#### Chernobyl closed after safety system dysfunction

KIEV, Feb 12: The only reactor still running at Ukraine's Chernobyl power station, site of the world's worst civil nuclear disaster, was shut down Friday after a dysfunction in the safety system, nuclear authorities announced, reports AFP.

No rise in radioactivity was registered and reactor 3 was to resume working on Wednesday. Of the plant's four original reactors, only Number 3 is still producing electricity. In 1999, it was operational for five months and under repair for

the remainder of the time. Number 4 reactor exploded on April 26, 1986, generating a radioactive cloud which contaminated much of northern Europe to a greater or lesser degree. It was the worst civilian

nuclear accident on record. Number 2 reactor was shut down in 1991 after a fire while Number 1 was taken out of service in 1996 under an interna-

tional accord. Ukrainian Prime Minister Viktor Yushenko is to visit London Sunday through Tuesday to hold discussions with officials of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on closing Chernobyl in exchange for a controversial 200 million dollar loan.

Ukraine pledged in 1995 to shut down Chernobyl by the end of 2000 but the agreement fell through after governments from the Group of Seven leading industrialised countries failed to come up with funds to ensure Kiev's energy needs.

#### Kashmir market blast: Death toll rises to 5

JAMMU, Feb 12: Police braced for more bomb attacks in Kashmir in advance of US President Bill Clinton's visit next month, as the death toll rose to five Saturday from an

on the highways leading to the state of Jammu-Kashmir, weapons or explosives.

ently left by unidentified men on two motor scooters exploded in a vegetable market during the busy evening shopping

the death toll to five. Twenty people were wounded.

### warns Suu Kyi

YANGON, Feb 12: Celebrating independence from Great Britain, the head of Myanmar's military regime issued a veiled warning Saturday to Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi to stop alleged attempts to destabilise the country, re-

of the danger of internal and external destructionists who national peace, stability and development", said Gen. Than Myanmar's emergence as an independent country 53 years ago.

reference to Suu Kyi, who is frequently accused by the military of conspiring with foreign nations, particularly the United States, against the regime.

later Saturday.

### vote in crucial referendum

weans began voting today on a controversial new constitution in a referendum seen as a test of President Robert Mugabe's hold on power, reports AFP.

their ballots.

Voting will be over two days. Polls opened at 7 a.m. (1100 BST) and will stay open until 7

observed Sunday. tine Chihuri said his officers would be deployed in force to prevent any violence, following

a series of skirmishes between political opponents in the past The government of President Robert Mugabe and the media it

controls have been pressing hard for a "yes" vote, but several opposition parties, civil society groups and independent newspapers have called for the draft to be rejected.

majority of the people, presented to a government-appointed commission in a nationwide survey, were ignored. In particular, opponents say

most people made it clear that they wanted Mugabe's powers curbed. Instead, they maintain, the

### Direct rule restored in N Ireland despite 'valuable progress'

whose party had threatened to BELFAST, Feb 12: The IRA bring down the Belfast execuon Friday made new commitments to the international distive without an immediate start armament body in Northern to IRA disarmament. Ireland, but too few to prevent Alan McFarland of the Ulthe suspension of the province's ster Unionist Party (UUP). 72-day-old power-sharing gov-

ernment, reports AFP.

beyond use."

The new proposals, de-

The commission led by

Canadian General John De

Chastelain said it viewed the

assertion as valuable progress"

towards resolving the arms is-

A source close to the com-

mission told AFP that De

Chastelain had met with IRA

officials on Friday afternoon

and was "able to extract from

them a commitment to do con-

crete things" but nothing re-

enough to stop British Northern

Ireland minister Peter Mandel-

son from suspenting the

province's fledgling national

assembly and restoring British

He had demanded a firm

Mandelson, who was aware

commitment and timetable on

of the De Chastelain report be-

fore announcing the suspension

around 6:00 p.m. (2400 BST),

"probably thought that it was

not enough to convince (Ulster

Unionist chief David) Trimble,"

The new proposals were not

sue in Northern Ireland.

garding a timetable.

rule here.

disarmament.

disarmament commission, in-

whose ruling council meets on Saturday to mull the latest crisis in the province, said: "It scribed in a second report by the certainly moves the language, but it's not strong enough to clude an assertion that the Irish cause a seismic shift. Republican Army "will consider He added: "rimble could not how to put arms and explosives

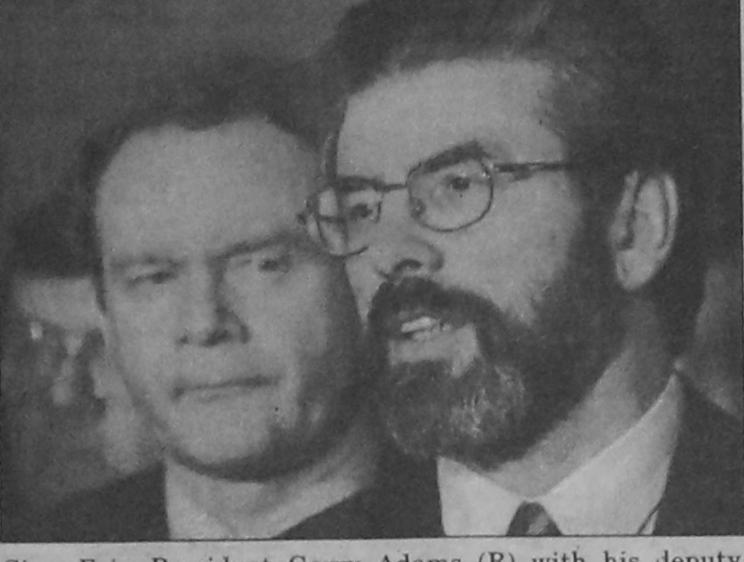
have sold that to the UPP coun-

The De Chastelain report said the commission believed the IRA commitment "holds out the real prospect of an agree-ment which would enable it to fulfil the substance of its man-

"We find particularly significant, and view as valuable progress, the assertion made to us by the IRA representative that the IRA will consider how to put arms and explosives beyond use, in the context of the full implementation of the (1998) Good Friday agreement, and in the context of the removal of the causes of conflict.

'The Commission welcomes the IRA's recognition that the issue of arms needs to be dealt with in an acceptable way and that this is a necessary objective of a genuine peace process and their statement that for these reasons they are engaged

Gerry Adams, head of the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein, had alluded to the development



Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams (R) with his deputy Martin McGuinness speak to the press at Parliament buildings Belfaston late Friday after Northern Ireland Minister Peter Mandelson suspended the Northen Ireland - AFP photo Assembly.

carlier Friday, saying that a "new and significant proposition" been put to the British and Irish governments that he called a "major breakthrough" Adams complained bitterly that London had not taken it into account before restoring

If no suspension had been announced, the Unionists would probably have carried out their threat to resign from

direct rule.

the government, bringing it

London wanted to avoid such a scenario at all costs, keen to keep Trimble aboard as a pragmatic unionist who had, after all, persuaded his reluctant party late last year to share power with Sinn Fein.

Government sources in Dublin ruled out any joint statement with London on Fri-

### Pakistan sounds stern action against terrorist activities

ISLAMABAD, Feb 12: Pakistan vesterday said it was opposed to all forms of terrorism and would take stringent action against any group or person involved in terrorist activities on its soil, reports PTI.

We oppose terrorism in any form. If any evidence is brought to Pakistan's attention to substantiate allegations of terrorism against any person or group on Pakistan soil, the government will take action as required by law, Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar said.

Pakistan is a law-abiding state with stringent laws against terrorism and is bound to respect and implement international law on terrorism. Sattar told official news agency APP in an interview.

He, however, said, militancy is not a crime unless a person commits an act of terrorism or uses force against an innocent person.

discussed every year in the United Nations general assembly and other for a like SAARC and Pakistan has always vowed to combat the scourge, he claimed. Asked about a possible US

The question of terrorism is

move to declare Pakistan as a state sponsoring terrorism, the minister replied these designs will fail on grounds of objective facts we have apprehended terrorists and prosecuted them in our courts or extradited them, he noted. To a question on the estab-

lishment of a joint working

group by the US and India to counter terrorism, he said, the subject required a multilateral approach.

To a question on a timeframe for restoration of democracy, Sattar said what the international community is asking to give a benchmark or a road map for return to civilian rule. Objective and sympathetic foreign friends wish us success in our efforts for a genuine democracy

They know Pakistan just cannot afford to return to the kind of democracy we had. They see the need for our nation to overcome the legacy of shame of corrupt rulers who built obscene estates at home and abroad the like of which is not owned by any president or prime minister of a modern state, he

Describing this as kleptocracy, he said the system we had was exploited by the power elite to plunder the treasury and bankrupt the state sector

Sattar said, Pakistan has to be a democracy. It was envisioned by its founding fathers as a state based on principles of democracy, freedom, equality. tolerance and social justice.

On accountability he said Pakistan's friends are sympathetic and say a nexus between crime and punishment is a prerequisite for deterrence of corruption. Such retribution alone will give a chance for a new generation of honest, public-mist be brought to justice, he said.

Another report adds: The military regime in Pakistan will not stay in power for long and hold elections to local bodies this year as the first phase of transfer of power, a senior official has said.

The five month-old Gen Pervez Musharraf regime will later review the idea of reverting the country to civilian reign and holding elections at the centre and provinces. National Reconstruction Bureau Chairman Tanvir Hussain Naqvi told BBC in an interview.

The government will hold elections to local bodies this year as the first phase of transfer of power. Later the transfer of power and the election process at the centre and the provinces will be reviewed, he was quoted as saying in the interview by the local media here.

He said the army would not stay in power for long and had no plans to follow the patch of former military rulers Ayub Khan and Zia-Ul Haq. We do not want to follow their pattern. One of these patterns worked for 10 years, while the other existed for 11 years. We do not intend to remain in power for ten

I understand the point of view of the people. You are also saying that we will not go back. I want just to say that we intend to go back to barracks, he

explosion in a crowded vegetable market, reports AP. More roadblocks sprang up

Jammu; the winter capital of checking vehicles for smuggled On Friday, a bomb appar-

Police said two people died in hospital overnight, raising

The attack apparently was planned when the area was darkened by a rotating schedule of blackouts to conserve power. Most areas of Jammu are without electricity for up to five hours a day.

### Myanmar junta

ports AP.

The entire union must ward ports Reuters. are attempting through various means to ruin and undermine Shwe at a ceremony marking

His words were an apparent

The opposition National League for Democracy, which Suu Kyi heads, planned to stage its own Union Day celebrations

## Zimbabweans

HARARE, Feb 12: Zimbab-

Polling began under rain, which could affect turnout as many voters have to travel several kilometres on foot to cast

Some five million voters are eligible to vote at 3,600 polling stations nationwide.

p.m. The same timetable will be

Police Commissioner Augus-

They say the views of the

draft leaves the 75-year-old president -- in power for the past 20 years -- as absolute

# to map the world

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida, Feb 12: The space shuttle Endeavour blasted off here Friday with six astronauts on board, on an 11-day mission to create highly detailed three-dimensional maps of the Earth's surface, reports AFP.

The spacecraft lifted off at 12:43 p.m. (2343 BST), surging into the cloudless blue Florida sky as hundreds of spectators cheered

"It looks like it's going to be a great day to go flying," launch director David King commented on the weather. "The crew is ready," Kevin

Kregel, the shuttle commander, responded. Ten minutes after lift-off, Endeavour almost reached its orbit at 233 kilometres above

the Earth, according to the US space agency NASA. The launch was delayed 13 minutes to fix what US space officials say were three "minor technical problems" that sur-

faced during the countdown. However, Endeavour's ascent was not flawless, NASA acknowledged.

One of the spacecraft's three auxiliary power units that control hydraulic circuits overheated, and the crew had to resort to a back-up system, according to James Hartfield, spokesman for Mission Control in Houston, Texas.

It was the second launch attempt after a first one on January 31 failed 20 minutes before lift-off because of an onboard computer malfunction.

The Endeavour crew, including one German and one Japanese crew member, will use sophisticated radar technology to help produce the most detailed three-dimensional maps ever made, for both military and civilian uses.

According to NASA, the crew of will split into two teams and shifts as they monitor the operations round-the-clock.

### Endeavour lifts off Israel set to quit Lebanon

JERUSALEM, Feb 12: Israel der. appears determined to pull its troops out of southern Lebanon. whether or not it secures peace with Syria and Lebanon or an end to hounding by Hezbollah guerillas, reports Reuters.

Even tentative moves to stem the latest tit-for-tat violence came to an abrupt halt on Friday when Israel walked out of a military meeting with Syria and Lebanon after Syrian-backed Hezbollah killed another Israeli soldier.

Israel sent warplanes after Hezbollah for the fourth day in the latest cycle while Syria which Israel believes is using Hezbollah as leverage for a deal accused it of sabotaging peace, and Washington still hoped peace talks would resume.

But Israeli Prime Minister

Ehud Barak told Israel's Channel Two Television: "The warfare is entering its last stages. Within four-and-a-half months, I am determined to put an end to this tragedy in Lebanon that has already lasted 18 years, and to bring the boys home to the international bor-

Barak came to power last year on a pledge to pull the troops out of Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon by this July - but hoping this would be part of a peace deal

with Israel's northern neigh-

However, the recently resumed Israeli-Syrian talks mediated by US President Bill Clinton have broken down over Syria's demand that Israel guarantee, in advance, a full withdrawal from the Golan Heights, captured in 'he 1967 Middle East war.

Barak insists he can still reach a deal But, under pressure from an Israeli public tired of seeing conscripts picked off by Hezbollah in Lebanon and now heavily in favour of a pullout, he indicated his patience for a deal with Syria had its

"If we get to April or May without an accord, or without one on the horizon, we will know what to do," he said. "In a few months it will be clear, before July 2000, whether or not

in Syria we have a partner for negotiations."

Friday's killing of a seventh Israeli soldier in two weeks by Hezbollah prompted Israel to walk out of a meeting of the so called April Understanding Committee, established in 1996 to monitor rules of engagement agreed between Israel and Hezbollah guerillas and cochaired by the United States

and France. The meeting was supposed to discuss respective Lebanese and Israeli accusations about violations of the agreement.

A Syrian official quoted Foreign Minister Farouq al-Shara as telling his British counterpart in a phone call on Friday evening that Israel's walkout from the meeting was "escalating the situation in the region instead of easing ten-

"Israel's arrogance and show of strength will lead to nothing but more human and material losses and the killing of any possible opportunity for peace in the region," Shara said.

### Tiny satellites may be communications future

The US space shuttle Endeavour lifts off from pad 39-A at

Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on Friday. The

Endeavour and her six-person international crew are just

beginning their 11-day shuttle radar topography mission.

LOS ANGELES, Feb 12: Two miniature satellites, not much bigger than cellular phones and using the same wireless technologies, have paved the way for the future of communications, scientists said today, re-

The satellites, the smallest ever to be sent into space, are known as "picosats". "They were launched on Jan. 26 and weigh less than one half pound (226 grams), measuring just 4 inches by 3 inches by 1 inch.

The mission ended on Friday when their tiny batteries began running out of power. They had started their transmissions to Earth on Monday after being released from a "mother" satellite. Aerospace Corp., which controlled the mission, said.

The two tiny satellites proved their capability to receive and transmit signals from Earth, opening a new era of mini-satellites that would inevitably replace the many large and costly satellites circling the globe today, said Ernest Robinson, the mission project leader at Aerospace, an independent, nonprofit, California-based company that controlled the

experiment. Rockwell International Corp's Science Centre, which supplied the micro-machined silicon relays and wireless networking technologies, said the technologies promised to "dra-

matically reduce the size, power and cost of future satellites used for such applications as telecommunications and

- AFP photo

weather imaging." The picosats are seen as forerunners of an envisioned new breed of mini-satellites called "nanosats," which would be slightly larger than the picosats and would be sent into space in clusters to form mass communications centres.

Robinson said finding the two tiny satellites in the vastness of space was, in itself, a major achievement, liking it to finding a needle in a haystack.

The two craft were tethered by a thin wire into which was inserted thin strands of gold, allowing the US Space Command's Space Surveillance Network to locate them, he said. The experiment also marked the first faunch of the US Air

Force's new four-stage rocket made up of the Minuteman II Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) and the Pegasus XL launch vehicle. In addition, it was the first

launch from the new commercial spaceport at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Another picosat mission is planned for mid-June when more mini-satellites will be jettisoned from a MightySat 2.1 satellite built by the Air Force Research Laboratory.

sian President Abdurrahman Wahid said today that security minister Wiranto, accused of responsibility for the bloodletting and terror in East Timor last year, will resign Monday.

reports AP. Wahid, in Bangkok for a UN trade meeting, said he would meet with Wiranto after his return to Indonesia Saturday night and expects to issue an announcement of his resigna-

tion within two days. Wahid has said throughout a

Wiranto has continued to attend Cabinet meetings and crimes tribunal.

former general had not resigned was that they had not yet met face-to-face. The president would meet him after returning to Jakarta.

the country." The resignation would defuse a crisis of leadership in Wahid's young presidency that has raised fears Wiranto or oth-

would have to face questions in court. Wiranto has indicated he would prefer to resign only if he But Wahid said it would be

reforms and restoring stability. "His resignation will be seen by other countries as a sign we are serious, that you can invest in Indonesia," Wahid said.

of patriotism, his sense of loyalty to the country, he will resign. Why hasn't he resigned now? Because we haven't talked

anonymity: "Please ask directly to Gen. Wiranto. We can't com-

ment on that." Wiranto was Indonesia's military commander in 1998 and played a key role in the removal of longtime dictator

### Valentine's card from Mars!

Valentine's Day from Mars. A satellite circling the Red Planet on Friday sent back pictures of a heart-shaped Martian plateau just in time for starstruck lovers to download it from the Internet and e-mail the image to their Earthbound

sweethearts, reports Reuters. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, California, announced that the Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft "has captured a lovely view of a bright heart-shaped mesa in the south polar region of the Red

The heart-shaped feature is about 837 feet across. But be warned, the heart has a dark side. In this case it is surrounded by a layer of dark

rough terrain. The image can be seen and downloaded from http://photojournal.jpl.nasa.g ov or http://www.msss.com.

#### Exercise cuts blood pressure fast

WASHINGTON, Feb 12: Just one 45-minute session on a treadmill lowered the blood pressure of several obese, sedentary, middle-aged men, and keeping up the exercise kept the blood pressure down, researchers report, says Reuters. The study, in the latest issue

of the American Journal of Hy-

pertension, adds to evidence

that a little exercise can have a dramatic effect on high blood pressure, which is a major cause of heart disease. "This beneficial effect was apparent after the first exercise session, giving patients a motivational lift to continue," Dr Michael Weber of Brookdale

Hospital Medical Centre in

Brooklyn, New York, an editor

of the journal, said in a state-

"Seeing a reduction in blood pressure is an inducement that provides immediate positive feedback to help the patients continue their exercise programme.

A team at the University of Maryland tested 11 obese men aged 49 to 67. Their mean weight was 204 pounds and mean blood pressure was 153 over 96, which is stage one or mild hypertension. Normal blood pressure is

The 11 men exercised for 45

minutes on a treadmill, broken

down into three segments with

four minutes of rest time be-

130 over 85 or below.

tween each segment.

peace in the whole region. The fate of this mission will

Leaders of all members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) apart

Models present outfits by Thomas Steinbruck during the Moet & Chandon Designer Debut fashion show on Friday in New York. The show is part of the Fashion Week Fall - AFP photo

### Annan calls for peace talks with ASEAN

BANGKOK, Feb 12: United from Myanmar's Senior Gen-Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan called today for a new dialogue on peace and security with Southeast Asian nations during a summit with regional leaders, reports AFP.

"Why have we found so little

to say to each other on peace

2000 Collections.

and security issues at the very time when new forms of security challenges are presenting themselves?" he asked. Annan said the operation to rebuild East Timor, which was

engulfed in militia violence after voting for independence from Indonesia last year, had important implications for

have important implications for peace, stability and prosperity of the entire region, and I look forward to working closely with the members of ASEAN in securing its success."

out observer status at the United Nations?" he asked. The UN chief also praised Asia for its fightback from the economic crisis which erupted in mid 1997. "As rapid globalisation con-

eral Than Shwe joined the

summit here, on the sidelines of

the United Nations Conference

on Trade and Development

ASEAN to attend a meeting

with the UN in New York in

June and suggested a regional

roundtable of experts between

the two organisations to discuss

jor regional organisation with-

Why is ASEAN the only ma-

Annan invited members of

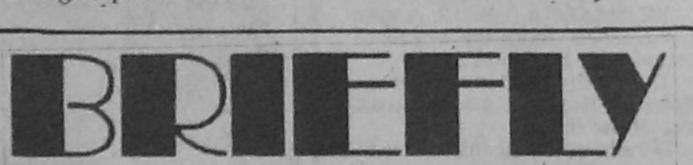
(UNCTAD)

security issues.

your efforts towards full recovery, all of us must find ways to protect against future upheavals. To head off future crises,

tinues, and as you continue

Asian nations must pay attention to good corporate and publie governance, he said.



Proton rocket booster lifts off: A Russian Proton rocket booster lifted off today from the Baikonur cosmodrome in ex-Soviet Kazakhstan, Russian media reported, the first launch since a rocket of the same type

crashed last October, Reuter reports from Moscow.

agency said. AFP reports from Jakarta

RIA news agency quoted space officials as saying the rocket blasted off at 1511 BST and later put into orbit a commercial Indonesian satellite, Garuda-1. Private NTV television showed the rocket moving into the sky, apparently without a hisch. Quake rocks East Java city: An earthquake measuring 5.1 on the Richter scale rock d the Indonesian city of Malang in East Java province Saturday morning but

there were no reports of casualties, the state Antara news

Residents in Malang ran out of their houses, offices and schools in panic when the quake struck, Antara said. The threeminute tremblor struck at 10.38 am (0938 BST) with its epicentre located 115 kilometres under the sea, Zainal Abidin of the Geophysics and Meteorology Agency in East Java capital of Surabaya was quoted as saying.

Clinton names envoy to Lanka:

President Bill Clinton on Friday nominated E. Ashley Wills to

be the US Ambassador to Sri Lanka and the Maldives, Reuters

reports from Washington. Wills has been a foreign service officer since 1972. His most recent assignment was as deputy chief of mission in New Delhi. the White House said in a statement. The nomination is subject to confirmation by the Senate.

### Wiranto will resign Monday III. Indonesian president says

BANGKOK, Feb 12: Indone-

two-week trip to 11 countries that he expected Wiranto to resign because of Indonesian and UN reports into the East Timor violence that found Wiranto responsible in his then-role as armed forces commander.

said he would refuse to quit. saying it would amount to admitting guilt and leave him open to prosecution by a war-Wahid said the reason the

'You can expect the day after tomorrow, the announcement of his resignation," Wahid said.

said: "Because of his sense of patriotism, his sense of loyalty to

ers could stage a coup. Wahid said he understood Wiranto's concerns that he

is ever found guilty. better for Indonesia if Wiranto steps down immediately, because it would signal the country is serious about democratic

"I think because of his sense

yet," Wahid said. In Jakarta, one of Wiranto's aides said on condition of

#### Asked why he believed Wiranto would resign, Wahid Suharto. Sharif sacked Musharraf

hours before coup

Witness tells court

KARACHI, Feb 12: Deposed Pakistani premier Nawaz Sharif sacked his army chief just hours before the army launched a coup, his military secretary told a Karachi court today, reports AFP. Sharif signed the papers

sacking General Pervez Musharraf and appointing a replacement on October 12, while the general was flying back to Pakistan from a visit abroad. Hours after landing, Musharraf seized control of Pakistan, detained Sharif and proclaimed himself chief execu-

permission in Karachi. The seven men pleaded not guilty to hijacking, abduction, attempted murder and terrorism but face the death penalty if convicted. Brigadier Javed Iqbal Malik, Sharif's military secretary, told

the anti-terrorism court Sharif

Sharif is now on trial with

six of his officials, accused of

denying the Pakistan Interna-

tional Airlines jet landing

Musharraf at 4:30 pm that day. Shortly afterwards the news was announced on state television and soldiers were seen at the station's Islamabad broadcast centre. Malik said Sharif sent him to the television station to deal

"At about 6:15 pm the prime

minister asked me to go to the

television centre and disarm

with the soldiers.

signed the papers sacking

soldiers who had taken over the television centre," Malik said. Several minutes later the army halted broadcasts and announced the coup. At the time Malik said the commercial jet carrying Musharraf was being given or-

ders from Sharif's official resi-

"I gathered that the aircraft was being controlled from the prime minister's house and that there was some confusion about its landing," he said. The trial is expected to last several weeks.

# PASADENA, Calif: Happy