990 murder of his elder brother.

over Professor Kazem Rajavi's assassins to the Swiss judiciary.

He described the act as "an extraordinary concession to the Iranian regime." France has sent back to Iran the two Iranians sought by Switzerland for the murder of Kazem Rajavi, the elder brother of the Mujahideen Khalq leader, the French Prime Minister's office said on Thursday.

France said earlier that it had rejected Switzerland's extradition request for Shariif Esfahani-Mashen and Ahmed Taheri, who were arrested in Paris in November 1992 in connection with the killing of Kazem Rajavi.

The office of Prime Minister Edouard Balladur said in a statement that they would not be extradited "for reasons linked to the national interest."

Rajavi, 56, a leading figure in the Mujahideen Khalq, was shot dead at his home in the Geneva suburb of Coppet on April 24, 1990. A spokesman for Balladur's office said Esfahani-Mashen and Taheri were returned to Iran last Wednesday night. He declined to elaborate or give any further details. They were arrested in France following the detention in Tehran of a French national who was held for 19 days without charge and then released.

Kazem Rajavi, Iran's first post-revolutionary ambassador to the United Nations, resigned his post in 1980 and became a vocal opponent of the Islamic government in Tehran. —Reuter

Advertisement for Amiantit Oman water tanks. Features a large white water tank, a photo of the Sultan, and text: 'We humbly thank His Majesty for bestowing us with the Best Factory Award for the year 1993'. Lists features like 'Made from U.V. Stabilised Food Grade Polyethylene' and 'Single Piece Moulding, Totally Leak Proof'. Includes 'SUPER WATER TANKS' on the right side.



Santa and the Sarajevo kids

On the last day of the year 1993 a Bosnian dressed as Santa Claus walks with some children through the so-called "Sniper alley" in Sarajevo.

We'll fight on: Bosnia

SARAJEVO — The commander of the Bosnian army said yesterday his men would fight on if the republic's political leaders did not get satisfaction at the negotiating table.

The remarks by General Rasim Delic came within hours of a clear indication by Croatian President Franjo Tudjman that his country might intervene militarily in Bosnia to stem an offensive against ethnic Croats there.

Delic told Sarajevo radio in a New Year statement: "If the peace negotiations don't give results we have to be ready to give our people their freedom and peace, and most importantly a chance to get their homes back, with weapons."

In his end of year interview on state television Tudjman said: "We are doing everything possible to stop Croat-Bosnian hostilities (through peace talks)."

"But the Bosnians must either abandon their aggression or the world will have to understand the steps we will have to take to defend Croats there."

Leaders of the warring Serb, Bosnian and Croat factions are due to resume peace talks in Geneva in mid-January.

Direct military intervention in Bosnia could expose Croatia to a UN trade embargo similar to that which has crippled rump Yugoslavia for supporting Serbs in Bosnia.

The effects of the sanctions, imposed on Yugoslavia for its role in the war in neighbouring Bosnia, were driven home yesterday when Belgrade ground virtually to a halt under the effects of power cuts and transport strikes.

A strike by coal miners in the Kolubara basin which supplies fuel for major thermo-electric power plants near Belgrade, resulted in drastic power cuts in the capital.

Although a tentative settlement was reported in the miners dispute, some areas in Belgrade were left without electricity for as much as 17 hours in the past 24 hours.

A strike by railroad workers settled earlier in the week was followed by another stoppage by engine drivers on Thursday.

Only international trains were running, but with major delays, and the strike stranded thousands of people at Belgrade's central railway station.

City trolley bus drivers protesting at low wages were prevented from taking their vehicles back to the depots by crowds of angry passengers who blocked the streets.

A total of 17 strikes are currently being staged in Belgrade, a local independent radio station reported.

The sudden pedestrian jam in central Belgrade was swelled by about 10,000 people, mostly pensioners, who queued for food handouts by a charity organisation.

Meanwhile United Nations efforts to move relief aid to victims of war in Sarajevo and other areas of Bosnia begin 1994 in much worse shape than a year ago, a senior UN official said yesterday.

Tony Land, head of the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Sarajevo, gave a gloomy summary of UN aid operations in Bosnia over the past year.

"We find ourselves at the end of 1993 in a significantly worse condition

with regard to the ability to supply Sarajevo than we were a year ago," he told a news conference.

"The reason for that is a year ago we still had relatively easy access from the Croatian coast by convoy and we were on average getting something like five or six convoys a week into Sarajevo along that route as well as being able to supply central Bosnia.

"We find ourselves now in a situation where we are almost totally dependent on an airlift in Sarajevo in the middle of winter, and that is a very difficult situation to be in."

UN aircraft operate a hazardous daily airlift into Sarajevo from bases in Croatia and Italy, often braving fire from Serb gunners besieging the city. Land said the situation was even worse in central Bosnia and the Bosnian enclaves in the east of the republic.

Sarajevo was getting about 56 per cent of people's minimum needs, while the enclaves of Zepa, Gorazde and Srebrenica were getting much less. Land said aid was positioned in Serbia and Croatia not far from where it was needed in Bosnia but convoys were being blocked for military and political reasons.

"We're a couple of hundred kilometres from Zvornik (in the Serbian-Bosnian border), we're a couple of hundred kilometres from the (Croatian) coast and people are hungry."

"There's 86,000 tonnes of food in forward positions in areas surrounding Bosnia-Herzegovina, which we cannot move a couple of hundred kilometres to get it in." — *Reuter*

New Year ushers in death penalty

MANILA — The law restoring capital punishment in the Philippines takes effect at midnight, more than seven years after it was abolished in the largely Roman Catholic country by then-president Corazon Aquino.

Approved by Congress and signed by President Fidel Ramos earlier this month, the law prescribes death for 13 crimes considered heinous.

Among them are treason, drug trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, murder and stealing of public funds of 50 million pesos (\$1.8 million) or more.

The death penalty may also be imposed for arson to buildings where people are gathered, for bribery if the victim is physically harmed, and for rape if the victim is a minor or the rapist has AIDS.

Executions are to be by gassing. But until a gas chamber is built, condemned convicts are to be electrocuted, the traditional method of capital punishment in the Philippines.

Ramos backed the death penalty to curb a resurgence of crime, such as kidnapping for ransom, an offence that has plagued the Philippines in the last year.

Many legislators had opposed the law, saying it would work mainly against the poor, who cannot afford good lawyers. — *Reuter*

Sudan expels British envoy

KHARTOUM—The rift between Sudan and Britain deepened yesterday, with Sudanese officials saying they were expelling the British ambassador for his criticism of their nation. The statements followed an announcement late on Thursday by the Sudanese foreign ministry that Ambassador Peter Streams would be given two weeks to leave because his presence in Sudan "does not serve the interests of the two countries."

The foreign office in London summoned the top Sudanese diplomat to explain the expulsion.

The order came in the midst of a controversial, four-day visit by the Rt. Rev. George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, to rebel-held southern Sudan. Carey entered southern Sudan from neighboring Kenya on Thursday after cancelling a planned visit to the Sudanese capital Khartoum, where he feared his activities would be restricted through imposition of an official agenda by Sudan's government. In a statement delivered yesterday to church contacts in the Kenyan capital Nairobi, Carey said he was saddened by Sudan's action.

The statement, addressed to Lambeth Palace in London and the British embassy in Nairobi, said his decision to avoid Khartoum was in no way influenced by the British government. "Before going on an overseas visit I always consult them and they are always helpful," said Carey, leader of 70 million Anglicans worldwide. "But the decision was mine alone." Sudanese officials made it clear they were dismayed at the Archbishop's travel plans.

Mohamed Al-Amin Khalifa, speaker of Sudan's appointed national assembly, told a news conference that entering from a neighbouring country would be "unacceptable to the Sudanese government" as an affront to its sovereignty.



Peter Streams in his Guildford garden yesterday. — AFP photo

Ahmed Kamal-Eddin, a member of the parliament, told the BBC radio yesterday that the archbishop's trip was "the last straw in the series of things, both from the British embassy and from Lambeth Palace." He added: "The British ambassador's relationship with our government has never been cool and nice. He has always got a lot of views and opinions about what is going on in the Sudan and, with due respect, most of them were not done in a manner that would better the relationship between Sudan and the United Kingdom." — *AP*

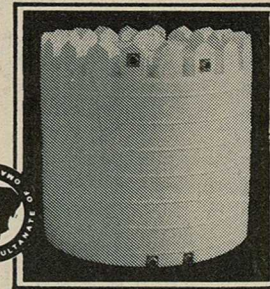
SAD DEMISE

SMT. KAMLABEN SHAMALDAS MEHTA
mother of Bakul and Dilip Mehta passed away in Bombay on Thursday, 30th December 1993.

A Prayer Meeting will be held at Motishwar Temple, Muscat on **Monday, 3rd January 1994.**

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Philippines braces for more typhoons

MANILA — The death toll from typhoon Nell's devastating sweep through the central Philippines this week has climbed to at least 126, and more typhoons may be on the way.

The Philippine Red Cross said yesterday that the 126 confirmed deaths from Nell — the record 32nd typhoon to hit the Philippines in one year — raised the number of lives taken by typhoons in the archipelago to around 700 for 1993.

The Red Cross said more than 400 people died in December alone, after the typhoon season in the Philippines should have ended. About 35 people were still missing after Nell, the third typhoon to hit the country in December.

As floodwaters subsided and people began to rebuild the traditional bamboo and thatch houses of

the countryside, weather forecasters warned another storm could be on the way.

They are watching an area of low pressure about 1,000 km east of the Philippines, which could develop into a storm. A second low pressure area is further out, over the Pacific.

"We are not sure which will develop first," said a forecaster at the government weather bureau. "We expect one typhoon will come in the first week of January."

Nearly 700,000 people were affected by typhoon Nell, which destroyed an estimated 15,000 houses and sparked widespread flooding.

The first two typhoons in early December killed more than 300 people and cut a swathe through one of the country's main coconut growing areas. — *Reuter*

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Honour for Indians

NEW YORK — In *Custody*, the novel which was recently transformed into an English feature film with Indian actors, won for its authoress Anita Desai and the renowned filmmaker Ismail Merchant the 'News India-Times Man And Woman Of The Year 1993' awards.

The honour by the New York-based journal is generally given to outstanding figures among the Asian community in the United States.

The announcement was made by John Perry, editor of the weekly. He said the date of the gala function at which these two will be honoured would be announced later.



ANITA DESAI



ISMAIL MERCHANT

Ban on revelry

KARACHI — New Year revellers in southern Pakistan will be forced to hide their celebrations behind closed doors because of a ban by Karachi authorities and threats by fundamentalists. "No hotel or restaurant will be permitted to organise celebrations and people will be stopped from dancing on pavements and roads on New Year's eve," said a municipal official of the southern business capital, Karachi. The ban was ordered to avoid clashes between revellers and extremists and to ensure the safety of the general public, he said.

Umer Sailiya, chairman of the Pakistan Hotels and Restaurant Association, said he had received no government notice but hotels would still avoid celebrations. "Most hotels will shut down before midnight to avoid any disturbance from the fundamentalist groups," he said.

The Jamaat-i-Islami Party would take all necessary action to prevent celebrations because of the fighting in Bosnia and "to check immorality", the party's Karachi information secretary, Mohammad Shamsi, said. — *Reuter*

Tears well up as Pandits reminisce poignant tales

NEW DELHI — It was the most poignant reunion among brethren of an exiled community. Long lost relatives, old childhood friends, missing acquaintances hugging each other unashamed of their flowing tears.

For the nearly 2,200 members of the Kashmiri Pandit community, at the two-day world Kashmiri Pandit conference, it was homecoming of sorts in the national capital.

More than 3,50,000 Kashmiri Pandits now scattered in far-flung, areas of the country, having suffered the tortuous banishment from their own homeland in Kashmir, four years was a long wait to suppress their emotions which culminated in this international conference.

Living in pitiable conditions in tents and other makeshift one-room pigeon holes in camps in Jammu and elsewhere, the conference became a platform to vent their feelings of suppression and torture.

"More than the unending misery caused by militancy in the state it is the apathy of the government to our situation and failure to cease."

For lovely Raina, life is not the same since her father was shot dead by militants three years ago. However, meeting old friends here has given her a renewed hope to fight life once again and a renewed vigour to go back home.

So far more than 1,200 Kashmiri Hindus have been killed by militants in the valley and more than 16,000

houses of Kashmiris burnt in the valley, according to Panun Kashmir group which has organised the meeting.

The two-day conference which opened in the capital was attended by Kashmiris from US, Canada, UK, and Switzerland, and Zambia.

The meet, organised by the chairman of Assembly of Tibetan Peoples Deputies, was organised by Panun Kashmir, an umbrella organisation of Kashmiri Pandits.

The opening day session gave an expression to the pain, anguish and trauma of the exiled Kashmiri Pandit refugees which was articulated through skits, songs and dances.

The conference depicted the travails of the Kashmiri Pandit community and each song brought back nostalgic memories of a life spent in the valley of risish, but whose peace now lies shattered with the booming kaleshknovs.

The artists' session was attended by eminent Hindi writer and critic, Mr Nirmal Verma, art critic Keshav Malik, writers Hrived Kaul, Hari Krishna Kaul, Dr Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani. All the writers emphasised on a need to preserve Kashmiri culture, language and literature at this critical juncture.

"Our cultural umbilical cord has been severed and in this hour of alienation we have to maintain our identity," emphasised writer Ratan Lal

Shah.

Talking about the historical tragedies that have befallen the community, writer Shashi Shekhar Toshkhani, said "we will once again rise from this crisis and come out stronger."

Mr. Agnishekhar, convener of Panun Kashmir said a "Sarda Peeth", a university in exile would be set up to usher in a process of renaissance of Kashmiri Pandit literature, poetry, art and other traditions.

Everyone present in the hall had a fervent prayer and hope of returning to the home in Kashmir seemed not such a distant dream "though the government has continuously failed in solving the Kashmir problem," lamented most of the delegates.

The callous attitude of the government and continuous neglect of the Kashmiri Pandits needs to be highlighted, says Dr Ajay Tsangoo of Panun Kashmir.

The Kashmir problem need not be solved militarily but a political solution is needed as soon as possible, added Dr Tsangoo.

According to Dr Suresh Raina, a doctor settled in the US, the world has to be made aware of the tragedy that has befallen the community. In the US, "we are trying on an individual capacity to make the policy makers aware of the Kashmir problem, but the government of India has failed on all fronts."

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Henman scalps Natekar

BOMBAY — Top seeded Tim Henman of Britain scalped unseeded Indian Gaurav Natekar 6-2 6-4 to enter the men's singles final of the Indian satellite (1st leg) tennis championships in Bombay yesterday.

Natekar, who had managed to make it to the main draw as quite a few foreign players pulled out of the championship, went down fighting against a much fitter and faster Englishman. — PTI

TIMES SPORT



Saturday, January 1, 1994

Jones back in Kiwi squad

WELLINGTON — The New Zealand cricket selectors yesterday named a predictable squad of 13 players for the second bracket of world series limited-overs matches against South Africa and Australia.

Andrew Jones returns to the side after missing the first bracket of games for family reasons, while Blair Pocock has been dropped. — AP

Masur eyes spot in top ten

PERTH — Wally Masur, recovered from the bitter disappointment of being dropped from Australia's Davis Cup final team, has set his sights on a top 10 ranking during 1994.

Masur, the top-ranked Australian at No. 21, was omitted from the Australian team beaten 4-1 by Germany in the Davis Cup final in Dusseldorf in early December.

It was a discouraging end to a year that had seen the 30-year-old rise to a career-high ranking of 15 and a semifinal finish at the US Open. Masur begins 1994 by partnering Nicole Provis on the Australian team that faces Sweden today in the first round of the \$510,000 Hopman Cup and has vowed to put behind him a series of early-round defeats late last season.

"In tennis, you can't afford to dwell on the past," he said.

"You have to look ahead and even though I've only had a three-week break I'm excited by the opportunity to play again."

Despite his lack of power, Masur believes has a mature-enough game to mount a challenge for a top 10 place.

"For any player, it doesn't matter whether you are 21 years old or 30, if you are making progress it is very satisfying," he said yesterday.

"The top 10 is still a possibility, sure. It seems to be easier, though, to move from 50 to 20 than from 15 to 10."

"To get into the top 10 you have to win a lot of matches against the top guys. You need to beat a Becker, Sampras or Edberg in a big event - and I'm still not doing enough of that."

Masur made five semifinals and two finals in 1993 without winning an event.

"By November I was physically fatigued and mentally stale," he said. "I was sick of competing and missing out on the Davis Cup final capped it off." — AP

Wessels in a spin over Shane Warne

SYDNEY — South African cricket captain Kepler Wessels, to bat through the pain barrier with a chronic right knee injury in the second Test against Australia starting on Sunday, is more fearful of facing spin than pace.

He struck an unbeaten 63 this week, coping well with pacemen Craig McDermott and Paul Reiffel in the rain-hit draw in Melbourne, the first Test against Australia in 23 years.

Wessels is hoping the mangled knee, already subjected to several operations, will stand the strain of the second Test in Sydney, after which he will consider further surgery.

"I want to play in Sydney and get through the game," said 36-year-old Wessels.

Running between the wickets

and fielding are problems enough but it is young superstar legspinner Shane Warne that weighs most on the mind of Wessels.

Wessels said Warne, whom he faced for the first time in Melbourne, was as good as any bowler he had faced in a 20-year first class career.

"In my career, most of my challenges have been fast bowlers up around my ears," said Wessels. "This (Warne) is a different problem but every bit as taxing."

Despite Wessels' caution about Warne, and fellow spinner Tim May, there is a resurgence of optimism in the South African camp that he may not turn out to be as troublesome as feared.

Allrounder Brian McMillan summed up the mood.

He is set to return to the side af-

ter spending last month recovering from surgery on his left knee, injured in a match against Victoria in Melbourne in early December.

McMillan said the first Test effort against Warne had given the side a huge lift and he felt too many people had made the mistake of thinking Warne would win the series.

"I thought our performance in the Melbourne Test was pretty good," McMillan said.

South Africa's first Test score of 258 for three in reply to 342 for seven declared was better than expected.

Andrew Hudson hit 64 and Hansie Cronje 71. Ace fieldsman Jonny Rhodes struck an unbeaten 35, all coped well with Warne and May.

"A lot of people had written us off on the evidence of a couple of

warm-up games. It was just a matter of time until our batters came right and now they've had a good bat, it's going to be pretty interesting."

"These two (Warne and May) are good spinners but they have to prove their worth against us. Shane Warne is obviously a top bowler and we have to watch him, but that applies to any bowler at international level," said McMillan.

Both teams played gold yesterday and will settle on final line-ups after training today.

McMillan, who bowled in the nets this week, said yesterday he was a strong chance to regain his Test place if the knee came through a big workout today.

"The leg is strong and it's in my favour to play. I don't think I can do any damage structurally and it's

just a matter of whether there is any swelling," he said.

A glut of injuries in December threatened South Africa's hopes of winning the series against Australia.

Fast bowler Brett Schultz was ruled out of the tour with knee problems, there is Wessels' knee problem and top fieldsman Jonny Rhodes is playing with a broken hand.

McMillan is also the side's best slip fieldsman. Daryll Cullinan dropped four catches at second slip in Melbourne.

But Australian skipper Allan Border has adopted a tough stance towards Wessels, lynch pin of his side despite the bad knee, and in Sydney will abandon the traditional agreement that permits substitutes and runners for disabled players.

Under law 2.1 of the game, a substitute can be disallowed for any player who enters a match with a known injury.

Border said he wanted to see Wessels initially in the field or his team left with 10 men.

"It's not the way I like to play. He can stand at slip can't he?"

"We know what the situation is with his knee and we'll wait and see if it happens again," said Border.

Australia has made no change to the first Test 12-man squad:

Allan Border (captain), Mark Taylor, Michael Slater, David Boon, Ian Healy, Mark Waugh, Craig McDermott, Shane Warne, Tim May, Glenn McGrath, Paul Reiffel, Damien Martyn.

South Africa has yet to announce its squad. — Reuter

First Test ends in draw Page 11

Bevan's ton puts NSW in command

SYDNEY — A masterful century from Michael Bevan put new South Wales in a commanding position on the first day of their Sheffield Shield match against South Australia at Adelaide yesterday.

Bevan hit 103, his 12th first class hundred, as New South Wales reached 351 for six by the close.

The gifted 23-year-old left-hander provided a hint of what was to come with his first four scoring shots, all of which rocketed to the boundary.

His 50 came off just 70 balls, his century took only just over one session and his 14 boundaries seemed to come without effort.

He was eventually undone when he tried to loft a ball from Daniel Marsh over the infield to give the 20-year-old son of former Test wicketkeeper Rod Marsh his first first-class wicket.

New South Wales captain Steve Waugh kept up the momentum, scoring 73 and showing he had recovered from the hamstring injury which kept him out of the Australian Test team.

In Brisbane, pacesman Michael Kasprovic provided the heroics as he scored a gutsy 35 to help Queensland recover from a dismal start and then snatched two wickets in the final over to put his side right back into the match against Tasmania.

Seamers Shaun Young and Colin Miller each took three wickets as Queensland were dismissed for 245.

But then with time remaining for only two overs, Kasprovic took the second of them and with his second delivery produced an almost unplayable outswinger to have opener Nick Courtney caught behind.

Two balls later Kasprovic bowled nightwatchman Troy Cool to leave Tasmania on four for two. — Reuter

New year honours for Mabbutt

LONDON — Soccer player Gary Mabbutt, rugby union international Gavin Hastings, and 1950s soccer hero Nat Lofthouse were among sporting personalities included in Britain's new year's honours list announced yesterday.

There was a knighthood for Bob Scott who led Manchester's unsuccessful bid to host the 2000 Olympic games and honours too for Karen Smithies, the captain of the England women's cricket team (Order of the British Empire) rugby player Peter Winterbottom (Member of the British Empire) Howie Tamati the New Zealand rugby league player (MBE), and Ian Smith, the New Zealand cricketer (MBE).

E.W. Jim Swanton, 86, who has written on cricket for 60 years was named a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) while Marea Hart-

man, 73, an athletics official, was named a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

The most poignant award was the MBE awarded to Mabbutt, 32, the captain of Tottenham Hotspur whose 17-year professional career is in jeopardy after he suffered a horrific injury in a match against Wimbledon five weeks ago.

Mabbutt, who suffers from diabetes, received a fractured cheekbone and a shattered eye-socket after a collision with John Fashanu's elbow in a premier league match on November 24. He faces at least two more operations before doctors decide whether he can play again.

"I have suffered a lot of downs lately, but this award has put a smile back on my face," said Mabbutt, who came within one millimetre of losing the sight in his right eye. Lofthouse, 68, known as the

"The Lion of Vienna" ever since an outstanding performance for England against Austria in 1952, retired from playing 34 years ago. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE). A prolific goalscorer in his playing days, he is currently the president of Bolton Wanderers, the only club he ever played for.

Scott, who worked closely with Prime Minister John Major as the mastermind behind Manchester's Olympic bid, was rewarded for his nine years of unrelenting lobbying for British sport with a knighthood.

Two of British rugby union's greatest servants on the field were not forgotten either. Scotland and Lions captain Gavin Hastings won the OBE, while England's most capped forward Peter Winterbottom, who retired from the international arena in the summer, was made an MBE. — Reuter

Response to women's meet lauded

MUSCAT — Ayida Al Ghamari, head of the women's wing of the General Organisation for Sports and Cultural Activities for Youth lauded the response of the players to the recently concluded first women's sports championship.

She said that the championship was a great success due to the cooperation of both the players and the organisation. Team spirit and harmony was very evident during the championship, she added.

The organisation was also encouraged by the enthusiastic response by all the participants and their desire to compete with each other at such a level.

"Now we will evaluate the success of the championship in discussions with experts", she said pointing out that a similar event will be held this year.

Injury woes for Leeds in key tie with United

LONDON — Leeds will be without top scorer Rodney Wallace when they attempt to beat runaway English Premier League leaders Manchester United at Old Trafford on new year's day.

Wallace, who has scored six goals in the last eight games and ten so far this season, pulled a hamstring in Wednesday's 1-1 draw with Queens Park Rangers and has been ruled out by manager Howard Wilkinson.

Speed may be back less than a month after damaging knee ligaments at West Ham. Wilkinson delays naming his squad but central defender David Wetherall and striker Noel Whelan are struggling to recover from viral infections and teenager Kevin Sharp is doubtful after collecting a slight groin injury against QPR. Mark Hughes is Manchester

United's only doubt as they bid to extend their 14-point lead at the top of the table. Blackburn Rovers are in second place and Leeds a further point back in third.

Hughes missed Wednesday's 5-2 win at Oldham with a heel injury and will have a late fitness test.

If Hughes is out, manager Alex Ferguson will rely on the side that won at Oldham as his team bid to extend their unbeaten run to 22 matches.

Mark Robinson, a £450,000 signing from Barnsley last season, will start his first match for Newcastle in the Premier League against Manchester City at St James's Park. Robinson badly damaged his knee in a pre-season friendly at Hartlepool and the injury kept him out until he made a fleeting appearance as substitute at Chelsea on Tuesday. — Reuter

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Watch out for the results in Tuesday's edition