

BRIEFLY

Bush to meet Kaifu : President George Bush plans to meet Japan's Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu in Los Angeles on April 4, the White House said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Sopkesman Marlin Fitzwater said the President would meet Kaifu during a short trip to California. Japanese newspaper reports said Kaifu is eager to meet Bush before the April 16-19 visit to Japan of Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, the first by a southeast leader.

Kaifu is expected to take up Japan's response to the Gulf crisis in his meeting with Bush.

Bush-Ozal post-war talks : President Bush discussed the future of the post-war Gulf with Turkish President Turgut Ozal Friday at the Presidential retreat at Camp David, Md, the White House said, reports Reuter.

During talks with Bush, Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, Ozal was expected to focus on Turkey's role in the region and the need for additional US economic and military assistance. The two leaders also were expected to discuss Cyprus.

Hillary named UNICEF envoy : Sir Edmund Hillary, who conquered Mount Everest in 1953, was on Friday named the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) special representative for the children of the Himalayas, reports Reuter.

The 71-year-old New Zealand-born explorer and former diplomat joins other celebrities in helping publicise the needs of children throughout the World.

Since his first climbing expedition to the Himalayas 40 years ago Hillary has helped build schools, hospitals, bridges and water pipelines for the people of the region.

Iraq violating truce : US : The White House said Iraq was violating the Gulf war ceasefire by continuing to try to fly military aircraft and called this "cause for concern", reports Reuter.

"It's troublesome that we find this second intention to operate fixed-wing aircraft," spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said after US fighter planes shot down an Iraqi military jet on Friday — the second in two days.

"It certainly is cause for concern," Fitzwater said when asked if the United States continued to regard the Iraqi flights as isolated incidents.

8 killed in Johannesburg : Eight people were found dead in a Johannesburg township, and a woman burned to death in an attack near Cape Town, police said Friday, reports AP.

Authorities could not determine the motive for the slayings. Police Maj. Ray Harrauld said in a statement that shooting broke out Thursday evening in Johannesburg's Tembisa township. Eight bodies were found, including one man whose throat was slit, Harrauld said.

"We have no idea who is responsible at this stage," he said. The township, the scene of past clashes between rival black factions, was reported quiet Friday.

A police report released earlier said a woman died in Khayelitsha township outside Cape Town when mobs set two vehicles on fire. The reports did not say when the incident occurred.

91 Senegal troops buried : Ninety-one Gulf war soldiers from Senegal who died in a plane crash on Thursday were buried in the Saudi desert on Friday, a Saudi official said, reports Reuter.

The simple Muslim funeral at Naircah near the Kuwaiti border was attended by Saudi Lieutenant General Khalid Bin Sultan, Commander of the Joint Arab Forces which helped defeat Iraq, and by Senegalese Armed Forces Minister Meudone Fall.

The soldiers died with six Saudi aircrew in a Saudi air force C-130 Hercules transport which crashed as it tried to land at Ras Al-Mushab airport a few miles (km) from the burial site.

8 killed in Kampala : At least eight people were killed when fighting broke out between police and Muslim youths outside a Mosque in the Ugandan capital Kampala on Friday, witnesses said, reports AFP.

Police were deployed in the area last Wednesday to flush out Muslim youths from the headquarters of the Supreme Council of Uganda Muslims, who occupied it demanding change in the council leadership.

Some of the youths told Agence France-Press that trouble started when police guarding the Mosque prevented hundreds of Muslim from entering the Mosque for Friday prayers.

4 Filipinos killed in blast : A man threw a hand grenade at a packed billiard hall in the southern Philippines, killing four people, including three children, and wounding 11, police said Saturday, reports Reuter.

The unidentified man fled in a waiting car after the attack on Friday in Libungan, north Cotabato province, 560 miles (900 km) south of Manila, a police report said.

The victims were children aged between 12 and 13 and an 18-year-old youth, police said.

Israel to get US Patriots : The Pentagon informed the Congress Saturday that it intends to sell Israel 350 million Dollars in Patriot missiles and Saudi Arab more than 900 million Dollars in parts and services related to the Gulf war, reports Xinhua.

The Pentagon said the 64 Patriot missiles, including eight launching stations, transporters, radar, spare parts and training, are in addition to the one and half batteries bought by Israel last September and the two batteries of US-owned and crewed missiles rushed in from Europe during the Gulf war.

"Israel needs these surface-to-air missiles to upgrade its air defense capabilities," a Pentagon statement said.

Militants attack Sindh press

KARACHI, Mar 23: Suspected ethnic militants set fire Friday to a weekly news magazine and forced one of Pakistan's largest publishing companies to suspend printing its newspapers because of attacks on its employees, reports AP.

No one was hurt in the blaze that gutted the offices of the Urdu-language magazine Takbeer.

The publication's story about the struggle within the militant Mohajir Qami movement triggered a weeklong wave of violence against the press in southern Sindh province. Takbeer accused the MQM of setting Friday's blaze.

The MQM, which represents descendants of Indian Muslims who immigrated to Pakistan during the 1947 partition of the subcontinent, is demanding recognition as Pakistan's fifth nationality. The others are Pathans, Punjabis, Sindhis and Baluch. MQM leaders have in the

past threatened journalists for negative stories about their party. However, they denied responsibility for the latest spate of violence. "The MQM has nothing to do with the recent violence against newsmen and newspapers. The MQM believes in complete freedom of the press," a party spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Newspaper executives and unions have demanded that the federal government in Islamabad take steps to stop the violence. Islamabad has said the matter should be handled by the Sindh provincial government, and the MQM is a crucial component of the governing coalition. During the past week, newspapers that carried stories about the MQM have been snatched from distributors and burned. Hawkers have been harassed, beaten or abducted. News offices, editors and journalists have been threatened.

Iraq's defeat shameful to Muslims, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 23: The defeat of Iraq in the Gulf war was shameful to Muslims all over the world, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad was quoted today as saying, reports AFP.

The English-language Business Times quoted Dr. Mahathir as saying Friday in northern Kedah state that before the Gulf war, Iraq's Arab neighbours had depended on its military strength as a bulwark against Israel.

He said that Arab countries including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait had given money to Iraq to build up its military might.

Following its defeat in the Gulf war it could no longer act as a bulwark and this was shameful to Muslims, Dr. Mahathir said.

"We had urged Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait because we knew it could not win in the face of the foreign military forces invited by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait," he said.

AP from United Nations adds: Food and other essential

**Sanctions on food eased
Iran won't return 150 Iraqi planes**

KUWAIT, Mar 23: Iran has told Iraq it will not return nearly 150 Iraqi military aircraft which took refuge in Iran during the Gulf war, a senior allied military source said.

The source told Reuter Tehran had formally notified Baghdad it was keeping the planes in partial compensation for damage in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, which followed an Iraqi invasion of southern Iran.

Allied military intelligence was aware of Baghdad-Tehran exchanges about the aircraft, he said.

AP from United Nations adds: Food and other essential

goods will be allowed into war-ravaged Iraq following the lifting of some sanctions by the Security Council, reports AP.

But the council Friday did not lift the sweeping economic embargo imposed after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

"It should be perfectly straightforward now for any organisation that wishes to help the people of Iraq to send in foodstuffs and material relating to food, public health and medicine," said British Ambassador Sir David Hannay.

But, Hannay said, before all sanctions are lifted, peace and security must be restored in the region, as demanded by

the Security Council. He said this would include destruction of Iraq's chemical and biological weapons.

The United States has drafted a complex resolution setting out numerous demands — including the destruction of the weapons — which Iraq must meet before a permanent end to Gulf War hostilities.

The council's permanent members — the United States, Britain, China, France and the Soviet Union — were to meet Saturday to discuss the resolution. It would be presented to the council's other 10 members after the permanent five approved the text.

Following recommendations of its sanctions committee, the council lifted restrictions on imports of fuel, spare parts, generators, water purification equipment and food — and health-related material for Iraq. The committee earlier Friday declared a humanitarian emergency in Iraq.

A senior Iraqi diplomat said his government welcomed the easing of restrictions but said Baghdad was dissatisfied that sanctions were not lifted completely.

The diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said his government had complied with all conditions imposed by

the council for complete lifting of sanctions. He asserted the United States and its allies wanted to wring concessions which had not originally been sought from Iraq.

Under the decision Friday, the council requires notification of proposed imports and requires that Iraq allow shipments to areas of rebellion by Kurds in the north and Shiite Muslims in the south. Iraq said it would comply with the requirements.

The United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross are to distribute the aid.

A UN report on Iraq's humanitarian needs released Thursday described the situation in the country as "near apocalyptic" and said that Gulf War allied bombing had driven the formerly modern Arab nation back to the "pre-industrial age."

Undersecretary-General Martti Ahtisaari said Iraq needs foodstuffs, seeds, medical supplies. He also called for emergency oil imports and the repair of Iraq's refinery system, partly to allow Iraq to run life-preserving medical equipment, to run trucks and to gain currency.

One lakh Iraqi troops killed in war?

WASHINGTON, Mar 23: More than 1,00,000 Iraqi soldiers died in the Gulf War, most of them killed during allied air strikes, a senior military official estimates. The exact war toll on the Iraqi side may never be known, but it stands in stark contrast to the 124 American combat deaths, reports AP.

Iraq has shown no interest in offering an estimate of its war dead. The US command insists it never took a count and thus cannot provide a credible estimate.

But a senior allied officer in Riyadh estimated that 60,000 to 80,000 Iraqis were killed by the relentless allied air strikes before the ground war started, most of them buried alive when their bunkers collapsed atop them. An additional 15,000 to 25,000 Iraqi troops likely were killed in the four days of combined air and ground attacks, said the officer, who had access to battlefield damage and intelligence reports.

"A ballpark figure of 100,000 is about as good as we

Premadasa sets terms for Tamils to join polls

COLOMBO, Mar 23: Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa Friday evening called upon the Tamil rebels to contest the north-east provincial council elections on the condition that they first lay down arms, reports Xinhua.

Addressing a public meeting in Kandy, the capital of central province, the President said that the doors are still open for the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to enter the "democratic mainstream."

Premadasa said that the LTTE should come forward to contest the provincial election and restore peace and order in the north-eastern province, but it was imperative that they gave up arms so that other political parties could also contest that poll.

While the presidential election was held in 1988 and the parliament election in 1989 in Sri Lanka.

can do for now," said the officer, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Officially, the US military is not interested in a body count, a practice in Vietnam that drew criticism and doubt about the reliability of the numbers.

"We're unlikely ever to know many Iraqis were killed," Defense Secretary Dick Cheney said recently. "We have no idea how many were killed and shipped north during the campaign. We have no idea how many were killed and buried in the theater during the campaign."

Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, the Desert Storm commander, was

adamant in avoiding body counts during the war. In a briefing just after the 100-hour allied ground blitzkrieg ended, Schwarzkopf refused to offer an estimate of Iraqi dead, and saying only that it was a "very, very large number."

A Defense Intelligence Agency official said DIA was asked informally by a senior Defense Department official if it was possible to make a reliable estimate of Iraqi dead and responded that only Schwarzkopf's Central Command could make a tally.

"And I'm not sure we'd trust theirs. The guys in the field just weren't counting. They still aren't," the DIA official

said. "They just poured them into common graves and covered them."

US troops who raced across Iraq recall a battlefield littered with Iraqi casualties and occasional mass graves. On the highways from Kuwait to Iraq, hundreds if not thousands of Iraqi troops were killed as they retreated.

But so varied are the estimates of Iraqi dead that most military historians consider them meaningless.

"I would distrust any answer I did get," said Lt. Col. Piers Wood, an Army reservist who is chief of staff at the Center for Defense Information.

"There are no good counts."

Chautala's 'dirty hatrick' attributed to Shekhar

NEW DELHI, Mar 23: The Janata Dal (JD) today said the credit for the "dirty hatrick" by Mr. Om Prakash Chautala becoming Chief Minister of Haryana should go exclusively to the Prime Minister Mr. Chandra Shekhar, reports PTI.

The party spokesman Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy said in a statement that in sharp contrast to the manner in which former Prime Minister Mr. V.P. Shingh got Mr. Chautala to resign twice as Chief Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar is the only leader of the country with the political effrontery to de-

fend Mr. Chautala for all the outrageous acts including massacres and murders at Meham.

A message from Kochi (Madras) says: The Indian

Union Muslim League (IUML) is emerging as a key factor for victory in the Kerala Assembly polls, and is being wooed by the state's two major political coalitions that — the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) and the opposition United Democratic Front (UDF).

Assembly polls are expected to be held simultaneously with the coming Lok Sabha elections. The LDF's State Committee on Thursday recommended polls. A cabinet decision is awaited.

The IUMUL, a long-time ally of the Congress (I) led UDF, severed its ties with the front on the Mandal-Masjid issue on Feb 13 last.

A week ago, the IUML's All-India President, Mr. Ibrahim Sulaiman said the party had received feelers from the UDF for a rapprochement, though this was denied by a state leader of the league, Mr. Kunjal Kuttu. Congress (I) sources confirmed that some informal contacts had been made.

As if to mollify the league, Congress (I) leaders, Mr. K. Karunakaran and Mr. A. K. Antony, have publicly stated that the Congress (I) was committed to implementing the Mandal Commission report after removing any anomalies.



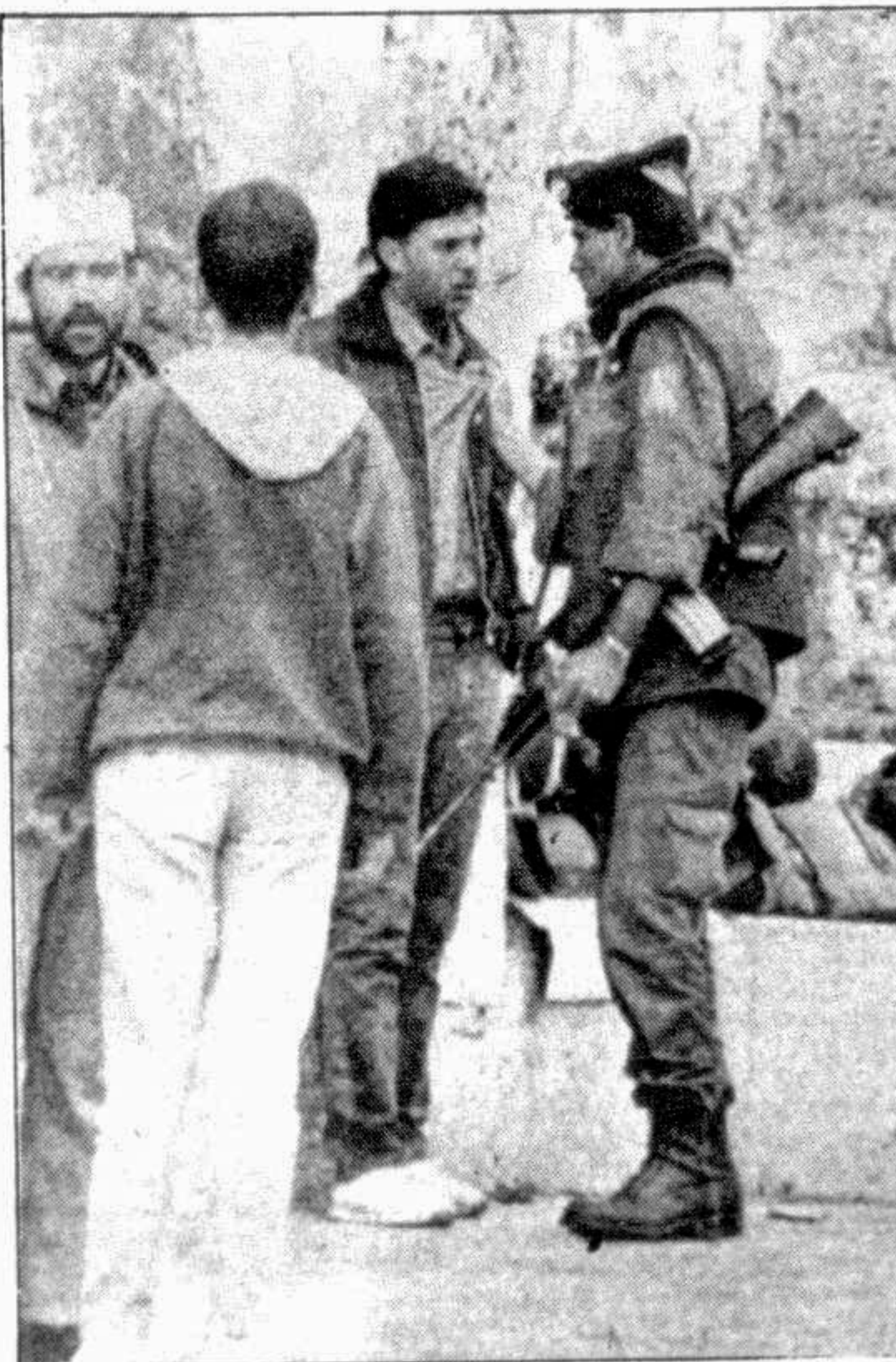
Chautala: A dirty hatrick

Haryana Ministry expanded

CHANDIGARH, Mar 23: Eleven Cabinet and 15 ministers of State were sworn-in Saturday raising the strength of the Om Prakash Chautala Ministry in Haryana to 27, reports PTI.

The Haryana Governor Mr. Dhanik Lal Mandal administered the oath of office and secrecy to the new Ministers.

No compromise with Gorbachev: Yeltsin



JERUSALEM — An Israeli border policeman grabs a Palestinian youth during a check here. — AFP/UNB photo

MOSCOW, Mar 23: Russian leader Boris Yeltsin has raised the stakes in his political battle with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev by saying he sees no hope for compromise, reports Reuter.

Yeltsin told workers in Leningrad's huge Kirov industrial plant on Friday that he was convinced Gorbachev did not want to work with the Russian federation, by far the most powerful of the 15 republics.

"That's why I distance myself from the policy of the President. That's why your support for me is very important," Yeltsin said to prolonged applause.

Yeltsin, declaring that it was clear there could be no bridging of differences between himself and Gorbachev, spoke confidently and made several attacks on the Soviet President.

He suggested he had drawn considerable comfort from a poll last Sunday which showed most Russians supported the idea of the huge republic having a popularly-elected President.

The Russian leader would be the most likely winner, thereby gaining a power base to challenge Gorbachev's authority and increase the republic's sovereignty.

Yeltsin's 70-minute speech marked the end of a troubled week for the Soviet President.

On Sunday Gorbachev received less than overwhelming support in a nationwide refer-

endum for his plan to keep the Soviet Union together as a renewed federation of sovereign republics.

And there are no signs of an early end to a miners' strike which has halted over a quarter of the nation's 600 pits and is threatening to cripple vital industries. Many of the miners are demanding Gorbachev's resignation.



Yeltsin echoed charges by liberals that Gorbachev has moved to the right in recent months, suggesting the Soviet leader was in the grip of those who did not want radical change.

Last month, the Russian leader demanded Gorbachev's resignation and accused him of deceiving the people.

He said he had no intention of stepping down at a special meeting of the republic's supreme legislature next week, hardline communists are expected to try to oust him.

Off the Record

Bush consoles Afghan taxi driver

WASHINGTON: President George Bush and his wife, Barbara, on Friday consoled an Afghan taxi driver and his family who were victimised by vandals who mistook them for Iraqis, reports Reuter.

Ohulam Mohammad, of the Washington suburb of Fairfax, Virginia, and his family were invited to the White House after his nine-year-old daughter, Saylat, wrote to Mrs Bush to tell her what had happened.

Moham madi fled Afghanistan in 1983 because of the war there and eventually moved to the United States, where he supports his wife and four daughters by driving a car.

Last November, when hostilities with Iraq were growing, he found that two of his tyres had been slashed. A month later the back window was broken out.

A week after the Gulf war began he found all four tyres flattened. A window on his wife's car was broken and someone had spray-painted profanities on it.

"My family and I came from Afghanistan because we thought there would be more opportunity for us here to live a good life," Saylat said in her letter to Mrs Bush.

"We also thought we would have the freedom to practise the customs and traditions from our own country. It is very difficult for me to understand how people can be so very ignorant, cruel and prejudiced...."

Brother vs brother

MANILA: President Corazon Aquino on Friday awarded the nation's highest medal for bravery to an army sergeant who killed his brother during a coup attempt in 1989, reports AP.

Sgt. Roberto Salvador received the Medal of Valor during ceremonies marking the 94th anniversary of the Philippine Army.

He was among the defenders of Camp Aguinaldo, the armed forces headquarters, when it came under attack by mutinous troops on Dec. 3, 1989, two days after rebel soldiers launched the most serious bid to topple Mrs. Aquino.

Salvador, then a private, used a 90-mm recoilless rifle to blast two armoured personnel carriers that smashed through the camp's gates, killing several rebel crewmen.

Troops discovered the body of Salvador's brother, Rogelio, among the dead.

The citation said Salvador's action "decisively disorganized the hostile forces and halted their momentum during the most critical days" of the coup attempt.

Salvador told reporters before the ceremony that he had "mixed feelings" about receiving the medal.

He earlier told a radio station that he felt obligated to support his brother's widow and family.

The radio report said Salvador discovered his brother's Christmas gifts for his wife and children inside the wrecked armoured personnel carrier.

Royal scandal

LONDON: Captain Mark Phillips, estranged husband of Britain's Princess Anne, said on Saturday he would contest any claim made against him as part of paternity proceedings in New Zealand, reports Reuter.

A New Zealand horsewoman, Heather Tonkin, sparked a royal scandal when she claimed that Phillips was the father of her five-year-old daughter. Her lawyers have filed court papers naming Phillips in a paternity suit.

Phillips was "extremely concerned at the distressing effect" on his family that publicity over the allegations had caused, he said in a statement issued through his solicitors and carried by Britain's Press Association news agency.

Phillips, 42, was separated from Princess Anne, Queen Elizabeth's only daughter, in 1989. He could face genetic fingerprinting tests to determine whether the child, Felicity, is his.

Tonkin, 37, said she first met Phillips in 1983 at a local riding event near her home in New Zealand.

The two met again at a party a year later, after which Phillips rang her late at night and invited her to his hotel.

"I asked how I would find his room... he told me not to worry, his riding boots would be outside his door and I should look out for them," she told Britain's Daily Express newspaper.

Buckingham Palace, Queen Elizabeth's official residence, said it had no comment on reports that Princess Anne, 40, may soon seek a divorce from Phillips.

Labour's three-point lead over Tories in opinion poll

LONDON, Mar 23: The opposition Labour Party has established a three-point lead over the ruling Conservatives in a new opinion poll, published today and conducted two days after the government announced its budget details

for the coming year, reports AP.

In the poll, published in the right-wing Daily Express, 40 per cent of those asked said they would vote for Labour, 37 per cent conservative and 14 per cent for the centrist Liberal Democrats.

The findings will come as a disappointment to Conservative Party chairman Chris Patten