Common religion not enough to ensure OIC unity: Laraki

Economic, trade benefits needed to safeguard the body

KUALA LUMPUR. June 30 Members of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) need more than a shared religion to ensure unity and must work towards building a Muslim trade bloc, the OIC chief

There have to be common interests. Cooperation in the economic and trade spheres can enhance unity." Ezeddine Laraki told AFP in an interview on the sidelines of this week's meeting of OIC foreign minis-

Laraki, a Moroccan whose four-year term expires December 31, warned Muslim countries that the emergence of dommant global economic blocs would have negative conse-

quences on Islamic countries. "Whether we like it or not, we have to be committed to the idea of a Muslim bloc," he said. speaking in Arabic through a all.

Solomon Islands

elects new PM

tion leader Mannasseh So-

gavare was elected the new

prime minister of the Solomon

Islands today and pledged to re-

solve the Pacific nation's polit-

address the crists that has been

affecting this nation this last

ted to bring Solomon Islands

into national unity and recon-

Eni Lapli emerged with So-

gavare from a two-hour meeting

to announce he had won the

vote 23-21, ABC radio reported.

Iranians vote

again amid

tension

of the Iranian capital began

voting again today in the sec-

ond round of legislative polls,

amid political tension after a

spate of arrests against re-

formist lawyers and intellectu-

ers, are vying for two seats

whose results were cancelled af-

ter the first round of voting

February 18, in which reform-

ers received massive enderse-

ment throughout the country

and overturned a conservative

majority in parliament in a

Mohammed Khatami.

in the early morning.

major victory for President

Polling stations, set up in

schools and mosques, opened at

9 a.m. (10:30 BST) and are

scheduled to close at 7 p.m.

(20:30 BST). Turnout was ex-

pected to be low and the polling

stations were practically empty

Congress rejects

Basu's appeal for

support to form

CMC board

Congress vesterday rejected the

appeal of Chief Minister Jyoti Basu to support the Left Front

as the Trinamool Congress ex-

uded confidence to form the board in the hung results to the 141-ward Calcutta Municipal

Corporation (CMC), reports PTI.

for support, state Congress

President ABA Ghani Khan

Chowdhury told newsmen here

that his party would not help

the CPI-M-led front to form the

watching the situation, the

WBPCC Chief said that Tri-

namool Congress had not ap-

proached his party for support.

We will consider if they seek

Chinese PM meets

German Chancellor

BERLIN, June 30 : Chinese

Prime Minister Zhu Rongji held

talks here today with German

Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder

at the start of an official four-

Zhu, received with military

He arrived Thursday from

Bulgaria, where he had vowed to

rebuild and strengthen trade

with his country's former

communist ally, which like

China is also rapidly trans-

forming its economy to embrace

honours, is on his first official visit to Germany as head of gov-

our support." he said.

day visit, reports AFP.

the West.

Stating that Congress was

Turning down Basu's appeal

CALCUTTA. June 30:

Four candidates, all reform-

als, reports AFP.

TEHRAN, June 30: Residents

19 months," Sogavare said.

"My new government will

"My government is commit-

Governor General Sir John

ical crisis, reports AFP.

ciliation."

SYDNEY, June 30 : Opposi-

and trade cooperation are very much in need today to safeguard the Muslim organisation.

Laraki had told delegates Tuesday that global trade liberalisation "constitutes an environment which is fraught with

The OIC is regrettably on the weak side. But there is power in unity and Islamic states have to cooperate and show solidarity," he said, calling for steps towards an Islamic common market.

Draft resolutions to be considered later Friday reiterate the "urgent need" for steps towards economic integration "with the ultimate objective of establishing an Islamic common market.

They also call for strategies to minimise the adverse effects of globalisation and urge that its benefits be equally shared by

bers currently accounted for less then 10 percent of total world trade, blaming tariff bar-

Thursday, fellow Moroccan Abdelouhed Belkziz, will be under pressure to reform the 31-yearold body to strengthen its relevance in the modern world and sort out its precarious finances. The Asian diplomat said the

politics. "It continues to harp on old resolutions over and over again. The war between Iraq and Kuwait is over more than a decade ago but you still see resolutions on it."

Another diplomat urged a greater focus. 'It covers dozens of issues from poverty to minorities is-

produced and nobody reads them. We are ineffective," he

sues. Volumes of reports are

heads of member states to exchange views. This is an approach which has helped us to Laraki's successor chosen on overcome many problems which would have otherwise erupted," he said

The OIC allows ministers and

But he admitted that the OIC was constrained by its constitution and lack of resources.

"Our charter does not allow us to play the same role like the OIC pays too much attention to United Nations. We do not have troops like the UN to be sent to trouble spots.

> Resolutions are not binding on member states, he said. Laraki also acknowledged that he had failed to make i mandatory for members to pay their subscriptions.

> "If members want to see the organisation fulfill its obligations they should pay up."

Laraki said the present annual budget of 11 million dollars was insufficient, especially since "we only get slightly less than half of the money.

Lawmakers give | Lankan SC rules tight sack governors

MOSCOW, June 30: Russian lawmakers today approved a controversial law allowing President Vladimir Putin to sack regional governors and dismiss regional assemblies. reports AFP.

Under the law, Putin will be able to dismiss regional chiefs once a court has ruled that they have broken federal laws.

The measure was approved on third reading by 339 to nine,

with three abstentions.

MQM activist murder Troops called out in Hyderabad

KARACHI, June 30 Paramilitary and police were called out today in Hyderabad, southern Pakistan, to control protesters angry at the murder of an activist with the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) ethnic party, officials said, reports AFP.

Protestors earlier blocked roads with burnt tyres and demanded shopkeepers close their doors as a mark of respect for Gulzar Ahmed, who the MQM said was gunned down by police on Thursday.

"In the past few months intelligence agencies and police have arrested our activists on false charges and we seriously suspect their hand in our partyman's murder," said central MQM leader Nasreen Jalil.

Gulzar was in charge of the party's unit in Hyderabad and considered an important figure in the city.

The protestors demanded the arrest of four policemen they said were behind the killing but police denied the allegations.

Fountain of youth may not be out of reach

SHANGHAI, June 30: The fountain of youth, the age-old dream, may not be out of reach, reports Reuters.

Chinese medical researchers say they have found herbal medicines effective in slowing down the inexorable process of

Dr. Shen Ziyin and his associates are putting traditional Chinese prescriptions for boosting the immune system through vigorous clinical tests and DNA research.

Trained in western medicine and a member of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shen has spent four decades on basic research integrating Chinese and western medical theories. Western scientists say the accelerated demise of T cells the cells which regulate immuof ageing, but there is still no

the process, Shen said. older people produce more T cells with a molecule known as Fas, or CD95. Another molecule, known as a ligand, groups Fas molecules together and leads to a process in which a cell self-destructs.

Shen said the only way known to decelerate the production of T cells with Fas is by slowing the whole body's metabolism through minimal calorie intake.

22 for allegedly violating the day and will sue the censor to recover losses incurred during President Kumaratunga the five weeks the paper was out slapped a blanket censorship The latest Supreme Court down by her administration uson both local and foreign media ruling will also have a direct after invoking draconian emerimpact on the Tamil-language gency regulations when Tamil Tiger guerrillas mounted fero-Uthayan newspaper which was

censorship illegal

Sunday Leader editor Lasan-

tha Wickrematunga said they

were pleased to have taken the

initiative to challenge the cen-

sorship imposed by Ku-

by the censor last month.

maratunga on May 4

the judgement.

violating the censorship. Two days before the day ordered the state to pay 100.000 rupees (1.250 dollars) in legal costs to the Leader Publications group, whose Sunday Leader and its Sinhalese-lan-

Uthayan, published in the northern peninsula of Jaffna. television journalist here for allegedly breaking the censorguage sister papers were sealed ship.

sealed on May 20 for allegedly

Police armed with automatic weapons entered the home of the private Telshan Network (TNL) news director Namal Perera at midnight and questioned him at length about a report on a bomb attack in the island's

"The Supreme Court with The government in a statethis latest judgement has ment Thursday had said that it stalled the government's march was contemplating easing some towards a dictatorship," Wickrematunga said shortly after of the emergency regulations under which security forces are He said his newspaper will sweeping powers to arrest and start publishing again on Sun-

detain suspects. Four days ago, President Kumaratunga reduced by more than half the six month ban of two Leader Publications shut

ing emergency regulations. Several other local and foreign media organisations have protested the censorship and the emergency regulations used to order the sealing of newspapers and harass journalists.

The censorship was lifted was sealed, police questioned a from Colombo-based foreign correspondents on June 5. but local media continued to be subject to censorship.

500 feared dead in Spice Islands' ferry disaster

JAKARTA, June 30: Nearly istrator in Tahuna on Sangir 500 people, most of them refugees fleeing sectarian bloodletting in Indonesia's Spice Islands, were feared dead today after an overloaded ferry was lost in stormy waters, reports AFP.

COLOMBO, June 30 : Sri

Lanka's Supreme Court today

ruled the tight censorship im-

posed by President Chandrika

country's civil war was illegal.

and ordered the state to com-

pensate an anti-government

newspaper group, reports AFP.

The Supreme Court ruled that

the chief censor. Ariya Rubas-

inghe, did not have the author-

Ity to censor news reports or

close the anti-government Sun

regulations.

day Leader newspaper on May

cious attacks in the north of the

The three-judge bench Fri-

Kumaratunga in response to the

More than 24 hours after the Cahaya Bahari (Light of the Ocean) sent its first SOS signal, many and local rescue boats dispatched to hunt for it had found no trace of the vessel.

ing nearly twice as many people as it was authorised to hold. had been travelling from Halmahera island, scene of some of the worst incidents in the wave of Muslim-Christian violence that have plagued the Maluku islands for the last 18 months, to Manado on the northern tip of Sulawesi.

be found.

Island, said: "We have the coordinates of the ship's last position but when the rescue ships arrived there, it was nowhere to "The sea was reported to be had sent out a distress call.

pretty rough, it is around two to three meters high," Ering told AFP by phone from Sangir. some 70 km northwest of where the wooden-hulled ferry was believed to have sunk.

The state news agency An-The ferry, which was carry- tara reported that one of the seven rescue ships, three of them from the navy, had discovered a life vest floating some 60 miles from the ship's last reported site. But it was not possible to determine whether the vest came from the Cahaya Ba-

At Manado hundreds of distraught refugees assembled. Musa Ering, the port admin- frantic for news of their rela-

Ering said communications with the Cahava Bahari had been lost on Thursday night. hours after the ship, which was also carrying a cargo of copra,

"There hasn't been any contact with the ship since late last night because their only spare battery for the sea radio, which is their only means of communication, is out," he said.

In its distress call on Thursday, the ship reported that its engines had shut down and the vessel was taking on water.

Earlier figures had put the number of refugees aboard the ferry, which was licensed to carry 270 people, at 400. But Bitting port administrator, Navy Lieutenant Sianturi said that there were 492 passengers and crew aboard.

Mugabe vows to seize 800 more farms gabe said late Thursday two saw a powerful opposition mus-

babwe President Robert Mugabe has vowed to press ahead with nity and control the production | the seizure of over 800 farms, as of antibodies - is a key cause white farmers reported bands of roving war veterans descending prescription for slowing down on their land and giving them two days to leave, reports AFP.

Researchers have found that Speaking late Thursday in veterans of the 1970s liberation Farmers meanwhile rean interview on national tele- war. vision, Mugabe said: "We have given notices to the farmers during this first phase, notices that expire on July 3, that is Monday next week and we begin the process of acquisition thereafter.

> The pledge came on the heels of watershed parliamentary elections last weekend in which Mugabe for the first time since independence two decades ago

cle its way into parliament. Mugabé had based his elec-

tion campaign on a land-forlandless-blacks ticket, encouraging the often-violent occupation of hundreds of whiteowned farms by squatters led by cratic Change (MDC).

were killed and hundreds of farm workers beaten in the accompanying violence.

But his party nonetheless, saw its parliamentary majority

greatly diminished. On June 2, the government earmarked 804 farms for acqui-

sition. The farmers had exactly one month to appeal. "It's going to happen," Mu-

PLO to debate proclamation

of an independent state

scraped only a narrow victory in the elections over the newlyformed Movement for Demoported bands of roving veterans

days after his fuling Zimbabwe

Africall National Union 1 Pa-

triotic Front (ZANU-PF)

At least four white farmers descending on their farms and giving them until Sunday to leave, the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) said. A top war veteran has ap-

peared in court in the southwestern town of Zvishavane on kidnap and murder charges, after allegedly ordering former guerrillas to abduct and brutalise three MDC supporters earlier this month.

ANKARA. June 30: Parlia- early 1990s to finance her True

ment cleared two former prime | Path Party, Only 145 of 550

ministers of corruption charges . lawmakers - voted - to indict

in what was considered a test of Ciller, far short of the 276

Turkey's campaign to weed out necessary to send her to the

liament cleared Mesut Yilmaz ing the sale of lucrative mobile-

corruption and strengthen its

bid to join the European Union.

early today, and a similar vote

decided against trying Tansu

Ciller on Thursday.

A vote in the Turkish par-

Some analysts believe that

political horsetrading helped

Ciller, Turkey's first and only

female prime minister, and

Yilmaz, a member of Turkey's

governing coalition, deflect the

phoning 71.000 dollar from a

covert intelligence fund in the

Ciller was accused of si-

Hostages at Disney resort freed: A man who took two people hostage -- including his four-year-old son -- in a hotel room at the Walt Disney World resort in Or lando, Florida released them unharmed early Friday, a police spokesman said, AFP reports from Miami.

Bismark Rodriguez, 39, who took the hostages late Thursday inside a room at the Boardwalk Inn, surrendered at 12:35 a m. (10:35 BST) Friday, after talking to a female negotiator, according to Angelo Nieves, a spokesman for the Orange County Sher-

Explosion in N Ireland: Police were on Friday investigating an explosion that happened overnight near Newry, southwest of Belfast, after an anonymous call to local media, AFP reports from Newry.

No one was injured and there was no damage reported, said a spokesman for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Nepali King in UK for check-up:
King Birendra of Nepal left here for Dubai Friday afternoon on

his way to London for his annual medical check-up, state radio said. AFP reports from Kathmandu. The king was accompanied by Queen Aishwarya, Prince Nirajan and other royal palace senior officials. Before his departure, the king appointed a Council of Royal Representatives under the chairmanship of Crown Prince Dipendra to take over

duties in his absence, the radio added.



Indonesian police block the Muslim students as they try to approach the US Embassy in Jakarta yesterday during a demonstration to protest potential interference by US in the sectarian fighting in the Maluku Islands. Some 100 members of the United Muslim Student Action Front (KAMMI) battled with police in front of the embassy's gate and at least one student and a policeman were - AFP photo injured.

HR Watch urges Jakarta to control troops in Malukus

JAKARTA, June 30 : Human Rights Watch today urged Indonesian authorities to suspend from service and ship out all military troops who have taken sides in the bloody Muslim-Christian fighting in the Maluku Islands, reports AFP. "Soldiers have broken ranks

ruption endemic to the political

system. The government's ef-

forts to confront official mis-

conduct gained urgency with the

EU's decision to make Turkey a

candidate for admission in De-

tant to deal with corruption."

said Bulent Aliriza of the Wash-

ington-based Center for Strate-

gic and International Studies.

"Turkey has proved reluc-

But that campaign seems to

Members of Prime Minister

Bulent Ecevit's party feared the

government would collapse if

Yilmaz, a key coalition ally.

had been indicted. But fighting

for Yilmaz may have tarnished

Ecevit's reputation as an honest

cember.

be faltering.

politician.

and joined the fighting as partisans, and, as a result, Indonesian troops right now have virtually no credibility in areas where a neutral force is most desperately needed," the New York-based rights group said in a statement received here. "Soldiers suspected of break-

ing ranks should be immediately suspended and removed from the conflict zones," it said.

"There's an urgent need for a neutral force to intervene to stop the bloodshed," it said adding that witnesses had reported direct participation by rogue troops in the fighting.

Christian soldiers supported Christian groups and Muslim soldiers supporting the Muslim side, it said, adding the reports also said army-issue weapons and ammunition had "found their way into the

hands of partisans." "The declaration of a civil state of emergency will mean nothing if the

security forces themselves aren't neutral," the statement

bate the upcoming proclamation of an independent state, a decision they insist has already been taken, regardless of the developments of the peace process, reports AFP. Zakariya al-Agha, a senior member of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's political group Fatah, said the meeting of the

City Sunday and Monday to de-

Palestine Liberation Organisation's Central Council will focus on technical and tactical preparations for statehood. Peace negotiations have so far failed to bring Israel and the

GAZA CITY. June 30 : Pales- Palestinians closer ahead of a tinian leaders gather in Gaza September 13 deadline for a permanent settlement and US Secretary of State Madeline Albright was unable this week to secure a three-way summit with US President Bill Clinton to bridge the substantial remain-

> Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who delayed a declaration of statehood in May 1999 because of Israeli elections as well as US and European pressures, vowed again last Sunday to unilaterally proclaim a Palestinian state if there is no peace deal by September.

move would kill the peace process and spark violent confrontations. Press reports say it would even annex all occupied land still under its control. "The Palestinian leadership

and the Central Council will implement a Palestinian state on September 13. It is a Palestinian decision that cannot be overturned," al-Agha said. "The Palestinians cannot

live under open dates." he An advance copy of the meet-

ing's agenda said the delegates would "debate the political situation of the interim stage, in-

Taiwan president rejects 'one China' principle

President Chen Shui-bian reit- interpretations of one China. erated today his rejection of the one China" principle on Beijing's terms, vowing to defend sovereignty, reports AFP.

proposal that the long-time rivals should cultivate a favourable climate of goodwill to jointly work on a future one China.

"From Beijing's view, one China refers to the People's Republic of China (PRC) and that Taiwan is part of it. This can not be accepted by the Taiwanese people," Chen said.

"We must not fall into the trap," he told William J. Flynn. chairman of National Committee on American Foreign Policy a private US-based think-tank. Chen pledged to "follow the people's choice to defend the country's dignity and sovereignty," and urged the public "not to over interpret" his remarks earlier this week on cross-strait ties.

Chen said Tuesday that he October discussions," said Tsai was willing to accept a compromise reached in October Mainland Afairs Council 1992 that Beijing and Taipei Thursday.

TAIPEI, June 30: Taiwan were allowed to have their own

"There is no need for the two sides to contact or sit down to talk if Taiwan is part of the the island's dignity and PRC," Chen said, adding that only Taiwanese can decide on But he remained firm on his the solutions of cross-strait disputes.

The unwritten 1992 consensus, which Beijing has repeatedly denied, is referred to by Taipei as "one China, different interpretations" and described by Chen as "agree to disagree."

Taiwan says "one China" refers to the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan's official name) established in the mainland in 1911. Beijing insists "one China"

is the PRC which was formed in

drove the ROC's nationalist troops to Taiwan at the end of a civil war. "The so-called 'one China. different interpretations' is the only language our side uses to describe the process of the 1992

Yin-wen, chairman of Taiwan's



Maoist guerillas of the Peoples War Group hold a meeting on June 26 at a village in the north eastern Indian state of Bihar. The guerillas vowed revenge for the recent massacre in the village of Mianpur of 34 people including 20 women and six children from the lower caste Hindus in a revenge attack by suspected members of a banned private army

- AFP photo

Taliban free 46 prisoners KABUL, June 30: The ruling

Taliban freed 46 prisoners from a jail in western Afghanistan calling the release a "good will" offering to their enemies, the state-run radio reported Friday. The Taliban's Radio Shariat

opposition, led by ousted president Burhanuddin Rabbani and his military chief Ahmed Shah Massood The release follows a reciprocal visit by representatives of Afghanistan's warring factions to fails in Taliban territory and in northern strongholds of the

anti-Taliban alliance,

said the prisoners were all

members of the northern-based

An Asian diplomat said "The benefits from economic trade between the 56 OIC mem-Laraki disagreed, saving:



Youth Congress activists are hit with police water cannon as they attempt to break through police barricades during a protest against Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's BJP government near the parliament in New Delhi yesterday. The demonstrators demanded that the pro-BJP Hindu militant organisations RSS and Bajrang Dal be banned, as the Congress Party had blamed these organisations for the recent attacks on Christians and churches in India. - AFP photo

Turkish parliament clears two

ex-PMs of corruption charges

Parliament later voted

against sending Yilmaz before

the Supreme Court for approv-

phone licenses at artificially

low prices. Only 151 deputies

voted to send Yilmaz to the

Yilmaz's premiership ended

Parliament must review al-

Many Turks consider cor-

Supreme Court, while 190 law-

in 1998 amid allegations of ties

legations of wrongdoing by se-

nior officials before sending the

cases to the Supreme Court.

makers rejected the motion.

with mobsters.

country's Supreme Court.