Quake hits northwestern China:

An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale struck

Xinjiang in northwestern China yesterday, Hong Kong's Royal

GMT Tuesday), was initially determined to be about 80 kilome-

tres (50 miles) east of Kashi in the Xinjiang region. An earth-

quake measuring five on the Richter scale is capable of causing

considerable damage. In the past weeks, the area has been

Pak Shi'ite leader shot dead: A mem-

ber of a Shi'tte Muslim political party in Pakistan was shot

dead Tuesday by unidentified gunmen in the latest in a string of

such killings in the country's Punjab province, police said, AFP

ber of Tehrik Jafria Paksitna (TJP) was attacked at his clinic

16 killed in Bangkok bus mishap:
A Buddhist New Year celebration turned tragic in Thailand's

poor northeast as 16 people were killed and more than 90

injured when their bus careened off a road and crashed, police

day holiday to 39, with 220 injured in 363 reported accidents around the country. The bus accident took place in Sisaket province, 430 kilometres (267 miles) northeast of Bangkok. Po-

lice said it was traveling too fast around an extremely sharp

Cholera claims 52 in Tanzania: so-

me 52 people have died of cholera in Dar es Salaam since

January, with more than 1,000 cases of the disease reported in

the past three months, health officials said Tuesday, AFP

the disease was spreading at an alarming rate. A total of 1,058

people have contracted cholera since the first case was reported

in January, he added. Ngwilizi announced a total ban on the

sale of food in the open in an attempt to stem the spread of the

sale of food in the open in an attempt to stem the spread of the

Hanoi bans import of animals: vi-

etnam has banned the import from Taiwan of livestock and

meat products from animals with hoofed feet official media

disease discovered in millions of Taiwanese pigs last month

the state-run New Hanoi reported. The ban will affect pigs, cows,

sheep, goats and deer. The order was issued in late March, but

only made public by state-controlled media Wednesday. Ani-

mal and animal byproduct shipped to Vietnam via Taiwan from

Quake rattles Russian Far East:

The latest in a series of earthquakes rattled Russia's Far East on

Wednesday, but officials said there were no immediate reports

GMT, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Emergency Situations

told the Interfax news agency. It was centered off Russia's Pacific coast in the Sea of Okhotsk, 460 kilometres (285 miles)

Fire kills 12 in Portugal: Twelve people died and eight were injured in a fire early Wednesday in

a discotheque near Amarante in northern Portugal, local

Around 40 people were inside the Mea Culpa discotheque

northeast of the Sakhalin Island city of Yuzhno Sakhalinsk.

The quake had a magnitude of 5.3 and took place at 0034

a third country will also be rejected, New Hanoi reported.

The ban is in response to an outbreak of hoof-and-mouth

epidemic, and appealed to residents to boil drinking water.

reported Wednesday, AP reports from Hanoi.

of damage or injury, AP reports from Moscow.

firefighters said, AFP reports from Lisbon.

when the fire broke out around 0330 GMT.

Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner Hassan Ngwilizi said

The accident brought total highway deaths during the four-

Tabbasum Reza, a medical doctor by profession and a mem-

The epicentre of the earthquake, which hit at 2.26 am (1826

Observatory said, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

struck by several strong earthquakes.

in the Punjabi town of Lodhran.

said Wednesday, AP reports from Bangkok.

curve, jumped the road and hit a tree.

reports from Dar es Salaam.

reports from Multan.

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 16: Pakistan said Tuesday the United Nations must listen to all sides in Afghanistan - including the Taliban - if the world community is to help bring an end to the 18-year civil conflict, reports AP.

That prompted a sharp retort from the ousted Afghan government, whose representative said that to do so would sanctions intolerance and human rights abuse in the warravaged Central Asian country.

The exchange took place as the Security Council discussed the situation in Afghanistan. The coming of spring threatens to reignite heavy fighting between the Taliban and its enemies, led by northern Uzbek warlord Rashid Dostum and ousted Kabul military chief Ahmed Shah Massood

Taliban controls the capital Kabul and about two-thirds of the country. It has imposed its strict version of Islam in the capital Kabul which it captured last September when its Islamic fighters ousted President Burhanudin Rabbani

During the council meeting. speakers from Pakistan. Tajikistan Iran, Turkey and the European Union repeated longstanding positions that the key to peace in the Central Asian country is a political settlement involving all ethnic and politi- the situation in Afghanistan,

Speakers also warned that continued unrest had encouraged drug smuggling, terrorism and illicit weapons trafficking

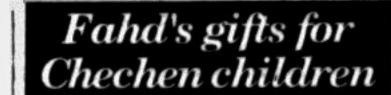
in the regio. During his speech, Pakistan's UN ambassador, Ahmed Kamal, said his government "is adhering to a policy of strict neutrality and non-interference in Afghanistan.

We do not support a military solution, and we continue to believe a broad-based government is the only viable solution for a multi-ethnic Afghanistan, Kamal said.

But Kamal noted that Taliban controls the capital and most of the country, conditions which had traditionally led to international recognition of

previous Afghan governments. He said the Taliban had promised to share power with all ethnic groups in a future government and "cannot be wished away." In order to acknowledge "ground realities." Kamal recommended that the United Nations suspend the General Assembly seat held by the Rabbani government and open a dialogue with Taliban in New York.

"It is high time the Security Council should listen to the views of the Taliban in order to have a more balanced view of



MOSCOW, Apr 16: A planeload of toys, clothing and other gifts for Chechen children from the King of Saudi Arabia arrived Tuesday in the capital of the largely Muslim republic, a Russian news agency reported, reports AP.

The gifts from Saudi King Fahd will be distributed to children orphaned or handicapped by Chechnya's 20-month war for independence from Russia. the ITAR-Tass news agency re-

ported The king's representatives will oversee the distribution the report said, citing Chechen government sources.

The king has made several

overtures in recent months toward Chechen Muslims, and he has paid for thousands of them to make a pilgrimage this year to Muslim holy places in Mecca Chechnya's war with Russia ended with a cease-fire last year, but the republic's political status remains unresolved. Chechnya considers itself an independent state, but Moscow insists it remains part of Rus-

Despite support from Muslim states, no country has officially recognised Chechnya as separate from Russia.

#### Russia to send 2 more SU-30 jet fighters to India

MOSCOW, Apr 16: Under a two-billion dollar contract signed last November, Russia is preparing to send another two SU-30 jet fighters to India, reports PTI.

India will have received eight aircraft by mid 1997, the press service of the Sukhoi Aviation Factory told the official Itar-Tass news agency yester-

Under the contract, Russia is to deliver 40 such planes within five years, the Sukhoi press service said.

Under contract concluded between Russia's state weapon company selling Rosvooruzheniye and Indian government, India has already received six SU-30's. The first two were sent from

an aerodrome of the Irkutsk Aviation and Production Association (APO) on March 19. The second batch was dispatched on March 27 and the

third on April 9, according to the press service. The fighters are delivered by

An-124 cargo planes for final assembly at an air force base near Pune.

#### Troops from France, Spain, Italy arrive in Albania

BURRES, Albania, Apr 16: Hundreds of troops from France, Spain and Italy arrived in Albania on Tuesday by sea and air at the start of the Italian-led effort to safeguard aid to the impoverished Balkan republic, reports AFP

Over a 1,000 soldiers from the three nations landed during the day to begin preparations for the aid operation aimed at restoring some stability in the lawless country.

More troops are on the way to bring the force up to its full strength of some 6,000 soldiers. However, it could take at least 20 days for all the troops from the eight contributing nations to arrive in Albania.

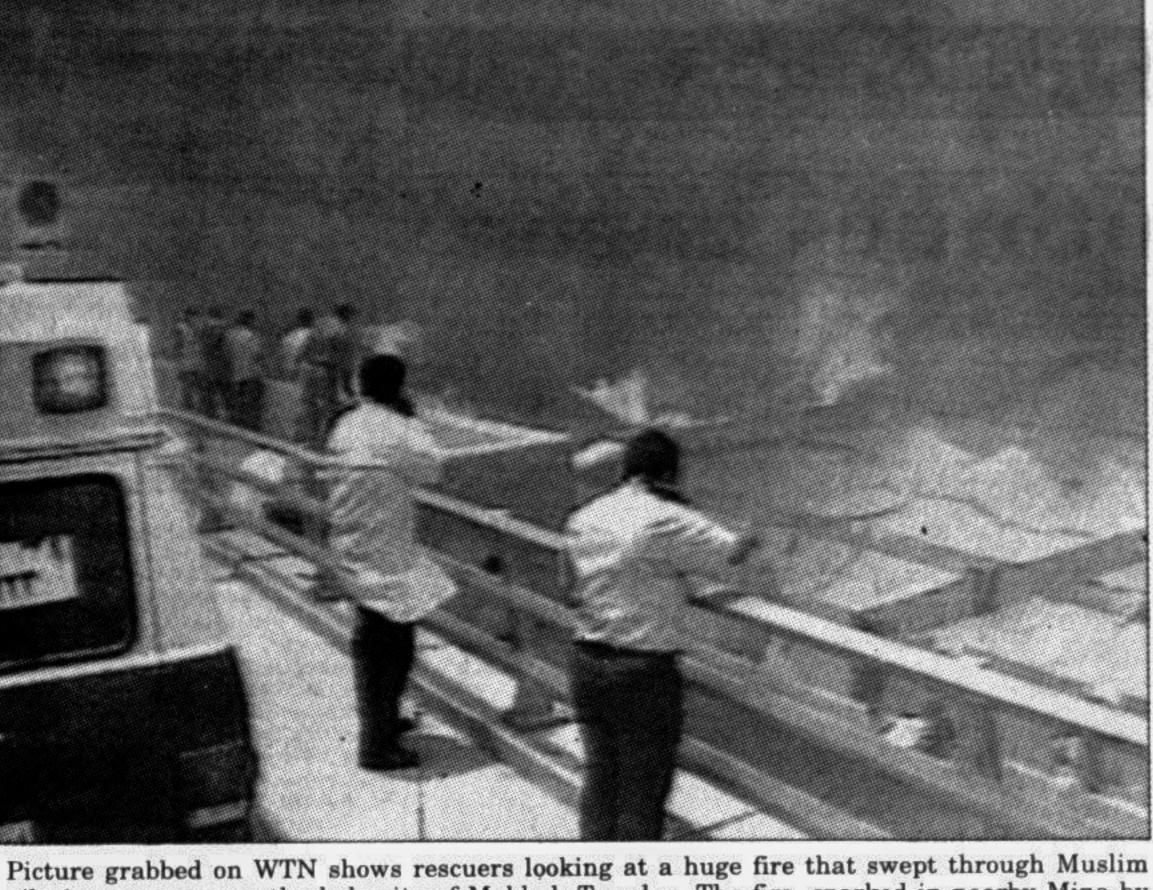
Their mission is to secure Albania's international airport and two main ports, Durres and Vlore in the south.

They will also protect aid deliveries along the country's main roads which in some areas are plagued by armed gangs who along with ordinary people looted army depots last month.

#### Albright to attend HK hand over ceremonies

ANNAPOLIS, Maryland, Apr 16: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright announced she would attend the July I ceremonies returning Hong Kong to Chinese control, a move she says underlines "American support for the continuation of Hong Kong's current way of life

and freedom," reports AP. She chose the US Naval Academy, which produced the seagoing officers who extended American power into the Pacific in the 19th and 20th centuries, to make her announcement and to urge anxious Americans not to fret over China's rise in power.



pilgrims camps near the holy city of Makkah Tuesday. The fire, sparked in nearby Mina by a gas bottle used for cooking, burnt down thousands of tents in the camps of several nationals. The number of dead in the fire... has so fire reached 181 while those injured exceeds 800 of varying nationalities," said the director of the Saudi civil defence agency.

Arafat, Levy not ready for face-to-face talks

# for derailing ME peace process

VALLETTA, Apr 16: Arab

"How can we talk about peace and stability in the region when the peace process in the Middle East is stumbling on all its tracks," Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Mussa said.

His outburst came during a conference of 27 European and Mediterranean countries here that was completely dominated by the current crisis between Israel and the Palestinians. Palestinians President

Yasser Arafat shook hands with Israeli Foreign Minster David Levy - the first time he has greeted an Israeli minister since the March 18 start of construction work for a new Jewish housing project in disputed east Jerusalem.

But after acrimonious exchanges in the conference's opening session it remained unclear whether EU efforts to organise a face-to-face meeting between them before the end of the conference on Wednesday afternoon would succeed.

remain unattainable if Israel did not stop the construction

work. "Peace and settlements

Levy responded by attacking Arab warnings that the peace process was on the verge of collapsing into renewed hostilities

AP adds. Yasser Arafat and Israel's foreign minister are turning down the rhetoric, but are also rejecting a European plea for face-to-face talks in the margin of a Euro-Mediterranean economic meeting.

cials said the chances of reviving the negotiations, perhaps in a matter of days.

## Saudi pilgrimage disasters

DUBAI, Apr 16: The huge fire that swept through pilgrims tents near the holy Saudi city of Mecca on Tuesday, killing 217 people by official count, is just the latest in a long line of recent tragedies at the annual Muslim

pilgrimage, reports AFP.

— May 1995: Three pilgrims died, 99 injured in a fire at a

camp near Mina - May 1994: A total of 270 pilgrims were killed when crowds surged forward uncontrollably during the "stoning of satan" ceremony at Mina. The authorities blame the record numbers of pilgrims attending the Haji.

- July 1990: A massive crush in the Mina tunnel, which leads pilgrims up to the holy sites of Mount Arafat, causes 1,426 mostly Asian pilgrims to die from asphyxiation. The authorities said the tunnel's ventilation system broke - July 1989: A double bomb

attack killed one person and wounded 16 others, sixteen Shiite Muslims from Kuwait were convicted of carrying out the attacks and executed two months later.

— July 1989: Eight days after the bomb attack, five Pakistani pilgrims were killed and 34 injured in a fire in their camp.

- July 1987: Saudi security forces clash with Iranian pilgrims holding demonstrations against Israel and the United States, official Saudi figures put death toll at 402, including 275 Iranians, Tehran and Rivadh break off diplomatic ties between 1988 and 1991, and Iranian pilgrims do not attend the

Hajj during that period.

— Nov 1979: Several hundred armed men hostile to the Saudi government barricaded themselves inside Mecca's great

#### pilgrims hostage. 'Myanmar may face US investment

mosque for two weeks, taking

sanctions'

ANNAPOLIS, Maryland, Apr 16: US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright on Tuesday put the Myanmar leadership on notice," saying the regime could face US investment sanc-

tions, reports AFP. Taking note of Yangon's tightening limits on political expression and its jailing of demonstrators, Albright said, "Myanmar leaders are on notice that, unless the repressions are lifted, they will face investment sanctions under US law."

A US adopted late last year bans US investment in Myanmar if Myanmar military rulers, known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) arrests, harms or exiles Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi or suppresses her followers on a large scale. The SLORC has ruled Myanmar

# Arabs bitterly denounce Israel

countries on Tuesday bitterly denounced Israel for derailing the Middle East peace process as acrimonious exchanges and to wreck the European Union's plans to promote greater security and stability throughout the Mediterranean region, reports AFP.

Arafat said that peace would

are two opposites," he said, denouncing what he said was an attempt to "Judaize Jerusalem."

as a form of political black-

But European Union offi-

## US to ship \$15m worth food aid to DPRK

WASHINGTON, Apr 16: Responding to an emergency UN appeal, the United States announced Tuesday it will ship 15 million dlrs worth of corn to North Korea to assist children under 6 who are affected by severe food shortages, report AP.

Department State spokesman Nicholas Burns said the decision was not linked to an North Korean announcement, expected Wednesday, on whether to accept a US-South Korean proposal to begin peace

"We view the issue of food for children as a humanitarian issue only. It is not linked to politics, nor should it be," Burns

The United States plans to channel the food aid through the UN World Food Programme which on April 3 asked for

100,000 tons of food relief on

top of an earlier request for 100,000 tons. In response to the earlier appeal, the United States agreed to a dlrs 10 million contribu-

tion of corn soy blend for children under 5 as well as rice and corn. The donation is being sent aboard two ships that are due to arrive in North Korea in early May. The current and future

shipments are being channeled through the World Food Programme because of the agency's proven ability to ensure food donations reach their intended recipients. The package announced Tuesday will total 50,000 metric tons. Because of widespread flood-

ing over the past two years and what Burns described as North Korea's systemic problems.

The murder charge against

Bhutto was registered by the

Karachi police on Thursday af-

ter a complaint from Shoaib

Bokhari, a leader of the ethnic-

based Mahajir Qaumi Move-

gerheads with her government.

two former ministers of in-

volvement in a 1995 "conspir-

acy" leading to the alleged mur-

ment (MQM), which was at log-

Bekhari accused Bhutto and

### Benazir condemns filing of murder case against her

KARACHI, Apr 16: Former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Tuesday condemned the filing of a murder case against her, saying the "baseless" charge was harassment, reports AFP.

"I do not know who is behind this. The moment I know, I will go public. I always speak up. I will not take steps against anyone right now. Whoever wants to take steps against me can do so," she said.

"It is a baseless charge," Bhutto told AFP on her return from a private visit to London. But she also insisted "I will

face these charges before the people," saying she had rejected her lawyers' advice to seek a court order forestalling any move to arrest her. Around 1,000 male and female supporters and activists of

Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples'

party (PPP), carrying party

flags, greeted their leader at the

airport here.

ders of two close relatives of MQM chief, Altaf Hussain. Hussain's brother and a nephew were killed amid prolonged unrest in Karachi during Bhutto's three-year rule, which ended with her dismissal in November by president Farooq

ruption and misrule. "When they (opposition leaders) cannot be defeated politically, they are framed," Bhutto said, recalling that she and her husband had been targetted earlier in 1990 when her first government was dismissed.

Ahmed Leghari for alleged cor-

# Zairean rebels trying to thwart repatriation plan

Supporters of former premier of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto (C), shower rose petals, as she

returned from London, on Tuesday. Benazir lashed out against the registration of a

murder case against her last week and denied the charges. Benazir and her two former

ministers have been accused of involvement in the murder of two relatives of Altaf

KASESE, Zaire, Apr 16: Comatose with malaria, the emaciated men and women lie on the ground of a makeshift hospital. Hundreds of flies bite their limp bodies while intravenous drips of nutrition keep them alive, reports AP. In just a few days, the

ing evacuated to a nearby transit centre, where they'll be screened and registered for a long-awaited trip home. repatriation plan is being frus-

trated by Zairean rebels, who by Tuesday still had not given the United Nations permission to set up the transit centre. That means healthy refugees must wait longer.

Hussain, chief of powerful Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Rwandans in this jangle refugee camp are supposed to start be-

But aid workers say the

At the same time, rebels want all the refugees out quickly. And that means the

thousands of sick may not get well enough to make the trip. Already, many have died.

"For us, the death toll is not dropping. We've got an average of 10 deaths a day," said Dutch nurse Danny Decamper, 27, already sweating in the jungle's morning heat. "It will take time before we can stabilize these people and prepare them for repatriation. He and other aid workers are

running against time, struggling to heal thousands of sick refugees while overcoming the bureaucratic tangle of sending as many as 100,000 people back to Rwanda.

The UN refugee agency needs permission from rebel and civil authorities to set up the transit centre at Lula, just 15 miles (25 kms) from the camps. From there, 2,000 people a day will be flown aboard three UN aircraft

to Goma, on the Rwandan

- AFP/UNB photo

"We're afraid we may be losing momentum," said Paul Stromberg, a UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesman. "The refugees are sick, some are dying, and they want to go home. And we're still waiting for permission to carry out the operation."

He said the first flight, scheduled for this week, will probably have to be postponed.

The 100,000 Hutus in the Kasese camp and another nearby are among the last Rwandan refugees in central Africa. Aid workers estimate that another 100,000 are still missing in Zaire. Hundreds of thousands of Hutus fled Rwanda in 1994 after the Hutu government-sanctioned genocide of a half-million Tutsis.

# Off the Record

### Caution for black men

SAN DIEGO: A newly located gene that triggers inherited prostate cancer appears to be especially common among black men and may explain their heavy burden of this disease, reports AP.

Prostate cancer is second only to lung cancer among cancer killers of American men, taking about 40,000 lives annually. However, it occurs about one-third more often among blacks than whites and is more aggressively fatal in blacks, too. Some suspect that genetic factors may play a role in this dif-

ference. Now, scientists have preliminary evidence of what one of these genetic triggers might be. Last November, researchers announced they had pinpointed the location of a gene, which they dubbed HPC1, that appears to

cause about one-third of all inherited prostate cancer. Most prostate cancer happen sporadically; victims have no

particular family history of the disease. However, about 1 in 10 cases seems to be clearly inherited, because many men in the same family have it. In these cases, experts believe that men are born with a dam-

aged gene that passes from generation to generation and plays a key role in triggering prostate cancer.

Dr William B. Isaacs and others from Johns Hopkins University found that in about 30 per cent of these cancer families, the disease is caused by HPC1.

# Bandaranaike remains an icon uniting shaky Lankan coalition govt

COLOMBO, Apr 16: Sri Lanka's matriarch Sirima Bandaranaike, who turned running the country into a family business, turns 81 Thursday at the summit of a record setting career, but family squabbles keep her worried and sick, reports AFP.

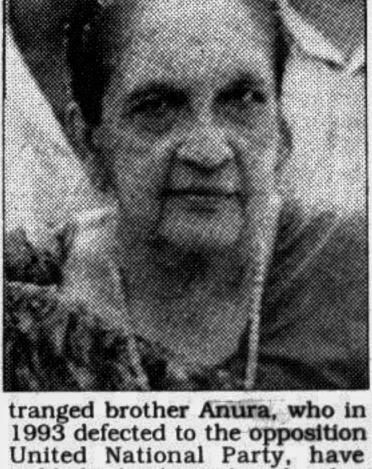
Bandaranaike, herself a former prime minister, consolidated a political dynasty and had remarkable success in defusing regional tensions but failed misserably to restore peace among her three children. She remains an icon uniting

the shaky coalition government headed by her second daughter Chandrika Kumaratunga, 50, who won a succession battle in 1993, defeating the youngest son Anura Bandaranaike, 48. Bandaranaike's eldest dau-

ghter Sunethra remains behind

But Kumaratunga and her es-

the scenes.



1993 defected to the opposition United National Party, have publicly lambasted each other with vulgar abundance. Asked what her message was to the brother after her presi-

dential victory in 1994, Ku-maratunga said: "Usually I don't speak to the deaf and the She has resisted moves by her mother to bring Anura back

to the party. Bandaranaike has not spoken publicly about the feuding in the family but friends say she is constantly worried about the bitter rivalry and that had been a cause of her ill health in recent years.

"She is not feeling too well these days," a family member said. "She even cancelled a meeting with the visiting Mauritius Foreign Minister Raymond Berenger on Friday because of poor health." Born to a land-owning aris-

tocratic family in 1916, Bandaranaike suddenly found herself in the political limelight after the 1959 assassination of her prime minister husband Solomon and was thrust into

the party leadership.

Riding a crest of a sympathy wave, she led her Sri Lanka Freedom Party to victory in July 1960 and was the first woman in the world to be elected prime minister. She lost in 1965 and returned to power again at the 1970 election.

Bandaranaike is the only Sri Lankan politician to serve three terms as prime minister since Sri Lanka won independence from Britain in 1948. She stepped down from the

presidential race in 1994 in favour of daughter Kumaratunga, herself a political widow after her husband was assassinated in February 1988. An inquiry later found that former president Ranasinghe Premadasa was indirectly responsible for the murder.

Bandaranaike and Kumaratunga together made it into the history books as the world's first mother-daughter prime minister and president combination.

Although the daughter is the executive head of state and government, Bandaranaike controls the ruling people's alliance coalition as well as its main partner, the Sir Lanka Freedom Party.

"I feel I have a role to play in guiding and advising the government. I am glad that history has been kind in making my husband, myself and now my daughter leaders of this country", she told an interviewer recently.

Bandaranaike, who is affectionately known as "Mrs. B" and regarded by party stalwarts as the uniting factor within the governing PA coalition, still harbours serious ideological

differences with the daughter. Kumaratunga is pushing an ambitious privatisation plan diametrically opposed to the socialist reforms introduced by her mother 37 years ago. She and King Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia are the

last surviving co-founders of the 115-nation Non-Aligned Movement. "She may be slowed down due to ill health but she is a very gracious lady and is liked by all," media minister Dhar-

masiri Enanayake said. "I never forget to get her chocolates when ever I go abroad." She is admired even by the opposition. In 1980, the then government took away her civil rights after a seriously flawed inquiry but Bandaranaike re-

returned to power in 1994. She may have failed to restore domestic harmony but

fused to seek revenge when she

had better luck abroad. She played a key role in efforts to defuse tension between India and China after the brief border war between those two nations



Qana massacre, Tuesday. On March 15 1996, Israeli bombs killed 105 refugees who were mostly women and children - AFP/UNB photo at the UN compound in Qana.