

# BRIEFLY



US Defence Secretary of State, William Perry (L), discuss with Muhammad Bin Fahd Bin Abd Al-Aziz Al Saud, Governor of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia in Dhahran on Saturday. Perry came to visit the site of the deadly bomb attack against American military personnel and review security measures. — AFP/UNB photo

**7 foreigners drown in Oman:** Four Britons, two Americans and a Dutch woman drowned on Friday during a flash flood at a recreation area in Oman, an Omani police statement published yesterday said, Reuters says from Muscat.

The seven victims were, among 26 people of different nationalities on hiking tour in an area known as Snake Canyon, said the statement published in Omani newspapers. It said rescue teams were still searching for a missing Briton. Two of the survivors were taken to hospital for treatment. The statement did not give her details.

**Gunmen kill 18 in Colombia:** At least 18 people were killed and 10 wounded when gunmen opened fire near a bus station in this western city, radio Caracol reported Sunday, AP reports from Medellin, Colombia.

Several armed attackers arrived in two vehicles Saturday night and apparently shot indiscriminately toward people near the station, located in the city's Belen neighborhood, said Caracol, one of Colombia's most respected stations. The motive for the violence and other details weren't immediately available.

**Syrian FM arrives in Tehran:** Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara arrived in Manama late Saturday from Tehran with a message from Syrian President Hafez al-Assad for the Emir of Bahrain, Sheikh Issa bin Salman al-Khalifa, the official GNA news agency said, AFP reports from Manama.

The agency, which gave no details about the message, said Al Shara was met by his Bahraini counterpart Sheikh Mubarak bin Mubarak al-Khalifa. Syria has close ties with Iran, which has been accused by Manama of trying to topple the Bahraini government and of being behind the violence which has rocked the Gulf archipelago since December 1994, claiming 22 lives.

**Blast kills 4 in Kuwait:** Four people were killed and nine injured Saturday in an explosion at a customs depot in the Sulabiya region west of Kuwait City, the official KUNA agency reported, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

The blast happened in a chilled container holding 200 cases of fireworks illegally imported into Kuwait, said the agency, citing an official statement. The fireworks, due to be re-exported abroad because they failed to match security standards, exploded while they were being taken out of the container inside the depot, KUNA said.

**Shankha Ghosh wins 'Joshua' award:** Eminent Bengali poet Shankha Ghosh has been selected for the 1996 'Joshua Sahiti Puraskaram', PTI reports from Hyderabad.

The award which carries a cash prize of Rs one lakh, would be presented to Ghosh at a function to be held in Hyderabad on September 28. Announcing this at a press conference yesterday, advisor to the Andhra Pradesh government on cultural affairs, Dr C Narayana Reddy, said that the jury considered in depth the poets in all the Indian languages who could be worthy of this award. It also considered the poet's stature as an Indian poet of eminence and his writings which reflect the warm humanism that poet Joshua represented, he said.

**15 electrocuted in Pakistan:** A stray bullet shot during a celebration knocked down a high-voltage power line that killed at least 15 people in northern Pakistan, a newspaper reported Sunday, AP reports from Islamabad.

A group of villagers travelling to the northern city of Rawalpindi to attend a cattle show on Saturday fired their guns into the air to celebrate the occasion, the English-language newspaper The News reported. One of the bullets clipped an overhead electric wire and sent it tumbling onto the group, the newspaper said, quoting Water and Power Development Authority officials.

**Protest rally in Bujumbura:** Hundreds of demonstrators marched through Bujumbura on Saturday to protest against military intervention to quell ethnic violence in Burundi, AFP reports from Bujumbura.

The protesters rallied by former President Jean-Baptiste Bagaza, converged on Bujumbura football stadium where thousands of other supporters of the former leader were already assembled. Bagaza, a Tutsi, who exerts powerful influence in the Tutsi dominated army and among young Tutsis, has denounced the Burundian government for calling for military assistance during a regional summit in Arusha, northern Tanzania, last Tuesday.

**Peace march held in Spain:** As a week long truce by the armed separatist group ETA neared an end Saturday, about 10,000 people endured pouring rain to march for peace in Spain's troubled Basque region, AP reports from Bilbao.

"We hope that the government, ETA, political parties and institutions take all the necessary steps to help bring lasting peace, Jonan Fernandez, of the pacifist social group Eikarri, told a rally after the march. Demonstrators were hoping to convince ETA to extend the unilateral ceasefire it announced Sunday. The clandestine group urged the government to hold talks leading to the independence of northern Spain's three Basque provinces.

**Bus mishap kills 14 in Jamaica:** A small bus speeding to beat oncoming traffic to a one-lane bridge plunged into a river, killing as many as 14 people, AP reports from Kingston.

Police and bystanders rescued six people and pulled eight bodies — including that of a 3-month-old boy — from the deep, swift waters of the Rio Cobre River after the accident Friday evening. Divers searched Saturday for six more bodies believed trapped in the bus.

## Kashmiris protest killings of 4 civilians

SRINAGAR, India, June 30: Hundreds of Muslims today took to the streets in a Kashmir town to denounce the alleged murder of four civilians by the Indian Army, witnesses said, reports AP.

Angry demonstrators, braving heavy rains, shouted slogans, including "we want freedom" and "no compromise with the killers", during the march through the lanes and by-lanes of Sopore, about 55 kilometres (34 miles) north of here.

The four civilians were killed late Saturday when Indian soldiers opened random fire after a land mine blasted an army vehicle, seriously injuring seven of their colleagues.

Residents in Sopore said by telephone that seven others were injured in the army reprisal.

Shops were shut across Sopore today as news of the army killings spread.

## Charles to take bank loan to finance divorce settlement

LONDON, June 30: Prince Charles is to take out a 20 million pound (31 million dollar) bank loan to finance a divorce settlement with Princess Diana, Britain's Sunday Times reported, says Reuter.

He will also give his wife 500,000 pounds a year for her own private office in a "take it or leave it" deal being offered by lawyers in the acrimonious divorce battle.

The newspaper, citing royal sources, said the heir to the throne did not want to depend on the generosity of his mother, Queen Elizabeth. Instead, he will borrow the money from the bankers of his own Duchy of Cornwall.

That could cost him up to 1.4 million pounds (2.17 million dollars) a year in interest payments alone.

His lawyers are said to be frustrated by the delay in finalising the divorce settlement.

## Indian court orders release of 9 Tigers held in '93

NEW DELHI, June 30: An Indian court Saturday ordered the release of nine Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas arrested in 1993 after they blew up their ship in the sea to prevent its capture by the Indian Navy, reports AP.

Judge P. Lakshman Reddy asked the Indian authorities to hand over the nine members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to Hon. Duras, where their ship had been registered, the United News of India (UNI) reported.

Reddy said the LTTE-owned ship, which was carrying arms and ammunition when it exploded, was in international waters when the Indian Navy intercepted it in January 1993.

"As long as the LTTE ship was not contemplating any action against the Indian government, the navy had no business to intercept it and demand boarding right," Reddy said in the southern Indian town of Visakhapatnam.

## Israel may bar FMs from visiting Orient House

JERUSALEM, June 30: Israel's new right-wing government is studying ways to ban foreign ministers and other senior foreign officials from visiting the PLO's unofficial headquarters in annexed East Jerusalem, government sources said today, reports AP.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to refuse to meet any senior foreign official if his or her itinerary includes a visit to Orient House, the source said.

He and his ministers discussed the ban at their weekly cabinet meeting on Friday.

Netanyahu pledged during his election campaign to shut down Orient House or at least curtail its activities.

The European Union recommends that its foreign ministers meet Palestinian officials at Orient House when they visit Jerusalem. However, at the request of former premier Shimon Peres, foreign countries refrained from sending ministers there in the run-up to Israel's May elections.

## US actor Michael Douglas (L) is accompanied by a Superman impersonator as he arrives to attend the official inauguration of the film and amusement park "Warner Bros". Movie World in Bottrup-Kirchhellen on Saturday.

## Voting in Pak Kashmir begins amid violence, threat of boycott

ISLAMABAD, June 30: Voting in Pakistan's troubled Kashmir province began Sunday in a controversial election marred by campaign violence and the threat of boycotts, reports AP.

More than 1.6 million Kashmiris were registered to vote in what Pakistan says will be a trouble-free provincial assembly election in a region prone to bloodshed and dispute.

"I want to assure the nation and the world that we want to hold transparent, free and fair elections in Kashmir," Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said during a televised address to the country.

But feuding political parties have already turned pre-election campaigning violent and a pro-independence group has vowed to disrupt the polling.

A week ago, political activists from the provincial op-

position People's Party shot and killed seven rivals from the ruling Muslim Conference. Another 13 people were wounded.

Police said People's Party workers opened fire on the Muslim Conference election headquarters in the Kashmir district of Mirpur, about 110 kilometres (75 miles) south-east of Islamabad, the capital.

The Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, meanwhile, has called the provincial elections a sham.

"The JKLF is not only boycotting these elections, but has also started a vigorous campaign against them," Liberation Front Chairman Amanullah Khan said.

Khan's separatist faction hopes one day to reunite Indian and Pakistani Kashmir and establish an independent homeland.

Long a flashpoint for conflict between India and Pak-

istan, Kashmir was divided between the two countries shortly after British rule over the Asian Subcontinent ended in 1947.

New Delhi and Islamabad have fought two of three wars over the Kashmir territorial dispute.

Rebels from the JKLF, along with various other factions, have led an armed uprising against New Delhi's rule over Indian Kashmir.

Pakistan hopes to avoid similar voting difficulties to those suffered in Indian-administered Kashmir during federal elections in May. Many observers said voters in strife-torn Indian Kashmir were herded against their will to polling stations.

Pakistan used the Indian elections as a platform against New Delhi's control over two-thirds of Kashmir, but is wary of potential voting problems of its own.

## Feud within Japanese coalition govt may lead to dissolution of Diet

TOKYO, June 30: The feud within the Japanese coalition government over how to handle the issue of US military bases in Okinawa might lead to the dissolution of the Diet, a former prime minister said today, reports Xinhua.

"If the three parties cannot reach an agreement on the Okinawa issue, it is possible that the coalition government will be broken up," Yoshiro Nakasone said on a Fuji television network programme.

"In that case, all they can do is to dissolve the lower house", he declared.

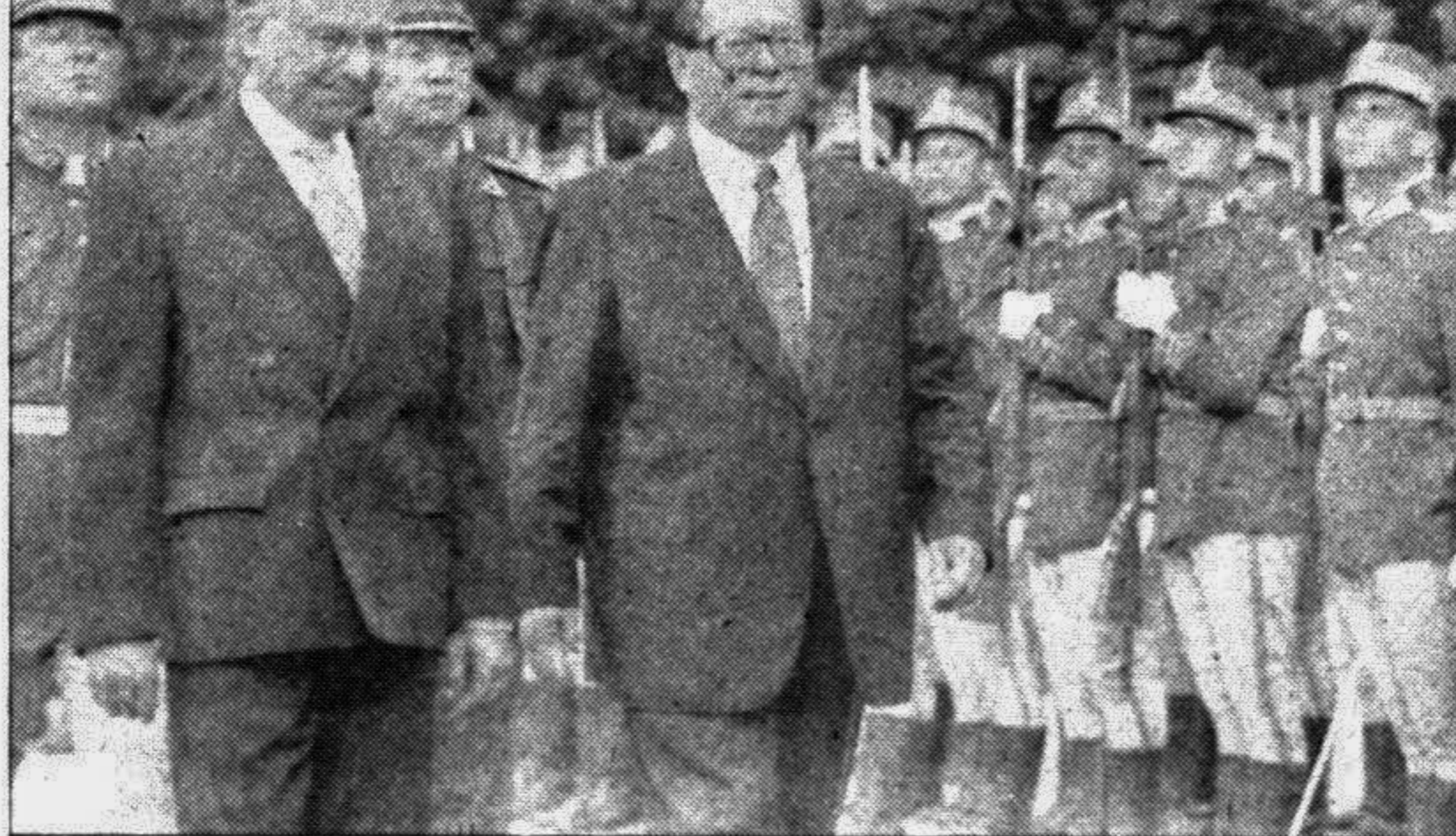
Nakasone stressed that the three parties in the coalition government should cooperate to resolve the Okinawa issue while maintaining the framework of the Japan-US

security accord.

But if the parties — the Liberal Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party and New Party Sakigake — fail to reach a consensus among themselves, a dissolution and a general election are inevitable, he added.

Under an agreement reached in April between Japan and the United States, the US military will vacate some 20 per cent of the land it now occupies in the southwestern island prefecture of Okinawa.

However, the Okinawa prefectural government led by Masahide Ota has not eased its fight against the central government's plan to continue seizing private land on the island for the US military's use.



Chinese President Jiang Zemin (R) and his Romanian counterpart Ion Iliescu review the honour guard during the official welcoming ceremony at Cotroceni Palace on Saturday. Jiang arrived for a four-day official visit to Romania. — AFP/UNB photo

## Chechens demand ouster of Moscow-backed govt

GROZNY, Russia, June 30: Accusing Russia of "grave violations" of the truce in break-away Chechnya, the rebel leader on Saturday demanded the dismissal of the Moscow-backed government and new federal negotiators, reports AP.

Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev's statement, reported by Russian news agencies, came a day after Russia began withdrawing troops from the separatist region in accordance with a military agreement.

It underscored the major obstacles remaining to peace in the region, with each side blaming the other for the lack of progress and demanding a reshuffling of negotiating teams.

Yandarbiyev and the separatists issued a statement calling for dissolution of the Russian-installed administration of Doku Zavgayev, cancellation of the results of June 16 elections for a Chechen parliament and a change in Moscow's bargaining team.

They proposed that the talks "be entrusted to people who do not carry the burden of inevitable responsibility for having unleashed the war," the Interfax and ITAR-Tass news agencies reported.

While pledging to adhere to agreements signed in the Kremlin last month and the city of Nazran in June, they warned: "If these agreements are disrupted or neglected, all responsibility for possible consequences will be put on the Russian side."

Yandarbiyev referred repeatedly to "a series of grave violations" of those accords, blaming them on Russian troops and "some members" of Moscow's negotiating team. The consequences of the statement were not immediately clear.

Chechnya's new parliament, elected in a June 16 vote held by Zavgayev's government over rebel objections, convened for the first time Saturday in the capital Grozny.

The remarks were the rebels' response to the lack of progress at recently concluded talks.

## Off the Record

**Europride parade**

- COPENHAGEN: The normally placid Copenhagen evening burst into vivid display of colour and noise as the annual homosexual festival Europride culminated in a parade on Saturday night, reports AP.

Onlookers cheered the marchers, including about two dozen lesbians riding motorcycles, a group of transvestites from Thailand, a Norwegian brass band and dancers in traditional Norwegian costume, and the Homosexual Doctors from Sweden, who wore surgery scrubs.

"People's sexual preference is none of our business. They look happy and that's great," said Kai Anderson, 51, who came with his wife Brithe to watch the spectacle.

It was the first parade of homosexuals ever in Denmark, though the country has been at the forefront on gay rights, becoming in 1989 the first country in the world to allow same-sex marriage.

"Unlike gays in other countries, we've never had a need to be extravagant or militant to show we're different," festival spokesman Michael Nord said.

Police reported no trouble as the parade wound its way through the city.

A concert featuring gay bands, including the Village People, was to follow the parade closing the 10-day Europride festival, which is held in different city each year.

Europride also included workshops and information on same-sex rights, art exhibits, and hearings in the Danish parliament.

## Clinton for dissolution of self-proclaimed Croat state

ZAGREB, June 30: US President Bill Clinton has demanded the immediate dissolution of the self-proclaimed Croat State in southern Bosnia in a letter to his Croatian counterpart Franjo Tudjman, the official Croatian news agency Hina reported, says AFP.

The agency said that Clinton stressed in the letter received here Friday that the maintenance of the entity, dubbed Herzeg-Bosnia by the Bosnian Croats, is in violation with the Dayton peace accords and the agreement to establish a Croat Muslim federation in Bosnia.

The US president referred in particular to the recent reshuffle of the "government" of Herzeg-Bosnia, which was proclaimed in July 1993 in Grude, southern Bosnia, at the height of the war between the Croats and the Muslim led government in Sarajevo.

Clinton also expressed disquiet at the slow pace of establishing the institutions of the

Muslim-Croat federation, which is to share power in Bosnia with a Serb republic, Hina said.

"In his reply Tudjman said, the Dayton agreement envisages the gradual disbanding of the Herzeg-Bosnian authorities alongside the establishment of federal and national authorities. At the end of this process the Herzeg-Bosnia institutions will be completely disbanded.

Meanwhile, US President Bill Clinton announced Saturday a three-point initiative for Bosnian-Herzegovina, including a commission to search for missing persons.

Speaking at the end of the G7 summit in Lyon, he said former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance has been appointed to lead a commission to investigate an estimated 12,000 cases of missing persons in the war-torn country.

In addition the United States would provide 15 million dollars to clear landmines in the former Yugoslavia.

## KSA contends with turbulence after decades of stability

DHAHRAN, Saudi Arabia, June 30: Saudi Arabia has long been an island of stability in the turbulent Middle East, but in the past seven months the desert kingdom has had its share of troubles, reports AP.

King Fahd, who is in his mid-70s, stepped down temporarily after a stroke last November, and by all accounts his health is poor. Two deadly attacks against US military targets have shown the country is vulnerable to terrorism. The huge cost of the 1991 Gulf War and low oil prices have led to falling living standards, producing an undercurrent of discontent.

The ruling Al Saud family, which founded modern Saudi Arabia and has ruled throughout the 20th century, does not appear to be in serious danger — although its intolerance of dissent makes it difficult to gauge the extent of dissatisfaction among the kingdom's 11 million citizens.

"This is a solid and stable government," Secretary of State Warren Christopher said when asked if the Saudi leadership was at risk.

Underground cassettes circulating since the 1990-91 Gulf crisis are critical of the government. Dissidents in exile accuse the royal family of widespread corruption that

continues to worsen.

Many of the current difficulties can be traced to the Gulf crisis, when Iraq forces overran next-door Kuwait. Fahd invited in the American forces who led the allied effort to drive Iraq out of Kuwait.

The US forces that remain are a provocation for Muslim militants who oppose any Western presence in the kingdom, a strict Islamic theocracy that purists feel is not strict enough.

The Americans have become a very convenient target — being the shield of Al Saud, standing behind Al Saud and the people," said Mohammed

al-Masari, the country's most prominent dissident, who lives in London.

The Gulf War cost the Saudis more than 50 billion dollars and caused them to run up debt for the first time since the oil boom of the 1970s and 80s.

Sitting atop the world's largest proven oil reserves, the Saudis are in no danger of bankruptcy. But the government has cut back on the lavish benefits it previously bestowed on its citizens.

If the Americans are such great buddies, then why did they make us pay for the Gulf War?" said a US-educated

Saudi businessman who spoke on condition of anonymity. "We are still paying for that war, which protected American interests at least as much as it did ours."

US military targets have been hit by car bombs twice in the past seven months, claiming a total of 24 American lives.

Following the first attack in November, four Saudis were arrested and said they wanted to drive the 5,000 American troops out of the kingdom. Muslim militants are the primary suspects in Tuesday's bombing that killed 19.

Speculation about Saudi Arabia's leadership has been rife since Fahd had a stroke in November, according to diplomats. The Saudis have never revealed the nature of his illness.

Fahd, an overweight diabetic with a history of health problems, temporarily handed over the reins of government to Crown Prince Abdullah on January 1, then resumed his official duties on February 22.

Abdullah is expected to take over in a smooth transition when Fahd passes from the scene. But he too is in his 70s, and the royal family has several thousand princes, many of them jockeying for key positions in the government.