International ____

Amendment to edn bill Opposition defeats Tory govt by single vote

Locals helping Taliban

to fight opposition

LONDON, Jan 28: The opposition defeated British Prime Minister John Major's government by a single vote on an amendment to a bill on Monday, underscoring the possibility of a national election before its May deadline, reports AP.

The vote, on a governmentmoved amendment to an education bill which would have increased government aid to privately-run schools, came the same day that unsourced television and radio reports said major told his cabinet he was opting for May 1 as the date for the national election.

By law, the next election must be held by May 22 at the very latest but constitutional rules say the prime minister can call one before that any time he wishes during the government's five-year term. The government can also have an early election forced on it by

GHORBAND. Afghanistan.

Jan 28: Thousands of armed lo-

cals here are helping the Tal-

iban militia to force a new route

into opposition territory after

anti-Taliban troops cut the

main artery to northern Afghanistan, locals said today,

gave their backing to funda-

mentalist fighters - who share

the same ethnic origin as them

- as opposition forces Sunday

blew up the strategic Salang

Highway to stop the Taliban

people in Shinwari and another

1.000 in Siagard districts, who

have joined the Taliban are

fighting against the other side,"

locals and international aid

workers in the Ghorband Valley

gone into battle with their new

allies and were today fighting

opposition alliance troops

around Chardehi, at the end of

this valley which starts 80

kilometres (50 miles) northwest

TIRANA, Jan 28: Albanian

President Sali Berisha on Mon-

day ruled out imposing a state

lapsed investment schemes, re-

"total or partial" state of emer-

gency and has refused all sug-

gestions" from leaders of the

ruling rightist democratic party

dency said in a statement issued

earlier on Monday accused the

democratic party of instituting

a de facto state of emergency in

Albania after parliament

granted Berisha special powers

to quell the recent violent

presidency statement said "par-

liament's decision on Sunday

grounded Arafat's helicopter.

opened talks to settle the dispute.

reported. AFP reports from Beijing.

Bombay.

Countering the charge, the

protests.

The Albanian opposition

that he should do, so, the presi-

Berisha will not proclaim a

of the capital Karatl

The villagers have already

More than 1,000 armed

Villagers in this key valley

reports AFP.

advance.

lesing a confidence vote in the

House of Commons. Ministers who attended Monday's 'war cabinet' meeting to plot strategy for the election refused to confirm whether Mafor had indeed committed to the May I date. Prime Ministers conventionally do not announce elections more than three weeks in advance

Monday's 273 272 defeat did not directly threaten the government as it was on a vote to an amendment, rather than the bill itself. The Conservative government backs aid to the privately-run schools, saying they promote choice for parents, the opposition Labour Party says the schools are elitist and don't deserve public money.

Years of defeats and defections finally cost Major his Parliamentary majority late last year.

The Ghorband Valley, which

the Taliban seized much of last

week after seizing two strategic

towns near here from the oppo-

northern warlord General Ab-

dul Rashid Dostam, analysts

Indian state bank

staff to strike

NEW DELHI, Jan 28: Em-

S K Patney, vice president of

ployees of India's largest bank

say they will strike Friday to

press demands for better bene-

the State Bank of India's em-

ployees union, told United News

of India Monday that the main

demands included housing and

a better retirement package.

Many civil servants in India

are granted house or apart-

demonstrate outside State Bank

of India branches all over the

gives the police the support of

some army units, and only a

ing public buildings and injured

Monday around official build-

ings in Tirana following a

weekend of violent protests

over the collapse of bogus sav-

Safet Zhulali told ministry of-

ficials late Monday that the

army would "never be used

against the people," adding:

"The army will respect the laws

of the constitution, the laws of

parliament and the orders of

democratic country will always

work within the law," he said.

saying states like Italy.

"The democratic army of a

Security was stepped up

Meanwhile Defence Minister

It is only for a limited pe-

limited number of troops.

by demonstrators," it said.

ings schemes.

the general staff.

Patney said workers would

fits, reports AP.

country on Friday.

Berisha rules out imposing

state of emergency in Albania

of emergency in his Balkan republic, which has been swept by good in order to provide time to
a series of protests over colreplace police officers protect

Arafat to meet King Hussein:
Palestinian President Yasser Arafat left for a one day visit to

Amman vesterday for talks with King Hussein and Crown

in the peace process following the January 15 Israeli-Pales-

timan agreement extending self-rule to the West Bank city of

Hebron, officials in Amman said. The visit had originally been

scheduled for Monday but was delayed after bad weather

Bombay cine owners to reopen trade:

Cinema owners in and around Bombay will reopen for business

in the next couple of days after a month-long strike film

distributors said in Bombay yesterday, AFP reports from

after the Chief Minister assures us our demands will be met

movie producer and distributor NN Sippy said after government

Chinese sunken warship raised:

A Chinese warship sunk in the Yangtze river 59 years ago by

Japanese planes was raised yesterday following 77 days of

salvage work and earlier failed attempts. Chinese state media

ing about two metres (six feet) above the water's surface between

two barges. State Councilor Li Tieying was shown proclaiming

as "a success" the effort to raise the cruiser Chungshan, which

was named after the revolutionary founder of post-imperial

China, Sun Yat-Sen. Chungshan is a Chinese variation of Yat-

Chinese central television showed a section of hull project-

"The strike should be over in a day or two, we will call it off

Arafat and the king were to discuss the latest developments

Prince Hasan officials said. AFP reports from Gaza City.

sition, is a "back door" to the

Pashtoons to exercise voting rights for first time in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Jan 28: Ethnic Pashtoon tribals in Pakistan are to get a first taste of democracy in next week's national polls using voting rights only just granted to residents of the rugged North West Frontier Province (NWFP), reports AFP.

The door of democracy had previously been shut for the federally-administered tribal areas bordering Afghanistan. But Pakistan's current caretaker government decided to usher in charge after it was formed in November.

None of the previous popular governments elected since the lifting of a decade of martial law in 1985 though it fit to let the tribals take part directly in the electoral process.

Instead, a limited number of tribal chieftains formed an electoral college and chose eight deputies to the Federal National

WASHINGTON, Jan 28

Teen-agers may increase their

risk of heart disease later in life.

by smoking or eating fatty

of autopsy results that found

artery blockage in young people

who died accidentally, reports

The study found dramatic

differences in the severity of

fatty deposits on the arteries of

teen-agers and other young peo-

ple, depending on whether they

were found in the major arter-

ies of young people with high

levels of cholesterol in their

blood, according to the autop-

sies performed on 1,079 men

and 364 women between the

increased with age, and the dif-

ference between subjects with

The amount of fatty deposits

ages of 15 and 34.

Fatty deposits and lesions

smoked or ate diets rich in fat.

foods, according to a US study

Assembly.

"The recent dissolution of the National Assembly and change of government proved a blessing in disguise for the tribals," said Iftekhar Ali, a prominent Pashtoon journalist in Peshawar, capital of NWFP.

President Farooq Ahmed Leghari, on the advice of Interim Prime Minister Malik Merai Khalid, announced universal adult suffrage for the semi-autonomous region last

The move should have special significance for tribal women, who, observers say, are widely living in ways reminiscent of the Middle Ages. But female suffrage is strongly opposed by the clearly who have

warned women not to vote. Election officials said a total of 1.563,000 tribals were registered to vote in the February 3

US Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (C), of Mississippi, introduces Senators Orrin

Hatch (L), of Utah, Strom Thurmond (2nd R) of South Carolina, and Larry Craig (R), of

Idaho, Monday in Washington prior to their announcement of the Republican's proposed

Teen-agers run risk of heart disease

by smoking later in life

high and low cholesterol

showed up as early as age 15

according to the study pub-

lished in the January issue of

Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis

autopsies of American soldiers

killed during the Korean and

Vietnam wars found similar

results, this is first large sam-

ple of data from young women.

said Dr. Basil Rifkind, of the

National Heart, Lung and Blood

Institute, which sponsored the

study disproves the notion that

women, who generally have

heart attacks 10 years later

then men, do not have to alter

their diets as early in life as

other large piece to the jigsaw

puzzle and says the problems of

"It pretty firmly adds an-

The researchers said their

Although studies based on

and Vascular Biology.

research.

Balanced Budget Amendment, which would constitutionally require a balanced budget.

elections called by Leghari after he sacked prime minister Benazir Bhutto and dissolved the assembly on November 5, alleg-

ing corruption and misrule.

A mere 20,000 of the enrolled voters are women. People familiar with the customs of the area say it is unlikely many women would be

able to vote. In Khyber Agency, near Peshawar, capital of NWFP, an organisation of tribal religious leaders known as Tanzeem-i-Ittehad-i-Ulema Bara this week repeated a threat to destroy the house of any woman who ventured out to vote.

But administration officials posted in the region vowed that women willing to exercise their right would be fully protected. with their homes.

Separate polling stations staffed only with female offi-

- AFP/UNB photo

diet and heart diseases is some-

life," Rifkind said.

concluded.

Rifkind said.

tack.

thing that starts of early in

fatty foods can begin the pro-

gression toward heart disease

later in life, the researchers

cheeseburgers and milkshakes

increase their risk of heart at-

and the calories a single meal of

that sort provides is tremen-

dous and make you use up your

daily rations in one meal."

The heart institute's Na-

tional Cholesterol Education

Programme recommends that

all children over the age of 2

keep fat consumption under 30

per cent of daily calories and

saturated fat under 10 per cent.

Children who eat a lot of

"The saturated fat intake

A childhood diet rich in

cials have been set up.

Feverish canvassing is under way in the tribal areas, with candidates busy addressing public meetings, residents say Hundreds of candidates are in the fray for eight seats reserved for the tribals in the 217 member assembly

The tribals are mostly illiterate and many openly carry arms, but no incident has been reported so far.

Pakistan's established political parties have been forbidden from extending their activities to the territory, for fear that their presence might stir up trouble.

Foreigners need a special permit to enter the region. where authorities representing the federal government look after the administration in concert with 'Jirgas' or tribal councils.

Aslam Maskhadov elected president of Chechnya

GROZNY, Russia, Jan 28: Chechnya's rebel General Aslam Maskhadov has been elected president of the Caucasus republic, according to early counts of votes. Central Electoral Commission Chairman Mumadi Saidayev, said on Russian Ort television today, reports AFP

Maskhadov had about 60 per cent of the votes cast Monday around the republic and even more in the capital Grozny, he said. Over 50 per cent was need to win in one round of voting.

But it was not clear how many votes had been counted or from how many electoral districts. But the television said it was more than half of the 4 dis-

Earlier, Central Electoral Commission official Bizal Ozdemirov told the news agency that with 10 to 20 per cent of Monday's vote counted Maskhadov "is far ahead" in most regions. Second was warlord Shamil Basayev

"You can see that Maskhadov could win in the first round," Ozdemirov said.

Actress vs Mullah battle

ISLAMABAD, Jan 28: A film actress noted for her raunchy roles has spiced up Pakistan's election next Monday by taking on a prominent religious leader in his conservative stronghold. reports AFP.

Musarrat Shaheen is known for her box office hits which feature her gyrating dances that show off her ample figure and send male fans into a frenzy. Now she is contesting Dera

Ismail Khan in the North West Frontier Province against Maulana Fazlur Rehman, chief of fundamentalist Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) Party. Rehman, a leader with close

links to the Taliban fundamentalist militia that now controls much of Afghanistan, who faces cricketing hero Imran Khan for the National Assembly seat.

Shaheen, who is in her 40s. has stolen the limelight as the press focuses on the actressversus-Mullah battle.

A veteran of scores of films in her native Pushtu language, she is campaigning hard in the constituency where women live a segregated life.

"I want to work to uplift my area," said Shaheen, whose entry into the fray disturbed the

Hun Sen begins Myanmar tour

YANGON, Jan 28: Cambodian Co-Premier Hun Sen and his wife arrived here Tuesday for a four-day official visit, the government news agency announced, reports AP.

Hun Sen is expected to sign a pact on cultural cooperation during his visit. Hun Sen and his entourage,

who travelled by special plane were met at Yangon's international airport by Senior Gen. Than Shwe, who is head of the country's ruling junta as well as prime minister.

Than Shwe and his wife visited Cambodia in October last year, where they faced protests from pro-democracy demonstrators opposed to Myanmar's military rule. The junta seized power in 1988 and refuses to hand over power to the civilian winners of a 1990 general elec-

Hun Sen holds the official position of Second Prime Minister, but is widely considered to exercise more authority.

Shakur, Twain, Braxton claim American Music Awards

LOS ANGELES. Jan 28: Four months after he was gunned down in a still unsolved Las Vegas attack, Tupac Shakur was named favourite rap-hip hop artist at the American Music Awards, reports AP.

Shania Twain. Brooks and Dunn. Toni Braxton and New Edition also won major honours at the 24th annual fan-selected awards ceremony on Monday night.

Actress and singer Brandy accepted the award on behalf of Shakur, who also lives on in "Gridlock'd" a film starring the rapper and Tim Roth that premiered this month at the Sundance Film Festival.

Twain was America's favourite female artist on a night when the American Music Awards saluted 'The Year of the Woman.

"If anybody ever tells you

this gets old - it never does."

said Twain, who was the AMA's favourite new artist last year. With frequent winner Alabama not in the running this year, Brooks and Dunn were honored as America's top band duo or group. Braxton, who sang the

show's opening number and wore three different outfits in about 15 minutes, won favourite female soul RandB artist, her fourth career AMA New Edition returned to the

winner's podium for the first time in 10 years, claiming the favourite soul-RandB honour

Young Newcomer Jewel beat Donna Lewis and No Doubt for favourite new pop-rock artist.

Backstage. Jewel explained that she and her mother for a time lived in their cars when Jewel was laid off from a job in San Diego. "I decided I couldn't face consciousness every day anymore, you know, stealing food and toilet paper and putting all your money into

rent," she said LeAnn Rimes, a teen-ager already singing beyond her years. was rewarded as country's favourite new artist.

Metallica picked up its second trophy for hard rock-heavy metal artist. Presenter Pat Boone stole the show, appearing in an open leather vest, tattoos and sunglasses to pitch his new album of hard rock classic cov-

you," the 62-year-old Boone host of a Christian radio show deadpanned to co-presenter and hard rock godfather Alice Cooper as the Shrine audience The soundtrack award went

"Alice, they're laughing at

to "Waiting to Exhale", topping "The Nutty professor" and "The Crow: City of Angels."

The Bee Gees received the International Artist honorary award, which recognises those artists whose popularity and impact cross national boundaries. Previous recipients include Michael Jackson, Led Zeppelin and Rod Stewart.



favourite female artist in the Soul/Rhythm and Blues category during the 24th Annual American Music Awards Monday in Los Angeles, California. Braxton also won an award for favourite album "Secrets" in the same - AFP/UNB photo category.

Off the Record

Old paintings show liberated women of Iran

WASHINGTON: These days, Iran has a reputation as an austere country of Islamic religious practice so strict that women must cover their heads with black veils, reports AP.

But a collection of small, precise paintings now drawing crowds to the Smithsonian's Arthur M. Sackler Gallery shows the luxurious past of its Persian court. Among the exhibits: a shyly kissing couple and a king riding a horse with a red parasol overhead.

There was a kind of gentleness about old Persia. Its warring princes loved poetry so much that some used it for their diplomatic correspondence. Although they occasionally cut off the beard - or even the head - of messengers bearing bad news. their women apparently led a freer life than some Iranian women today.

"At least in those court circles, the women were educated and comparatively liberated - they wrote poetry, too," said Massumeh Farhad, who organised the exhibition.

Today's Iranian women are often educated and enjoy some business, professional and physical freedom, even under strict segregation from men.

The gallery has thoughtfully hung a supply of strong magnifying glasses to bring out expressive features, otherwise

almost invisible, on the tiny images. Visitors may be fascinated by a painting, a little over 4

inches (10 cms) wide, of a shyly kissing couple. They can use a glass to get a close look at the fine embroidery on the boy's Several other paintings also show women without veils. In

contrast to such tiny images, the show opens with two huge and beautifully written pages from the Quran, the Muslim holy book. Each page is more than 4 feet (120 cms) long and 3 feet (90 cms) wide.

Gunfire breaks out around Japanese embassy in Lima

out around the Japanese am-

A short burst of gunfire was heard as dozens of troops circled the compound on Monday and Peruvian police in an armoured vehicle made obscene gestures, taunting the rebels in-

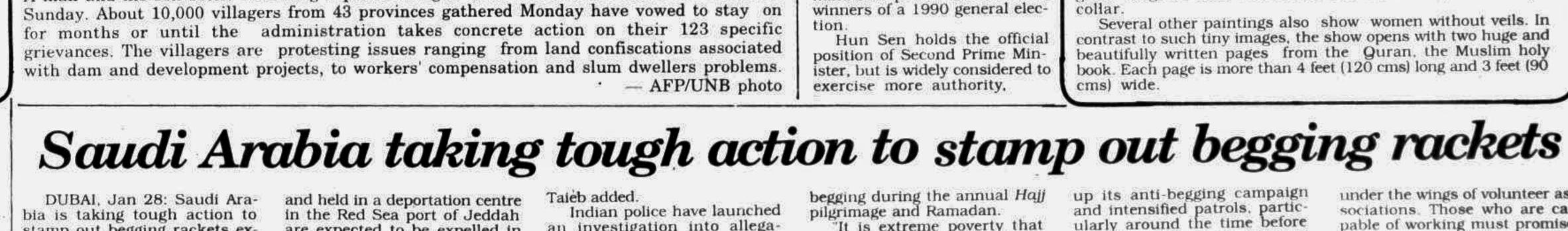
taro Hashimoto.

tion among the terrorists would intensify due to moves by the special police unit," Hashimoto told reporters in Tokyo today. "I'm calling the Peruvian government's attention to such moves, he added.

Earlier, as military music blared, one tank, three armoured troop carriers, a pickup and about 100 heavily armed police from a special operations unit marched around the compound for about two hours late

Monday afternoon.

Martial Music poured from speakers piled three metres (10 feet) high that had been installed around the white walled compound around midday. A helicopter buzzed overhead.



bia is taking tough action to stamp out begging rackets exploiting children, many of them handicapped girls as young as five found barefoot and hungry on the streets of the oil-rich kingdom, reports AFP.

In the first two weeks of the month of Ramadan — a particularly lucrative time for beggars, Saudi authorities have arrested more than 120 Indian children suspected of being the victims of well-organised trafficking rings.

Two weeks ago, Saudi Arabia deported 76 Indian child beggars aged between five and 15. all girls except for one boy. Nearly all had deformed limbs. The Indian Embassy in

and held in a deportation centre the next few days.

A man and his son settle in during a protest staged outside Thailand's Government House

press, the 76 youngsters, now housed in a state-run orphanage in Bombay, were victims of traffickers who send children to Saudi Arabia to beg during pilgrimages to Makkah, site of Islam's holiest shrines.

eign to our society, multiplies during the month of Ramadan. considered a period of mutual help," said Ihsan Saleh Taieb, social affairs director in the western region of Saudi Arabia.

Taieb added.

Indian police have launched an investigation into allegations that children from the state of West Bengal are being and have already arrested two

· — AFP/UNB photo

"The authorities are also taking steps to identify Saudi Arabian contacts of the childrunners of West Bengal," Calcutta Police Inspector-General

Safwi said police had established that touts bought children from poor families in Murshidabad, a Muslim-majority district of West Bengal. Other sources say touts in

East countries for several years. picking them up from impover-

ished Muslim families. adult, so that immigration offi-

Faced with this latest out-

up its anti-begging campaign and intensified patrols, particularly around the time before Iftar, the daily meal marking the end of fasting, said Taieb.

Offices working on the problems first opened at the start of the 1990s and are now spread across the kingdom, particularly in the holy towns of Makkah and Medina.

Saleh Al Ghamdi, deputy director of an office in Jeddah. said a group of 16 young beggars led by a woman and which was operating out of four apart-

ments in Makkah had recently been dismantled "Beggars seized around Makkah and Jeddah were of various nationalities." Saudis represent only one per cent of

"But during the first days of Eid ul-Fitr. Saudi homes are swarmed by beggars demanding "Aidua." money that adults and the wealthy give to children and

under the wings of volunteer as-

sociations. Those who are ca-

pable of working must promise

not to beg again. If they do, they

will be imprisoned for 14 days"

near mosques, banks and of-

Beggars generally operate

Some, in order not to attract the attention of the police, dress in their Sunday-best clothes.

These five star beggars frequent luxury hotels, chic restaurants or shopping centres," said Mohammed al Muayed, a journalist with Saudi Arabia's Okaz newspaper

"I'm worried whether irrita-

LIMA, Jan 28: Gunfire broke bassador's residence as police put on a show of force around the mansion where rebels are holed up with 72 hostages, raising concern among Japanese authorities, reports AFP.

There were no injuries during the incident, but the tension prompted a call for calm from Peru's Roman Catholic bishops and raised concern with Japanese Prime Minister Ryu-

Rivadh said another 46 children who have been rounded up

in the Red Sea port of Jeddah are expected to be expelled in According to the Indian

Begging, a phenomenon for-

"However, professional beggars organised in gangs have over the past few years been ex-

ploiting handicapped children

to arouse pity among citizens,"

forced to beg in Saudi Arabia. Indians.

H.A. Safwi said on Sunday.

West Bengal and Saudi Arabia prey on Indian Muslims in the Gulf nation, offering them money to use their children for

for. They get some money and keep quiet," said Sarfraz Arzoo. a Bombay journalist. He said India has been exporting child beggars to Middle

break, Saudi Arabia has beefed

begging during the annual Hajj pilgrimage and Ramadan.

"It is extreme poverty that drives this racket. Most of the time the parents know what the children are being taken away

"The gangs usually send three or four children with one

cers in the receiving country do not suspect," he said. "The younger children are, more money they bring in for the gangs.

the total. Ghamdi said. The truly needy are taken

the poor.

Ghamdi added.