

BRIEFLY

Vatican dismisses theologian: An outspoken Roman Catholic theologian has been ousted from the Dominican order in what he sees as part of a Vatican movement to stifle dissent, AP reports from San Francisco. "This is how fascism works", the Rev Matthew Fox said. "It sets up a fear that this could happen to you, so the fear goes throughout the whole system." Fox was notified of his dismissal from the Dominicans, effective Saturday, in a letter dated February 24. The letter cites Fox's refusal to return to the order's provincial office in Chicago as directed in 1991. Fox said he viewed the dismissal order as an end to his work at the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality, which he founded in Chicago in 1977 and moved to Holy Names College in Oakland in 1983. He is also the author of 14 books, including 'The Coming of the Cosmic Christ', and is editor of the magazine 'Creation Spirituality'. He entered the Dominican order in 1960.

Iran-Contra enquiry spending: Special prosecutor Lawrence Walsh has agreed to provide detailed expenditures of his six-year investigation into the Iran-Contra affair to a conservative public interest group, reports AP from Washington. Both a spokeswoman for Walsh and Van Hipp, an attorney for the 170,000 member Americans for a Balanced Budget, said the agreement was reached by telephone Tuesday. The group had filed a Freedom of Information Act request for the documents on January 7. After Walsh rejected the request as an "unwarranted administrative burden," the group filed an administrative appeal with the Justice Department. Critics of the investigation, including Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole of Kansas, have repeatedly called for an end to the Iran-Contra probe and argued that the \$3.9 million dollars spent as of last November 30 has been excessive.

Miller ends fight over flag: Governor Zell Miller gave up his fight Tuesday to remove the Confederate battle emblem from Georgia's flag, blaming extremists on both sides for the lack of support in the state Legislature, reports AP from Atlanta. "I have given this issue my best and strongest effort," he said in a letter to the House rules committee chairman. "I still strongly believe that changing the flag is the right thing to do. However, extremists from both sides have complicated this issue beyond any immediate solution."

The governor didn't say whether he will ask the legislature to consider his proposal next year, but he told the committee's chairman, Bill Lee, not to bring the bill up for a vote now. "I realize the votes are simply not there to pass my bill. In fact, it is not even close," Miller wrote in the letter, distributed to reporters after the Legislature adjourned Tuesday.

Blast in Beirut's Kuwaiti embassy: Unidentified attackers lobbed a bomb into the Kuwaiti embassy compound in Beirut late on Tuesday, breaking windows but causing no casualties, embassy guards said, reports Reuter from Beirut. They said the blast made a small crater near an inner wall in the compound near Beirut's mainly Shi'ite Muslim Southern Suburb and was caused by sticks of dynamite or a mortar bomb. Lebanon supported but did not contribute troops to a US led force that expelled Iraqi troops from Kuwait in 1991.

Ghali hails Afghan accord: Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali welcomed on Tuesday the signing of an Afghan peace accord in Islamabad on Sunday and said he hoped it would pave the way for a representative government and ensure peace, reports Reuter from United States. A statement issued through a UN spokesman said the Secretary-General also hoped the ceasefire would improve the security situation and permit the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in need, which had always been a priority UN concern in Afghanistan. Under the accord, fundamentalist President Burhanuddin Rabbani is to remain as head of state for the next 18 months while his bitter enemy, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, chief of the hardline Hezb-i-Islami Party becomes Prime Minister.

Quakes rock Pinatubo: Earthquakes rocked a volcano famous for its near-perfect cone and another that exploded violently two years ago, authorities reported Wednesday, says AP from Manila. An earthquake shook the Mayon volcano before dawn, sending a cloud of superheated debris down its slopes, the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said. The institute said the quake dislodged lava deposits near the crater that traveled 1.5 kilometers (1 mile) from the summit of the 2,462-meter (8,124-foot) volcano. At least four other quakes were detected by seismographs. A 6-kilometer (3.75 mile) zone around Mayon has been ordered evacuated after the volcano killed at least 72 people in an eruption last month. The pyroclastic flow re-emphasizes the abnormal condition of the volcano and the danger of an explosive eruption, scientists warned.

Helen Hayes hospitalized: Acting legend Helen Hayes was hospitalized Tuesday in critical condition with congestive heart failure, a hospital official said, AP reports from Nyack. Hayes, 92, was brought to Nyack Hospital by ambulance at 2:30 am (0730 GMT), said hospital spokeswoman Nancy Kriz. She was taken to the coronary care unit where she was also diagnosed with an irregular heartbeat, Kriz said. Hayes' son, actor James MacArthur, and his wife were expected to arrive at the hospital later Tuesday after flying in from California, Kriz said. Hayes lives in Nyack, a town north of New York City. Her companion, Eileen Dowd, said at midday that Hayes was 'resting comfortably' at the hospital.

Cypriots accept Ghali's invitation: Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders have accepted an invitation by the UN Secretary-general to this month resume talks in New York for the reunification of the island, the United Nations announced Wednesday, AP reports from Nicosia. Greek Cypriot President Glafcos Cleides and Turkish leader Rauf Denktaş held separate meetings this week with a team of three top UN officials, who invited them to the one-day meeting, set for March 30. Denktaş, president of a breakaway state in Turkish-occupied northern Cyprus, initially rejected UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's invitation.

Zafy elected president of Madagascar: ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar, Mar 10: Albert Zafy, a little-known professor who led a grass-roots opposition movement that democratically toppled a strongman from power, was officially declared Tuesday this country's new president, reports AP. The Constitutional High Court made the declaration after a painstaking recounting of the ballots from the February 10 presidential election. Current President Didier Ratsiraka, who led the country for 17 years, sent his congratulations to Zafy, wishing him "full success in accomplishing the heavy task that awaits."



ZAGREB: A Muslim woman refugee (C) from Bosnia-Herzegovina is embraced by her crying mother (R) who was released on Tuesday with some 50 others, mainly women and children, from Serbian occupied Velika Kladusa. After being reunited with their families in this transit centre some 50 kms from the Croatian capital they will try to find refuge in European western countries. — AFP/UNB photo

IRA bid to hit Buckingham Palace

LONDON, Mar 10: Police foiled an IRA attempt to launch a massive car bomb attack on Buckingham Palace or the prime minister's residence, British media reported Wednesday, says AP. "Several hundred pounds of explosives were discovered in a vehicle hidden in a north London garage, the reports said."

Scotland Yard refused to confirm or deny the reports. The story was first published in Wednesday's Daily Star tabloid and then picked up by other newspapers, the BBC and Britain's Press Association news agency. No

sources were given for any of the reports. The Daily Star said police found maps near the explosives marking Buckingham Palace and Downing Street as possible targets, and other locations in Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow. Prime Minister John Major lives and works at 10 Downing St and nearby Buckingham Palace is the London residence and office of Queen Elizabeth II and her royal staff.

Anti-terrorist police found the explosives following several days of surveillance of a garage in the north London district of Barnet. The Daily

Star said. The Daily Mail said police believe the garage was being used as a "bomb factory." It said the explosives were to be used to make a "massive bomb" similar to one which exploded in the City, London's business district, last April, killing three people and injuring more than 80. That bomb used 100 pounds (45 kgs) of explosives. BBC Radio said the explosives were a fertilizer-based mixture packed into a vehicle, "suggesting the planned attack was imminent." Asked about the news reports, a police spokeswoman,

speaking anonymously in keeping with British customs, said "We're not discussing it at all." The Daily Star said the Irish Republican Army may have been planning to disrupt the queen's birthday or awards ceremonies at the palace in April to offset recent failed bomb attempts. Press association and the Times of London said another possible motive could be this week's 20th anniversary of the first IRA bomb attacks in London. One man died and more than 170 were injured in car bomb attacks on the old Bailey court, Scotland Yard and a BBC office on March 8, 1973.

'C-17 plane vital for US future'

WASHINGTON, Mar 10: McDonnell Douglas, the Pentagon's leading aircraft supplier, told a Congressional panel Tuesday the C-17 transport plane was vital for its future, reports AP. The US House of Representatives Armed Services Committee began Tuesday two days of hearings on the problems with the controversial C-17 programme that has come in a year late and one billion dollars over budget.

The air force had originally planned to buy 210 C-17s at a cost of 42 billion dollars but

has been forced to cut the request to 120 planes. Retired air force colonel Ken Tollefson, who oversaw production of the aircraft, told the panel that Pentagon and McDonnell Douglas officials had for years ignored warning about serious flaws in the C-17 transport plane. He said the division of the company building the plane was a small factory overpowered that grew from 15,000 workers in 1984 to 50,000 by 1990. The cut puts economically

precious McDonnell Douglas, which makes the F-15E fighter jet and the Tomahawk missile, further in jeopardy. The company said it would lay off 39 per cent of its workforce by the end of the year. But the US air force must replace its C-5 planes and, above all its C-141 transport planes, which date back to the 1960s and are reaching their age limits for operation. The C-17 would resolve some problems for the military. Like the C-5, the C-17 would be able to carry heavy weapons like an M-1 tank, but

unlike its predecessors it can land on short runways that are the norm in developing countries. The 52-meter (170-foot) long aircraft that is capable of transporting 77 tons of freight is operated by a three-man crew instead of the usual seven and it can maneuver quickly. McDonnell Douglas is counting on the support of President Bill Clinton, but it is up against a budget that calls for reducing military spending by 88 billion dollars over the next four years.

Spain admits talks with Hamas

MADRID, (Spain), Mar 10: The Spanish Foreign Ministry admitted Tuesday that it held talks with the Palestinian fundamentalist Hamas faction, a day after it denied having any contact with the group, reports AP. "Yes, we have had contact, not official, but low-level," ministry spokesman Juan Lena said. He said the ministry denied Hamas' claims Monday that

held talks with a Spanish envoy because the meeting was at such a low level it would not have been reported. He said he did not believe there would be any further meetings. Lena's comments came after Hamas representative in Jordan, Mohammed Nazzal, expressed surprise at the Spanish ministry's denial. He insisted that the group's representative in Sudan, Munir Al-Sayed, had held a two-hour

meeting on Feb 21 in the Sudanese capital Khartoum with Augustin Cassinello, a Spanish embassy consul in Cairo. Lena on Tuesday confirmed that information. Nazzal said the two discussed the future of the Middle East peace talks following Israel's December deportation of nearly 400 Palestinians to southern Lebanon.



LONDON: Faisal Hussein (C), Palestinian leader in the occupied territories with other members of his delegation, Hael Fahoum (L) and head of PLO London, Afif Safieh (R), leave the British Foreign Office on Tuesday after talks with Foreign Office Secretary Douglas Hogg. It was the first such diplomatic contact at that level since the PLO supported Iraqi President Saddam Hussein. — AFP/UNB photo

DPRK will never allow int'l N-inspection

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 10: North Korea's UN ambassador said Tuesday his government will never let international inspectors tour two disputed sites even if defiance leads to sanctions, reports AP. "We will take self-defensive measures," Pak Gil Yon told The Associated Press, declining to elaborate. The CIA says North Korea has enough nuclear material to make one or more weapons, but is hiding its production facilities. North Korea claims it is not trying to build a nuclear bomb. On February 25, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) gave North Korea a month to accept a special inspection of two sites that North Korea calls military areas. The Vienna, Austria-based agency also seek explanations about materials shown to inspectors at other sites. North Korea contends the agency has no jurisdiction. Pak also said the United States was trying to use the IAEA to confirm questionable data collected over North Korea during spy plane flights. "If that happens," Pak said, "It will show that not only the IAEA and the Security Council are tools of the United States and that small countries can be victimized by big powers. We will not agree to inspections under any circumstances," he added.

Off the Record



FRANCE: The area around the famous French landmark of Mont St Michel is covered by seawater due to a record high tide, only reached twice this century. The high tide is caused by the sun and moon being in a particular orientation. — AFP/UNB photo

Hospitals mark newborns with ink to stop swapping

NEW DELHI: An Indian state has directed hospital to mark newborns and their mothers with indelible ink to prevent possible swapping of infants, the Press Trust of India reported Tuesday, says AP. Medical Education Minister G Ramakrishna said in the southern state of Karnataka that the decision was taken after a nurse gave away a baby to a woman in a hospital who was not its mother. Another woman had complained that she was presented with a baby girl although she had delivered a boy.

Archbishop likes teenagers

NEW MEXICO: A roman catholic archbishop asked for forgiveness on Tuesday following allegations that he had sex with three women, reports AP. The women reportedly told CBS television's investigative news programme "60 minutes" that they had sexual relations with archbishop Robert Sanchez when they were teenagers in the 1970s. A CBS spokesman would not comment, citing the show's policy not to discuss pending stories until just before they are broadcast. "I have always tried never to be the cause of harm or disappointment to anyone, and yet today I must say, I'm sorry," said Sanchez said in a written statement released by the archdiocese of Santa Fe. "I realize that these allegations have caused pain for all who now know of them. I can and do ask publicly for your forgiveness, as I have of my god, added the 58-year-old Sanchez who is out of state on a religious retreat. The Albuquerque journal quoted a source as saying the woman met Sanchez at church activities and began sexual relations with him while they were in their late teens.

Zafy elected president of Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar, Mar 10: Albert Zafy, a little-known professor who led a grass-roots opposition movement that democratically toppled a strongman from power, was officially declared Tuesday this country's new president, reports AP. The Constitutional High Court made the declaration after a painstaking recounting of the ballots from the February 10 presidential election. Current President Didier Ratsiraka, who led the country for 17 years, sent his congratulations to Zafy, wishing him "full success in accomplishing the heavy task that awaits."

In long term Iran is greater threat to US than Iraq

WASHINGTON, Mar 10: Iran may turn out to be a greater threat to US interests in the long term than its neighbor Iraq, some officials and analysts believe, reports Reuter. While Iraq is subject to tight international sanctions, constant surveillance and intrusive inspections, Iran has been quietly rearming and is pursuing an active nuclear weapons programme, US officials say. It has also emerged as the key force opposing Arab-Israeli peace efforts, while bankrolling some of the most dangerous radical factions in the Middle East. A State Department statement last week branded Iran the world's "most dangerous state sponsor of terrorism" and accused the Iranian intelligence service of involvement in assassinations and bombings in the Middle East, Europe and Latin America in the past year. "Iraq is more a problem of one person — Saddam Hussein," said one State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Iran is a problem because of the ideology of an entire regime. Therefore one could argue that in the long term Iran will be more of a problem than Iraq", he said. When Terry Anderson, the last American hostage held in Beirut by Iranian-backed guerrillas, was released at the end of 1991, it looked as if relations between Tehran and Washington might improve. But neither side made a move towards the other and relations today are, if anything, characterized by even greater mutual hostility and suspicion. Moderate Iranians advocating warmer relations with the West may have been weakened when Tehran did not receive the kind of recognition they expected for its release of hostages and its strict neutrality during the Gulf War. There are Iranians who say they made serious concessions and did not get anything in return," said Shireen Hunter, an analyst with the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think-tank.

For other, more radical elements, anti-Americanism and anti-Zionism remain the sacred legacy of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Shocked by Iraq's success in building a nuclear weapons programme that came close to producing a bomb, the United States has invested considerable diplomatic efforts to stall what it believes is a similar Iranian effort. "We believe they are working on a nuclear weapons programme which is at a very early stage and we believe we have had some success in restraining and retarding their programme", said the State Department official. But it has proved impossible to prevent Iran acquiring some conventional weapons that Washington would rather Tehran did not have. Russia sold Iran three Kilo class submarines last year, of which one has been delivered so far. It is stationed near the straits of Hormuz, a major oilwaterway. "About the only thing they could do with that

kind of submarine is sink regional merchant shipping. We don't like that", said the official. On the political front, Iran has waged an offensive against the Arab-Israeli peace process since the Madrid peace conference of October 1991 that has emerged as a major irritant to Washington. Even while the Madrid conference was in session, Iran organized a rival conference of 'rejectionists'. Its chief Middle East surrogate has been Hizbullah 'Party of God' guerrillas in South Lebanon and Hamas activists in the occupied West Bank and Gaza strip. Backed by tens of millions of dollars of Iranian money, the groups have emerged as serious threats to the peace talks. Israel's decision to deport 415 suspected Hamas activists to south Lebanon last December has produced a three-month interruption in negotiations. Even if they resume next month, Hamas has proved it is a factor to be reckoned with.

Philippines to review ties with US

MANILA, Mar 10: President Fidel Ramos is to convene his national security advisers next week to review Philippines' relations with the United States, its main trading partner, the presidential palace said today, reports AP. The March 19 National Security Council (NSC) meeting will assess Manila-Washington ties in the light of new policies of the Clinton administration, a palace statement said. It said the implications of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) — breaking down trade barriers among the United States, Mexico and Canada