Strike paralyses Zairean capital

KINSHASA, Zaire, Apr 15: Opposition forces brought Zaire's capital to a desolate standstill Monday with a strike meant to pressure President Mobutu Sese Seko to resign, reports AP.

Faced with a new army-led government that has made clear it won't permit public protests, opponents of Mobutu called instead for Zairians to stay off the streets and boycott work. The "ville morte," or "dead city" call was widely observed, leaving streets normally choked with traffic bare and markets empty.

Soldiers kept a low profile, standing at some key intersections and dispersing a small crowd that gathered outside the home of opposition leader Eti-enne Thsisekedi. But there were no clashes like those that erupted last Wednesday when tear gas was used to disperse thousands of people who marched in the city to protest Mobutu's nearly 32-year rule.

Public anger toward Mobutu has swelled with the advance of a rebel army that in seven months has seized nearly half the country and has vowed to march to Kinshasa and topple the president. Rebel leader Laurent Kabila has been greeted by cheering crowds in most Zairian cities, and many people in Kinshasa say they also would welcome his - or just about anyone else's - arrival if it brought about Mobutu's demise.

willing to accept anyone — even the devil should he arrive - if it will bring change," said Willy Kashama, who stayed home from work Monday to support the strike. The strike was called by sup-porters Tshisekedi, the former

"We want change. We're

prime minister who angered Mobutu and most lawmakers two weeks ago by firing parliament and scrapping the constitution. Mobutu responded by firing Tshisekedi, a longtime political foe, and replacing him with a army general.

A special Cabinet meeting Monday hinted at further crackdowns on dissent, warn-

Iran builds its 1st fighter plane:

Iran has designed and built its first fighter aircraft, Iranian

was built with Iranian expertise and that it had passed its tests.

The officials credited the feat to relentless and round-the-clock

effort." But the report, which was monitored by the British

Broadcasting Corp., did not provide details. Iran developed a

large arms industry during its 1980-88 war with Iraq, when it

Blast hurts 33 in Ethiopian market: An

unidentified attacker threw a grenade into Addis Ababa's Le

Tana supermarket Monday, injuring 33 people, the official

three days, with the toll since Saturday standing at one dead

and 75 injured. Police appealed for public vigilance after cor-

doning off the area as the injured were taken to the Black Lion

Turkey frees 13 Hadep leaders: A

Turkish state security court Monday ordered the release of 13

leaders of the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (Hadep)

who had been in jail since last June, a party official said, AFP

tors were released at the end of yesterday's hearing," Hadep offi-

cial and former deputy Sirri Sakik told AFP. "This is a delayed

but positive step towards internal peace and we are happy about

2 of 16 US jets arrived in Taiwan: Two of

the 150 F-16 jet lighters Taiwan has ordered from the United

States have arrived in the nationalist island, the air force said

July and have been delivered to technicians from Taiwan, the

air force said. It did not say how many it had already been re-

ceived from the American manufacturer, but confirmed two of

27 hurt as ferries collide in HK: A

passenger catamaran and a car ferry collided in Hong Kong

waters Tuesday, injuring 27 people the government said, AP

were evacuated by boat, it said. Their condition was unknown.

ously with a broken leg," said Roger Tupper, an assistant direc-

tor of the Marine Department's port control. Hong Kong radio

earlier said a female passenger had lost a leg, but that could not

16th HK film awards presented:

The 16th Hong Kong film awards were presented on Monday at

Hong Kong Cultural Centre, with 'Comrade Almost a Love Story'

including the best picture, best director, best screenplay and

best actress. The best actress went to Maggie Cheung, who had

Trial of Nazi SS officer begins:

The second trial of former Nazi SS Officer Erich Priebke for

involvement in one of Italy's worst World War II massacres the killing of 335 Italian civilians in 1944 at the Ardeatine Caves near Rome - opened in Rome on Monday at a military

The tribunal decided to combine Priebke's trial with that of

his erstwhile superior, former SS Major Karl Hass, on the same

charge of multiple murder with cruelty and premediation. The

two accused were originally to be tried separately for their roles

Lankans celebrate New Year: People

of Sri Lanka on Monday celebrated their Sinhalese and Tamil

New Year while the country's leaders issued various messages to

the event signifies the triumph of historic cultural coexistence

in the country, and calls upon all Sri Lankans to work with a

sense of commitment and responsibility realising new hopes

and aspirations to achieve peace and prosperity for all the

2 ROK women sue Japanese govt: Two

South Korean women launched a lawsuit against the Japanese

government on Monday demanding a total of 60 million yen

(476,200 dollars) in compensation for forced labour during

residents of the South Korean port city of Pusan, filed the suit

with the Shizuoka District Court. They are also demanding the

30 more killed in Algeria: Suspected

Islamic extremists killed 30 people on Monday today in a

village south of the Algerian capital, security forces said, the

latest in a series of horrific attacks, AFP reports from Chebli.

Japanese government formally apologise for the wartime act.

The two, Cho Kap-sun and Woo Chong-sun, both 67-year-old

World War II, court officials said, AFP reports from Tokyo.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga said in her message that

the public on the occasion, Xinhua reports from Colombo.

The movie which gained 11 nominations won nine awards.

being a big winner, Xinhua reports from Hong Kong.

gained the title twice in 1990 and 1993 respectively.

tribunal, AFP reports from Rome.

communities in the country.

"There are three passengers seriously injured, one very seri-

Three victims were airlifted to the hospital, while the rest

The first of the batch rolled off the US assembly line last

"Party leader Murat Bozlak and 12 other party administra-

It was the third such attack in the Ethiopian capital in

Ethiopian news agency reported, AFP says from Addis Ababa.

Armed forces officials quoted by the radio said the aircraft

radio reported Monday, AP reports from Cairo.

was forced to rely on its own production.

hospital.

reports from Ankara

Monday, AFP reports from Taipei.

the planes had arrived in Taiwan.

reports from Hong Kong.

be confirmed.

in the massacre.

this," Sakik said.

ing that authorities had been instructed to enforce the law "scrupulously" and with "full force," including a ban on public

Across the Zaire River in the Congolese capital, Brazzaville, diplomatic efforts were under way to bring Mobutu and Kabila to the negotiating table. Sources in the office of Congolese President Pascal Lissouba, who met Mobutu on Saturday, said he has decided to take personal charge of efforts to arrange a face-to-face meeting.

Attempts to work out talks have stalled over stubbornness by both men. Mobutu, ailing with prostate cancer, hinted Saturday he would be willing to talk to Kabila if the rebel leader "asks politely" for a meeting.

Kabila's foreign affairs spokesman, Bizimana Karaha, responded Sunday by saying the rebel leader had no problem meeting with Mobutu. But, he added, the only thing left to discuss was the timetable for Mobutu's resignation. Mobutu, whose decades in power have

ner of pasta and tomato sauce

served with green tea and lemon

could be a defence against can-

cer, new research suggests, re-

Four separate studies being

presented at the annual meeting

of the American Association

for Cancer Research here sug-

gest that all those foods have

Harlem Hospital centre Co-

lombia University looked at

blood concentrations of ly-

copene, an antioxidant found in

They found patients with

lung cancer had significantly

lower than normal levels of ly-

copene. Even when looking just

at smokers, those with the low-

est levels of lycopene were four

times as likely to get lung can-

cer than those with the highest

concentrations, the study

findings that low intake of ly-

copene may be a risk factor for

lung cancer, especially for

smokers," said principal inves-

tigator in the study, Dr. Jean

BEIJING, Apr 15: Chinese

and Russian defence ministers

have hailed increasing trust

and friendship in ties between

the two neighbours who were

once bitter socialist rivals.

China's Xinhua news agency re-

sian relations is "in the funda-

mental interests of the people of

both countries," Xinhua quoted

Chinese Defence Minister Chi

Haotian as telling his visiting

Russian counterpart Igor Rodi-

Improving ties were "con-

ducive to peace, stability, and

development of the Asia-Pacific

Rodionov's visit, just days

before Chinese president Jiang

Zemin is to go to Moscow, would

help maintain and develop the

and the world as a whole," Chi

Current growth in Sino-Rus-

ported, says Reuter.

onov on Monday.

was quoted as saying.

"We concluded from our

In one study, researchers at

cancer-fighting properties.

tomatoes and grape fruit.

ports Reuter.

SAN DIEGO, Apr 15: A din- Ford.

left mineral-rich Zaire wretchedly poor, refuses Kabi-

la's demand he step down.

The rebels Monday moved to shore up their hold on one of their biggest prizes - mineralrich Shaba region - by naming a new governor, but the move sparked anger by some Zairians who accused the new rulers of acting in a dictatorial style reminiscent of the previous

"They are replacing the Mobutu dictatorship with another dictatorship," said Boni Banza, a resident in the Shaba capital of Lubumbashi. "We want elections, not dictator-

The rebels captured Lubumbashi, Zaire's second-largest city. Friday and announced Monday that Kabila's cousin, Gaetan Kakudji, would replace Gabriel Kyungu wa Kumanza, who had been governor until Sunday. Some Kyungu supporters threatened to paralyze the city with protests if elections were not called within 48 hours.

Another study, which was

Rats were treated with a can-

conducted in Italy, examined

the effect varying levels of pasta

cer causing agent and then di-

vided into four dietary groups.

The incidence of intestinal tu-

mours in the rats fed a diet of

pasta was 30.8 per cent, com-

pared with 63.2 per cent with

those fed a sucrose-concen-

trated diet, 45.8 per cent with

those fed bolus and 36.8 per cent

versity of Western Ontario in

compound in citrus fruits, in-

hibited the proliferation o

London, found that nomilin,

The third study, at the Uni-

Researchers said the results

were not necessarily conclusive

but should merit further study

into the role of citrus as an

cally engineered cancer vaccine

successfully activated the im-

mune systems of people with

kidney cancer, according to a

report in cancer research pub-

friendship between their two

21st century together with our

Russian friends... to enable our

two countries to become good

neighbours, good partners, and

forward the strategic coopera-

tive partnership between our

itary cooperation, including an

exchange of visits, but talks

would not involve technical co-

operation, an embassy

spokesman said. The Russian

defence minister arrived on

on arms sales and no docu-

ments would be signed during

the trip, the embassy

Talks also would not touch

Sunday for a five-day visit.

spokesman said.

Rodionov was to discuss mil-

two countries," Chi said.

good friends forever and to push

"We are ready to usher in the

armed forces. Chi said.

Earlier AFP adds: A geneti-

with those fed glucose.

breast cancer cells.

anti-cancer agent.

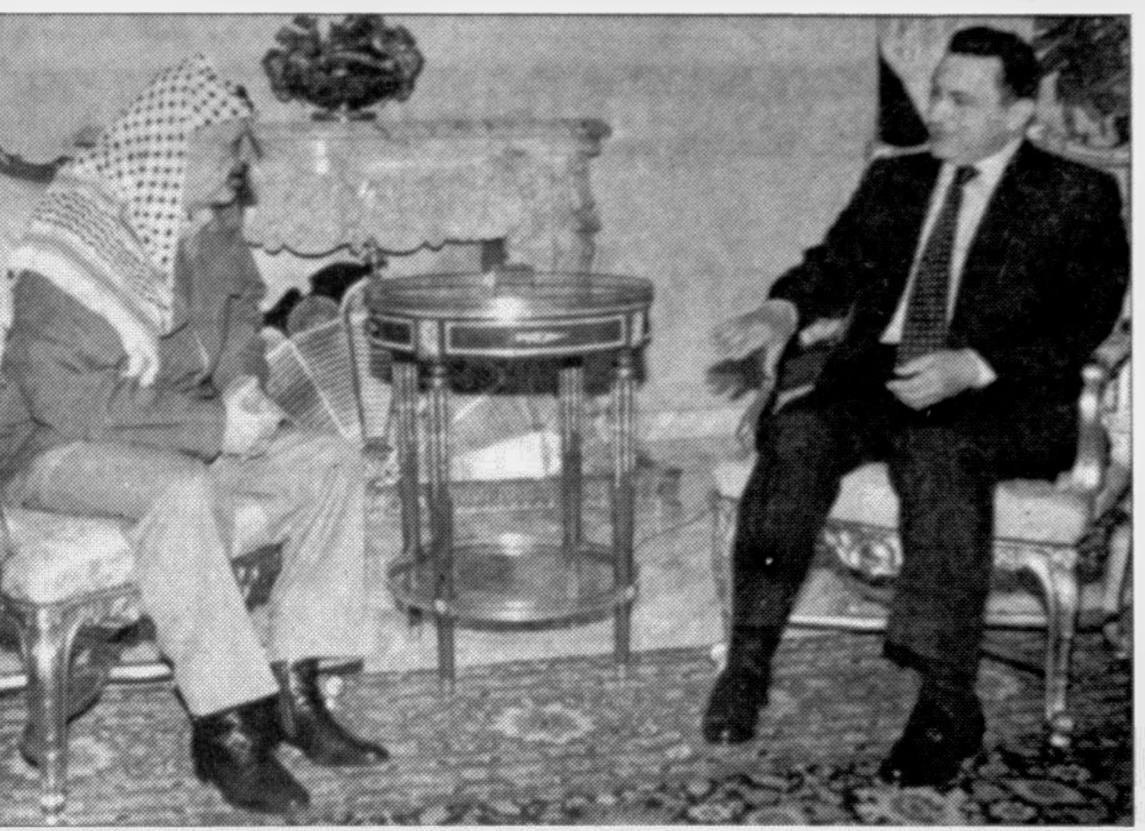
lished today.

Chinese, Russian ministers

hail progress in ties

intake had on rats.

Defence against cancer



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak confers with his Palestinian counterpart Yasser Arafat Monday in Cairo. Arafat on the eve of talks with Israeli Foreign Minister David - AFP/UNB photo Levy, asked Mubarak to help salvage the faltering peace process.

EU-Mediterranean nations meet

Arafat to meet Levy in Malta hose in a dispute over a new

VALLETTA, Malta, Apr 15: A meeting of foreign ministers from the 15 European Union and 12 Mediterranean nations is providing a chance for Israel and the Palestinians to give the stalled Mideast peace process new momentum, reports AP.

Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will attend an economic meeting at the conference, which opens Tues-

A face-to-face meeting would be the highest-level contact since Israeli-Palestinian peace talks collapsed last month after Israel began construction of a Jewish neighbourhood in disputed east Jerusalem, where Palestinians hope to establish their future capital.

Israel radio said Monday Levy would meet with 'Arafat and his deputy, Mahmoud Ab-

"No meeting has been scheduled vet, but the foreign minister has no objection in principle to meet Arafat," Foreign

LONDON, Apr 15: Conserva-

tive Prime Minister John Ma-

jor and Labour rival Tony Blair

have traded insults over educa-

tion policy as the British elec-

tion campaign entered its

appeared to political analysts

today that the negative cam-

paigning that has marked the

campaign so far was yet to con-

tion plans part of "a shameless

contract with hypocrisy" and in

a speech Monday assailed Blair

for choosing to send his son to a

school that has selective ad-

mission procedures for its

pupils.

Major called Labour's educa-

tinue to polling day on May 1.

Judging from their words, it

fourth week, reports AFP,

Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor told The Associated

Last week. Levy threatened to boycott the conference if the Arab countries and the Palestinians turned it into a platform for attacking Israel's expansion of settlements in the West Bank and construction of a controversial Jewish housing project in the Israeli-annexed part of Jerusalem the Palestinians claim as a future capi-

However, Israel received assurances from European countries, including the Netherlands, which currently holds the presidency of the European Union, that economic cooperation would remain at the centre of the agenda, and that a consensus would be sought on the closing resolutions.

Meanwhile, turning on their protectors, Jewish settlers in the West Bank town of Hebron pelted Israeli troops with stones and tomatoes Monday and soaked the officers with a water

fence around a settler enclave. Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy is considering a re-

quest by the Palestinians that he meet with Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat during this week's Malta business conference, ministry officials said. Such a meeting would be the first high-level contact since Is-

off over the Israel's decision last month to start work on a Jewish neighbourhood in the sector of Jerusalem the Palestinians claim as a future capi-The decision triggered daily

stone-throwing riots in the West Bank, with the town of Hebron one of the flash points of violence.

Israeli troops on Monday began putting up a chicken wire fence above a gate outside the Beit Hadassah settler compound in Hebron to help keep away stones.

Major, Blair trade insults

decreed no more foreign cars for government officials. Now Boris Yeltsin is targeting other imported items too, appealing to his countrymen Tuesday to buy Russian-made goods instead, reports AP.

But in announcing "the beginning of a great cause," the president admitted there's one big obstacle: A lot of Russianproduced stuff just isn't very

Someday, he declared in a nationwide radio address, Russian products will be better

both in price and quality. "Of course this is a dream

Yeltsin said. For now, his call serves as part of a drive to persuade skeptical Russians that after years of enduring trying and chaotic

raeli-Palestinian talks broke

over education policy ding-dong battle on the news every night and talk about the

future of Britain."

"nasty, negative, personal and But Major retorted that abusive. The heated exchange came on the same day the Labour declared it wanted to move the election debate beyond negative campaigning.

Blair said his party was "fighting a positive campaign on the issues that concern people" while the Conservatives were "engaging in a campaign of abuse - an unpleasant campaign that has absolutely nothing to say about the future of

Blair, whose party is opposed

to selection in education.

retorted that the attack was

this country." He called on his rivals to "lift this campaign beyond a

Labour "have been subjecting the Conservative government and individual Conservative

members to the most scurrilous criticism day after day over the past two years, yet they shrink away whenever there is any criticism of them as though it was unfair."

He strongly rejected suggestions that the Tories had turned to negative campaigning tactics because they were behind in public opinion polls.

"This is a rough, tough campaign.

President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro shake hands as they meet for talks at Rome's Quirinale Palace Monday.

Former Soviet Union secretly developed space-based weapon system

- AFP/UNB photo

Leghari dismisses Benazir's claim of implicating her in murder case ISLAMABAD, Apr 15:

President Faroog Ahmed Leghari yesterday dismissed a claim by former premier Benazir Bhutto that she has been implicated in a murder case on his orders, a presidential spokesman said, reports AFP. Describing the allegations

as a 'pack of lies', the spokesman said Benazir had been trying to malign Leghari by making "Frivolous and nonsensical charges" against him since he dismissed her government by the November.

The murder charge involving Benazir was registered by the Karachi police on Thursday on a complaint from Shoaib Bokhari, a leader of the ethnicbased Mohajir Qaumi Move-ment (MQM), which had been at loggerheads with her govern-

Bokhari accused Benazir and two former ministers of involvement in a 1995 "conspiracy" leading to the alleged murders of two close relatives of MQM chief Altaf Hussain.

Annan to extend UN mission in Angola

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 15: Secretary-General Kofi Annan is recommending that the Security Council extend the UN peacekeeping force in Angola until the end of June and before turning it into an observer mission, reports AP. More than 5,500 soldiers of

the UN Angola Verification Mission have been helping implement a 1994 peace accord ending nearly 20 years of civil war in Angola that has killed a half-million people.

President Jose Eduardo dos Santos' forces have battled rebel fighters of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola, or Unita, led by Jonas Savimbi.

Last Friday, a new government of national unity and reconciliation was sworn in, including representatives from both groups. In a report to the council re-

leased Monday, Annan said the UN observer mission will help oversee the final military provisions of the peace agreement.

Yeltsin's appeal to buy Russian goods MOSCOW, Apr 15: First he

good.

now. But it must come true,"

conditions since the Soviet collapse, foundations have been laid for improvements to both the government and their lives.

Opposition parties agree to stay united in Serbia

BELGRADE, Apr 15: Serbia's opposition leaders, whose relations have soured in recent weeks, on Monday announced that they would bury their differences and present a united front to challenge Serbia's autocratic president and his party in elections, reports AP.

The formation of the coalition, Zajedno, or Together, by the three main opposition leaders last year marked the greatest challenge to date to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's 10-year rule.

The alliance won 14 towns and cities, including the capital, Belgrade, in municipal elections in November. It then led nearly three months of massive street protests that forced Milosevic to recognise the opposition election victories he at first had annulled.

But with that goal achieved, the three opposition leaders -Vuk Draskovic, Zoran Djindjic and Vesna Pesic - increasingly were at odds over past personal

differences and who should run for the Serbian presidency.

Djindjic, who is now mayor of Belgrade, suggested that Draskovic was not a strong enough candidate.

The three opposition leaders announced after an emergency meeting Monday that they "firmly remain together." They did not say who would be their candidate.

"This year, we have to win," Djindjic said at a joint news conference. No date has been set for elec-

tions due later this year for the Serbian presidency and the Serbian parliament. But they will be crucial for Milosevic. It is still unclear whether Milosevic has the constitutional right to run in the presidential elections for a third term. But it is crucial for his Socialist Party to win a majority in the republic's parliament to maintain a hold over Serbia, the dominant republic in Yugoslavia. Montenegro is the only other republic in the federation.



Off the Record

Coffee may help fight cancer, heart disease

SAN FRANCISCO: A freshly-brewed cup of coffee may do more than just wake you up in the morning - its smell might be helping your body fight cancer and heart disease, a California researcher said on Monday, reports Reuter.

High-temperature coffee brewing produces protective chemi-cals called antioxidants that can be beneficial to health, according to Takayuki Shibamoto, a professor of environmental toxicology at the University of California at Davis, near Sacramento. "It's comparable to a potent antioxidant like vitamin E or vi-

tamin C, and down the line, we may find that the flavour or aroma of coffee may have some beneficial health effects," Shibamoto said.

Oxidants are oxygen-containing molecules called free radicals. Many scientists believe they can damage DNA and the membrane of cells in ways that lead to cancer.

Antioxidants can reduce free-radical levels, and have been shown in recent studies to have cancer and age-fighting effects

as well as to work against heart disease. Shibamoto said. Shibamoto said these "healthful" antioxidants can be found in both regular and decaffeinated coffees. The antioxidant level

in the aroma of one cup of coffee would be equivalent to three oranges, his tests showed. To benefit from these chemicals, the coffee must be both

smelled and consumed during the first 10 minutes after brewing and pouring, Shibamoto said

'UN makes little progress in Afghan ceasefire'

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 15: After six months of diplomatic effort to persuade Afghanistan's warring sides to agree to a ceasefire, UN peace envoy Northert Holl acknowledged that little progress had been made, reports AFP.

"My aim is to bring about a ceasefire," Holl told reporters after briefing the UN Security Council on his efforts Monday. "I must admit that I have

been trying that for the past six months and I have not covered much ground despite all of our efforts," he added. Holl was mandated to seek a global settlement to the fac-

tional war in Afghanistan but he lowered his expectations after the Taliban militia seized Kabul in late September, opting instead for negotiations on a ceasefire.

warm spring weather. Holl predicted a return to all-out fighting but said a decisive military victory by the Talibans, who now control 80 per cent of Afghanistan, was not necessarily in the cards. "We have to overcome the

With the arrival of the

perception that victory is around the corner," said the peace envoy. Holl is scheduled to attend

a two-day meeting here of officials from 21 countries with influence in Afghanistan that begins Wednesday. At the meeting Holl said participating countries such as

Iran, Pakistan and the United

States must re-think the UN

role in Afghanistan. "How the United Nations shall proceed is perhaps the most important question," he said.

LONDON, Apr 15: While the sile defence system. former Soviet Union was publicly denouncing the US "Star Wars" initiative in the 1980s, it was secretly developing its own space-based weapon systems including a space battle station, according to Jane's Intelligence Review, reports AP. But there was a key differ-

ence in the Soviet and American approaches: The US programme aimed at defending the country against ballistic missile attacks while the Soviet programme also aimed at destroying enemy targets on the ground, the magazine said.

version of the "Star Wars" mis-

Since the Soviet break-up in 1989, Jane's said, the Soviet defence programmes". programme "has lost most, if not all, of its funding." The US dogs - real losers," said John government is still funding a Pike, an expert on Soviet missile defences with the Federamultibillion-dollar research programme for a scaled down tion of American Scientists in

The Jane's article, "Red

Star Wars," was written by Steven J. Zaloga, a military analyst for the Teal Group Corp. of Fairfax, Virginia, a defence and aerospace consultancy. He has written extensively on Russian missile development including the 1989 Jane's book, "Soviet Air Defence Missiles: Design, Development and Tactics". Zaloga said recent Russian

revelations provide intriguing details on the Soviet programme and show that Moscow's propaganda campaign against "Star Wars" was partly intended to hide "one of the Soviet Union's most secret "These Soviet designs were

Washington. He said Zaloga re-

lied on Russian material released several months ago but not widely circulated. "It really helps to under-

stand why the Soviets were so concerned about 'Star Wars' because when they looked at the American programme and compared it with their own pathetic designs, I think they just realised this was something they could not match," Pike said in a telephone interview.

The idea behind President Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" project was to station lasers in space to obliterate flocks of ballistic missiles.

According to Zaloga, Soviet scientists had been secretly theorising about space based weaponry since the 1960s but were spurred into action by "Star Wars" and a conviction that the US space shuttle programme was geared toward

military ends.

"The soviets feared that the space shuttle was the central element in a new generation of space strike weapons" which could be delivered against targets on earth, Zaloga said. The Soviets also feared the

space shuttle could deliver and support combat spacecraft, he

"It is not clear if this Soviet perception of the shuttle was due to a mistaken and paranoid assessment of actual US intentions for the space shuttle, or whether this view was a conscious ruse on the part of the Soviet Defence Ministry to win support for its own space strike systems, mirroring the imagined US space strike systems, he said.

In 1983, Zaloga said, former Soviet leader Yuri Andropov ordered an acceleration

of the space strike programme and a shift to developing technologies to field space-based weapons and to counter the US "Star Wars' programme.

The Astrofizika design bureau examined the possible use of laser weapons against satellites and the Vympel design bureau studied the possible use of high-energy lasers against ballistic missiles in a programme

called Terra-3, he said. "One of Terra-3's first operational uses was conducted in 1984 at the insistence of Soviet Defence Minister Dmitri Ustinov, who was concerned that the US space shuttle was being used as a reconnaissance platform," Zaloga said.

On October 10, 1984, a Terra-3 laser at low power tracked the 13th US Challenger space shuttle mission, causing unspecified malfunctions on

the shuttle and distress to the crew, he said. The incident led to a formal US diplomatic protest.

But Terra-3 did not prove practical as a weapon, Zaloga

Meanwhile, the NPO Energia space development centre based in Kaliningrad was working on a space battle station complex.

According to a recently re-

leased history of Energia's operations, it included two types of spacecraft, one armed with a laser weapon and the other with self-guided missiles. Zaloga

Energia also worked on a small missile interceptor similar to the US Brilliant Pebbles

concept, he said. It was designed to crash into ballistic missiles and destroy them.