Off the Record

Ali, still humourist

Parkinson's syndrome, his sense of humour is intact, reports

television profile that was to be broadcast in the United

States, on Sunday, he and his wife, Lonnie, played a prank on

Ali, seated at a table with Bradley and his wife, gazed va-

cantly into space while his wife explained that the champ oc-

casionally lapses into a trancelike state - and sometimes even

That was when Ali threw a left hook toward Bradley's head.

Bradley moved, warjly, Ali smirked, and everyone laughed.

Love knows no barrier

TUZLA, "Love will find a way," says Kristin Reisenweber,

For her and Kevin Smith it was on a pontoon bridge across

The two US Army lieutenants were married there on

"We just decided to do it and not let this deployment stop

"We decided to do something that was fund and crazy,"

Kristin and Kevin, who met 16 months ago in the mess

But Bosnia changed all that. They were deployed to sepa-

Kevin is a supply and maintenance officer. Kristin, a 1993

Traffic was stopped during the eight-minute ceremony

They exchanged simple gold wedding bands and passed

They're going to do it all again for their families when they

Meanwhile, marital togetherness is a case of so near, yet so

added Kristin, 24, of Washington, DC. "First we thought it was

hall at a training camp in Germany where they are based, had

planned to marry this spring after returning to the United

rate bases about two hours apart - she initially to Camp

Harmon on the Croatian side of the river and he to US head-

West Point graduate, is a personnel officer. She has since

been transferred to a base near Tuzla, 15 miles (25 kilome-

performed by a military chaplain. The bride and groom wore

the standard camouflage fatigues, helmets and flak jackets

through an honor guard of riflemen. Friends threw rice. They

were toasted at a reception at Camp Harmon with coffee i

alcohol is banned on Army installations here). An army cook

return home in December. Her father, Col. James

far. One recent day, Kevin visited Kristin at her camp, and

they strolled down a muddy path, rifles in arms. But spend

Painted buffalo horns for

highway safety measure

required to do so with their horns painted in bright

reflective paint as a highway safety measure. District

4,000 buffaloes and cows on the resort island of Langkawi.

hit buffaloes, Ismail said when contacted by telephone at

Langkawi. 450 kilometers (270 miles) northwest of K ala

This would warn motorists at night of the danger from

Three people were killed this year when their vehicles

Officer Ismail Hamid said Thursday, reports AP.

KUALA LUMPUR: When buffaloes roam they might be

that the Army requires when soldiers are outside.

impossible, and it was just a joke amongst all of us."

what we had planned," said Kevin, 30, of Spokane,

the Sava River, which American peacekeepers crossed to

"60 Minutes" correspondent Ed Bradley.

throws punches in the air.

reports AP.

arrive in Bosnia.

Valentine's Day.

quarters near Tuzla.

ters) from Kevin.

the.night?

Lumpur.

prepared the wedding cake.

Reisenweber, works in the Pentagon.

Washington.

"You got me," Bradley said.

NEW YORK: Though Muhammad Ali's speech is slurred by

While the former boxer refused to speak on camera for a

Big rally in Taipei favouring reunification

China asks US not to send navy



A man wipes a tear during a demonstration of some 5000-6000 refugees living in the Tuzla area which was organised by the Muslim women of Podrinja, in the Tuzla neighbourhood on Saturday. -AFP/UNB photo

Afghan refugee killed on Pak border: Iranian security forces killed an Afghan refugee as he was crossing the border into Pakistan at Taftan, 750 km southwest of Quetta on Friday evening. Pakistani military sources said, Reuter reports from Quetta.

"Abdul Rehman was an Afghan national living as a refugee in Iran for many years. He wanted to enter Pakistan when he was shot by Iranian security forces," an official in Taftan said.

Indian actor Anil Chatterjee dies: Noted actor Anil Chatterjee died of heart attack at the SSKM hospital at 0115 hours yesterday, family sources said, PTI reports from Calcutta.

Chatterjee was 65. He left behind his wife, three sons and a daughter.

He was also a member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Canadian tourist killed in Florida: A Canadian teenager visiting Florida with his schoolmates was shot dead in the popular resort of Daytona Beach during a robbery while he was talking on a public telephone with his mother, police said on Saturday. Reuter reports from Daytona Beach.

Mar Fyke, 18, from Belleville, Ontario, was pronounced dead at about midnight on Friday (0500 gmt) from a single gunshot wound to the back of his head.

The slain teenager was part of a tour group from Nicholson Catholic High School and had visited Disney World in Orlando before coming to Daytona.

Powell won't contest polls: Top Republican presidential contender Bob Dole is optimistic that retired Gen Colin Powell could be induced to join his ticket as a vice presidential nominee, but Powell again insisted he's not interested, according to a published report. AP repots from Chicago.

"I'm speaking to you for myself. My position is that I will not run for any elective office," Powell said in an interview with the Chicago Sun-Times, published in its early Sunday

Powell last November said he would not be a candidate. making it clear he does not want to subject his family to the personal attacks that often become part of the race for the White House.

Taki elected Comoros President:

Mohamed Taki Abdoulkarim has been elected Comoros President with 64 per cent of the vote, beating his adversary Abbas Djoussouf, the national electoral commission announced yesterday, AFP reports from Moroui, Comoros.

Djoussouf's campaign manager Mohamed Ahmed had earlier conceded defeat to Taki. "We have lost," Ahmed told AFP as Taki supporters took to the streets of Moroni to celebrate.

Thai PM arrives in Yangon: Thai Prime Minister Banharn Silpa-Archa arrived in Yangon Sunday morning to begin his two-day official visit to Myanmar, Xinhua reports from Yangon.

He was greeted at the Yangon international airport by chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and Prime Minister senior General Than Shwe and other Myanmar government officials. Banharn's visit followed the 12th meeting of the Myanmar-Thai regional border committee held last month in the southeastern Myanmar city of Mawlamyine, at which progress was reportedly made in resolving some border issues between the two countries.

BJP slams govt plan to fix job quotas for Christians

NEW DELHI, Mar 17: India's main opposition party on Saturday demounced a government plan to fix job quotas for Christians, saying it would cut into the benefits enjoyed by the mass of Hindu poor, reports AFP.

The Hindu right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) said the government plans to issue an ordinance reserving jobs in the government for underprivileged Christians was an election gimmick.

"Issuing such an ordinance will be a misuse of government powers," BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee told reporters here. "In effect this is a caretaker government which

should keep away from ordi-

Christians make up less than three per cent of India's 900 million people. Presently, a section of government jobs are reserved for "backward" Hindus and members of three other minority religious grou-

Vajpayee said the demand for reservation of jobs for underprivileged Christians had been engineered by the ruling Congress (I) Party of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao keeping the upcoming general elections in mind.

"The demand has been generated by the Congress to meet its electoral requirement," he

into Taiwan Straits BEIJING, Mar 17: Chinese its views on another." Li said Premier Li Peng put the United States on notice today

not to send its navy into the Taiwan Straits, saying the use of force against China could spell trouble, reports Reuter.
"If some foreign force makes a show of force in the Taiwan Straits that will not be helpful but will make the situation all the more complicated." Li told reporters when asked

ships entered the narrow sea passage dividing Taiwan from the mainland that claims it. The United States has sent two aircraft carrier groups to the region to monitor Chinese war games off Taiwan that are intended by Beijing to intimi-

about China's response if US

independence. Li's remarks were Beijing's hardest hitting response to the United States since China launched missile tests and live-fire war games to menace Taiwan this month and Washington replied by sending in the navy and calling the intimidation "deplorable."

date the estranged island into

abandoning any ambitions for

The Chinese government will in no way accept the practice of one country imposing

Curfew imposed

in southwestern

Pakistan

Paramilitary troops kept a

curfew in place on Sunday in a

town in southwestern Pakistan

to halt fighting between rival

tribesmen in which nine peo-

ple were reported killed in the

last three days, reports Reuter.

lifted soon but it could be only

possible when complete peace

is restored," said an official

contacted by telephone Indera

Bugti. The curfew was imposed

after fighting broke out on

troops had been dismantling

firing positions set up in the

town by rival factions of the

Bugti tribe, whose chief Nawab

Mohammad Akbar Khan Bugti

is an opponent of Prime Minis-

ter Benazir Bhutto's govern-

two hours this afternoon to al-

low people to buy essential

Tigers kill 5

more cops

Lankan policemen, including a

sub-inspector, were killed

when Tamil Tiger guerillas at-

tacked their post in Al-

inchipotana, in northeastern

They said ten policemen

Army reinforcements from

The rebels attacked a joint

army-navy boat patrol in the

eastern Batticaloa lagoon the

same night but there were ca-

The government says more

than 50,000 people have been

killed in the rebel's 13-year

Junta bans UK

politician from

visiting Yangon

nior British politician said on

Saturday that Myanmar had

banned him from visiting Yan-

gon to present a freedom prize

to opposition leader Aung San

leader of Britain's opposition

Liberal Party, said Myanmar au-

thorities told him it was "not

convenient" when he sought a

visa after Suu Kyi was awarded

the Liberal International Prize

rejected but he was eventually

promised permission for a visit

in April. Éarlier this week he

was told this was not conve-

Further requests were also

Sir David Steel, a former

Suu Kyi, reports Reuter.

for Freedom a year ago.

nient.

EDIBURGH, Mar 17: A se-

sualties, the officials said.

were wounded in the attack

which took place on Saturday

said today, reports Renter.

COLOMBO, Mar 17: Five Sri

items, one official said.

The curfew was relaxed for

Officials said frontier corps

Thursday.

ment.

and east.

"We want the curfew to be

QUETTA, Pakistan, Mar 17:

when asked about the impact on Sino-US ties of the US ship movements.

"If someone threatens the use of force against China this, as has been shown by past experience, will not spell any good results." Li told a news conference after the closing session of the annual National People's Congress, or parlia-

China and the United States should approach their relationship by seeking common ground. Li said.

Another Reuter report from Taipei says, Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui today quoted a local professor as saying that China's military threats toward Taiwan are "state terrorism."

"Regarding communist China's exercises, Professor Yu has made a very good analysis. saying that communist China conducted state terrorism toward Taiwan by using missile tests just before the elections," Lee said in a televised speech.

aims at dominating Taiwan's election," Lee quoted Professor Yu Yin Shi as saying. "Its power came from guns and it relies on guns to main-

"This terrorist behaviour

tain its power and the biggest threat to its power is the democratic direct election across the Taiwan Strait." Lee quoted Yu as adding.

AFP adds: At least 20,000 people demonstrated here today, calling for peace between Taiwan and China but also protesting against President Lee Teng-Hui, accusing him of provoking Beijing with his

An AFP reporter said at least 20,000 people of all ages took to the streets, many of them chanting "Lee Teng-hui. resign" and "down with the Chinese communists, down with Taiwan independence."

They carried Taiwan's na-_tional flags and pennants supporting Lin Yang-Kang, a candidate in the March 23 presidential elections who backs the reunification of Taiwan and China.

The rally was organised by the Neo-Conservative New Party, which is headed mostly by former top officials of Lee's Kuomintang who quit the party in anger at his dealing with

Lee , according to critics. has stocked tensions with the

mainland by making trips abroad to promote Taiwan's influence

China says this is part of a plot to declare Taiwan's formal independence, a break with a period of more than 46 years during which both island and mainland - separated by the end of the Chinese civil war have declared their thebretical belief in reunification.

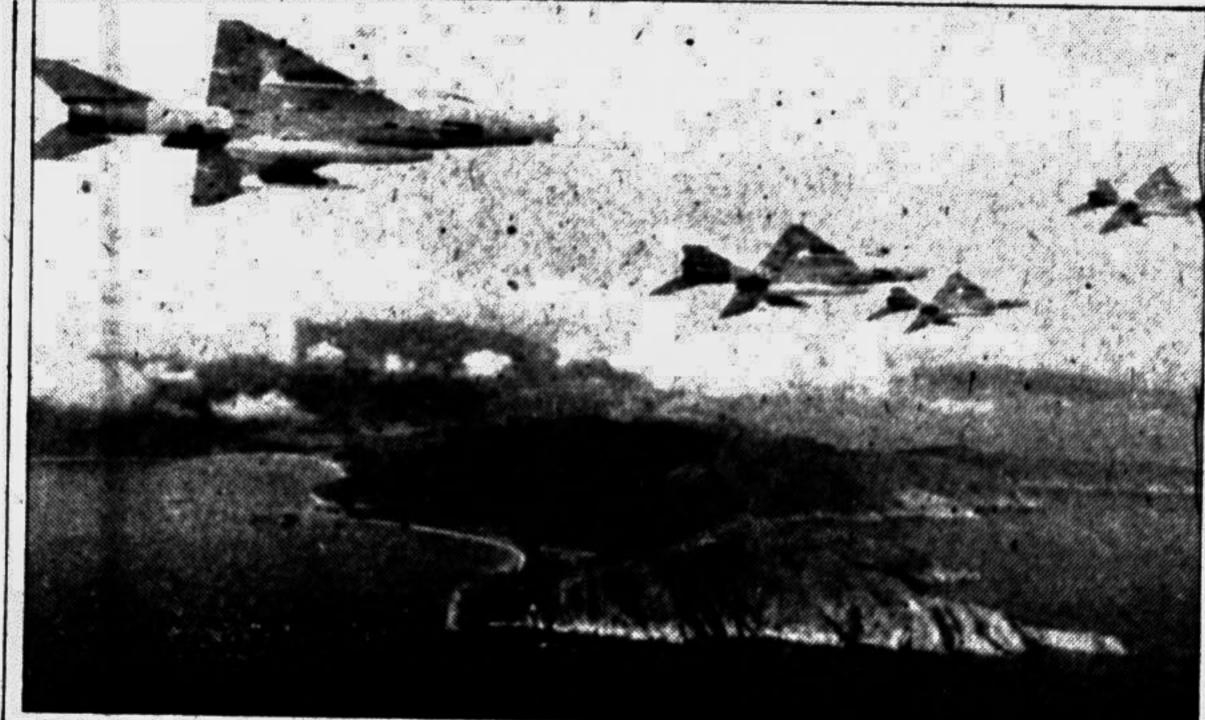
If Taiwan declares itself an independent state. China will invade, says Beijing.

On the opposite side of the political spectrum, between 20,000 and 30,000 people in Taipei and three other cities rallied on Saturday to declare their support for independence and demand that China ends its intimidation, of

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Monday launches its sixth military drill near Taiwan in eight months. The week-long exercises which will straddle polling

day, will taken place in Azne Lying just 10 nautical miles (18.5 kilometers) from three outlying Taiwanese islands in the northern Taiwan Strait.

Lee is clear favourite to win the elections.



Recent photo released by China News Service (CNS) shows Chinese-made military aircraft airborne during military drills. China reiterated that it would attack Taiwan if the island, declares independence. Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "We certainly will use every means necessary to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the motherland." -AFP/UNB photo

India's Election Commission in turmoil ahead of polls

Commission was in turmoil ahead of the crucial parliamentary polls, with its chief accused of undermining its independence by meeting frequently with the prime minister, newspapers said today.

nearby camps helped the police to fight the Liberation reports AFP. Tigers of Tamil Eelam rebels. "I strongly feel that having who are battling for an indeone-to-one parleys between the prime minister and the pendent homeland for minority Tamils in the island's north Chief Election Commissioner. is likely to create misgivings in It was not immediately regard to its independence," clear if the rebels suffered any Election Commissioner GVG. Krishnamurthy said. casualties, officials said.

The Chief Election Commissioner, TN Seshan, and Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao met for the second time in a week on Friday, for over 20 minutes, The Economic Times

said. Krishnamurthy accused Se-

which conducts polls for the federal parliament and all the state legislatures, was a multimember body and should not be influenced by the govern-

The "Election Commission is constituted as a constitutional authority to the nation to hold free and fair elections without being under the influence of the ruling party or the government." Krishnamurthy

He said Rao was the president of the ruling Congress (I) Party which was going to contest the elections and had major stakes both in regard to the timing and the schedule of the elections.

"If at all the prime minister wanted to have a dialogue with the commission it would have

NEW DELHI, Mar 17: In- shan of coshing up to Rao, been proper that all the three Welikanda, security officials dia's autonomous Election saying that the commission, commissioners were invited for such discussions.

"Neither is it proper on the. part of the Chief Election Commissioner to go behind the back of the other commissioners for with the prime minister," when the whole country was waiting for election dates. Krishnamurthy said.

But the tough-talking 62year-old Seshan told The Economic Times that the prime minister asked to meet him and that Krishnamurthy was "entitled to his opinion."

"When the prime minister asks me to come and meet him, I am not expected to bring the whole commission along or for that matter my whole family. When the prime minister calls me over I will go," Seshan said.

EP adopts unanimous resolution

Bhutan urged to take back refugees from Nepal

KATHMANDU, Mar 17: The European Parliament (EP) has unanimously adopted a resolution calling on Bhutan to take back Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, the state-run RSS news agency reported today, says

"The EP also asked Bhutan to safeguard the rights of minorities on its territory," RSS quoted the Foreign Ministry as saying, adding the resolution

was adopted on March 15. About 86,000 Bhutanese refugees, mostly of Nepalese descent from the west of Bhutan, are sheltered in the southeastern Nepalese districts of Morang and Jhapa while about 15,000 others are dispersed in neighbouring areas of Nepal and India. According to the resolution,

The refugees have been

and torture."

as a result.

sheltered in eight refugees camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other International Non-Government Organisations. The EP also called on India

Bhutan's policy of "national in-

tegration ... led to the sup-

pression of Nepalese cultural

expression in Bhutan, revoca-

tion of citizenship and intimi-

dation of its citizenship, arrest

of the refugees qualified under

international law as genuine ci-

tizens of Bhutan, adding

Bhutan's citizenship act of

1985 may need to be modified

The resolution noted most

, to release hundreds of Bhutanese refugees.

Taiwan accuses China of trying to derail polls

TAIPEI, Mar 17: Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui accused China today of trying to derail the island's first direct presidential elections by staging waves of intimidatory war games in the narrow Taiwan Strait, reports Reuter.

"Communist China's attempts to use joint sea and air exercises to destroy our elections will be spurned by freedom-loving Chinese and pepple of international communities," Lee, the leader in the race for the March 23 poll. told in a campaign rally in

City on Saturday in support of President Yasser Arafat and to protest against Israel's . second-round of military exer-With China set to hold a - AFP/UNB photo cises on March 18-25, strad-

dling Taiwan's election. Lee has stepped up his bid for votes to win a strong hand in dealing with the Island's belligerent rival.

Lee, who is chairman of the ruling Nationalist Party, told supporters on Saturday that he needed at least 50 per cent of the votes to allow the party to hold power and apply its poli-

Beijing denied on Saturday that it had given up the option of using force against Taiwan. which it considers a rebel province, further dashing

hopes for an easing in tension.

"Peaceful reunification and 'one country, two systems' is our basic policy toward Taiwan.

Israel eases closure of Gaza Strip as Palestinians protest GCC meet aimed at easing GAZA CITY, Mar 17: Israel Israel radio no further meativists marched peacefully to closure. has been delivering medicine on the Israeli army, dead bod-

tension opens RIYADH, Mar 17: Gulf Arab foreign ministers on Saturday opened a meeting aimed at easing tension that first surjobs, reports AP.

faced when Qatar walked out of a Gulf summit in December, reports AFP. "We are meeting to examine obstacles and problems which bould block the workings of the GCC (Gulf Cooperation

son Alawi ibn Abdallah, said in an opening speech. Qatar sparked a crisis when its Emir, Sheikh Hamad ibn Khalifa al-Thani, walked out of the GCC summit in December to protest its appointment of a Saudi as a GCC Secretary General at the expense of Qatar's

candidate.

Council)," Oman's Minister of

State for Foreign Affairs, Yussef

further relaxed its blockade of Palestinian areas Saturday while Palestinians rallied, certain the Palestinian Authoragainst the three-week closure ity has arrested the top leaders that has caused food shortages and kept people from their

reopen a freight crossing-point between the Gaza Strip and Israel and allow some Palestinian workers into factories in the West Bank and on the border

with Gaza, but not into Israel. The blockade was imposed by Israel on February 25 after a series of suicide bombings by Muslim militants of the Hamas movement that have killed 62 people, including the four bombers. On Friday, the army permitted travel between most towns and villages in the West

Bank. Israel's Internal Security Minister Moshe Shachal told

sures to ease the closure were planned "so long as we're not

Israel wants to pressure Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Israeli officials said they will into acting decisively against Hamas and its military offshoots. The closuré costs the Palestinian economy millions of dellars a day in lost wages and exports, and unemployment has soared to 70 per

In Gaza, Arafat lashed out at Iran and unspecified Arab countries for ordering Hamas attacks that the said were aimed against Palestinians as well as the Israeli people and government.

"They are trying to kill the Palestinian dream of building a state," Arafat told hundreds gathered to rally against the

Also Saturday, about 2,000 frustrated labourers came in buses, trucks and cars to Gaza's Erez crossing. They waved Palestinian flags and placards that read: "No to the policy of hunger," and "No to

continued closure of the Gaza Strip.

violence, yes to peace." "Peres, open Erez, " the protesters chanted, referring to Israeli premier Shimon Peres. Some hurled flowers and tomatoes, among Gaza's main exports, into the air and over to the Israeli side several

hundred meters (yards) away. Palestinian police chief Ghazi Jabali banned similar trade union protests planned in four West Bank towns, apparently to avoid aggravating Israel.

In Hebron, the only West

Bank town still under Israeli

control, more than 100 Pales-

tinians and Israeli peace ac-

protest the blockade. They were turned back at an army checkpoint. "This kind of collective punishment will not help the

Palestinian girls march with hundreds of demonstrators to the PLO Headquarters in Gaza

peace process," Azmit Shukri, an Arab demonstrator said. "It will encourage extremists on both sides increase the vio-Shalomo Dror, a spokesman

for Israel's department-coordinating activities in the West Bank and Gaza, said some Palestinian laborers will be allowed into a joint industrial area at Erez, the West Bank's Barkan industrial zone and farms outside Jordan Valley's Jewish settlements as of Sun-

Dror said some trucks carrying food will be allowed in and out of the densely populated Gaza strip beginning Sunday. Dror also said Israel

as requested by Palestinian hospitals in Gaza and the West Bank during the past week.

Security checks of the trucks will be strict, Dror said. and far fewer than the usual 400 or so per day will pass through because the checks will take more time. The suicide bomber who blew himself up in the heart of Tel Aviv March 4, killing 13 people, sneaked into Israel while hid-

ing in a truck. AP adds: In Ramallah. Palestinian town, Israel's closure of the West Bank and Gaza Strip could be seen Saturday through children's eyes sometimes with prompting from their elders.

. Abdulla Khalil Amer. 12. and 45 other sixth-graders from the Mughtarbin school presented tough images: roadblocks, stone-throwing attacks ies, closed shops and bus ex-

plosions. One drawing by Amer showed two Palestinians facing a wall, their hands risen, as a soldier is thoroughly frisking the pair and another points his

gun at them. "What do you want me to do, draw a bird or a tree?" said

Amer. Israel sealed, off the West Bank and Gaza on February 25 in the midst of a series of suicide bombings in Israel that killed 58 victims. The closure has barred some 2 million Palestinians from entering israel or travelling to searby towns and villages.

Behind the pictures is art instructor Maha Aghwani, a Tunisian university graduate who arrived last year with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's troops and now teaches at several Ramallah schools

5 African states begin talks on Burundi, Rwandan security crises TUNIS, Mar 17: Five African

presidents began private talks on Saturday about the security crises in Burundi and Rwanda with hopes of progress hinging on their readiness to put mutual antagonisms aside, resorts Reuter

The presidents of Burundi. Rwanda and neighbouring Tanzania. Uganda and Zaire sat down together with former US President Jinny Carter. whose Atlanta-based Carter Centre organised the three-day summit in Thinis.

The five Central African leaders are divided over the root causes of the conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes who seem unable to cohabit in the two countries