

### Iran, Russia to launch fresh efforts to end Nagorny-Karabakh war

TEHRAN, Mar 8: Iran and Russia are to join forces in mediating between the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed territory of Nagorny-Karabakh, Tehran radio reported Saturday, reports AFP. A settlement "depends on the good will of Russia," the official radio said. It said Iran would launch new mediation efforts "jointly with Russia" to halt the bloodshed in the Christian Armenian-populated enclave of Karabakh in Muslim Azerbaijan. According to informed sources here, Iran is seeking to host a meeting of the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia. Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati has said Iranian delegations would return next week to the two Caucasian republics in a bid to secure a ceasefire, after a similar effort last month that failed. On Saturday, Tehran radio warned that "certain countries are trying to side with one of the protagonists in the conflict to advance their own policies in the region." It did not elaborate but the Iranian media have criticized both Turkey and the United States for their policies toward the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union.

# 112 drowned as ferry capsizes in Gulf of Thailand

BANGKOK, Mar 8: At least 112 pilgrims returning from a shrine drowned early Sunday after their crowded ferry was rammed by an oil tanker and capsized, news reports said. At least 21 passengers were rescued, reports AP. The accident in the Gulf of Thailand was the nation's worst maritime disaster in modern history. The ferry cut in front of the tanker and was struck broadside, police said. The ferry was about halfway through an 11-kilometer trip from the island of Si Chang to the town of Si Racka, 80 kilometers south-east of Bangkok, said Sgt. Pradap Praphakun by telephone from the town. Anan Anantrakul, a senior Interior Ministry official, said the vessel carried 120 passengers, but villagers said the vessel carried no less than 200 people. Channel 7 television reported at least 112 people drowned and 21 were rescued. The casualty figure was not immediately confirmed by officials. Police said the tourists were from a province near Bangkok and had visited a well-known animist shrine on the island. Survivors were taken to hospitals in Si Racka and the bodies of victims here temporarily placed in a Buddhist temple. A Thai journalist in Si Racka quoted a survivor saying the tanker flashed several lights to warn of its approach, but the ferry captain did not respond. The rescue effort included divers and more than 10 Thai navy and marine police vessels. The ferry was owned by the Nava Prathip Co., police said. It had been chartered by the tourists and was not on a regular run. The tanker captain, Preecha Petchu, was detained for questioning, police said. The fate of the ferry captain was not immediately known. A number of Thai ferries have capsized while overloaded with local and foreign tourists visiting offshore islands. Sea traffic off the southeastern coast has increased dramatically in recent years because of a huge coastal development plan that includes a large port, industrial sites and tourist facilities. More than 20 passengers drowned in 1987 when a ferry carrying tourists from an island in the Gulf of Thailand capsized in a sudden squall.

## Off the Record

### Ex-Olympics chief won't waste \$12m for Senatorship

SACRAMENTO, Calif: Former Olympics and baseball chief Peter V Ueberroth says he decided not to run for the US Senate because a bruising multimillion-dollar race would be a waste of money, reports AP. Ueberroth, who is credited with turning a profit at the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, said he was told he would have to raise more than 12 million dollars by November. "That is to me a waste of money," said Ueberroth, who also was baseball commissioner from 1984 to 1989. The 54-year-old businessman had until Friday to decide whether to enter the Republican primary for the California seat being vacated by Alan Cranston. Cranston, 77, announced last year he wouldn't seek reelection.

### Four legged baby awaits surgery

CAPE TOWN, South Africa: A baby boy born with four legs is about to undergo extensive surgery that doctors hope will give him a normal body, the baby's parents said Saturday, AP reports. Aziz Railoun, five months old, is an alert child who has no physical deformities on the upper part of his body. But he has four legs, two pelvises and twin genitalia and already has had an extra colon removed. His parents Ebrahim and Ghairu Railoun, both 22, say doctors at the Red Cross Children's Hospital in Cape Town have given the operations an even chance of success. Neither parent has a family history of physical deformity, and the mother said she was not taking any special drugs when the baby was conceived. "They said it's a phenomenon that occurs once in a billion times," Mrs Railoun said of her only child. She said a scan taken when she was five months pregnant revealed no abnormalities. But about a month later when the baby began kicking she thought she was expecting twins. "My sister went out and bought two sets of clothing," she said. The couple decided to make their son's condition public this week when they realized they could not afford the expensive medical costs.

### They chase pistol-wielding Minister into public toilet

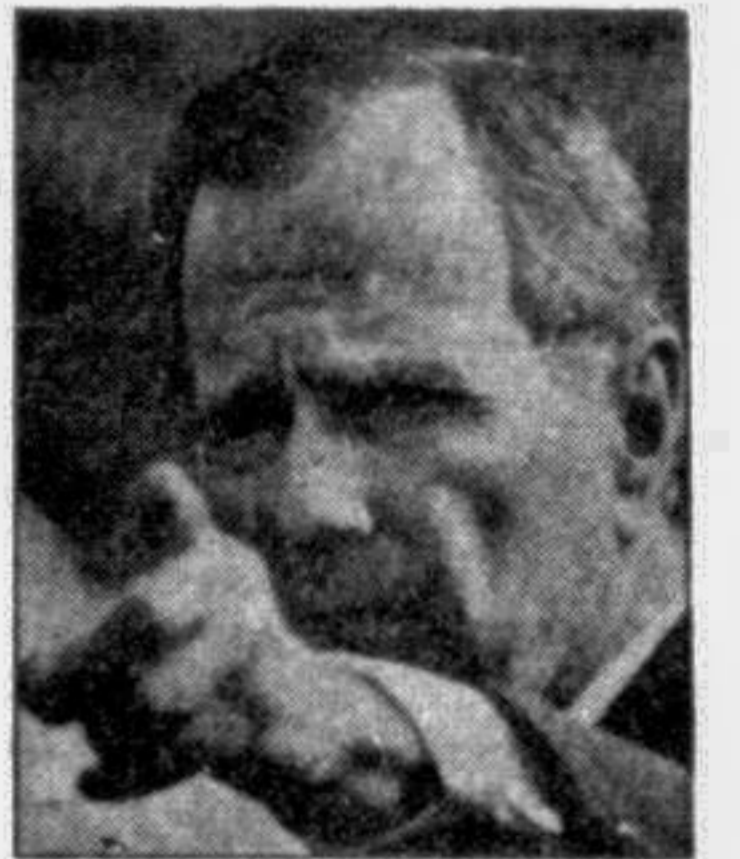
NAIROBI: Stone-throwing youths who broke up a pro-government rally in Kenya chased a pistol-wielding Assistant Minister into a public toilet and set his car on fire, witnesses said, reports Reuter. David Mwenje, Assistant Minister for Supplies and Marketing, took refuge in the toilet after firing his pistol in a vain attempt to ward-off the youths who broke up a rally yesterday by the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) party. Riot police used tear gas and batons in a pitched battle with the youths in the crowded Nairobi suburb of Dandora who shouted slogans of the opposition Forum for the restoration of Democracy (FORD).

### Boyfriend tries to gas foe for stealing girlfriend

ENSCHDEDE, Netherlands: A university student has been charged with a attempted murder after admitting he tried to gas a fellow student who stole his girlfriend, police said Friday, AP reports. The 23-year-old suspect told police he drilled a hole through the wall of his rival's apartment and piped carbon monoxide gas into his bedroom last Saturday night. If the attempt had succeeded, the student planned to take his own life using what was left of the gas, police spokesman Piet Hendriks said. The suspect said he was obsessed with jealousy after the other student started going out with his girlfriend of three years standing, Hendriks added. None of those involved was identified, in line with Dutch police practice. Hendriks said the suspect ordered a cylinder of the poisonous gas from a local company and bored the hole two days before the incident.

### Bush blasts ugly politics of hate

OKLAHOMA CITY: President Bush called on Americans Friday to "reject the ugly politics of hate" as he campaigned at a cheering pop-mom waving student rally here, reports AP. Bush, who has avoided a direct clash with challenger Patrick Buchanan over civil rights, blended a warning against bigotry with a call for voluntary prayer in school in remarks at Oklahoma Christian University. Bush told the students he was "counting on Oklahomans you young people especially to reject the ugly politics of hate that's rearing its head again." "Antisemitism, racism bigotry, they have no place in the United States of America," Bush said. Bush aides say head-on clash with Buchanan over civil rights now could prompt his followers to sit out next fall's election. "We want those conservatives to be with us in November," spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said.



### N Korean parliament to ratify accord with IAEA

TOKYO, Mar 8: North Korea said today its parliament would meet on April 9 to ratify an agreement allowing international inspection of its nuclear plants, reports Reuter. The Korean Central News Agency, monitored in Tokyo, said the agenda for the third session of the ninth Supreme People's Assembly would include the accord with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the state budget. Pyongyang signed a nuclear safeguards agreement with the IAEA in January to allow inspections of its plants but has yet to set a timetable. Washington, Seoul and their allies, suspecting North Korea is trying to build a bomb, have called on Pyongyang to ratify the accord soon. North Korea has denied developing atomic weapons. A North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesman said last month that after parliament had ratified the agreement, Pyongyang would accept nuclear inspections without delay.

### Velayati urges OIC to protest Myanmar action against Muslims

TEHRAN, Mar 8: Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati called on the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Saturday to protest against "violent and harsh" treatment of Muslims in Myanmar, reports AFP. Quoted by the official news agency IRNA, he called for the recognition of their rights as Myanmar citizens and for the repatriation of tens of thousands of Muslims who have fled to Bangladesh. Muslims from Arakan state have been fleeing across the border to escape alleged atrocities by Myanmar forces. In December, North and South Korea signed a separate accord banning nuclear weapons from the Peninsula. The agreement provided for inspections by the two sides of each other's nuclear plants. Seven hours of talks between the two sides were adjourned last week with no progress toward setting a timetable for those inspections. South Korea warned that political and economic relations would become more difficult if Pyongyang continued to delay. "Our side again reminded the North if the mutual South-North inspections do not take place at an early date, inter-Korean relations will enter into a difficult phase," a Seoul government statement said. The two sides will meet again on Tuesday. North and South Korea are still technically in a state of war after the truce that halted their 1950-53 conflict.



PRETORIA: A Conservative party supporter holds a poster of President De Klerk kneeling at the feet of ANC leader Nelson Mandela at a rally in Pretoria held to call for a no vote amongst Conservatives in the forthcoming referendum. — AFP/UNB photo.

### Afghan refugees escalate crime rate in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Mar 8: The presence of about 3.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan has escalated the crime rate in the country particularly in Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), posing a serious threat to the law and order situations, reports Xinhua. According to the local daily The News Today, police officials an intelligence services suspect the involvement of Afghan refugees in 75 per cent crimes in the country. Soon after Afghan refugees took shelter in Pakistan in 1978, they especially those diehard criminals among them started indulging in heinous crimes like dacoities, robberies and car lifting, the newspaper said. Quoting statistics gathered by an independent media organization, the report said in the last decade (1981-91), 481,948 crimes were reported where in 361,461 were committed by Afghan refugees. During the period, Afghan refugees were charged for killing 12,882 persons while Pakistanis were charged for killing only 4,294 people. Death attempt were made on 6,189 citizens by Pakistanis and for 18,565 death attempt Afghans were named. Locals kidnapped 1,287 while Afghans found guilty for 3,859 kidnappings. Refugees made 175 dacoities while Pakistanis were accused for only 59 dacoities, and 154 robbery cases were registered against Pakistanis and 45,975 cases were committed by Afghans. The report attributed the main reason behind to the fact that they were supplied by Mujahideen groups with arms.

### Opinion poll puts Labour ahead of Tories

LONDON, March 8: Support for Britain's opposition Labour Party has jumped, according to an opinion poll released on Saturday, while voters in another poll gave a thumbs-down to the Conservative government's handling of the economy, reports Reuter. A survey in the Mail on Sunday newspaper put Labour three points ahead of the Conservatives, marking a shift from the polls of the last month or so which have shown the two main parties running neck and neck. A poll in Sunday's observer newspaper put Labour only one point ahead, but showed half of those questioned feared the economy was in danger in the hands of conservative chancellor of the exchequer (Finance Minister) Norman Lamont. Only 12 per cent in the Observer's poll blamed Prime Minister John Major's government for Britain's recession, although 42 per cent blamed the government of his predecessor Margaret Thatcher. Major was chancellor of the exchequer in Thatcher's government.

## BRIEFLY

### Clashes leave 6 dead in S Africa

Six blacks were shot, hacked and clubbed to death on Saturday in fresh fighting between supporters of Nelson Mandela's African National Congress and members of the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, reports Reuter from Johannesburg. Witnesses said hundreds of Inkatha members armed with sticks, clubs, and machetes, and some with shotguns, marched through Alexandra township in defiance of a government order after a funeral was abandoned. The hacked, stabbed and shot at residents, killing six and wounding 20 others. The funeral of an Inkatha member was abandoned when the mortuary twice delivered the wrong body for burial. Police said they found three bodies after the Inkatha march, but residents said six people were killed.

### Six killed in Venezuelan prison

At least six inmates have been killed and 30 others injured in a battle by three rival prison gangs armed with submachine guns, pistols, knives and sharpened rods, officials said, reports AP from Caracas, Venezuela. Three inmates were stabbed to death and another three were shot Friday at the Tocuyito Penitentiary Center, 200 miles to the west of Caracas, said prison director Cristian Benavides. The 12-hour gun battle — the second wave of violence at the prison in a week — ended Friday night after National Guard units intervened, Benavides said. Two inmates were stabbed to death earlier this week. "The prison guards alone could not control the situation. The gangs seemed better armed than we were," Benavides said.

### ICRC official meets Iraqi FM

An official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) met Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein Al-Khodair in Baghdad Saturday to discuss the fate of prisoners still held from the Iran-Iraq war, reports AFP from Baghdad. The Iraqi news agency said Michel Cagneux and the Foreign Minister reviewed the agreement signed between the two countries on February 14 in Geneva to resume an exchange of prisoners from the 1980-1988 conflict. The exchange is due to start in mid-March. Baghdad says Iran still holds 30,000 Iraqis, while Tehran says 5,000 Iraqis are left in Iraq.

### Athens faces water shortage

Athens faces the worst water shortage in 10 years and the national water board has urged the government to launch a national campaign to prevent wastage. Greek newspapers said Saturday, reports AFP from Athens. As of late last month, the Greek capital and outlying area had only seven months' worth of water reserve left, a water board official said. The situation was caused by insufficient prospecting and lack of maintenance of the distribution network, which allowed large quantities of water to escape, the official said.

### Israeli official killed in Ankara

A car bomb killed the Israeli embassy's top security officer and wounded three passers-by in Ankara on Saturday in reprisal for the murder of a Lebanese Islamic leader, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said, reports Reuter. A ministry statement said the Islamic Revenge Organisation, a little known group, had claimed planting the bomb. "The person who claimed the attack on behalf of the Islamic Revenge Organisation has said the incident was intended to avenge for the killing in Lebanon of (Sheikh) Abbas Musawi," it said, referring to Israel's killing of the leader of Lebanese Hizbollah (Party of God) on February 16. It was not clear how the ministry learnt the motive.

### Sikhs kill 8 more in Punjab

AMRITSAR, Mar 8: Sikh militants shot and killed eight people in Punjab, six of them after they were lined up against a wall and sprayed with automatic gunfire, police said Sunday, reports AP. Six gunmen Saturday barged into the home of Najjar Singh and shot him and his wife as they slept, police senior superintendent Iswar Chandra said. He said the other six were killed in the adjoining house of Singh's brother, Charan Singh. Chandra said the rebels dragged out Charan Singh, his two sons, their wives and his mother-in-law, lined them up in the courtyard and opened fire with assault rifles. The killings occurred in Chunga village, 175 kilometers (110 miles) south of Amritsar, the holy Sikh city and the focus of Sikh extremism. Sikh rebels have been fighting since 1982 to set up an independent nation in the northern state of Punjab, a rich farming land bordering Pakistan.

### Racial strife claims 15 in Rwanda

NAIROBI, Mar 8: More than 15 people have died in clashes between Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups in the central African state of Rwanda, Kigali radio reported today, said Reuter. The radio monitored in Nairobi said about 6,000 people had fled their homes north the southern Bugesera region and taken refuge at the Roman Catholic Parish at Nyamata. Earlier reports from travellers returning to the capital Kigali said the clashes broke out on Thursday. Rwandan security forces later intervened, but the clashes continued on Friday.

### Russia, India to sign defence pact

NEW DELHI, Mar 8: Russia is keen to continue close military ties with India, and is likely to offer on sale a nuclear submarine, Mig-31 jets and Su-28 fighter bombers, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP. The two countries were expected to sign a defence agreement during a visit later this month to New Delhi by a high-level Russian delegation led by deputy Prime Minister Gennady Burbulis, the news agency said. India and Russia will also finalise an arrangement for

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Members of the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), which has been fighting in northern Rwanda for the last 16 months, accused the Hutu-dominated Rwandan government of instigating violence. The government has not commented on the allegations. Rwanda has in the past accused Tutsis living in neighbouring Burundi of mounting attacks into southern Rwanda. Hundreds of thousands of Tutsis fled from Rwanda in the 1960s after the Tutsi monarchy was overthrown. Tutsis continue to dominate the government in Burundi, where thousands of people have died in inter-ethnic clashes in recent years. President Juvenal Habyarimana says Rwanda, with one of the world's highest population densities of more than 271 people per sq km cannot agree to demands to take back hundreds of thousands of Tutsis who fled into exile to escape tribal massacres.

### Artillery fire erupts anew in Croatia

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Mar 8: Artillery attacks claimed at least six lives Saturday as scattered shelling erupted anew in Croatia, punctuating weeks of general calm as Yugoslavia's warring parties awaited UN peacekeepers, reports AP. In Belgrade, foes of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic made final plans for a rally to demand his ouster Monday, the anniversary of a demonstration he crushed one year ago with tanks. Local defense officials in the eastern Croatian city of Osijek reported at least four civilians were killed and five wounded Saturday by shelling from two Serb-held positions. The officials said shells were still falling by sundown and fire also was being directed at Vinkovci, a city south of Osijek that had also been a key battlefield in the nearly 7-month-long civil war. Two soldiers also were killed in shelling on Croat positions in the Dalmatian hinterland, officials said, and artillery fire also was reported around Masic and Poljanec, 60 miles east of the Croatian capital of Zagreb. The attacks could not be independently verified. The federal army had no comment. The Serb-dominated army joined with ethnic Serb militias in seizing about a third of Croatia's territory after the republic declared independence last June 25. The reported attacks appeared to be part of a pattern of sporadic violations that have disrupted a truce the United Nations helped broker in January. The first of 14,000 UN peacekeepers are expected to begin arriving later this week, and Denmark said Saturday it would send about 900 lightly armed troops as an early contingent to western Croatia, starting March 28. Meanwhile, Belgrade was the scene of rising tension as organizers of Monday's rally said they had assigned 10,000 guards to defend the protesters and prevent a replay of last year's clashes with tanks and riot police. The federal army warned that it was braced for violence during the planned demonstration. Dozens of tanks rumbled through Belgrade last March 9 after riot police clashed with tens of thousands of protesters demanding Milosevic's resignation. Two people were killed and 120 injured. Four days of street protests ensued, but failed to dislodge

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Milosevic's Socialist cabinet of renamed Communists. But Milosevic met some demands, including the release of prisoners and an easing of press censorship. Seeking to allay mounting fears of violence, Milosevic's chief rival and leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement, Vuk Draskovic, pledged that his guards would go unarmed and not seek confrontation. He said their purpose would be to prevent a single pistol from reaching the gathering. The start of the war in neighboring Croatia last summer muted growing discontent with Milosevic's economic policies. His support of ethnic Serbs battling Croatian forces sent his popularity soaring. Now that the war has stalemated, Milosevic is being accused of abandoning his

### Larry Lamb's condition critical

Tea export hard hit by global recession, tough competition from Nurul Alam in Chittagong SYDNEY, Mar 8: Former British tabloid editor Sir Larry Lamb was in a coma in hospital here today after collapsing on Thursday, medical authorities said. A spokeswoman for Saint Vincent's hospital told AFP "Lamb's condition was critical, but stable." Lamb, former editor of the London tabloids The Sun and The Daily Express, suffered a massive heart attack Thursday hours before he was to watch England play Australia in the World Cup Cricket. The Spokeswoman said Lamb was in a coma and on a life-support machine in the hospital's intensive care unit. He was being visited each day by family members.