International ____

Lanka offers talks with LTTE

COLOMBO, Feb 6: The Shri Lankan government has offered to hold talks with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) without the precondition that rebels should lay down their arms. reports Xinhua.

According to a report by the local weekly 'the Sunday Times', the new offer for unconditional talks was made when government leaders and army commanders met the catholic church delegation headed by Archbishop Nicholas Marcus Fernando who had held talks with LTTE leaders last week.

President DB Wijetunga who met the delegation has ex pressed the willingness to negotiate a political package to settle the ethnic crisis, the report said.

The church delegation met LTTE theoretician Antion

Balasingham who said the LTTE was no longer insisting on a separate state and would accept a solution within uni-

tary framework. Balasingham who represented LTTE chief V P Prabhakaran called on the government to restore electricity to the rebel-held Jaffna

Peninsula as a goodwill step towards normalcy. He promised LTTE would release captured policemen, and soldiers if the government lifted the ban on prohibited items which are believed to be think. used for military purposes.

The church delegation has suggested a ceasefire as a first step towards confidence build ing by both sides.

In last month, Shri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickramasinghe called on LTTE to send its proposals for a fresh round of talks.

PLO-Israel talks in Cairo today

Arafat reluctant to meet Peres

CAIRO. Feb 6: PLO chief Yasser Arafat is reluctant to meet Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres here tomorrow without the promise of a final deal to launch long-delayed Palestinian autonomy, his advisers say, reports AFP.

Arafat has not yet decided to go to Cairo to meet Peres as planned, PLO official Nabil Shaath said. After Israel suggested the two sides were not close to an accord, the PLO chief has given himself time to

But Shaath said a delegation headed by PLO executive committee member Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) was expected in Cairo on Monday to hold talks with Peres on implementing autonomy.

Israel was to have begun withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of

Jericho on December 13 under a September declaration of principles, but both sides have failed to negotiate a deal on

security arrangements. In Tunis, the head of the PLOs information department, Yassar Abed Rabbo, said earlier that Arafat would meet Peres if their talks were likely to lead to a final agreement on implementing Palestinian self-

The Palestinian president's presence is linked to the con-

clusion of a final deal, he said. In Geneva on Tuesday, Arafat declared he was ready to sign immediately an agreement reached with Peres at Davos. Switzerland last weekend and had decided that it be known as the Davos agreement.

But Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said later that

nothing had been settled in Davos even though progress had been made on security is-

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa, who met with Shaath here on Saturday, said meanwhile he had talked with Arafat and the Israelis about ways to overcome obstacle to a workable solution on the an accord.

A Washington report says : Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin refused Saturday to put a timetable on reaching an agreement between Israel and the PLO on Palestinian auton-

There are several key issues that have not yet been solved. Rabin said on CNN television.

I believe that next week in Cairo there will be thoughtful continuations of the talks between Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestine

Liberation Organisation leader Yasser Arafat, Rabin said in an interview videotaped Friday.

I believe that the main point is to make sure that the declaration of principles that was signed in Washington should be implemented correctly in the way that it will be

The points of frictions are thousands, he said, recalling that the aim of a final agreement was to create peaceful coexistence between two enemies.

Asked about Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' comment this week in the United States that implementing the declaration of principles could take as long as the rest of this year, Rabin said, I don't want to put any target date, but I believe Peres was right.

Protest against

French laws

on immigration

sand people marched across

Paris on Saturday to protest

against the centre-right gov-

immigration, reports Reuter.

laws, 'Q' we're sick of Pasqua"

and "Pasqua copies Le Pen"

read the banners, referring to

Interior Minister Charls

Pasqua of the coalition that

took office 10 months ago, and

extreme right-wing leader

Pasqua has introduced

Le Pen's National From

legislation making it more

difficult for foreigners to enter

the country and take up

Party wants foreigners out of

France. There are up to a mil-

lion illegal foreigners in France

and a further four million who

Russian, Ukraine

sailors clash

SEBASTOPOL, Feb 6: Hun-

dreds of Ukrainian and Russian

sailors clashed in the southern

town of Nikolayev, in a new

incident linked to a dispute

over control of the Black Sea

fleet, the belligerents said

sailors burst into a military

hospital there Friday in an at-

tempt to seize control of the

building, Interfax news agency

quoted a fleet spokesman as

claimed its seamen were try-

ing to prevent men from the

fleet from seizing supplies

from the hospital, where part

of the staff had just called for

the facility to be put under

complained they were tired of

promises from the head of the

Black Sea fleet about condi-

tions of their military service.

and the allocation of housing.

the Ukrainian navy's press ser-

Disgruntled employees

control of the Ukrainian navy.

However the Ukrainian navy

Three hundred Ukrainian

Saturday, reports AFP.

live legally in the country.

Jean-Marie Le Pen.

residence.

ernment's tough new laws on

"Down with the Pasqua

PARIS, Feb 6: Several thou-

China's Daya Bay N-plant worries Hong Kong

colony, reports AP.

Sir Robin MacLaren, the

The 4 billion dollar project

British ambassador to Beijing.

is a joint venture between the

Guangdong provincial gov/ern-

ment and Hong Kong's China

plant's two-900 megawatt

units originally was scheduled

to open last year, but was de-

layed by technical pro'olems

The second unit is scheduled

to come on line in the middle

The first of the Days, Bay

Light; and Power Co.

of this year.

HONG KONG, Feb '6: Pre-Following the panic that gripped Hong Kong in 1986 mier Li Peng opened China's, largest nuclear plant Sunday, a after the Chernobyl nuclear project that has spread anxiety disaster in the former Soviet in Hong Kong because it is or ly Union, one million Hong Kong 50 kilometers (30 mile:s]

residents signed a petition calling on China to scrap the north of this crowded British Daya Bay plant. Hong Kong press reports said about 1,000 people at-The petitioners argued that the nuclear plant, China's sectended the ceremony in ond, was too close to this city China's Special Economic Zone of 5.9 million and that it was of Shenzhen. They included

believed to be located near an earthquake fault line. The Chinese government has dismissed such fears as

groundless.

When completed later this, summer, the plant is expected ato generate up to 1,800 megawatts of electricity, with about 70 per cent going to Hong Kong.

China has agreed to inform Hong Keng if there is an accident that would affect the - colony.

UK smuggled radioactive debris in 1950s?

LONDON, Feb 6: The British government smuggled radioactive debris from hydrogen bomb tests in the 1950s back to London in diplomatic bags carried on ordinary passenger airlines, the Observer newspaper said today, reports Reuter.

Citing what it said were newly-released official papers, the Observer said that debris from the early nuclear tests on Christmas island in the Pacific was secretly loaded onto scheduled flights on Australia's Qantas Airline.

The dust was examined at Britain's top secret atomic weapons research establishment at Aldermaston. Military flights had been abandoned because of the costs involved, the Observer said.

The newspaper said that although the H-bomb dust was sealed in cans, placed in polythene bags and loaded into lead-lined boxes before being

Reuter reports from Ivory Coast.

assembly, AFP reports from Lome.

observers from France and Burkina Faso.

(WHQ). PTI reports from New Delhi.

leaders and captains of the industry.

reports from San Jose.

its release.

despatched under diplomatic cover, it was impossible to know whether innocent Qantas passengers and crew were exposed to radiation.

However, it said the courier who accompanied the first diplomatic bag from Christmas island in 1957 died from two different types of cancer in

The Observer said the official papers also revealed that debris from earlier A-bomb tests at Maralinga was also sent to Britain by diplomatic bag on scheduled flights from Australia.

The H-bomb debris was gathered by royal air forcecrews who flew through the nuclear clouds taking samples.

One file cited an Air Ministry observer monitoring the sampling from the ground as estimating his radiation dose could have been five times above permitted levels.

BRIFFIY

NASA won't release satellite: NASA

postponed the release of an experimental satellite from the

space shuttle Discovery on Saturday after a fault with a

The problem developed shortly after astronaut Jan Davis

used the shuttle crane to grab the satellite in preparation for

Houphouet-Boigny dead: President Felix

Houphouet-Beigny lay in state in his birthplace of

Yamoussoukro on Saturday night after a smooth final journey

over the 260 km (160 mile) highway he built from Abidjan,

All along the road, the cortege of some 100 Mercedes cars

and other limousines, flanked by two helicopters, was greeted

Costa Rica begins voting: Costa Rica

elects a president Sunday after one of the closest campaigns

in modern history, choosing between a free-market

economist and the son of a revered political patriarch, AP

to become the youngest head of state at 39, has vowed to

Togo goes to polls: Some two million voters

have been called to the polls yesterday in the first round of

legislative elections to elect 81 deputies to Togo's national

GMT) and 6:00 PM. (1800 GMT) with the electorate facing a

choice of 352 candidates in a poll being monitored by military

26m to be infected by AIDS: A

staggering 26 million people worldwide would be infected by

the dreaded AIDS disease by the turn of the century, ac-

cording to estimates drawn by the World Health Organisation

An estimated 1.8 million people will die of AIDS each year.

Rao returns to Delhi: The Prime Minister.

P V Narasimha Rao, returned to New Delhi yesterday morning

after a six-day visit to Switzerland and Germany, PTI reports

During his visit, the Prime Minister addressed the world

economic forum in Davos, Switzerland and later he flew in to

Germany where he met Chancellor Helmut Kohl, top German

Voting was due to take place between 7:00 AM (0700

modernise the welfare state created by his late father.

Opposition candidate Jose Maria Figueres, who is bidding

by silent crowds with almost military discipline.

Houphouet-Boigny was 88 when he died.

computer was discovered. AFP reports from Houston.



Kashmiri activists display anti-Indian slogans painted on their chests during a nation-wide strike held in solidarity with Muslim militants in Indian-held Kashmir on Saturday. Slogans read: "Kashmir will become part of Pakistan" and "we will die for Kashmir". - AFP photo

West warns Russia against renewed imperialism

MUNICH, Feb 6: The West warned Russia against renewed imperialism on Saturday as top western defence and security specialist gathered for a con-

ference here, reports AFP. Keynote speaker and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said the Russians must not seek to create spheres of influence or interest.

British Defence Minister Malcolm Rifkind also raised fears of a Russia determined to restore Hegemony over neighbouring countries.

The NATO military alliance has to take seriously Russian fears of encirclement and isolation, Kohl told the confer-

ence on security policy. In return however, we expect Russia to continue a foreign policy marked by constructive participation in solving international problems, he told the conference, a regular

ABU DHABI, Feb 6: Domes-

tic workers from the Phili-

ppines. Shri Lanka and other

Asian countries working in the

United Arab Emirates (UAE).

are discarding their traditional

dresses and make-up and

putting on Muslim gowns and

head covers as hundreds of

them convert to Islam every

converted out of their belief in

the new religion but others

appear to be under pressure

I converted to Islam be-

cause I work for a Muslim

family. They kept telling me

Islam is better and I was afraid

of losing my job, said a Shri

from their Muslim employers.

Some are reported to have

year, reports AFP.

event since 1963 founded and organised by the German publisher Ewald Von Kleist. Among participants is the

new US Defence Secretary. William Perry Especially, the Russians must unequivocally show unqualified respect for the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, Kohl said. Any thought of creating spheres of influence or interest would be incompatible with fostering the trust of its neigh-

bours, Kohl said. I am sure that the present Russian leadership, and in particular President Boris Yeltsin, will not listen to those who call for Russia to adopt a nationalistic or even imperial. ist policy, he said alluding to the extreme nationalist Russian leader Vladimir

Zhirinovsky. The Russian president had

Lankan housemaid, who has

changed her Christian name

had embraced Islam because

she wanted to please her em-

ployer. I have been working

here for five years. My mistress

is very nice to me. She advised

me to embrace Islam and I

could not say no, said Mariam,

a Filipino who had a Christian

Official figures showed for-

eigners converting to Islam

and sharply increased over the

past few years and most of

them are housemaids and ser-

vants from the Philippines.

Authorities have stepped up

Shri Lanka, and India.

Another housemaid said she

into Fatima.

name Yola.

just given him an assurance on this point, President Yeltsin expressly confirmed this in a letter to be a few days ago, the Chancellor revealed.

Replying to Kohl, Rifkind said the immediate security priority was not extension of the European Community and NATO eastward from the German-Polish border as the Chancellor suggested.

Rifkind said the most likely area of tension and threat to the security of Europe in the next few years was resurgent Russian attempts to control neighbouring countries.

He said the fundamental question was whether the unexpected disintegration of the Russian empire was to be seen as Irreversible, or the prelude to a very determined and concerted attempt to regain the hegemony it long had.

people to Islam by setting up

specialised centres, organising

seminars, distributing booklets

and printing the Muslim holy

book the Koran, in different

ers, including Russians, Ame-

ricans, and Ethiopians con-

verted to Islam in 1992 and

the figure is projected to be far

higher in 1993, according to

the Ministry of Islamic Affairs

In the Oasis city of Al-Ain.

235 expatriates converted to

Islam in 1993, including 116

Filipinos, 57 Shri Lankan and

and Endowments.

20 Indian women.

More than 1,500 foreign-

languages.

Over 100 feared Many Asians in UAE embrace Islam drowned in China campaign to attract more

vice said.

BEIJING, Feb 6: More than 100 people are dead or missing some four days after a collision between a tug and a passenger boat on the Yangtze river in southwest China Xinhua news agency reported, says AFP.

Three bodies have been found and about 100 people are still missing following the accident near Wanxian in Sichuan province late Tuesday. the agency said in a dispatch late Saturday.

Eighteen were taken to hospital, 10 of whom have been released and all are out of danger, said the report, which gave no exact figures for casualties on the tug boat.

Off the Record

Hysterectomy for hygiene

NEW DELHI: Hysterectomies performed on up to 11 mentally retarded women for "hygienic" reasons have sparked an ethrical row in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, Indian press reports said Sunday, reports Reuter.

They said surgeons in Pune on Saturday removed the wombs of between eight and 11 women aged 15 to 35, most

of whom have a mental age of two to four. Maharashtra Chief Minister Sharad Pawar halted more hys-

terectomies scheduled for Sunday after voluntary and medical groups condemned them as fascist. The Press Trust of India (PTI) quoted Vandana Khullar.

the state government's head of welfare for women, children and the handicapped, as saying the operations were needed because the women could not cope with basic hygiene during menstruation.

Bottles as invitation

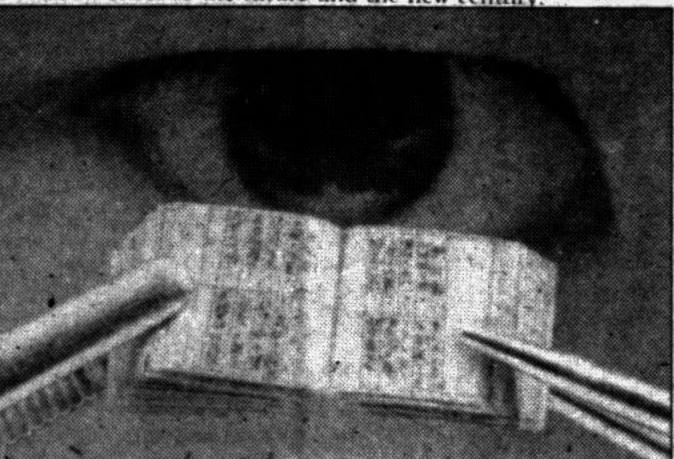
SHANGHAI: Children in East China's Shanghai city have sent dozens of bottles into the East China sea as invitation to whoever the receiver is, to join the '94 international children's culture and art festival due to be held here in July, reports Xinhua.

In hazy drizzle, more than 100 children boarded a navy fleet and dropped the calabash-shaped glass bottles into the East China sea on January 31.

Each bottle contains a golden key to the city, which is given by the mayor, Huang Ju, their hand-made gifts and invitation letters in Chinese and foreign languages, which read: 'Dear friends, when the blue ocean sends you a protty and exquisit floating bottle, you are bound to be taken as a pleasant surprise.

"Whether your skin is white or black, whether your hair is golden or black, and whether your eyes are brown or blue, we warmly welcome you to come to our hometown. Shanghai, China, and attend the '94 international children's culture and art festival.

Amid singing and dancing, the children chanted: "Oh" floating bottles, you are our invitation letters, and sea mom will send you afar to the woods in the Nile river, the prairie of Australia and towns in the Mississippi valley. May all yellow children, black children and white children join their arms.... and march towards the future and the new century.



TAIWAN: Chen Fun-hsien, 35, displays a tiny book titled Three hundred poems from the Tang Dynasty" on Sunday. The 75-page book took two years to make and measures 0.9 cm long, 0.9 cm wide and 0.8 cm high. It is part of a 50-piece exhibit of miniatures opening on February 18. - AFP photo

A kiss is not just a kiss

LOS ANGELES: A kiss is not just a kiss. Not when it involves Roseanne Arnold and Mariel Hemingway, reports AP. ABC is refusing to air an episode of Arnold's hit sitcom "Roseanne" because it shows the two women exchanging a kiss in a gay bar. The episode was slated to air March 1, said Tom Arnold, Roseanne's husband.

Arnold said he was told by Steve Weiswasser, senior vice president and general counsel of ABC Inc. that the scene "is not the lifestyle that most people lead."

Arnold's remarks were reported Saturday by the Los Angeles Daily News.

ABC spokeswoman Sherrie Berger said the network had no

comment on the issue.

In the episode, Roseanne Conner goes to the bar with bisexual friend Nancy (Sandra Bernhard). Roseanne dances with a woman (Hemingway), kisses - and then has to explain things to husband Dan (John Goodman).

British minister World leaders condemn bomb attack on Sarajevo market apologises

the WHO report said.

from New Delhi

LONDON, Feb 6: Prime Minister John Major said Saturday that Cabinet Minister Michael Portillo had apologised for accusing foreigners o corruption and the matter was "finished," reports AFP.

"Michael has made a mistake. He has apologised. The matter is finished," Major said in his constituency of Unitingdon, Northern London.

"There is no distraction that is going to push this government off the policies that are going to get us back into growth." Major added, "what we are going to concentrate on are the things of importance to the future of the country."

Portillo, Chief Secretary to the Treasury and tipped as a future premier, plunged the Conservative Party into yet another embarrassing row late Friday when he accused foreigners of corruption and attacked education standards abroad.

WASHINGTON. Feb 6:

President Bill Clinton on Saturday led an international outpouring of outrage and horror at a mortar bomb attack on a crowded Sarajevo market that killed at least 66 people and wounded 197, reports Reuter.

He called on the United Nations to identify the attackers urgently and directed Secretary of State Warren Christopher to consult with US allies on appropriate next

Nothing was being ruled out. Clinton added.

Earlier, a senior US administration official said Washington had "very little doubt" that Serb gunners fired the mortar bomb. He said the attack "makes it more likely that the United States will consider pressing for action" against the Serbs but no decisions had been taken.

In New York, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali issued a statement condemning "in the strongest possible

terms this heinous act of violence" and ordered an investigation to establish the facts surrounding the incident.

Belgian Foreign Minister Willy Claes called for NATO air strikes against Serb position around Sarajevo. After a NATO bombardment, the Serbs can naturally try to take their revenge against the UN blue helmets on the ground, but once again I don't see any other way out, he said in a television interview.

At the Vatican. Pope John Paul appeared to move closer to support for military intervention in Bosnia in an emotional condemnation of the mortar attack and he urged world leaders to try every means to stop the fighting.

Italian Foreign Minister Beniamino Andreatta said he would ask European union colleagues at a meeting in Brussels on Monday to react with concrete measures to halt such bombardments.

In London, British Foreign

Secretary Douglas Hurd condemned the brutal killing of civilians in Sarajevo, adding it underlined the urgency of finding a peace settlement in Bosnia.

The new US Defence Secretary, William Perry, said at a European Security policy conference in Munich that western air strikes might be launched against them if the killing of civilians continues in the besieged Bosnian capital. That will certainly be considered, he told reporters.

in Cairo, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said the bombardment demonstrates the failure of all policies pursued so far to deal with the problem of aggression against the people of Bosnia. The aggressor must now be confronted openly and candidly.

Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller, broadcasting on domestic television, also urged a lifting of the arms embargo. according to BBC monitoring in London.



Handwritten identifications are placed on the chest of two corpses laying in the morgue of Sarajevo's Kosevo hospital on Saturday. - AFP photo

Zhirinovsky promises to back Serbs

MOSCOW, Feb 6: Russian maverick nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky promised Yugoslavia's Serbs his backing on Saturday, comparing proposals for air strikes against Serbian positions to actions carried out by Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. reports Reuter. Speaking on the day that a

shell killed 51 people and wounded at least 84 in the worst single atrocity of Bosnians 22-month civil war. Zhirinovsky told a rally of about 500 supporters that Serbs were Russians' religious broth-Fighting in Yugoslavia aimed

Ring Russia with a green corridors of Muslim people, said Zhirinovsky, who has alienated a string of countries with increasingly outrageous comments since Russia's Decem ber parliamentary polls. An undercover World War

to annihilate, the Serbs and

Ill is being waged against the Slavs in Yugoslavia.