

Talks with Milosevic fail

# Clinton seeks congressional support for NATO airstrikes

**Former hostage sues Iran:** Former hostage Terry Anderson has filed a 100 million dollars lawsuit against Iran for allegedly financing and directing the terrorists who kept him shackled and blindfolded for nearly seven years, AP reports from Washington.

**141 arrested in New York:** A New York state representative and a state official were among 141 people arrested during protests Monday over the police shooting of an unarmed African immigrant, police said, AFP reports from New York.

**Jet crash claims 6 in Colombia:** One person was rescued Monday from a plane crash that killed six people, while eight others were feared dead in another crash sighted by search aircraft, AP reports from Bogota.

**UK suspends licence of MED-TV:** A Kurdish television station was ordered off the air Monday after Britain's Independent Television Commission accused it of showing programmes that incited viewers to violence, AP reports from London.

The watchdog commission suspended the broadcasting licence of London-based MED TV for 21 days. The ITC said the station called on viewers to carry out acts of violence in Turkey, and ran programmes that allowed people to make inflammatory comments without balanced opinions.

**Female CJ appointed in NZ:** New Zealand named its first female chief justice — Sian Elias yesterday, AFP reports from Wellington.

**Tigers kill 9 men in Sumatra:** Tigers on the island of Sumatra have mauled and killed nine men in the southern province of Lampung in a week, a report said yesterday, AFP says from Jakarta.

**Doctors go on strike in Lanka:** Health services across Sri Lanka came to a halt Tuesday, as medical doctors went on a one-day strike to demand a restructured administration, AP reports from Colombo.

**Quake rocks Tajikistan:** An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of between 4 and 5 shook the Central Asian nation of Tajikistan overnight, but no serious damage or injuries were reported, a Russian news agency said, AP says from Moscow.

## World population to reach 9b in next 50 years

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 23: The world's population, expected to reach six billion in October, will be nearly nine billion by the year 2050, according to the latest UN estimate on Monday, reports Reuters.

"Fifty years from now the UN population division projects a much larger world population than exists today. We are anticipating a world close to nine billion inhabitants," the Division's Director, Joseph Chamie, told the UN Commission on Population and Development.

"I hope we are wrong," he added. "I hope that this projection for the world's population turns out to be far too high." But he said a UN projection for the year 2000 calculated 40 years ago was remarkably accurate in predicting a figure of slightly more than six billion. Even though in the aftermath World War Two, when the world population was slightly above two billion, he believed it would nearly triple by the end of the century.

Chamie said the population increase of some three billion by the year 2050 was expected to take place in less developed regions.

While the population of the more developed regions was projected to remain essentially unchanged at 1.2 billion that in the less developed regions was expected to grow from 4.8 billion now to 7.8 billion by the year 2050.

**Arafat meets with Albright to seek support for statehood**  
WASHINGTON, Mar 23: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Washington Tuesday to seek support for eventual Palestinian independence, amid growing pressures for him to postpone a May 4 declaration of statehood, reports AP.

**BEGRAD, Mar 23:** Slobodan Milosevic's party on Tuesday rejected the key Western demand of a Kosovo peace plan — foreign troops to police it — even as the Yugoslav president held a second, short meeting with a US special envoy, reports AP.

There was no immediate word on the results of two hours of talks between Milosevic and Richard Holbrooke, who failed to change Milosevic's position in talks Monday night. But his party's action all but slammed the door on the peace plan as long as the West stands firm on the foreign troops provision.

NATO action may be imminent barring a dramatic reversal in Milosevic's stand. But fighting resumed Tuesday in Kosovo between Yugoslav forces and ethnic Albanian rebels, and officials remained defiant in Belgrade.

"We are not accepting foreign military troops on our territory under any excuse and at any price, even at the price of bombing," the general secretary of Milosevic's Socialist Party, Gorica Gajovic, told an emergency session of the Serbian parliament.

**Strike in Bihar demanding Rabri Devi's resignation**  
NEW DELHI, Mar 23: A strike to protest against a string of massacres closed many shops and businesses in the eastern Indian state of Bihar today, the United News of India (UNI) reported, says AFP.

The 12-hour shutdown began at 6:00 am across the sprawling agrarian state of about 110 million people bordering Nepal, the news agency said.

The strike called by India's ruling Hindu nationalists and allies — who form the main opposition in Bihar — was also to seek the resignation of the state's Chief Minister Rabri Devi.

UNI said shops and businesses were shut in Patna, the state capital, while road traffic was near normal. Banks and government offices reported normal work.

Details from other parts of Bihar were not immediately available. Today's strike followed last week's massacre of 35 villagers belonging to upper-caste Hindu landlord families by Maoist guerrillas who champion the cause of low-caste landless farmers.

The state had earlier witnessed two equally brutal massacres of landless farmers by an outlawed armed militia patronised by landlords who are politically influential.

Devi, who took over as chief minister in 1997 after her husband and predecessor Laloo Yadav was linked to a huge corruption scandal, has, however, refused to quit despite mounting demands that she should go.

**India, Russia sign accord on military edn**  
NEW DELHI, Mar 23: India and Russia yesterday signed an agreement on training of Indian service officers in military educational institutions of that country and explored possibilities of further strengthening defence cooperation between them, reports PTI.

Visiting Russian Defence Minister Marshal Igor Dmitriyevich Sergeev met his Indian counterpart George Fernandes and discussed ongoing military cooperation and explored possibilities of further strengthening and speeding up the process.

Fernandes recalled the long-standing defence ties between India and Russia and hoped that these would be further consolidated in the years to come.

The agreement, initially by senior officials of the two sides, lays down broad terms and conditions of the training programme of service personnel, a Defence Ministry spokesman said.

Although New Delhi and Moscow have had strong defence ties, the agreement assumes significance since the United States has discontinued training of Indian service officers after the Pokhran nuclear tests in May last.

**HK court decision on immigration policy next week**  
HONG KONG, Mar 23: A Hong Kong court will decide next Tuesday whether the government can deport hundreds of mainland Chinese who have expired visas but are claiming residency here, reports AP.

The government is locked in a court fight with 17 mainland Chinese and says they must be deported to China to seek approval for their residency applications. Lawyers for the migrants say that violates an earlier court ruling giving them the right of abode in Hong Kong.

# Anwar's trial ends abruptly, verdict on Apr 6

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 23: The closely watched trial of ousted Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim ended abruptly today after defence lawyers refused to make their closing arguments and the judge found them in contempt of court, reports AP.

A verdict in the sensational sex and corruption trial was expected early next month. Anwar's lawyers demanded that a motion against the High Court judge conducting the trial be heard before closing arguments began.

Paul, who sits as sole judge and juror, closed the trial and refused to hear the motion that Anwar had filed against him. He told the court that he would announce his verdict on the four corruption charges April 6.

Prosecutors also refused to make their closing arguments, in light of the defence boycott. Attorney General Mohtar Abdullah simply called on Paul to find Anwar guilty.



Anwar Ibrahim

But Paul said the defence lawyers should have taken their complaint to the country's chief justice and not ask him to adjudicate on himself.

The trial, which began on Nov. 2, ended one day after Malaysia's top opposition leaders also expressed concern that Anwar, 51, was not getting justice.

"It is clearly an unfair trial," said Lim Kit Siang, the leader of the opposition in Parliament and chief of the Democratic Action Party.

Anwar was arrested on Sept. 20 after leading a massive demonstration against Mahathir in the capital, Kuala Lumpur. That night, a blindfolded and handcuffed Anwar was beaten so badly by the country's top police officer that doctors later said he could have died.

Each of the four corruption counts carries a jail term of 14 years and a fine of 20,000 ringgit (5,000 dollars). If convicted, Anwar will also be barred from entering politics for five years. He still faces another corruption charge and five counts of sodomy.

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# Pakistan rules out any timeframe for resolving Kashmir dispute

ISLAMABAD, Mar 23: Pakistan yesterday ruled out setting any timeframe for resolution of the contentious Kashmir issue but asserted efforts to normalise relations with India are not likely to go very far without resolving the issue, reports PTI.

One should not underestimate the complexity of the issue and difficulties involved in it, he added.

He also ruled out the possibility of reopening the consulates in Karachi and Mumbai or even the Khokrapur railway line connecting Rajasthan with Pakistan's Sindh province for the time being.

He said a proposal to augment the staff strength at the existing Indian and Pakistani missions in New Delhi and Islamabad is being discussed to improve the visa procedure from both the sides.

On the exchange of civilian prisoners between the two sides yesterday at Wagah border, the foreign minister said that though it was a symbolic release, it would become a regular feature after the ministers of state from both sides meet in April to put into motion a permanent mechanism.

He said under this mechanism, two or three months before the release of the civilian prisoners, verification will be done so that they are not detained beyond their sentence period and the relatives of the prisoners will also be allowed to meet them.

**Pak National Day**  
AP adds: Tanks rumbled down the wide boulevards of the federal capital on Tuesday and a 21-cannon salute thundered at dawn to herald the 59th anniversary of a resolution that led to the creation of Pakistan.

At a parade of tanks, air radar defence systems, missiles and soldiers, President Rafiq Tarar announced a new award to honour the scientists, who developed Pakistan's nuclear programme and paved the way for last year's underground explosion of several nuclear devices.

Called the Survival Award, Tarar said "after conducting the nuclear tests our defences have become invincible and now our enemies cannot even look at us with evil intention in their heart."

"We have become an impregnable nation," Tarar said from a brightly decorated stage flanked by his military chiefs and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

The country's latest weaponry and radar defences were displayed at the National Day parade, which commemorated a 1940 resolution that led to the creation of Pakistan as a homeland for the Muslims of the sub-continent.

# EU summit begins today to choose new president

BRUSSELS, Mar 23: European Union leaders will be under pressure to name a new chief executive this week to begin repairing the damage caused by the sudden resignation of the group's senior officials, reports AP.

"There must be stability as soon as possible," German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said Monday. "We must not have a repetition of the events we have witnessed."

Germany, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, will host the 15-nation summit on Wednesday and Thursday in Berlin.

The meeting had been scheduled to settle disputes over the group's budget and set the stage for admission of new members from Eastern Europe in the coming years.

Monday the fraud report should become a "catalyst for deep and lasting reform of the European institutions."

Former Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi has emerged as the front-runner to succeed Santer, a former prime minister of Luxembourg.

Prodi has said he is ready to take the job but only for a full five-year term. Santer's outgoing commission was due to step down Dec. 31.

On Monday, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg proposed that the leaders appoint a new Commission president at the summit. The appointment would be ratified by the EU assembly, which sparked the inquiry that led to the Commission's resignation.

# Troops capture LTTE-held town: 19 rebels killed

COLOMBO, Mar 23: Sri Lankan troops captured a rebel stronghold town and adjoining areas in the north after killing 19 Tamil Tiger rebels in a two-day operation, the area's top military commander said today, reports AP.

One government soldier was also killed, Major General Lionel Balagalle told The Associated Press.

Voice of Tigers, the rebels' clandestine radio, made no comment Tuesday morning on the reported setback, but said: "A battle is going on." The radio was monitored in the northern town of Vavuniya, said.

The newly taken area is about 210km north of Colombo and is known for the 17th-century Church of Our Lady of Madhu. The church and the adjoining areas served as sanctuary to an estimated 13,000 Tamil refugees who had fled there to escape fighting elsewhere in the north.

The rebels had entrenched themselves in the area and their administrative offices were based there. Soldiers and rebels have been training their guns on each other across barbed wire and mine fields in the region since 1997.

The total land area we captured will be about 325 square kilometers," Balagalle said when reached by the telephone in Vavuniya, his command headquarters.

He said at least 19 rebels were killed and an unspecified number injured in the two-day operation that started early Saturday.

"No harm has come to the refugees and we are looking after them," Balagalle said. The rebels want a separate homeland for Sri Lanka's 3.3 million Tamils, accusing the 14 million Sinhalese majority of discrimination, a charge the government denies. Over 57,000 people have died in the insurrection since 1983 in the island nation off India's southern coast.

March 6-7, troops seized more than 500 square kilometers from Tamil rebels in their stronghold in the northern jungles.

The newly taken areas are west of a highway that runs north from Colombo to the Tamil-dominated city of Jaffna.

**Thailand expels six DPRK diplomats**  
BANGKOK, Mar 23: Thailand said today it has decided to deport six Bangkok-based North Korean diplomats for suspected involvement in a bungled attempt to kidnap a former colleague and for holding his son hostage, reports Reuters.

Foreign Minister Surin Pitsovan told reporters the diplomats must leave the country within 72 hours. "The Thai government has decided to deport six North Korean diplomats within 72 hours, he said.

**Off the Record**  
Mission to change history!  
KATMANDU: A team of mountaineers on a mission to solve the mystery of who first climbed Mt. Everest left the Nepalese capital for the mountain Tuesday, expedition organisers said, reports AP.

The expedition members — 10 American, two Britons, one German and 12 Nepalese Sherpa guides — will attempt to trace the steps of British climbers George Mallory and Andrew Irvine. Some believe Mallory and Irvine reached Everest's 8,848-meter (29,028-foot) summit in 1924 before they disappeared on the slopes of the mountain, never to be seen again.

Mallory and Irvine were last seen just 900 feet (270 meters) from the summit in 1924 — 29 years before New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary and Nepalese Sherpa Tenzing Norgay made the first successfully documented ascent.

The mountaineer-detectives led by Eric Simonsen, of Ashford, Washington, left for Tibet Tuesday to begin their climb from the Nepalese side of the mountain, said Ang Jangbu Sherpa who equipped the expedition.

Simonsen's expedition will be looking for the body of a man discovered by a Chinese climber in 1975 just below the spot where an ice ax belonging to Irvine was recovered in 1993.

The Chinese climber who had described the body as that of an English man dressed in old-fashioned clothes later died in an avalanche.

They will be looking for a camera carried by Mallory and Irvine that Simonsen's team believe could have photographs of the two missing climbers on the summit. Eastman Kodak, the camera's manufacturer, said the frozen film could be processed if the camera has remained intact and has not been exposed to light.

**Now, Dolly in thousands to serve humanity**  
WELLINGTON: Scottish researchers who created Dolly, the world's first cloned sheep, Tuesday won permission to breed thousands of genetically-engineered sheep capable of producing a human protein in their milk, reports AP.

PPL Therapeutics' New Zealand manager, Mike Aitkenhead, said commercial production of the protein, Alpha-1 Antitrypsin (AAT), had the theoretical potential to prolong life for thousands of sufferers of respiratory diseases such as cystic fibrosis and congenital emphysema.

PPL's Managing Director in Scotland, Ron James, said recent clinical trials had encouraged the company to scale up its production capacity in New Zealand.

"Discussion with potential marketing partners for the product are continuing, and the initial view of two potential partners of the trial results appear positive," James said.

Aitkenhead said PPL was planning to have a cream-skimming plant, which would collect the human protein from the ewes' milk, in operation in 2001.

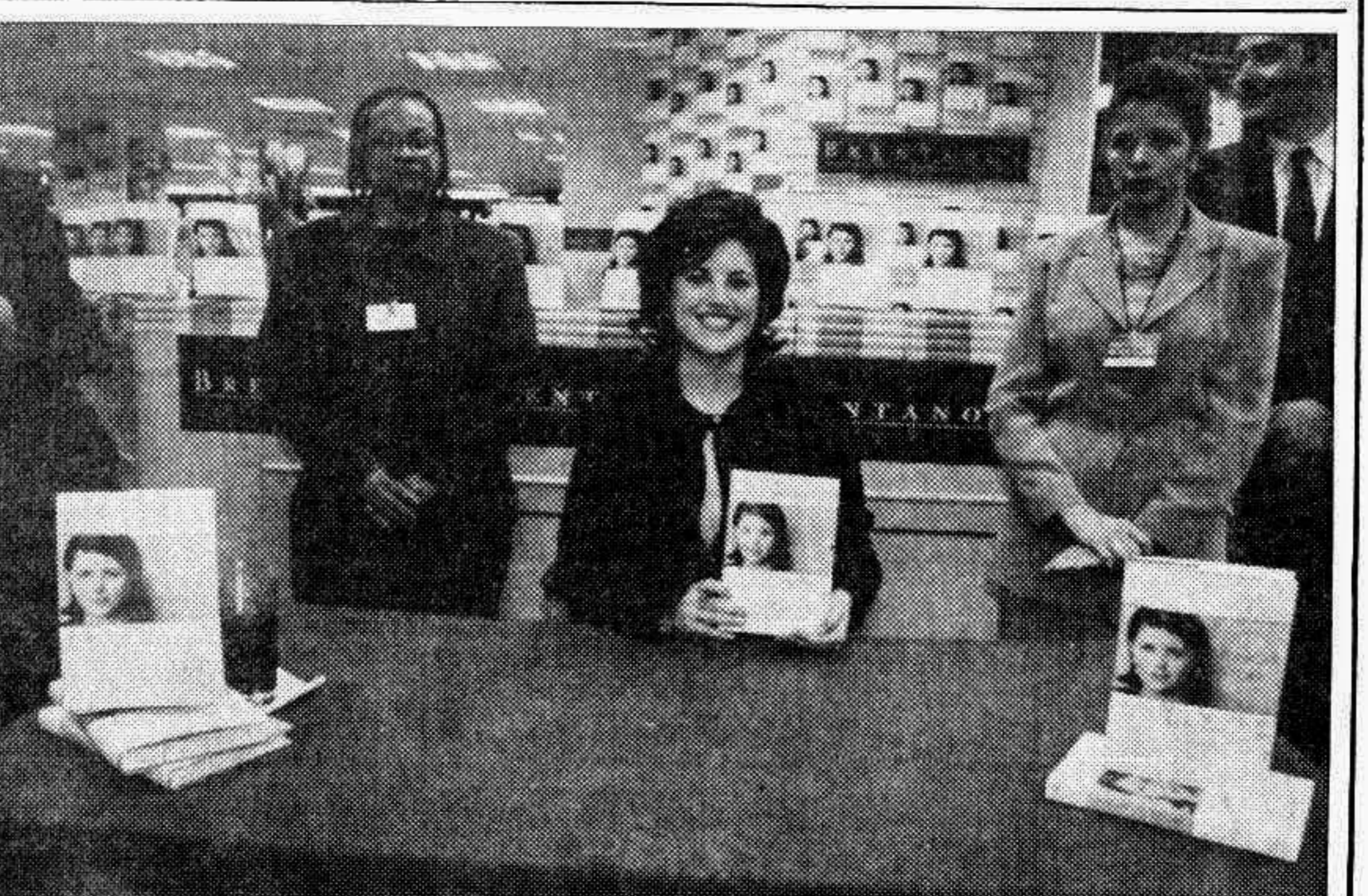
Construction of the farm would begin late next year. When the pharmaceutical product was ready for production, it would be necessary to have a second farm and a second skimming plant to ease the risk of any interruptions to supply of the protein.

**Devilish devotee**  
SHIVPURI, Madhya Pradesh: A man beheaded his two sons and offered them to Goddess Kali at a temple near here yesterday before making a bid to offer himself, police said, reports PTI.

The heads of the boys, Devendra, 12, and Narendra, nine, were found at the feet of the idol of Goddess Kali in the temple at Macha village, 29 km from here, when devotees went there in the morning, the police said.

Ramcharan, 36, who killed his sons also tried to offer himself to the Goddess by using a sword, he had been admitted to the district hospital where his condition was stated to be serious, they said.

The reason for offering the boys to the Goddess was not known. Ramcharan's wife, Radha, is blind and he also has a four-year-old daughter, the police added. Senior police and administrative official have reached the village.



Former White House intern Monica Lewinsky poses with a copy of her book in a bookstore in Los Angeles Monday. Lewinsky cut short a book tour in Great Britain and flew to Los Angeles, reportedly to attend an Oscar party and to sign copies of her book. — AFP photo