Lankan opposition stage protest march against govt

AFP, Colombo

Tens of thousands of opposition activists marched to the Sri Lankan capital Colombo Friday for a noisy rally protesting high living costs and demanding the resignation of the

The opposition United National Party (UNP) said Friday's meeting was the launching pad for a concerted campaign to force President Chandrika Kumaratunga to step

"This the beginning of a struggle to get President Kumaratunga to go home," UNP deputy leader Gamini Athukorale said after supporters set off fire crackers which reverberated outside the Colombo Town Hall area for several minutes.

Even as opposition leaders addressed the mass rally, others set fire to an empty coffin symbolising the funeral of a the local rupee which the central bank last month allowed to "free float," effectively depreciat-

"Even death is taxed," shouted activists of the right-wing UNP who ironically carried placards with leftists slogans to denounce Kumaratunga's party which won a second term in controversial polls in

Opposition activists began their five-day march to the capital from the central town of Kandy, 72 miles (112 kilometres) north-east of here amid fears that they will be attacked

by ruling party supporters.

substantial crowds.

However, witnesses saw large crowds taking part in the rally here prompting police to seal off several roads and step up security in the

Wickremesinghe joined the final stage of the rally near the capital, riding in the back of a pickup truck.

Key UNP leaders wore bulletproof jackets and were closely guarded by heavily-armed policemen. Officers had ordered bodyguards to wear uniforms so that they could be easily distinguished from

flying overhead as the procession made its way to the Town Hall with hundreds of thousands of people lining up the route.

The main theme of the demonstration was the rising living costs and the "free float" of the rupee.

Putin to crown diplomatic push in Asia with North Korean summit

Russian President Vladimir Putin is set to crown a diplomatic offensive in Asia with a summit, possibly in April, with North Korean leader Kim Jong-II following visits to South Korea and Vietnam.

The reclusive Stalinist dictator

that the "timing is still being discould yet be made

seeking to develop a dialogue with the isolated communist regime, in part to show the United States and China that it can play a role in easing tensions on the divided Korean

foreign policy doctrine aimed at challenging US hegemony in world affairs by boosting Russia's influence in Asia, which has waned considerably since the 1991 col-

Kim he is clearly sending a message to Seoul, the United States and whoever in Asia is watching the Korean situation that Russia is a player, that there are certain things that Russia can do that no one else can do." said Dmitry Trenin from the Carnegie Moscow Centre think-

North Korea last July, becoming only the second foreign head of state to visit the struggling isolated country after South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung's June

That trip put Putin in the spotlight

FROM PAGE 12

Some alarmed people rushed from their temporary homes, but 15year-old Suresh Keshunda said he wasn't frightened. "Now we are living in tents. So nothing will happen," he said.

aftershocks of magnitudes measuring between 3 and 4. More than 230 aftershocks have

rocked the region since the 7.7 magnitude earthquake, India's worst tremor in half a century.

Residents across Guiarat felt the quake Thursday night, and many who feared their buildings would collapse rushed into the street and spent the night outside. The jammed state telephone lines while trying to call loved ones in the after-

Some 24,000 soldiers have been deployed in Gujarat to search for bodies, clear debris and help hundreds of thousands of injured and homeless people. Many survivors of the quake are still sleeping outside under plastic sheets, awaiting tents and other relief supplies.

The Home Ministry says at least 17,000 people died and unofficial estimates say the toll is likely to reach 30,000, with many victims still buried under the rubble. Bhuj was among the hardest-hit towns, with whole neighborhoods flattened by the tremor.

Gen. NC Vij, a military commander supervising the relief operation, said the task of removing the rubble was "Herculean.

President Kumaratunga ordered her supporters not to disrupt the opposition rally and warned that any violence against the UNP will only make "heroes" of them. She said the opposition was unable to muster

Opposition leader Ranil

Air force helicopters were seen

The government said it was forced to allow the local currency to float freely against other currencies in a bid to save the country's dwindling foreign exchange reserves, which had dropped by 45 percent in

just ahead of a G8 Summit of the

world's leading industrial democra-

cies in Japan, although a North

Korean offer to abandon its missile

programme announced by Russia

appeared set to follow suit just

before leaving office on January 20,

but his Pyongyang visit never took

Following the election of

Republican President George W.

Indian police

criminal

AFP, New Delhi

told AFP Friday.

arrest 1st cyber

Indian police have made their first-

ever arrests under a new law aimed

at tackling cyber-crime, an official

missioner of police for cyber crime,

said his force detained two people

who hacked into the website

www.gotonextjob.com and posted a

message saying the site was closed

address for the website where

police eventually tracked them

The hackers left a contact

due to non-payment of bills.

down and arrested them

Rajan Bhagat, assistant com-

US President Bill Clinton

at the time failed to materialise.

will visit Moscow in April for talks with Putin, ITAR-TASS news agency quoted an informed source in the Russian foreign ministry as

Bush, who has advocated a tougher A Kremlin spokeswoman conline toward Moscow, the Russian firmed that talks were under way leadership is determined to with Pyongyang on a summit but advance its foreign interests more aggressively, analysts say. "Putin is after economic benefits cussed" and that no announcement

and wants to put Russia back on the The visit would have enormous political and strategic map of Asia,' significance for Russia, which is commented Trenin "Russia is seeking to expand its ties with South Korea while at the same time becoming active in the north." he added.

Putin is to visit South Korea on peninsula. February 27 and 28 before heading Last year Putin unveiled a new off for an official trip to Vietnam, the Kremlin told AFP on Friday.

lapse of the Soviet Union. "When Putin talks to the northern

Putin made a historic visit to summit in Pvongvang.

25 injured

Bhachau.

Gayebana janaza FROM PAGE 12 Mohammad Abu Zafar, Maidul Islam and Jamaat-e-Islami Amir The quake was followed by 10 Motiur Rahman Nizami. Kamaruzzaman, Ali Ahsan Muzaheed and IOJ leader

> among others. After the janaza, the leaders and activists of the alliance also brought out a mourning procession in the city. The procession ended in front of the

Mohiuddin attended the janaja,

City lacks

FROM PAGE 1

tion of a new one costs about Tk 50 lakh, sources said. Lack of farsightedness of the authorities concerned is causing the huge loss, he alleged.

DCC officials however said they are shifting the three footbridges as those are lying almost unused for the last few months due to change in density of traffic in the last four

Textbooks

FROM PAGE 1 publishers. However it did not seek permission from the NCTB for this.

Earlier, Pustaka had sold allotment letters for 14 books to five printers and publishers, mostly engaged in printing notebooks which is banned.



The Dhaka International Trade Fair drew huge crowds yesterday on the first day of the weekend.

Syria accuses Sharon of trying to destroy peace

AFP, Damascus

An official Syrian newspaper on Friday accused Israeli Prime Minister-elect Ariel Sharon of trying to destroy the Middle East peace process but called on Washington to help restore it.

Sharon's statements in the hours following his victory did not surprise anyone. The prime minister-elect wants not only to put sticks in wheels but to destroy the peace process," said al-Baath, the newspaper of Syria's ruling party.

"Syria will only sign a true peace treaty that restores Arabs their rights," it said. Sharon during his campaign

declared the Middle East peace

process, as started in 1993 in Oslo, dead, and ruled out returning to Syria the Golan Heights, which Israel has occupied since 1967. "The new American administration of George W. Bush could be among the first to bring peace, if it adopts a neutral position and works

actively to apply international resolutions and make Israel restore Arab rights," Al-Baath said. The newspaper stressed "the importance of the role of the United States, the first sponsors of the peace process," and called on Washington to stop Sharon from

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said Wednesday he was ready to negotiate with the Sharon government if it agreed to "carry through the conditions for peace"

moving the peace process back-

Negotiations between Syria and the outgoing government of Ehud Barak broke down in January 2000 with Damascus demanding a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan.

Immigration on agenda at Franco-British summit

The leaders of France and Britain met Friday in the mediaeval southern French town of Cahors for an annual summit focussing on illegal immigration and European relations possible to their country of origin. with the new administration in Washington.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair flew in from London leading a delegation comprising four other minisinterior and transport -- for a day of talks hosted by French President Jacques Chirac and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin.

Separate bilateral meetings in the morning were followed by lunch in a 14th century wine-cellar in the town centre, and a plenary session in the afternoon.

British officials said the main focus was on Europe's worsening problem of asylum-seekers, with discussion centring on proposals outlined by British Home Secretary Jack Straw in Stockholm Thursday to limit the 500,000 immigrants estimated to be entering the EU illegally every year. The two governments were

expected to announce a new "Cross-Channel Commission," an informal body whose task would be to tighten security at French channel ports -principally Calais -- from where thousands of migrants seek to cross to Britain by ferry and rail-tunnel. Britain has Europe's highest

number of asylum-seekers - 76,000 were recorded last year -- and with elections approaching Biair's Laboui government is under mounting pressure to take action to stem the

Straw's proposals included reformulating the 1951 United

Nations convention on the right to asylum, drawing up a list of nations deemed "safe" from where asylum applications would automatically be rejected, and a system for processing would-be migrants as near as

A further suggestion that would permit British police to send illegal immigrants back across the Channel as soon as they were detected on British soil has been scotched by ters -- defence, foreign affairs. France as a breach of existing international obligations.

A French official said the morning's discussions between Chirac and Blair had centred on European integration -- with the French president speaking of his vision of a "federation of nation-states" -- and relations between the projected European Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) and NATO.

Comments at the weekend by the new US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld that the force risked undermining NATO have prompted guick reassurances, and the French official said Chirac had emphasised that the aim of the RRF -- originally a Franco-British initiative -- was to "reinforce the Atlantic alliance, not

The two leaders also discussed American plans for a "son of star wars" nuclear ballistic missile (NBM) system, with Chirac repeating the long-standing French view that the programme would lead to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and Blair taking a non-committal view, the official said

Other items on the agenda were the election of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and a new co-operation agreement on Africa.

AMS Kibria as chief guest.

others in the discussion.

Ahmed will preside

Prof. Imtiaz Ahmed presented

the keynote paper and Zaglul

Ahmed Chowdhury and Mohammad

Humayun Kabir participated among

demand and prospect of 21st

Century: The Future of

Bangladesh's Economy". Dr. Ali

Akbar Ali Khan will present the

keynote paper and Prof. Anu

Mohammad and M. M Akash will

discuss the paper. Prof. Muzaffar

Meanwhile, Sammilita Sanskritik

Jote held cultural programmes at the

Central Shaheed Minar for the

second day yesterday, rendering

songs, poems and dramas. The

programmes will continue tomorrow.

Today's discussion is titled "The

territories today AFP, Geneva

A UN team of experts will visit the Palestinian territories February 10-18 to investigate reports of human rights violations following the upsurge of violence there, the UN said Friday

visit of Palestinian

Algerian rebels

kill 7, including

Islamic extremists killed seven

shepherds, among them five chil-

dren, in a village in the Oued

Romane mountains in western

Algeria, residents in the region said

attacks on civilians by fundamental-

(GIA), up in arms against the secu-

UN HR inquiry

team to begin

The attack occurred on Thursday

5 children

AFP, Algiers

residents said.

100.000 lives.

The three-member panel will begin its work in Gaza, before heading to Jerusalem, Ramallah, Hebron, Bethlehem and Beit Jala and will report back to the UN Commission on Human Rights which begins its annual session here March 19. The panel was set up last

October by the commission to compile information on alleged abuses by "the Israeli occupying power"

South African professor John Dugard, US professor Richard Falk and former Bangladesh foreign minister Kamal Hussein will gather details on allegations of human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law committed since Arab-Israeli violence resumed at the end of September.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, who was also requested by the special UN session to visit the region, described the human rights situation in the Palestinian territories as "bleak" on her return last November.

India shows off its new fighter jet for first time

AFP, Bangalore

Aircraft (LCA) belatedly made its public debut on Friday in a noisy flypast shadowed by a French-made Mirage fighter iet.

Earlier in the week Indian defence chiefs had been left redfaced when a planned public flight on the opening day of the Aero India airshow in the southern city of Bangalore was cancelled at the last minute.

Sources from Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. which is managing the show, said the postponement followed a pre-flight test in which one of the onboard instrument warning lights signalled a problem.

But two days later, in front of a crowd of 10,000 spectators, the LCA finally took a public bow.

In an opening address to the fiveday show on Wednesday. Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes hailed the LCA as a "high-watermark" for the national

been languishing on the drawing board since 1983 -- will reduce dependency on imports for its technology-starved air force, the world's fourth largest.

month and Friday's outing was its fourth flight, air force officials here

Cooking fire

FROM APGE 12

found, a third of the biofuel is firewood, while the rest is animal dung and agricultural wastes, such as

Pollution from such fuels causes greater carbon monoxide concentrations in the atmosphere, the study "Considering the population size,

the situation in Asia may became more serious," the study found. This will add considerably to the global atmospheric pollution in the Northern Hemisphere, the researchers said. "Unless international control

measures are taken, air pollution in the Northern Hemisphere will con-

Sharon for talks

bomb exploded in a religious Jewish neighbourhood of Jerusalem,

Two previously unknown alestinian groups took responsibility for the blast. Attacks have been frequently claimed by rival groups during a four-month-old Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian Popular

in Mainis near the town of Tenes, Resistance Forces said in a statesome 200 km west of the capital, ment it planted the bomb to send a message to Prime Minister-elect The mountainous region west of Ariel Sharon, who was elected two Algiers is often the scene of grisly days ago. The group urged Palestinian leaders to severe conists from the Armed Islamic Group tacts with Israel

"This is the first message to the criminal and fascist Sharon in Algeria's civil war, which began response to his programme and in 1992, has claimed at least arrogant statements," the statement

It added that the unit that carried out the attack was named after a massacre of Palestinian refugees by Israeli-allied Christian militias during an invasion of Lebanon orchestrated by Sharon. He was held indirectly responsible for the killings by an Israeli inquiry. In a separate statement faxed to

Reuters in Beirut, the Popular Army Front said it carried out the bombino and pledged to "continue its attacks

against the enemy everywhere." Meanwhile, Sharon and Barak

condemn the blast. "What happened today is another tragic event which demands we all unite to act with determination against terror,' Sharon told reporters.

He made clear it was not up to

him to respond to the bombing because Ehud Barak, whom he defeated in Tuesday's election. remains prime minister until a new government is formed. But he added: "My position on this is very clear. Negotiations for

peace are very important and the government I head will make every effort to make peace but the condition for peace negotiations (with the Palestinians) is an end to terror and

Barak issued a statement condemning the bombing as an "attempt to undermine the strength of the Israeli people (that) will not succeed. Israel will continue to fight terrorism and strike at whoever tries

JP (Ershad) to face setback

After the Awami League came to power in 1996, he surrendered on July 28. The then president Abdur Rahman Biswas, on his last working day on October 8, 1996 relieved Manzur of imprisonment.

Accordingly, he was freed from jail on November 17. However, as per the Constitution, he is also disqualified to participate in elections for five years from November 17, 1996. In addition, when he sought clarification from the Election Commission regarding his candidature in election, the EC sought Law Ministry's views on the issue and then declared him disqualified.

Meanwhile, the JP constitution's Clause 4 of Act 6 bars a convict from becoming party member. The clause says, "If he is punished for his crime due to social and moral

turpitude, he would not be disqualified to be a member of the party.

Both the JP Chairman and the Secretary General fall under this category and should lose their membership A senior JP leader commented in this regard, "When they run the

party, how can such a clause of the

party constitution be effective JP was formed on January 1, 1986 when Ershad was Chief Martial Law Administrator (CMLA). In the same year, he withdrew martial law and took over the leadership of JP.

After Ershad's fall in 1990, during BNP rule, six corruption cases were filed against him and he suffered six years' imprisonment. On January 9, 1997 Ershad got bail in all the cases But after his party joined the fourparty alliance, the Janata Tower

Taliban becoming less radical: Musharraf

Afghanistan's Taliban militia is becoming less radical and the world must accept the reality of its rule over the country, Pakistan's military ruler said in an interview published

change in the Taliban's views with the passage of time," General Pervez Musharraf told the Englishlanguage Emirati daily Gulf News 'Take the issue of poppy growth. The Taliban are against this, they are against terrorism, they are

"I certainly see a perceptible

Mutawakel) told me," Musharraf He said the Islamic militia was also easing its policies on women.

against religious extremism being

spread elsewhere. That is what their

foreign minister (Wakil Ahmad

"They are prepared to educate women. In fact, he (Mutawakel) said, 'You open schools and colleges for girls for us as we don't have the money," said Musharraf, adding that he would send two cabinet members to Afghanistan to discuss the issue.

states to recognise the Taliban rule of Afghanistan. "Whether we like them or not, they are there to stay, so we better accept this reality," he said.

place there," said the general

whose country is one of only three

Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider this week became the first high-level Pakistani official to visit Afghanistan since Musharraf seized power in an October 1999 coup. Islamabad has repeatedly

denied accusations that it armed and financed the student militia which now controls around 90 percent of Afghanistan, including Kabul. The United Nations last month

Taliban for their refusal to hand over indicted terrorist Osama Bin Laden, accused of masterminding the bombing of two US embassies in East Africa in 1998.

imposed fresh sanctions on the

Washington has asked Pakistan to use its influence with the Taliban to secure Bin Laden's extradition.

During Haider's visit, the Taliban renewed its offer to discuss sending Bin Laden for trial by Muslim clerics in an Islamic country, an interior ministry spokesman in Islamabad

Smuggled goods

FROM PAGE 12 drivers escaped, leaving the vehicles in the middle of the road near Chandra,

said an inspector of the team. The consignments were headed for the old part of the city. None of the trucks was carrying any valid papers

The trucks were sent to the Customs warehouse at Zia International Airport.

A departmental case was filed in this regard.

Shot dead in Uttara

FROM PAGE 12 grant work permits to the spouses of people already holding permits to

Canada

take further tuition.

work in the country. In a statement to business leaders, Immigration Minister Lianne Daiziel said that from July this year, immigrants scoring below the pass level for entry on the English language test would be encouraged to

Other plans included reviewing fees charge, job applications and helping "knowledge workers" in telecommunications and related industries get into New Zealand.

Officials were also exploring the feasibility of establishing a skills matching system to help prospective migrants obtain job offers in New Zealand.

The present 38,000 per year immigrant total covers family

FROM PAGE 1 owned by father of Aleya, cousin of

Taraj, was sold to one Khorshed who later sold it to Taraj. But recently Aleya wanted to 'grab' the land with the help of Dipu and his gang.

Two months ago Dipu's gang built a tin-shed house on the land. Taraj went to Uttara police station to file a case in this regard, but second officer Hamid refused to take the case and registered a general diary instead, family members alleged.

On Thursday night, a gang of about 25 riding in three yellow cab and motorbikes went to Taraj's office and shot him in the chest. Taraj died on the spot. Police arrested Aleya Begum,

Sohel alias Russel, Shahin, Kanai, Gopal and Aminul Jahur and Borhan n connection with the murder Nurul Islam, brother of the victim,

filed a case with Uttara police, accusing 21 people including Dipu Chowdhurv.

Visitors crowd book fair

political turmoil

about bringing in more new books against the backdrop of a looming

Sale of books this year is not

satisfactory compared to last year as political unrest began soon after the fair's opening. "We are watching the political situation and might bring in more

books by the middle of February,"

said a leading publisher. Publishers take preparations all year long for bringing out new books on the occasion of the Amar Ekushey Book fair, the largest Bengali literary congregation. The University Press Limited

(UPL) has published six books so far

for this year's book fair. The books

are 'Out of Periphery: Development

of Coastal Chars in South Eastern

Bangladesh' by Kien de Wild,

'Socio-Legal Status of Bengali

consideration. It would depend on

businessmen's views expressed at

ment of an international marketing

and trading company for promotion

of trade while the Jeddah-based

Islamic Development Bank has

agreed to finance the feasibility

formation of a business forum with

shipping lines of all the D-8 coun-

banking maybe discussed at the

Summit, Malaysia and Iran have

already worked out plans for Islamic

and documentation to facilitate

movement of goods among D-8

members has already been under-

Easing of customs procedures

Cyber communications are likely

Bangladesh has proposed

A scheme for launching Islamic

Egypt has proposed establish-

the Cairo meet.

study.

banking.

Women in Bangladesh' by Saira Rahman Khan, 'Journey within Islam' by Justice Mohammad Golam Rabbani and volumes 1,2 and 3 of 'Bangladesh Education Sector

Review', a World Bank publication.

Kakoli Prokashani published a

series of books for juveniles includ-

ing biographies of some noted

personalities including Begum Rokeya, Rabindranath Tagore, Jibananda Das, Michael Madhusudan Dutt and also some children's fantasies. and prospect of 21st Century: The Crisis of Democracy in Bangladesh" was organised yesterday as part of a

organised by Bangla Academy on the occasion of the Ekushey Book

month-long discussion programme

A discussion titled "The demand

Presided over by Prof. Shamsul Huda Harun, the function was D-8 to draw up plans

to be focused by participants in the

Summit. D-8 has already opened a

web site. The forum is hoping to

build up a cyber ball to expedite

businessmen-to-businessmen

transactions. Private sector interac-

tion is seen as a key to success of the organisation. Progress in the formation of D-8 joint chambers of commerce is expected to get adequate attention. Four countries have already signed the charter of the proposed D-8 chamber whose objective would be to attract wider participation of

private sector It is learnt that Bangladesh and Egypt will be completing a report on the development of rural infrastructure through setting up of smallscale industries and it may be placed at the Summit.

Some senior diplomats con-

cerned said, "Some significant

strides" were made recently in the

forum's technical committee meet-

In an exclusive interview with

The Daily Star, Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad who attended the second Summit of the D-8 in Dhaka, said "We hope to make D-8 not just a talk shop but a dynamic economic forum which would see the implementation of economic programmes and pro-At the concluding session of the D-8 commissioners' meeting in

expressed optimism that the development forum would mobilise cooperation among the eight member-countries. Cooperation from all fronts would raise the standard of living of 800 million people who share common religion, culture and socio-economic identity, they

India's much-hyped Light Combat

aeronautical industry. India hopes the LCA -- which had

It made its first test flight last

In India, for instance, the study

Dhaka last month, the participants

tinue to grow into a global plume across the developed and the developing world," the researchers said. humanitarian, and skilled, business and professional people.

"So there is a moderation going on and the world must be cognisant of whatever changes are taking

for the delivery.