BREFLY

Jewish student shot dead in NY: A 15-year old Jewish student who was shot along with three of his friends by a gunman on the Brooklyn bridge died Saturday, a spokesman for the Lubavitch movement

confirmed, Reuter reports from New York. Ari Halberstam died at approximately 9:50 PM (0250 GMT) at St. Vincent's hospital, said an aide to Rabbi Yehuda

Krinsky, a spokesman for the ultra-orthodox religious group. Halberstam had been declared brain dead by doctors Wednesday, a day after the deadly attack on the four students as they travelled onto the New York landmark.

Hirohito's widow turns 91: The late Emperor Hirohito's widow, Empress Dowager Nagako, turned 91 Sunday, making her the second-longest living empress in Japanese history, AP reports from Tokyo.

Nagako spent the early afternoon hearing recitations of greeting poems and receiving gifts from members of the royal family, palace officials and friends at Tokyo's imperial place. She was scheduled to meet with her son, Emperor Akihito, and his wife, Empress Michiko in the late afternoon.

Princess Anne ends Vietnam tour: Princess Anne ended the first visit to Vietnam by a member of the British royal family Sunday with a stop at Shell, the first major international oil company to return here after the Vietnam War, AP reports from Ho Chi Minh city.

The Princess royal, 43, the only daughter of Queen Elizabeth II, wore a red dress to cut a ribbon at the newly renovated office of Shell, which has invested about 100 million dollar since it returned to Vietnam in 1988.

Anti-abortion activist gets life term: A Christian fundamentalist was, sentenced to life in prison Saturday for first-degree murder in the fatal shooting of an abortion doctor, Reuter reports from Pensacola.

The jury of seven women and five men had deliberated for about three hours before returning a guilty verdict against Michael Griffin, 32.

He was charged with shooting Dr David Gunn three times in the back as Gunn arrived at a Pensacola clinic for work during an anti-abortion demonstration on March 10, 1993.

Venezuelan coup leader freed: Charges were dropped Saturday against the leader of a 1992 coup attempt that undermined the government of then-President Carlos Andres Perez, AP reports from Caracas.

President Rafael Caldera, who took office last month, ordered the release of Admiral Hernan Gruber Odreman and three rebel air force lieutenants.

The November 1992 coup was the second attempt that year to overthrow Perez, accused by the military of corruption. Six months later he was suspended from office by Congress to face charges.

Israel accepts PLO demands for security guarantees

NICOSIA. Mar 6: Israel accepts PLO demands for security guarantees in the occupied territories, including the presence of international observers, but the details must be discussed, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said

Saturday, reports AFP. In an interview on the US television network CNN, monitored in Cyprus, Peres said he was in favour of an "acceleration" of autonomy talks with the Palestinians, "The presence of a temporary foreign or international group" in the occupied territories, and the

adoption of measures "so nobody will be threatened" in the territories.

"On details we have to sit together and find solutions." tre. Peres said. The PLO demanded the

general disarming of Jewish settlers in the occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank following the February 25 Hebron massacre, when a Jewish settler shot dead dezens of Arab worshippers in a mosque.

The PLO also called for international protection for Palestinians and the dismantling of some Jewish settle-

ments, notably Kyriat Arab near Hebron, where killer Baruch Goldstein lived, and settlements in the town cen-

The Israel government has ruled out any international military presence in the occupied territories.

Peres said "every settler who may become dangerous to the normal life of the West Bank and Gaza will be disarmed, detained if necessary and exiled if necessary, as

Two extremist Jewish settlers have been arrested and

place in administrative detention, out of five sought by security forces.

"The Israeli people understand the moral damage, not only the political (damage). that this murderer Goldstein caused to our people," Peres

Asked whether the extreme rightwing Tzomet Party would join the government. Peres said: "nothing was yet con-

AP adds: Thousands of Israeli protesters urged the government to dismante Jewish settlements in the occupied lands, and Arabs and Israeli troops clashed after a rally marking the Hebron mosque massacre.

"The Israelis are sick of the settlers and their extremism." said Tzali Reshef, a leader of the Peace Now group that organised Saturday's rally. The mosque gunman was a Jewish settler.

In Tel Aviv's Kings Square, tens of thousands of Israelis rallied to support peace talks with the PLO. Some waved Palestinian flags, and banners read "Dismantle all the settlements" and "War against the extreme right."

Reshef, the Israeli Peace Now leader, said the immediate aim of the protest was to push for the ouster of the 400 Jewish settlers who live among 80,000 Palestinians in the heart of the West Bank town of Hebron.

The demonstrators have the support of several Cabinet ministers. Israel's leftist minister of culture. Shulamit Aloni Saturday called the Hebron settlers "extremists and racists."



This file photo dated November 1993 of former actress and Greek Culture Minister Melina Mercouri who is reported to be critically ill in the New York Memorial Hospital. Mercouri, 68, is married to film director Jules Dassin. - AFP photo

Split in South African. Freedom Alliance

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 6: Cracks have appeared in South Africa's right-wing Freedom Alliance (FA), with the main black partner showing more willingness to take part in elections next month than its white allies, reports Reuter.

The Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party led by Mangosuthu Buthelezi registered on Friday night, just a few hours before the deadline, to take part in the country's first all race election next month.

It hedged the registration with conditions, including a proposal, immediately rejected by the rival African National Congress, that the election be postponed to allow more time for campaigning.

Buthelezi's fellow-FA leader General Constand Viljoen also registered on Friday night under the new name "Freedom Front," but on Saturday his Afrikaner People's Front (AVF) reaffirmed its refusal to

take part in the poll. The decision was taken at a meeting in Pretoria of the AVF's "representative council," an alternative parliament set up as a symbol of its rejection of black rule.

"The meeting discussed (the registration) in depth and decided to maintain its previous standpoint of non-participation in the election and to withdraw the registration," it said in a statement.

The Pretoria meeting was attended by Eugene Terre Blanche, leader of the radical paramilitary Afrikaner Resistance Movement (AWB), who said afterwards "I'm not interested in living any more. there's no reason for my existence if I have to live under a communist system....

"If you deny me the right to be free and independent then you are declaring war and we will accept that war."

Sunday Times drops bid to patch up London-KL row

LONDON, Mar 6: The Sunday Times newspaper, whose reporting angered Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad into punishing British firms, dropped its attempts to patch up the damaging row and called for London to hit back, reports Reuter.

In a front-page editorial entitled "stop grovelling and retaliate", it said Britain should suspend its funding of a dam in Malaysia to put pressure on Mahathir, who it said enjoyed bashing Britain.

Mahathir, in a move reminiscent of a "buy British last" policy of a decade ago, last week barred British firms from lucrative government contracts after the Sunday Times reported an alleged plan by a big British company to bribe him.

That was the final straw for Mahathir after weeks of reports that a one billion pound (1.5 billion dollar) Malaysian order for British arms was tied to British aid worth 234 millien pounds (350 million dollar) to build the Pergau Hydroelectric Dam.

British ministers admit the

two were briefly linked in 1988 but are treading carefully with Malaysia, well aware of the impact the ban is having on exports.

Lord Pryor, chairman of one of Britain's biggest companies, General Electric Co PLC(GEC). said the row with Malaysia had probably cost his firm four billion pounds (6 billion dollar) in lost exports and could hit business across Asia, the BBC

"It could affect Indonesia and it could affect Thailand. hope it won't affect Singapore or Vietnam but it is very serious particularly because the China market is not being improved by what is going on in Hong Kong," he told BBC tele-

"The great growing market of Asia and South-East Asia which we ought to be in and getting a big share of is becoming very difficult for us."

But the Sunday Times, in vengeful mood after an attempt it made to smooth over the row was rebuffed, called for a tough response, saying that "grovelling" would do no good.

US still concerned about fate of China's dissidents

A Shalom Arshav (Peace Now) demonstrator waves the Israeli and Palestinian flags Mar 5

during a demonstration in Tel Aviv to protest against the presence of Jewish settlements in

the occupied territories. About 50000 Jews and Arabs attended the rally in the centre of the

HONOLULU, Mar 6: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Saturday he remained concerned about the fate of detained Chinese dissidents and was determined to raise their cases when he visits Beijing next week, reports Reuter.

Christopher, in Hawaii on the first stop of his tour of Australia and Asia, told reporters he was pleased China had released its most prominent dissident. Wei Jingsheng, after just over 24 hours in cus-

'I'm glad to her he's now been released. But we remain concerned about the dissidents whose whereabouts a least to us are unknown. We're asking for explanations about them." Christopher said.

In addition to Wei, at least four other dissidents in Beijing have been arrested or are missing from their homes.

Another half dozen activists in Shanghai were rounded up

to keep them from talking to Assistant Secretary of State for human rights, John Shattuck, who was in China to prepare for the Christopher visit.

President Clinton must decide by June whether to renew China's most favoured nation

Another top dissident held

BEIJING, Mar 6: Authorities on Sunday detained another top student leader from the 1989 Tiananmen Square prodemocracy movement in a continuing crackdown on dissent, sources said, reports AP.

Police have detained at least nine dissidents in Beijing and Shanghai since Wednesday in a sweep that has set a sour tone for a visit this week by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

Christopher said in Hawaii on Saturday that human rights would be at the top of his agenda when he is in Beijing.

trading status and has repeatedly stated he would only do so if there was a 'significant overall improvement' in China's human rights. At stake are billions of dollars of trade.

MOS

- AFP photo

Wei, who became a potent symbol of China's lack of freedom of expression during 14 years in prison, had bluntly told Shattuck before his arrest the United States had to be tough on China to get progress

Christopher is due to arrive in Beijing next Friday. But the Chinese authorities signalled their disdain for his human rights message with the arrests which prompted some speculation he might cancel his trip. But he said he was determined to press ahead.

"You can be sure human rights will be right on top of my agenda when I get to Beijing," Christopher said Saturday. 'It just redoubles my determination that they understand the seriousness of our concern about that."

Strike paralyses occupied areas

JERUSALEM. Mar 6: A strike to mark the 75th month of the Palestinian uprising or Intifada paralysed the occupied territories today after a week of rioting and bloodshed over the Hebron mosque massacre, correspondents reported, says

The stoppage came with a curfew still in force in the West Bank towns of Hebron, Ramallah, Jericho and the surrounds of Nablus.

Shops remained shut across the Gaza Strip and the West Bank in response to the call from the Islamic Jihad, which commemorates the start of the Intifada on the sixth of each month, three days before the

majority of Palestinian groups. Traffic was scarce and

schools were closed. In the week since a Jewish settler opened fire on Muslims at prayer, killing 30 according to the army and 52 according to Palestinian doctors. Israeli bullets have left 23 more Arabs dead and hundreds wounded.

The army lifted the curfew on the Bethlehem area on Saturday night after ending the restriction on Gaza city and the central Nablus last Thursday, a military spokesman said.

Britain to send 1200 more troops to Bosnia

LONDON, Mar 6: Britain's preparing to send some 1,200 more troops to Bosnia to back up its 2,500 already there as part of a major reinforcement

of United Nations peace-

keeping forces, the Sunday

Times newspaper said, reports The report could not be immediately confirmed but Britain has signalled it is considering complying with a UN request to send more troops proportionately as part of a

wider effort. The cabinet will send more troops because the safety of the British troops already there is at risk, the paper quoted a government source as saying. But the decision will need cover from the other countries - we just can't do this alone.

Off the Record

Barbie turns 35

BERLIN: Call her sublime. The most popular doll of all time. A cultural icon transcending generations. It's enough to get dozens of artists and designers all worked up, reports AP. Barbie, you see, is 35.

The leggy chesty molded plastic mannequin is adored. adorned, mocked and defrocked - even pickled - in a special anniversary show by mostly German artists at Berlin's premiere art exhibition hall, the Martin-Gropius-Bau. One Barbie is "Lady Liberty," straddling a globe held alog

by two Ken dolls, hot pink high-heels crossing the Atlantic. Another is spray-painted white and pierced from head to ankle with a few hundred nails." Or there's the life-size mannequin with the Barbie acces-

sory-spangled gown and three-headed shoes, eveglasses framed with Barbie arms and legs. And lots of Barbies got their hair done - by stylists such as Vidal Sasson.

"There has never been anything like this, to my knowledge, relating to a doll, let alone Barbie, said the doll's 77-

year-old American creator exhibit's Handler. At the exhibit's opening last month, Handler heard people use the words "cult" and "icon" in discussing her doll's role in

"Those are two words I had never heard before," she said. But then there's never been anything like Barbie, an 11 1-

2-inch (29-centimeter) figure with a flawless figure who transformed." playing dolls.

Torture museum opens to public after sixty years

ROME: The executioner kept good notes. The 16th century parchment diary - complete with sketches in the margins of hangings, beheadings and floggings - recounts grim punishments for crimes as visceral as murder and as ephemeral as witchcraft, reports AP.

If the words aren't chilling enough, there is always the real thing: iron masks that were once clamped on slanderers, a chamber of metal spikes and a body cage where the only way to come out is as a skeleton.

"This is not just a house of horrors, it serves as a testament to crime and the response to it through the ages," said Nicola Coco. scientific consultant to Rome's Museum of Criminology.

The collection — one of the world's best storehouses of torture implements and records - was opened to the public last week after being used exclusively for students and researchers for more than 60 years.

The exhibits have already drawn thousands of visitors. But some are driven to make an early exit.

"Enough," said Laura Lumino, who accompanied her two teen-age sons." I don't know how they can enjoy it." The ancient Romans did not invent torture, but they were

dedicated to refining it. The exhibits start with models of such objects as a bronze bull, where subjects would be stuffed inside and cooked alive over an open fire to obtain a confession, suspects may have been forced to straddle the top of a wooden pyramid and then covered with heavy weights.

The superstition and intolerance of the Middle Ages and religious inquisitions found new ways to bring anguish: hot oil poured in the ears of suspected witches, dismemberment by being lashed to horses galloping in opposition directions; being strapped to a wheel and raked over barbs; being impaled inside the 16th century "Virgin of Nuremberg." a spike-filled metal chamber favoured by German courts.

US not yet ready to set up ties with Vietnam the fate of missing soldiers.

HONOLULU, Mar 6: The United States is not yet ready to establish full diplomatic relations with Vietnam, Secretary of State Warren Chrisopher said yesterday, reports

Christopher, who stopped

in Hawaii ahead of a trip to Australia, Japan and China, said Hanoi needs to make more progress in human rights, settle claims by US businesses and help resolve questions on missing US ser-

"There are a great many things they would have to do" before normal relations can be established, he said.

Christopher lauded Vietnam

for its cooperation with the

United States in determining

but said he was unable to visit the country on his current "I hope to go there some time in the future," he added.

in Honolulu, he visited a laboratory where scientists are attempting to identify human remains provided by Vietna-

mese authorities.

"We now have the means to get a full accounting (of the missing troops) because we have the cooperation of the government of Vietnam," he

The fate of 1.647 US ser vicemen missing in Vietnam has not been resolved, among some 2,200 missing in Southeast Asia.



The fuselage of Yugoslav Army Orao jet fighter, stripped of its electronic systems, lies at the edge of a Tuzla airport apron March 5. The Bosnian government army command protested the use of Russian UNPROFOR troops to monitor the use of the base for humanitarian-aid. AFP photo challenging their neutrality.

Lanka rules out foreign mediation

COLOMBO, Mar 6: Sri Lanka's President Dingiri Banda Wijetunga has rejected proposed foreign intervention to resolve the island's dragging Tamil separatist war, a staterun weekly newspaper said today, reports AFP.

to end fighting

Wijetunga turned down mediation offered by a group of Canadian parliamentarians. through an intermediary, to cad the fighting between the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and government forces, the Sunday Observer said.

In August last year, Colombo rejected a peace initiative by four Nobel prize winners.

NATO rebuffs special treatment for former Warsaw Pact foes the allies so far have refused to would join the US-inspired

NATO allies have rebuffed a ship itself is on the basis of Russian request for special equality of opportunity. treatment in joining the al-Russia, anxious to maintain liance's new partnership proits status as a world military gramme for its former Warsaw power, made the request to Pact foes, the US ambassador Hunter and two other NATO said, reports AP. ambassadors — Carlos Miranda of Spain and Sir John Weston But Robert Hunter, the

American envoy to the 16-na-Moscow last Monday and tion alliance, said the allies are Tuesday. willing to consider new ar-They travelled to the rangements for consultations Russian capital to explain the with the giant nation outside plan, which allows participants "Partnership for Peace." for the first time to take part "The doors are always open in peacekeeping, military ex-

here," Hunter said in a recent ercises and some other al interview with The Associated liance activities. Press. "Clearly, we recognise In stark contrast to the rithe special significance of valries marking the Cold War. Russia within the context of Russia last week ended much European security." speculation by announcing it

signing ceremony, possibly with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, at the headof Britain - during a visit to Treaty Organisation.

part will give an added boost to NATO but without granting security guarantees that would go with it.

January summit of President for fear of creating new divi-Clinton and other allied lead-No date has been set for a

quarters of the North Atlantic Russia's decision to take ranking officials in the foreign

the project, which was designed as a way of drawing one-time adversaries closer to them full membership and the

Despite requests from Hungary, Poland and others,

programme, approved at a hand out membership cards sions in Europe and isolating Russia. Russian President Boris Yeltsin has cautioned against an eastward expansion.

Hunter said during his visit to Moscow, no Russian official repeated Yeltsin's words of caution. "The question of enlargement did not come up," he said. The ambassadors met high-

and defence ministries as well as in the parliament. Hunter said the Russians were interested in learning more about the limited partnerships, but also made clear their desire to be dealt with as

a great power and sought

cial standing in the pro-But he said the ambassadors told their hosts the deal was

based on quality among the participating nations. "Outside 'Partnership for Peace' we would be pleased to

talk with them about how one could have consultative relationships," he said. "But we wanted to make very clear that NATO takes its own decisions." No proposals have yet been

made about the framework for any extra consultations. "NATO is going to want to take a good hard look at the ways in which one would be able to have discussions with the Russians on

serious subjects," Hunter said. So far, the partnership pro-

gramme has enrolled 10 nations: Albania, Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. The Czech Republic will sign up on Thursday. Turkmenistan also has expressed interest.

The alliance also has extended invitations to the traditionally neutral nations of Austria, Finland, Sweden and Switzerland, and the allies have said Slovenia, a former Yugoslav republic, can enroll.

Ignoring Russia's misgivings about an eastward expansion of NATO, nearly all the nations signing up so far have said they view the limited partnerships as a first step toward full membership in the alliance.

Malaysia to ban foreign newsmen KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 6:

Malaysia will ban foreign journalists who have written reports about Malaysia, the government considers false, a top official says, reports AP. The national news agency

Bernama cited Deputy Home Affairs Minister Megat Junid Megat Ayub as announcing plans for the ban. Megat Junid also said the Home Ministry will investigate

whether Malaysians in the country have instigated the British mass media to report on the alleged bribery of Malaysian officials.

He added that an investigation would be carried out to see if any 'insiders' from Malaysia were involved.