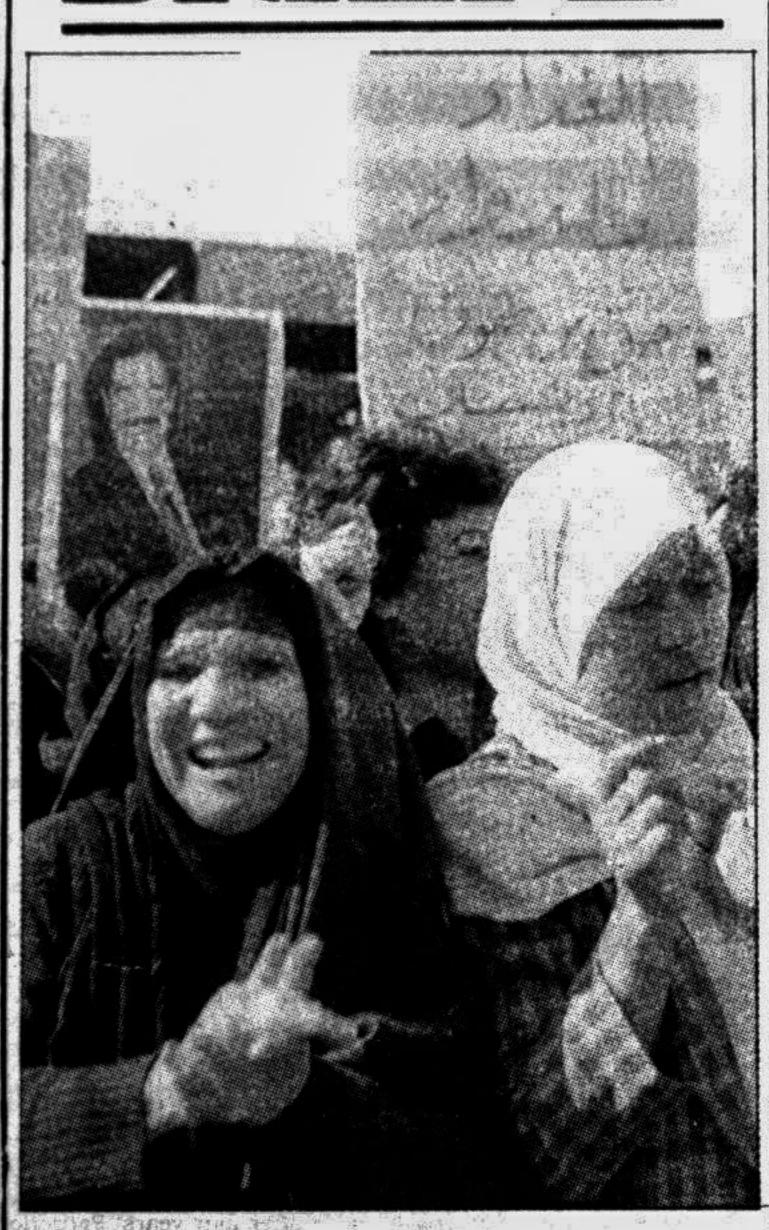
Albanians urged to lay down arms,

BDIFFIY



Iraqi women demonstrate Wednesday in Baghdad brandishing portraits of President Saddam Hussein and a placard reading "food and medicine are a human right." A ship carrying rice from Thailand docked at the southern Iraqi port of Um Qasr and began unloading 13,000 tonnes of rice under a humanitarian deal with the United -AFP/UNB photo Nations.

Kuwaiti students burn Israeli flag: Kuwaiti students burned Israeli flags in Kuwait City on Wednesday during the first anti-Israeli demonstration in the Emirate in six years, witnesses said, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

Nearly 200 students took part in the demonstration at Kuwait University called to protest Israeli's decision to build a new Jewish neighbourhood in disputed East Jerusalem. Which houses Islam's third-holiest site and which Palestinians want as their future capital. Several Kuwaiti opposition MPs attended the protest, the first here since Kuwait's liberation from Iraqi occupation in February 1991.

Guatemalan road mishap kills 7 Seven people died and 47 others were taken to hospitals when a passenger bus packed with easter week vacationers bound for the Pacific coast collided with a pickup truck on Wednesday, emergency workers said. Reuter reports from Guatemala City.

"Five adults and a child were killed at the scene Luis Perez of the Guatemala City volunteer emergency squad told Reuters. 'd seventh victim died in a hospital. Jose Gonzales of the natori 'tional police in Escuintla told Reuters. The Pamaxan Co. bus was rounding a notoriously dangerous curve 29 miles (46 kms) from the capital at about 5.30 pm (2330 GMT) when it hit the pickup and went over an embankment into the steep ravine.

DPRK worker defects to ROK: A North Korean carpenter arrived in Seoul Thursday after seeking asylum through the South Korean Embassy in Kuwait,

AP reports from Seoul. "Upon arrival at the airport in Seoul, Rim Jee !!, 29 one of the 1,500 North Korean construction workers in Kuwait, said he winted to escape political oppression and widespread hunger in North Korea. Rim also said he worked 15 hours a day in Kuwait since November but all his wages were taken by the

Strong quake rocks Indonesia: An strong earthquake estimated at 5.6 on the Richter Scale jolted Indonesia yesterday, the Royal Hong Kong Observatory said, Reuter reports from Hong Kong.

North Korean government.

The epicentre of the quake, detected at 0224 yesterday local time (1824 GMT Wednesday), was off the north coast of Halmahera, about 250 kms (155 miles) north-northeast of Ternate, Indonesia, the Royal Observatory said in a statement. No further details were immediately available.

Rebels kill 7 in Philippines: Suspected communist guerillas killed seven people, including five policemen rushing to the site of a reported shooting in the northern Philippines, police said Thursday. AP reports from Manila.

The ambush took place late Wednesday in the coastal town of Palauig in Zamabales province, said Thompson Lantion, deputy regional police chief. The dead included Palauig police chief Manuel Alop and two civilians. The group was travelling to a remote village in Palauig to investigate a reported shooting when they were fired upon, Lantion said. It was not clear whether the shooting they were going to investigate had actually occurred.

8 drug dealers jailed in Mexico: Eight gunmen who worked for the Tijuana-based Arellano Felix drug cartel were sentenced to prison terms up to 15 years on federal charges of arms possession and racketeering. AP reports from Guadalajara.

The men allegedly participated in a May 1993 gun battle with a rival drug gang at the Guadalajara International Airport in which the city's archbishop, Cardinal Juan Jesus Posadas Ocampo, was killed. The sentences handed down Wednesday did not mention the killing of Posadas Ocampo, but the defendants still face charges in state courts relating to that killing and other crimes.

die of suffocation in China: Seven people died from smoke inhalation when their bakery caught on fire in Shanghai, the China Daily reported yesterday,

AFP reports from Beijing. All seven were sleeping upstairs when fire broke out in the ground floor bakery in the Pudong new area around 2 am on Monday morning, the newspaper said. It blamed the fire on a negligent worker who clocked off at midnight and forgot to turn off a gas cooker.

ton. Bosnia's president said he believes a special international force will be formed to hunt down suspected war criminals in his wartorn country, reports "We received clear assur-

ances that the war criminals will be brought to justice," Alija lzetbegovic declared after a 45minute session with Clinton at

the White House Wednesday. Speaking to reporters before the meeting. Clinton did not mention the issue of pursuing war criminals. But Clinton told the Bosnian leader, according to a spokesman, that he fully expects to pull out US troops by the previously set June 1998

deadline and is committed in the meantime to helping Bosnia

Clinton said before the meeting. Deputy White House press secretary David Johnson, recounting the talks between the two leaders, said that the war criminals were "a source of

frustration. criminals would be apprehended, Izetbegovic replied: "I can say only my impression that would be the special units."

Asked how the suspected war He declined to elaborate.

European Union ministers have agreed to provide an initial 2.3 million dollars in food and other relief -- but only if Albania safeguards the aid workers and shipments. Fino said in an address Wednesday carried on state television.

TIRANA, Albania, Mar 27:

Premier Bashkim Fino pleaded

with Albanians to lay down

their arms and give safe passage

to European aid shipments to

help stave off famine, reports

"We must organise to restore order and calm to our towns. because without guarantees, this aid can't reach its destination." Fino said.

An EU civilian and military delegation, meanwhile, headed to Albania to offer guidance in ending a month old insurgency that has killed more than 160 people and sent nearly 12,000

Bldg collapse

kills 35

in China

five people were killed and

more than 100 injured when a

Hong Kong-owned factory dor-

mitory collapsed in southeast-

ern China, a Chinese Central

Television (CCTV) spokesman

in Fujian province were still

digging through the debris is

search of bodies from the Tues-

part of Jiangkou Xinguang Elec-

tronic Products Ltd., a fully

owned Hong Kong venture -

house migrant workers, the

from poorer areas in China. are

often made to live in tight hous-

Such workers, brought in

PNG cabinet

meets to select

caretaker PM

Guinea, Mar 27: The Cabinet

met Thursday to select a care-

taker prime minister and gov-

ernment to replace Sir Julius

Chan, who resigned under in-

tense public pressure over the

hiring of foreign mercenaries to

quash an island rebellion, re-

Lands Minister Sir Albert

Kipalan, who served as acting

prime minister when Chan

travelled overseas, appeared to

be a likely prospect. But he is

not expected to hold the posi-

tion for long because he lacks

pushing for the appointment of

Foreign Minister Kilroy Genia

Malaysia to freeze

bilateral dealings

with Singapore

Malaysian government today

announced it was freezing all

fres's bilateral dealings with

Singapore following a diplo-

matic row with the city-state,

Bernama news agency said, re-

said the Malaysian cabinet de-

cided at its weekly meeting to

suspend government-to-gov-

ernment contacts and meetings

between the ruling parties of the

contracts to Singapore compa-nies would also be affected, it

Labours take 21

pts lead

lished Wednesday night, the

first taken since elections were

called in Britain, showed the

opposition Labour Party 21

points ahead of the governing

The poll, published in Thursday's Times of London,

put support for Labour at 50 per

cent against 29 per cent for

Prime Minister John Major's

Conservative Party and 14 per

cent for the small centrist Lib-

eral Democratic Party in the

the last MORI poll published a

month ago, but both Labour and

the Conservatives had dropped 2 points. Major called the elec-

gained 3 points, and a new party

that advocates reduced ties with

Europe, the Referendum Party,

demonstrated its first substan-

"We have assurances and

tial showing, at 3 per cent.

The Liberal Democrats

The gap was the same as at

race for elections on May 1.

tions on March 17.

Conservatives, reports AP.

LONDON, Mar 27: A poll pub-

The awarding of Malaysian

The official news agency

ports AFP.

two neighbours.

added.

KUALA LUMPUR: The

as caretaker prime minister.

Opposition parties were

his own power base.

PORT MORESBY, Papua New

The four-storey dormitory -

He said authorities in Putian

said today, reports AFP.

day night accident.

spokesman said.

ing conditions.

ports AP.

BEIJING, Mar 27: Thirty-

give safe passage for aid convoy Albanians fleeing to Italy.

Italy has set up a naval blockade to keep more Albanian vessels from reaching Italian ports, and is sending back what it calls undesirables among the refugees. Military flights carried 189 people back Wednesday.

President Sali Berisha and his Democratic Party reluctantly agreed this month to set up a caretaker government under Fino, a member of the opposition Socialist Party, after turmoil over failed high-risk investment schemes in January turned into armed insurrection.

The United Nations warned Wednesday that Albania faces food shortages after weeks of anarchy in which mobs looted state warehouses and disrupted commerce. Food supplies were already uncertain after a poor 1996 harvest, and the rioting

threatens to interrupt harvesting and planting this year, the Rome-based UN food agency

Although EU ministers assured Fino that Albania will receive humanitarian aid and help in reorganising its police and armed forces, they rejected sending a peacekeeping force to help quell the uprising.

Fino said individual EU members might guard the shipments of food they send, but told him they would not try to restore order.

Some aid has already arrived from France, Greece and Italy. The Red Cross also plans to practice a large-scale delivery with a 12-ton shipment arross the Greek border on illursday.

In Vienna, Austria, the 54nation Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe failed Wednesday to agree on the formation of an international force that could protect aid deliveries to Albania, according to Ambassador Lars Vissing, chairman of the OSCE's permanent council.

The OSCE, comprising all of Europe, the former Soviet Union, the United States and Canada, will dispatch a mission to aid in Albania's democratisation and to oversee elections, tentatively scheduled for June.

While there appears to be consensus on that mission, a final decision is dependent on all member states endorsing a volunteer multinational military force to secure aid deliveries and protect international missions.

Ross sent back to ME for talks with Arafat, Netanyahu

JERUSALEM, Mar 27: The United States sent its Middle East envoy back to the region for talks today with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and later with Israeli leader Banjamin Netanyahu to try to defuse a growing crisis, reports Reuter.

"I am concerned about it, I think everybody in the world who has worked for peace in the Middle East is concerned about it. We're all going to put our heads together and do the best we can," US President Bill Clin-

ton said on Wednesday. A State Department spokesman said envoy Dennis Ross was carrying messages to both men from Clinton, who told reporters Washington would try to stop Israeli-Palestinian violence and restart

peace talks. Israel said Ross must press the Palestinian authority to crack down on militant Muslim groups in the wake of a Tel Aviv Suicide bombing that killed three Israeli women on Friday.

"We expect and we would like to see the Palestinian Authority fight terrorism. This is the first order of the da; if we are going to salvage the peace process." Netanyahu said in a speech in central Israel.

AFP adds: Palestinian police turned out in force today to rein in a seventh straight day of protests over Israeli settlement policies, but there were still sporadic crashes with Israeli

Pak police raid Afghan refugee camp: 1 killed

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, Mar 27: A Pakistani police constable was killed and 11 people were injured during an operation to flush out several Arab and Central Asian suspects from a refugee camp, officials said today, reports AFP.

A combined operation by security police and paramilitary soldiers was launched Wednesday to apprehend the suspected Islamic extremists hiding in the Jalozai Camp, home to thousands of Afghan refugees. they said.

A clash erupted after some people inside opened fire on the raiding force resulting in the death of the police constable and injuries to 11. Aighau refugees, among them two women and two children, the officials said.

Around 80 people including Afghans, Arabs and nationals

from Central Asian states of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were taken into custody from

The force continued to beslege the camp today, amid reports that some suspects were still inside, witnesses said.

The exact number of the Arab and Central Asian nationals sought by the authorities was not disclosed.

But officials said the operation followed a shooting incident in the camp three days before a special summit of the Orgamisation of the Islamic Conference held in Islamabad on

in the incident three Egyptians killed and an Algerian contrade in the camp for yet miknown reasons, bringing to light the presence of the sus pected extremists in the refugee shelter, official sources said.

Mobutu agrees to form team to negotiate with Zairean rebels

This trio of Nazarenos wearing the startling-looking "Klan-like" "Capirotes" provide an

eerie element to the scene on Wednesday during the annual pre-Eastern religious enact-

ments and processions through the streets of this Spanish regional capital. The processions

KINSHASA, Zaire. Mar 27: Opening the way for talks with rebels who control one-third of Zaire, President Mobutu Sese Seko has suggested that Parliament form a seven-member negotiating team to hold talks with them, reports AP.

feature images of Christ and saints.

The rebels had long insisted they would only negotiate directly with Mobutu, but have softened their stance in recent

government source in South Africa, which has played a key role in trying to mediate an end to Zaire's insurgency. told The Associated Press on Tuesday that rebel leader Laurent Kabila has agreed to meet with a government delegation but only once and in a foreign country.

Mobutu, too, has said for some time that he wants negotiations with the rebels. The stumbling block has been whether negotiations would take place before or after a ceasefire.

That issue was not raised in Tuesday's announcement on national television by presi dential spokesman Kabuya Lumuna Sando.

"One is looking for a way to put an end to the hostilities and open negotiations," Kabuya said. He also said Mobutu would form a national council to advise the government on Zaire's

transition to democracy. He gave no details on either pro-

39 young men commit suicide in US

RANCHO SANTA FE, California, Mar 27: The bodies of 39 young men, all dressed in dark pants and tennis shoes, were found inside a multi-milliondollar mansion in authorities called a mass suicide, reporte

The men, all white and between the ages of 18 and 24, were found lying prone with their hands at their sides Wednesday. There were no signs of trauma, said San Diego Country Sheriff's Cmdr. Alan

Deputies were called to the scene of the palatial home about 3:15 pm. A deputy entered the home through a side door and found the first bodies.

Investigators believe it's a mass suicide "due to the number people involved, no signs of struggle, no signs of trauma," sheriff's Lt. Gerald Lipscomb

The cause of death has not been determined, although deputies noticed a pungent odour, he said.

The announcements — the first on Mobutu's behalf since he accepted the resignation of his embattled prime minister on Monday - disappointed many Zaireans, who antici-

-AFP/UNB photo

appear and possibly appoint a new prime minister. 'I swear, it was a non-event given the buildup of suspense and given the change that all of us were expecting, said Yoka Live Mudaba, spokesman for the National Electoral Commission, which had hoped to

pated Mobutu himself would

"I was expecting, at the very least, the terms of negotiations with the alliance. At the most. I was expecting the president to resign - I'm really disappointed." Mobutu and Kabila sent en-

hold elections by the end of the

voys to the west African country of Togo for a two-day summit of African leasters with 150 are trying to end the chass. Neither Kabila nor Mobutu was expected to attend the 53-nation Organisation of African Unity summit, which starts Wednes-

"I think one gives too much importance to the presence or absence of Kabila," Mobutu's chief adviser, Honore Ngbanda Zambo-ko-Atumba, said before leaving for Togo.

Off the Record

Royal godfather for Koo Stark's baby!

LONDON: Koo Stark's newborn daughter is no blueblood, but could get a royal godfather, reports AP. The one-time sweethcart of Britain's Prince Andrew revealed that American investment banker Warr Wolker, 38, is the father of Tatiana, born March 12 in Boston

"We're not married and we don't have a man home sctup but we are united in our love for Tatiana." Stark said in this week's edition of Hello! magazine, published Tuesday.

When Stark's pregnancy was revealed last year and she refused to name the father. Britist tablolds suggested a rekindled romance with the prince. The two dated before Andrew married Sanah Ferguson, / a to be

Stark, 40, an American-born photographer living in London, said she hoped the 36-year-old prince would be Tatiana's godfa-

Fergie finds her new job

NEW YORK: The Duchess of York has still another job lined up newspaper columnist. Still, don't expect her to dish any dirt on the toyal family, reports AP

The ex wife of Britain's Prince Andrew signed a one-year dea with The New York Times Syndicate. The column, which will reach 2,000 papers worldwide, begins April 15.

"She will be focusing on children's issues and her travels, many subjects." her spokesman, Jeffrey Schneider, said Tuesday. "But this is not a column about the royals."

John Stickney, a syndicate spokesman, said her early submissions were "quite nice, nicely turned, quite funny. ... We're confident the column will do well or we wouldn't launch it." The more successful the column, the more money she can

make. Stickney said. The former Sarah Ferguson has written children's books and

released her autobiography, "My Story," last fall. She also is a spokeswoman for Weight Watchers.

Bush fulfils wartime promise

YUMA PROVING GROUND. Arizona: George Bush fulfilled wartime promise to himself, jumping from a plane over the Arizona desert under a rainbow-colored parachute, reports AP. It was a serene, Technicolor repeat of this leap to safety from a disabled Navy bomber half a century ago.

"It was wonderful. I'm a new man — and I go home exhilarated." the 72-year-old former chief executive said It was his second parachute jump, but his first planned one

Bush was forced to bail out of his Navy bomber in the Pacific during World War II, and promised himself that one day he would make a jump for fun.

He had a little help, with two jump masters holding onto his harness until he opened his chute safely, and half a dozen people - including wife Barbara - running to cushion his landing. Medical emergency personnel were also standing by on the ground.

Asked how he felt. Bush gave a thumbs up and said: "Like that. He landed about 40 meters (yards) from his target at the Army's Yuma Proving Ground, the sprawling base where the Golden Knights, the Army precision parachuting team, train eight weeks

"There's a lot of things about my previous incarnation that I do not miss, but I do miss the military," Bush told base employees af-

Bush leaped from a civilian twin-engine airplane at 3,800 me-

ters (12,500 feet), accompanied by eight Gold Knights and a civilian from the US Parachute Association, then fell freely until he deployed his parachute at 1,370 metres (4,500 feet).

Bosnia will form int'l police to hunt down suspected war criminals

WASHINGTON, Mar 27: Afthat's all that's important," ter meeting with president Clinadded Mohammed Sacirbey, achieve peace. Bosnia's ambassador to the "There's a lot of specific United Nations, who also atwork to be done that if done tended the talks in the Oval Ofright will make it possible for (Bosnia) to succeed and for the people to be brought back to The idea of a special internamore constructive cooperation,"

tional police force to include US troops not assigned to the NATO-led operation in Bosnia was raised by the White House in January Late last year, then-Defence

Secretary William Perry discussed such a force with French. Dutch, Norwegian and Danish defence ministers. European nations generally agree then that a force was needed, but they disagreed over who should lead it or participate in it. The problem of apprehend-

ing several dozen Bosnian Serbs and Croats, including the former political and military leaders of the Serb entity, has bedeviled the international force ever since it was first de ployed to Bosnia in December

wages and pensions.

The peace accord signed in Dayton, Ohio, specified that all three warring parties would extradite suspects indicted by the international war crimes tribunal in The Hague. Netherlands. The Serbs, and to a lesser extent the Croats, have refused to comply.

American commanders of the peacekeeping force, now numbering 30,000 soldiers. have shied away from confronting the suspects, insisting their mandate was limited to

separating the warring factions. Diplomatic efforts to secure the arrests also have failed.

Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin (C) flanked by Vice-Premiers Anatoly

Chubais (L) and Boris Nemtsov (R), gestures during a press conference in the Government

House Wednesday during which he announced the full cabinet list and the government's

response to a general strike called by the unions for Thursday to protect non-payment of

More recently, however, there have been unconfirmed reports that an international commando unit outside the NATO chain of command might be formed and given the task of hunting down the suspects.

Izetbegovic also said that the peacekeeping force would be able to pull out of Bosnia as scheduled next year only if the civilian side of the peace accords is fully implemented. This includes the war crimes issue and the return of refugees. another problem where the peace force has been unhelpful. Defence Secretary William Cohen has said repeatedly that US troops would pull out of Bosnia on schedule. NATO allies say they will all withdraw together.

-AFP/UNB photo

Asked if the Bosnian peace process had reached an impasse, Clinton said: "The things we knew from the beginning would be difficult have been difficult."

"But I think it's important not to lose sight of what has been done and not to lose sight of the fact that there will be an international security presence there for quite some time yet, during which time we have to work hard to implement the Dayton agreement," he said. "That's going to be my commit-

Govt, rebels consider deal to end Peru hostage crisis jimori, meanwhile, has been LIMA, Peru. Mar 27: Both

sides in Peru's hostage crisis are considering a deal in which rebeis would free their captives in exchange for asylum in Cuba and the release of 17 jailed comrades, newspapers reported Tuesday, reports AP.

The agreement would require that both the government and leftist Tupac Amaru guerillas cede ground on the key sticking point in negotiations.

Rebels have demanded that at least 300 jailed comrades be freed before they free their 72 hostages at the Japanese ambassador's mansion in Lima. They also have said they would prefer to return to Peru's central jungle than leave to another

country. President Alberto Fu-

adamant that Peru will not release imprisoned rebels. The news reports on a possi-

ble deal came at a time of heightened activity by mediators in the 3-month-old stand-

Several mediators met Tuesday for nearly two hours at a house across from the ambassador's compound that has been designated a negotiating site. A Red Cross car with tinted windows drove to the house from the compound, likely carrying rebel negotiators as it has done

before. The mediators included Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent, Red Cross representative Michel Mining,