Off the Record

Imran to launch pressure group to challenge 'exploitative' system

BRIFILY

Blast kills 3 in Japan: Three people were

killed and one suffered injuries when an explosion tore

through an explosives factory in western Japan early Tuesday

Kayaku Co. in the town of Etajima in Hiroshima prefecture

(state), said Tomoki Hiratsuka, of the Etajima fire depart-

ment. Etajima is located about 700 kilometres (434 miles)

two women and one man, is being investigated. He said fire

department personnel responded after receiving an emer-

Lankan PM Sirima turns 80: sri

Lanka's matriarch Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike turns

80 yesterday, boasting a record-setting career and a place in

history as the world's first elected woman premier, AFP

in Sri Lanka. She is also the only leader to serve three terms

as prime Minister since Sri Lanka gained independence from

Britain in 1984 and is the mother of Sri Lanka's first woman

one day" but because of her frail health the daughter. Chan-

drika Kumaratunga, 50, won party nominations and romped

Robbers kill 4 in China: Four people were

shot dead by gunmen who raided a South China bank, a China-

controlled newspaper said yesterday. Reuter reports from

lars) after the raid on Monday at a bank in Zhongshan city.

just across the border from Hong Kong, the Daily Wenwei Po

shot in the head at close range, the Hong Kong newspaper

9 E Timorese enter German Embassy:

Nine East Timorese entered the German Embassy compound

early Tuesday in the latest of a number of recent similar

break-ins into diplomatic missions, witnesses said, Reuter

adjacent building and embassy security dragged out all or

Wars claim 2m children in 10 yrs:

Wars around the world have killed two million children and

maimed another five million over the past 10 years, a UN

campaigner for children's rights said on Monday. AFP reports

rated from their parents, said the official. Graca Machel, who

is overseeing a report on the impact of armed conflict on

Rwanda and the Caucasus are children, added Machel, who is

Benazir to visit Syria on Sat: Pakistani
Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto will pay an official visit to Syria

on Saturday for talks on bilateral cooperation and regional

developments, Syrian officials said on Monday, Reuter reports

high-ranking delegation, would give special attention to the

issue of economic cooperation during the talks in the Syrian

Iran's Dy FM arrives in Damascus:

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammed Kazem Khonsari

arrived in Damascus for talks with Syrian leaders on how to

secure an end to Israel's bombardment of Lebanon, officials

Republic of Iran to stop the Israeli aggression against Lebanon

and to extend support to the Lebanese people," an Iranian of-

Uzbek President backs Yeltsin:

Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov on Monday threw his

weight behind Russian President Boris Yeltsin who is seeking

and democratic changes," Karimov told a news conference in

a clear sign of support for Yeltsin, who trails Russian Com-

munist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov in opinion polls ahead

HR situation in Myanmar worsens:

The human rights situation in Myanmar has worsened since

last autumn following a slight improvement with the release

of the dissident Aung San Suu Kyi last July, a UN official said

rapporteur, told journalists he had been informed that

Japan's professor Yozo Yokota, a special UN human rights

"Only Yeltsin can guarantee the irrevocability of reforms

re-election in June, Reuter reports from Tashkent.

"The visit is part of the diplomatic efforts of the Islamic

said, Reuter reports from Damascus.

Monday, AFP reports from Geneva.

political prisoners were severely tortured."

They said that Benazir, who would be accompanied by a

the widow of the late Mozambican President Samora Machel.

At least half of the refugees of war in the former Yugoslavia.

A further 12 million children have been orphaned or sepa-

most of the nine from the embassy area, the witnesses said.

Within minutes however Indonesian soldiers guarding an

The robbers escaped with 130,000 yuan (US 15,700 dol-

Police found three bank staff dead on the floor, all of them

It was her life's ambition to become president "at least for

Bandaranaike is to date the oldest person to hold the office

gency call at 8:44 am (2344 GMT) Tuesday.

The explosion occurred at a factory owned by Chugoku

Hiratsuka said the cause of the explosion, which said killed

Former international cricket hero Imran Khan has announced he will launch a pressure group this month to chal-lenge Pakistan's "exploitative" system, reports said today, savs AFR.

Khan made the statement in Lahore late Monday, a day after a bomb blast at his charity hospital killed seven people, causing estimated losses of more than four million dollars.

Khan was quoted by The Nation newspaper as saying his organisation would not be political in nature, adding: "We will launch this movement against the exploitative system within the next two weeks."

He coupled his announcement with a verbal attack against Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who Sunday visited the Shaukat Khanam Memorial

morning, AP reports from Tokyo.

southwest of Tokyo.

reports from Colombo.

to power in November 1994.

president.

Hong Kong.

children.

from Damascus.

ficial said.

of the June 16 vote.

reports from Jakarta.

Trust Hospital, located on the outskirts of Lahore! capital of Punjab province.

"How could I welcome a

hypocrite at the hospital, who visited it only for political motive," he was quoted as saying. Khan was notably absent when Benazir visited, but met opposition leaders there on

Benazir has strongly condemned the attack and ordered official agencies to mobifise all resources to trace the perpetrators.

AP adds: Authorities investigating the bombing of a charity cancer hospital in central Pakistan have identified several suspects and may make arrests before the end of the week, a senior government official said Tuesday.

Move to bring permanent peace to Korean peninsula

Clinton, Kim agree to convene four-way talks immediately

CHEJU ISLAND, South Korea, Apr 16: U.S President Bill Clinton and South Korean President Kim Yung-Sam today called upon North Korea and China to join in talks designed to bring a permanent peace to the Korean peninsula, reports

Reuter. Kim, during a joint news conference with Clinton after one hour of private talks, said they agreed to convene without any preconditions and as soon as possible four-way talks to defuse the tensions that have haunted the Korean

Clinton said the talks "can lead to a permanent peace' and echoed Kim's remarks that no preconditions would be set before representatives of

the four nations would sit

AP adds: President Clinton will propose unconditional four-way peace talks between North and South Korea with the United States and China as participants, U.S officials said.

The president was expected to seek final approval for the initiative in a meeting on this resort island with South Korea President Kim Young-sam. Discussions about the proposal have been under way quietly for about two months, an official said, speaking on condition of

anonymity. Until now, the United States has insisted that North and South Korea negotiate directly with each other on a permanent peace accord to the long-unsettled Korean

North Korea has tried to force the United States into direct negotiations, which would put South Korean into a secondary role. Clinton's initiative is a new diplomatic

formula for a peace process. Clinton has tried to make peacemaking a hallmark of his presidency, boasting of efforts in the Mideast, Haiti, Bosnia, and Northern Ireland. Any movement in the 43-year old Korean stalemate would be an election-year plus for the president.

After a 20-hour flight from Washington, Clinton arrived here before dawn Tuesday. Korean time. Accompanied by his

wife, Hillary, the president was greeted by Kim and his wife at a seaside hotel. "We are glad to be here," the president said, complimenting Kim on the beauty of the island in the

early morning hours. Rim said he hoped Clinton would be able to see more of the island attractions and the president replied, "Time will take care of that."

In their talks at a hotel abutting the East China Sea. Clinton also was expected to reaffirm to Kim that the United States is committed to defending the South while urging the North to stop violating the border area.

Another Reuter reports from Seoul says : Police arrested four student activists today as they attempted to deliver a protest letter to U.S President Bill Clinton during his summit meeting with South Korean leader Kim Young Sam.

A Cheju island police officer said the four were held near the hotel where Clinton met Kim to discuss ways to bring a permanent peace to the troubled Korean peninsula.

Clinton arrived on the resort island earlier this morning for one day talks with Kim.

The letter demanded that the United States apologies for what it called the masterminding of a crackdown on island residents in April, 1948.

Another AFP report adds: North Korea today hinted that it might reject a four-party proposal by South Korea and the United States to discuss peace on the Korean Peninsula.

"The Korean armistice agreement was signed by the North Korea and the United States. The South Korean puppets are not eligible to poke their nose into the issue," Pyongyang's ruling party organ Rodong Sinmun said editori-

MQM calls strike

in Sindh Thursday

Pakistan's ethnic Mohajir Na-

tional Movement (MQM) has

called for a strike on Thursday

in Sindh province to protest

against a provincial assembly

bill that curtails powers of lo-

asked people to shut their

businesses as a mark of protest

against an amendment bill

passed by the Sindh Assembly

limited autonomy of the

Karachi Metropolitan Corpora-

tion (KMC) and reduces it to a

subordinate body of the

provincial government, MQM

another bill that would sepa-

rate the Karachi Water and

Swerage Board from the KMC.

bringing it under the control

The MQM, which con-

of the provincial government.

trolled the KMC before the

then caretaker government

dissolved local government in-

stitutions across Pakistan in

1993, demands that these

bodies should be run by

elected representatives.

The statement criticised

The bill curtails the already

An MQM statement today

cal bodies, reports Reuter.

on Monday.

KARACHI, Pakistan, Apr 16:



US President Bill Clinton (L) takes a walk with his counterpart Kim Young-Sam in the garden of Hotel Shilla on Cheju Island on Tuesday before their summit meeting. - AFP/UNB photo

Tale of Fergie's platonic affair

LISBON, Portugal: Austrian tennis star Thomas Muster denies he is having an affair with the Duchess of York and says he hopes Fergie gets back with her estranged husband. Prince Andrew, report AP.

US film actress Elizabeth Taylor greets well wishers at a

New York department store Monday. Taylor was in New

Madonna on her way to

become a complete woman

pregnant with her first child and is "deliriously happy," her

whom she met in New York a year and a half ago, Liz Rosen-

berg told Reuters in Hungary where Madonna is filming the

be. He's the man in her life and they met about a year and a

screen version of the hit stage musical "Evita".

she did not know if they had plans to do so.

half ago in New York," Rosenberg said.

publicist said on Tuesday.

BUDAPEST: American pop star and actress Madonna is

The father is her personal physical trainer, Carlos Leon,

"He's not a movie star, you know. Everyone doesn't have to

She said that Madonna and Leon were not married, adding

- AFP/UNB photo

York to promote her new Black Pearls fragrance line.

"I know her well and sometimes we talk on the phone, but it's purely platonic and nothing more than a friendship," Muster said after winning the Estoril Open on Sunday." Three weeks ago. Muster's former girlfriend Mariella

Theiner told a British tabloid the Austrian had left her for the duchess.

Muster, one of the world's top-ranked tennis players, joked that the news reports have spread his fame: "Now I'm even known at the nairdresser's."

Magic power of love makes the difference

MILAN, Italy: The other woman in tenor Luciano Pavarotti's life says she prefers rock music to opera, reports AP. "At the beginning we had a lot of problems because I was bored to death by listening to opera," Nicoletta Mantovani told the Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera in an interview published Monday.

Ms Mantovani, Pavarotti's 26-year-old secretary, also said she feels much better since her relationship with the tenor has come out in the open.

"We love each other... the last year was hell ... because I don't like to tell lies," she was quoted as saying. "Since the truth has been revealed I'm happy."

Ban on growing

hemp goes

BONN, Germany: Germany has lifted a 14-year-old legal ban on growing hemp, but only for plant types that can't easily be used to make marijuana and hashish, the Health Ministry

said Monday, reports AP. Farmers will have to use government-approved seeds that contain little tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC, the active drug in

hemp. Violators risk criminal charges. The advent of low-THC hemp and a growing market for industrial products using hemp fibers and oil sparked a review of German legislation, the ministry said.

Parliament and the government's panel of drug experts had earlier approved the controlled planting of hemp for industrial use.

Queen bars Di, Fergie from

royal party LONDON. Apr 16: Queen

Elizabeth II has barred both her daughters-in-law Princess Diana and the Duchess of York - Sarah Ferguson - from her 70th birthday party, the Daily Mirror reported today, reports

The tabloid said she made the decision because she is furious at the continuing turmoil over the breakdown of her sons' marriages. The Mirror added that the

Queen decided against any national celebrations of her 70th birthday on Sunday because of the slow progress of the divorce between her eldest son Prince Charles and his estranged wife Diana.

She is also unhappy about the Duchess of York's estrangement from her second eldest son Prince Andrew. The couple separated in 1992.

But prince Edward's girlfriend Sophie Rhys-Jones will be at the informal dinner party at Windsor Castle on Sunday. the paper added, quoting an unnamed member of the royal family.

Warm feelings for Clinton expressed Gaddafi may allow chemical

weapons site inspection

NEW YORK, Apr 16: Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi said on Monday he would conditionally accept an international team to inspect a suspected chemical weapons site outside Tripoli and also expressed warm feelings for US President Bill Clinton, reports

Speaking with CNN on the 10-year anniversary of US air strikes on Libya, Gaddafi denied US allegations of the existence of a plant about 40 miles (65 km) outside of Tripoli which aims to develop chemical weapons including nerve and mustard gas.

Reuter.

Gaddafi chose to conduct the interview, which was broadcast on Libyan Television. from the ruins of his bombed out home damaged during the 1986 US retaliatory raid for the bombing of a Berlin Dance Club that killed two US sol-

"There is no proof from America ... to confirm that," Gaddafi said, adding that the allegations were about 10 years old and were as untrue now as they were then Asked if there were any

chemical weapons programmes or facilities anywhere in Libya, Gaddafi said, "we don't think about these things, although we are under the threat of nuclear and chemical and political (pressure) from Israel and from America also."

Asked if he would allow international inspectors to visit the site, Gaddafi said, "we are ready, but we have conditions in that case. Suppose that they come and they find no chemical factories in Libya and say OK, we are sorry. No, we have conditions and we are ready for this... and in time we will say these conditions,"

GENEVA, Apr 16: The head

of the 51-nation Organisation

of the Islamic Conference

(OIC) condemned Israel on

Monday its "aggression" in Le-

banon and for "terrorist mea-

In a speech to the United

BJP within striking distance of power for first time OIC blasts Israeli 'aggression' in New Delhi from 1977 to Lebanon

recent years has been mainly on the strength of a nationwide RSS-backed campaign to build a temple to the Hindu God Rama at the site of a 16thcentury mosque which was razed by Hindu zealots in

two communities, consolidating the mass of Hindu votes for

the BJP as never before. Hindus form 80 per cent of India's 930 million people The BJP advocates Hindu nationalism with a touch of anti-Muslim sentiment which the country's secular parties

sures" against Palestinians in the occupied territories, reports Reuter. Nations Human Rights Com-

mission, OIC Secretary-General Hamid Al-Gabid said Israel's actions constituted a "flagrant violation" or peace accords signed with the Pales-

"In spite of the ongoing peace process in the Middle East, which we rightly support, we note that Israel continues to pursue a repressive



US announces delivery of \$368m arms to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Apr 16: After several weeks of uncertainty. the United States has announced the delivery of a frozen shipment of military material to Pakistan, spelling a diplomatic coup for Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, who has long been courting Washington, reports AFP.

The US decision announced simultaneously in Islamabad and Washington, heralds the delivery of three P-3c surveillance aircraft, harpoon antiship missiles, two missile launchers. Howitzers, rockets and a variety of spare parts embargoed under the 1985 Pressler amendment.

But a Pentagon spokesman has cautioned that the move has limited implications, saying: "No news sales were included in the decision and the release of this equipment does not constitute the resumption of US military supply relationship with Pakistan.

The arms shipment, valued at 368 million dollars, is being released under the controversial Brown amendment, introduced by Colorado Republican Senator Hank Brown and

passed by the Senate last September At the time, commentators

in the US press said in delivering arms to Pakistan, a country with nuclear capabilities, Washington risks contributing to the arms race in South Asia - one of the most unstable regions on the planet - and un-

dermining its own non-proliferation policy. istan confirmed Monday that the United States had begun steps to release 386 million dollars in embargoed military equipment as announced earlier by the Pentagon, reports

A Foreign Ministry spokesman was quoted by the three P-3C aircraft. Harpoon official Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) news agency saying that the release had already begun, as specified by the Brown amendment.

US press reports that China has delivered 5,000 ring magnets for use in the enrichment of uranium for military purposes led to speculation the release might be suspended.

The equipment released by the US administration did not include 28 F-16 aircraft which Pakistan has already paid for but whose delivery has been frozen by sanctions imposed in October 1990, the ministry spokesman said

Colorado Senator Hank Brown, who moved the amendment, made a brief visit to Pakistan earlier this month during which he suggested it was unlikely that reports of transfers of Chinese nuclear technology to Pakistan would prevent his amendment coming into effect. Both Beijing and Islamabad have denied the allegations

According to details released in Washington, the equipment released includes anti-ship missiles, two missile launchers, howitzers, rockets and a variety of spare parts that were embargoed under the 1985 Pressler amendment.

"No new sales were included in the decision and the release of this equipment does not constitute the resumption of a US military supply relationship with Pakistan," Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Commander Scott Campbell



Lebanese army soldiers fire an anti-aircraft heavy machinegun at Israeli jets flying over Beirut on Monday. The Iranian-backed Hezbollah said it would stop firing rockets on northern Israel if the Jewish state halted its five-day offensive in Lebanon. - AFP/UNB photo

US urges 'all parties' to restore calm' in Lebanon

CHEJU ISLAND, South Korea, Apr 16: The White House today urged "all parties" to do everything possible to "restore calm" in the Lebanon border

region, reports AFP. "We believe all parties understand that the current violence is not in the interests of citizens on either side of the border and hope they'll act to defuse tension, to restore calm and stability in the border region," said White House spokesman Michael McCurry.

McCurry was speaking aboard Air Force One which brought President Bill Clinton to the South Korean Island of Cheju, the first stop on his week-long trip to Asia and

McCurry declined to answer questions on whether Washington had directly asked Is-

rael to stop its bombing raids against the Lebanese Hezbollah Shi'ite movement, saying only: "We don't want to be specific."

"We've had intense discussions at all levels," he added Washington's aim, he said, without giving details, is to find "some solution that builds on the type of arrangements that were in place following an outbreak of similar conflict in the summer of 1992."

McCurry confirmed that US Secretary of State Warren Christopher had been making a series of contacts in an attempt to defuse the situation.

Christopher had also telephoned his Syrian counterpart from Elemedor Military Base in Alaska, where Air F . . One made a brief stop, McCurry

final match.

NEW DELHI, Apr 16: India's main right-wing Hindu party is within striking distance of power in the world's largest democracy for the first time a possibility that could have far-reaching implications, reports AFP.

After decades on the opposition benches, the Hindu revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) India's main opposition party, is dreaming of coasting to power here in upcoming general elections.

A possible victory by the BJP, which is fighting nearly 500 seats for the first time, has already unnerved the rest of the political spectrum and sparked debate about the future of India's tense relations with Pakistan.

"We are very clear in our the ming elections do ...t constitute a semifinal match," BJP general secretary Pramod Mahajan said. opposition party in five other "The 1996 polls represent the . "We are the party in wait-

ing" added party spokesman K R Malkani "we are sure we will emerge as the single largest party in the event of a hung house". Our effort is to emerge as the majority party.

Malkani said in an interview that if the BJP, one of India's best-organised parties, managed to win nearly 200 seats. "any number of regional parties would like to join us" to help from a government.

It's been a long march for a party which won only two miserable seats in the 1984 election, boosted its tally to 89 five years late and to a record 119 in the last hustings in 1991. The BJP today rules three

of India's 25 states and the city

of New Delhi, and is the main

major states. Its membership is more than 10 million. It already has the support of the Hindu militant Shiv Sena

Party, which governs Bombay in alliance with the BJP, and three regional groups and hopes to win over many other parties after the polls. Although factionalism and

corruption scandals have plagued the BJP, it expects to cash in on the unprecedented infighting that has bled the Congress (I) Party of Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao. The fragile state of India's centrist-leftist coalition, the

third main contender for

power, has also helped the

BJP, whose election slogan is:

"You have tried the rest. Now try the best. "The nation is looking for a change," BJP president Lal Krishna Advani said. "A tremen-

dous responsibility has been thrust on us and we are ready for it."

On the economic front, the BJP has criticised the Congress government for allowing unrestricted entry into India of multi-nationals and said it would not welcome foreign competition in the consumer goods sector.

The BJP is the political arm of the Rashtriya Swayameewak Sangh (RSS, national : rvice crops), India's most influential group that believes in aggressive Hindu nationalism bordering on theocracy.

Although the BJP was set up in 1980s, its origins go back to 1951 when it was known as Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS, Indian People's Societyl. The BJS merged with hree her parties in 1977 to form a new party which was in power in

Its astounding growth in

The temple-mosque row ignited Hindu-Muslim riots across India and polarised the

warn could spell disaster for India The BJP also adopts a hardline stand towards India's arch foe Pakistan.

and expansionist policy," Al-Gabid told the commission,