

## BRIEFLY



French doyenne Jeanne Calment presents on Thursday at her retirement home in Arles the compact disc "mistress of time" that she recently recorded. The disc consists of four funk-rap songs and will be released on February 22 for Calment's 121 birthday.

— AFP/UNB photo

**Polish parliament okays new govt:** The leftist-dominated parliament on Thursday approved the Cabinet of Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz, Poland's seventh government since the 1989 fall of communism, AP reports from Warsaw.

The new prime minister has vowed to continue the nation's 6-year-old market reforms and its pro-western course. He also promised to rebuild the authority of state institutions, which suffered as a result of spying allegations against his predecessor and during a stormy presidential campaign last year.

**US aid for China quake victims:** A plane carrying 80 tons of medicine and medical supplies from the United States arrived in Beijing on Friday en route to an earthquake site in southwestern China, AP reports from Beijing.

The 2 million dollars cargo was donated by US health, care companies and delivered under the direction of Project Hope, a US-based charity best known for its hospital ship, SS Hope. "This goes beyond governments. This is very much people-to-people," said Lyle L. Smith, Project Hope's director in China.

**Russia slams Turkish newsmen:** Russia slammed two journalists working for a major Turkish newspaper on Thursday, accusing them of incitement, "anti-Russian" coverage and illegal entry into the breakaway republic of Chechnya, AP reports from Moscow.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Grigory Karasin said Russian authorities may bar the two, Ramazan Ozturk and Benguc Ozerdem of the Sabah newspaper, from entering Russia in the future. A statement of protest was issued to the Turkish Embassy in Moscow on Thursday, Karasin said.

**Tajik security chief killed:** Opposition gunmen shot and killed a regional security chief and wounded other security officers in a car ambush, a news agency reported Friday, AP reports from Dushanbe.

The ITAR-Tass news agency said Khodaberdor Ibodov, security chief of the Tajikabad region, was slain when opposition militants attacked his car on a highway 160 kilometres (100 miles) northeast of the capital Dushanbe. The ambush came a day after a 24-hour truce was declared by the government and Muslim opposition forces to allow the return of bodies of government forces killed in two weeks of clashes in the Tavildara region.

**Vietnam, Laos to boost ties:** Vietnamese and Laotian defence ministers have agreed to strengthen their longstanding and already close military ties, an official newspaper said on Friday, AP reports from Hanoi.

Laos Lt. Gen. Choummaly Saysonne and Vietnam's Gen Doan Khue exchanged information on their national defence situations in meetings this week in Hanoi, the Vietnam News said. Saysonne began a five-day visit to Vietnam on Wednesday, it said.

## UN urges Afghan factions to allow humanitarian aid

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 16: The Security Council on Thursday called on Afghanistan's warring factions to allow the delivery of food and medicine into the capital of Kabul, reports AP.

Civilians in Kabul have been virtually isolated due to heavy fighting and harsh winter weather and relief workers have warned of severe food shortages if deliveries are not permitted.

Islamic factions have been fighting each other since 1992 when they took control of the capital and ousted the communist government.

The council called for an end to the fighting and demanded that the factions stop blocking "the delivery of humanitarian aid and other needed supplies to the innocent civilians of the city."

The council also demanded that militia leaders

halt drug trafficking and terrorism on their territory.

The council "is deeply concerned that the continued conflict in Afghanistan provides fertile ground for terrorism, arms transfers and drug trafficking," the council statement said. "It calls on the leaders of the Afghan parties... to halt such activities."

Islamic fighters from many Muslim countries joined the fight against the communist government and some have remained in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is one of the world's largest producers of opium, which is smuggled across the porous 750-kilometre (500-mile) border.

Reuters adds, the Security Council expressed particular concern about the "recent intensification of shelling and air attacks in and around" Kabul.

**Ghali recommends 6-month extension of UN mission in Haiti**

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 16: As Haiti's new president struggles to assume control of his shattered country, the UN secretary-general has recommended that a scaled-down United Nations force remain there for another six months, reports AP.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the United States, which had planned to remove its troops by March 15, has agreed to keep about 320 support personnel in Haiti for another month to close its bases and provide helicopters and flight and maintenance crews.

The Security Council is expected to vote on a six-month extension before the current mandate expires at the end of the month.

## Floods claim 60 in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG, Feb 16: At least 60 people are dead or missing Thursday in flooding which has devastated towns, villages and shack settlements in the eastern parts of South Africa, state television said, reports AP.

As unseasonably heavy rain that started Saturday continued to fall, rivers in six of the country's provinces burst their banks washing away people, homes, roads, vehicles and livestock.

Seven people drowned Thursday bringing the possible death toll since the floods began to 62, the South African Broadcasting Corporation said.

The Sapa News said 19 flood-related deaths had been confirmed by police, but that another 43 people are missing but other reports put the number of missing persons at more than 50.

Mpumalanga province South Africa's eastern border with Swaziland, was the worst hit, and police reported that three children had drowned there late Thursday.

## US black women plan to stage rally in June

LOS ANGELES, Feb 16: Black activists announced plans Thursday for a June rally billed as the Million Woman March, but insisted it was not a response to last summer's Million Man March in Washington, DC, reports AP.

The event scheduled for June 14-16 will focus on crime, teen pregnancy and other issues affecting families, said Celes King, a Los Angeles bail bondsman. Workshops and seminars are planned.

"Our theme is strengthening the bonds of the family," King said at a news conference.

**Clinton, Holbrooke nominated for Nobel Peace Prize**

OSLO, Feb 16: US President Bill Clinton and diplomat Richard Holbrooke are among the candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize to be awarded in October, the Norwegian press agency NTB reported, says AP.

The agency which cited reliable sources said the two had been proposed for their role in negotiating the Dayton (Ohio) accords which ended four years of war in the former Yugoslav republic.

The Nobel Institute which receives the nominations for the prize does not make public the names of candidates.

NTB said other candidates who played a role in the Bosnia negotiations might also have been proposed notably the European Union's Lord Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg, the United Nations negotiator.

## 'Nexus among politicians, cops made Indian democracy mockery'

NEW DELHI, Feb 16: The nexus among politicians, bureaucrats and police made Indian democracy a "mockery," the Chief Justice of India AM Ahmadi said today, reports PTI.

Delivering the Dr Zakir Hussain memorial lecture on "the problems and prospects of Indian democracy" an evaluation of its working for designing the processes of change for peaceful transformation here, Justice Ahmadi called for breaking this "vicious circle."

Criticising the emergency imposed in 1975 as the "death knell for democracy" and the populist methods taken by political leaders for short term gain, he said there has been a perceptible decline in the performance of parliament.

"In recent times, we have noticed instances of one wing of the government avoiding to take a decision a politically sensitive issue by passing it on to another wing, the latter not being expected to make that decision" he said.

expansion of the Palestinian autonomous zones in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. He rejects withdrawal from the Golan.

"I don't much believe in a 'New Middle East'," Netanyahu said, mocking the title of Peres' upbeat 1993 book predicting a future in which soldiers give way to software engineers.

"We don't see a computer for every Arab peasant in the region," the Likud Party leader said this week as he and Peres announced that the elections would be held early, probably in late May.

Hanan Ashrawi, a former Arafat spokeswoman elected last month to the new Palestinian self-rule council, warned that Netanyahu's attitude could wipe out the achievements of the peace process.

"It will sign the death

## International

## Police-MQM gunbattle leaves 8 dead

KARACHI, Feb 16: An early morning gunbattle on Friday between ethnic militants and police left eight people dead, including one policeman, hospital and police officials said, reports AP.

The shootout occurred during a police raid on a suspected hideout of ethnic militants in the troubled Orangi neighbourhood in eastern Karachi, Pakistan's violent port city.

Seven of the dead were militants, who belonged to the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM), a group that represents Indian Muslims who settled in Pakistan after 1947, police said.

The most powerful political force in Karachi, representing nearly 70 per cent of the city's 12 million people, the Mohajirs have been waging an increasingly violent battle with the Karachi Security Force.

The MQM declared Friday a day of mourning to honour the seven Mohajirs killed earlier in the day.

As well the MQM has

called a nationwide strike on Saturday to protest the deaths of Mohajirs either in shootouts with police or while in police custody.

"Our workers are being

## Missiles from SA Pakistan terms report as 'speculative'

CAPE TOWN, Feb 16: Pakistani Senate Chairman Wasim Sajjad on Thursday described as "speculative" reports that his country is about to buy missiles from South Africa, reports AP.

Sajjad, who earlier Thursday became the first foreigner to address the South African Senate in its chamber, did not directly deny the reports of a 600 million rand (186 million dollar) deal, the Sapa News Agency reported.

He said Pakistan was in favour of totally eliminating missiles from South Asia

killed in cold blood," said Shoaib Bukhari, an MQM leader. "Their relatives and neighbours are witness to it."

So far this year nearly 40 Mohajirs, suspected of terrorist activities, have either died while in jail, or during gunbattles with police.

The MQM, as well as international and local human rights groups have expressed concern about the increasing number of custodial deaths.

Late on Thursday another MQM leader and former legislator, Kunwar Khalid Yunus sought refuge in the US Consulate in Karachi and asked for political asylum, to protest alleged police abuses.

He surrendered after five hours of negotiations and guarantees from Pakistani officials that he would not be mistreated.

Before being hustled into an awaiting police van, Yunus said he fled to the US Consulate to protest "against the genocide of Mohajirs."

Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government has denied the accusations.



Thousands of students hold up their white-painted hands to protest against the assassination of Francisco Tomas Valiente at Madrid University on Thursday. The students painted their hands white as a symbolic contrast to the terrorists' blood-stained hands.

— AFP/UNB photo

## US may delay arms shipment to Pakistan amid allegations

WASHINGTON, Feb 16: The Clinton administration said on Thursday it was discussing with Congress how to proceed with delivery of military equipment to Pakistan, following new allegations that Islamabad is developing nuclear weapons, reports Reuters.

The Washington Post reported that the administration was considering delaying a planned shipment of arms because of Pakistan's suspected acquisition of sensitive nuclear equipment from China last year.

Under the so called Brown Amendment, Congress authorised the release to Pakistan of 368 million dollar of equipment Islamabad bought before 1990, when Washington stopped military cooperation because of Pakistan's alleged nuclear arms plans.

"We are now working with the Congress in an attempt to

decide how to proceed in implementing the amendment's various provisions," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

There has been some discussion in the Congress about this, and I think we certainly want to continue our discussions with the Congress and with the government of Pakistan, he added.

Several members of Congress have demanded that implementation of the Brown Amendment be held up following reports that Pakistan purchased 5,000 Chinese ring magnets, used in gas centrifuges that enrich uranium.

US officials say they have discussed the allegation with China and Pakistan both of which have denied the transaction.

The Washington Post quoted US officials and

diplomatic sources as saying deputy national security adviser Samuel Berger warned Pakistan during a visit there two weeks ago that the allegations could hold up the arms shipment.

The shipment would include naval patrol aircraft, harpoon missiles Howitzers and various spare part and equipment. But not F-16 fighters also purchased by Pakistan — that the United States is trying to sell to a third country.

Pentagon spokesman Ken Bacon said: "This whole issue is being reviewed. We always review arms sales in light of information we have at the time."

The United States has not so far made an official "determination" that China sold Pakistan the ring magnets — a move that would require the administration to impose sanctions on Beijing.



Republican Presidential candidates (L-R) Alan Keyes, Morry Taylor, Steve Forbes, Robert Dornan, Sen. Robert Dole, Sen. Richard Lugar, Lamar Alexander and Pat Buchanan pose for a photo before the start of the New Hampshire presidential debate in Manchester on Thursday. — AFP/UNB photo

## Iraq, Syria to work for 'fair share' of Euphrates waters from Turkey

DAMASCUS, Feb 16: Old foes Syria and Iraq have decided to work together to wrest a "fair share" of the vital waters of the Euphrates from Turkey after five days of talks here, a senior Syrian official said Thursday, reports AP.

"We have coordinated our positions to work together on a regional and international scale to force Turkey to respect international law," a member of the Syrian delegation, Munib Rifai, told AP.

The two countries broke diplomatic ties in 1980 as are governed by rival wings of the Baath Party. But they have been pushed together in the dispute with Turkey over the Euphrates.

"A fair sharing of the international waters (of the Euphrates) between the three bordering countries in line with international law is the only solution to the conflicts with Turkey."

"We will not hesitate to raise the issue before international bodies and to use every legal means to win our

rights," he added.

The Euphrates rises in Turkey and flows into Syria before passing into Iraq. Both countries which suffer hot, dry summers depend on the river waters to irrigate crops along its banks.

Iraq has already accused Turkey of causing the waters to fail by half following the completion of the Ataturk Dam in 1992.

But a further bone of contention is the 30-billion-dollar Turkish project, known as GAP, to build 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric power stations.

Rifai said the dispute would be discussed at the next meeting of the 22 Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo on March 13.

"We expect a firm attitude from the Arab League towards Turkey and their backing to region Arab rights."

Iraq said in a memorandum to the Arab League in January that Turkey was going ahead with the GAP Project without any concern for Syrian and Iraqi rights to the Euphrates.

## India wants deadline for total elimination of N-arms

GENEVA, Feb 16: Stepping up confrontation with nuclear powers in negotiation for a nuclear test ban treaty, India demanded a deadline Thursday for the total elimination of nuclear weapons, reports AP.

Arundhati Ghose, the Indian ambassador to the 38-nation Conference on Disarmament, likened the ongoing negotiations to a hall with trick mirrors in which nothing is what it appears to be.

"Those who want to eliminate nuclear weapons are being seen as a threat to disarmament. The threatened are being painted as a threat," she said.

Ghose contended that the test ban, expected to be concluded by the end of this year, would freeze the nuclear status of all countries and, without a timeframe for disarmament, would leave nuclear countries with the

ability "to threaten the very existence of others ... for eternity."

The declared nuclear powers are the United States, Russia, France, Britain and China.

India and other developing nations called for negotiations on the outright elimination of atomic arms to start early this year.

In a thinly-veiled reference to the United States, Britain and others, Ghose said a lack of flexibility on the part of a few delegations had blocked this move.

The United States has led criticism of India for wanting to link the test ban to disarmament.

Holding one important goal hostage for another is a sure way to fail at both," said John D. Holm, director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

## Off the Record

### Tale of a cave and 31 new, bizarre species of life

LONDON: An underground Romanian cave hidden from the outside world for five million years has yielded 31 new and bizarre species of life, a British newspaper reported on Wednesday, says Reuters.

The Movie Cave in Dobrogea, west of the Black Sea, has never seen the light of day, yet supports an entire ecosystem dependent on sulphur-laden groundwater for its existence, the Independent newspaper said.

The newly discovered creatures include blind spiders, leeches and water scorpions.

Serban Sarbu, a Romanian-born biologist now working at the University of Cincinnati in the United States, started exploring the cave when it was accidentally uncovered by construction work in 1986, the newspaper reported.

Sarbu said he fled former Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu's government and was only able to return to the cave after Ceausescu's death.

"All the food is being produced inside the cave, using the energy that results from the oxidation of hydrogen sulphide," the newspaper quoted Sarbu as saying.

It joins a very select group of ecosystems that do not depend in some way on sunlight. The only others are tens of thousands of feet (thousands of metres) underwater, living off the heat and chemicals pumped out by undersea volcanoes.

Creatures in the underwater systems include shrimp with no eyes, eel fish, crabs, mussels and tube worms.

The Movie Cave is considered so delicate that only three people are allowed in at any one time. Visitors must change their clothes on entering to avoid bringing in microbes from the outside world.

### Useful mouse

NEW YORK: Scientists have created a strain of mice that lack a key component of a brain communication system — a step that could shed light on drug addiction, Parkinson's disease and schizophrenia, reports AP.

The mice will help researchers understand brain cell circuits that communicate with a chemical messenger called dopamine.

In these circuits, one brain cell signals another by releasing bits of dopamine. Then it retrieves the dopamine with a structure called dopamine transporter, which terminates the signal.

Mice in the newly created strain have no dopamine transporter because of genetic defect. As a result, dopamine persists 300 times longer than usual in the tiny spaces between nerve cells, delivering its signal for an abnormally long time, said researcher Marc G. Caron.

That makes the mice hyperactive, as if they'd been given cocaine or amphetamines, said Caron. Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator and professor of cell biology at the Duke University Medical School in Durham, North Carolina.

The animals did not get more active when they were given cocaine or amphetamines. That confirms previous indications that those drugs affect the dopamine transporter, scientists said.

## Upcoming polls to determine future of Jewish state

TEL AVIV, Feb 18: The upcoming election will give Israelis their clearest choice in decades about the future of the Jewish state, reports AP.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres promises a mighty push for a comprehensive peace to end a century of Arab-Israeli conflict. Although he is vague on the details, many believe this to mean Palestinian independence and a return of the Golan Heights to Syria.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the right-wing challenger, tapes the skepticism that many Israelis have about whether the Arabs are ready to end hostilities and accept Israel's permanent presence in the Holy Land.

He considers Yasser Arafat a terrorist, not a peace-maker, and says he will never meet with him face-to-face. He vows to prevent further

expansion of the Palestinian autonomous zones in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. He rejects withdrawal from the Golan.

"I don't much believe in a 'New Middle East'," Netanyahu said, mocking the title of Peres' upbeat 1993 book predicting a future in which soldiers give way to software engineers.

"We don't see a computer for every Arab peasant in the region," the Likud Party leader said this week as he and Peres announced that the elections would be held early, probably in late May.

Hanan Ashrawi, a former Arafat spokeswoman elected last month to the new Palestinian self-rule council, warned that Netanyahu's attitude could wipe out the achievements of the peace process.

certificate for peace," she told The Associated Press.

For now, Peres leads his conservative rival by up to 20 per cent in the polls — a result of a wave of sympathy following the November 4 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by a right-wing religious extremist.

But the election is far from sewn up.

The urbane Peres, 72, has a poor track record, having lost three elections and tied one. Four years ago the Labour Party dumped him for Rabin, a gruff, popular former army chief, and won its first election in almost two decades.

When Rabin was assassinated, the party turned to Peres as the natural choice.

Peres' Achilles' heel is terrorism by Islamic mili-

itants who have vowed to wreck the peace process. A resumption of their deadly suicide bombings, on hold since the summer, could erase his advantage.

Launching his campaign this week, Peres urged Israelis to give him a mandate to "end the state of war in the entire region."

Rabin and Peres signed a 1993 deal with the PLO establishing autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza. That led to a peace treaty with Jordan, establishment of ties with several moderate Arab states and a fizzling of the Arab economic boycott of Israel.

Many difficult issues remain: the PLO's demand to upgrade autonomy to statehood; the future of Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, which the Palestinians want as their capital; the rights of hundreds of thousands of

Arab refugees; and the status of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza.

Netanyahu, 46, a former UN ambassador and deputy foreign minister, says he recognises Palestinian self-rule but would go no further. That would leave the 2.2 million West Bank and Gaza Arabs in limbo and still under Israel's effective domination.

Israel's Haaretz newspaper predicted a Netanyahu victory would mean "an almost inevitable new Palestinian uprising, this time under worse conditions" — not by stone-throwing youths, as during the 1987-93 intifadeh, but by thousands of armed PLO troops.

Such a development also would throw Israel's relations with Arab countries into turmoil.

Netanyahu adviser Dore Gold, a researcher at Tel Aviv

University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, said the solution to the Israeli-Arab problem was more complex than Labour's formula of offering land in exchange for peace.

The Palestinians, Gold said, would not turn hostile for fear of losing the autonomy they have gained. Talks with Damascus would continue because Syrian President Hafez Assad is more interested in being seen by the United States as pursuing peace than in actually reaching a deal.

And moderate Arab Gulf countries actually prefer a "strong Israel" to act as a counterbalance to Iran and militant Arab states, Gold said.

But he conceded: "To keep the process going will take a lot of diplomatic skill."

## Farrakhan ready to answer charges

BAGHDAD, Feb 16: US black Muslim leader Louis Farrakhan said here Thursday he was prepared to answer charges from US congressmen that he has committed treason for visiting countries allegedly supporting terrorism, reports AP.

According to what I have heard, two US congressmen are charging me with treason and they say I have possibly broken five or six laws which will get me 29 years in prison. Farrakhan said during a visit to Iraq.

The congressmen whom he did not name are calling for a Senate investigation of his visits to Colonel Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani in Iran and President Saddam Hussein in Iraq he said.