

# Netanyahu hopes to form govt next week despite legal problems

TEL AVIV, Israel, June 14: Benjamin Netanyahu hopes to form a government next week despite the mounting legal problems of key allies and wrangling between coalition partners, a top aide said Thursday.

Likud Party lawmaker Moshe Katsav told The Associated Press he believed the prime minister-elect would finish coalition negotiations as early as Sunday, Katsav acknowledged, however, that there was a "struggle around the religious aspects of government policy."

Israeli media said Netanyahu has decided not to assign the internal security portfolio until police have completed an investigation of Ralael Eitan, a key Likud figure who was expected to head the ministry.

Attorney General Michael Ben-Yair reportedly told Netanyahu this week that Eitan cannot hold such a sensitive position until he is cleared of suspicion he improperly used classified military files.

The police are investigating allegations that a key Eitan aide illegally acquired hundreds of secret military personnel files in an effort to smear political rivals, and according to the reports at least one of the documents reached Eitan himself.

Ben-Yair this week also announced charges against Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert, another key Likud figure reportedly considered for a Cabinet post. Olmert denies accusations he covered up illegal donations when he served as Likud's treasurer in 1988.

The developments coincided with reports Netanyahu sought to replace Ben-Yair, who was appointed three years ago by the late Yitzhak Rabin. Netanyahu has said Ben-Yair would stay on, but there was criticism of the attorney general's timing.

# Clinton meets King Hussein

WASHINGTON, June 14: President Bill Clinton met with Jordan's King Hussein on Thursday and they agreed Israeli Prime Minister designate Benjamin Netanyahu should be given a chance to pursue Middle East peace, the White House said, reports Reuters.

Clinton told reporters after the 45-minute meeting that he hoped Arab leaders meeting in Cairo next week would not jump to conclusions about Netanyahu before the newly elected prime minister has begun to set policy.

"I would hope they (the Arab leaders) would give Netanyahu an opportunity to constitute his government and set a policy, and not presume that we can't pursue peace, before there is some evidence of that," Clinton said.

"I would hope they would just give him (Netanyahu) a chance," Clinton said. Arab leaders are to hold a summit in Cairo on June 21-23.

Clinton said he wanted to meet with Netanyahu "as soon as we can."



US President Bill Clinton (R) listens to a question from the press for King Hussein (L) of Jordan Thursday in Washington. Talks between King Hussein and President Clinton come ahead of the first Arab summit in six years, to be held in Cairo June 21-23 and hastily convened after Israeli Premier Shimon Peres was narrowly defeated by Benjamin Netanyahu in the recent election. — AFP/UNB photo

# Kremlin leaders won't stop polls in Chechnya despite protests

GROZNY, June 14: Kremlin leaders said Thursday they have no plans to interview to stop parliamentary elections in Chechnya despite heated protests from separatists who say the vote will undermine the peace process, reports AP.

Both President Boris Yeltsin and his representative in Chechnya, Oleg Lobov, said local elections were an internal matter.

"I think everything will be all right," Yeltsin said during a campaign trip to St. Petersburg, according to the Interfax news agency.

Lobov said on Chechen television he saw no reason to cancel or postpone the vote, planned for Sunday by the pro-Moscow government of Chechnya.

Rebel officials say the balloting will undermine an accord they signed with Russia earlier this week.

Separatist leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev said the move to hold the vote, and Moscow's implicit support of it, "is an open violation of the agreement signed in Nazran."

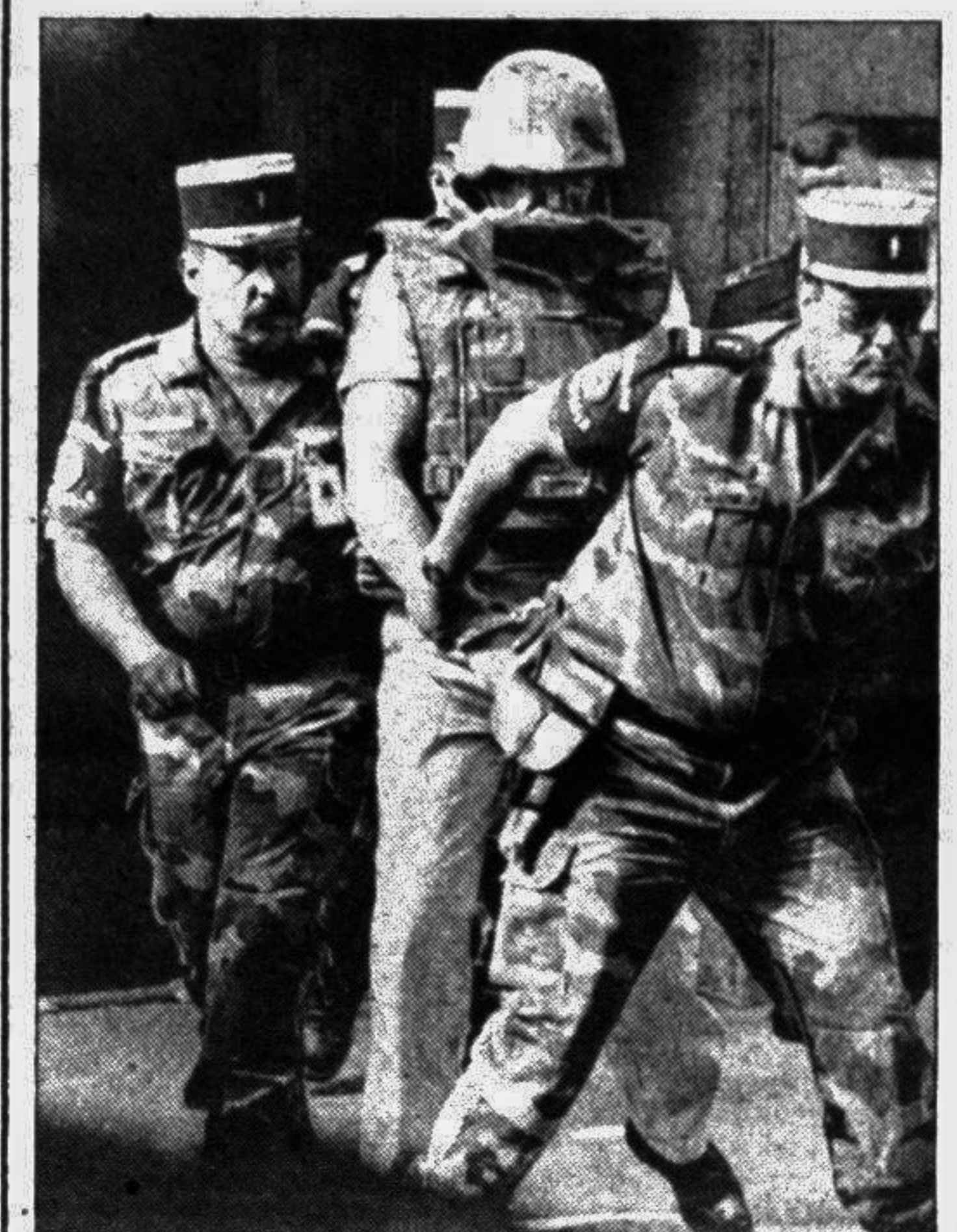
"We have levers and methods to respond to the violation of the agreement," he said at a news conference in Chechnya, according to NTV television.

Neither Yeltsin nor Lobov offered any explanation for Moscow's apparent willingness to stand by.

The agreement was initially hailed as a potential breakthrough in the 18-month-old war and a boost for Yeltsin's re-election chances in presidential balloting Sunday.

The pact calls for a Russian pullout from Chechnya and rebel disarmament by August 30. The rebels, who say a free election is impossible with Russian troops in Chechnya,

# BRIEFLY



French NATO soldiers escort one (C) of the two Muslims indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal in the Hague from the central prison in Sarajevo on Thursday to an armoured carrier that would take them to the airport and then to the Hague. Esad "Zenga" Landzo and Hazim Delic were arrested by the Bosnian authorities in May upon the request of the Tribunal. — AFP/UNB photo

**Major rebukes Thatcher:** British Prime Minister John Major sharply rebuked his predecessor Margaret Thatcher for deepening rifts over Europe that could cost the ruling Conservatives the next election, Reuters reports from London.

Aides said Major was "incandescent" with anger after Thatcher made a substantial donation on Thursday to an anti-European think-tank run by a Conservative rebel who accuses Brussels of encroaching on Britain's national sovereignty.

**Ships washed ashore in Lanka:** A navy ship was washed ashore Thursday by strong winds Thursday, and a merchant ship ran aground in Sri Lanka, but no one was hurt, officials said. Two other ships were damaged, AP reports from Colombo.

The Valampuri, which ferried troops and civilians in war-torn north and east, was on its way to Colombo from southern Galle port after repair. It began drifting after the engine failure. Two navy boats were sent to tow it, but strong monsoon winds blew it ashore in Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital, said Commodore Terrence Sundaram, the navy's operations director.

**Jet makes forced landing in Bangor:** Former President George Bush and retired Gen Colin Powell made an emergency landing at Bangor International Airport when the plane they were traveling in developed engine trouble, an airport official said Thursday, AP reports from Bangor.

Powell, Bush and former first lady Barbara Bush were traveling from Portland to Europe on Wednesday when an indicator light in the plane's cockpit showed a problem with the left engine, said Bob Ziegelaar, director of the Bangor airport. Bush, his wife and Powell were heading to Europe for a vacation, said Bush spokeswoman Mary Sage. She declined to say exactly where they were headed.

**Vietnamese dissident freed:** Hoang Minh Chinh, a former top Vietnamese official who has been a steadfast critic of communist rule, was released from jail yesterday after serving a year in jail for "anti-state activities," his family said, AFP reports from Hanoi.

The 77-year-old dissident, who has spent many of the past 30 years in jail or under house arrest, served out a 12-month prison sentence despite severe medical problems, including tuberculosis and heart and intestinal ailments. His family said he was very weak and tired after spending a year in three different jails but that he was in good spirits and maintained his innocence.

**Zhirinovskiy's aide shot dead:** A regional representative of ultranationalist presidential candidate Vladimir Zhirinovskiy was shot to death Thursday in the Siberian mining city of Novokuznetsk, officials said, AP reports from Moscow.

Vladimir Oberdorfer, a branch leader of Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party, was shot with a pistol as he stood at a kiosk to buy cigarettes, said Novokuznetsk Police Chief Nikolai Medyantsev. Medyantsev said the likely motive lay in Oberdorfer's activities as an owner of trading business rather than politics.

**15 pc adult illiterate in Germany:** Around four million people in western Germany, or roughly 15 per cent of the adult population, can neither read nor write adequately, a leading educational expert said in Munich, AFP reports from Munich.

Gerd Kegal, who organised Thursday a symposium of experts in teaching the written word, said most of these people "can sign their names or read simple words but have troubles reading short texts or filling in forms." He said it was not known precisely how many people were totally illiterate.

**4 peasants killed in Brazil:** A Catholic agency said Thursday that gunmen had killed at least four people while firing on 600 families of landless peasants in Brazil's second such bloody incident in two months, AP reports from Rio de Janeiro.

Three people also were wounded in the shootings Wednesday in Maranhao state, 1,400 miles (2,250 kilometers) northeast of Rio de Janeiro, the Pastoral Land Commission of the Roman Catholic Church said.

# Afghan govt close to sign deal with Wahdat faction

KABUL, June 14: The Afghan government is close to signing a peace deal with another opposition group, government sources said on Thursday after a secret meeting outside Kabul, reports Reuters.

They said President Burhanuddin Rabbani's top military commander, Ahmad Shah Massoud, held talks with the leader of the opposition Hezbi-Wahdat faction, Mohammed Karim Khalili, at Ghikh Ali in the eastern province of Parwan on Wednesday.

No deal was reached but the embattled government delayed announcing a new cabinet in the hope of getting Khalili involved, they said.

Rabbani signed a peace deal last month with his one-time rival, Hezbi-Islami Party leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Analysts said a deal with Wahdat, which controls the central province of Bamyan, would open up the region and strengthen the Kabul government.

# 30 migrant workers feared killed in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, June 14: About 30 migrant labourers from Nepal and the eastern Indian state of Bihar were feared killed after they were trapped in a snowstorm in the Himalayan state of Kashmir, police said here today, reports AP.

They quoted a report as saying that the workers were caught in the blizzard last week on the 11,500-foot (3,450-metre) high Zojila Pass en route to the northern Kashmir region of Ladakh where they were going to seek work.

They said the workers had to disembark from a bus in the town of Sonamarg, 88 kilometres (55 miles) north of the Kashmir summer capital Srinagar, and were trekking to Leh, Ladakh's main city, because the highway was closed to traffic.

Police said four bodies had been recovered.

# Troops repulse Tiger attacks

COLOMBO, June 14: Sri Lankan security forces repulsed simultaneous Tamil Tiger guerrilla attacks against two police posts in northeast Sri Lanka today, the Defence Ministry said, reports AFP.

One soldier was killed and eight others injured in the clash.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) stormed the Serunuwara and Alolluwa police stations in strength, the military said.

"Policemen together with the reinforcements retaliated effectively causing casualties among the terrorists," the ministry said.

The attack came hours after tiger gunmen killed two policemen elsewhere in the eastern province after attacking an outpost in the district of Ampara, the ministry said.

It said two Tiger guerrillas were also shot dead by security forces in the northern peninsula of Jaffna late Thursday.

# Turkish troops cross border into Iraq, kill 51 Kurds

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey, June 14: Turkish troops have crossed the border into northern Iraq in two days of fighting with Kurdish rebels in which 51 guerrillas have been killed, Turkish security officials said today.

A high-ranking security official told Reuters that troops had pushed a few kilometres into Iraq in the hunt for Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) rebels but later withdrew.

"We went in and out. It was only a small amount of commandos and is not to be exaggerated," he said.

Fighting was heaviest in the rugged Turkish border province of Hakkari.

Planes from an air base in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir pounded PKK positions.

# US, UK for declaring Baghdad in violation of ceasefire

# Iraq bars inspectors from 2 more bases defying UNSC

BAGHDAD, June 14: Defying the Security Council, Iraq barred UN inspectors Thursday from two more bases suspected of concealing banned weapons, a day after the UN Security Council demanded unconditional access to all sites, reports AP.

The weapons inspectors kept round-the-clock vigils outside the two installations and another base inside the Iraqi capital to try to prevent any material from being removed.

In New York, the council convened Thursday afternoon to consider a response to Iraq's defiance. British Ambassador John Weston said Iraq's refusal endangered the UN sanctions and inspection programmes imposed after Iraq's defeat by the US-led coalition in the 1991 Gulf War.

"That is not a pleasant prospect to contemplate," Weston said.

US Ambassador Madeleine Albright said the United States was "very concerned" over Iraq's defiance but refused to say whether Washington was prepared to use force to back up UN demands.

In Baghdad, UN experts, wearing sunglasses and blue caps with the UN logo, squatted in the shade of trees and fences outside a Republican Guard compound in the Al-Qadissiyah district of the capital.

UN team leader Nikita Smidovich, a long-range missile expert from Russia, said the inspectors arrived at that base Wednesday morning and "will stay as long as it takes."

In New York, chief inspector Rolf Ekeus told the council the Iraqis barred the experts Thursday from two more bases. The installations are said to be near the Baghdad airport, although authorities have not confirmed the location for reporters.

The Iraqi action violates a UN resolution passed Wednesday that requires "immediate, unconditional and unrestricted access to any and all areas" the inspectors want to see.

Earlier report from United Nations adds: The United States Britain urged the Security Council on Thursday to declare Iraq in violation of the Gulf War ceasefire after Baghdad barred UN inspectors from two more bases believed to conceal banned weapons.

# Islamabad denies deployment of M-II

# US disputes missile reports

WASHINGTON, June 14: An Air State Department spokesman disputed published reports that US intelligence agencies believe with "high confidence" that Pakistan has obtained medium-range ballistic missiles made by China, reports AP.

"I would advise the government of India and the government of Pakistan, the government of China, not to pay any attention to these leaks," spokesman Nicholas Burns said Thursday. "These leaks don't amount to anything."

Burns targets were The Washington Times and the Washington Post.

AFP adds from Islamabad: Pakistan on Thursday denied as baseless a US press that it had deployed Chinese M-11 missiles, while China said it had never exported such weapons to Pakistan.

The report, carried by the Washington Times on Wednesday, was part of a "regrettable effort by certain quarters," a foreign office spokesman said.

The spokesman said the aim was to "impede the improvement" in relations following a recent US decision to release military equipment worth about 400 million dollars to Pakistan which had been held up since 1990.

He said the report made no mention of Pakistan's proposal for a zero-missile zone in South Asia or of the "danger posed by India's plan to manufacture and deploy nuclear capable Prithvi missile and its continued development of the intermediate range Agni missile."

The spokesman expressed the confidence that decision makers in Washington would make a distinction between truth and such motivated stories.

These efforts to "malign a friendly country and mislead public opinion would not succeed," he added.

China has also rejected the reported allegation saying it had never exported M-11 missiles to Pakistan.

"In the past China has never exported such missiles to Pakistan nor will it do so in the future, or export such missiles to any country," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang said in Beijing.

The US newspaper, quoting American intelligence, said Pakistan had deployed nuclear-capable Chinese missiles and that this could trigger economic sanctions against the two countries.



Chechen rebel leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev (L), talks to the press near the pro-rebel village of Vedeno, Thursday as he is flanked by Chechen rebels' information spokesman Movladi Udugov (C) and Shamil Basayev. Yandarbiyev said that his guerrillas would use "any means" to oppose planned legislative elections in Chechnya. — AFP/UNB photo

# Off the Record

# Bid for beauty pageant at 50

HONG KONG: A chubby 50-year-old woman has put in a bid to become Hong Kong's next beauty queen, a newspaper said Friday, reports Reuters.

According to Asia Television Ltd, which organises the annual beauty contest, the woman entrant was slightly overweight but very charming. The Sing Tao daily said. The contestant was not named.

The television company has allowed women of all age groups to enter the contest since last year to attract more contestants. A 40-year-old made herself famous by entering last time, although she failed to win.

# Best page of US history fetches \$300,000

LONDON: A vital missing leaf from one of the most prophetic and elusive manuscripts in US history — which was discovered by a gardener under a sofa in an English townhouse — was sold here Thursday for almost 200,000 pounds (300,000 dollars), reports AFP.

Book experts at Phillips, the London auctioneers who handled the sale, are satisfied that the single piece of paper was hand-written by George Washington, and contains the most important section of the visionary speech he intended to make at his inauguration as the first president of the United States.

The new owner — a telephone bidder who bought the document after fierce competition — was a private collector whose identity was not revealed. He said he would issue a statement later.

Washington abandoned the speech, delivering instead a shorter, less radical version when he was sworn in on April 30, 1789.

The original draft was broken up, with no record taken of the full text, and given away to autograph hunters.

And on Thursday, after 207 years, the kernel of Washington's vision of future American greatness, contained on pages 34 and 35 of the 62-page document, was auctioned after surfacing by chance during a routine probate valuation of books at a house in Alderbury, southern England.

"To find a lost leaf of this immensely important document is one thing," Phillips senior book specialist Felix Pryor said. "To find, in an English townhouse, the exact part where Washington is talking about freedom his visions of a brave new world and the future greatness of America as a superpower is both romantic and incredible."

It is extraordinarily perceptive for 1789, when America was an infant country, smaller than the West Indies in financial terms.

"No record was made of the original speech and the bulk of it was later lost. The only way it can be reconstructed is by the discovery of further leaves," Pryor said.

In more than 200 years since Washington's inauguration, 13 other leaves have been found. But "leaf 14," is the first to have been discovered in Britain and is by far the most important.

After Washington's death, the complete manuscript of the undelivered speech passed to his heir, Justice Bulrod Washington, who in turn gave it to research to Jared Sparks, later to a lost leaf of this immensely important document is one thing, Phillips senior book specialist Felix Pryor said.

When Bushrod's heir, George Corbin Washington, sold the papers to the United States in 1837, Sparks was given permission to keep "a few autographs," among which was the undelivered first inaugural.

# Poor maternal healthcare costs 2m lives every yr in India, says World Bank

NEW DELHI, June 14: Poor maternal healthcare costs two million lives in India every year, a senior World Bank health official said on Thursday.

About two million women and children die each year because of poor maternal health services in India, senior World Bank health specialist Anne Tinker told Reuters in an interview.

Tinker is the principal author of a World Bank report, "Improving Women's Health in India," scheduled to be released in New Delhi on Friday.

"A woman in India is six times more likely to die in childbirth than her counterpart in Sri Lanka," she said, comparing two South Asian neighbours with similar economic structures.

Low female literacy, inadequate and poor female healthcare and a strong bias toward men were key factors, Tinker said. Government statistics say 39 per cent of Indian women are literate.

Foetus sex-determination tests, often followed by abortions, revealed a distinct bias against women, Tinker said. Many Indian families forced pregnant women to undergo an abortion if tests showed a female foetus.

"This is dangerous," Tinker said.

AP adds, discrimination against women in India is so deep that mothers even stop breast feeding daughters two months before they would wean infant boys, said a World Bank report released Friday.

The 160-page report by the bank, which lends India about 350 million dollars a year, suggests that the government focus health services to provide better care for women.

The poor health of Indian women is a concern on both national and individual levels.

# Yeltsin heads to hometown for campaign finale

MOSCOW, June 14: Election fever heated up Friday just two days before Russia's pivotal presidential elections, and Boris Yeltsin headed to his hometown for the grand finale of his breakneck campaign, reports AP.

Yekaterinburg — the Ural Mountains city where Yeltsin has launched his campaign in a rambling, poorly received announcement in February — was gearing up for the arrival for its newly energised native son.

Russian newspapers ran front-page, banner headlines endorsing their favourite candidate and passionate appeals fitting to this highly emotional race, Russia's first post-Soviet presidential election.

Most Russians see the vote as a choice between Yeltsin's reforms and the Soviet past, its social safety net and state control that is symbolised by Yeltsin's chief rival communist leader Gennady Zyuganov.

Much of the Russian media has been openly pro-Yeltsin and Friday's endorsements reflected that.

"Vote for Democracy," declared Kuranty, carrying a huge photo of Yeltsin. Several others, including popular daily Moskovskiy Komsomolets and the presidential administration paper Rossiyskiye Vesti, had similar headlines.

But Pravda, the Soviet-era Communist Party mouthpiece, said, "Vote for Zyuganov or You'll Lose the Future: Yours and Russia's."

Meanwhile, Yekaterinburg, the city where Russia's last Czar, Nicholas II, and his family were killed in 1918, was lined with Yeltsin campaign posters and the Russian tricolour flag.

Despite some disillusionment with the president, support for Yeltsin seemed high.

Svetlana Zhuravlyova sells pastries in the street to augment her salary at a failing defence plant, which has only given her half-pay for the past few months.

Yet she won't for the Communists: she's supporting Yeltsin.

"I don't want any more changes. The Russian people are sick of experiments," she said.

Four months ago, a deflated and defensive Yeltsin announced he would seek a second term in a long speech to unenthused dignitaries. The mood contrasted with a huge, near-euphoric Communist rally for Zyuganov's nomination.

But Yeltsin's popularity has climbed in recent months, and he won an upbeat reception at a huge rally and concert in St. Petersburg on Thursday, as he delivered a forceful speech against his hard-line foes.

In a lengthy television interview Thursday, the president admitted that the war in Chechnya was a mistake but urged Russians to vote for him to prevent civil war.

Employing his favourite red scare tactics, Yeltsin warned that a Zyuganov would finish reforms, bring the nation to poverty and result in mass violence.

Zyuganov, meanwhile, declared that he was confident of a first-round victory in Sunday's election, and ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy said he also expected Zyuganov to win.

Violence has marred the intense campaign this week. Two regional officials were murdered, and a bomb blast killed four people in the Moscow metro, an even many say was election-related.

The Moscow government announced Friday it will offer free public transport on election day for the many city dwellers who spend weekends at their dachas, or country cottages, "to encourage them to come back to town to vote."

Three of Russia's best-known poll organisations all had Yeltsin clearly ahead of Zyuganov in their most recent surveys. Thursday was the last day polling data could be released. But polls in Russia consistently underestimate support for hard-liners.