

# BRIEFLY



US President Bill Clinton makes a fist as he talks about the continued bombings in Israel while making a speech at a presidential luncheon at Cobo Conference and Exhibition Centre on Monday in downtown Detroit, Michigan. Clinton also made a speech in Taylor and visited a private residence as he spent much of the day in Michigan.

— AFP/UNB photo

## 36 feared dead in Peru bus mishap:

Thirty-six people are believed dead after a bus went off the road and plunged into a deep, swift-flowing river in the Peruvian highlands, authorities said Monday, AP reports from Lima.

Eleven people were killed and 25 are missing after the bus with 38 aboard crashed into the Mantaro River on Sunday near the provincial capital of Jauja, 100 miles (160 kilometers) east of Lima. Two people survived the crash, Capt Segundo Diaz of the police in Jauja said.

## Kyrgyz President forms new govt:

The president of Kyrgyzstan formed a new government on Monday, but retained his prime minister and most key Cabinet members, a news report said. AP reports from Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

The government of the Central Asian republic resigned last month after nearly 95 per cent of the voters approved a February 10 referendum giving President Askar Akayev greater powers. He now has the power to appoint all his ministers except for the prime minister without parliamentary approval, and he can disband parliament if it rejects his candidate for prime minister three times.

## UNSC greets Sierra Leone:

The UN Security Council on Monday congratulated Sierra Leone in the wake of last week's presidential election and urged rebels to lay down their arms, AP reports from United Nations.

Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a 60-year-old former UN and John Karefa-Smart, an 80-year-old doctor and former World Health Organisation official, led the field of 13 presidential candidates.

## King Fahd chairs cabinet meet:

King Fahd, 74, chaired a meeting of Saudi Arabia's cabinet on Monday for the first time since he formally returned to running the world's largest oil producer and exporter, Reuter says from Dubai.

Saudi television showed the king, who suffered a stroke in November, presiding over the cabinet.

## Rabbani ends visit to Iran:

Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani ended a two-day visit to Iran on Monday where he received assurances of Tehran's continued help to end fighting in Afghanistan, the official Islamic Republic News Agency said. AP reports from Nicosia.

Iran has been trying for months to broker a peace agreement among Afghanistan's warring factions, but it has been unable to bring on board the fighters of Taliban, Rabbani's strongest rivals.

## Snowfall paralyses Ukraine:

Unseasonal heavy snowfalls in Ukraine cut off dozens of towns, disrupted the shaky national power grid and shut down major roads on Monday as the country's harshest winter in decades showed no sign of easing, Reuter reports from Kiev.

Dleg Bykov of Ukraine's civil defence organisation said two and a half days of snowfalls had cut power to 34 towns and villages solely in southern Ukraine's Kherson district.

Snow whipped by winds gusting to 110 kph (70 mph) brought down two high-tension pylons near the Zaporizhia nuclear power station Europe's largest, cutting capacity by 40 per cent in three of its six reactors.

## Katherine Hepburn hospitalised:

Katherine Hepburn was hospitalised last week with pneumonia and is resting at her Connecticut home, the Daily News reported Monday. AP reports from New York.

The 88-year-old actress was admitted to Manhattan's Lenox Hill Hospital last week under an assumed name, and hospital sources told the News she was very ill and her doctors at one point had not expected her to live.

She has since been discharged — it was not clear when. Family members told the newspaper that she was resting comfortably at her Connecticut home. As for whether she was out of danger, a sister-in-law, Robert Hepburn, said: "No, I can't say that. She's working through it."

## Major meets Kim Young-Sam:

British Prime Minister John Major met with President Kim Young-Sam in Seoul yesterday to discuss ways to strengthen economic ties and trade between the two countries, a presidential spokesman said. AP reports from Seoul.

Major and Kim, who both took part in the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Bangkok, are also expected to discuss ways to help step up cooperation between Asia and Europe.

## US official to mediate Yemen Eritrea's dispute

SAN'A, Yemen, Mar 5: A US State Department official has arrived to discuss a dispute between Yemen and Eritrea over three Red Sea islands, reports AP.

Arthur Hughes, a deputy assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs, arrived in San'a a Sunday night for a five-day visit, an embassy spokesman said Monday.

The Yemeni-Eritrean dispute flared in December into a brief battle in which Eritrean forces took control of Greater Hanish Island, Lesser Hanish and Zugar, the other two islands, remained under Yemeni control.

## France fails to meet target in expelling illegal aliens

PARIS, Mar 5: The number of people expelled from France dropped 10 per cent last year, despite the occasional well-publicised charters filled with illegal immigrants, reports said Monday, reports AP.

The Paris daily *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, citing a confidential Interior Ministry report, said only 10,058 people without proper residency papers were expelled last year.

The figure is far below Interior Minister Jean-Louis Debre's goal of expelling 200,000 illegal immigrants a year. The ministry had no immediate comment on the report.

The main reason, according to police sources cited by *Le Monde*, was war wracked

Algeria's refusal to take back its citizens illegally living in France, the North African nation's former ruler.

It wasn't until last October that Algeria agreed to readmit its citizens, who account for between 30 and 40 per cent of all those expelled.

Nonetheless, the drop in expulsions compared with 1994 was surprising because of tough new anti-immigration laws and a sharp increase in police identity checks resulting from last year's wave of terror bombings.

Of 21,540 people arrested as undocumented aliens during six months of the anti-terrorist campaign last year, only 2,324 were expelled, Debre said.

The number of expulsion

orders signed by local prefectures declined 7.6 per cent last year to 41,400 people compared with 44,800 in 1994. Of these, only 22.1 per cent were actually carried out, compared with 22.4 per cent in 1994, the Interior Ministry report said.

*Liberation* said the official statistics of those expelled include family members, even their French born children.

Generally, the figures amount to a 10 per cent drop in expulsions compared with 1994.

Besides the Algerian problem, officials say a lack of holding cells prevents them from rounding up more illegal immigrants. Also, many immigrants destroy their papers to avoid repatriation.

Illegal immigration was a key issue in last year's presidential campaign. Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Front, won 15 per cent of the vote on promises to expel 3 million illegal aliens.

With unemployment at 11.8 per cent and growing, many in France blame immigrants for the jobless rate, crime, drugs and other social problems.

The conservative government of Prime Minister Alain Juppe, under pressure to crack down on illegal immigration, decided last year to institute charters to send the immigrants home.

Some 800 people in 14 charters have been flown back. Most expelled aliens are placed aboard buses and trains

to Eastern Europe or ferries to North Africa. But well-publicised charters serve to deter others thinking of moving to France illegally.

The last such flight left Paris for Kinshasa, Zaire, with 65 people aboard Friday.

The government decided to stop using regular commercial flights after expelled aliens caused so much disturbance while being forced aboard that pilots refused to take off for safety reasons.

Despite complaints from pro-immigrant associations, the government insists those expelled are well treated. It notes that doctors always are aboard the charter flights.

The number of people granted political asylum also

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## Iranian clerics shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI, Mar 5: An Iranian opposition leader said today that two Sunni Muslim Iranian clerics, including a brother of opposition activist Ali Akbar Mollazadeh, have been shot dead in the Pakistani port city of Karachi, reports Reuter.

Police declined to confirm or deny the killings.

The opposition leader, who asked not to be identified, said gunmen had ambushed Maulvi Abdolmalek Mollazadeh and Abdol Nasser Jamaisdah on Monday on the Chandi Bibi road in the Nanawara area of district south in the city. A woman passer-by was wounded.

## International

Cong leader blames Rao for framing rivals in scandal

## Leftist parties plan to censure govt in Lok Sabha for Hawala scam

NEW DELHI, Mar 5: Leftist Indian opposition parties plan to censure the government in the upper house of parliament this week for its handling of a political corruption scandal, one of their leaders said today.

Somnath Chatterjee, parliamentary leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPIM), told Reuters that although a censure motion in the Lok Sabha (upper house) could not force the government of Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao to resign, it would have moral weight.

"It has a political effect, they would be morally bound to resign," he said.

The Rajya Sabha (lower house) is also due to resume a debate criticising the government's handling of the 18 million dollars bribes — for favours scandal when it meets tomorrow following a four-day holiday recess.

The debates are part of the struggle by Indian political parties to win the moral high ground on the corruption scandal in the run-up to general elections which must be held by July.

The scandal, which centres on alleged payments to politicians by an illegal foreign exchange, or "Hawala," dealer, has led to the resignations of seven ministers in Rao's government and a bevy of opposition leaders, including Lal Krishna Advani, the president of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Ten politicians charged in the case have been summoned to appear in court next week, and a New Delhi judge will consider this week whether to proceed with charges against another 14 people, including former government ministers and opposition leaders.

Rao's ambiguous messages about whether he will allow members of the ruling Congress Party involved in the scandal to stand in the general elections have succeeded until now in keeping them in line.

Meanwhile APF adds: A leader of India's ruling Congress (I) Party linked to a major corruption scandal has

blasted Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao, accusing him of implicating political rivals in the case, reports AFP.

K Natwar Singh, a former junior foreign minister, told a court on Monday that politicians who posed a challenge to the premier had been framed in the country's worst scandal, a newspaper reported today.

Singh, who heads the Congress Foreign Affairs Cell, said in his statement the scandal was the outcome of Rao's "evil designs" ahead of parliamentary elections expected in April or May, the Pioneer reported.

Singh, a diplomat turned politician on Tuesday refused to speak on the statement. His lawyers were not available for comment, while Congress spokesman Vithal Gadgil said: "I have nothing to say on this."

Singh, who has been accused by detectives of accepting 2.3 million rupees (about 67,000 dollars) from a businessman at the heart of the scandal, told the court that the story is concocted and manu-

factured.

"It is the brainchild of a shrewd man like PV Narasimha Rao," he added.

Singh, who is known to be close to the Italian born widow of slain former premier Rajiv Gandhi, denied taking bribes from the businessman. Surendra Jain, who has been accused of making payoffs to 115 politicians and bureaucrats.

Singh, a former MP, is the first Congress leader to openly attack Rao over the snowballing scandal that has sullied the reputation of almost all political parties in the country.

The case has led to the resignations of seven ministers from Rao's cabinet so far and of three key opposition leaders from parliament. Several others from the Congress and the opposition have been named in the scandal as well.

The scandal followed the seizure of two coded diaries from Jain which detailed the huge payoffs he had made between 1988 and 1991 to top politicians and bureaucrats in return for favours.

WASHINGTON, Mar 5: President Bill Clinton on Monday proposed a 242.6 billion dollar US military budget for fiscal 1997 beginning next October, a 9.2 billion US dollar cut from current spending on the nation's armed forces, reports Reuter.

But as in recent years since the death of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the budget includes no initiatives for major new arms programmes, leaving those until planned defence spending begins to rise again in fiscal 1998.

The military budget announced on Monday is for defence department spending only and does not include a yet-unmade request of some 12 billion dollars for other defence programmes such as nuclear arms managed by the energy department.

Defense Secretary William Perry said that despite cuts in the 1997 budget, it reflected an emphasis by the Clinton administration on readiness and the ability to fight and win major regional conflicts at once.

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The navy would get the biggest chunk of fiscal 1997 spending with 74 billion dollars followed by 72 billion dol-

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These issues are not discussed at such high-level meetings," the sources said.

Since political unrest began 15 months ago in Bahrain, there have been repeated clashes between government forces and protesters in Shi'ite villages near the capital, Manama.

Two luxury hotels have been bombed since January, marking an escalation in the opposition campaign in Bahrain, a regional financial hub and home to a key US naval base.

The opposition is demanding the restoration of a parliament dissolved in 1975, the release of political prisoners and greater freedom of speech.

MANAMA, Bahrain, Mar 5: A government sweep of Shi'ite Muslim villages in recent days has netted 320 suspected dissidents, an Islamic opposition group claimed on Monday, reports AP.

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Sheik Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

Sheik Hamad flew to London on Sunday to discuss military and economic relations, but opposition groups said he will also pressure the British government to curb dissidents based there.

The claim coincided with the first day of talks with British leaders by the Gulf state's crown prince, Sheik Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

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The opposition is demanding the restoration of a parliament dissolved in 1975, the release of political prisoners and greater freedom of speech.

The government source, speaking on condition of anonymity, accused the dissi-

dens of trying to "create for themselves a political magnitude (that is) more than they deserve."

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