

Army chief gives PM 48-hrs deadline to quit

# Army, police stage revolt in Papua New Guinea

SYDNEY, Mar 17: The army and the police force in Papua New Guinea staged a revolt today. AFP quoting an Australian Broadcasting Corporation report from Port Moresby said...

was staging a coup in the troubled South Pacific nation. "If the PM and his deputy and minister for defence do not step down within 48 hours then I will plea to Papua New Guineans to join hands to force them to resign," Singirok said...

training it for a mission to Bougainville. A senior aide to the army chief told Reuters the mercenaries had been detained and could be expelled from PNG. Singirok also called on the country's governor-general to appoint a caretaker government pending an inquiry into the hiring of the mercenaries...

sacrifice to stand in the gap which I have not created." A senior aide, Colonel Jack Tuat, said all troops in the capital port Moresby were still in their barracks and the mercenaries detained. "They have been detained, not arrested, under special security laws. They are being safeguarded for their own safety," Tuat said.

## Taliban renews amnesty offer to opposition fighters

KABUL, Mar 17: The head of Afghanistan's Taliban interim ruling council repeated an offer of amnesty to opposition fighters today and said that he hoped they would take advantage of it on the Muslim new year on Thursday, reports Reuter.

The offer of amnesty was originally made by Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, called Amir al-Momineen (leader of the faithful) by his followers. "I call on all opposition fighters to take advantage of the amnesty previously offered by Amir al-Momineen on the occasion of the new year," head of the Taliban ruling council Mullah Mohammed Rabbani told a conference in Kabul today.

The Taliban, who captured Kabul in September and now control more than 75 per cent of Afghanistan, face opposition forces in the snow-bound mountains to the north of Kabul and in the remote north-western provinces.



French doctors demonstrate Sunday in Paris, against Prime Minister Alain Juppe's plans to reform the social security system, which they say will lead to a rationing of health care. — AFP/UNB photo

## BRIEFLY

**President Mobutu hospitalised:** Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko, who is recovering from cancer surgery, was hospitalised on Sunday for "supplementary care," aides at his villa on the French riviera said. AFP reports from Roquebrune-cap-Martin.

The news came after an aide said the embattled president had put off indefinitely returning to his homeland, the day after rebels hostile to his regime captured a key government-held city. A source close to Mobutu said the Zairean president was expected to leave Monaco's princess Grace Hospital yesterday, but warned that he might stay in for longer.

**15 killed in Egyptian bus plunge:** Fifteen people were killed and three injured when their minibus plunged into a canal Sunday in southern Egypt after the driver lost control of the speeding vehicle, police said, AFP reports from Cairo.

The bodies were fished out of the Ibrahimiya canal, 125 kilometers (80 miles) south of Cairo, police said.

**Hillary arrives in Senegal:** US first lady, Hillary Clinton, arrived in Dakar early Monday from Washington for a one-day visit to Senegal at the start of a two-week African tour. AFP reports from Dakar.

Hillary's arrival was delayed by a day because her husband US President Bill Clinton had to have surgery on his knee. Accompanied by her daughter Chelsea, Clinton was welcomed by Aminata Mbengue Ndiaye, Senegal's minister for women, children and family affairs.

**5 killed in Manila shootout:** A bank security guard killed five before turning the gun of himself in a shooting spree yesterday in a satellite town just north of Manila, radio reports said, AFP says from Manila.

Two more were wounded in the killing, which occurred at the Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. in Quezon city, a satellite town of the capital, the reports said.

**Colombian defence minister quits:** Guillermo Alberto Gonzalez resigned as Colombia's defence minister Sunday, two days after acknowledging he accepted a check in 1989 from a leading narcotics figure. AFP reports from Bogota.

The check, for the equivalent of 7,500 dollars, was issued by reputed drug trafficker Jesus Pastro Delafont, who is being sought by authorities. When he acknowledged receiving the money for his congressional campaign, Gonzalez insisted he did not know at the time about an apparent drug-money connection.

**US deputy defence secy in KSA:** US Deputy Defence Secretary John White met Saudi Crown Prince Abdallah bin Abdul Aziz in Riyadh yesterday, state radio said without indicating the purpose of the visit, AFP reports from Riyadh.

Radio Riyadh said that White would leave yesterday for a visit to neighbouring Qatar.

**Bomb explodes outside Paris mosque:** A bomb exploded outside a Paris mosque early yesterday, damaging the entrance and slightly wounding one man, police said, Reuter reports from Paris.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the explosion, at 4:30 am (0330 GMT), which shattered windows along the rue de Tanger in the 19th district of Paris.

**23 Kurdish rebels killed in Turkey:** Turkish security forces have killed 23 Kurdish rebels since Friday in anti-insurgency operations in two areas of eastern Turkey, Anatolia News Agency reported Sunday quoting an official communique, AFP reports from Ankara.

The report said 16 militants of the separatist Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) had been killed in Kigi region in Bingol province and seven other "terrorists" — the official term for Kurdish separatists — had been shot dead in Cemiskezek district in Tunceli province.

**6 crewmen still missing in China:** Six crewmen were missing after a freighter sank in a collision with a container ship at the mouth of the Yangtze river, the Liberation Daily reported yesterday. AFP reports from Shanghai.

Shanghai river patrol police saved four out of 10 crew members thrown overboard when the freighter laden with rice, hit the other ship in the dark last week, the paper said.

**Gunbattle claims 3 in Germany:** Three people were killed and two seriously wounded in a gunbattle between members of two foreign families in a Berlin apartment block late Sunday, the emergency medical services said, AFP reports from Berlin.

Five other people, including a suspected gunman, were taken to hospital suffering shock, the services said. The emergency services said two bodies and one of the wounded were found in an apartment, while third body and second wounded person were in another flat on a lower floor. Berlin police were unable to give further details.

# Cost of guarding India's present, ex-PMs, families doubles in 3 yrs

NEW DELHI, Mar 17: The cost of paying for elite commandos guarding India's present and former prime ministers and their families has more than doubled in the past three years, reports AFP.

The Special Protection Group (SPG) responsible for the task argues the spiralling costs have been caused by the increasing numbers of people they have to protect. "Before we began in 1985, security agencies only had to guard members of the Gandhi Dynasty," an SPG source said, adding, there were now ex-prime ministers and members of their family living all over India.

Finance minister Palaniappan Chidambaram recognised the problems in his budget for the fiscal year to March 1998 last month when he increased the SPG allocation by 66 per cent from 9.27 to 15.42 million dollars over the previous year. But SPG officials privately complain the extra money will "evaporate" immediately, with more than 30 'VVIPs' — very, very important persons — to guard round-the-clock. In 1995, spending on the force was near six million dollars.

A 48-strong SPG team guards Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda in his home in New Delhi but during his trips that figure jumps to 400. A large SPG contingent is deployed in the southern state of Karnataka to guard four of his sons and two daughters who refuse to move to the Indian capital. The commando unit also has to guard former premier PV Narasimha Rao in New Delhi and his three sons and five daughters in the distant state of Andhra Pradesh.

# Zairean rebels take full control of Kisangani

KISANGANI, Zaire, Mar 17: Zairean rebels, commanded by their leader's 25-year-old son, were in full control of Kisangani on Sunday, a day after residents lined the streets to welcome them as "liberators", reports Reuter. Zaire's third largest city was calm and there was no gunfire on Sunday evening, government troops and their foreign mercenary allies fled on Friday and Saturday. "Hundreds of people lined the streets welcoming the rebels on Saturday as their liberators. It was very festive," a foreign missionary in Kisangani said. The man in charge on Sunday was Joseph Kabila, son of rebel leader Laurent Kabila who launched the campaign to oust President Mobutu Sese Seko last October. "If I say people were excited it's an understatement," Joseph Kabila told Reuters. He gave his title as "operational commander of the northern sector" for the rebel Alliance of Demo-

cratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire (ADFL). Kisangani was the Zairean Army's headquarters in the east of the vast Central African country. Its capture is the biggest victory yet for rebels now controlled one fifth of Zaire, Africa's third-biggest country. Town Zaire control 2 residents said government troops fled on Friday night and Saturday after a looting spree, they crossed the Zaire River on a flotilla of small boats, fleeing westwards. "The rebels came into town at 2 pm (1200 GMT) Saturday afternoon. Civilians, mostly younger people, came out to greet them and walked with them for four to five kilometres as they came into town," said hotel worker Pete Lesondja, 32. There were only a handful of casualties and there was no real battle for the city, residents said. Joseph Kabila said the heavy fighting was continuing last

Monday and Tuesday more than 20 km (12 miles) outside the city. He said his casualties were only two and 260 government troops had surrendered. He said the rebels' biggest problem was a carpet of mines laid by the defenders around every road into Kisangani apart from the one they used to retreat. Kabila said demining was his priority because villagers were being killed by mines when they walked to their farms. Mobutu has stayed in France for most of the time since being operated on for prostate cancer in August in Switzerland and aides had little to say about the fall of the city. After news of Kisangani's fall, one of his aides said the 66-year-old Mobutu had no firm date for returning home. "He is definitely not going back tomorrow. He may leave after in the week but nothing is certain," the official told Reuters in Paris.

Residents reported finding six bodies when they emerged on Saturday morning after heavy firing on Friday night. Three were Zairean military and three were civilians. "My family lost nearly everything during this looting," said Papi Lembaemba, 20. But the general feeling was relief that Zaire's notorious army, the FAZ, had finally left. Joseph Kabila said his forces had crossed to the West Bank of the broad Zaire River at Kisangani, chasing retreating government troops. He said he thought most of the foreign mercenaries were French and ex-Yugoslavs and that they flew out of Kisangani on Friday night. The rebels advancing on several fronts, said they were aiming next for the southern mining hub of Lubumbashi, Pweto 400 km (250 miles) north east of Lubumbashi, fell on Thursday, but the ultimate goal was Kinshasa, Zaire's capital.



President of Mali Alpha Oumar Konare meeting the Ambassador of Bangladesh Syed Muhammad Hussain, after receiving his credentials as the ambassador to Mali recently at the Presidential Palace, Bamako.

## Egyptian police round up 1500 for questioning

ASSIUT, Egypt, Mar 17: Egyptian police have rounded up 1,500 people after suspected Muslim militants massacred 14 people in a southern hamlet last week, security sources said today, reports Reuter. They said police in Qena governorate were gathering any information about three wanted members of the militant Gama'a Al-Islamiya (Islamic group) suspected of gunning down the villagers in Ezbet Dawoud on Thursday and then attacking a Cairo-bound train. Police identified the suspects as Gama'a members Anwar Hamed, Abdel Razeq Aitta and Mahmoud el-Farshouti. The group has denied in a faxed statement that it was behind the attack. The sources said the men rampaged through the village, shooting passers-by before heading for Nag Hammadi, some 450 kms (280 miles) south of Cairo, and firing at a train. Police identified eight of the dead as Coptic Christians, one of the groups targeted by the Gama'a in its campaign to topple the government. The militants have also shot at tourists, particularly on the

line south from Cairo, in their drive to sabotage Egypt's economy, which is dependent on foreign revenue. Other targets have been policemen and government ministers. A healthy press makes healthy govt: Aga Khan. NAIROBI, Kenya, Mar 17: The role of an independent press is to give the public the information it needs to carry out its responsibilities. And this special task — the role of observing and informing — is a role that not even the most enlightened government can ever play for itself, this was said on Sunday by the Aga Khan, in Nairobi at the inauguration of a new printing facilities for Kenya's newspapers by Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi, according to a press release received in Dhaka. "A healthy press," he said "makes a healthy government and a healthy government makes a healthy press. Together, they make a healthy society."

# Netanyahu to press ahead with settlement plan

JERUSALEM, Mar 17: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reaffirmed Sunday that his government would press ahead with the establishment of new Jewish enclaves in disputed east Jerusalem this week, brushing off appeals from Jordan's King Hussein and Yasser Arafat to cancel the project, reports AFP. "The work will begin this week, Netanyahu said at a joint press conference with King Hussein at the end of a one-day visit during which the Jordanian monarch paid condolence visits to families of seven Israeli schoolgirls killed last week by a Jordanian soldier. Netanyahu said he and King Hussein had telephoned Arafat during a two-hour meeting Sunday evening in a bid to resolve the crisis sparked by the Jerusalem building plan and other recent Israeli policy decisions. He said the telephone conversation failed to end the

stalemate, but added that contacts were continuing between the two sides and that some new ideas had been put forward. "We have much to gain. All three of us, in moving the process forward and we cannot let our disagreements, which are as yet unresolved, destroy the process," he said. "We have disagreements and they are not likely to be solved in one afternoon, or one week, and certainly the issue of Jerusalem is one of these," he said. "But I believe that the principle differences have to be ironed out in direct consultations," he said. Netanyahu said he and King Hussein had discussed a number of ideas for moving the peace process forward and some of the initiatives "are being implemented as we speak." He said one such issue discussed "intensively" with King Hussein was the opening of a

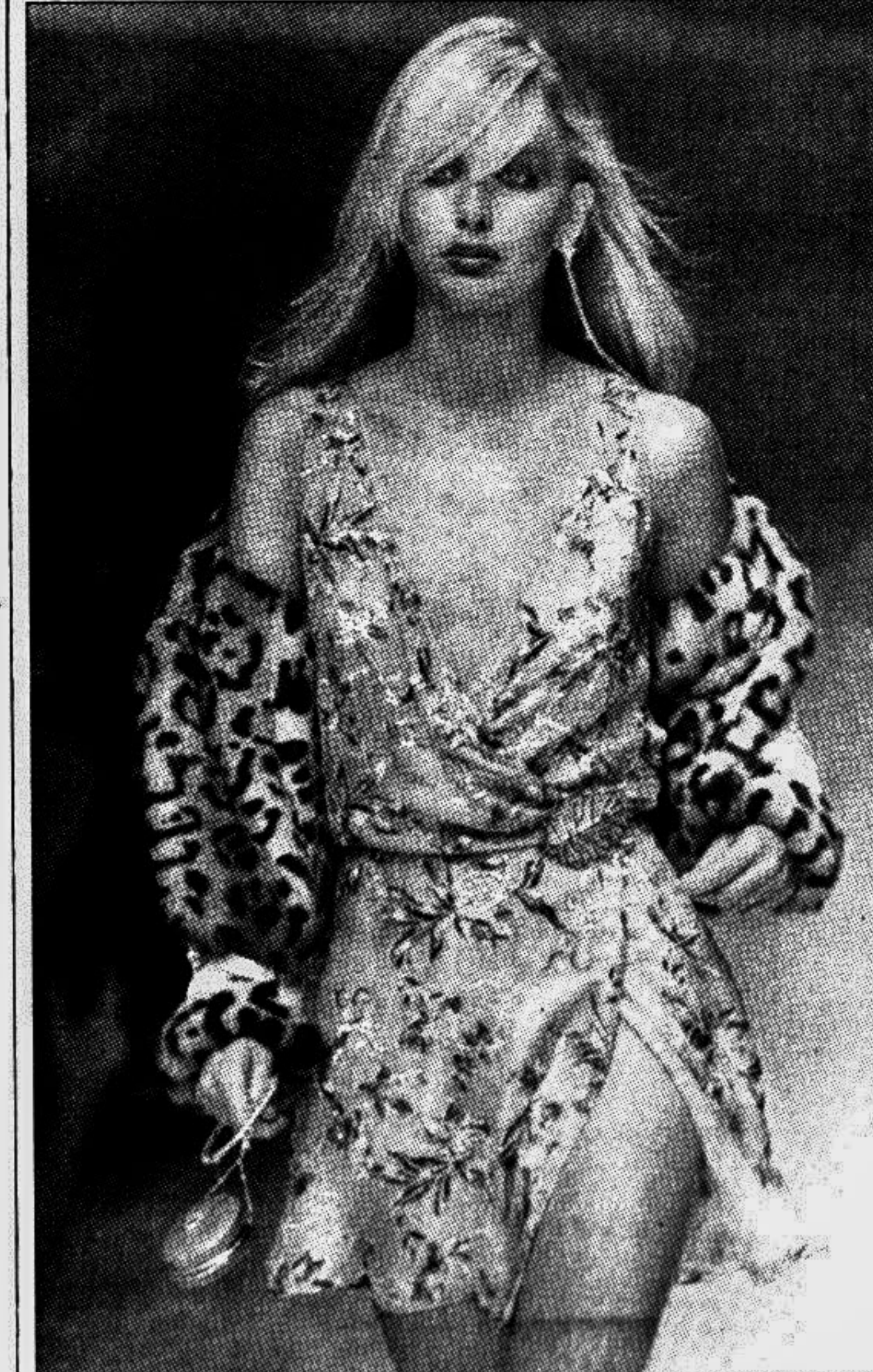
Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip, a project blocked for months by Israeli demands to maintain full control over the facility. Israel television said that as a gesture to Arafat, Netanyahu agreed to permit the Palestinian leader from using the yet unfinished airfield in the southern Gaza Strip for his personal travels, but not for general air traffic. Earlier report says, Israelis and Palestinians are engaged in secret talks to prevent violence from erupting over Israel's plan to build a new Jewish enclave in disputed east Jerusalem, a senior Palestinian official said on Sunday. But US diplomat Edward Abington, who has been intensely involved in efforts to bring the two sides together, said little progress had been made just days ahead of the scheduled start of work on the east Jerusalem settlement.

**35 drown as ferry capsizes in Myanmar** YANGON, Mar 17: Thirty five people drowned when a triple-decker ferry carrying over 500 people capsized during a dust storm on Myanmar's Irrawaddy River the official press reported today, reports AFP. Some 502 passengers including 282 males and 220 females were rescued where the boat went down at 7:00 pm (1230 GMT) on Saturday, one hour's journey north of Thabeikkyin in Central Burma the new light of Myanmar said. It was unclear how many people were travelling on the state owned boat, which was 11 hours about half-way into its journey from Kantha in Sagaing Division to Mandalay. Among the 35 dead were seven women passengers and 28 males, The New Light said. Transport Minister Lieutenant General Thein Win and other high ranking government officials visited the scene of the accident on Sunday.

## Albania's Socialist Party leader urges Berisha to quit

TIRANA, Mar 17: The leader of Albania's Socialist Party called today on President Sali Berisha to resign as a way of ending the uprising in Europe's poorest country, reports AFP. Fatos Nano was speaking a day after receiving a presidential pardon for corruption charges that had landed him in jail. Asked if Berisha's resignation was desirable, he said: "Politically, no, morally, yes." Meanwhile Albania pulled back from the bring Sunday after two months of violent unrest, as EU foreign ministers

prepared a mission to help the shattered nation get back on its feet. With tanks and armoured personnel, carriers patrolling the streets of Tirana overnight and volunteer militia in place calm appeared to have broken out in the capital at last. Some 3,000 demonstrators carrying flowers marched through the city centre in memory of those killed, more than 80 people have died this month and more than 600 have been wounded.



This double-breasted peach chiffon dress with embroidered burgundy and silver flowers is seen under a quilted peach velvet spencer jacket with a leopard-print mink lining in Paris Sunday during the Valentino 1997/98 Fall/Winter ready-to-wear collection. — AFP/UNB photo

## Off the Record

### Romeo & Juliet of our time

BOGOTA: Two young lovers opted for poison rather than following a parent's wish to end their relationship, police in western Colombia reported Sunday, says AFP. Alexandra Garcia, 13, died almost immediately after drinking a cup of cyanide in a bar with her boyfriend Carlos Alberto, 20, police reported. Alberto was rushed to a hospital in the town of Santa Rosa, 400 kilometers (250 miles) west of Bogota. Doctors said it is unlikely that he would survive. The Colombian Romeo and Juliet had been together for about a year against the wishes of Garcia's parents. Garcia's parents had increased pressure on her lately to end the relationship, police said.

### Victims of witchcraft in magic box

LIMA: Children playing in a half-built house in a Lima shanty town stumbled on a box containing 16 skulls and two human arms, police reported Sunday, reports AFP. When police searched the house, located in the Banco de Semillas shanty town on the city's southeast outskirts, officers found candle holders, candles and plants commonly used in witchcraft ceremonies. The skulls were in bad condition and the arms considerably burned, police said. The find was sent to the homicides division for further study. Police believe the skulls were dug up from a nearby clandestine graveyard where there are frequent reports of grave robbing. The witchcraft paraphernalia together with the skulls lead agents believe the house was used by warlocks to hold "black magic".

### Pamela sues Penthouse

LOS ANGELES: Penthouse magazine is going to have to open its books for Pamela Anderson Lee, who is suing the magazine over a video showing the former "Baywatch" co-star and her rock star husband having sex, reports AFP. She and husband Tommy Lee, the Motley Crue drummer, want to know how much money Penthouse magazine made on the issue with descriptions of the video, which they say was stolen. A judge ruled Friday the magazine will have to release the sales information. The Lees sued Penthouse publisher Bob Guccione a year ago after the magazine acquired the video allegedly stolen from their Malibu home by a construction worker.