'Jayalalitha should leave alliance' quently scrapped through a confidence motion due to outwith corruption. Jayalalitha, a leader from

NEW DELHI, Apr 20: A crisis within India's new coalition government deepened here today, with three cabinet ministers rejecting an 'ultimatum' from a key member of the alliance to resign over corruption allegations, reports AFP.

Urban Development Minister Ram Jethmalani, Commerce Minister Ramakrishna Hegde and Communications Minister Buta Singh hit back by saying that Jayalalitha Jayaram, who has demanded their ouster, should be told to leave the minority alliance.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, meanwhile, was reportedly working to placate the maverick Jayalalitha today and head of the crisis threatening his one-month old govern-

The affairs began a fortnight ago when one of Jayalalitha's portages was forced to quit the cabinet after being charged

southern India whose support is side support. vital for the newly-elected multi-party coalition, immediately called on all ministers

facing similar charges to go. She also accused Vajpayee of "double standards." Jethmalani, however, was quoted as saying today: "The prime minister should not hesi-

tate in telling Jayalalitha enough is enough. If she wants, she can leave the government. "Self-respect is above all else. If this continues we can

easily sit in the opposition," he told The Statesman newspaper.

Jayalalitha's AIADMK Party and its allies, based in the state of Tamil Nadu, command 27 of the Hindu nationalist-led coalition's 264 seats, just short of a majority in the 545-seat Lower

Vajpayee, sworn-in last month after elections, subse-

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said Jayalalitha's demands amounted to "an ultimatum" which could lead to her quitting the coalition.

The Hindustan Times said Vajpayee had written her a letter to try and end the impasse.

Her letter to Vajpayee said

there were "several other allega-

tions against some more mem-

bers of the cabinet."

and trekked the last few kilo-Hegde, however, said the metres by pony to the predomi-nately Hindu village of Prankote, 250-km northeast of film actress-turned-politician was "behaving like a teenager" while Singh branded the allega-tions "political blackmail." Jammu, the winter capital of Jammu-Kashmir state, where

Jayalalitha's salvo came af-ter Vajpayee asked surface the killings occurred Saturday.
Police said militants tar-Transport Minister S R Muthiah, a member of the geted the village in the midst of a fierce encounter with Indian AIADMK, to quit over corrupsecurity forces in nearby juntion charges. Muthiah resigned gles. They apparently wanted to divert attention of the security on April 8.

> immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, police said an outfit of mercenaries called the Lashkar-e-Toiba was suspected.

Though no insurgent group

Attack on village

in Kashmir: Death

toll rises to 25

JAMMU, India, Apr 20: Officials raised the death toll from

a weekend massacre to 25 Hin-

dus as information trickled out

Monday from a remote north-ern Indian village that was at-

tacked by Muslim militants.

rooq Abdullah, who visited the

village Monday morning, told the state parliament that he had counted 22 bodies. Later,

police said three more bodies

had been found in the remains

of a house the attackers had set

on fire, raising the toll to 25.
Abdullah flew by helicopter

Kashmir Chief Minister Fa-

reports AP.

Abdullah blamed neighbour-ing Pakistan, but cited no evi-

Sixty bonded labourers freed in Sindh

KARACHI, Apr 20: Pakistani authority busted a private jail and freed 60 bonded labourers including women and children from the jail of a feudal lord in southern Sindh province, offi-

Local administration and police officials raided the agricultural fields of a landlord in Nawabshah city, some 200 kilometres (120 miles) northeast of here Saturday, and liberated peasants and their fam-

The action was taken after a in the private jails.

"We were treated as slaves. They made our lives miserable, said peasant Janatan Bibi after being released. The released peasants were in poor condition, many of them wearing torn clothes.

Most bonded labouers are low-caste Hindus and are enslaved by rich feudal lords after other family members were unable to repay debts, human

4 parties back Abacha as their

parties have now backed junta leader Sani Abacha as their candidate in presidential polls due on August 1, leaving just one movement yet to decide, re-

Official radio and television on Sunday reported that the four parties had adopted the their sole candidate in the poll which is aimed at ending the junta's transition to civilian

rule. Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP). on Thursday asked the 54-year-

civilian administration in-

sensus (CNC), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN) and the National Centre party of Nigeria (CNC) — all chose Abacha at their separate conventions.

Attack on village raises fear of Khmer terrorism

PHNOM, PENH, Apr 20: An attack on a fishing village that killed 21 people raised fears Monday that the remnants of the Khmer Rouge are turning to terror tactics in response to a humanity. pro-government military offensive that has put their backs

to the wall, reports AP. The Interior Ministry blamed the attack on the village of ethnic Vietnamese, who are particularly hated by the xenophobic Khmer Rouge, on guerillas seeking to derail elections called for July 26 by strongman Hun Sen.

The beleaguered group may be trying to prove that it has not died along with its notorious former leader, Pol Pot, who succumbed to a purported heart at-tack last week under house arrest by former comrades who

deposed him a year ago. Maj. Gen. Wiwat Satarak of the Thai army denied reports Sunday that Pol Pot had been poisoned.

"Once the spiritual leader disappears, they are on the edge of collapse," government spokesman Khieu Kanharith

Pol Pot led the genocidal

their home's plumbing, reports AFP.

regime that caused the deaths of as many as million people be-tween 1975 and 1979. His death finished hopes he might one day be tried for crimes against

Now that Pol Pot is dead, Khmer Rouge leaders were reported by Thai military officers to be meeting Monday to discuss merging with another armed faction in an effort to improve their image and ease interna-

tional pressure against them. Thai officers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that in the process they might ditch their current leader, Ta Mok, known as "The Butcher." who has an equally bloodstained history.

Some guerillas apparently want to merge with armed backers of Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who was deposed as co-premier last year. They share a common enemy in Hun

The meeting was being held near Cambodia's northern border with Thailand, some 200 kilometers (120 miles north) of the village in Kompong Chhnang province, where an esti-mated 30 armed men attacked a fishing village Saturday.

- AP/UNB photo

Austrian President Thomas Klestil (R) is hugged by former

Viennese mayor Helmut Zilk on arrival at his election

office in Vienna Sunday evening. Klestil was re-elected to

a second 6-year term, winning 63 per cent of the vote in

Sunday's presidential election.

2 found dead in taxi in Pakistan: Pakistani police yesterday found the bullet-riddled bodies of two young men in the troubled port city of Karachi, police said,

AFP reports from Karachi. The bodies were found in a taxi in the city's western district of Orangi town, police said, adding that the victims' arms and legs had been tied with rope.

Medical tests for Wang Dan in US: Newly freed from a Chinese prison, Wang Dan, a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests, underwent medical tests for a possible tumor after arriving in the United States, AP reports from Detroit.

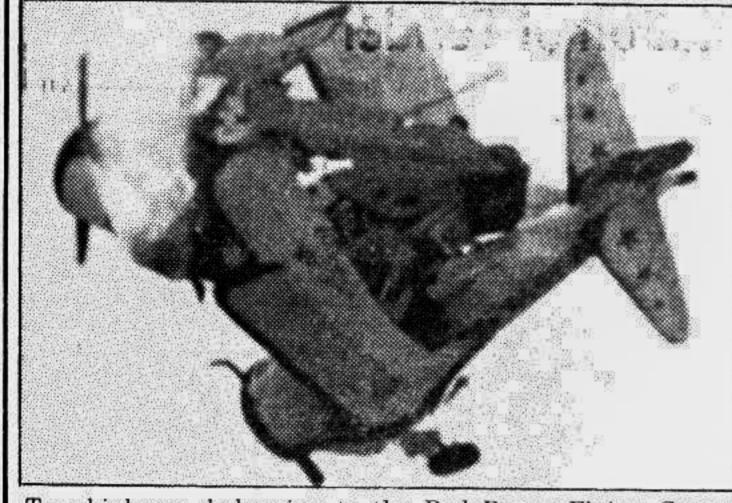
Wang, the second major Chinese dissident to be released in six months, has suffered for months with a throat infection and headaches that his family believes may indicate a brain

Mexican Nobel laureate dies at 84: Mexican writer and Nobel prize laureate Octavio Paz, 84, died late Sunday, the television station Televisa reported, AFP says from Mexico City.

Paz won the Nobel prize in literature in 1990. He is probably best known for a collection of essays entitled "The Labrynth of Solitude." Paz was also a major force behind the Mexican literary magazine Vuelta.

2 Pak kids shot by Indian troops: Indian troops opened fire on Pakistani soldiers patrolling the disputed Kashmir border Monday killing two children walking

to school, the authorities said, AP reports from Islamabad. The details were sketchy, but according to government officials, the children were walking to school near Kotli, some 400 kms northeast of the federal capital of Islamabad when the firing began. The children died immediately and another four were injured.



Two biplanes, belonging to the Red Baron Flying Group, from Marshall, Minnesota fall to the ground after colliding in mid-air over Kissimmee, Florida Sunday. Pilots Randall L. Drake and James Edward Lovelace were killed. The two planes were part of a four plane formation when they collided at 1,000 feet. - AP/UNB photo

3 to die in China for killing: A court in China's southern Guangdong province has sentenced three men to death for the hotel killing last month of a US engineer, the China News Service reported on Monday. Reuters says from The court in Dongguan city found the three men from

northern China guilty of premeditated murder in the March 23 slaying of Leonard Philips, an engineer employed at the Duracell battery factory in the city, the agency said. Linda McCartney dies of cancer: Linda McCartney, 56, a 1960s flower-child photographer who

married the last bachelor in The Beatles and built a multimillion dollar vegetarian food business, has died from cancer. AP reports from London. Geoff Baker, a spokesman for her husband, Paul McCartney,

said she died Friday while on vacation in Santa Barbara, California. Her husband and children were with her. The couple revealed in December 1995 that McCartney was being treated for breast cancer. The treatment at first appeared to be working well, but in March the cancer was found to have spread to her liver, Sunday's statement said.

Hashimoto for redrawing border with Russia north of disputed islands TOKYO, Apr 20: Japan's

Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto proposed redrawing his nation's border with Russia north of four disputed islands at his weekend summit with President Boris Yeltsin, reports said today, says AFP.

Hashimoto's offer was intended to win back the islands without forcing Russia into the embarrassing and difficult move of overtly handing them back, the Asahi Shimbun said.

The four islands in the Kuril chain, north of Japan, were seized by Soviet forces in the closing days of World War II.

Since then Shikotan, Etorofu, Kunashiri and Habomai have been controlled by Moscow but claimed Tokyo, a row which has prevented the two nations from singing a peace treaty.

At the end of the informal "no-necktie" summit Sunday, Hashimoto said he made a "serious proposal" to Yeltsin but disclosed no details.

The pair held two round of

talks and spent one hour sea fishing at Kawana, a coastal resort southeast of Tokyo.

"Today we heard a few more interesting suggestions from our friends," Yeltsin said at a joint news conference afterwards.

"Our side should consider these suggestions now. It is premature to speak about it but I am thinking very positively."

The new proposal here was aimed at making clear that the four islets off the northernmost prefecture of Hokkaido belonged to Japan, the Asahi said.

It marked a shift in Tokyo's political stance over the row since Japan has always claimed the islands were unlawfully occupied by the Russians, the

Hashimoto most likely offered the incentive of joint economic development on the islands on condition Moscow agreed to the territorial demarcation, the Tokyo Shimbun

Talks between Taliban, UN reach impasse of Afghanistan, where the op-

ISLAMABAD, Apr 20: The United Nations refused to send a negotiation team to neighbouring Afghanistan Monday after the Taliban religious army rejected its leader, Alfredo Witchi-Cestari, the UN's coordinator for humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, reports AP.

"Basically we are in limbo right now," while we negotiate with the Taliban to get Witchi-Cestari back on the team, said Sarah Russell, a UN spokesman in Pakistan.

At a news conference in Kabul on Sunday Taliban officials refused to say why Witchi-Cestari was not welcome in Afghanistan, but they have refused him a visa.

The Taliban's decision puts in jeopardy the entire UN programme in Afghanistan, which has already been substantially reduced in Taliban-controlled areas and is non-existent in the north where bloody infighting within the anti-Taliban alliance has made it unsafe to op-

At risk are millions of dollars worth of programmes ranging from assistance to refugees to return to Afghanistan from

Mideast peace summit in Lon-

don can only be arranged once

Israel commits itself to a sub-

stantive West Bank troop with-

drawal and agrees to freeze con-

struction of Jewish settlements.

Palestinian officials said Mon-

The idea came up Sunday in

talks between visiting British

Prime Minister Tony Blair and

Israeli Prime Minister Ben-

jamin Netanyahu, who said he

summit idea outright, Pales-

tinian officials said Monday

that a high-level meeting only

makes sense once the United

States has made its peace pro-

said the Palestinian leader

would not agree to another

meeting without assurances of

progress, saying too much time

has been wasted already with

is interested in having as many

meetings as possible so that he

can come out and tell reporters

that there is progress," Tibi told

minister has to agree to the

American proposals on the

agenda, on redeployment, on

the cessation of unilateral ac-

"The point is that the prime

The (Israeli) prime minister

public relations exercises.

Israel army radio.

Arafat advisor Ahmed Tibi

While not rejecting the

day, reports AP.

was willing to attend.

posals public.

neighbouring Afghanistan, to demining to help reduce one of the world's biggest poppy growing areas.

The Taliban's decision also derails an agreement apparently reached by Washington's ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson during his one-day shuttle diplomacy trip to Afghanistan last week.

At the end of his meetings with the Taliban, Richardson said the religious army was ready to meet with the UN and seek a compromise between UN demands for concessions like equal access to education for girls and women and the Taliban's hardline interpretation of Islam.

In the 85 per cent of the area under Taliban control a harsh version of Islamic rule has been imposed, banning girls from school, women from the work force and seriously restricting the movement of women. The Taliban also has im-

posed edicts on men that force

Blair proposes peace summit in London

building," Tibi said.

Palestinians set conditions,

With his first visit to the

Middle East, Blair is trying to

raise Europe's profile in the ne-

gotiations, but is also acting in coordination with US President

Blair, Netanyahu, Palestinian

leader Yasser Arafat and US

Secretary of State Madeleine

Albright would meet in London

soon — possibly on May 4 — to

Communist deputies

to reject Yeltsin's

choice of PM

nist Deputies in the Russian

Parliament will reject Presi-

dent Boris Yeltsin's choice of

prime minister, Sergei

Kiriyenko, when he is nomi-

nated for a third and final time

this week, Communist Party

boss Gennady Zyuganov said

party, which constitutes the

largest voting bloc in the Lower

House Duma, is to be held on the

eve of Friday's final vote to dis-

cuss the on going confrontation

between Parliament and the

A special plenum of the

yesterday, reports AFP.

Kremlin over Kiriyenko.

MOSCOW, Apr 20: Commu-

Under the latest proposal,

Bill Clinton, a political ally,

them to pray in the Mosque. grow a beard and wear a head covering. In the northern 15 per cent position rules, bitter infighting among partners in the anti-Taliban alliance had forced the UN to withdraw all its international staff. As a result the UN opera-

tions in Afghanistan - a country devastated by nearly two decades of war - has been reduced to the capital of Kabul, its environs and partially in western Afghanistan.

If the two sides can't reach an agreement the UN has said it will stop all, but "life-threatening" operations in Afghanistan.

It's not clear when that decision will be made, but right now the UN says it won't even open talks unless the Taliban allow Witchi-Cestari to head the negotiating team.

The Taliban official said they had not been told of the cancellation of the UN visit. "We have not received any official communication by the United Nations.

He dispelled the impression that the Taliban are dictating the United Nations. "We had given the proposal to the United Nations which could not be described as dictation."

Israel willing to attend GAZA CITY. Apr 20: A tions, including settlement try to break the impasse over

the scope of a West Bank troop

withdrawal. A US peace package, which has been floated for several weeks but never been made public, calls for Israel to withdraw from 13.1 per cent of the West Bank in several stages, with each to be met by Palestinian security gestures. Washington also wants Israel to freeze Jewish settlement construction, a

demand rejected by Israel. Blair was to meet later Monday in Gaza with Arafat to discuss the summit idea. The two leaders were also expected to sign an anti-terrorism agreement under which the European Union would send instructors to train the Palestinian secu-

rity forces. Israel has complained that the Palestinian Authority is not doing enough to combat Islamic militants responsible for more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel since 1994.

On Sunday, Netanyahu said he was willing to attend a London summit. "I want to make it clear that I am prepared to go anywhere, at any time, and specifically in the next month to any location and possibly to London to try to advance the process," Netanyahu said in a joint news conference with

cials said Sunday, reports AFP.

ily members, they added.

The peasants, including 22 women and children, had been enslaved for working in the fields for the past seven years.

bonded laborer escaped the fields and approached Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Lahore to brief him about the "Inhuman treatment"

rights activists said.

candidate

LAGOS, Apr 20: Four of Nigeria's authorised political ports AFP

head of the military regime as The biggest group, the United

old Abacha to be its candidate during a congress in the northern state of Kaduna. The general, who seized power in a November 1993 coup which toppled an unelected

stalled by a previous military regime, has made no public comment confirming that he will run in the poll. On Saturday, three parties the Congress for National Con-

The 30-something couple and their three children, with help from firemen and a thermal detector, spent seven hours Saturday tracking the kitten whose desperate mewlings reverberated through the walls and floors of their house in Tividale in the English West Midlands. Then, late in the day, when all seemed futile, Green dislodged

Off the Record

For love of kitty

LONDON: Paul and Joanne Green sawed through the kitchen

ceiling, dismantled the staircase, ripped up flooring and tore

out the bathtub in search of Rocky, a kitten lost in the bowels of

bathroom fixture and. "he just tumbled out of the pipe into the palm of my hand" the search was over. "We had tried to coax him out with food but just as we thought

we'd got him he would decide it was time to move on," Green said. "He must have climbed at least 3 metres during his trav-Green said the family faced several day's work restoring the

house to its previous condition, "but we all love the cat and are just happy he's back with us." "We would have torn down the whole house if necessary," his

'White elephants'?

LAMPANG, Thailand: Banks go bust and just about every Thai's wallet shrinks. But even in these economically gloomy times, few regard the kingdom's eleven pampered albino elephants as "white elephants," reports AP

With at least four keepers assigned to each revered beast, their days are spent ambling through lush forests. An evening bath, then snacks of sugar cane and tamarind precede a snooze in immaculate, well-guarded pavilions.

This besits animals once held so sacred and power-giving that wars were fought over them in Southeast Asia. Far from costly, useless possessions — as the English term would have it - white elephants continue to be highly prized in traditionrich Thailand.

Some traditions, however, are being tailored in face of the financial constraints imposed by the Asian economic crisis that has hit Thailand hard.

"We went to preserve the white elephants but His Majesty would rather give the money to people in need. And I feel the same way," says the royal veterinarian, Phiphatanachatr Diskul.

Thus, the elaborate induction ceremonies for newly found white elephants — costing some 30 million baht (1.2 million dollars) and involving 3,000 people - have been suspended until better times. And keepers keep a sharper eye on daily expenses.



Actor Hugh Grant and actress and model Liz Hurley arrive at London's Grosvenor House Hotel for the British Academy Awards Sunday. - AP/UNB photo

'The Full Monty' tops British Academy Award

supporting actor trophies as two of the movie's not-so-reluctant Sheffield strippers, reports

It trumped, among others, Oscar favourite "Titanic," which sailed away without a

But the black-tie ceremony at London's Grosvenor House performer Paul.

Lord Puttnam, vice president of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, praised the 56-year-old McCartney as "a remarkable woman who was half of a remarkable marriage.

to rise in "a short but warm standing ovation." Earlier ovations of a cheerier sort went to two award

nery was granted a special Academy Fellowship, and told the crowd. "They say it's better to give than to receive, but tonight, I'm not so sure." Best actress winner Judi Dench ("Mrs, Brown") brought the room roaring to its feet

once more. I'd do it all again," Dench said of a shoot marked by consistently terrible weather. The 63-year-old actress was an also ran at last month's Academy Awards. Other multiple winners, mostly in technical categories,

"Mrs. Brown" was cited for best costume design. Best foreign language film went to "L Apartment" from France. A loser in the same category was Sally Potter's "The Tango Lesson," a film mostly in

were "The Wings of the Dove"

and "L A Confidential." both

with two prizes. Besides Dench,

Sinn Fein supporters begin crucial debate over peace deal with the accord blamed Sinn sertion that the plan could be

DUBLIN, Apr 20: The IRAallied Sinn Fein party has begun the wrenching process of deciding whether to help govern Northern Ireland, the traditionally pro-British state it has long vowed to eliminate.

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and his supporters spent all weekend edging the party's would -be revolutionaries toward accepting sweeping reforms for Northern Ireland as the best next step to a united Ireland.

At the party's annual Dublin conference, Adams opened the floor for critics of the peace accord, which was reached April 10 among eight parties, including Sinn Fein. He postponed any internal vote for two weeks to allow

people to vent their frustrations

and to minimize the chances of

a dangerous split.

The agreement goes before voters in both parts of Ireland on May 22. If approved, it would create a Northern Ireland Assembly in which Protestants and Catholics would take responsibility for departments now run by the British govern-

The Assembly's leaders would have to pursue joint policy-making with the Irish Republic, a requirement designed to appeal to the north's substantial Catholic minority. But the very idea of sitting in a Belfast administration is heretical to many Irish Republican Army

supporters. With more than 1,000 people in the audience, and Adams watching them from the head table, Sinn Fein activists denounced the idea of helping govern a six-county state they refuse even to call Northern Ireland.

"In the six counties," said Martina Mcllkenny of Belfast. "voting yes would mean saying yes to going into an assembly, which to me means accepting partition. It would mean going against everything I was meant to believe in republican princi-

"The more I read this document, the less I see in it for republicans," agreed John Murphy of the Irish Republic border town of Monaghan. Throwing back Adams' as-

veteran in north Belfast, said it could be political suicide for Sinn Fein to enter, "a devolved British parliament in the occupied six counties." Other speakers defended the

"transitional" to a united Ire-

land, Murphy said he foresaw" a

permanently transitional pe-

we're ever going to get.

riod, where all we've got is all

Christie Beattie, a Sinn Fein

the full loaf of bread they still intend to get. They stressed that Sinn Fein's recent electoral gains two seats in the British Parliament, which they boycott, and 17 per cent of the northern vote

came because of the IRA truce

and Adams' pragmatic leader-

accord as offering slices from

There are gains in the document, and also dangers in the document," said Sinn Fein's vice president, Pat Doherty, who urged the audience to "be sophisticated enough, clever enough, even devious enough" to back it.

Many speakers disappointed

Fein's moderate rival for Catholic votes, the Social Democratic and Labor Party. Sinn Fein executive member Sean McManus emphasized that if Sinn Fein boycotted the

given their seats. The strongest appeal for pragmatism came from Sinn Fein's fund-raising director. Joe Cahill, the surviving symbol of continuity between the

old and modern IRA.

Assembly, the SDLP would be

Cahill, 74, was to have been hanged in 1942 for killing a policeman but had his death sentence commuted. After the modern IRA was born in 1969, he was imprisoned for trying to smuggle weapons from Libya. As Cahill moved to the

beamed with approval. "There's one word I hate to see being bandied about - and that's the world principle." Cahill said, noting that the IRA has abandoned policies such as refusing to recognize the authority of British courts." Don't be afraid of change."

LONDON, Apr 20: "The Full He urged the star-studded crowd Monty", the sleeper English success that has become Britain's highest grossing movie ever, was named best film Sunday at the British recipients. A kilted Sean Con-Academy Awards (BAFTA), and stars Robert Carlyle and Tom Wilkinson took the actor and

single prize.

ended on a tearful note, with producer David Puttnam's announcement from the podium of the death — made public only podium, the cheering crowd while the show was in progress rose to its feet and Adams — of Linda McCartney, the photographer and wife of Beatles