

Dismissal of lawsuit

Paula Jones to appeal

DALLAS, Apr 17: A tearful Paula Jones vowed on Thursday to press her fight for justice by asking a US appeals court to reinstate her sexual harassment lawsuit against President Bill Clinton, reports Reuters.

Struggling to maintain her composure, Jones cast her decision to appeal the dismissal of the case as so important for women's rights that it had to be placed ahead of considerations for her family.

"Despite the continuing personal strain on my family and me, in the end, I have not come this far to see the law let men who have done such things dodge their responsibility, they should not be able to abuse their position of power at the expense of female employees," Jones told a news conference.

Jones, 31, alleges that Clinton exposed himself to her and asked for oral sex in a Little Rock, Arkansas, hotel room in May, 1991 when she was a low-level state employee and he was governor.

Clinton denies the allegations, and US District Judge Susan Webber Wright ruled on April 1 that Jones' case against him — a case financed by Clinton's conservative political foes — was too flimsy to go to trial,

which had been set for May 27. But Jones whose husband stood beside her with his arm around her said the case was too critical for women everywhere to let it go.

"I was shocked because I believe that what Mr Clinton did to me was wrong and that the law protected women who are subject to that kind of abuse of power," she said.

The appeal will be made to the eighth US Circuit Court of Appeals in St. Louis, Missouri. Jones' attorney Donovan Campbell said a ruling could be made in as few as six months but could possibly take much longer.

He said the appeal would allege that Wright wrongly interpreted civil rights laws and had not considered that Clinton had made a weak case.

"We do not think that the law permits a male supervisor to expose himself to his female subordinates and ask for sexual favour. There is no one-free-flash rule recognised in the law," he said.

Campbell said it was possible the case could be upheld and go to trial before the end of Clinton's presidency, but would be pursued even if he was out of office.

Jayalalitha posing threat to BJP-led coalition

NEW DELHI, Apr 17: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's fledgling minority coalition government is facing a game of political poker in a bid to keep one of its major allies in its camp, newspapers said today, reports AFP.

The multi-party Hindu nationalist-led coalition, in power for less than a month, is trying to placate the maverick leader of the AIADMK Party after she tabled a series of demands that could threaten the fragile alliance.

Jayalalitha Jayaram, head of the AIADMK which controls 18 of the coalition's 264 seats, said all government ministers facing criminal charges should stand down until they had been proved innocent.

"It is anybody's guess who will win in the political poker that is currently being played out in full public view," the Times of India said.

Jayalalitha made the demand after one of her own party members was forced to stand down as transport minister last week over corruption allegations.

The newspapers said it was "in principle... a compelling argument" but that such a policy would deprive the coalition of a string of ministers and top officials, including Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani.

Advani is a senior leader in Vajpayee's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which dominates the coalition.

"Vajpayee knows he cannot give in on this," the Times said. The AIADMK, which is based in the southern state of Tamil Nadu where it is in opposition, also wants the state assembly there to be dismissed by New Delhi and new regional elections held.

The Times said Jayalalitha, a former Tamil Nadu chief minister, was using the resignation of her minister as a "bargaining chip" to try and force new state elections which could sweep her back to power.

However, a special government panel set up to look into allegations of misrule in Tamil Nadu and charges of official abatement to insurgent groups, late Thursday said it was satisfied with the law and order situation there.

Jayalalitha, who herself faces long-standing corruption allegations and is currently out on bail, had already threatened to pull the rug from under the

dozen-party coalition just before it was sworn in last month after her demand for the finance portfolio was rejected.

Analysts warned after the February-March elections that Vajpayee's coalition was unlikely to last much more than a year-and-a-half because of the conflicting ambitions of its constituents. Many are regional parties without a real national agenda.

PTI adds from Calcutta: Despite small disputes regarding seat sharing, the Trinamool Congress and BJP last night reiterated that they would unitedly put up candidate in each of nearly 60,000 seats in the coming Panchayat election in the state against CPI-M-led Left Front.

After the second round of meeting between the two electoral allies at the residence of Trinamool Congress MP Ajit Panja, the party chairman Pankaj Banerjee said that the meeting was held in cordial atmosphere.

Admitting that small disputes cropped up at some places regarding seat adjustments, Banerjee said that these would be sorted out amicably.



Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat weeps Thursday in Ramallah as he sits alongside the crying Intissar Wazir, wife of his deputy Abu Jihad who was assassinated by Israeli commandoes in Tunis ten years ago. About 5000 Palestinians attended a rally in memory of Abu Jihad, and it was the words of Hanan, his daughter that brought tears to the eyes of Arafat. — AP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Bandaranaike turns 82: The 82nd birthday of the world's first woman prime minister, Sri Lanka's Sirimavo Bandaranaike, was marked with religious ceremonies and prayers in her homeland Friday, AP reports from Colombo.

Bandaranaike entered politics after her husband, then Prime Minister Solomon Bandaranaike, was assassinated in 1959 by a deranged Buddhist monk. A year later, she was elected the world's first woman head of government, serving until 1965 and again from 1970-77. She is currently serving her third term as prime minister, taking office in 1994 after her daughter, Chandrika Kumaratunga, became president.

George Michael charged: Pop star George Michael was charged on Thursday with lewd conduct stemming from his arrest this month in a public toilet, officials said, Reuters reports from Los Angeles.

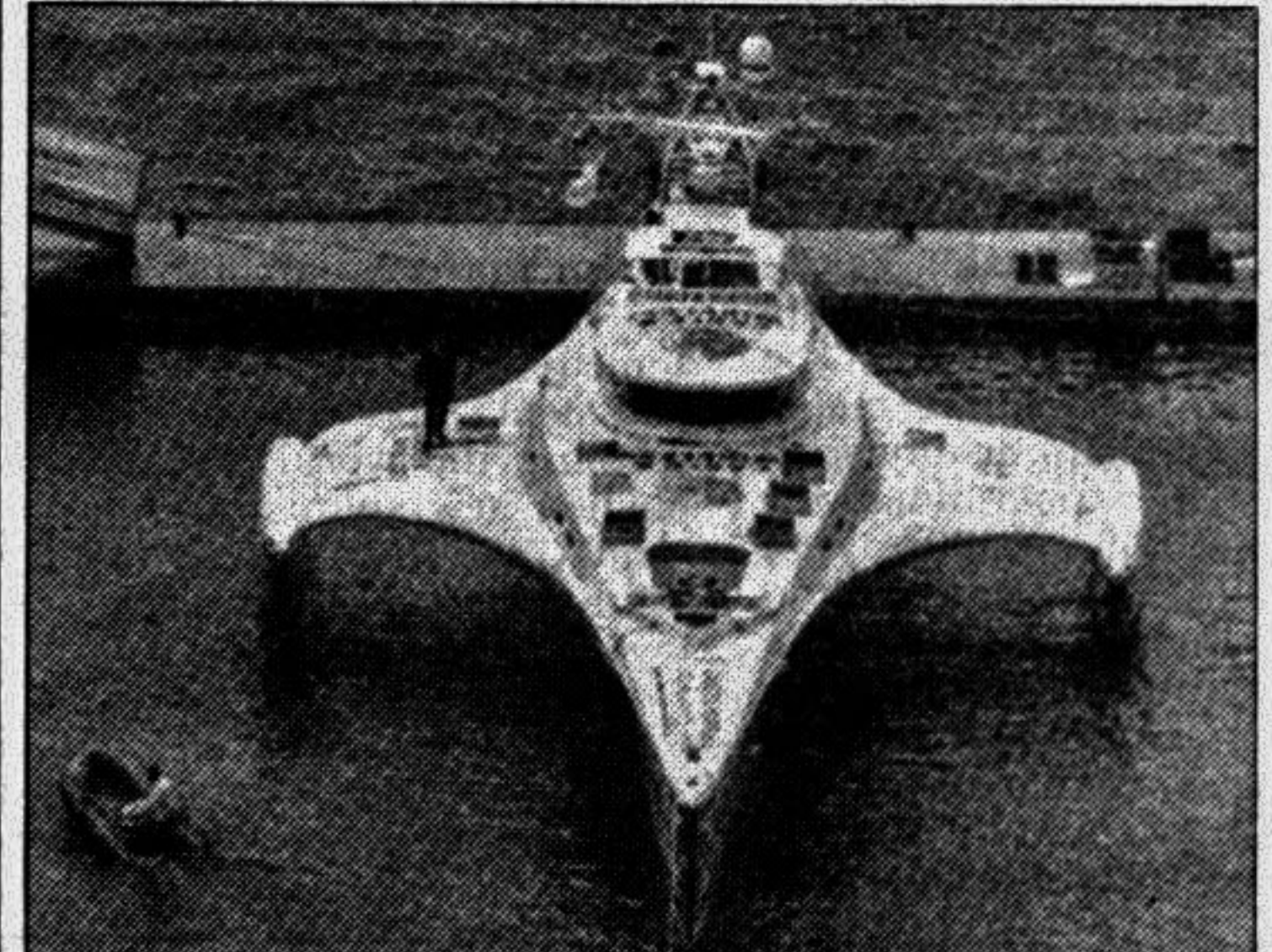
The Los Angeles district attorney's office said in a statement that Michael, 34, would be arraigned on the Misdemeanor charge on May 5 at Beverly Hills Municipal Court. The British-born singer hinted in a television interview he was likely to plead guilty. The charge carries a maximum sentence of six months in jail and a 1,000 dollars fine.

US govt to give up Internet control: The US government will hand over control of the Internet to an independent global board, a senior advisor to President Bill Clinton said Friday, AP reports from Canberra.

Ira Magaziner, Clinton's information technology policy advisor, said one reason for distancing itself from the Internet was to reduce the government's legal liability for companies that operated from the Internet, originally set up by the US Defense Department. It also wanted to back out of having to favour any commercial interest over another.

Serb war criminal surrenders: A Serb war crimes suspect charged with torturing non-Serbs in one of Bosnia's most notorious prison camps surrendered Thursday to the international war crimes tribunal, AP reports from Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Both the NATO-led peace force and the UN tribunal confirmed that Zoran Zigic, 40, was en route to the tribunal's cells in The Hague, Netherlands.



View of the British built and crewed C and W Adventure power boat Thursday in Gibraltar. The Adventure leaves Gibraltar tomorrow in a bid to break the world record of circumventing the globe in 80 days, passing by Monte Carlo, Port Said, Singapore, Yokohama, Honolulu, Balboa, Kingstown, Miami, New York and back across the Atlantic to Gibraltar. — AP/UNB photo

UK to overhaul detention centres for immigrants

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He also said conditions were "unsafe and unsound" because there were no clear rules and sanctions for detainees, and no legal duties imposed on staff.

The detention centers were set up in the belief that immigrants would be held for no more than six weeks, but they are often held for more than a year.

In return for giving staff new powers, detainees must be guaranteed minimum standards of facilities, including food, clothing, accommodation, family contact and access to religious worship, Ramsbotham said.

Amnesty International called for government assurances that key recommendations in Ramsbotham's report, such as access to the courts, will be enforced.

The group alleged that more than half of immigration de-

tainees are yet to have their asylum cases considered, making Britain the only EU country to lock up asylum seekers before their claims have been heard.

Immigration Minister Mike O'Brien acknowledged the system was a "mess," and has announced a review of delays in processing asylum applications. But he said more detention centers would have to be built to reduce the use of prisons to hold immigration detainees.

Ramsbotham backed the principle of holding some immigrants, warning that the system was so "overloaded" that some illegal immigrants were arbitrarily going free.

Mongolian govt resigns

ULAN BATOR, Mongolia, Apr 17: Under fire for radical economic reforms that have worsened their nation's economic decline, the coalition government in Mongolia, resigned en masse on Friday, a top government official confirmed, reports AP.

Prime Minister Mendsaihan Enhsaihan submitted his government's resignation to the national legislature, the Great Hural, following a special meeting on Friday, Finance Minister P. Tsagaan told reporters.

UN accord with Iraq isn't time-specific: Annan

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 17: An agreement under which Iraq opened up presidential sites to UN weapons inspectors is "not time-specific," UN chief Kofi Annan said here Tuesday, reports AFP.

Annan was questioned at a news briefing here after Iraqi Oil Minister Mohammed Amer Rashid raised questions about Baghdad's intentions by telling the deputy chief UN weapons inspector that the inspections were of a "finite duration."

Asked whether the February 23 accord provided for the inspectors to make repeated visits to the sites, and included long-term monitoring, Annan replied: "The answer is yes."

"The agreement allows UNSCOM to go in again and to go back again. It was not time-specific, or one-time only."

Rashid's statement was mentioned by UN Special Commissioner (UNSCOM) deputy chairman Charles Duelfer in a report to Annan focusing on the first inspections of the eight presidential sites in Iraq.

Duelfer led the UN weapons experts who were accompanied by diplomats during the presidential site inspections from March 26 to April 2.

The sites had been declared off-limits to the inspectors until Annan and Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz signed the February agreement providing for full and unconditional access.

Annan was also asked about Thursday's statement by the Iraqi leadership after a meeting chaired by President Saddam Hussein, which called for the lifting of the oil embargo "so as to guarantee a balanced and healthy relationship between Iraq and the Security Council."

The Secretary General said he had not read the statement. But "I have had no official communication from the government that they are ending their cooperation with the UN," he stressed.

The sanctions can only be lifted when UN inspectors are satisfied that all Iraqi weapons of mass destruction have been eliminated.

The UN Security Council is due to hold its regular sanctions review in the last week of April, after receiving a six-monthly report from UNSCOM chief Richard Butler which is expected to be released in the coming days.

Rashid and Foreign Minister Mohammed Said al-Sahhaf are due in New York and Sunday for the sanctions review.

Pol Pot's death a relief to nation: Sihanouk Cambodia moves to crush Khmers

PHNOM PENH, Apr 17: Following the death of former dictator Pol Pot, the Cambodian government moved Friday to root out the last of the Khmer Rouge guerrillas and bring other notorious rebels to justice, reports AP.

Pol Pot, 73, died late Wednesday of an apparent heart attack, a peaceful end contrasting with the brutal and senseless deaths of as many as 2 million of his countrymen when the Khmer Rouge ruled Cambodia between 1975 and 1979.

But diehard Khmer Rouge guerrillas are still operating from rugged enclaves along the northern border with Thailand, led by men almost as blood-stained as Pol Pot.

"We are appealing for them to lay down their weapons and surrender," said Gen Chea Man, who commands government troops confronting the remnants. "But if they refuse our appeal, we will immediately launch an offensive."

The Thai military estimated the holdouts still had 2,000 men under arms and would be difficult to wipe out. But Chea Man said they numbered only

200-300.

Cambodian government spokesman Khieu Khanharith said the government hopes to catch and try their leaders, who lost a major bargaining chip for a peace deal when Pol Pot died.

Botha's trial postponed

GEORGE, South Africa, Apr 17: The trial of former President P W Botha was postponed on Thursday against his wishes soon after a truth commission official painted his rule as one of killings torture and blatant trampling of human rights, reports AFP.

Botha, 82, who is charged with contempt of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), stormed out of court when magistrate Victor Lugujau announced a postponement until June 1.

The adjournment will allow prosecutors time to get hold of documents currently housed in the TRC's archives in Pretoria.

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49 former Indian ministers issued eviction notices

NEW DELHI, Apr 17: India's new government has issued eviction notices to 49 former ministers and top officials to leave their official residences to make way for new Cabinet members, the Indian Express said today, reports AFP.

Urban Development Minister Ram Jethmalani has sent a directive asking the officials — including former finance minister Palaniappan Chidambaram and former parliament Speaker Purno Sangma — to leave immediately.

Officials said that at least 18 former ministers were illegally staying on in government bungalows, creating a housing shortage for the ministers of the new Hindu nationalist-led government which came to power last month.

World's oldest person dies

CORBEIL, Ontario, Apr 17: Marie Louise Meilleur, said to be the world's oldest person, has died at 117, her daughter said, reports AP.

Meilleur celebrated her last birthday in August at a celebration attended by a host of dignitaries at the nursing home where she lived.

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'Suicide bombings to continue' Netanyahu, King Hussein meet to talk on ME peace

JERUSALEM, Apr 17: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and King Hussein of Jordan met for surprise talks Thursday on the stalled Middle East peace process, Israeli officials said, reports Reuters.

The previously unannounced meeting at a hotel in the Red Sea resort of Eilat, southern Israel, was the first between the two leaders since last November.

It marked a further thaw in relations following severe strains last September over a botched attempt in Amman by Israeli Mossad secret service agents to kill a leading member of the Palestinian Islamic militant movement Hamas, Khaled Meshal.

Netanyahu's spokesman Shai Bazak said the two hours of talks had focused on the peace process and bilateral relations.

Both sides expressed the importance that they attach to pushing the peace process forward," Bazak said.

He said the leaders had also expressed satisfaction at the state of bilateral ties and agreed

Huge chunk of ice shelf breaks off Antarctica

SYDNEY, Apr 17: An enormous chunk of the ice shelf has broken off the Antarctic Peninsula, US satellites show, and experts on Friday said that could back up global warming theories, reports AP.

A 5 by 40 km section of the Larsen B ice shelf vanished from the east side of the peninsula, which reaches toward South America, according to the US National Snow and Ice Data Centre, based in Boulder, Colorado.

Satellite images of the ice shelf show the chunk broke away some time between Feb 26 and March 23, as the Antarctic summer turns to winter.

The ongoing ice shelf collapse is consistent with what we see from the effects of increased greenhouse gases, which cause warming," said Bill Budd, a professor of meteorology at Australia's Antarctic Cooperative Research Centre.

Research by Budd indicates global warming will continue for several centuries and melt

most of the vast ice shelves. His computer climate models predict significant degradation beginning in the 21st century and the near-total loss of the ice shelves within 500 years.

In January 1995, the Larsen A ice shelf to the north broke away in a mass some 77 by 37 km and 180 metres thick.

Ted Scambos at the Data Centre said it is likely that the remaining Larsen Ice Shelf is no longer strong enough to hold together and "the retreat will continue in the next season."

Ice shelves border some 44 per cent of Antarctica, covering 1.5 million square km. The two biggest are in the Weddell Sea and the Ross Sea.

Continuing increase in carbon dioxide emissions from industry are expected to drive ocean warming for several centuries, Budd predicted.

Over the past 50 years, the Antarctic Peninsula has experienced a sustained atmospheric warming of 2.5 Celsius.

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US leads world in gun deaths

ATLANTA, Apr 17: The United States has by far the highest rate of gun death — murders, suicides and accidents — among the world's 36 richest nations, a government study found, reports AP.

The US rate for gun deaths in 1994 was 14.24 per 100,000 people. Japan had the lowest rate, at .05 per 100,000.

The study, done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, is the first comprehensive international look at gun-related deaths. It was published Thursday in the International Journal of Epidemiology.

"The CDC would not speculate why the death rates varied, but other researchers said easy access to guns and society's acceptance of violence are part of the problem in the United States."

"If you have a country saturated with guns — available to people when they are intoxicated, angry or depressed — it's not unusual, guns will be used more often," said Dr. Rebecca Peters, a Johns Hopkins University fellow specializing in gun violence. "This has to be treated as a public health emergency."

The National Rifle Association called the study shoddy because it failed to examine all causes of violent deaths.

"What this shows is the CDC is after guns. They aren't concerned with violence. It's pretending that no homicide exists unless it's related to guns," said

Dr. Paul Blackman, a research coordinator for the NRA in Fairfax, Virginia.

The 36 countries chosen were listed as the richest in the World Bank's 1994 World Development Report, with the highest GNP per capita income.

The study used 1994 statistics supplied by the 36 countries. Of the 88,649 gun deaths reported by all the countries, the United States accounted for 45 per cent, said Dr. Etinne Krug, a CDC researcher and co-author of the article.

"I was surprised by the magnitude of the difference between the US and other countries," Krug said.

Brazil ranked second with 12.95 deaths per 100,000, followed by Mexico with 12.69, Estonia with 12.26 and Argentina with 8.93.

Japan, where very few people own guns, averages 124 gun-related deaths a year, and less than 1 per cent end in death. Police often raid the homes of those suspected of having weapons.

Also at the bottom of the list were South Korea with 12 per 100,000 people, followed by Hong Kong with 14, Mauritius with .19, Singapore with .21, Taiwan with .37 and England and Wales with .41.

The study found that gun-related deaths were five to six times higher in the Americas than in Europe or Australia and New Zealand and 95 times higher than in Asia.

