BREFLY



US Secretary of State Warren Christopher (L) and Palestinian authority President Yasser Arafat speak at a press conference in Beit Hanun in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday. Christopher announced that the United States will allocate 2.7 million dollars to help the democratization in Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

- AFP/UNB photo

4 Harijans killed in Bihar: Four Harijans were killed by some unidentified criminals at the Karnaul Chandi village under the Charpokhari police station in Bihar's Ara district last night, according to official sources.

The heavily-armed criminals swooped down on the village late last night and killed the Harijans, the sources told PTI in Ara yesterday.

Seoul local council chief held: South Korean police yesterday arrested a local council chief on charges of illegal election nearing ahead of the crucial upcoming parliamentary elections, triggering outcries of foul play from the opposition, AFP reports from

Police said they arrested ban Sang-Kyun of the main opposition National Congress for New Politics (NCNP), who was elected last year to head the Kumchon district in

King Fahd arrives in Makkah: Saudi Arabian King Fahd has arrived in the Muslim holy city of Makkah on his first trip since suffering a stroke in November, the Saudi press agency reported. Reuter reports from Dubai.

In a late Wednesday night despatch, the agency said the king flew to the Red Sea port city Jeddah from the capital Riyadh on his way to nearby Makkah.

Iraq, Russia sign accord: Iraq and Russia signed an agreement on technical cooperation in their oil industries in Baghdad on Wednesday, as talks resumed in Ne ork on Iraq resuming limited crude exports. AFP regards from Baghdad.

Under the accord, the two countries will cooperate in training oil industry technicians in exploring, drilling. producing and refining oil, the official Iraqi news agency INA said. Iraq has been under a UN oil and trade embargo since its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

7000 flee Riau to escape flood:

More than seven thousand people have been evacuated in Riau, a province in central Sumatra, to escape floods triggered by incessant rain, a local official said Thursday, AFP reports from Jakarta.

"The rising waters of the Kampar river have now inundated eight sub-districts and forced the evacuation of 7.080 people to safer grounds," said an official at the provincial spokesman's office in Pekanbaru.

photographer honoured: Lithuanian photographer Mindaugas Kulbis has been named European Press Photographer of 1995 for his dramatic images from Chechnya on assignment for the Associated Press, AP reports from Stockholm.

Astronomers find galaxy at 'great attractor's' centre

LONDON, Feb 8: Astronomers said on Wednesday they had solved one of cosmology's little mysteries by finding the galaxy at the centre of the "great attractor," a giaut mass of galaxies that sends other galaxies webbling, reports Reuter.

RC Kraan-Korteweg or the Observatoire De Paris and colleagues in South Africa and New Mexico said astronomers have been mystified by findings that nearby galaxies, which are speeding off into space, do not move at uniform velocities. These deviations indicate

the presence of the "great attractor" - a large concentration of mass (equivalent to five million billion suns) that lies in the direction of the southern Milky Way.

The gravitational attraction of this mass must be afastronomers cannot see through all the dust and light in that part of the dense

Using telescopes in Europe, South Africa and Australia to supplement existing surveys of the sky, Kraan-Korteweg's group managed to fill in the holes. They pinpointed a galaxy other astronomers had overlooked.

previously identified galaxy cluster, Abell 3627, which lies only nine degrees from the predicted centre of the 'great attractor', is very massive," they wrote in the science journal Nature,

the State University of New York, said the finding was important to scientists trying to find out whether the universe will go on expanding forever, reach a "steadystate", or eventually collapse back on itself.

fecting the other galaxies, but matter there is in the universe, because this affects the gravitational pull that holds things together.

Colombo bank blast

Lankan army officer held

COLOMBO, Feb 8: Police investigating last week's suicide bomb attack in the Sri Lankan capital have arrested an army officer suspected of allowing the truck bomb to slip through security in the north, police said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The arrest was made the day after police took into custody an army sergeant suspected of obtaining a security permit for one of the rebel bombers to come to Colombo from the northern frontline town of Vavuniya.

The powerful truck bomb on January 31 killed at least 83 people, wounded more than 1,200 and gutted part of the capital's financial district. The government has

blamed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), who are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in the island's north and east, for the attack which was condemned by many countries.

US Cong issues 28 subpoenas to admn officials

WASHINGTON, Feb 8: Locked in a battle of wills with the Clinton administration. a Republican-led congressional panel issued 28 subpoenas Wednesday to administration officials seeking documents on the White House travel office firings. reports AP.

Among those receiving subpoenas from the House of Representative government Reform and Oversight Committee were senior White House aides George Stephanopolous and Harold Ickes: Lisa Caputo, spokeswoman for Hillary Clinton; and former presidential lawyers Bernard Nussbaum and Neil Eggleston.

At issue are documents those aides have relating to the bungled firings in May 1993 of seven employees of the White House travel office that the administration has refused to turn over so far.

Louis Farrakhan meets Abiola

LAGOS, Feb 8: Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan met with Nigeria's most prominent political prisoner. according to news reports on Wednesday, reports AP.

Farrakhan, who is on a tour of Africa, would not disclose the nature of his twohour meeting with Nigerian opposition leader Moshood

Abiola, a millionaire businessman who presumably won the 1993 presidential election that was rejected by the military government, has been detained since declaring himself president more than a vear ago.

Farrakhan was quoted in Lagos newspapers on Wednesday as saying his meeting with Abiola at an undisclosed location in the capital of Abuja was "useful and our discussion frank."

Farrakhan, in Nigeria for two weeks, also met with military ruler Gen. Sani Abacha.

New Polish govt eases pressure on

ex-communists WARSAW. Feb 8: The appointment of a new Polish government has eased the pressure on the co-ruling former communists, seriously shaken by spying accusations against previous prime minister Jozef Oleksy, reports

President Aleksander Kwasniewski appointed the new cabinet on Wednesday after two weeks of tough bar-

Reuter.

Beijing-Taipei tension temporary: Clinton

China blames US for current tension in Taiwan Strait

BEIJING, Feb 8: China blamed the United States today for the current tension in the Taiwan Strait and warned Washington to stay out if it did not wish to see the stand-off between Beijing and Taipei deteriorate into armed conflict, reports AFP.

Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's visit to the United States last year and US arms sales to Taiwan are "the two major causes" for the tension. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang

Asked about the possible use of force by China to take over Taiwan, which Beijing considers a renegade province, Shen said, "I believe the non-peaceful means will be used in two cases: The interference of foreign forces in China's internal affairs and the independence of Taiwan."

He warned Washington against invoking the Taiwan relations act and going to the aid of Taiwan.

in Japan's southernmost prefecture of Okinawa.

WASHINGTON, Feb 8: US

President Bill Clinton's aides

are examining evidence that

China sold nuclear technol-

ogy to Pakistan to determine

whether it is strong enough

to invoke trade sanctions, an

State Department officials

official said Wednesday, re-

raised concerns about the al-

leged sale of the weapons-re-

lated technology in talks with

Chinese Vice Foreign Minis-

ter Li Zhaoxing this week. he

into something on scant evi-

dence," said the official,

speaking on condition he not

The official stressed that

"We don't want to rush

ports AFP.

be named.

Meanwhile, AP adds:

President Clinton says he be-lieves military tensions between China and Taiwan are a temporary problem because leaders in Beijing and Taipei have too much at stake to permit armed conflict to oc-

cur, reports AP. Eventually, time will take care of this and they'll decide on the appropriate resolution," Clinton said on Wednesday. He urged the two sides to settle their differences peacefully.

He noted that the overall

trend in the area has been

toward a lessening of tensions and said, "I don't believe the leaders will let that turn around." Taiwan investors have played a key role in China's economic development, and

Clinton indicated such cooperation would be halted if current tensions escalated to the point of armed hostilities.

China has become alarmed at gains by Taiwan's pro-independence movement, US

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto (R) chats with US national security adviser

Anthony Lake prior to a meeting at the premiers official residence in Tokyo on

Wednesday. They are expected to talk about problems related to the US military presence

N-technology sale to Pakistan

US examining evidence to

invoke trade ban on China

the administration was sensi-

tive to the fact that sanctions

against Beijing "would have a

great impact" on US-Sino re-

this week quoted US intelli-

gence as saying that China

sold ring magnets, used in

gas centrifuges that enrich

uranium for weapons, to Pak-

Monday said the Central In-

telligence Agency had noti-

fied the State Department

that it, had detected a ship-

ment of 5,000 magnets to

the Abdul Qadeer Khan Re-

search Laboratory in Kahuta,

If confirmed, the sale,

The Washington Times on

Newspaper reports here

lations.

Pakistan.

officials believe Beijing's saber rattling is aimed at dampening such sentiments as presidential elections in Taiwan approach.

Anti-Independence President Lee Teng-hui is favoured to win re-election in the March 23 balloting.

Defence Secretary William Perry has said he is concerned but not alarmed that China is using "military manoeuvering" to try to influence the election.

In appearances before a Senate panel, administration officials said on Wednesday they believe the Chinese threats are mostly posturing but warned Beijing that any attack would have "very grave consequences.

Earlier report says: Trying

- AFP/UNB photo

would be violation of the

1994 nuclear proliferation

act which provides for the

nancial assistance to busi-

Such a move would halt fi-

administration to cut off fi-

nesses doing trade with

nancing from the US export-

import bank for nearly 10

billion dollars worth of busi-

deals by aviation giant Boeing.

AT and T and Westinghouse

Electric, the Washington Post

Michael McCurry meanwhile

said the United States would

act in line with the determi-

nation made by officials in

their review of the evidence.

White House spokesman

ness in China that includes

to ease tensions, President Clinton said on Wednesday a military confrontation between China and Taiwan is unlikely. He urged their political leaders to find a way to work out their problems.

Israeli polls to be held on May 28, says Peres

JERUSALEM, Feb 8: Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres told US Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Wednesday that Israeli elections would be held on May

28, diplomatic sources said.
"Peres told Christopher that the elections will be on May 28," one diplomatic source told Reuters.

The source who spoke on condition of anonymity said the main reasons for Peres's talks with Christopher on Wednesday were to thank him for persuading Syrian President Hafez Al Assad to keep the peace process moving and "to tell him the date of the election. It was to have been held in October.

Christopher said on Tues-day after talks with Assad in Damascus that Israel and Syria would resume negotiations on February 26 near Washington, whether or not Israel called early elections as expected.

Peres told Israel radio after meeting Christopher on the issue of the elections "I announced that I would make an announcement next week

and I am standing by that an-nouncement." But signs of preparations for elections bound Justice Minister David Libai told Israel's channel two television the ruling Labour Party had set up a committee on elections.

AP adds: Human right cannot be ignored in the rush toward peace, Amnesty International's head waned on Wednesday in a visit to the

PLO-ruled Gaza Strip. Amnesty Secretary-General Pierre Sane was visiting to discuss charges that Palestinian police tortured detainees. The international human rights group also ac-cused Israel of detaining hundreds of Palestinian prisoners without charge and systematically torturing pris-

oners during interrogations. A delegation led by Sane met for more than two hours on Wednesday night with PLO leader Yasser Arafat.

Sane told The Associated Press that Arafat ensured him the newly elected Palestinian legislature would work for the protection of human rights.

Off the Record

Snakes vary their venom according to choice!

LONDON: Poisonous snakes can vary their venom according to what kind of prey they attack, biologists reported on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

They said their findings could be important for doctors trying to come up with ways to treat snakebite victims. Wolfgang Wuster and colleagues at the University of Wales collected nearly 70 malayanpit vipers, a species that bites more people than any other snake in Southeast Asia.

They analysed both the venom of the snakes and what they were eating. Its venom contains many potent digestive enzymes which can cause human victims to suffer severe tissue damage, often leading to permanent deformities among

survivors," they wrote in the science journal Nature. "The precise symptomology shows some geographical variation, suggestive of variation in venom composition." Wuster's group found that the venom of snakes that mostly ate lizards, and other reptiles was different from that of snakes of the same species that ate mice, rats and

other mammals. Captive-bred pit vipers had the same venom as their parents, indicating that venom composition is inherited rather than a result of what the snakes were eating.

Indoor lighting can reset body's internal clock

NEW YORK: Ordinary household lighting makes it harder to get up in the morning by resetting the body's internal clock, a study suggests, reports AP.

While scientists have long known that bright light can reset the brain's internal clock, which governs such things as the drive to sleep, the new work shows that ordinary indoor lighting can also affect the setting. Results suggest that when people are exposed to indoor

lighting after sunset the body's clock is reset in such a way that, on average, the peak drive for sleep occurs at about 4 am to 5 am. Without artificial lighting, the peak would probably occur about midnight, said the study's researcher, Dr Charles Czeisler.

As a result of the shift in their internal clock, Czeisler said, people exposed to indoor light must wake up much closer to the time when their bodies are making peak demands for sleep.

He said that makes it harder to get out of bed in the morning and also makes it harder to go to sleep early

enough the next night to get enough rest. To minimize the problem, Czeisler recommended using dimmer light in the hours before bedtime, sticking to a regular schedule for bedtime and awakening (even on weekends), avoiding artificial light after one's regular bed-

time hour, sleeping in a dark place and letting sunlight stream into the bedroom in the mornings. Czeisler, of Brigham and Women's Hospital, in Boston, and his colleagues reported the five-year study, which in-

volved 31 men exposed to the normal range of light found in modern homes and offices, in the Feb 8 issue of the journal Nature.

UK may extend 'white list' of nations on asylum issue

LONDON, Feb 8: Britain may extend its so-called "white list" of nations deemed safe from political persecution by adding Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya to the seven countries from which asylum seekers would be rejected, the Guardian reported today, says

The paper said it had seen a leaked document — signed by foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind — which shows the Home Office wants to extend the current list, which includes Bulgaria, Cyprus, India, Ghana, Pakistan, Poland and Romania.

More than 3,425 asylum applications were received last year from the three African countries which may be added to the list the Guardian noted, adding that only 59 applicants were given asylum or exceptional leave

The leaked document makes clear that the key criterion for country to be included in the 'white list' is not its human rights record but the volume of asylum claims it generates and the rate at which the Home Office refuses them, the paper

Home Secretary Michael Howard said in December that there would be a "presumption" that people arriving from the listed countries did not face a "serious risk of persecution" and that their claims for asylum were not well-founded.

He said arrivals from countries on the list would still be dealt with on a caseby-case basis and would retain the right of appeal to an independent adjudicator although they would lose the right of further appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal.

Ireland seeks US | China's chances of military success slim if it invades Taiwan: IISS support to end sectarian strife

sought US support today for a plan to hold a two-day brain storming session of northern Ireland's political parties to pave the way for a permanent end to 25 years of political and sectarian strife, reports

Reuter. Irish Foreign Minister Dick Spring travelled to Washington to enlist Bill Clinton's backing for Bosnia-style talks which the US president successfully convened in Dayton. Ohio to end years of religious and political war informer Yugoslavia.

irish officials said they expected a sympathetic hearing from Clinton, who paid a triumphant peace-making visit last year to northern Ireland.

chances of military success if it invaded Taiwan are slim DUBLIN, Feb 8: Ireland and it would probably suffer massive casualties and considerable loss of face, according to a naval analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies. (IISS), re-

"China has to be content with issuing forceful rhetoric and giving visible demonstrations of its power while it slowly attempts to develop a real capability for the future." John Downing said in a report to be published in the March issue of Jane's Intelligence Review.

Despite China's 1.2 million-strong army and its acquisition of some new weapons in recent years, most of its equipment is old and its

LONDON, Feb 8: China's "capability to fight in a modern environment remains in considerable doubt," he said in the report, made available to The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Downing's assessment echoed a report last week by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute which said China's military capacity is overrated in the West, its weapons quality is low and most Western arms sellers have stopped supplying Beijing.

In recent months, China has staged war games and test-fire missiles to signal its displeasure with Taiwan's attempts to promote itself internationally. A series of stories appearing in the media in Hong Kong, which cannot be independently confirmed. give the impression of a

gradual Chinese buildup to

US Defence Secretary William Perry said Tuesday he is concerned but not alarmed that China is using "military maneuvering" to try to influence Taiwan's democratic presidential election. set for March 23. The Clinton administration has not said how it would respond if China attacked.

China says publicly it will not rule out using military force against Taiwan, an economic powerhouse that Beijing considers a rebel province.

Downing said the Chinese

leadership privately, how-

ever, "will appreciate that

while it would be desirable

for Taiwan to kowtow to such

threats, with the People's

Liberation Army in its current state, not only would the chances of a military success be slim but an invasion force would also suffer massive casualties and probably considerable loss of face."

"Military operations further afield would be even more problematic," he said. But in another article to be published in Jane's Intelligence Review, Holly Porteous, a researcher at the Centre for Nonproliferation Studies in Monterey, California, said "China's threats to use force against Taiwan may

be more than just bluster." She said China is very concerned about US plans for developing and sharing new anti-missile missiles, which will replace the Patriot antimissile system used to destroy Scud ballistic missiles

fired by Iraq during the 191 Gulf War. The US army calls the programme theatre missile defense. "The US offer to work co-

operatively with Japan on theatre missile defense and its exploration of Taiwan's interest in this area pose a direct threat to China's strategic arsenal," Porteous said.

China invested a tremendous amount to build its arsenal of about 300 nuclear weapons and can't afford "another game of catching up," she said, either by building its own missife defenses or trying to devise ways to counter the US missiles.

"If pushed far enough into a corner on the theatre missile defence issue, it appears likely that China will, at the very least, lash out against plans for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in 1996," Porteous warned. She said two Chinese mis-

sile scientists. Liu Erxun. vice chief engineer at the China Academy of Launch Vehicle Technology and Huang Zuwei, director of the Space Systems Research Division of the Systems Engineering Research Centre at the China aerospace Corpora-tion, reached the same conclusion in a forthcoming pa-

Porteous quoted them as warning that deployment of these anti-missile system may cause nations with smaller arsenals, namely China. Britain and France, to reconsider their commitments to participate in further arms control efforts with Russia and the Untied States.

Saudi prince opens secret talks with dissidents

LONDON, Feb 8: Crown Prince Abdallah of Saudi Arabia has opened a secret dialogue with Islamic dissidents linked to Mohamed Al Massari, the prominent exile who has been ordered to leave Britain, the Independent reported today quoting "wellinformed sources" in the kingdom, reports AFP.

The paper said the move by Prince Abdallha, who took over last month from King Fahad, could wrong-foot the British government which is embroiled in a complex legal battle to expel Al-Massari to the Caribean island of Dominica.

It noted that since Britain has conspicuously staked its interests in Saudi Arabia on a continued hard line against religious dissidents.

