FAO donates

\$ 260,000 to Cuba HAVANA, May 6: The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has donated 260,000 dollar to Cuba for the recovery of agriculture and to help Cubans make up for losses caused by a winter cyclone. Alberto D Perez, an official of the local UN office, told Prensa Latina that this donation will finance the purchasing of herbicides and pesticides, reports Pool-PL.

Indian lower house passes finance bill

NEW DELHI, May 6: India's lower house passed the finance bill for 1993-94 fiscal year last night after Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh turning down all the demands for amendments from the opposition parties. In the final vote during the third reading of the bill to give effect to tax-preposals in 1993-94 budget, 248 members voted in favour and 193 against with four abstentions, reports Xinhua.

Taiwan's trade surplus plunges

TAIPEI, May 6: Taiwan's trade surplus plunged 53 per cent from a year earlier to 1.79 billion US dollar in the first four months of this year, the Finance Ministry said Tuesday. The ministry said exports in the January-April period advanced 3.4 per cent to 26.98 billion dollar while imports jumped 13.1 per cent to 25.19 billion dollar, reports AFP.

Indonesian govt statistics disputed

JAKARTA, May 6: The Indonesian government, which recently launched an antipoverty programme, is working with figures that vastly underestimate the extent of the problem, experts said Tuesday, Since 1990, Indonesia's central statistics bureau (BPS) has pegged the poverty line at 13,000 rupiah (6.4 dollar) per month in rural areas and 20,000 rupiah 19.7 dollar in urban areas. However, some researchers say 1,000 rupiah per person per day is necessary in Jakarta just to meet basic ood beeds without taking into account housing, clothing and transport, reports

Vietnam, S'pore body for economic ties

HANOI, May 6: Singapore and Vietnam created a highlevel commission here Wednesday that official said would form the foundation for broad economic ties between the two countries. The Vietnam-Singapore Commission for Cooperation (VSCC) is the brainchild of Singapore Senjor Minister Lee Kuan Yew, who paid a groundbreaking visit here one year ago, said Dau Ngoc Xuan, Chairman of Vietnam's State Committee for Cooperation and Investment, reports AFP.

WB project on blindness in India

NEW DELHI, May 6: A 5,500-million rupee (171 million US dollar) World Bank project on control of blindness is on the anvil for implementation in India in next September. The project envisages over 11 million cataract operations to ward off blindness that has already assumed frightening dimensions with every fifth blind person living in India, reports Xinhua.

Sharp rise in world gold demand

NEW YORK, May 6: Gold demand was up 24 per cent in markets monitored by the World Gold Council during the first quarter of 1993 over the same period a year ago. According to the council's latest edition of Gold Demand Trends, gold demand in these markets, which account for approximately 75 per cent of global demand, reached 632 metric tons during the first three months. The same markets increased 11 per cent in fullyear 1992 over 1991, reports Xinhua.

Chinese tourists to S'pore rise by 320 pc

SINGAPORE, May 6; Almost 20,000 Chinese visitors came to Singapore in March, an increase of about 320 per cent over the same month 1992. According to the latest statistics released by the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (STPB), visitors from China quadrupled in March matching the performance in February. In February, the number of Chinese visitors quadrupled to 14,202, overtaking India as the 10th largest market for the month, reports Xinhua.

BRIEFS No accord on ADB's capital increase plan

MANILA, May 6: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) ended its annual meeting Thursday without reaching a decision on whether member countries should double contributions to allow the bank to keep lending beyond next

year, reports AP. ADB President Kimimasa Tarumizu said most country representatives had called for a new pact on the general capital increase but failed to reach any agreement.

AFP reports, The Asian Development Bank (ADB) ended a fractious annual meeting here today fearing a sharp reduction in future lending after the United States and Japan squabbled over a proposed capital increase, reports

There was optimism however that Vietnam would receive ADB funds soon following signals that the US economic embargo might be lifted.

Members also agreed in principle to admit six former republics of the former Soviet

Union into the bank. ADB President Kimimasa Tarumizu, who had sought the doubling of the bank's authorised capital to 46 billion dollar to support increased lend-ing, said he hoped differences over the issue could be resolved in follow-up talks, but sounded uncertain.

"I'm neither pessimistic nor optimistic at all," he told a news conference after the three-day gathering of finance ministers, central bank governors and other senior officials from the bank's 53 member

countries.
The Manila-based bank's largest shareholders, the United States and Japan, collided on Wednesday when Washington sought a freeze on the capital hike, and Tokyo doggedly pressed for the in-

The United States, facing

budgetary problems at home and pre-occupied with Europe overseas, demanded an independent inquiry into how the ADB -which has lent out 42 billion dollar since 1966, half of it in the last five years -

Japan, the biggest donor but sharing roughly equal voting power with the United States, said higher lending was needed to sustain Asian economic growth and reduce deep-seated poverty in the re-

had spent its money, and

called for "sustainable" lending

Basudev Dahal, chief of the ADB development policy office, said lending from the ADB's regular loan window could drop to three billion dollar in 1995, one billion dollar lower than last year's level.

including the soft-loan window, the Asian Development Fund, lending totalled 5.1 billion dollar in 1992. The ADB plans to increase this slightly this year

Despite Japan's concerns about reduced ADB lending, other donor nations said the scenario was not so gloomy. and proposed that the bank stress quality rather than quantity in its loans.

Chief French delegate Michel Rouge questioned the bank's projections and said shareholders are entitled to demand the best possible use of their capital contributions, which are scarce resources."

Even Indonesia, one of the top three borrowers along with China and India, agreed that some ADB money might have gone to waste on bad projects.

While supporting the capital increase, Indonesian Finance Minister Muhammad called for "more effective project implementation and supervision" and said failures could multiply with the trend

toward more complex social and environmental projects, as opposed to traditional infrastructure projects.

Tarumizu reacting to criticism that the quality of projects might be slipping, acceded to US demands for an inquiry involving out side ex perts. A task force was given

six months to come up with

findings. Amid the row over capital, a ray of hope shone over Vietnam's long struggle to resume borrowings, cut off after the communist north captured the US-backed south in 1975.

A senior US delegate to the ADB meeting indicated that despite a continuing emotional dispute over missing US service men from the Vietnam war, Washington might be prepared to "discuss" its embargo by June.

The International Monetary Fund board is expected to decide on Vietnam's bid for new

Nepal second

largest importer

lending in July. A go-ahead would unlock funds already set aside by the ADB and other lending institutions for Hanoi.

China seeks access

to soft loan China which posted one of the world's highest economic growth rates last year, Wednesday sought access to the soft loan window of the Asian Development Bank (ADH) and supported calls for a capital hike in the lending institution.

Li Guixian, Governor of the People's Bank of China, told the ADB annual meeting that criteria for access to the Asian Development Fund (ADF) should be made on a countryby-country basis.

The ADF is reserved for the ADB's poorest member coun-

tries. China and India, while cligible on the basis of per capita income and other criteria. have been excluded from the ADF for fear they would crowd out smaller countries.

Acute shortage of energy may blow China's growth plan

BELJING, May 6: An acute energy shortage could sabotage China's rapid development plans, an official newspaper warned Wednesday, says an AP

The Economic Daily (Jingii Ribao) said industrial production already is only 60 per cent of capacity and rail use is only 48 per cent of capacity be-

cause of too little energy. It blamed low investment in energy production during the 1980s and inefficient energy use. It said Chinese factories require 1.2 to 2.7 times as much energy as factories in developed countries to make steel, cement, glass and other major industrial products.

The economic boom of the past year has especially strained energy supplies, forcing up prices and adding to inflation that hit 15.7 per

IFPRI warns of impending hunger in S Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa

WASHINGTON, May 6: Hunger will dramatically increase in Sub-Saharan Africa and in South Asia by the year 2000 if immed-iate steps are not taken to raise food production in those regi-ons, according to the head of an international research organisation, reports

Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to produce about 45 million metric tons less than it needs to feed its population by 2000, Per Pinstrup-Andersen, Director General of the International Food Policy Research

ALCIAND IN

known as "Swiss" dinars from circulation.

SYDNEY, May 6: A meeting

of the 14-member Cairns

Group countries is likely on

the eve of the G7 summit of

the worlds seven richest coun-

tries to press for a global trade

Australian officials said

held in Indonesia, has been

called by Australia's New Trade

Foreign firms

may invest \$85b

in CIS gas,

oil sectors

GENEVA, May 6: Foreign

investors might pump about 85

billion dollar into the oil, gas

and mineral industries of the

former Soviet Union in coming

decades, the UN Economic

Commission for Europe re-

ported on Wednesday, reports

The meeting, which may be

pact by the end of this year,

Wednesday, reports AFP.

Institute (IFPRI), said May 3. The region is not likely to have the resources to pay for imports to make up the differ-

ence, he said at a briefing for

the staff of the US Congress. That gap between production and need is now about 11 million tons, he said. The gap in South Asia - India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Shri Lanka and Nepal- is expected to grow to about 45 million tons by the year 2000, he said.

"We desperately need international leadership and vision"

This file photo, taken Apr 15, 1993 shows employees at the Iraqi state bank Al-Rafidaine in

Baghdad counting Iraqi dinars. The Revolutionary Command Council decided May 5 to close

the country's borders for six days in an operation to withdraw foreign-made bank notes

Minister Peter Cook to apply

extra international pressure on

the major economies for a suc-

cessful conclusion to the

stalled Uruguay Round of world

Tuesday that the meeting

would "drive home our mes-

sage of the importance to the

world trading system of a suc-

cessful conclusion of the

fore - that we were close to

conclusion - only to have the

think it is true to say that the

US and the EC are re-engaging

agreement by most of the 14

for a ministerial meeting,

although details had not been

finalised, a government

clear signals to the G7 about

the round, especially the agri-

cultural component," he

"This meeting would send

There is already broad

expectations dashed, but

"I know you've heard it be-

Uruguay Round this year.

seriously for an outcome.'

spokesman said.

Cook said in a speech late

trade talks.

Cairns Group likely to press for a

world trade accord by '93

Pinstrup-Andersen argued. Developing countries pro-

duce three to four times as much food now as they did in 1950. But population growth has outstripped production in two-thirds of 116 developing countries, he said.

Massive hunger can be

- AFP/UNB photo

The summit by the G7

countries - Britain, Canada,

France, Germany, Italy, Japan

and the United States - is to

be held in Tokyo in July,

not been fixed.

although the precise date has

Cairns Group of agricultural

trading nations which is

chaired by Australia. The group

also includes New Zealand,

Fiji, Thailand, Indonesia,

Malaysia, Brunei, Hungary,

Argentina, Brazil, Chile,

held under the General

Agreement on Tariffs and

Trade (GATT), are stalled over

a series of disagreements be-

tween the United States and

to reduce agricultural protec-

tion, which has run into stiff

opposition from France de-

spite a general EC agreement

on reducing protection mea-

A key problem is a proposal

the European Community.

The Uruguay Round talks,

Colombia and Uruguay.

Canada also belongs to the

averted if fertilizers and pesticides are made available to farmers in developing countries at prices they can afford, he said in reply to a question A short-term plan should also include building roads from

farm areas to market towns and cities and allowing farmers to earn a better price for their

A long-term plan should include major new investments in agricultural research in developing countries and increased technological aid by developed nations. He said he had not calculated how much the additional costs of such programmes would be.

In addition, programmes should be available for women who want to practise birth control.

Iraq withdraws 25-dinar notes, closes border AMMAN, May 6: Saddam

Hussein closed Iraq's borders Wednesday to stop currency smuggling and abolished pre-Gulf War banknotes to shore up the crumbling dinar, weakened by U N sanctions and reportedly spiked by his Gulf foes, reports AP.

The actions announced by the ruling Revolutionary Command Council, dominated by Saddam, underlined the critical state of Iraq's battered economy nearly three years after the sanctions were imposed following the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The official Iraqi News Agency said borders were closed at 8 am (0400 GMT) Wednesday until midnight (2000 GMT) Sunday to ensure an effective implementation of the new currency law."

Japan is also creating prob-

lems over a refusal to open its

rice market and remove a

series of other non-tariff trade

last week called on Japan to

help get the talks moving by

proposing its own package of

unilateral market opening

Dollar rises

against major

currencies

lar rose against most major

currencies Wednesday as in-

terest in the Greenback waned

in favour of cross-trading in

terest in the dollar," said

Curtis Perkins, a trader at

Chemical Bank. "This was

more of a cross-driven day."

"There was light buying in-

other currencies, reports AP.

NEW YORK, May 6: The dol-

Prime Minister Paul Keating

barriers.

measures.

of NZ wool WELLINGTON, May 6: Nepal

has become the second biggest buyer of New Zealand wool, taking nine per cent of the country's clip, the New Zealand Wool Board said Wednesday, says AFP.

Board Promotion and Research Manager Roger Buchanan said in a statement China, taking 23 per cent of the clip in the first nine months of the current season, remained the biggest buyer.

He said Nepalese buyers were making handknotted carpets from the wool imports.

However, New Zealand's overall wool fibre exports to all countries had declined. The volume had slipped by 36,510 tonnes, from a total of 1771,908 tonnes for the same period last year, a slide of 21 per cent. The value had declined by 17 per cent from 826 million NZ dollar (447 million US dollar) to 686 million dollar (371 million US dollar).

Buchanan attributed the de crease in volume to a smaller wool clip due to poor weather here, as well as to smaller

The old Soviet Union used to consistently buy at least 20,000 tonnes a year of wool, but in the current season the CIS countries have taken only 1,413 tonnes, less than one per cent of the clip.

US bank examiner gave First American a clean slate in '86

NEW YORK, May 6: Attorneys for banker Robert Altman unveiled a 1986 bank examiner's report Wednesday they contend vindicates their client of charges of lying to regulators over ownership of the corrupt bank BCCI, says

New York state bank regulators in 1986 "uncovered nothing to indicate" that First American Bank of New York violated its pledge to remain independent from BCCI, the report said.

Defence attorney Mitchell Ettinger said the report is proof positive" that Altman and First American didn't mislcad regulators about their relationship with Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Altman, 46, is standing trial in New York State Supreme Court in charges of scheming to defraud regulators, receiving bribes and falsifying business records.

The charges stem from a 1981 takeover of Financial General Bankshares, now known as First American Bankshares Inc. of Washington, by a group of wealthy middle Eastern investors.

Altman and his law partner, Democratic power broker Clark Clifford, are accused of lying to regulators about BCCI's secret control of First American, which had a major bank in New York.

rely on US market' BANGKOK, May 6: The definitely, Jurin said. United States is "demanding

Bangkok can no longer

too much" from Thatland, and it is time the Thai industrial sector proves it can "stand on its own feet" because it can no longer rely on the US market.

This comment was made by Thai Deputy Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanavisit while talking to local reporters here on Wednesday over Thai-US copyrights issues, reports Xinhua.

"What I have learnt from reports of US demands over Thailand's patent laws and its demands seem to flow on in-

Over the last weekend, the US placed Thailand, Brazil and India on its 'priority foreign country' Watchlist, claiming they had failed to adequately protect US intellectual property rights.

It has given Thatland three months to fall in line or face trade retaliation, probably through increased taxes on imports.

The US has the right to make such demand, Jurin said, adding that Thailand has a similar right to decide what is internationally acceptable.

Washington hopes to open NAFTA to other Latin American states

WASHINGTON, May 6: The Clinton administration, while facing an uphill battle to win congressional passage of a free trade agreement with Mexico, already is looking ahead to expanding the pact to include other Latin American countries, reports AP.

US Trade Representative Mickey Kantor said once Congress approves the North American Free Trade Agreement, the administration will seek the authority to negotiate similar deals with other nations.

"We see good prospects for additional trade agreements with successful market-oriented economies throughout the Americas, beginning with Chile," Kantor said in a speech Wednesday before the National Press Club.

trouble in Congress, but Kantor insisted that the negotiation of credible side agreements dealing with environmental protection and worker rights would address many of the concerns that have been raised. NAFTA would remove virtu-

The administration has

conceded that the NAFTA is in

ally all barriers to trade and investment between the United States, Canada and Mexico, creating the world's largest free trade zone.

Kantor said President Clinton was committed to seeing NAFTA approved and take effect on Jan 1, 1994, and he warned that defeat of the agreement would have serious consequences.

India expects 4.2 pc GDP growth in fiscal 92-93

BOMBAY, May 6: India's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to have grown 4.2 per cent after staging a good recovery in fiscal 1992-93, which ended in March, the central bank said Wednesday, reports AFP.

The main reasons for the recovery were a revival in industrial activity and record food grains and oilseeds output, the reserve Bank of India (RBI) said in an annual report on currency.

The GDP growth rate marked a sharp improvement over the 2.5 per cent growth registered in the previous fiscal year.

Industrial output grew at a rate of 3.9 per cent during the first eight months (April-November) of 1992-93 after a phase of stagnation in industrial production and a decline in agricultural production the previous year, the report said.

The RBI said agricultural

population was expected to be five per cent higher in 1992-93 in contrast to a decline of 2.8 per cent in 1991-92, adding that the year's industrial revival was in the manufacturing, mining and quarrying sectors.

ever, recorded a lower growth rate of 4.6 per cent against 9.6 per cent the previous year. The RBI said the price situation had improved in 1992-

The energy sector, how-

93, with inflation at 6.7 per cent, down from 13.6 per cent in 1991-92. But the bank called for a close watch on the movement of prices.

The report also warned the balance of payments situation needed a close watch, although pressures on external payments had subsided.

It said the trade deficit was expected to be more than six billion dollar in 1992-93, against a little over three billion dollar estimated for 1991-

Turkey banks on Central Asian republics to enhance economy, prestige

From Kyrgyzstan on the borders of China to Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, Turkish President Turgut Ozal appealed as the proverbial Greek bearing gifts. He was keen to strengthen the expectation of his hosts that he (held) the key to the West's riches waiting to be invested in their economies, that an alliance with his country (would) be an alliance with Europe and the United States.

He also held out some gifts of his own:

Turkey has promised up to 2,000 million dollar of its own money as potential investment in the new republics. Numerous smallscale educational projects have already been started, crumbling telecommunication networks have been renewed, and plans have been submitted for oil and mineral exploitation.

The largest investment is for a 600-million dollar pipeline that would carry Azerbaijan's surplus oil through Iran to the Mediterranean coast of Turkey, for shipment onward to Europe.

states choose the Turkish model of secular government in preference to others, which apparently excludes any local initiatives, as well as the Islamic model offered by Iran.

Turkey, through the educational establishments it sponsors, tries too hard to propagate its own language and alphabet at the expense of the native varieties of Turkic. Tens of thousands of Turkish typewriters have been distributed free of charge, and more than 1,000 Turkish delegations visited Central Asia during the course of last year alone. In addition, the region is bombarded by three hours of Turkish television programmes by satellite every night.

So far, the Turkish strategy has been reasonably successful. Shiite Azerbaijan, which is ruled by a coalition of nationalists at war with

Armenia, has opted for Turkey's variety of the Latin alphabet, though Iran had hoped it would replace Cyrillic with Arabic. Azerbaijan has also chosen a secular constitution that makes a clear distinction between religion and gov-

This is a hostile refutation of the central principle of the Iranian state and could have important implications. The great majority of Azerbaijanis, numbering up to 15 million, live outside their country in north-western Iran. And an unfriendly Azerbaijani republic could inspire rebellion in Iran.

To make life more difficult for Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United States have told anyone who would care to listen that any friendly gestures towards Tehran would displease them. Saudi Arabia is channelling millions of dollars into the region to strengthen its largely Sunni religious orientation at the expense of Shiaism. For its part, Iran is not without a winning card or two.

Unlike Turkey, which is physically cut off

from the new Muslim republics by Christian Georgia and Armenia, Iran shares over a thousand miles of land and sea frontiers with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Under such circumstances, why do Turkey and Iran put so much energy into wooing the new states? Analysts believe that there is a fine difference between the strategies of Ankara and Tehran. The Turks promote relations with the present rulers and invest money in their industries in the hope of preventing change in favour of the nascent Islamist movements. If it works, Turkey would stand to win untold riches and enjoy enormous political influence that would increase its standing in the eyes of its Western allies.

On the other hand, Iran, which is short of money, plays a longer-term game trying to endear itself to the populations by remaining aloof from their rulers. If turmoil sweeps away the present rulers, it would be the natural successor to Turkey's present position of dominance. -- Gemini News



credit to buy equipment and services from Turkey, and a share in TurkSat, a new, exclusively Turkish-owned satellite to be launched later this year that could revolutionise telephone and television communications across central Asia.

Turkish leaders are keen that the new.

There is also a strong perception that