

## What's on today....

**Seminar:** International Rice Research Institute will present a seminar on 'Rice Research Challenges of Today: The Crucial Role of Partnership in Harnessing the Emerging Scientific Opportunities.' Chief guest: Motia Chowdhury, Minister for Agriculture. Venue: Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), Farmgate. Time: 3:30 pm.

**Discussion:** Bangabandhu Parishad will hold a discussion meeting in observance of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth anniversary. Venue: Ramna Restaurant, Ramna. Time: 6:30 pm.

**Seminar:** A seminar on the 'Communications Challenge' on the occasion of Commonwealth Day will be held. Venue: British Council auditorium, 5, Fuller Road. Time: 10 am to 12:30 pm. Organiser: Commonwealth Society of Bangladesh.

## ..... and tomorrow

**Launching:** The launching ceremony of the first Internet Portal Website from Bangladesh will be held. Chief guest: Md Abdul Jalil, Minister for Commerce. Venue: Hotel Purbani International. Time: 11:30 am.

## Weather

### Thundershowers likely

Rain or thundershowers accompanied by temporary gusty wind is likely at a few places over Rajshahi, Dhaka and Sylhet divisions and at one or two places over Khulna, Barisal and Chittagong divisions in the next 12 hours till 6 pm today, reports UNB.

No appreciable change in day temperature is expected over the country during the period, Met Office said.

The country's highest temperature 33.6 degree Celsius was recorded yesterday at Jessore and the lowest 17.0 degree Celsius at Rangpur, Syedpur and Dinajpur.

The sun sets in the capital today at 6:07 pm and rises tomorrow at 6:08 am.

Maximum and minimum temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	31.8	23.8	80	87
Chittagong	29.8	22.0	86	73
Rajshahi	29.4	18.6	87	73
Khulna	33.2	22.6	81	64
Barisal	32.0	21.4	73	75
Sylhet	23.5	17.5	88	88
Cox's Bazar	30.9	22.0	77	73

## HERE and THERE

### BAAP

Speakers at a function have urged all to resist the conspiracy of the autocrat and vote da-cuits who are trying to foil the country's peaceful democratic atmosphere by creating anarchy and terrorism in cooperation with the anti-liberation forces, reports BSS.

They were speaking at a council meeting of Bangladesh Awami Ainjibi Parishad (BAAP), held at Engineers Institution Auditorium on Saturday. The speakers expressed their firm commitment to establish

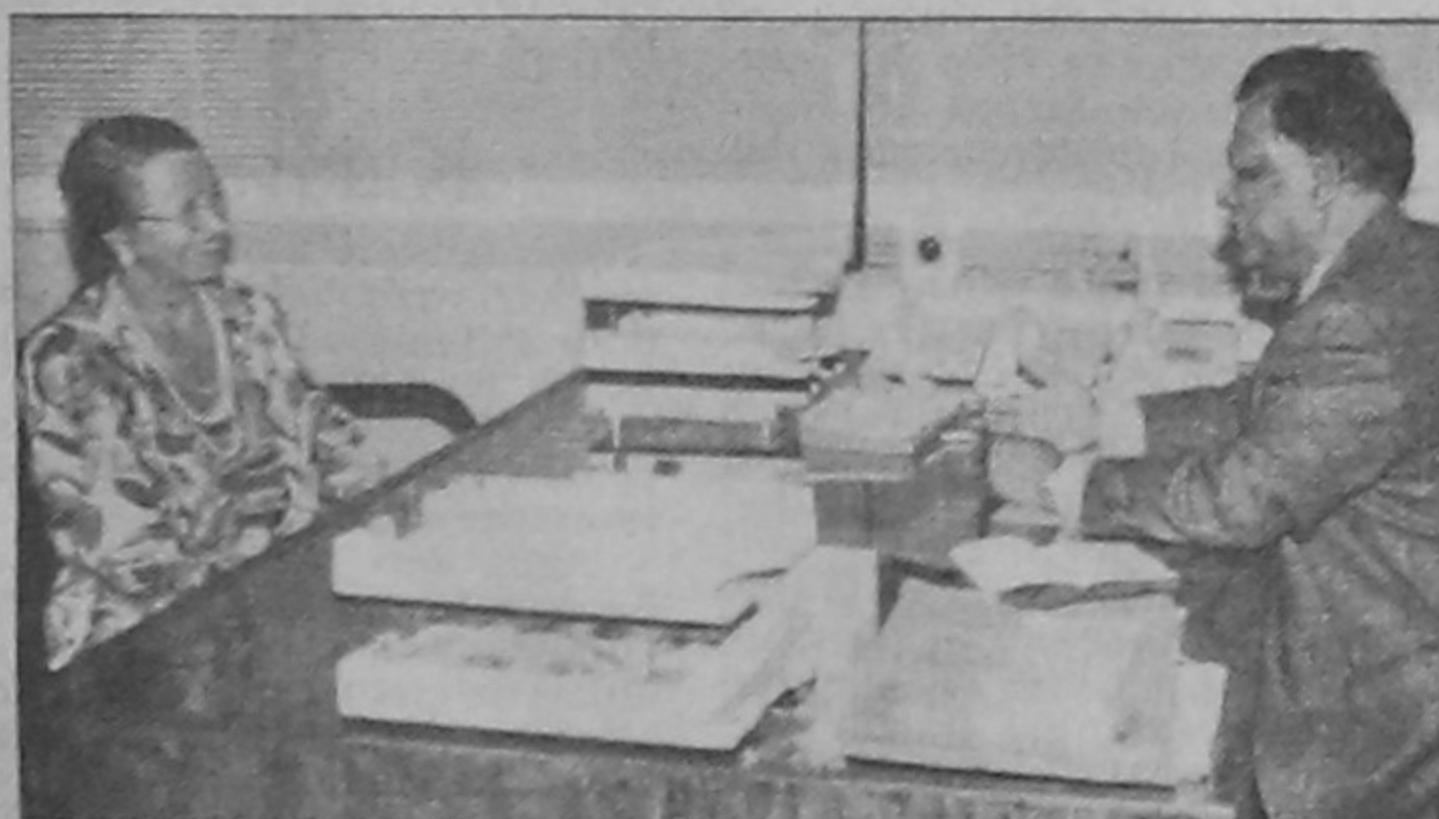
rule of law, justice and democracy aiming to establish the ideal of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. They also expressed their pledge to give legal help to the poor and root less people of the country.

In the council meeting, Advocate Shahara Khatun and Mohammad Abdullah Abu were unanimously elected president and general secretary respectively of the parishad.

Full committee of the parishad will be announced within the next seven days, a BAAP press release said.



Dhaka Business and Professional Women's Club honoured National Professor Dr Sofia Ahmed, Nargis Zafar and Rokeya Mannan at a function yesterday for their contribution in the fields of education and social service. The function was held at the club premises yesterday afternoon.



The ambassador of Norway Gerd Wahlestorm called on the pro-vice chancellor of the North South University (NSU) at his office recently.

## Three killed in Kashmir cross-border shelling

SRINAGAR, India, Mar 12 : An Indian army captain, a porter and a woman were killed in artillery duels between Indian and Pakistani troops on their disputed Kashmir border, police sources said today, reports AFP.

Police sources told AFP Pakistani troops opened artillery fire on Indian army posts Saturday evening at the Galian and Barsar outposts in Kashmir's northern Uri region, killing army captain Omkar Nath and local porter Abdul Majeed.

The firing continued throughout Saturday night and Indian gunners returned the fire, the sources said.

Similar artillery duels were also reported from Kashmir's northern sectors of Keran and Kama and the southern border region of R.S.Pura, where a

Hindu woman died in Pakistani firing on Sunday.

Two women were killed and six people injured in artillery duels between Indian and Pakistani troops in the southern frontier district of Poonch Friday.

Both India and Pakistan blame each other for starting artillery duels on the Line of Control -- the de facto border that divides Kashmir into Indian and Pakistani zones.

The skirmishes have increased since July 1999, when a bitter conflict broke out between the Indian army and Pakistani-backed troops in northern Kashmir mountains.

Last month Pakistan accused Indian army commandos of intruding into a village in Pakistan-administered Kashmir and killing 14 civilians. India denied the charge.



Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) jointly brought out a procession yesterday protesting the recent attack and ransacking of the Daily Dinkal office.

— Star photo

## Indo-Pak leaders dismiss fear of N-war over Kashmir

WASHINGTON, Mar 12 : The leaders of India and Pakistan, in interviews published today by both the Washington Post and Newsweek, dismissed concerns that nuclear war could result from the conflict between their countries over the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir, reports AFP.

"There is no possibility. I completely rule out a nuclear war," Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee said.

Pakistani military leader General Pervez Musharraf, who came to power in a military coup last October, also expressed confidence in a parallel interview that the nuclear threshold would not be crossed on the subcontinent.

"I do not think it will get out of control," said Musharraf, referring to tensions between the two neighboring states, which have fought three wars since their 1947 partition, two of them over Kashmir.

"They know that there is a deterrence in place on our side," added Musharraf.

Pakistan carried out nuclear tests in 1998, a few weeks after

India tested its own nuclear devices, triggering what military experts see as a nuclear arms race in South Asia.

Musharraf denied he was an architect of last May's Muslim rebel offensive in Kashmir that led to the capture of several strategic peaks in the area, gains Pakistani-backed rebels had to abandon under international pressure.

The humiliating withdrawal is believed to have laid the groundwork for the subsequent ouster of Pakistan's democratically-elected Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, who is now facing trial on attempted murder and hijacking charges.

The Pakistani new ruler stopped short of calling for a new offensive in Kashmir but made clear his government intended to do nothing to stop a guerrilla war there.

"I'm not calling for Jihad (a holy war)," said Musharraf. "This is a natural outcome. Every Muslim around here is talking of jihad against India in Kashmir because Kashmir is not India. It is a disputed territory."

US President Bill Clinton will visit Bangladesh, India and Pakistan later this month to explore ways to improve security in the region and stave off a larger conflict over Kashmir.

But Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee ruled out any possibility of the US president playing a mediating role between India and Pakistan.

"There is no role for any third party, however well-intentioned," argued Vajpayee. "We would like to solve the problems bilaterally."

He also deplored Clinton's decision to go to Pakistan in the wake of a military coup there, saying such a visit "will be a disappointment to the Indian people."

Musharraf interpreted Clinton's decision to stop in Pakistan after his five-day visit to India as "a recognition of the importance that Pakistan has in the region and of the 52-year friendship we have with the United States."

It's also a recognition of the righteousness of our stand on Kashmir," opined the Pakistani ruler.

## UN urged to seek release of Kashmiris jailed in India

MUZAFFARABAD, Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Mar 12 : Hundreds of people called for UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to intervene and help secure release of Kashmiri leaders jailed in India here today, reports AFP.

Holding banners and placards condemning "state terrorism in Kashmir", the protesters called for withdrawal of Indian forces from the disputed region, witnesses said.

The multi-party protest was led by Sultan Mahmud Chaudhry, chief executive of the Pakistani-administered part of Kashmir, they said.

The participants marched up to the office of the United Nations Military Observers and delivered a memorandum calling upon the UN chief to take urgent note of "tyrannical acts of the Indian rulers."

It also urged Annan to seek immediate release of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders and other Kashmiris detained in Indian jails.

The rally in Muzaffarabad, the capital of the Pakistani-controlled northern third of Kashmir, followed a two-day strike observed in the Indian-held part of the Himalayan state over the continued detention of APHC leaders.

The APHC is an umbrella organisation of some two dozen

Kashmiri groups waging a campaign against Indian rule in Kashmir.

The Indian authorities arrested several top APHC leaders in November shortly after they boycotted elections in Kashmir. A decade old separatist campaign in the Indian held part of Kashmir has claimed more than 25,000 lives since 1989.

India blames Pakistan for fuelling the unrest. Islamabad denies the charge but admits extending political and diplomatic support to a "legitimate" Kashmiri struggle for self-determination.

India and Pakistan have fought two wars over Kashmir since independence in 1947.

## Blast at fireworks factory kills 33 in China

BEIJING, Mar 12 : An explosion at an unlicensed fireworks factory in eastern China killed 33 people and injured 10 others, prompting one of the owners to go on the run, state media reported today, says AFP.

Two of those injured in the Saturday morning explosion in Pingxiang city in Jiangxi province were in serious condition, the Xinhua news agency reported.

## Nepal-Bhutan refugee talks begin

KATHMANDU, Mar 12 : Talks between Nepal and Bhutan began here today to discuss the problem of 100,000 Bhutanese refugees who have been camped in Nepal since 1990, official sources said, reports AFP.

A seven-member official delegation headed by Bhutanese Foreign Secretary Ugen Tsering was received by the Nepalese Foreign Secretary Murari Raj Sharma on arrival here from Thimpu, Foreign Ministry sources said.

The first round of preliminary talks began later in the afternoon at the Nepalese Foreign Ministry, the official source said.

"We will be holding the talks on matters relating to the categorization of the 100,000 Bhutanese refugees taking shelter at the UNHCR-run camps at Morang and Jhapa districts in the lowland tropical far southeastern region of Nepal," Foreign Ministry sources said.

Nepal and Bhutan have been locked in dispute over the refugees, who fled Bhutan after a cultural drive by Bhutanese authorities launched in 1990.

The two countries disagree over how many of the refugees are genuine cases. Sunday's talks are aimed at forging an agreement to determine how many of the refugees should be sent back to Bhutan.

## Anti-India protest in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, Mar 12 : Six people were injured today when police broke up an anti-Indian protest march in Kashmir with batons and tear gas, witnesses said, reports AFP.

Police fired tear gas shells into a crowd of several hundred Kashmiris, who had poured on to the streets of the state summer capital Srinagar Sunday to protest the alleged murder by police of a freed militant.

Shouting "We want freedom" and "Allah is Great," the protesters carried the corpse of the slain former rebel and tried to reach the main commercial center here when police swung into action, injuring six people.

The relatives of the slain former rebel alleged he was arrested by the police on Saturday evening and his body returned to them on Sunday morning.

## Church burned down in Nigeria

LAGOS, Mar 12 : A church was burnt down by a group suspected to be Muslims in a northern Nigerian town today after police guards manning the building left, a witness said.

The Baptist Church at Gidnamadi, about 80 kilometers south of Sokoto was razed by the group immediately the police left, witness Sheu Usman told AFP by telephone. There were no reports of casualties.

## 5-hr visit

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nod to Bangladesh's recent ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, according to AFP.

That ratification was one small success in the Clinton administration's drive to get all of South Asia working with the United States against nuclear weapons proliferation.

Clinton will then travel to India, becoming the first US president to go there since President Jimmy Carter did 1978. The visit reflects the US administration's growing recognition of that country as a rising regional economic and political force.

The United States sees India as a key player in global affairs in the 21st century, and as a vital contributor to overall Asian regional peace and stability," Assistant US Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth has said.

Clinton will be meeting Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to discuss trade, terrorism advanced technologies and cooperation on environmental issues.

There are some areas where India and the United States don't see eye to eye.

India took other nuclear powers by surprise when it tested its own nuclear weapons in 1998. Its refusal to sign on to the CTBT has raised worries in Washington about the potential for disaster every time the conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir flares up.

"We have made some progress toward greater understanding on these issues, but much work remains to be done," according to Inderfurth.

## Wheat output

From Page 1

during the last two decades and stood at around two million tonnes in 1999.

He also said cultivation of wheat has some advantages over that of rice. It is cost effective.

more eco-friendly and needs less irrigation. Wheat is more nutritious, he added.

Dr Meisner said per hectare wheat production in Bangladesh is higher than that in Pakistan and Nepal.

In this regard, Bangladesh is next to China and India. The national average of wheat production here is 2.2 tonnes per hectare, he pointed out.

"Traditionally Pakistan had a big investment in wheat production whereas it is a new phenomenon in Bangladesh," Meisner said.

Responding to a question the CIMMYT chief said the government should increase the investment in agriculture sector significantly, particularly in research.

The government's procurement policies are good but availability of fertilisers, machines and credit should be ensured for the farmers, he said.

Agriculture research should be directed towards the need of the farmers, not academic purposes. The decision makers should keep in mind that food does not come from the super markets, but it comes from the farmers, Reeves noted.

Investment in agriculture research can also come from international financial organisations like World Bank, US-AID and DFID, he added.

CIMMYT played a vital role in popularising wheat cultivation in the country. Through its local office and in cooperation with Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI), it provided various types of research and technological support and training facilities for improvement of wheat production in the country.

Reeves also emphasised the need for increasing the production of Maize in the country. To increase food production in the country, maize is another area which can get importance, he said.

About 70,000 tonnes of maize are produced annually in Bangladesh.

Maize also could be cultivated on commercial basis for poultry and livestock food. CIMMYT innovated some maize seeds with better protein quality, Reeves said.

## Chechen refugees mob Council of Europe team

SEVERNY REFUGEE CAMP, Russia, Mar 12 : Shouting "troops out," "Putin is a killer", hundreds of refugees mobbed a visiting Council of Europe delegation today, reports AFP.

Interior ministry guards had to force their way through the throng to allow delegation chief Lord Frank Judd to struggle to meet residents in this tented city in Ingushetia.

Some 30 children held aloft cardboard placards screaming "Stop the genocide" and "Maskadov is our president."

Orchestrated by a group of at times hysterical women, the children, in their early teens and below, tracked the delegation wherever they went.

Delegation members said that although the protest was clearly orchestrated, it reflected genuine concerns among the camp residents.

The crowd surged forward to talk to Judd, causing alarm among bodyguards as the

refugees packed tightly. "We are not against Russia or the Russians. We have lived together for centuries," said engineer, Musa Magomedov.

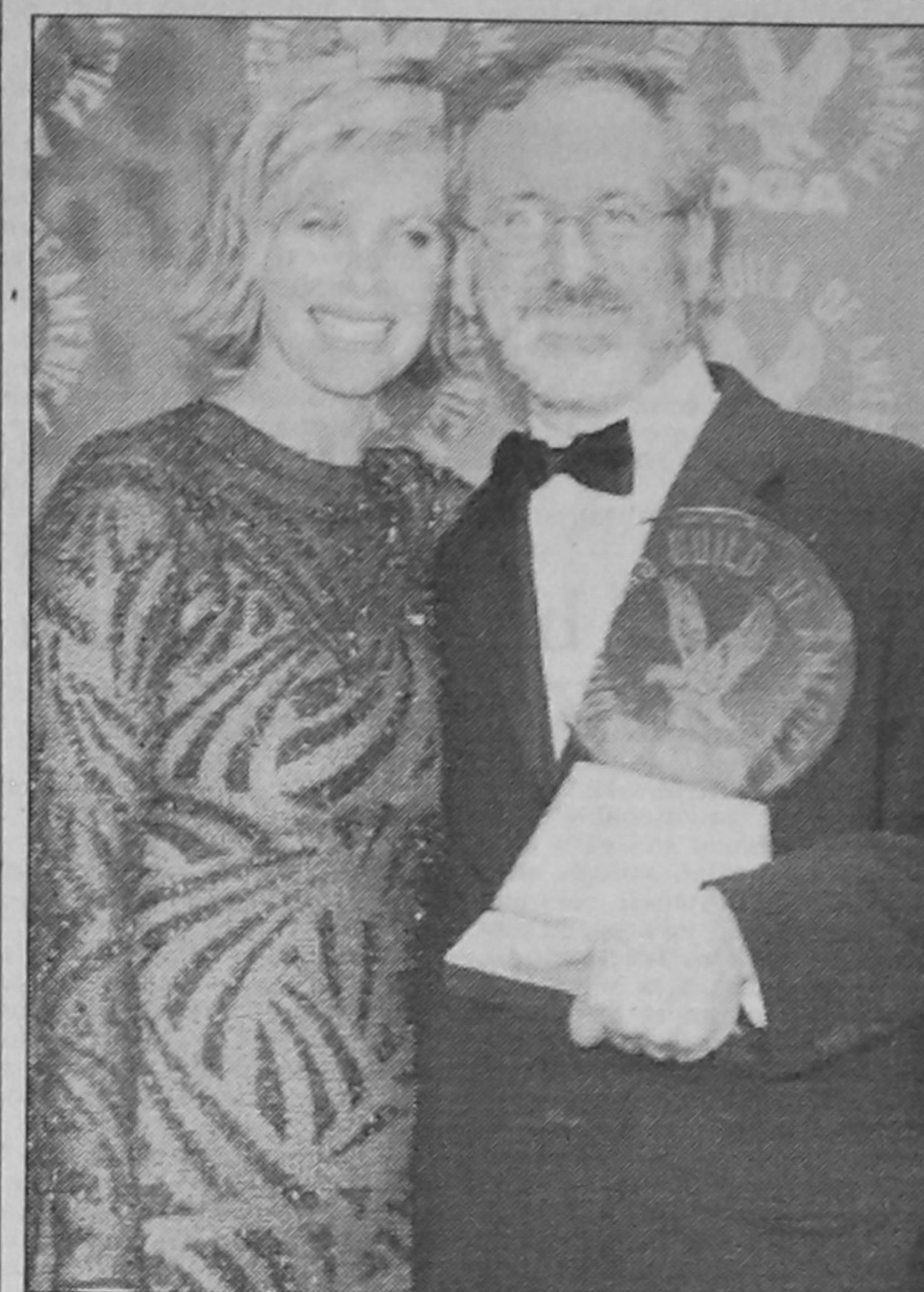
"Please tell them in the West to let us live as we want to live," he added.

Judd dipped into one of the tents to talk with some of the 9,680 refugees the camp commandant said were now housed at the site.

Council of Europe delegates said they were impressed with the order at the camp, saying minimum needs -- housing, heat and food -- appeared to have been met.

However, refugees reported an unofficial black market existed at the camp, one delegate member said, with residents able to obtain extra food and other items.

A blanket cost 500 roubles (17 dollars), a fortune for people who fled their houses with next to nothing.



US film director Steven Spielberg (R) stands next to his wife, actress Kate Capshaw (L), as he poses with the Lifetime Achievement Award at the 52nd Annual Directors Guild of America (DGA) Awards in Los Angeles Saturday.

— AFP photo

## Putin a man with clear vision, says Tony Blair

LONDON, Mar 12: British Prime Minister Tony Blair praised Russian's Acting president Vladimir Putin as an "impressive" man with a clear vision of where he wants to take his country, reports Reuters.

Blair told reporters on his flight back to London late on Saturday after a day of talks in St Petersburg that he believed the former spy, who remains a relatively unknown figure internationally after his swift rise to prominence, was a "pretty quick learner."

"He was highly intelligent and with a focused view of what he wants to achieve in Russia," he told BBC Television.

Blair is the first Western leader to travel to Russia to meet Putin, who is favourite to win presidential elections in two weeks, and officials say the British prime minister will brief other world leaders on his first impressions.

Blair, who likes to portray his own government as a force

for modernisation, said he saw similarities with Putin, who like Blair is in his late 40s and former law student.

"He wants to modernise his country. He wants to build it for the future. He wants to take it into the 21st century. So there's a lot of things, perhaps, we have in common," Blair said in a separate interview with Sky Television.

Both leaders exchanged warm words at a news conference midway through their talks, although Putin, whose popularity stems from his uncompromising stance on Russia's campaign in Chechnya, reiterated his staunch defence of the military offensive there.

Blair, who avoided any public criticism of Russia's actions in the province, said he believed that after his talks Russia would increase access for international organisations who what to investigate reports of atrocities by Russian troops in the province.

## The Crusades' legacy of antagonism

VATICAN CITY, Mar 12 : The Crusades, for which Pope John Paul II sought forgiveness today, were a series of military expeditions launched by Christians in western Europe to recover Jerusalem and the Biblical lands from Muslim domination, reports AFP.

Launched by Pope Urban II at Clermont, France, in 1095, they raged sporadically but intensely for two centuries and created an antagonism between Christianity and Islam whose legacy lasted well into the modern era.

They at first inspired immense enthusiasm among all classes, with nobles and peasants banding together to stream eastwards and take on the Turks, who had recently displaced the Arabs as the dominant force in the region.

Against expectations they recaptured Jerusalem in July 1099 and established several crusader states that clung on until the end of the 13th century.

The Crusades are generally considered to number eight in total: the first, from 1095 to 1101; the second 1145-47, the third, led by Philip Augustus and Richard the Lionheart, 1188-92; the fourth, during which Constantinople was

taken, 1204; the fifth, 1217; the sixth, 1239; the seventh, 1249-52; and the eighth, 1270.

However there were several other important expeditions during this period, and other lesser ventures took place after 1291 when the Latin Christians were finally expelled from their bases in Syria.

Coming at a period of significant social, economic and institutional growth in western Europe, the Crusades brought out the best and the worst in those who took part, valour and abnegation mixing with cruelty, greed and vandalism.

Confused in their objectives and often bloody in execution, they had profound social, religious and political consequences, leaving their mark on the western imagination then and now.

There was considerable loss of life, but Europe profited in various ways from its contacts with the Muslim world, not least from the fact that it entered into sustained contact with the ideas and technology of a civilisation more advanced than its own.

However the Crusades so embittered the Greek church that any prospect of reunion of the eastern and western churches was ruled out forever.