

UN fails to make multinational force to help refugees stranded by Zairean war

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 12: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has failed to convince UN member states to establish a multinational force to help refugees stranded by the Zairean civil war, his spokesman said Tuesday, reports AFP.

At a news briefing here Tuesday, UN spokesman Fred Eckhard confirmed that a multinational force "does not at this moment look like the likely solution to the problem."

Annan proposed reactivating the multinational force on February 28 after talks in Paris with French officials, saying the troops could protect humanitarian corridors, which would enable up to 400,000 Rwandan refugees to return home.

France spearheaded a move in the UN Security Council in November to set up the force, which was dismantled the following month before being fully deployed.

Annan "floated the idea, he

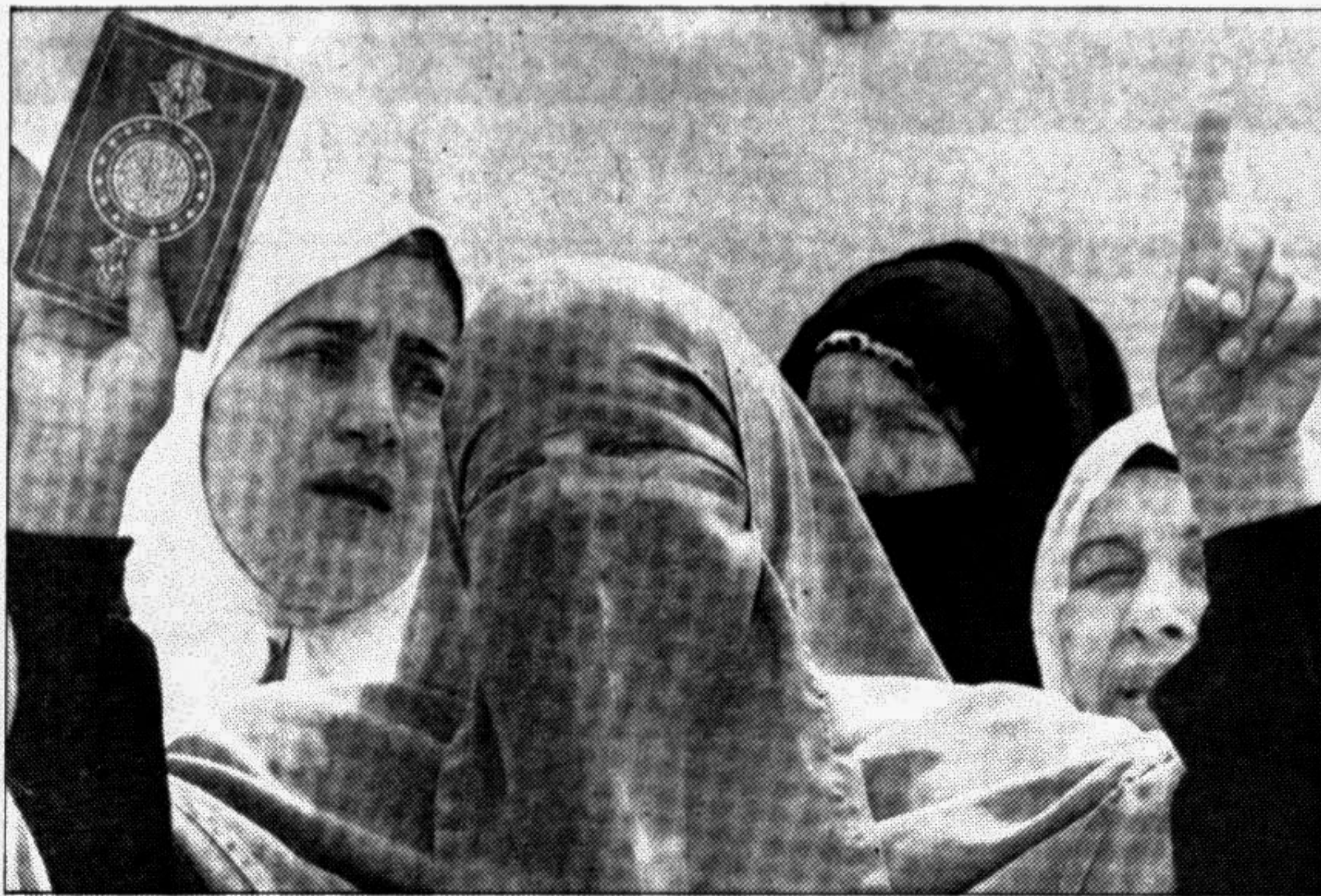
tried to light a fire under a few governments, he did what he could," Eckhard said.

But he noted that it was "not up to the secretary-general to authorise a force" which would be established by the Security Council.

AP adds: While aid workers arranged for food, medicine and plastic sheeting to shelter thousands of refugees, Zairean rebels announced they captured another town in their march through eastern Zaire.

Rebel forces have seized the Lake Tanganyika port city of Moba, 500 kilometres (310 miles) south of their headquarters in Bukavu, spokesman Rafael Ngenda said Tuesday. Zaire's Defense Ministry spokesman, Leon Kalima, said the city was captured Sunday.

The rebels also claim to be on the outskirts of Kisangani, several hundred kilometers (miles) northeast of Moba and the government's last stronghold in the east.



A Palestinian veiled woman waves the Quran as she demonstrates against the Palestinian Authority in Gaza City Tuesday. Around 100 hard the Muslim women demanded the release of Resistance Islamic movement Hamas prisoners imprisoned in the Palestinian Authority jails. — AFP/UNB photo

Non-govt political party formed in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY, Mar 12: A non-government political party consisting of persons in Kuwait has been formed in disregard of the official rejection of such organisations in the Islamic Gulf country, reports Xinhua.

The new group, called the Kuwait Society for the Defence of Public Fund, announced its formation Monday afternoon at a meeting attended by some 200 of its members which included some former parliamentary members, prominent businessmen and intellectuals.

The group which has designed to help check corruption, applied to Kuwaiti Ministry of Social Affairs and labour for official recognition, local newspapers reported yesterday.

Under the current law, the Kuwaiti government has suspended the formation of any non-governmental organisations. However, such groups do exist in fact without official recognition.

'Lanka's survival depends on adoption of new constitution'

COLOMBO, Mar 12: Sri Lanka's survival depends on the adoption of a new constitution to be put to parliament before the next budget debate, a senior cabinet minister was quoted as saying today, reports Reuters.

"The choice is between national devastation and national survival," the state-owned daily news quoted Justice Minister Gamini Lakshman Peiris as telling a seminar.

Sri Lanka's budget is usually presented to parliament in November.

The daily news quoted Peiris as saying a parliamentary select committee debating the new constitution would complete the remaining chapters on devolution of power by the end of May.

The new constitution incorporates the government's devolution proposals designed to end the war by Tamil Tiger rebels for an independent homeland in the Indian Ocean island's north and east.

Fujimori declines to rule out use of force to free hostages

LIMA, Mar 12: President Alberto Fujimori declined Tuesday to rule out the use of force to free the 72 hostages held at the Japanese ambassador's residence for nearly three months, reports AFP.

The remarks came one day after the government cancelled a round of talks with the leftist rebels shortly before it was due to begin, claiming the conditions for talks did not exist.

But government negotiator Domingo Palermo met Tuesday with the so-called commission of guarantors, which acts as a mediating team, to determine when talks could resume.

Fujimori said he intended to "pursue the search for a peaceful solution," but warned that his government "will continue working on possible security and preventive measures" so that force can be used if necessary.

US has replaced Iran as Bosnia's military backer

SARAJEVO, Mar 12: The United States has now replaced Iran as Bosnia's leading military backer, US special envoy to the Balkans James Pardew said Tuesday, reports AFP.

In an interview with Bosnian state television he said the United States was providing training and hardware to rebuild Croat and Muslim armed forces.

"Quite frankly we've replaced Iran as the primary means of assisting Bosnia in its security," he said. "There's no way that Iran can duplicate what we've done here."

Pardew said that a US-sponsored 400 million dollars programme, train and equip had begun the process of training the forces of the Muslim Croat Federation one of Bosnia's two semi-independent entities.

Troops kill 16 rebels in Colombia

BOGOTA, Mar 12: Colombian troops killed at least 16 leftist rebels in four separate clashes across the country on Tuesday, military sources said, reports Reuters.

The heaviest fighting took place near the town of Remedios in northwest Antioquia province, where soldiers killed seven rebels of the National Liberation Army (ELN), the country's second-largest guerrilla force, an army spokesman said.

In a jungle region of neighbouring Choco province, four Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) fighters died in clashes with the army. The FARC is Colombia's largest and oldest guerrilla army.

Five more guerrillas were killed in separate incidents in northern Sucre and eastern Meta provinces.

The deaths followed a wave of violence over the weekend in which 24 people died, including civilians, rebels and security force members, and dozens were injured.

King Hussein slates Netanyahu Arabs in UN dismiss Israel's warning

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 12: The Arab group in the United Nations on Tuesday dismissed Israel's warning that a Palestinian bid to apply international pressure against Israel could freeze the peace process, reports AFP.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and his friends "cannot dictate to the world (their conditions)," said Acting President of the Arab group, Qatar Ambassador to the United Nations Nasser Bin Hamad Al-Khalifa.

The Israelis have "hijacked" the peace process and "squandered all the capital which had been invested by everybody, by the Americans, the Europeans, the Arabs and even the Israelis themselves," he continued.

Earlier Tuesday Levy said at a press conference in Jerusalem that "in our agreements with the Palestinians, it is stipulated that the parties will resolve their disputes directly, without calling on international organ-

isations. The Palestinian UN delegate Nasser Al-Kidwa predicted Tuesday that a General Assembly resolution criticising Israel's settlement plan would get "near unanimous" support.

By bringing the matter to the 185-member General Assembly following the US veto of a similar resolution in the Security Council Israel and the United States are likely to be in an even more isolated position.

We are sure that there will be near unanimous support," said Al-Kidwa, who said the resolution would be "basically the same text" as the one presented to the Security Council. The General Assembly was set to meet today, with a vote expected Thursday.

Reuters adds: King Hussein of Jordan has launched a bitter attack on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, accusing him of turning Middle East peace into a "distant elusive mirage."

Off the Record

He bride!

JAKARTA: An Indonesian teenager splashed out on a lavish wedding last weekend only to find when he got home that this bride was a he not a she, reports Reuters.

The Jakarta Post reported today a Muslim cleric formalised the wedding at Samarinda in east Kalimantan province.

But it turned out that the bride of the 18-year-old groom was in fact a 38-year-old transvestite drag queen who ran a local beauty parlor, the Post said.

"If this sort of marriage is allowed, it would mean we had set the clock back to the age of pagan ignorance," the newspaper quoted the chief of the local Muslim council as saying.

Wonder drug

NEW DELHI: India has developed a wonder drug to enhance memory with the help of a well-known medicinal plant, and people here are lapping it up, reports AFP.

The "memory plus" capsules are doing roaring business across the country since they were developed by the state-owned Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) last year, officials said. "It is going to be a potential winner in the global market," said Minister of State for Science and Technology Y.K. Alagh.

"Basically it tends to improve memory fairly substantially in six to eight weeks."

"Some friends who have used it say they have liked it," he told AFP. "There has been a lot of demand from MPs. Generally, our parliament is very bullish on traditional medicines."

The three-rupee (eight-cent) capsule reportedly has many high-profile users, including Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, former Indian prime minister Chandra Shekhar and chess celebrity Vishwanathan Anand.

The "memory plus" capsule is based on the traditional Indian system of medicine called *ayurveda* and has been extracted from bacopa monnieri, a plant found near rivers and known locally as *brahmi*. It is believed to be a memory booster.

Experts prescribe one capsule of "memory plus" in the morning and one in the evening.

"We are very happy with the way the drug is doing in the market," said CDRI's director V.P. Kulkarni. "It has been accepted very well. It is selling very well."

Campbell breaks promise

LONDON: Naomi Campbell apparently broke her promise to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals — and the fur is flying, reports AP.

The Norfolk, VA-based activist group "fired" the British model Tuesday as one of its fur-free "models of compassion," after a report in a British newspaper said she appeared modeling real fur in Milan, Italy.

"It just goes to show that sometimes beauty really is only skin deep," PETA spokesman Michael McGraw told The Associated Press.

Campbell was one of five models who posed nude in a 1994 PETA advertisement, under the heading: "We'd rather go naked than wear fur."

Soon after, other well-known models — including Elle Macpherson and Claudia Schiffer — joined the campaign.

But on Saturday, The Guardian newspaper ran a photo of Campbell draped in a fur coat. It was not clear what kind of fur, but The Guardian quoted the design house, Fendi, as saying that all the fur on display was real.

In a letter to the 26-year-old model, PETA campaigns director Dan Mathews described her actions as a "disgrace."

"Are you the same person who tearfully told me... how disgusted you were by the needless suffering behind each fur?" he wrote. "I'm heartbroken that, as you grow older, you may look back on your 'glory days' with shame instead of pride."

Campbell's New York spokesman, Cassy Caesar, said she was aware of the reports, but could not confirm if the fur was real.

In London, however, Campbell's British agent was quoted as saying the fur was real, and that fashion determined the turn-around.



Former Beatle and veteran of the pop music scene Sir Paul McCartney shows off his medal after receiving his knighthood from the Queen at the investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday. — AFP/UNB photo

Ex-Indian defence chiefs for dividing Kashmir permanently

NEW DELHI, Mar 12: Former Indian defence chiefs today unanimously backed a Kashmiri leader's proposal to divide the disputed state permanently between India and Pakistan, reports AFP.

The Indian Express daily quoted retired army and naval chiefs and former intelligence heads as saying Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's suggestion that the existing line of control should be recognised as a permanent border, could end the imbroglio.

"It is realistic, practical and worth considering," former army chief K Sundarji said. "This would be major step in force reduction and would improve both economies."

"Militarily, it is almost impossible to recover Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and integrate it into India," he said. "Only the hardline Indian chauvinists

will feel aggrieved if the line of control is made the international border."

Most of Kashmir, which has blighted India-Pakistan relations for 50 years and sparked two wars, is under Indian rule. The northern third is held by Pakistan but both countries claim the entire territory.

The dispute is exacerbated by a Muslim separatist campaign in Indian-administered Kashmir which has left around 17,000 dead since 1989.

General S F Rodrigues, another former chief of army staff, said the four-decade-old tangle could not be resolved if both countries stuck to their guns.

"In an increasingly interactive world, we must accept that traditional attitudes cannot really stand close scrutiny. Abdullah's proposal should be viewed in this context."

India spent 2.36 per cent of gross domestic product on defence in the last fiscal year to March, compared to 6.88 by Pakistan and 5.63 by China.

"Even the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war in which Pakistan was defeated could not change the line of control. To that extent, India has accepted the fact that beyond the line, Pakistan could retain the area," said retired navy chief S M Nanda.

"The two countries need to accept the realities of the time and get on with nation-building," he added.

A K Verma, who headed India's intelligence wing, said only constructive steps such as Abdullah's plan were feasible.

"To move forward one must engage in confidential diplomacy like the Oslo talks between the Israelis and the Palestinians."



US President Bill Clinton (L) and Vice President Al Gore stand together at an event, announcing an economic plan for the District of Columbia Tuesday at the White House in Washington, DC. With the continuing flap over campaign finance, President Clinton called Tuesday for reform of campaign finance laws. — AFP/UNB photo

Unrest spreads in Albania

Berisha declares new PM from main Socialist Party

TIRANA, Albania, Mar 12: President Sali Berisha, making further concessions to opposition parties in a bid to cling to power, has handed over the post of prime minister to the main Socialist Party, reports AP.

Berisha on Tuesday named Banskim Fino as prime minister, hoping that Fino's background as mayor of a major insurgent-held town would help calm the violent protests that have spread to northern Albania.

Fino is a former mayor of Gjirokastra, a southern city rebelling against Berisha.

Eight rebel town councils met in Gjirokastra and formed a "National Front for the Salva-

tion of the People" which demanded Berisha's resignation and said it must be part of the political negotiations in the capital of Tirana, the Greek television network Antenna reported.

Berisha said he would form a new government within 24 hours, Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini said.

But the political talks in Tirana had little effect elsewhere on insurgents, who seized more military weapons, looted a state-owned hotel and several army bases and killed a man in southern Albania.

Outgunned soldiers in northern areas, unwilling to put up a fight with the increas-

ingly well-armed insurgents who now control more than a third of the country, pulled back closer to the capital.

Lightly armed soldiers, backed by two tanks without ammunition, withdrew to posts around a strategic crossroads outside Lushnja, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Tirana. A soldier at the checkpoint conceded that the 30-man unit was not prepared to defend the post.

Looters carted off numerous arms and ammunition from a military base in Bajram Curri, 215 kms (135 miles) north of Tirana, a man who identified himself as the mayor of the town said.

Number of India's poor doubles overnight!

NEW DELHI, Mar 12: The number of India's poor has doubled overnight from 160 to 320 million following a change in the method of calculation, The Times of India reported today, says AFP.

The newspaper said the figure had doubled after the government decided to take the declining value of the rupee into account.

The change, which sparked arguments within the United Front cabinet, means that 35.97 per cent of India's population, according to the latest figures published for 1993-94, are now considered below the poverty line.

Previously, the figure had been put at 18.1 per cent, the daily said, adding the revised statistics had prompted protests from ministers during

a cabinet meeting on Monday.

Finance Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram, the Times said, argued with Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda that the new formula could trigger new demands for funds and wreck the government finances.

Agriculture Minister Chaturanan Mishra, meanwhile, argued that poverty alleviation programmes could see funds flooding out of New Delhi to the state governments.

Deve Gowda, however, was determined to push through the change. He had announced last month that the government would supply staple foodstuffs at half price to the country's 320 million poor under a special subsidy scheme.

That proposal is due to cost the exchequer 2.3 billion dollars,

UK will have to pay \$4b for NATO expansion

LONDON, Mar 12: Britain will have to pay between three and four billion dollars over 13 years towards the cost of expanding NATO eastwards, according to a study published here Tuesday, reports AFP.

The analysis by the independent British American Security Information Council (BASIS) was estimated from figures produced by the US administration on the costs on NATO expansion in a report to Congress last month.

The US report predicted that the financial cost of expansion would range between 27 and 35 billion dollars for the period between 1997 and 2009.

BASIC said Britain's payment of between 250 and 300 million dollars a year over 13 years would be twice the US contribution.

The organisation made its calculations using the US report along with official NATO

data that apportions costs among the allies.

These show that Britain currently pays 25.93 per cent of the total NATO budget excluding the US contribution.

The US administration report said that NATO's 14 European members, together with Canada, will be asked to pay between 12.5 and 15.5 billion dollars, while the United States will pay just 1.5 to two billion dollars.

The rest of the costs — 13-18 billion dollars — will be met by Poland, Hungary and the Czech republic, which are expected to be invited to join NATO at the alliance's July summit in Madrid.

Dan Plesch, BASIS's director said, said his organisation's report was released "the (British) government has refused to carry out its own study, saying it was waiting for NATO's cost study."

Next century to be hot one : Study

NEW YORK, Mar 12: Satellite temperature measurements suggest that next century will be a hot one, and bolster the conclusion that global warming is already under way, two US scientists say, reports AP.

Last year, an international scientific panel concluded that the planet is indeed getting hotter, and "the balance of evidence suggests that there is a discernible human influence on climate." The findings also call attention to the urgency of the issue at a time when the world's nations are trying to control pollutants that contribute to global warming.

In Thursday's issue of the British journal Nature, climatologists Kevin Trenberth and James Hurrell argue that satellite temperature measurements show a slight warming trend in the upper atmosphere between 1979 and 1995.

Previous analyses of those satellite measurements suggested a cooling of about 0.09

degrees Fahrenheit (0.13 degrees Celsius) per decade over that period.

If the two National center for Atmospheric Research scientists are correct, they have resolved a troubling discrepancy:

Ground-level records show a temperature increase of 0.13 degrees Celsius between 1979 and 1995, while satellite readings higher in the atmosphere show a cooling trend during the same period.

Trenberth and Hurrell contend those atmospheric measurements were erroneous because they failed to account for inconsistencies that occurred when old satellites were out and were replaced by new ones. Over the 18-year span, eight satellites were used to measure temperature in the upper troposphere, an atmospheric layer about five miles (eight kilometers) above the ground.

To ensure consistency, each satellite in the series was supposed to have an orbit identical

to its predecessor. But the satellite orbits vary somewhat, Trenberth said, and that affects the temperature readings.

"Those kinds of problems are very difficult to correct for," Trenberth said.

When he and Hurrell examined the satellite record, they found noticeable temperature dips in 1981 and 1991. Both dips came at times when temperature measurements were being transferred from one satellite to another. When those dips are accounted for, the temperatures show a slight increase, rather than a decrease.

"The accumulated evidence suggests that there should be a small positive trend," the researchers said.

John Christy, a climatologist at the University of Alabama in Huntsville who is familiar with the satellite measurements, asserted that the data are sound and that the Colorado researchers made several errors in their analysis.