

## 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. Reuters 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. Reuters 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 Zaporizha 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. AFP 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

SANA, 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 Sana'a late 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 Zuhar, 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 dailies 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 Debré'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, Debré 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.

Globally, 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 Juppé, 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

declined sharply to 4,900 last year compared with 7,000 in 1994, according to a report by the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless People (OFPRA).

The report said only 16.3 per cent of candidates receive political asylum. In 1994, it was 23.6 per cent.

There are several reasons for the decline. They include stricter border controls and heavy fines on airlines that transport passengers without visas.

Also, last year's Schengen accord eliminating most border controls among 10 European Union nations specify that a rejection of political asylum by one member state is a rejection by all.

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 Jamsidehi on Monday on the Chandi Bibi road in the Nanakwara area of district south in the city. A woman passer by was wounded.

**2 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 Reuters.

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 Jamsidehi on Monday on the Chandi Bibi road in the Nanakwara area of district south in the city. A woman passer by was wounded.

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 Jamsidehi on Monday on the Chandi Bibi road in the Nanakwara area of district south in the city. A woman passer by was wounded.

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## 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 (CPM), 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 16 million dollars bribe — 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 gen-

eral 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 AFP 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 snow-balling 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.

The Presidium of the annual National People's Congress (NPC) and the top Chinese leadership hold their opening session at the Great Hall of the People on Tuesday. The national parliament with 2,973 delegates from across the nation is to endorse the country's ninth Five-Year Plan approved last year by the communist party plenum.

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## China accused of endangering peace by holding war games

TAIPEI, Mar 5: Taiwan today accused China of endangering peace by staging its fourth major military exercise off the Taiwanese coast in eight months and urged the world not to be a passive bystander, reports AFP.

The missile drill, running for a week from Friday, is the closest to Taiwan so far.

The move (the drill) seriously violates the world trend of replacing confrontation with peace and jeopardises peace in the Asia and Pacific region.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Rock Leng said.

He urged the world community "not to tolerate China's ruthless behaviour and to uphold justice."

Military spokesman Major General Kung Fau-Ting said "the latest drill is intended to harass our two international sea ports in the north and

south and in the Taipei metropolitan area.

Air and sea pre-maneuvre drills are being conducted along China's southeastern cities of Pingtan, Tungshan and Wanao, he said.

Kung said one missile splash zone named in the announcement from Beijing today is located between 20-40 nautical miles (30-60 miles) off Taiwan's northeastern coast, near the Port of Keelung.

The other one is located between 30-50 nautical miles (45-75 miles) off Kaohsiung Port along the southwestern coast, he said. Each area covers some 500 square nautical miles.

Operations at Taipei and Kaohsiung international airports would also be affected.

Earlier Reuters says, Tai-

wan's troops will exercise self-control against any attempt by China to start a war, the Defence Ministry said today.

"If communist China uses a provocation as an excuse to start a war, our national troops will react with rational and self-controlled behaviour," a Defence Ministry statement said.

China announced today it will hold missile tests in the seas around the island of Taiwan, apparently part of military exercises intended to intimidate the island before presidential elections this month.

From March 8 to 15, 1996, the Chinese People's Liberation Army will conduct ground-to-ground missile launching trainings in a sea area," China's Xinhua news agency said.

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## Clinton proposes \$ 242.6b military budget for '97

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 Reuters.

The plan, which includes reductions in spending on both new weapons and operations and maintenance, is sure to spark demands for increases by Republicans in Congress who charge that US military punch has already dangerously eroded.

Although the military portion of Clinton's proposed 1.58 trillion dollar federal budget is lower in key areas than 1996, it includes a three per cent pay boost for troops and allocates 2.8 billion dollars for anti-missile defence and 1.1 billion dollar for ongoing operations in Bosnia and Iraq.

The defence proposal also includes 9.1 billion dollars for military construction such as improvements in ageing housing facilities for troops around the world.

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

lars for the air force, 59.8 billion dollars for the army and just 37 billion dollars for other defence department programmes.

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.

Defence 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 two, major regional conflicts at once.

Under a six-year 1.55 trillion dollar defence plan proposed by Clinton beginning in 1997 and running through 2002, Pentagon spending would begin to rise again in fiscal 1998.

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## 320 more dissidents held in Bahrain, claims opposition

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.

A government source said the claim by the London-based Islamic front for the Liberation of Bahrain was "exaggerated." He did not provide a figure for the latest arrests.

The claim coincided with the first day of talks with British leaders by the Gulf state's crown prince, Sheikh 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 government source, speaking on condition of anonymity, accused the dissi-

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

The source said the visit wasn't related to the opposition groups.

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 security 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.

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## Off the Record

**Alternative to live animals**  
DELFT, Netherlands: Dutch scientists have found an alternative to live animals for testing the effects of toxic substances on human skin: the ears of dead pigs salvaged from the slaughterhouse, reports AP.

This is as close as possible to an experiment on humans," Dr Graham Elliott said Monday.

His researchers at the city's TNO-Prins Maurits Laboratory have started using pig ears from local slaughterhouses to test how agricultural and industrial chemicals, as well as cosmetics, are likely to affect the human skin. Pig ears are now regularly sent to the laboratory where they are connected to a pump that circulates blood through them.

"Pig skin is very similar to human skin," Elliott said. "In the beginning we were very cautious, but we are now convinced that it's a useful model."

**She was provoked by voices inside her head**

VALLEJO, California: A mother accused of tossing her 2-year-old son into San Francisco Bay, killing the child, told police she was provoked by voices inside her head, reports AP.

Lakesha Edwards, 20, was arrested Saturday for investigation of murder in the death of Oshay Love. She remained in custody Sunday.

Police said Edwards took her son to a sea wall in Vallejo along the bay Friday afternoon. She strolled along the walkway about 300 feet (100 metres), then stopped and tossed him over the rail. Lt. Al Lehman said.