BREFIY

China assumes UNSC presidency: China's UN ambassador. Li Zhaoxing, on Wednesday assumes the presidency of the 15-seat Security Council for the month

of March. Reuter reports from United Nations. The council presidency rotates monthly according to the English alphabet. Li takes over from Ambassador Elgwaila Joseph Legwaila of Botswana.

21 hurt as Cong, TDP workers clash: Twentyone persons were injured when rival groups of Congress-I and Telugu Desam (TDP) workers hurled crude bombs against each other at Ammireddynagar village in

Kurnool district on Tuesday, PTI reports from Hyderabad. According to a report reaching the police headquarters in Hyderabad, the rival groups fought pitched battle on the streets following a dispute over a water tank. Fourteen of the injured belonged to TDP and the remaining were Congress-I workers, police said.

WHO team to visit India: The head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) will visit India next month to monitor anti-plague measures taken after the disease killed 55 people last year, a WHO spokesman said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

WHO Director General Horoshi Nakakjima, accompanied by foreign health officials, will check if India was following standard procedures for preventing another outbreak of the disease.

Jailed Hamas activists on strike: Supporters of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas jailed by Yasser Arafat's self-rule authority in the Gaza Strip have gone on a hunger strike demanding immediate release, a Hamas source said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from Gaza

The source, who spoke on condition he not be named, said 20 Hamas prisoners have been refusing all food and drinking only water stace Monday.

Blast outside US embassy in Lima: Suspected rebels hurled a bomb outside the US embassy in Lima late on Tuesday, shattering some windows, and tossed two other bombs at police stations, injuring seven passersby, police said. AFP reports from Lima.

There were no injuries reported in the blast at the US embassy, which also damaged some nearby store fronts. The bomb was hurled from a passing car, police said.

Huge arms seized in France: Antiterrorist agents have seized an arsenal including a rocket launcher, submachine guns, gunpowder and 10,000 bullets linked to Algerian Muslim militants, authorities said on Tuesday. AP reports from Paris.

The cache, found on Monday in the locker of a parking garage in Choisy-le-Roi east of Paris, had numerous handguns grenades, four submachine guns, 10kg (22 pounds) of gunpowder and bomb-making materials including fuses and timers.

China bans night services at airports: China has banned night services at several airports, alarmed at the explosive growth of highrises that endanger aircraft, it was reported vesterday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China found that nearly three-fourths of China's 114 airports were found to have "potentially risky" flight paths because of surrounding highrises, the semi-official China news services said.

6 more executed in China: Six people were executed in Beijing and 12 others were sentenced to death on Wednesday as China began a three month anti-crime campaign. AP reports from Beijing.

The six who were executed were guilty of murder, armed robbery, rape and other crimes, the Beijing Evening News reported. It said the other 12 who were sentenced after an initial trial committed serious crimes, but gave no details about the crimes or any appeals.

Road mishap claims 11 in Harare: Eleven soldiers died when their truck crashed into a tree after a tire burst, the army said Wednesday, AP reports from

Another 13 soldiers, including the driver, sustained back injuries, tractures and other injuries in the crash near Chivhu. 140 kilometres (90 miles) south of Harare, the army said in a statement.

Har.ac

Police raid Winnie's home: south African police probing allegations of fraud and corruption raided the Johannesburg home of President Nelson Mandela's estranged wife Winnie yesterday, a police spokesman said.

Reuter reports from Johannesburg. "The house ... and various other locations in Johannesburg were searched." Captain Dave Harrington told Reuters.

Karen rebels attack army post: At least two people were killed and more than 10 injured when Karen guerillas attacked a Myanmar army staging post on a road in southeastern Myanmar Myanmar traders said yester-

The attack was believed to be one of the largest since the guerillas lost their last major base on the Thai Myanmar border on February 21

16 Kurds killed in Turkey: Turkish troops killed 16 Kurdish guerillas in continuing fighting in southeastern Turkey on Tuesday the regional governor's office

said. AP reports from Divarbakir, Turkey. The rebels were killed in separate clashes in the south-

eastern provinces of Bitlis. Bingol and Tunceli. Meningitis claims 233 in Niger: An epidemic of meningitis has killed at least 233 people in the West African country of Niger, National radio reported on

Tuesday, AP reports from Niamey Niger. Health officials have recorded 2,000 cases of the disease since the end of December, the radio said

S Africa, Mozambique sign accord: South Africa and Mozambique signed an agreement Tuesday to combat a wave of cross-border crime including drug trafficking, gun smuggling, and car and cattle theft. AP reports

from Cap Town. The accord is part of a crackdown on violence in South Africa and comes a day after President Nelson Mandela sent troops and more police into areas troubled by strikes, rioting and political killings.

Ghana's president to visit US: Ghana's President Jerry Rawlings will make a two-day visit to Washington at the invitation of President Clinton. AP reports

from Accra. Rawlings on his first visit to the United States, will have a meeting and working lunch with Clinton on March 9, said an official statement issued late Tuesday.

PLO calls for 'total cessation' of Israeli settlement activities

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 1 The Palestine Liberation Organisation called in the Security Council on Tuesday for the "immediate and total cessation" of Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories, reports Reuter.

"The alternative is capable of seriously undermining the peace process," said the PLO's UN observer, Nasser Al-Kidwa, referring to talks aimed at building on a framework accord signed in September 1993.

"What is now needed is the immediate and total cessation of any settlement activity, regardless of the type and vol-

ume, period." Al-Kidwa said that "any set tlement activity in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem" was a flagrant violation of the letter and spirit of the Israel-PLO declaration of principles, the fourth Geneva Convention and Security Council resolutions.

He was speaking at the start of a debate requested last week by the Arab group on the building of settlements in territory occupied by Israel since

The United States which, together with Russia, sponsors the Middle East peace talks. opposed the holding of the debate as impeding the negotia-

Edward' Gnehm, the US deputy UN representative, told the council "my government believes that debate here can only sour the atmosphere and deflect the parties from the need to work together on the path they have set for them-

selves." Nevertheless, many delegations were inscribed to take part in the debate. Council sources said it was uncertain whether a resolution, or even a statement, would eventually be adopted.

Israel UN envoy Gad Yaacobi

Two US soldiers carry a crate as they walk past a UN Pakistani soldier manning a heavy-

Heavy fighting in Bihac

mortar, artillery, tank and

multiple-barrelled rocket

launchers firing around the vil-

lage of Mala Kladusa, the offi-

had been reported by 5 pm lo-

of several days in which re-

ports spoke of mainly sporadic

lief workers had to abandon

their nine-truck aid convoy

after coming under fire near

the front line at Mala Kladusa.

officials from the UN High

Commissioner for Refugees

cal (1400 gmt), he said.

Some 1.000 detonations

The clashes followed a full

Earlier on Tuesday UN re-

UN peacekeepers reported

machine gun on the beach in Mogadishu on Monday.

SARAJEVO, Mar 1: Heavy

fighting erupted in the Bosnian

enclave of Bihac on Tuesday as

rebel Muslims launched in-

fantry and shelling attacks on

Bosnian government troops.

United Nations peacekeepers

this morning and it's still go-

ing on," a Bangladeshi UN offi-

cer told Reuters by telephone

from the enclave. "Intense fir-

The fighting was concen-

trated some five km (three

in the north of the enclave, the

officer from a United Nations

miles) south of Velika Kladusa

"It started at 8-30 (local)

said, reports Reuter.

ing is under way.

base in Coralici said.

said it was "highly inappropriate" for the PLO to have initiated the debate, since its agreements with Israel called for all outstanding so-called permanent status issues, such as settlements and Jerusalem to be dealt with in direct, bi-

lateral negotiations. He said no new settlements had been established since Isreal's present government took office in July 1992, but added: "Yes, we continue to build in Jerusalem. As the Arabs do. They have not stopped building, and this is their right. We have not stopped building, and this is our right.'

Yaacobi said terrorism was now the main obstacle to the peace process and that "radical fundamentalists, with ties to Iran, lead the campaign."

This had resulted in the killing of 116 Israelis and the wounding of 634 since the 1993 Israel-Palestinian accord was signed, he said.

- AFP/UNB photo

The drivers had to take

refugee in UN armoured vehi-

cles escorting the convoy,

which apparently was not tar-

geted, and were driven away to

the UN base in Coralici. The

The United Nations was try

trucks were later recovered.

ing to negotiate a truce to al-

low through another convoy.

carrying 150 tonnes of food

aid, unable to move from the

Serb-held territory in Croatia

because of the heavy fighting

government fifth corps in the

pocket is surrounded by rebel

Muslim troops and allied Serb

forces from Croatia and Bosnia

The Muslim-led Bosnian

Israel expected the Palestinian authority to "do all in its power to combat terrorism and bring to justice all those involved in murderous activities," he added.

Al-Kidwa said although Israel's present government had implied its settlement policy would be different from that of its predecessor, some sources had estimated that "the units that have been built under the current government have increased by 10 per cent, which has been accompanied by a 15 per cent increase in the number of settlers."

The failure of the Security Council to impose past decisions regarding Israeli settlements had resulted in the "approximately 140 settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, with approximately 300,000 settlers living in them, including those settlers brought to east Jerusalem.

Imelda to run for Congress in May elections

MANILA. Mar 1: Former first lady Imelda Marcos announced on Wednesday she will run for Congress in the May elections despite a criminal-conviction for corruption during her late husband's 20-

year rule, reports AP. "I'm running not for ambition but compassion," Mrs Marcos told reporters. She will seek a House of Representatives seat from her family's native Leyte island in the central Philippines.

Analysts in Leyte believe she is all but assured of winning. The widow of former strongman Ferdinand Marcos is free on bond pending appeal of a 1993 conviction for corruption.

She was sentenced to 17-23 years imprisonment. Her son, Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr, won a congressional seat from the northern province of llocos Norte in in the May 8 balloting.

Mrs Marcos lost a bid for the presidency in 1992 after returning from exile in Hawaii.

She finished fifth among seven candidates but won by a landslide among Leyte voters.

Mrs Marcos said she will fly



1992 and is running for Senate to Leyte either on Wednesday afternoon or on Thursday to file her certificate of candidacy with the local office of the Commission on Election.

Chandrika rejects Prabhakaran's allegations

COLOMBO, Mar 1: President Chandrika Kumaratunga Wednesday dismissed warnings by Tamil rebel chief Velupillai Prabhakaran that further delays could jeopardize peace talks, reports AP.

"Nothing very serious will happen to the peace process," said Mrs. Kumaratunga, rejecting accusations by rebels that the government was insincere about ending the 11-year ethnic war that has killed 34,000 people. A lot of it (accusations) is

false," she said. The rebels are getting worried that the steps taken by the government in helping the minority Tamils in the north and the east were making the guerillas unpopular, she said.

Last week, the government opened the only two land routes to rebel-held Jaffna peninsula for the first time in four years as a conciliatory move to the guerillas, who have blamed the government blockade for depriving people of food and power.

But the rebels immediately said it was not good enough because a military base still remains beside one of the

Although both sides have blamed each other for the deadlock in the talks, a cease fire announced Jan. 8 has held. despite minor violations. But negotiators are yet to begin discussing political issues such as giving minority Tamils

greater autonomy.

Attack on last Chechen stronghold in Grozny

MOSCOW, Mar 1: Russian forces spounded the last Chechen stronghold in the capital Grozny and several rebel-held villages and towns with artillery on Tuesday, while officials in Moscow insisted the main stage of the war was over, reports AP.

Shelling ripped through the Chernorechye region of Grozny, and the villages of Gioty, Alkhan-Yurt and Komsomolskove. the military command said. Fighting was also reported just outside Chechen-held town of Argun.

The Russian Interior Ministry said that Tuesday's fighting claimed the lives of 32 Chechen fighters and two Russian soldiers.

In Moscow, Defence Minister Pavel Grachev told top generals and ministry officials that although the main Chechen resistance has been broken, "one should expect some isolated bandit groups to commit terrorist acts against Russian troops."

The head of the GRU military intelligence. Col Gen Fyodor Ladygin, echoed his assessment: saying: "It is impossible to eliminate in the near future the bandit regime" of President Dzhokhar Dudavev in Chechnya.

Grachev said that, 38,000 Russian troops had been deploved in the region along with 230 tanks. 454 armored personnel carriers and 388 guns and rocket lannehers, news exercises reported.

Troops loyal to Dudayev numbered about 30,000 at the peak of the fighting, including 6.000 mercenaries from Tajikistan, Afghanistan and the Baltic countries, Grachev said.

Ladygin estimated that more than 7.000 Chechen fighters had been killed since the fighting began.

More than 1,000 Russian servicemen have died in the violence. Some human rights observers say as many as 25,000 civilians also have been killed since Moscow sent troops into Chechnya Dec 11 to crush the republic's threeyear independence drive.

Peru, Ecuador sign fresh truce accord.

MONTEVIDEO, Mar 1: Peru and Ecuador signed a new ceaseffre accord today allowing international observers to monitor the disputed jungle border area from March 8, said the foreign ministers of Argentina and Brazil, reports

Ecuadorean Foreign Minister Galo Leoro and Peruvian

Foreign Minister Efrain Goldenberg signed the agreement in the Uruguayan capital Montevideo, after five hours of talks with the foreign ministers of Argentina, Brazil and Chile and US Assistant Secretary for Foreign Affairs Alexander Watson

Yeltsin should be jailed for 10 yrs: Zhirinovsky

BAGHDAD, Mar 1: Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky said on Tuesday President Boris Yeltsin should be jailed for at least 10 years for failing to end the suffering of the Russian and Iraqi peoples, reports Reuter.

"Yes' yes' it is necessary to punish (him). It is the result of his policy now there are many victims in Russia. Zhirinovsky said at the end of a three-day visit to Baghdad.

Yeltsin also deserved punishment because he had done nothing to improve the lot of the Iraqi people suffering under United Nations sanctions. he added

"After five years of blockade (we still) have negative results," he said.

Asked what type of punishment he had in mind for Yeltsin. Zhirinovsky said: 'Ten years of prison, may be 20. Between 10 and 20 years.

He told reporters he was certain his ultra-nationlist party would win Russia's next parliamentary elections and that he would be president in

"I will cancel all embargoes for Iraq, Yugoslavia, we will begin with Iraq." he said, adding that if necessary he would leave the United Nations if its charter was not changed.

Zhirinovsky, who was ac-

50-member delegation including 20 Russian parliamentary deputies, earlier singed an agreement on cooperation between his party and Iraq's ruling Baath Party.

He also signed a protocol with Iraq's parliamentary Speaker Saadi Mehdi, Saleh to promote bilateral ties.

"The visit has achieved tremendous results. It opens the path for solid relations between ... our two parliaments for the benefit of the two countries and peoples," Saleh

Zhirinovsky met Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Monday and put forward his idea of a coalition between orthodox Christians and Muslims to confront the West, but he did not say whether Saddam agreed to sign an accord on the plan.

The United Nations clamped sanctions on Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990. Zhirinovsky said on arrival on Sunday that he wanted the sanctions lifted immedi-

Russia says fraq owes it 9 billion dollar and supports efforts to have sanctions lifted to the money can be repaid, but Yeltsin's administration has said it would not lift sanctions unilaterally

Off the Record

Another man pays heavily for his libido

COLOMBO: An 18-year-old Sri Lankan housemaid hacked off the penis of a 60-year-old man with a kitchen knife after he made sexual advances towards her, police said on Wednesday, reports AP.

Thangiah Vijendra was charged with causing grievous injury and jailed until May 8, when a Colombo court would begin trying her.

The gardener was rushed to hospital, but unlike in the Lorena Bobbitt case, doctors were unable to surgically reattach the organ.

The victim, a gardener in the same house where Vijendra worked, said he was attacked because he found her having sex with another manservant. She first tried to buy his silence with sexual favours, he told the police.

This was the first such case of such violence in Sri Lanka, which has a conservative society and sex outside marriage is considered a taboo and shameful.

'A perfectly normal guy'

AIX-EN-PROVINCE, France: A man on trial for 37 rapes and sexual assaults over a 15-year-period testified Tuesday that he was "a perfectly normal guy" driven to his crimes by a split personality, reports AP.

"I had compulsions," said Alain Garcia, 53, a refinery worker with a wife and two children. "There was another person who entered into me."

Garcia, arrested in 1988, went on trial Monday in what reportedly is the biggest case of serial rape recorded in France.

He testified Tuesday that he felt a need for sexual relations because his wife was sickly.

"I don't know why I didn't take a mistress," he said. "I had money. I could have paid a prostitute.

Jailed for the past seven years while investigators examined scores of rape cases. Garcia underwent extensive medical and psychological tests.

He was found to be physically normal and of near-average intelligence.

ROK President | US monitoring Iran's deployment of Hawk missiles in Gulf for unification

SEOUL, Mar 1: President Kim Young-Sam on Wednesday said South and North Korea should be reconciled and work for unification of the divided peninsula, reports Reuter.

our country to remain divided after a half century." Kim said in a speech to commemorate the 76th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement in 1919, when Korean revolted against Japanese colonial rule.

WASHINGTON, Mar 1: US intelligence is keeping close watch on Iran's deployment of artillery and missiles at the mouth of the Gulf, which America's top general said Tuesday could endanger shipping on the critical waterway.

of Koreas reports AP. "It is a national shame for Gen John Shalikashvili.

> chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff said the Iranians have deployed anti-aircraft missiles on islands in the Strait of Hormuz, through which pass ships carrying much of the world's oil supply. President Clinton said the

US-made Hawk missiles are "rather old" and have been in the Iranians armoury for some time. The Shah of Iran, whose monarchy fell to the current Islamic government in 1979. was a close ally and major arms

"We are on top of the situation, and we think there is no undue cause for concern at this moment," Clinton said "It's a situation that we're monitoring very closely Shalikashvili said US re-

connaissance had spotted the

Iranians "putting missiles onto

launchers, which they haven't

"All of that could lead me to lots of conclusions," said the general. "One of them is that they want to have the capability to interdict the traffic in customer of the United States

> Undersecretary of State Lynn Davis said she has insufficient details to "get behind the objectives of the Iranians." She said, however, that whatever it is 'poses a poten-

tial threat to stability: not only

to their neighbours but also

over time to the flow of trade

the Strait of Hormuz.

He said they also have ar-

tillery in forward positions.

in that pat of the world." As undersecretary of state

for international security af fairs. Davis is deeply involved in US efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear technology that could be used for a weapons programme. The United States has tried

without success to persuade the Russians to call off a deal under which they are building a light-water nuclear power plant in Iran. The Russians contend the reactor is a type from which it is very difficult to extract material for nuclear weapons.

Shalikashvili said that while Iraq remains the major threat in the region, "as you look towards the end of the century. the beginning of the next cen tury, we have to be very mindful that Iran can become that major threat. "I am very worried when a

government like Iran would get a capability of weapons of mass destruction," he said. think we would face a very very serious challenge, and all our friends in that area would face a very serious challenge. am very worried about Iran.

un 1987, at the height of

the Iran-Iraq War, Iran deployed Chinese-made Silkworm anti-ship missiles along the 90-mile Strait of Hormuz, prompting the Ronald Reagan administration to provide naval escorts for Kuwaiti oil tankers. After an Iranian mine al-

most sank the missile frigate USS Samuel B Roberts in April 1988, the United States retaliated with attacks on Iranian targets. Three oil platforms were wrecked and several vessels, including an armed patrol boat and two large gunboats. were sunk or disabled.

involvement in Delhi meet

ISLAMABAD, Mar 1: The government on Tuesday implicitly confirmed reports of recent private meeting between citizens from Pakistan and India over the nuclear issue, but denied any secrecy or official involvement in it. reports AFP.

A statement, issued by the Foreign Ministry here, said the suggestions that any official or secret talks had taken place between India and Pakistan were "without foundation."



Russian nationalist and Parliamentary delegation leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky leaves Baghdad on Tuesday ending an official visit. - AFP/UNB photo

done before

companied on his visit by a