



The Daily Herald

RUMS-SPICES-ART-HISTORY
GUAVABERRY

SXM HAS TENNIS CHAMPION, P. 45

World's Tallest Man Ties The Knot Page 40



RICHIE SPICE IN CONCERT AT BAMBOO BERNIES
Saturday July 14th, 9 PM
Heineken

VOL 17 NO. 49

Friday, July 13, 2007

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In preparation for the 1st Klass Model 2007 Fashion Extravaganza, Insel Air International made a donation to the modelling agency in the form of covering its security aspects for the evening and sponsoring two free roundtrip tickets to Curaçao and the Dominican Republic as door prizes. The extravaganza will take place this Saturday, July 14, at Celebration Palace starting at 8:00pm. Inset Air Station Manager Alonzo Hassell (right) presents one of the models of the agency with a cheque while other models of the 1st Klass Model agency and Inset Air officials look on.

Boyfriend sets house on fire, suspects woman of cheating

BELVEDERE—A Jamaican man allegedly set fire to the house where he and his girlfriend were living, after a lovers' quarrel Monday night.

Police spokesman Chief Inspector Johan "Janchi" Leonard told The Daily Herald that a Jamaican woman living on Bishop Hill Road had called the police Monday night because she was having a fight with her boyfriend, who had accused her of cheating on him with another man.

"When the police arrived at the house, the boyfriend had already left," Leonard said. Consequently, the police left and the woman left shortly afterward as well.

The boyfriend apparently returned to the house later that night and, in a jealous rage, set it on fire.

"The house burned down completely from the inside" and the woman lost all her belongings, Leonard explained.

However, the owner of the house did not file a report about the fire until two days later, on Wednesday, June 11.

Police called in to probe irregularities at MPC

PHILIPSBURG—The School Board for Secondary Education SVOBE has launched an investigation into "irregularities" pertaining to school fees at Milton Peters College (MPC).

The Daily Herald understands that paid school fees are unaccounted for. The amount in question could not be ascertained.

Contacted for comment Thursday, school board director Joseph Rogers confirmed that the board had uncovered some irregularities regarding school fees and was thoroughly investigating the matter. He declined to give details.

He said that though the matter had been reported to the state, "We discovered some irregularities with regard to school fees that apparently occurred and it is being thoroughly investigated," he said.

Asked whether anyone had been suspended, fired, or placed on

inactive duty stemming from the discovery, he said, "Measures are being taken."

He said the recent SVOBE announcement urging parents to pay school fees via the bank had not been made because of the current investigation. The system for the payment of school fees via the bank has been in place for some time now and all new students had been given letters informing them to pay their fees

Continued on page 4

Guyanese terror suspect arrested in St. Maarten

PHILIPSBURG—Members of the Kingdom Detective Cooperation Team RST arrested a terrorist suspect said to be national of Guyana, in St. Maarten recently.

Chief Prosecutor Taco Steen

confirmed the arrest, but declined to give details, as an investigation was still ongoing. He said very sensitive information was involved and there was need for

caution. Surprisingly, Justice Minister David Dick, who arrived in St. Maarten Thursday afternoon, *Continued on page 6*

IN BRIEF

Marigot TERRITORIAL COUNCIL

The Territorial Council of the Collectivité will be officially installed in the Mairie on Sunday at 10:00am. Page 5.

Philipsburg STAY OVER INCREASE

The eight-month-old Philips Juliana International Airport terminal building and additional direct and connecting airlift into St. Maarten are expected to aid the growth of stay-over tourist numbers this year. Page 3.

The Hague JUSTICE WORKGROUP

The technical discussions within the Workgroup Law Maintenance, Law Enforcement and Constitutional Affairs in The Hague earlier this week were positive, advisor to the Central Government former prime minister Suzanne Camello-Römer told The Daily Herald Thursday. Page 4.

Two persons arrested in human smuggling probe

PHILIPSBURG—The man C.P. (47) and the woman D.V. (36), both originating from Guyana, were arrested on suspicion of human smuggling on Wednesday afternoon.

Police spokesman Chief Inspector Johan "Janchi" Leonard told The Daily Herald they had been arrested as a consequence of an

ongoing investigation into human smuggling and he therefore could not give more specific details about the case.

He said that a car with three suspects — two men and a woman — had been spotted by the police on Bush Road Wednesday afternoon. The police followed the car and finally ordered it to stop. *Continued on page 3*

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Early Thursday morning an accident happened on Welfare Road outside the gate of Chiki's Car Rental. For unknown reasons, driver of the white car (seen in this photo) lost control of the steering wheel and hit the fence. Unconfirmed reports reaching The Daily Herald indicate that the driver was unhurt. The police were unable to provide any details about the accident.

Armed robbery suspect dies after lungs collapse

PHILIPSBURG--The young man who crashed his scooter while going down Link I, Phase II probably died of collapsed lungs caused by the impact of the accident. He has been identified as 19-year-old St. Maarten native Sergio Patricio Venier Blijden.

Dr. Mercela officially declared him dead at 11:18pm Wednesday.

Police spokesman Chief Inspector Johan "Janchi" Leonard told The Daily Herald that Blijden had been driving a black scooter when the accident occurred. Due to excessive speed, the scooter spun out of the corner near Learning Unlimited and hit the side of the road.

Blijden and 19-year-old T.C., who was sitting on the back of the scooter, were catapulted in the air and came down several feet farther down the road. Leonard said Blijden had received the hardest blow, maybe because he was the scooter driver.

"He tried to get up and run away, but after a short distance he collapsed. Before he collapsed, he threw a black gun on the ground, which he probably had in his pocket," Leonard stated.

Chief Prosecutor Taco Stein said Blijden's body had been confiscated, but he was not sure whether an autopsy will be performed. "All evidences show that it was an unfortunate accident

after an ill-advised ride on a scooter," Stein said.

T.C. suffered multiple injuries all over his body, particularly to his face. Leonard said he was still under medical observation at St. Maarten Medical Center, but his condition was not life-threatening.

The police found T.C. lying on the ground at the scene of the accident, carrying a machete. "He had the machete on him and you could see the cuts of the machete caused by the accident, where he had been carrying it. Police also confiscated a ski mask at the scene," Leonard said.

A third youngster, who was detained and had his scooter confiscated by the police Wednesday night, is suspected of being part of a group that has committed a series of armed robberies, along with Blijden and T.C. However, Leonard said the investigation was still ongoing and it hadn't been determined yet whether the third suspect was part of the group.

Police suspect that the group had committed

several armed robberies since Wednesday morning. Wednesday night the police were on the trail of the youngsters when notification was received of an armed robbery that had just taken place on Beacon Hill Road.

"The tourist B.W.C. (39) from the United States (US) told the police that he had been robbed by two men of dark complexion. One had a machete and the other a black gun," Leonard said.

The tourist said he had been walking toward a jeep to join some other friends when a man with a machete approached him and told him to give up his money. Behind the man with the machete, a second man appeared who pulled out a black handgun and pointed towards a woman who was with B.W.C.

"One of the armed robbers stuck his hand in the tourist's pocket and pulled out a US \$10 bill. Afterwards they jumped over a fence, jumped onto a scooter and fled from the scene," Leonard said.

Stay over tourism expected to increase

PHILIPSBURG--The eight-month-old Princess Juliana International Airport terminal building and additional direct and connecting flights into St. Maarten are expected to aid the growth of stay over tourist numbers this year.

Stay over visitor numbers have remained somewhat dormant in recent years with a total of 467,861 arrivals in 2005 compared to 467,804 in 2006.

Based on the Economic Outlook 2007, growth was noted especially in the South American (about 27 per cent) and European markets (three per cent). "Promotional activities were especially geared towards attracting a more diversified spread of visitors with more regional visitors from these markets."

The largest tourist source market, North America, shrank somewhat by minus 1.7 per cent after a weaker showing from the Canadian market in 2006. "The moderation of the US economy since the second quarter of 2006 may have also influenced the growth potential of arrivals from that market throughout the year."

Villa/condominium developments and international branded properties will also work to attract more visitors, according to the outlook. Several properties, including The Cliff and Rainbow Beach, are coming on line while others like Barbanton in Little Bay, Indigo Bay Estates, and Caravanserai are under construction.

Properties, such as The Westin St. Maarten Dawn Beach Resort and Spa and Sonesta Maho Beach Resort, offer the island exposure via the marketing coverage of their brand. Existing properties acquiring recognised brands and to attract more brand names to the island were suggested in the island's ten-year Tourism Master Plan (TourMap).

Attracting more stay over

visitors has always encountered a barrier: insufficient marketing money to partner with airlines, magazines and other promotional ventures. Government's dire financial position has affected tourism marketing significantly over the year.

St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA) has been upfront with calls of more marketing money. A clear indication of how lack of funding is affecting the island's stay

over market was given by tour operators, wholesalers and travel agents at the sixth annual St. Maarten/St. Martin Annual Regional Tradeshow (SMART) in May.

Attendees commented at SMART that the island is almost invisible to vacationers scouting for new places to explore.

Timeshare owners and exchanges are the bulk of the annual stay over visitors.

Pantophlet wants publication of requirements for permits

PHILIPSBURG--National Alliance Councilman George Pantophlet is requesting that proper information be provided to persons requesting employment and residence permits. He is asking government to publicise these requirements, as this will prevent unnecessary cost, embarrassment and time.

The councilman said he has been receiving numerous phone calls lately from persons who had been refused entry into St. Maarten although they had landing permits issued by the Immigration Department.

The landing permit, which is given to the employer, should only be issued when the request for an employment permit is granted by the Executive Council, after which the residence permit is given by the L. Governor, Pantophlet said.

He said the problem persons with landing permits were confronting had to do with the countries from which they originate, such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Colombia and India. "Coming from these countries one would require a visa in order to come to St. Maarten, be it on a vacation or to work after the request for employment permit submitted by the employer is approved."

But at present these persons, on their arrival at the airport, are being refused

entry although they have entry permits in their hands, according to Pantophlet. "I was told it has to do with the laws of the land," he said.

He said a visa was the competence of the Kingdom Government and the landing permit was the competence of the Central Government. "The application for a visa in some cases can take months."

Pantophlet suggested that the employer be informed that prior to the person coming to the island, the necessary visa must be obtained at the Dutch Embassy in his or her country or wherever that Embassy might be located. "The reality is that in the past, once one had a landing permit he or she was allowed to come on in that document," Pantophlet said.

Probe

Continued from page 1

in front of a hardware store on A.Th. Illidge Road.

All three occupants of the car were detained, but police released one of the men, C.E.B. (47), after the initial investigation. On Wednesday evening police searched a house in South Reward where the two suspects were staying and confiscated several documents.

C.P. and D.V. are still in police custody pending further investigation, Leonard said.

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"If you are not careful, it can swallow your car!" This was how one driver described his encounter with the deep pothole on Welfare Road opposite Daily Extra Supermarket. Drivers are appealing to Public Works Commissioner Theo Heyliger to start patching the island's roads, which are becoming more and more riddled with potholes every day, as soon as possible. The Welfare Road "ravine" is also a traffic hazard, according to drivers, because many of them swerve to prevent their vehicle from plunging into it. (John Halley photo taken on Tuesday, July 10.)

Justice Workgroup meeting in The Hague was positive

THE HAGUE—The technical discussions within the Workgroup Law Maintenance, Law Enforcement and Constitutional Affairs in The Hague earlier this week were positive, advisor to the Central Government former prime minister Suzanne Camelia-Römer told The Daily Herald Thursday.

The main topic of discussion was the Common Court of Justice, Camelia-Römer said. "There were clear signs of progress in the discussions," she said, without going into any further details.

It was agreed in the November 2, 2006, final accord that there would be one common Court of Justice for all new entities within the Kingdom and that the common Court of Justice could hold sessions in all new entities and Aruba. The regulation of the legal organisation on the Dutch Caribbean islands will be done through a consensus Kingdom law.

Other topics tabled were the immigration policy and the Police Force. "The discussion on the Police Force was preliminary. It was agreed that the chiefs of po-

lice would be invited when the topic is discussed again," Camelia-Römer said.

Issues such as having one Attorney General for the Dutch Caribbean islands and the authority of the Dutch Minister of Justice to give directives to the Attorney General of the new entities will be discussed at the political level, Camelia-Römer said.

"The Curaçao Island Council approved a resolution in which some 'problem points' have been identified, including having a single Attorney General and the authority of the Dutch Minister of Justice. So these points will be debated at the political level," she said.

Week full of robberies and a drive-by shooting

PHILIPSBURG—Police had their hands full with several robberies, armed robberies and a drive-by shooting, among other things, during this week. Police Chief Inspector Johan "Janchi" Leonard informed The Daily Herald of the most noticeable incidents that occurred.

Monday the man S.J.R. from Haiti was robbed on Alexis Arnell Road. The victim said a man approached him with a gun and demanded he hand over his belongings. The gunman took a black pocket book in which S.J.R. had money and personal documents.

Tuesday afternoon another report of robbery was filed. Tourists who left their Toyota Corolla rental car open on the parking lot of a hotel near Oyster Bay were robbed. Burglars took several items from the car, such as a cell phone and diving equipment.

Tuesday afternoon a resident of Trade Wind Apartments in Cupe Coy reported to the police that they had been burglarised. Thieves removed some of the shutters of one of their apartment windows and took two laptops and jewelry, among other things.

A woman living on St. Claire's Drive, Cay Bay, was jumped by two men when she was cleaning the house Wednesday at 9:15am. The men threw a towel over her face and asked her for drugs.

When she could not provide them with the requested illegal substances, the two men tied the woman's legs and arms, took her inside and stole a cell phone and US \$105.

The same Wednesday, around 11:45am, police received notification of a rob-

bery at gunpoint which had taken place in Lower Princess Quarter. The victim, a 64 year old man from Nevis, told police that two men, one with a ski mask on and the other with a T-shirt over his head, had robbed him of his gold necklace.

Finally Leonard informed that Thursday at 1:40am police received notification of a drive-by shooting

on Cucumber Road, South Reward. Three friends were talking on the street in front of house #6 on Cucumber Road when four unidentified men on two scooters drove by and fired three to four shots at the three friends.

Nobody was injured, but police did find three bullet holes in one of the walls of the house.

Prosecutor wants Loor to remain behind bars

PHILIPSBURG—The Prosecutor's Office will request the Judge of Instruction today to extend Police Commissioner Marcel Loor's detention by sixty more days. Chief Prosecutor Taco Stein told The Daily Herald.

Loor's first 26 days of pre-trial detention will end this Sunday and before that date a decision must be taken whether he will be incarcerated for 60 more days. "The Judge of Instruction is scheduled to hear Loor on Friday," Stein said.

He added that in the interest of the ongoing investigation the Prosecutor's Office would request the Judge of Instruction today to extend Loor's pre-trial detention.

Loor was arrested on June 19 after an investigation led by Federal Detectives pointed to his involvement in fraudulent acts, accepting bribes and money laundering.

He was named by G.Y., who had been detained on charges of bribing a civil servant on duty, as part of a human-trafficking probe.

Irregularities at MPC

Continued from page 1

via the bank even before the SVOBE announcement was made in the media.

Rogers said there had been several break-ins at the school recently and the payment via the bank was "for security reasons only."

The board, which also oversees Sundial School, had advised parents and guardians of students attending MPC and Sundial School earlier this week that they could pay their children's school fees for the 2007-2008 school year via Windward Islands Bank (WIB) guilder account

number 22 50 94 02 or WIB US dollar account number 22 50 95 00.

When paying the fees, parents should state the name of the student whose fees they are paying, the school the student is attending and the class he or she is in.

The school fees for the 2007-2008 academic year are the same as last year's: NAF. 700 or \$389 for the first child, and if the parent has more than one child attending the school NAF. 650 or \$361 for the second child and NAF. 600 or \$334 for the third child.

The board will soon announce the RBTT account numbers via which parents can pay their children's school fees.

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Youthfest underway with 75 registered participants



Some Youthfest participants at a workshop yesterday.

PHILIPSBURG—The fourth annual Xtreme Youthfest got underway Wednesday with about 75 registered participants from St. Maarten, Antigua, Saba and the United States and additional people who attended the day ses-

sions for free.

A press release from the organizers Thursday said the first day's workshops featured Dr. Gerry Seale of Barbados on "Developing the leader within" and Arthur Tigney of the USA on "Conflict resolu-

tion."

The first day's programme climaxed in the afternoon with a session on "Let's talk about sex," with Apostle Elmeade Allen and other facilitators at the John Larmorie Centre and the L.B. Scott

Sports Auditorium.

"In this workshop, the boys and girls were separated in break out sessions and they later reconvened for a discussion on the topic. In the general discussions, the youth made a link between the image of today's fashion and sex. The boys and young men believe that the way young women's dress determines how men interact with them. If they dress provocatively, men tend to see them as sex tools," the organizers explained.

They continued: "The girls on the other hand believe that the way they dress does not give men the right to approach them in a sexual manner. The debate was lively and prompted Pastor Allen, one of the facilitators of this session, to suggest that a gathering of this nature should be done on a regular basis and not just once a year, which the Youthfest committee could look into."

Wednesday's Youthfest activity culminated with the Xtreme Games at the L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium

from 8:30pm to 10:30pm.

The Youthfest sessions yesterday saw presentations from Pastor Allen and Arthur Tigney on Breaking soul ties and Youth sexuality. The focus was on helping the youth to guard themselves against becoming promiscuous and eventually creating soul ties with multiple sex partners, as that can be emotionally damaging.

Tigney also spoke to the youth on building healthy relationships, which includes dating, compatibility and engagement.

BET Rap City's Jeff Johnson spoke to the youth about issues on gang violence, drugs and sex. Later in the day, the youth were treated to manicure, pedicure, facials and a fashion show. The day ended with the Fresh Jays Party with DJ Fire from St. Kitts local performances and singing and dancing competitions.

Today is the spiritual workshop and Youthfest Ball and Comedy Show. The day sessions from 9:00am to 5:30pm are open to the general pub-

lic free of cost.

Admission to the Youthfest concert on Saturday night at the L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium is \$15 pre-sold and \$20 at the gate. Children pay \$10.

Admission to the Youthfest Talent Explosion on Sunday at 7:30pm is \$5 per person for those not registered for the entire Youthfest.

New Minister swears in today

WILLEMSTAD—Elvis Tjin A Sjoie will take oath today, Friday, June 13, as the new Minister of Economic Affairs for the UPB party, the Central Government Information Service informed in a press release.

Tjin A Sjoie will replace Burney Elhage who resigned as a minister to return to Bonaire to assume the position of Commissioner in the Island Council of Bonaire.

The oath taking ceremony is scheduled for 4:00pm at the Governor's House.

Oyster Pond residents in shock after armed theft

MARIGOT—An Oyster Pond resident and two friends are recovering from shock after they were held up by two armed thieves in a villa on Tuesday night.

The three friends had just finished dinner at about 11:00pm and had gone outside the villa for some fresh air and to smoke cigars. However, they had left the front door open and unbeknownst to them the thieves had entered.

On re-entering the villa, they were confronted by two bandits, one with a machete and the other with a gun. They were forced to lie on the ground while one of the men set about robbing the house. Hearing a commotion, a neighbour came to the door to see what was going on. Realising they could be identified or caught, the two thieves quickly escaped with only a small amount of valuables.

Meanwhile three young St. Martiners ages 28, 27, and 20 have been handed suspended prison sentences by the court for verbally insulting Gendarmes in the course of their duties, rebelling against authority, and drunkenness.

The court heard that on April 13 the three St. Martiners had taunted Gendarmes at a traffic control before making a getaway in a car. The Gendarmes immediately gave chase and caught up to the car and arrested the three young occupants. The driver, and oldest of the three who was also drunk, was given a three-month suspended prison sentence. The second was given a two-month suspended sentence for resisting arrest, and the third a one-month suspended sentence.

Territorial Council to be installed Sunday

MARIGOT—The Territorial Council of the Collectivité will be officially installed in the Mairie on Sunday at 10:00am. Council members will be voting for the president and vice-presidents as well as for the seven-member Executive Council.

The Executive Council will comprise the president, four vice presidents, and two other councillors, one or both of whom will be from the opposition.

The ceremony will be held outside the Mairie and it will be open to the public. It was not certain if Delegated Préfet Dominique Lacretin will be present as State representative. At 12:00 noon the elected president will give an address followed by a toast.

Later in the afternoon at 3:00pm Secretary of State for Overseas Territories Christian Estrosi will be welcomed at the Mairie for a meeting and press conference. Estrosi will be on his first official visit to St. Martin and St. Barths.

A cocktail reception has been organised for Mr. Estrosi from 4:30pm onwards in the Sous-Préfecture on Sunday.

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Gracia and Frankie framed! Photographs of former Island Councilwoman Gracia Arrindell of Peoples' Progressive Alliance (PPA) and former Island Councilman and commissioner Franklin Meyers have joined those of past council members on the wall of Dr. A.C. Wathey Legislative Hall. The two new photos are in different frames from the older photos and do not bear the island's coat of arms, their names or the periods they served.

Water quality at most beaches 'excellent'

MARIGOT—The regional health department Direction de La Santé et du Développement Social (DSDS) of Guadeloupe recently announced that water quality at beaches in Guadeloupe, St. Martin

and St. Barths, is excellent, and conforms to 98 per cent of European directives for quality controls.

The results obtained from the Pasture Institute laboratory in Guadeloupe refer to tests for bacteria and other

testing criteria carried out by health officials in 2006.

Of 114 sites tested in the region, 89 swimming zones fell in Category A for Good Quality. Twenty-three zones were in Category B (Medium Quality) and 2 zones in Category C (Temporarily Polluted).

No beaches were given a classification "No Swimming Allowed."

French side beaches in St. Martin given the Good Quality classification in 2006 included Baie aux Prunes at Anse Marcel, Le Galion north end, Le Galion south end, Long Bay (Lowlands), Orient Bay North, Orient Bay South, Baie Rouge, Friars Bay, Grand Case, Grandes Cayes North, Grandes Cayes South, and Petit Plage.

Pinel Island was classified as Medium Quality.

Graduate lauds USM's education programme

PHILIPSBURG—Estella Matinburgh, who recently graduated from University of St. Martin's (USM) education programme has lauded the programme saying it equips students to work in the classroom.

Matinburgh, who was a kindergarten teacher for some 15 years, is scheduled to start teaching a combination of second and third graders, under the Foundation Based Education (FBE) system, at the St. Dominic Primary School, when the new academic year starts in August.

"I am equipped to face any challenge that is thrown at me," the mother of one, who has been employed with the Catholic School Board for about 20 years, said about the benefits of the USM education programme.

She decided to upgrade her teaching skills because she felt that she had stayed in one area for too long. Now that she has her bachelor's in education, Matinburgh said she has become more flexible. "I can teach any class now, and I am no longer restricted to just one area."

It was not an easy decision for Matinburgh to go back to school. She always wanted to go back, but financially she was unable to do so. One of Matinburgh's closest friends who had gone back to university to get her bachelor's and master's in education would continuously encourage and motivate her to follow suit. It was her friend's persistence that prompted Matinburgh's decision to study at USM.

She started the first semester and then later on applied for a scholarship from the Island Government of St. Maarten. Without the scholarship, Matinburgh said, obtaining her degree would not



Estella Matinburgh

have been possible. Matinburgh felt out of place when she first started at USM. She was the oldest in class and being shy and timid made it more of a challenge. But she soon got over her inhibition and began to feel

more comfortable in the environment.

Even though Matinburgh had years of teaching experience, which gave her an edge over her peers, she still found the education programme challenging.

"The education programme is good; it prepares you to go out there to teach. I acquired a lot of new skills such as technological, measurement, and evaluation skills, where I learned how to make a good test for children and how to evaluate them properly."

She advises other teachers to continually upgrade their skills since it is beneficial. In the future, Matinburgh hopes to become a principal of a school and is also considering doing more upgrading in her field.

Terror suspect

Continued from page 1

said he had no knowledge of a suspected terrorist being detained here.

Reliable sources indicated that the suspect had been arrested during a raid at the house where he was staying and that he had been found in possession of three passports in the house.

Apparently, an international search warrant for the suspected terrorist had been issued some time ago.

No information is available about what act of terrorism the suspect is believed to be linked to. However, shortly after two Guyanese, one Guyana-born US citizen, and one Trinidadian were arrested early June, one in the USA and three in Trinidad and Tobago, for allegedly plotting to blow up a fuel line that feeds John F. Kennedy (JFK) International Airport in New York, US authorities had indicated that there were several other persons of interest.

About two weeks after the

arrest Guyana's President Bharrat Jagdeo told a press conference that more Guyanese were on the US Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) radar as the probe into the alleged conspiracy to blow up fuel tanks at JFK Airport wended.

Also, according to a report published by Guyana's Starbrook News newspaper on June 7, "at least six other Guyanese may have been directly involved or had knowledge of the plot to blow up pipelines and fuel storage tanks at John F. Kennedy International Airport, according to the US complaint which named the four defendants currently facing the conspiracy charges."

Starbrook News said the document did not name the other persons, but simply referred to them as Individuals A, B, C, E, F and G, while the nationality of another presumed partner in the plot, Individual D, was also not disclosed.

Painter takes three weeks to report stolen painting

ST. PETERS—It took a painter from Trinidad almost three weeks to file a report to the police of his stolen painting. The man went to the Police Station last Wednesday to report that his painting had been stolen on June 22.

Police spokesman Chief Inspector Johan "Janchi" Leonard informed *The Daily Herald* that the man from Trinidad told the police that his painting had been stolen from a Chinese restaurant in St. Peters.

According to the man's statement, he had put the painting down next to the table where he was having something to eat. After he was finished eating and wanted to leave the restaurant, he noticed that the painting was gone.

Strange was that it took the man almost three weeks to reach the Police Station to file a report of his stolen painting. Leonard said the man claimed that his painting has a US \$9,000 value.



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Businesses establish contacts at trade fair in Dominican Republic

PHILIPSBURG—Several local businesses got the opportunity to interact with manufacturers and producers in the Dominican Republic during the first Agro-Alimentary Trade Fair held in the Dominican Republic June 27-30.

A team of local businesses, representatives of the Island Government, the St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Dominican Republic Consulate on St. Maarten attended the fair, which was held at the five-star Hotel Dominican Fiesta.

The local delegation also met with President of the Dominican Republic Dr. Leonel Fernandez and the Director of the Centre for Exports and Investments of the Dominican Republic (CEI-RD) Eddy Martinez.

Fernandez iterated the importance and value of the market of the islands, such as St. Maarten, and assured the delegation that his government would work so that products from the Dominican Republic could enter into the market of the islands, a press release from the St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce and Industry stated.

Some 150 exhibitors displaying more than 1,000 products were at the fair. "The (local) businesses had the opportunity to speak directly to the producers and they were shown the range and quality of products that they can import directly from the Dominican Republic," the release stated.

"The products from the suppliers were produced with the best form of production science to achieve the best qual-



Some members of the local delegation and other officials pose for a photo in the Dominican Republic.

ity. The Dominican Republic producers are interested in supplying the market of St. Maarten and the Caribbean by providing the best quality at competitive prices with first class products."

Also participating in the first Agro-alimentary fair were representatives from the United States of America, Canada, Europe, China, Japan, Puerto Rico, Anguilla and St. Kitts. The fair was organized by the CEI-RD.

During the fair, the visiting delegation also took the opportunity to meet with Secretary of State of Foreign Relations in the Dominican Republic. The discussions centred around the revised letter of intent between the governments of the Dominican Republic and St. Maarten. The parties wanted to review an agreement that existed from 1982 signed by the then governors of the Dominican Republic Antonio Guzmán Fernández and the Governor of St. Maarten Dr. Ralph Richardson.

Some of the areas that were discussed were ways and

means of strengthening business relations between both countries, business visas, utilizing St. Maarten as an added-value packaging centre for products to enter into the European markets due to St. Maarten being part of the Netherlands.

The meeting took place in the office of Dr. Juan Guiliam Cury, the Vice-secretary of Foreign Relations for Business and Commercial Affairs who was represented by Business Analyst Marisol Difo, on behalf of the Minister Foreign Relations, Rafael Payans.

Also present at the meeting were General Consul of the Dominican Republic in St. Maarten Doris Vásquez, Miguel Ferreras representative of CEI-RD, Antillean Minister of Constitutional Affairs Roland Duncan, Miguel de Weever of the Sector Economy and Tourism of the Island Government, Hunby Pantophlet President of the St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce and Dr. Cornelius de Weever Treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce.

De Weever gave a presentation on behalf of the Island Government of St. Maarten pertaining to the economy of the island and the investment opportunities in St. Maarten. The idea was to provide potential investors and/or businesses with the facts and figures pertaining to the economy of St. Maarten and doing business with St. Maarten. Opportunities were also highlighted to use St. Maarten as a transhipment point as well as an avenue into the European market.

"There was significant interest by businesses to engage in trade and business with St. Maarten, as many businesses approached the St. Maarten delegation for information and with questions," the release stated.

Business representatives attending the fair were, among others, Johnny Sang (Sang's Trading Co. Inc. N.V.); Danny Ranehandani (Prime Distributors); Sabnani Indigo (Le Grand Marche); Chris Coombs and Lee Hallam (Breweries Wallé E.U.R.L.

- President Beer); Elis Francis Poirier (Capucino Restaurant); Melvin Rosario and Clifford Illis (Clips Import and Export); Teresa France (Evas Special Events); Rod-

RBTT Bank contributes to Voluntary Corps St. Maarten

PHILIPSBURG—RBTT Bank has joined other businesses on St. Maarten in making a financial contribution to the third annual Summer Camp initiative of the St. Maarten Voluntary Corps VKS.

The VKS has had two successful years of hosting the Summer Camp for children between ages 7 and 17 and hopes to make this year's Summer Camp, held at Sundial School in Philipsburg, even more successful.

The VKS Summer Camp has as its goal to inform children about the organisation and, at the same time, impart values such as discipline. It wants to provide an environment that encourages educational, physical and social awareness among the youth.

RBTT Managing Director Wayne Kowlessar said during the cheque presentation, "RBTT is pleased to donate to institutions like the Voluntary Corps St. Maarten, where the main focus is on the youth, where it is encouraged to develop character, learn valuable skills, make new friends or renew old friendships and discover new interests."

VKS Commander Major Jean A. Illidge thanked the bank for its generosity.



President of the Summer Camp Bernice Charles Richardson (left) along with Commander of the Voluntary Corps St. Maarten Major Jean A. Illidge (centre), accepting a cheque from RBTT Managing Director Wayne Kowlessar (right).

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Lucky Line is # 04 within 20 balls	31 04 18 42 43 17 40 28 48 14 24 13 08 05 30 29 20 33 38 10	1st Prize: 194 2nd Prize: 022 3rd Prize: 382	0391 5951 0826	1st Prize: 197 2nd Prize: 398 3rd Prize: 893	6831 0933 8228	1st Prize: 614 2nd Prize: 508 3rd Prize: 216	8930 1005 2810
Four Corners within 22 balls	50 23						
Diamond within 26 balls	01 26 25						
Jackpot Blackout within 35 balls	15 34 11 07 02 19 21 44 35 47						
2nd Chance Blackout	36 39 27 41						
Next Jackpot	\$18,500						

LUCKY 6

MIDDAY
07 12 15 21 23 25 30
Evening
02 07 12 13 17 27 28

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Young St. Maarteners Alexis Williams and Anthony Gibbs tied the knot on Saturday, July 7, joining numerous couples worldwide who opted to get married on 7-7-7, considered a lucky day. To complement their wedding date, the couple is on a seven-day Caribbean Honeymoon Cruise. Alexis, who was a youth Island Council member, just received her Nursing Diploma, while Anthony is pursuing studies in the hospitality field. Alexis is the daughter of Charles Williams and Theresa David. Her aunt is well-known bodybuilder Christine Williams. Anthony's parents are Ingrid and Gliben Gibbs.

New Testament Baptist Church hosts 2007 Vacation Bible School

PHILIPSBURG—The New Testament Baptist Church will be holding its annual Vacation Bible School (VBS) from Monday, July 16, until Friday, July 20, daily from 9:00am to 12:30pm.

According to a press release from the New Testament Baptist Church, the VBS this year will be held at the St. Maarten Academy because of the traffic situation in town. A team from the US, together with members of the church, will provide children and young adults between the ages of 4 to 19 with a wide variety of activities, such as Bible stories, arts and craft, music, drama and dance. All activities will be based on Christian values and principles.

The registration fee for the week is US \$10 for each child. Starting at 8:00am, buses will be running from French Quarter, Middle Region, Sucker Garden, Philipsburg and Cay Hill to the St. Maarten Academy on the LB Scott Road.

For more information contact Pastor Smith at the New Testament Baptist Church.



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WINAIR, Airport
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James Johnson
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WHO lifts suspension on Euvax B vaccine

PHILIPSBURG—World Health Organisation (WHO) has lifted its suspension on the specific batches of hepatitis B vaccine - Euvax B - which was recalled in May and June.

Based on tests conducted on the vaccine, WHO concluded that the vaccine was safe for use. Sector Health Care Affairs (SHCA) has since informed local health care providers that the vaccine can now be used again.

WHO had temporarily suspended the use of specific batches of the Euvax B vaccine on May 31 and June 20. Government Information Service (GIS) said in a press release that samples of the suspended vaccine batches collected from the manufacturer and from Vietnam had been tested for bacteria and the final test results show that the batches comply with WHO quality standards.

"WHO has concluded its investigation of serious adverse effects following immunization, temporarily associated with administration of Euvax B vaccine in infants in Vietnam," GIS said.

"The WHO concluded that there were no problems with regard to the quality, safety or potency of the Euvax B vaccine. The clinical, epidemiological and multiple vaccine quality investigations provided no evidence of a quality problem with specific lots of Euvax B, or with the vaccine in general.

"Therefore, the WHO removes, with immediate effect, its recommendation for temporary suspension of specific lots of Euvax B vaccine and all lots of Euvax B under temporary suspension are released for use."

Parents are being advised to contact their healthcare providers to ensure that their children's hepatitis B vaccination status is up to date. Hepatitis B vaccination is given at the age of two months, three months and 11 months, according to St. Maarten's vaccination schedule.

Hepatitis B is a serious but very common infection of the liver which comes from the hepatitis B virus. The vaccine prevents hepatitis B virus infection and its serious consequences. There is no cure for hepatitis B. Treatment includes rest and proper diet.



Children attending the Kidway Summer camp, during one of their vigorous training sessions on Wednesday, in preparation for the Little Village Princess show scheduled for July 23, under the guidance of music teacher Raymond. The children were all excited to be on stage.



A new organ was recently dedicated to the service of God at Roman Catholic Church in St. Eustasius. Father Raffje blessed the organ, as organist Dennis Amujan played and lifted the spirits of the congregation. Ingrid Whitfield thanked the several persons and entities, locally and off island, for their contributions toward the purchase of the much-needed instrument. In photo, Father Raffje blesses the organ as a smiling Dennis Amujan plays.



One of the three occupants of this car had to be flown to the St. Maarten Medical Center for medical attention. The car with licence plate No E362 was involved in an accident on the road leading to the harbour Tuesday night. According to reports, at the time of the accident the driver was speeding in the direction of the harbour when he lost control of the steering wheel. Long skid marks were visible at the scene of the accident indicating where the car had run off the road and ended up on its hood. All three occupants were taken to the hospital and the following day, Wednesday, one of them was taken by ambulance to the airport and flown to St. Maarten on a Winair flight.

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Mayor to perform last duties on Bastille Day

MARIGOT—Albert Raoul Fleming will perform his last official duties as Mayor of St. Martin on Saturday, when he addresses the population during the Bastille Day celebrations.

Fleming is to retire from the political scene after some 34 years of dedicated service to the French side, when the Collectivité's new Territorial Council is officially sworn in on Sunday.

The festive occasion on the waterfront will take on extra poignancy, as many close friends and associates of the Mayor from both sides of the island, as well as those who have worked for him, or under him during the past three decades have been invited to the ceremonies. He will give his last public address and many will be keen to hear what he has to say.

Much of the waterfront will be closed off to traf-

fic and parking to accommodate the activities and a large crowd is expected.

The day begins at 9:00am with a religious service at the Roman Catholic church, before wreaths are laid at the monument in the Maire's garden at 10:00am.

A traditional parade of troops will then pass along Rue de Holland, Rue de la République, and Boulevard de France before the official speeches take place at the gazebo on the waterfront at 11:30am. Following the speeches there will be a special toast.

Many activities have been organised for the rest of the day. Category B boat races start at 11:00am, followed by a swimming race at 12:00pm. Gunslingers will be performing on stage.

Category A boat races resume at 2:30pm and are followed by mountain bike races at 3:30pm. Various

games are being organised at 4:00pm followed by a running race at 5:00pm.

The evening will be taken up with musical entertainment. Tanny and the Boys are on stage at 6:00pm followed by Rhythm Boys and Dancing Diamonds at 8:00pm. The Respect Band and Mighty Pretender are last on stage at 10:00pm.

A fireworks display will then close off the celebrations.

Fête de La Bastille is a national holiday in France and commemorates the day when hundreds of Parisians marched to the Bastille Prison on July 14, 1789, and killed the Governor, an act that triggered the French Revolution, and brought about the end of the Louis XVI monarchy. With it came the declaration "Freedom, Equality, and Brotherhood."



Archaeologist Dominique Bonnissot with conch shells

Fossilised conch shells shed light on Amerindian habits

MARIGOT—The discovery of a significant number of conch shells at a vacant lot in Lowlands has led archaeologists to believe the site was used by pre-Columbian Amerindians as a collection and sorting point for conchs before they were taken to their villages.

Archaeologist Dominique Bonnissot who is conducting an excavation there said the find is very interesting but added the site is otherwise temporary and not of major importance, nor is it part of a village.

"The shells were found in groups and sorted according to size," she noted. "One group was all adult conchs, all of the same size, while smaller groups were found elsewhere. The shells were pierced to take the meat out; then the meat would be taken to the village. I'm sure these specimens are from the ceramic period because in the pre-ceramic period conch shells were placed whole onto hot stones to cook."

Shells found under the soil at different depths indicated different periods of civilisation, she noted. A small amount of ceramics were also found.

Bonnissot has been working at the one and a half hectare site since last Wednesday and is being assisted by a backhoe driver to dig the trenches. Under French laws, a preliminary investigation has to be done if a site falls within archaeological zones of interest to remove artefacts before any building can begin.

Dominique Bonnissot works for Institut National de Recherches Archéologiques Prévention (INRAP) attached to the French Ministry of Culture. She is a leading ceramics expert in the Caribbean and has been working for the Hope Estate Archaeological Society since

1994 on different sites in St. Martin.

She is currently finalising a 400-page thesis "Chronology The People of St. Martin by Pre-Columbian Civilisations" which should be completed by the end of the year. The scientific thesis is also expected to be translated into English.

Christophe Hénoq noted it is very rare in St. Martin for a building project to be held up for any length of time for an important discovery. The majority of artefacts found usually consist of trash thrown out by Indians, bones, ceramics, shells, and other items mostly found in shallow ground.



Minister Wever, State Secretary Ank Bijleveld and Prime Minister Nelson Oduber sign the document.

Aruba, Dutch extend cooperation protocol

ARUBA—The evaluation of the cooperation protocol that the two countries entered in February 2006 was the subject of a meeting of Aruba's Prime Minister Nelson Oduber and Minister Booshi Wever of Immigration with Dutch Justice Minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin and State Secretary Ank Bijleveld for Kingdom Relations.

Oduber and Wever are currently in the Netherlands for deliberations. At the end of the meeting, the parties signed an extension of the protocol.

The cooperation consisting of Dutch financial support and technical assistance to improve the immigration chain was evaluated in March. Aruba wants a continued

programme and emphasised that this would also be in the interest of the Netherlands.

Also a deliberation on the Marriott-matter is on the agenda. Oduber wants a solution on the division of the proceeds from selling the buildings and is of the opinion that they need an agreement on this.

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From Herick.




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Gotcha!**

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Coming from your children and the
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**Happy
Birthday to**
A very special person, daughter,
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met je 45ste verjaardag


Van Kytho & Mamie.



**Happy
Birthday
greetings**
going out to my husband


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mother In-law Louisa, sisters in-law
and the rest of the family.



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Jahaira
J.J.J.J.**

from your father, mother,
brothers Jerry, Julian, Jahi,
sisters Jessie, Georgia and also Chancy.
May God bless you, most precious
and beautiful daughter



**Happy
birthday
to a
special
friend
Sherly**

Coming from Max, Sha and the staff at
Sonesto Maho. Enjoy your day girlfriend.



**Happy
Birthday
Juju**

We all love and wish
you the best today.
May God keep on
blessing and watching
over you always.


Please don't forget church on Sunday.
Coming from Beyonce, Sean, dad, mommy, Micheline
and the rest of the entire family that loves you.



**Look who
turned 2
yesterday
it's
Tyriq
Mathew**


coming from your mommy Turquesa, Nana,
Opa Tony, Aunt, Uncle, Cousin Dari,
Godparents and everyone who loves you
here and abroad.

Hope you're enjoying yourself in Holland.
See you soon



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Not much is left of the existing pier at Kurá Buriú.

New fishermen's pier in Curaçao

WILLEMSTAD--Dock builders in Curaçao have till August 1 to submit a tender for the building of a new pier at Kurá Buriú, the fishing port in the Eastern part of Spanish Water.

The above is part of the project "renovation fishing ports" paid by the Netherlands via USONA. The existing dock has been in a deplorable state for a long time.

A ramp was also built at Playa Canoa on the North

Coast and recently completed. Small boat owners, recreational boaters and even the rescue organisation Citro can use this ramp to put their boats into the water or pull them out.

New Commissioners visit Island Government projects

SABA--Commissioners Bruce Zagers and Chris Johnson toured the sites of current projects as well as the sites for projects in the pipeline on Tuesday, July 10.

Also on the tour with the Department of Public Works were Island Council Member and Head of the Housing Foundation Rolando Wilson and Robert Zagers of the Planning Bureau.

One of the sites visited was the Landfill and, according to Commissioner Zagers who is responsible for Sanitation, a Landfill Management Plan is being drafted and should be completed by the end of July.

The team also visited the harbour and one idea discussed there was the possibility of building an offloading ramp at the end of the container yard to make offloading of containers easier.

They also stopped at the cisterns for the springs, which are proving to be invaluable during the current drought. According to a Government Information Service press release, locks have had to be placed on the cisterns to better manage the selling of the water. Commissioner Zagers was reported saying that the spring water is for everyone, but measures had to be taken, because previ-

ously only a select few were benefiting from it, which was unfair. The keys for these cisterns are available at the Harbour Office.

Some of the other sites visited were Ladder Bay Road, Lower St. Johns, the Junior Garden, the Agriculture Station and areas in Zion's Hill.

"Both Commissioners were very pleased with the informative tour. In the future tours like this will happen on a regular basis in order to keep the Council up to date with the projects that are being dealt with by the Department of Public Works," GIS said.

Pedro de Weever to launch his new book

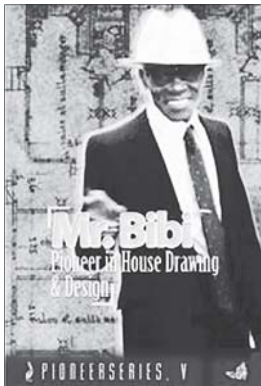
PHILIPSBURG--Pedro de Weever will be holding a book signing for his book *Mr. Bibi: Pioneer in House Drawing & Design* at the Philipsburg Jubilee Library on Saturday, July 14, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

The book priced at US \$5 traces the life of Alexis "Bibi" Guillaume Gumbs from boyhood in a small two-room wooden house to the designer of affordable dream homes and mansions for St. Maarten people from the 1960s to 2000. During his lifetime, Mr. Bibi lived and worked in the Dominican Republic, Curaçao and Aruba. He learned his profession through correspondence courses, studying architectural and other home design books, and apprenticeships.

The book, which was edited by Offshore Editing Services and published by House of Nehesi is the fifth booklet in the pioneer series of non-traditional nation builders from St. Maarten, Saba and St. Eustatius. The publication of the book took more than seven years to complete.

The author will be present to personally provide an inscription to anyone who buys a book. According to the publishers, "There are fascinating glimpses of life, food preparation, and how land was divided and names changed in St. Maarten between 1910, when Bibi was born in Rambaud, to 2002 when he died in the same village."

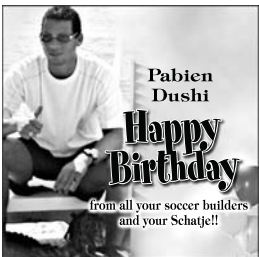
Mr. Bibi contains passing references to the pioneer's contemporary draftsman Robert Arrondell and to St. Maarteners such as Raymond Peterson, Marcel Jeffrey, Claudwick Peterson and Kenneth Serrant who studied architecture as a modern profession. Previous pioneers in the junior scholastic series were cyclist Gassy Richardson, pan-man Chester York, Catholic Priest Alfie Heyliger and road builder Lambert Hassell.



Cover of the new book by Pedro de Weever entitled *Mr. Bibi: Pioneer in House Drawing & Design*.

The publishers would like to thank AMFO and other community-minded businesses like Kwik Bargain, Shipwreck Shop, Van Dorp and Taloula Mango's, who all

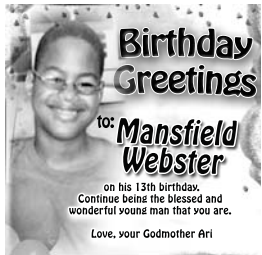
contributed to the publication of Mr. Bibi. De Weever can be reached at 553-0495, or pedro.deweever@gmail.com.



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Gregory Winegar in new Diamonds International store in Anguilla.

Diamonds International opens store in Anguilla

ANGUILLA—The newest store of Diamonds International has just opened in the new Tomac Plaza here. It is being managed by graduate gemologist Gregory Winegar, who is from California and has been living in the Caribbean for the past two years. He is not only a graduate of the Gemological Institute of America (GIA), but he also worked at GIA's West Coast Gem Trade Laboratory as a professional diamond grader.

When asked how he thinks Anguilla will receive its first high end jewelry store he replied that the island is a place of phenomenal

growth right now and "the marriage of Diamonds International and the island of Anguilla is a match made in heaven."

He said although the tourists are a major target for the store they are aiming to provide a level of service and merchandise to Anguillians which will make them proud to have the store here.

"We intend to help eliminate the cost and inconvenience that locals incur when they must travel to St Maarten for their jewelry needs and will serve to deliver to them a level of customer service that is unmatched. We are ex-

pected to be here," Winegar said.

Diamonds International is a family-owned company that is currently one of the largest jewelry retailers in the Caribbean. It began with one store in St. Thomas in 1988 and has expanded to more than 100 stores in countries including Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Belize, Mexico, Barbados, St Lucia and St Maarten.

The founders of Diamonds International are both graduates of the Gemological Institute of America. They personally oversee every aspect of daily operations.

Recalled Kraft items not on supermarket shelves

PHILIPSBURG—The recalled batch of Kraft Food products were not found on supermarket shelves during inspections over the past few days, the Veterinary and Hygiene Department reported Wednesday.

In a press release, the Department said health inspectors from the Department have been in the field over the past few days searching grocery stores and supermarkets for the recalled food product from Kraft Foods Inc.

The recalled items are Back to Nature Sesame Ginger Rice Thins; Lightly Crisped Baked Crackers (Package UPC 7 59283 10013 5, case UPC 07-59283-10013-00, best when used by May 16, 2007.)

The Hygiene Department said it will continue with its inspections to ensure that

the recalled products are not "sitting on a store shelf somewhere on the island."

On Wednesday, local Kraft Foods Inc. supplier Prime Distributors provided health authorities with a product list of imports and the recalled items did not appear on the lists.

The product was recalled because a small number of boxes was inadvertently manufactured using allergens (milk proteins) that are not declared on the product's label.

"If an allergic individual consumes the product, it might cause serious adverse health consequences or death, according to the Associate Director for the Americas of the US Food and Drug Administration," GIS said.

Approximately 2,200 cases of the product were also

distributed to California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin and Bermuda.

"There is an overarching requirement that only safe food be placed on the market and that the right of individuals to have access to safe food only is ensured. We have been working diligently after receiving the food safety advisory from US authorities.

"Human health and food safety is our business and our proactive approach in this matter is to ensure that public health is protected," Hygiene Department Head Tony Boyard was quoted as saying.

Policeman's stolen laptop recovered

ARUBA—The laptop stolen from the home of a Dutch police official was recovered. Two detectives of the Police Corps of Aruba travelled to the Dominican Republic to recover the laptop, which contained a lot of information on crime in Aruba and a strategic plan to tackle it.

The stolen laptop belonged to an official of National Police Corps of the Netherlands who has been in Aruba since March to make a so-called "combat criminality" analysis.

The coordination is with the Prosecutor's Office, Janneke Pöschgen of that office said that the data in the laptop is mostly from

public sources, like annual reports. The reason why the prosecution, the police, and the Kingdom Detective Cooperation Team RST wanted the laptop back was, according to her, the amount of time that was put into this analysis.

Up to now, five persons have been arrested in this case and five houses raided. From an investigation in

one of the homes, police learned that a person had bought the laptop and taken it with other stolen goods to the Dominican Republic. The Dominican police then arrested this person.

With this investigation, police believe they have found a group of burglars with a permanent fence in the Dominican Republic. The investigation is being continued.

Youth leader being trained in Trinidad

ANGUILLA—Sherri-Ann Roberts, President of the Anguilla National Youth Council, is currently in St. Augustine, Trinidad, receiving training in governance.

The programme is being sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is designed to mobilize Caribbean youth and build on their existing skills.

There are 35 young men and women, aged 18-37, involved in the year-long training that will enable them to enhance their skills and participate and influence Caribbean governance processes.

The project is promoting dialogue in governance issues with a focus on par-

ticipatory democracy; the deepening of democracy by strengthening accountability in development processes; youth as change agents in their communities and countries with leadership development; and civic education by creating a regional governance youth network as a tool for knowledge sharing and learning.

The training component of the project supports four training modules that include understanding Caribbean governance challenges, transformative leadership, advocacy and participation in policy development, and gender and governance.

Roberts is participating in the programme on the

recommendation of the Ministry of Social Development, Department of Youth and Culture.

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Dr. Will Smith at the Summer Music Camp

Many students take part in Summer Music Camp

ANGUILLA—Students of Albena Lake Hodge Comprehensive School are currently taking part in a two-week music camp organized by music teacher Lennox Vanterpool with five teachers from American University of Washington as facilitators.

The camp is being sponsored by the Anguilla Tourist Board as an educational component of the annual Tranquillity Jazz Festival.

There are several groups, including voice, strings, woodwind, brass, piano and percussion. The students range from beginners to advanced in ability and from age 5 to adult.

The main facilitator is William Smith, who is Assistant Professor at American University in the Department of Performing Arts. He says that he and his team are here to spread music education and have brought jazz to the students to engage them with music from their heritage.

Vanterpool explained that the annual summer music camp is a wonderful opportunity for the students, but there is so much potential that he would like to see instrument teaching as part of the curriculum. He teaches some of the students and there is a school orchestra

with some 40 members, but these music activities are all out of school functions.

House of Assembly meets July 17 to discuss constitutional reform

~ Meeting being held ahead of talks with UK reps ~

ANGUILLA—Chief Minister Osbourne Fleming has decided to hold a special meeting at the House of Assembly to share with the nation the proposed constitutional changes ahead of the upcoming talks with the British government.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 17, while the first round of discussions between Anguilla and representatives from the UK will be held from July 23 to 25.

Fleming said that the special meeting is necessary to remind the general public of what the recommendations are, as constitutional changes involve the tailoring of the document upon

which democracy, special needs, legitimate interests, fundamental rights and freedoms are based.

He said that although there have been a series of public meetings in the lead up to the first round of talks to enable people to voice their views on the changes proposed, he hopes that the people will continue to be vigilant and demonstrate what participatory democracy is all about.

The discussions with the UK on the reform of Anguilla's Constitution follow from the Report of the Constitutional and Electoral Reform Commission that was established by the then Governor in January

2006 and presented to the present Governor in August 2006. A team of five officials from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office will hold meetings with an Anguillian team consisting of elected members of the House of Assembly, legal advisers, and other community representatives.

The review of Anguilla's Constitution is part of a process being undertaken with a number of the UK Overseas Territories. It is likely that more than one round of discussions will be needed before final agreement is reached on a modern constitution that is acceptable to both the people of Anguilla and the UK.



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UK tour operators experience Anguilla

ANGUILLA—A group of tour operators from the UK visited Anguilla this week under the guidance of Anguilla's marketing representative in the UK Carolyn Browne of CSB Communications.

One of the main purposes of the visit was to address the challenges of accessibility to Anguilla from the UK with a view to increasing tourist figures from that market and decreasing the heavy dependence on the USA market.

The group travelled from Antigua with Rainbow International Airlines, a jet service that is Anguillian owned and operated by Kirby Hodge. They said they were very satisfied with this

connection and could now recommend it to their clients. They also experienced Anguilla Air Services, locally owned and operated by Carl Thomas and went on a day trip to St. Barths.

"We feel very confident that having this type of initiative coupled with other ongoing marketing initiatives in the UK will provide not only diversification to our initiatives, but will ensure sustainability of our presence in the UK market, thus ensuring success of our local airlines and by direct extension success and growth for the island," a spokesperson for the Anguilla Tourist Board explained.

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The first outlines of what's going to be the Hyatt Resort in Curaçao are rising behind Barbara Beach. The 350-room resort extends from the beach some hundred metres to the seacoast in the direction of Fuikbaai. What was used as beach-bar before is now the construction site hut, "the most beautiful in the world," jokes supervisor Raul Reinren. The developer is Geveke Development, a branch of the Dutch Vervat Group.

Golding explains system for a fixed election date

KINGSTON, Jamaica—Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) leader Bruce Golding Wednesday reacted to criticisms of his party's commitment to prioritise a fixed election date, suggesting that it could be done without changing entrenched clauses of the Constitution.

In a statement to the media, Golding said that based on Section 65 of the Constitution, which states that a general election shall be held within three months after the dissolution of Parliament, the actual date for the holding of an election is obviously tied to the date of the dissolution of Parliament.

He said that while that provision is entrenched, Section 64(1), which gives the Prime Minister the right to advise the governor general to prorogue or dissolve Parliament by proclamation published in the Gazette any time he/she wishes, was not entrenched and could be amended by a majority in Parliament.

He said that the JLP would also seek to remove Section 71(3) of the Constitution, which provides that if the House of Representatives passes a resolution for the appointment of the Prime Minister to be revoked, the governor general shall revoke the appointment but, before doing so, shall consult with the prime minister



Bruce Golding

and if the prime minister, within three days, so requests, the governor general shall dissolve Parliament instead of revoking the appointment.

He said, however, that the prime minister would still have the option to name an election date within three months of the dissolution of Parliament, under section 65(1). He said that the Opposition would wish to see that option reduced to 30 days, but accepted that an amendment would require a referendum.

He said a JLP government, if elected on August 27, would introduce a bill to Parliament to amend or remove Section 64(1) and to remove Section 71(3) within the first 100 days in office.

Following Sunday's announcement by Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller of August 27, as the date

of the general election, the Opposition Leader reacted that it was "fundamentally wrong" for the election date to be used as a strategic tool by the prime minister in the interest of the ruling People's National Party (PNP).

Wednesday he said the changes would ensure that "no prime minister, in the future, will be able to hold the country to ransom this way."

Since then there have been public discussions on the issue, including the input of Golding's predecessor, Edward Seaga, who was opposed to the proposal as leader of the JLP (Jamaica Observer)

Dr. Verene Shephard to speak in Cry Freedom Lecture Series

ST. KITTS—Dr. Verene Shephard, Professor of Social History at University of the West Indies, will deliver Lecture II of the Cry Freedom Distinguished Lecture Series. The St. Kitts and Nevis National Commission for UNESCO in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture announced Thursday.

The Lecture Series is part of the commemorative activities that have been organized to celebrate the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the British Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Shepherd will lecture on the theme "In Our Own Words: In Search of a More Liberating and Self-Affirming Caribbean Identity." The evening programme will get underway at 7:30pm at the Sir Cecil Jacobs Auditorium at Eastern Caribbean Central Bank.

Secretary General of the UNESCO Commission Antonio Maynard said, "The topic for this lecture is quite appropriate and timely, because it speaks to the important role of cultural identity in shaping the way forward in regional integration."

He continued: "The fundamental ideology of this movement must be founded on a regional identity, focusing on the creation of a distinctly Caribbean person. Who that person will be depends upon us, as descendants of strong and resilient Caribbean people."



Dr. Verene Shephard

who overcame the chattels and deprivations of our slavery and colonial past to now come full circle and overturn some of the age-

old stereotypes about the Caribbean and Caribbean people".

Dr. Shephard is currently the Chair of the Jamaica National Bicentenary Committee, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Jamaica National Heritage Trust, President of the Association of Caribbean Historians and Second Vice President of the Jamaica Historical Society. She has authored, edited and compiled several publications dealing with slavery, emancipation, gender and Asian labour migration and settlement.

University warns of fake certificates

GEORGETOWN, Guyana—The University of Guyana (UG) says anyone who is suspicious of the authenticity of any certificate bearing the likeness of genuine UG certificates should contact the office of the registrar.

The university said that it has become aware of fake certificates purporting to be issued by the institution that have been circulating locally and overseas.

In an advertisement Registrar, Dr David Chanderbali, advised persons suspicious of the authenticity of any certificate containing elements of genuine University of Guyana certificates to immediately contact the office of the registrar at telephone number 222-4184.

The advertisement stated that transcripts (other than student copies) are, as a rule, posted directly to the nominated addressee and these may also be submitted for verification. (Stabroek News)

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Prime Minister takes '7s' criticisms light-heartedly

KINGSTON, Jamaica—Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller Wednesday took a good-natured swipe at persons speculating that she may be involved in numerology because of her play with the number 7, as she commissioned a new irrigation system at Seven Rivers in Cambridge, St James.

"The fact that the first official duty that I am performing after flying the gate is at Seven Rivers, I hope others do not have a problem with Seven Rivers," Simpson Miller said at the commissioning ceremony for the new irrigation system.

"I cannot deny the fact that I am the seventh prime minister of Jamaica; that Jamaica has seven letters, and that we have seven national heroes and here am I at this historical site, Seven Rivers," said the prime minister to much laughter.

Simpson Miller has come under heavy criticism for her apparent fixation with the number 7.



Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller addresses Wednesday's commissioning of the Seven Rivers Irrigation System in Cambridge, St James. (Jamaica Observer photo by Paul Reid)

At Sunday's mass rally in Half-Way-Tree where she announced that the dates for nomination and election days would be August 7 and 27, respectively, Simpson Miller made much of the fact that she was the country's 7th prime minister and that Jamaica had 7 national heroes.

The Seven Rivers irriga-

tion system, built at a cost of US\$400,000, was the second of three 'flagship projects' to be put into use by the National Irrigation Commission.

The project was made possible through a partnership between the Caribbean Development Bank and the Jamaican Government.

Agriculture Minister Roger Clarke, who also spoke at the function, described the event as 'historic' with two irrigation systems being commissioned in two weeks.

The Pedro Plains system was commissioned recently with the third, a rehabilitation plant in Houslow, to be put back into service in September this year.

"The commissioning of the Seven Rivers irrigation system marks another milestone for agriculture in Jamaica, today we are equipping you farmers with the tools necessary to help them to increase production," said Clarke. (Jamaica Observer)

Labour ministry probe confirms breaches in downtown wholesales

KINGSTOWN, Jamaica—The Ministry of Labour and Social Security says it has detected major deficiencies in a number of key areas at several wholesales in downtown Kingston during recent inspections, corroborating the findings of an earlier study by a Master's student at the University of the West Indies.

Among the areas found wanting were working hours, wages and overtime pay, vacation and maternity leave entitlements, time allotted for lunch breaks and matters relating to occupational safety and health, the ministry said Tuesday in a statement.

According to the ministry, the inspections were done in two phases - the first of which was conducted by its Pay and Conditions of Employment Branch (PCEB) among 72 shops from May 15 to 31. The second phase, which ran from June 7 to 12, was conducted by the Occupational Safety and Health Department (OSHD) and covered 26 establishments.

With regards to wages, the ministry said while most persons adhered to the

"National Minimum Wage of J\$3,200 per week", many did not "compensate their workers for overtime".

"Instead they gave them an extra \$200 or \$300 for work done on Saturdays," it said in a press release on Tuesday.

But the ministry said it discovered what was considered a "major breach" in the area of occupational safety and health: the absence of fire escapes and exits and fire warning devices. According to the ministry, "only a minimal number of establishments had fire extinguishers in place".

Other deficiencies cited were the lack of proper ventilation, lunch and restrooms particularly for female workers.

The inspections were carried out in response to a survey which highlighted the conditions in which women in downtown wholesale bargain stores were forced to work.

The survey, done by Ann Murray-Brown for her Master's thesis at UWI, revealed that the women were, among other things, denied maternity benefits,

overtime pay, sick leave, prevented from sitting for entire days, and made to do back-breaking work.

There are an estimated 600 women working in wholesale bargain stores in the downtown Kingston business district.

Brown's report, titled 'Gender and Labour in Jamaica, Modern day Slavery?' The experiences of women working in the wholesales in downtown Kingston', also cited human rights breaches, as well as violations of Jamaica's employment and labour laws and the International Labour Organisation's Declaration on the Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

According to Brown's report, the practices at several wholesales were in contravention of several national labour and employment laws as well as international conventions. Her report also drew concern from groups such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). (Jamaica Observer)

Jamaican teachers in UK take plight to British PM

LONDON, England—The plight of Jamaican teachers working in the United Kingdom without Qualified Teacher's Status (QTS) is to be placed before Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Minister of Children, Schools and Families Ed Balls.

George Galloway, the member of parliament for Bow and head of the Respect Party, told the group that he intended to pressure the Labour Party on the matter during the next meeting of Parliament.

The east London MP's pledge came one day after the government offered unqualified Overseas Trained Teachers (OTTs) a conditional one-year extension within which to gain QTS. The Government had previously set a September 2007 deadline for the teachers, who arrived in that country in 2001, to complete a first degree.

But in an apparent move to appease the teachers, the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) offered them the conditional deadline extension and said they could work as instructors. The teachers would, however,

be required to obtain work permits from the Home Office which would allow them to stay in the country.

"There is also an extension to deadlines for those who have had statutory leave," the DCSF said, adding that deadlines, which become effective in September will be extended to take into account statutory maternity, adoption, paternity or parental leave taken by teachers. The teachers must gain their QTS during this conditional extension.

The DCSF, however, made it clear that employment as instructors would only be done if there are no qualified teachers to fill the positions.

"The head teachers should

not simply reclassify former teachers as instructor," the department said in a statement.

Wednesday, more than 100 OTTs, led by Galloway and the National Union of Teachers, marched on the offices of the DCSF in south-west London.

The group, which also included teachers from the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and several other Caribbean territories, accused the DCSF of being "insensitive" and "unfair". They were joined by support groups, Jamaican Overseas Teachers Association - UK, Facilitators for a Better Jamaica and the Black Londoners' Forum. (Jamaica Observer)

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VACANCY

Former speaker: Manning dismantling the judiciary

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad—Former House Speaker Nizam Mohammed has accused Prime Minister Patrick Manning of systematically dismantling the judiciary, adding this could lead to a path of destruction and ruin in this country.

Warning of the dangers

of the People's National Movement (PNM) getting a two-thirds majority in the upcoming general elections, Mohammed beseeched the nation to commit itself to ensure that does not happen.

Mohammed was addressing the Congress of the Peo-

ple's (COP) public meeting at Montrose Government School, Chaguanas, on Tuesday night. Other speakers included Nirad Tiwarie, Wendy Lee Yuen, Dr Patrick Watson and Political Leader Winston Dookeran.

Mohammed said: "Manning is systematically dis-

mantling the judiciary in Trinidad and Tobago, as it happened in other places such as Guyana, Zimbabwe and Pakistan. We are following the path of destruction and ruin."

The attorney added: "We do not understand the implications of that yet."

He suggested that "we have to put our differences behind us, give up our likes and dislikes. There is room for everyone in the politics".

Mohammed stressed that the population must understand that "there will be no second chance".

He accused the PNM of us-

ing State funds to buy votes to get the two-thirds majority.

"If they win, then there would be an executive president and then you will see

dictatorial tendencies and development as we have never witnessed." (Trinidad Express)



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Corbin raps President on judiciary impasse

GEORGETOWN, Guyana—Opposition Leader Robert Corbin has written President Bharrat Jagdeo saying that the President's failure to reach consensus on the top judicial appointments or to observe the letter and spirit of the constitution threatens to place Guyana "beyond the pale among the democratic countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean".

The second reading of the controversial High Court (Amendment) Bill which was expected to come up Thursday was expected to be deferred. The bill aims to give the Chancellor, the constitutionally recognized head of the judiciary, "general supervisory provisions over the administration of the High Court, which he may or may not exercise".

"The opposition has argued that this is an attempt by the President to get around the constitutional requirement for consensus with

the Opposition Leader on the candidates for Chancellor and Chief Justice. If the bill is passed the Chief Justice - who is the President's candidate for the chancellorship - will continue in the position of acting Chancellor.

It is expected that following Corbin's letter of July 8 to the President that the scheduled second reading of the bill today will be deferred. The Government Information Agency (GINA) yesterday issued a statement in response to Corbin's letter saying:

"Corbin had correctly pointed out that the government had given no undertaking to withdraw the bill which was reintroduced after President Jagdeo and Corbin were consistently unsuccessful in reaching agreement on the appointments.

President Bharrat Jagdeo * That President Jagdeo had since however con-



Robert Corbin

mitted to delay the second reading of the bill, providing an opportunity for further discussion on this long outstanding matter.

Corbin in his letter proposed a course of action for the next six weeks which would include a withdrawal of the bill and the scheduling of an urgent formal meeting to seek consensus on the appointment of a Chancellor.

Corbin's proposal includes a meeting with an agreed agenda. In his proposal for the appointment of nomi-



Bharrat Jagdeo

nees to head the judiciary, he said that if one nominee continues to be the present Chief Justice, they should agree at the same meeting to discuss the appointment of a Chief Justice in the event that the nominee is agreed upon to be appointed as Chancellor. In the event they disagree on a substantive permanent appointee to either position, the agenda should provide for discussions concerning acting appointments.

At the meeting, Corbin said they should share with each other the facts which form the basis of the selection of the nominees, and the appointment of a candidate should not be regarded as written in stone. He added that a spirit of consensus-seeking should prevail and the views of persons and organisations consulted by either party should be made available to the other.

Corbin said he believed that the country's judicial system was at a watershed and the recent reintroduction of the bill was intended to emasculate the Office of Chief Justice and place it under the dominion of the Chancellor establishing "a point of no return for the judiciary and its capacity to constitutionally protect the individual citizen or any group which does not meet the demands of the ruling Party." (Stabroek News)

Leadership issues still to be settled within UNC/Alliance

PORT-OF-SPAIN, Trinidad—United National Congress (UNC) Political Leader Basdeo Panday is not interested in being the leader of the new UNC/Alliance coalition.

Panday indicated his position in an interview with the Express Wednesday as Stephen Yedits, who leads one of the other groups in the coalition. Yedits, said the former Conva North MP would not necessarily be the UNC/Alliance political leader.

"I don't want to be in charge either. I am interested in getting rid of the PNM and returning this country to peace and harmony," Panday said.

The formation of the coalition between the UNC, YESit, the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR), the Democratic Party of Trinidad and Tobago (DPTT) and the National Democratic Party and the activist group YESit was announced by Panday on Monday.

"Leadership depends on whether people want to you to be their leader. Power comes from the people," Panday said.

The UNC/Alliance is now being managed by a leadership council that comprises Panday, Cadiz, NAR political leader Dr Carson Charles, DPTT Political Leader Steve Alvarez, NDP leader Mike Simms as well as UNC deputy Political Leaders Jack Warner and Opposition Leader Kamla Persad-Bissessar.

Speaking to the Express Wednesday, Cadiz said there was no denying that Panday is still a dominant force in

local politics. He, however, added, "I think the UNC has realised that Mr Panday has had his issues and I don't think the general electorate would support that."

He described the electorate as being too mature to accept "any old pick up side" and "therefore, something new has to emerge".

"Mr Panday has a vital role to play in this whole thing, which is to be the leader of the UNC, not necessarily the leader of the Alliance," Cadiz said.

Panday is now seeking to be reappointed as the Couva North MP after having a conviction and sentence in the trial against him last year on failing to declare a London bank account overturned by the Appeal Court earlier this year.

Cadiz is now facing a retrial in that matter as well as corruption charges relating to the Piarcio International Airport project.

Cadiz and Charles said that while they are not actively pursuing the leadership of the UNC/Alliance, they would not turn it down if they have the full support of the coalition's members.

"If people feel I could do it, then of course, I would accept that. This is not for me to say," Cadiz said. "If the platform decides that I am the most appropriate person, then I cannot see how I can say no," Charles said.

He asserted that appointment of a UNC/Alliance political leader will only be resolved when a date for the general election is called. (Trinidad Express)

Region plans to better prepare for disasters

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados—Barbados' public and private sectors have signed a deal which will ensure a better response should disaster strike.

Wednesday, officials from the Caribbean Centre for the American Action (CCAA), the Barbados Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, and the Barbados Department of Emergency Management (BDEM) signed the Declaration of Principles document at Hilton Barbados.

The signing brought the curtains down on the 2007 Disaster Management Workshop series on Preparing Before The Storm.

Head of BDEM, formerly the Central Emergency Relief Organisation (CERO), Judy Thomas explained the signing was an indication that they were willing to work with partners to execute the national disaster management programme.

She added that through the collaborative effort, they will be able to access support and expertise through the other entities.

"This is part of the Emergency Management Act

of 2006 which requires a partnership between the public and private sectors," she said.

She added that they were also "open" to such partnerships with other members of the private sector.

According to the declaration document, "it is recognised by the parties that co-ordinated response management by all sectors will play a key role in the ability of countries to recover from such events to return to normal business operations as quickly and efficiently

as possible".

Among the items agreed to by the signatories are plans to ensure and support a plan to address the needs of first responders [emergency personnel] and their families in tandem; increase awareness of the importance of best practices in disaster management; and co-ordinating in mutual planning, exercise, drills, or other training activities designed to train personnel to prepare for, cope with, or prevent the impact of any disaster emergency. (Daily Nation)



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The representatives of 12 local corporate institutions recently attended an interactive seminar on pensions and pension planning, organized by RBTT Bank. The main objective of the seminar was to cultivate awareness amongst participants on the benefits of proper pension planning.

The seminar was conducted by Sr. Advisor Commercial Lines, Mr. Michel Teunisse of insurance company ENNIA. During the well attended session he shared his knowledge of proper pension planning for corporate institutions as well as for individuals.

RBTT Managing Director, Mr. Wayne Kowlessar, Corporate Banking Manager, Mr. Harry Harinarain and RBTT Corporate Insurance Officer, Mr. Lionel Lawrence were also present during the seminar. Mr. Kowlessar stated: "While the traditional product of banking centers around deposit and loan activities, RBTT's vision for its clients goes far beyond this. This session will mark the beginning of a series of added-value activities that RBTT will be providing to its corporate clients."

On behalf of RBTT Bank, Mr. Harinarain thanked Mr. Teunisse and all participants for their attendance.



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Bush rules out shift on Iraq, report is mixed

WASHINGTON--President George W. Bush put off changing course in Iraq for at least two months on Thursday but the U.S. House of Representatives signaled its frustration by calling for combat troops to leave by April.

An interim White House report released just before Bush spoke gave the Iraq government a mixed review in meeting political and security goals—providing more ammunition for war opponents demanding that Bush start ending U.S. mili-

tary involvement.

In a symbolic move, the Democratic-controlled House voted 223-201 to approve legislation to bring combat troops out of Iraq by April 1, 2008. Defying a veto threat from Bush, House Democrats hope the vote will put pressure on the Senate to attach a similar troop withdrawal timetable to a military policy bill it is debating. Two previous efforts either died in the Senate or were vetoed by Bush.

Trying to buy time in the

face of a growing revolt among fellow Republicans over his Iraq strategy, Bush urged lawmakers to withhold judgment until he receives a broader assessment in September from Gen. David Petraeus, the top commander in Iraq, and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker. "We'll also have a clearer picture of how the new strategy is unfolding, and be in a better position to judge where we need to make any adjustments," Bush told a news conference.

Bush conceded that "war fatigue" had set in among the American public and Congress but that it was premature to talk about bringing U.S. forces home, less than a month after all of an additional 28,000 troops had arrived as part of a new attempt to boost security. Signaling the next report could be pivotal, Bush said he would consider "making another decision, if need be" at that time.

Holding his first news conference in nearly two months, Bush's tone was at times strident, at times beseeching, as he defended the U.S. role in a war that has claimed the lives of more than 3,600 U.S. troops and tens of thousands of Iraqis. A USA Today/Gallup poll this week showed more than seven in 10 Americans favor withdrawing nearly all U.S. troops by April, and several surveys show Bush's approval ratings the lowest of any American president in decades.

Bush said he understood



U.S. President George W. Bush speaks at a press conference in the Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington, on Thursday.

opposition to the war but he was the commander-in-chief and would rely on his generals' advice. "I guess I'm like any other political figure. Everybody wants to

be loved—just sometimes the decisions you make and the consequences don't enable you to be loved," Bush said.

To demonstrate U.S. com-

mitment to the Middle East, Bush said he would send Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates to the region in early August.

Bush denies al Qaeda at pre-Sept. 11 strength

WASHINGTON--U.S. President George W. Bush denied on Thursday that al Qaeda is as strong today as it was before the Sept. 11 attacks.

Bush spoke after media reports, citing a new intelligence assessment, said the militant network is now as great a threat to U.S. soil as in the months before the 2001 hijack-plane attacks. "There is a perception in the coverage that al Qaeda may be as strong today as they were prior to Sept. 11. That's just simply not the case," Bush told reporters.

While administration officials have acknowledged that al Qaeda had recovered somewhat since U.S.-led forces drove its operatives underground in Afghanistan in late 2001, Bush insisted, "Because of the actions we've taken, al Qaeda is weaker today than they would have been."

"They are still a threat. They are still dangerous and that is why it is important that we succeed in Afghanistan and Iraq and anywhere else we find them," he told a news conference dominated by the release of an interim progress report on the Iraq war.

Bush put much of the blame on al Qaeda attacks for the Iraqi government's shortcomings in achieving national reconciliation. But sectarian killings between majority Shi'ites and minority Sunnis have also accounted for a large share of the death toll.

Bush's comments echoed those of Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, who said on Thursday the threat to the United States from al Qaeda has

not returned to levels seen just before the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington. "I wouldn't put it at that level," he told ABC's "Good Morning America." "I do think we've accomplished an awful lot in dismantling their activities overseas and in building our own defenses. But I do think the level of intent on the part of the enemy remains very high."

The Washington Post cited a Bush administration intelligence report saying al Qaeda has significantly rebuilt itself and established a safe haven in remote tribal areas of western Pakistan. Top intelligence analysts also told Congress on Wednesday that al Qaeda's training activities, funding and communications have increased as the militant network has settled into new bases in remote areas of Pakistan.

Chertoff told the Chicago Tribune this week that his "gut feeling" was that the United States faced a heightened risk of attack this summer. But he told NBC on Thursday: "We don't have any specific information about an imminent or near-term attack on the homeland. We're looking at the strategic picture over the next six months to a year. We're evaluating where that is."

He said his concern the United States could be entering a period of heightened risk was based on greater al Qaeda activity in Pakistan and Africa, an increase in public messages from militant figures including Osama bin Laden's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, and a history of summer attacks.

Surgeon general nominee denies he's against gays

WASHINGTON--Surgeon general nominee disputed critics' claims that he holds "anti-gay" views and told senators on Thursday he would quit before bowing to political interference in his job.

"I can only say that I have a deep, deep appreciation for the essential humanity of everyone, regardless of their personal circumstances or their sexual orientation," Dr. James Holsinger testified during his two-hour confirmation hearing.

Holsinger also said he favors banning drug com-

panies from advertising prescription medications on television, saying it puts undue pressure on doctors to prescribe particular pills. He also said he would support banning TV, and radio and newspaper advertising of "junk food" aimed at children.

Holsinger, chosen by Bush in May to be the nation's top doctor, testified before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, which considers his nomination before any vote by the full Senate. Just two days earlier, the first surgeon general appointed

by Bush, Dr. Richard Carmona, accused the administration of preventing him from speaking out on stem cell research and other controversial issues, censoring speeches and blocking reports on ideological and political grounds.

Gay rights groups oppose Holsinger, citing a 1991 document he wrote titled "Pathophysiology of Male Homosexuality." Written to a United Methodist Church panel studying homosexuality, Holsinger offered exhaustive anatomical details to describe anal sex as unnatural.

"Questions have been raised about my faith and about my commitment to the health and well-being of all Americans, including gay and lesbian Americans," Holsinger told senators.

Holsinger said he was deeply troubled by these allegations, saying they do not "represent who I am, what I believe, or how I have practiced medicine for the past 40 years."

But Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, the committee's chairman, said, "Dr. Holsinger's paper cherry-picks and misuses data to support his thesis that homosexuality is unhealthy and unnatural."

"I did not attempt to write a definitive scientific paper," Holsinger responded, admitting its contents were now outdated.

Young black smokers face obstacles to quitting

NEW YORK--An "alarmingly" high number of inner-city black young adults smoke and, for those trying to quit, several factors may conspire to thwart their efforts, researchers show.

A key factor, researchers found, is the widespread belief among 18- to 24-year-old black smokers and nonsmokers that smoking cigarettes is a normal behavior that's very common and "essentially unproblematic."

The ease with which people can purchase single cigarettes, or "loosies" as they are known, is another factor. "This study found that the sale of single cigarettes was more pervasive

than previously reported and that most of the sales occurred on the street," according to the report in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

"This easy and affordable way to purchase cigarettes from street vendors and stores undermines tax policies, promotes smoking as a normative behavior and may contribute to high smoking rates in some inner-city communities," write Baltimore-based researchers led by Frances A. Stillman of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

In 1996, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration tried to ban the sale of

single cigarettes, but "current laws differ from state to state and enforcement is lax," the authors report. These barriers to smoking cessation in inner-city black youth emerged in focus groups conducted with 28 young adult black men and women living in Baltimore, Maryland, as well as in a written survey completed by 156 black young adults living in the same area.

Other influences fueling the high level of smoking and lack of interest in quitting among inner-city black young adults are industry-targeted advertising, marketing and promotional campaigns.

France Warns:

No Serbia entry to EU without Kosovo deal

BELGRADE—France told Serbia on Thursday it could not hope to defy a Western plan to give Kosovo independence and still expect to join the European Union.

"You are going to join the EU," French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner told Serb reporters in Belgrade.

"But when I say that, don't think that it is going to be before Kosovo is resolved peacefully," he said after meeting his Serbian counterpart, Vuk Jeremic.

"It is not possible to enter the EU with ethnic conflict," added

Kouchner, who was himself United Nations governor for Serbia from 1999 to 2001.

Enlisting the powerful help of Russia, Serbia has blocked Western efforts to steer the secession of its southern province through the United Nations. NATO allies with 16,000 soldiers in the territory are concerned the impulse could spark unrest among Kosovo's 2 million ethnic Albanians, the 90 percent majority.

The EU had denied any link between resolving the fate of Kosovo and Serbia's bid to join the bloc over the next decade.

UN doubles aid appeal for Iraq as 2,000 flee daily

GENEVA—The United Nations refugee agency on Thursday doubled its funding appeal for Iraq this year to \$123 million, saying humanitarian needs continued to mushroom as an estimated 2,000 people flee violence each day.

Most of the revised appeal, up from \$60 million in January, will be used to provide shelter, food, health care, education and other emergency services to Iraqis who cross into neighbouring countries.

Syria and Jordan are already struggling to host 2 million Iraqis who fled before and since the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, while another 2 million people are uprooted within Iraq, according to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Massive displacement of Iraqis externally and internally continues unabated, causing a great deal of suffering and uncertainty," Radhouane Nouicer, director of UNHCR's Middle East and North Africa bureau, told a news briefing.

The agency had received

\$67 million towards its initial appeal, including \$17 million from the United States, and was seeking more from both new and traditional donors. The United States on Thursday announced an additional donation of \$19 million.

"At least one Iraqi in seven is displaced and UNHCR estimates the number of those newly displaced at 2,000 per day," the UNHCR said in an appeal document sent to donors.

"Thousands of Iraqis approaching UNHCR are the victims of torture, sexual and gender-based violence, car bombings, or other violent attacks and are in urgent need of medical care."

Many Iraqi children had been out of school for two to three years, raising the prospect of "potential emergence of a generation of uneducated Iraqi youth", the UNHCR warned.

As part of its protection strategy, the UNHCR has set a target of resettling 20,000 of the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees to third countries this year.

But Kouchner's comments echoed a tougher line taken by EU Commission President

Jose Manuel Barroso last week in Brussels. "Unless this issue is settled, we will not be able to reach our objective—Serbia as an EU member one day," Barroso said.

Kosovo Prime Minister Agim Ceku said in Kosovo on Thursday that the EU should be "more courageous". He repeated a call for the West to set a deadline for the province to declare independence.

Kosovo has been run by the United Nations since 1999, when NATO bombed Serbia for 78 days to halt the killing and expulsion of Albanian civilians in a two-year counter-insurgency war.

A draft U.N. Security Council resolution calls for another 120 days of Serb-Albanian talks to find the compromise that proved elusive in 13 months of dialogue which ended last March. Kouchner said independence would be the automatic outcome if talks again failed. "If we don't manage to resolve this issue we shall go back to the (Martti) Ahtisari plan," he said.

U.N. mediator Ahtisari has proposed independence under the supervision of the EU, with strong safeguards for Kosovo's 100,000 remaining Serbs and their religious and historic sites. It is uncertain whether Russia would drop its opposition to Kosovo statehood after 120 days of talks, or the United States and EU would be forced to recognise a unilateral declaration.

"If these efforts (at the United Nations) are not successful, they should allow us to declare independence, or let us set a date," Ceku told reporters.

Serbia is engaged in talks with the EU on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement, the first step on the long road to eventual membership. But it must hand over top Bosnian Serb war crimes fugitive Ratko Mladic to clinch the deal.



Spanish civil guard members stand next to the Ocean Alert in Algeciras's Port, southern Spain, on Thursday.

Spain seizes US treasure boat close to Gibraltar

GIBRALTAR—Spanish police boarded an American treasure-hunting ship on Thursday that Madrid believes may have taken gold and silver worth millions from a sunken Spanish galleon.

A Spanish Civil Guard patrol boat challenged the Ocean Alert after it left the British colony of Gibraltar, on Spain's southern tip, and confronted the captain with a court order to search his vessel, the Civil Guard said in a statement. The boat then docked at the Spanish port of Algeciras.

Spain says the U.S. company Odyssey Marine Exploration has treasure Madrid believes could have been retrieved from Spanish waters or from a Spanish galleon which sank in the Atlantic during the colonial period.

Odyssey Marine Exploration, a Florida-based treasure hunting company, has said it legally recovered gold and silver coins worth

an estimated \$500 million from a colonial-era wreck code-named Black Swan at a location in the Atlantic Ocean which it refuses to disclose. Odyssey said it had arranged with the Civil Guard for an on-ship inspection of Ocean Alert in international waters.

"To Odyssey's surprise, when the Guardia Civil did stop the vessel on Thursday, they informed the Captain that the ship would instead have to travel to a Spanish port for inspection," Odyssey said in an e-mail to Reuters.

This was "in direct contravention of the arrangement which had been agreed to the previous day and contradicted the representations of the Spanish Judge," it said.

"As a result, the Captain refused to be boarded and the Guardia Civil boarded the ship under threat of force, which is illegal in international waters under these

circumstances," it said.

Spain suspects the company of illegally flying treasure to the United States. The Ocean Alert, which had a Spanish lawyer on board, is one of three vessels belonging to Odyssey which are subject to a search warrant issued by a Spanish court last month. It had been effectively stuck in Gibraltar since then. It was not clear what its destination was on Thursday.

Once in the port of Algeciras, crew had their possessions removed and searched. No one was immediately arrested or charged. It was not clear whether arrests would follow or if the boat would be confiscated.

British government sources said London would raise the case with the Spanish Foreign Ministry since the boat should not have been detained in international waters without permission from Panama, where the boat is registered.



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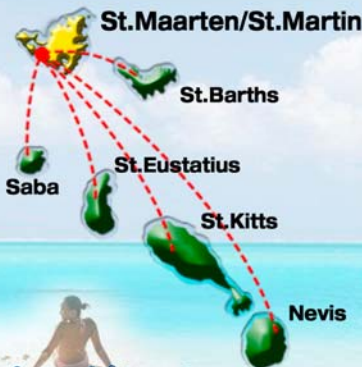
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War memories rankle Israelis along battered border

KIRYAT SHMONA, Israel—Only Peretz has angrier words for her own Israeli government than for the Hezbollah guerrillas over in Lebanon who pounded her town with rockets last year, wrecking or damaging hundreds of homes.

"I felt they treated me like a refugee in the Gaza Strip," said Peretz, 41, a mother of three in the Kiryat Shmona border town, comparing her circumstances during the month-long war with the lot of Palestinians in their war-torn coastal territory.

Much of Peretz's small three-room apartment suffered blast damage during the fighting, when Hezbollah fired some 4,000 rockets into Israel, more than a quarter of which ploughed into her working class town of 25,000. Though her home has since been repaired at government expense, the part-time clerk feels pa-



A group of Israeli peace activists demonstrate against war in the northern town of Kiryat Shmona July 11, 2007.

troubled by Israeli authorities she says did little during the fighting to relieve the suffering of civilians living near the front lines.

She worries that war could well return and empathises with Lebanese civilians who

were killed or whose homes were destroyed in the war. "When we shell them, those poor people suffer too," she told Reuters last week.

The 34-day war erupted last July 12 after the guerrillas captured two Israeli

soldiers and killed eight in a cross-border raid, then rocketed the Jewish state as Israel bombarded their strongholds in Lebanon, killing more than 1,200 Lebanese. In Israel, 157 people were killed, mostly soldiers and 43 of them civilians before a U.N.-sponsored truce.

Kiryat Shmona was the most battered of Israel's northern region bordering on Lebanon, where up to a million Israelis took refuge in concrete-reinforced shelters or fled the area. Though the town sustained few civilian casualties—none were killed by rockets, while 50 people suffered injuries—the war's physical and emotional impact was great.

More than 1,000 of the Katyusha rockets fired from Lebanon struck Kiryat Shmona, destroying or damaging more than 2,000 homes and businesses there alone. Fires ignited by rockets and Israeli artillery shells scorched 75,000 trees around the town.

Most Israeli homes and businesses damaged in the war have since been repaired, but building facades

marked by shrapnel still dot the landscape as a ready reminder of what has passed.

Also slowing the war recovery is the fact that Kiryat Shmona, which translates as "Town of the Eight"

after eight Jewish heroes killed fighting Arabs there in 1920, is one of Israel's poorest, bypassed by an otherwise booming economy. Unemployment is rampant among the town's population mainly of immigrants from former Soviet states and North Africa, many of whom feel cut off from and forgotten by Israel's mainstream.

Peretz resents how her town has been sidelined. "Once it's quiet here, no one pays much attention to us or cares about our economic situation. If I had the money I would leave," she says.

She also worries the fighting isn't really over. "I feel almost sure the war will return. It's on my mind all the time."

Such concerns were fueled by an official inquiry released in April that scathingly criticised Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's handling of the war. In addition to assailing the military's war readiness, the Winograd Commission said the government had provided inadequate protection for Israeli civilians in the line of fire, citing a lack of bomb shelters and other measures.

Kiryat Shmona city officials say fewer than 100 of

about 550 public shelters still had been refurbished since last year's war. "There's a terrible feeling of anger among the residents of Kiryat Shmona," says Peretz referring to the shelters.

She recalls how vulnerable she felt during the war when she avoided using her own building's mouldy, flea-infested shelter. "It started with 30 or 40 rockets a day then rose to 100. People here suffered endlessly," she says.

Peretz sent her three children to relatives in another town after her youngest boy, Naor, now 13, was hurled across the building's lobby when a rocket struck a neighbour's home.

She regrets that Israel's attacks also caused victims among the Lebanese, killing them and ruining their homes. "Their children suffer just like mine do, why should they?" she said.

Having grown up in a town prone to rocket attacks from Lebanon since the 1970s—none so intense as the 2006 war—Peretz doubts she will ever see peace along the Lebanese border. She has put plans to celebrate her son's bar mitzva, a Jewish coming of age ceremony, on hold for now, pending a quiet summer for fear of it being disrupted by a rocket attack.

"In another two or three months, if I see it is calm," Peretz said. "Maybe then I'll plan a party."

UN Hariri investigators identify main suspects

UNITED NATIONS—U.N. investigators probing the killing of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri have identified a number of people who may have been involved or know about it, their chief reported on Thursday.

New information about a van used to blow up Hariri and 22 others in Beirut in February 2005, about mobile phones used to track him and about Hariri's political activities had helped to pinpoint suspects, Belgian prosecutor Serge Brammertz said.

The role of Hariri, who became a prominent critic of Syria, in support of a 2004 U.N. resolution demanding that Syrian and other foreign troops withdraw from Lebanon had emerged as a likely motive, he said in a report to the Security Council.

In the eighth report so far by the U.N. team, Brammertz said that since the last one in March, investigators had clarified their findings by condensing some 120,000 document pages into reports totaling 2,400 pages. That effort "has helped identify a number of persons of particular interest who may have been involved in some aspect of the preparation and execution of the attack" on Hariri or had prior know-

edge of it, he said.

Brammertz did not name any suspects in his report, which also expressed concern that deteriorating security in Lebanon could hamper the continuing U.N. inquiry, which will eventually hand over to a court approved by the Security Council in May.

The report said the Mitsubishi Canter van in which a suicide bomber is believed to have set off some 1,800 kg (4,000 lbs) of explosives was stolen in the Japanese city of Kanagawa in October 2004, then shipped to the United Arab Emirates. From there it was sent in December to a showroom near the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli and sold. The U.N. team "has recently

acquired information regarding the sale of the van to individuals who could be involved in the final preparation of the van for the attack," Brammertz said.

The investigation had also established that individuals who had used six cellular phone SIM cards up to Hariri before his killing had also "played a critical role in the planning and execution of the attack itself," the report said. "The (inquiry) Commission has established the origin of the SIM cards and is finalizing its understanding of the circumstances around the sale of the cards and a number of handsets to the individuals who made use of them."



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A man sits on the pavement at a train station in Moscow on Thursday.

Sri Lanka rebels vow to cripple economy

KILINCHCHI, Sri Lanka—Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger rebels aim to cripple the island's economy with major attacks on military and economic targets, a top rebel leader told Reuters on Thursday.

"Tiger political wing leader S.P. Thamilselvan said peace was "not possible" with President Mahinda Rajapaksa, pouring cold water on international efforts aimed at halting a deadly new chapter in a two-decade civil war.

"Our targets would be in the future major military and economic structures of the govern-

ment of Sri Lanka," he said in an interview in the rebels' northern stronghold of Kilinochchi.

"They will be targets which help the government sustain its military operations and military rule," he added. "For instance (our) attack on the oil installations. That is one of the targets that will cripple the economy of Sri Lanka as well as the military capability of Sri Lanka, so such will be the tactic."

Thamilselvan's comments came a day after the government declared it had driven the rebels from their last jungle

stronghold in the east after months of fighting in which the military has had the upper hand. The capture of a jungle area called Thoppigala in the eastern district of Batticaloa came after the military captured vast swathes of terrain from the Tigers in the east this year.

"We can only say that Thoppigala and the jungles the government is now gloating about as if they had captured a new country or a state or something like that, is not going to last very long," Thamilselvan said.

Analysts say the Tigers' mili-

Russian police want to jail vagrants, beggars

MOSCOW—Russian police said on Thursday they wanted to revive a Soviet-era law to jail tramps and beggars, but critics condemned the idea as a return to the totalitarian past.

Vagrants and beggars are commonplace in Russia, despite an oil-fueled economic boom. In winter many freeze to death.

Human rights groups and charities say most are victims of the flawed economic reforms of the tumultuous 1990s. Some lost jobs and

apartments while serving jail terms. State officers are groaning with windfall oil revenues but Russia lacks social infrastructure to deal with the problem.

The proposal to reinstate Soviet-era punishments originates with the head of Moscow railway police, General Andrei Alexeyev. "In the past, such people could be jailed for up to a year or be ordered to do forced labour. Now we have no such system, we have no place for isolating these tramps," a railway police spokeswoman said.

"Our top general spoke in favour of protecting normal people from having to contemplate these human beings, if you can so call them," the police spokeswoman said. "You must agree: if you travel by metro, by bus or on a commuter train, you would never want to take a seat previously occupied by a tramp, especially because many of them swarm with lice, right? But we (police) still have our hands tied."

Thamilselvan said the Tigers had no faith in a cross-party bid to forge a consensus de-valuation proposal for minority Tamils, and said they could not talk peace with the current president, who has repeatedly said he is open to talks at any time while forging ahead with military offensives.

"After closing all the avenues for the other party to participate in meaningful negotiations, the government inviting (us) to attend talks is meaningless," Thamilselvan added. "Peace is not possible with this president, because during this president's term we find a euphoria, celebration, jubilation over the so-called victory in the east."

for the group "For Human Rights". "This is another example of a return to totalitarian laws."

A tougher law could only widen police corruption, said Maxim Yegorov, head of Nochlezka (Shelter) charity which helps the homeless in Russia's second city St Petersburg. He said the authorities aimed "to put an end to a problem they cannot resolve in a humane way".

Wigs off as Britain ends courtroom tradition

LONDON—Britain's lawyers and judges are to break with centuries-old tradition and cease wearing white horse-hair wigs in non-criminal cases, the head of the country's judiciary announced on Thursday.

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Phillips of Worth Matravers, said new dress rules would mean the wigs, which British legal professionals have worn since the 17th century, would not be needed in civil or family court cases.

Wing collars and bands—white cotton strips worn round the neck—can also be dispensed with in such cases according to the reforms, while judges will need just one gown in future instead of a variety of colourful outfits currently required. The wigs will still be worn in criminal courts.

"At present High Court judges have no less than five different sets of working dress, depending on the jurisdiction in which they are sitting and the season of the year," Phillips said in a statement. "After widespread consultation it has been decided to simplify this."

A review carried out in 2003 found that more than two thirds of respondents wanted to eliminate the wigs in civil cases, although most said criminal court judges should still wear them. Opponents of wigs thought they were anachronistic, as well as uncomfortable and expensive. A shoulder-length ceremonial wig costs more than 1,500 pounds (\$3,000) while the shorter ones worn by lawyers cost about 400 pounds each.



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Islamic school sanctions online Muslim weddings

LUCKNOW, India—An influential and conservative Islamic theological school in India said on Thursday marriages of Muslim couples using internet web cameras were acceptable and legal.

The decision was taken by the "fatwa" (decree) department of Darul Uloom Deoband in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and came after two rare cases of Muslims marrying through the internet in Lucknow, the state capital, since 2005. One case was brought to the Deoband school for approval.

"The internet assumes the role of a lawyer in such cases and is, therefore, competent to formally supervise the "Ijab" (offer of marriage) and "Qabool" (acceptance) made by the bride and bridegroom," top Deoband cleric Khalid Safiullah Rehmani said. "The concept was widely discussed and debated over the past two years since the first online nikah took place in Lucknow in 2005."

Nikah is a legal Islamic marriage contract. Muslim marriages should have a "wakil" or lawyer who deals with the marriage contract. Rehmani said both the bride and bridegroom in an internet marriage—like regular Muslim marriages—must have two witnesses under Islamic law.



Children sail a boat near in a flooded street near Bangbu at east China's Anhui province on Thursday.

Swollen river prompts mass evacuation in eastern China

BEIJING—Almost half a million people have been evacuated from the flood basin of China's Huai River, swollen to its highest level in over half a century, with their misery compounded by a plague of rats blamed on a scarcity of snakes and owls.

Most of the evacuees are villagers from the dirt-poor eastern province of Anhui with the rest from Henan to the north-west and Jiangsu to the east. "The three provincial authorities have mobilised 511,000 people to patrol the Huai embankments and issue emergency warnings," Xinhua news agency quoted the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters as saying.

Thirteen huge sluices at Wangjiaba, a key hydrological

station on the river after it flows out of Henan into Anhui, were opened on Tuesday to divert waters to the adjacent Mengwa buffer zone, home to 150,000 people. They were closed again on Thursday as the river level receded below the danger zone, the central government said on its Web site.

The Huai originates in Henan and runs east between the Yellow River and the Yangtze River, cutting through Henan, Anhui and Jiangsu before entering the Yangtze at the vast Hongze Lake. The pressure on the embankments along both banks of the river has been mounting, threatening key cities and railway lines on the middle and lower reaches.

Authorities diverted water to another five buffer zones on

Wednesday where residents were evacuated to temporary shelters on high ground. Water remained above danger levels and cities and towns still suffered serious street flooding, but no casualties have been reported along the Huai so far, state media said.

Floods and landslides in other parts of Anhui have killed at least 26. Tens of millions of residents across southwestern, central and eastern China are grappling with the threat or aftermath of floods that have killed at least 131 people in the past two weeks.

China is also trying to deal with 2 billion flood-displaced rats in the central province of Hunan alone which have destroyed 1.6 million ha (6,200 sq miles) of crops. Experts blame the plague partly on the shortage of owls and snakes, both popular in traditional Chinese medicine, with snake a favourite winter dish in the south.

"A snake can eat as many as 400 rats a year and an owl 1,500," the China Daily said. "Snakes in the region have been caught and exported to Guangdong in recent years and have ended up on the dining table. It has become a lucrative business and depleted the number of snakes. Owls have suffered the same fate."

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Sarkozy eyes reform of France's constitution

EPINAL, France—President Nicolas Sarkozy called on Thursday for a reform of France's constitution and announced he would set up a commission to study ways to modernise rather than revolutionise the French state.

Repeatedly evoking the spirit of former President Charles de Gaulle, Sarkozy said French presidents should be allowed to address the national parliament and suggested introducing an element of proportional representation in elections.

He also said famously opaque presidential spending should be scrutinised by the national state auditor. "I want the president to govern and be held more to account," Sarkozy said in a speech in this northeastern town, where 61 days ago de Gaulle also delivered a keynote speech demanding that the presidency be handed more powers. Months later the French voted down his proposals in a referendum and his project was not realised for another decade.

Sarkozy said on Thursday a commission of constitutional experts and political heavyweights would be tasked with drawing up a

reform plan. The committee will be headed by a close ally, former Prime Minister Edouard Balladur, and will report back by Nov. 1.

Sarkozy said he hoped leading leftists would also take part despite an edict from the opposition Socialistists warning that members would be suspended from the party if they cooperated. Socialist leaders say the reform should be discussed by a regular parliamentary commission. Any change to the constitution will eventually need the backing of the opposition bloc if it is eventually to pass.

Sarkozy made clear he did not want to establish a new political order in France, but said the existing institutions of the 49-year-old Fifth Republic needed re-viving. "I wouldn't change the main equilibrium of our institutions. I would turn the page on the Fifth Republic," he said.

The Fifth Republic, created during the Algerian colonial war that paralysed the Fourth Republic's parliamentary system, is a "republican monarchy" based on a powerful presidency, a submissive legislature and a centralised state.

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Indian kids at graveyard school face nightmares

PATNA, India—Scores of Indian children attending a school located in a graveyard were having recurring nightmares about ghosts and have appealed to authorities to shift them from the site, officials and residents said.

"I have stopped going to school after many dead people walked out of their graves and came into my dreams, ordering me to reach school on time," said six-year-old Raqib Ansari.

This week, hundreds of children at the school in the eastern state of Bihar, accompanied by their parents, marched to the office of a senior district official, asking for the school to be shifted away from the Muslim graveyard. About 200 children study in the makeshift school set up several years ago after authorities refused to donate land for

a school in Kohari village, 200 km (125 miles) southwest of the state capital, Patna.

Some parents say their children's sleep and health is being affected by dreams of ghosts. "They used to play and study together and finish their lunch boxes while sitting on top of concrete graves but now the ghosts have come to haunt them at night and they are falling ill," said one father, Riyazuddin Ansari.

"We have no choice as the nearest other school is at least four hours away," he said by phone from Kohari.

There are more than 100 tombs in the graveyard but dozens of fresh graves—most of them shallow—have been dug in recent months, further crowding the burial ground.

Authorities in densely populated Bihar said they

were trying to provide new land for the school. "Maybe the dead are not enjoying the noise inside the graveyard any more, but we are looking into the matter," said Ram Yash Singh, a village council official.

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International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) deputy director Olli Heinonen (L) attends a news conference with Iran's deputy nuclear negotiator Javad Vaeedi in Tehran on Thursday.

Iran, IAEA see progress in atomic transparency talks

TEHRAN—Two days of talks between Iran and the U.N. nuclear watchdog on an Iranian offer of more nuclear transparency made progress and discussions will continue in the next few weeks, both sides said on Thursday.

Iran has offered to draw up an "action plan" to address Western suspicions that its nuclear programme is a front to obtain nuclear arms. Tehran says it needs nuclear technology only to generate power.

The U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said it cannot be sure of Iran's intentions until several questions about its plans have been answered.

Western diplomats have said the United States and its European allies suspect Tehran may be trying to buy time to develop its programme. They say Iran failed last year to make good on a promise of a timetable within three weeks to resolve IAEA doubts, and ask why it now wants 60 days to do so.

"We had serious and good meetings. These talks were to reach modalities to resolve outstanding issues. We had constructive and good progress," Javad Vaeedi, Iran's deputy nuclear negotiator who headed the Iranian team, told a news conference.

IAEA deputy director Olli Heinonen spoke of "good results" in the joint news

conference. He said agreement was reached on four or five points but he did not specify them.

Both sides would meet again in the next few weeks, he said. A senior Iranian nuclear official told reporters another meeting would be held "very soon" but said no date had been set.

Asked if he expected outstanding issues to be resolved, Heinonen said: "Maybe not tomorrow, but in a reasonable (time in the) future, we may be able to resolve the remaining questions."

Mohammad Sa'edi, deputy head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation, who attended the three rounds of talks in Tehran on Wednesday and Thursday, told reporters ground had been paved for resolving outstanding issues. "I think that in the agreed time-frame we can resolve those issues," he said.

IAEA head Mohamed ElBaradei has said the transparency offer, combined with what the IAEA has said was a slowdown in Iran's uranium enrichment work, had raised hopes of defusing the row.

Two rounds of United Nations sanctions have been imposed on Iran since December for failing to halt enrichment, a process which can make fuel for power plants or material for warheads. A third sanctions resolution is being considered.

Syria may be flexible on key demand

JERUSALEM—Syria has signalled to the U.N.'s Middle East envoy a willingness to change its relationship with Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas if progress were made towards a peace deal with Israel.

U.N. special envoy Michael Williams told Reuters in an interview on Thursday that he has conveyed to top Israeli officials his "impressions" from talks with Syrian leaders in recent months.

Israel has offered direct talks on returning the Golan Heights, captured 40 years ago, if Syrian President Bashar al-Assad would

in return cut his ties to Iran and Palestinian and Lebanese Islamist groups hostile to the Jewish state. But Williams acknowledged deep-rooted suspicions on both sides would make reviving the peace process difficult.

Williams said Syrian officials had made clear to him during his recent visits to Damascus that they believed negotiations that collapsed in 2000 had largely set the parameters for a deal. "The Syrian side has basically said, 'Look the work is done. It's here in the drawer. The big issues like water, security, access were all looked at then,

were pretty much thrashed out. So if negotiations were resumed, then maybe we could make real progress," Williams said.

A Syrian Foreign Ministry official recently said Israel and Syria had solved some 85 percent of the problem in past negotiations. But U.S. President George W. Bush has shown little enthusiasm for an Israeli-Syrian peace track, casting doubt on the chances of progress.

Williams said he believed that Syria's assessment that a deal was "in the drawer" was "somewhat exaggerated". "It is difficult. There's an awkwardness on both

sides which stems from the history of their relationship over 60 years. It's very difficult to remove the suspicions and antipathies that have resulted from that," Williams said.

Negotiations between Syria and Israel collapsed in 2000 without resolving the fate of the Golan, a plateau occupied by Israel in 1967 during the Six Day War and annexed in 1981 in a move not recognised internationally. Williams said he briefed Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert last month on his talks in Damascus.

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Is HIV a time bomb under the mining industry?

LONDON--From Africa to Russia, from Peru to China, mining companies face a problem: the workers who haul up the earth's riches are coming down with AIDS, and it is hampering operations at a time of booming demand for minerals.

"The epidemic is extremely severe, it's worse than any of us admit to, there are a lot of undiagnosed cases that don't get reported," Brian Brink, medical senior vice-president at Anglo American's South Africa operations, told Reuters.

He said Anglo, the world's fourth largest mining group, realised it had a problem at its mines 21 years ago when four of its 18,450 South African workers tested positive for the virus. Over two decades later, with up to one in three infected and South Africa the centre of a global pandemic, the firm says its own prevention efforts failed.

"We didn't stop this epidemic. In fact if I was to look back and score ourselves, I think we get zero," Brink said.

Worldwide the disease has killed some 30 million people, double the amount of casualties in World War One. Miners are anxious to

build on lessons learned in South Africa to try to stem the tide elsewhere.

The world's fourth biggest gold producer, Gold Fields, has estimated the total cost from HIV at around \$5 per ounce of gold produced in South Africa, and even with gold trading at around \$650 per ounce the cost is significant.

AIDS is growing fastest in Eastern Europe and Central Asia where the number of people living with HIV has grown 20-fold in less than a decade, according to the United Nations. In Russia, the infection rate has more than doubled in two years to 1.2 million in 2005 and in the country's fifth largest gold mining area, Irkutsk, the rate is more than three times the Russian average, UNDP data showed.

In India, there are many patches where the population's infection rate is above 1 percent. "In the early 1990s that (one percent) was where we were and then it is very difficult to stop," Brink said.

The HIV infection rate among South African miners is now nearly double that of the general working population.

In China, the U.N. esti-



Bannang, 28, a miner who has AIDS, chats with his wife and child in Carltonville outside Johannesburg, South Africa June 29, 2007.

mated 650,000 people were infected in 2005, up by 23 percent in two years. If that spread continues, some 1.9 million people will be infected in China by 2015.

"They (other countries) must not fall into the same trap as South Africa," said Lennox Mekuto, Health and Safety Officer for the National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa.

In May this year health experts from seven mining giants met for the first time in London, forming a group to come up with an improved strategy on how to halt the spread of AIDS. "It is a major challenge this industry is rising to meet," said the UK-based head of Operations and Safety at Rio Tinto, Richard Gaunt.

Sex Workers

Miners—many migrant workers—risk their lives to make money daily, so unprotected sex seems a minor hazard. Remote mine sites attract sex workers. In the mining province Yunnan in China, sex workers from

Myanmar and Vietnam are a high-risk group likely to spread the disease as illegal migrants fear the threat of deportation if they contact public health services.

"This is the nature of our business, it attracts sex workers, whether we like it or not we cannot wish it away," said Stella Ntombane, group HIV/AIDS coordinator for Gold Fields in South Africa.

Clients of sex workers are a major bridge of HIV transmission to the general population. In 2005 the ILO estimated that 1.4 million sex workers were forced labour, without access to treatment.

Russia, China and India and the broader continent of Africa face a huge urban-rural divide, limiting rural access to HIV clinics. In often inhospitable mining areas workers and their communities depend on services provided by the mining firm.

Poverty adds to the risk of infection and the virus creates a vicious circle, with an estimated cost of 0.5 to 2

percent of the GDP produced in the worst-hit countries.

Slow Governments

In India, an influx of multinational corporate investment gives business a great opportunity to play a significant role in the fight to halt the epidemic, said Neeraj Mistry of the Global Business Coalition (GBC) in New York, which consists of 200 companies dedicated to fighting AIDS. Governments must also act, he said: "In Russia and Eastern Europe we are seeing that the governments are a bit slow."

In Russia and neighbouring countries, HIV is concentrated within the prison population, sex workers and intravenous drug users—Russia is a main transit route for Afghanistan's opium. "When I was working in Ukraine, it was well known that on pay day miners would spend a lot on drugs and alcohol and HIV was spreading quite rapidly," Human Rights Watch's director for HIV/AIDS, Joseph Amon, said.

Mistry said China's government was proving more responsive, having learned from its failure to deal with the deadly severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). "Companies that are now investing in China and working there are working hand-in-hand with the government to get a more comprehensive response in its strategies," he said.

Tina Meng, business development manager for Anglo American in Beijing said: "We do it because we know that if this disease takes root it is really terrible, of course for individuals and the community, but also for a company's operations."

Win A Truck

After initial confusion and political obfuscation, South Africa has brought all stakeholders together and the government, civil society and business have set up a five-year plan to tackle HIV.

Firms are enticing miners to take HIV/AIDS tests by offering prizes, sending mobile treatment units to the bush where sex workers operate and blanketing the region with condoms. For instance, Gold Fields gives each miner who takes an HIV/AIDS test a lottery ticket, offering monthly prizes of cell phones, televisions and cash, plus a final sweepstake where one worker wins a new pick-up truck.

If more governments addressed the epidemic it would secure the sustainability of HIV programmes, especially when a mine closes and the firm leaves, say South African executives. "It is certainly one of the biggest concerns for us, again that really points to the importance of a collaborative approach with other partners," said Rob Barbour, medical coordinator in Tanzania for gold producer Barrick Gold.

BHP Billiton—the world's largest mining company—said for every dollar it invests in HIV training, education and medical programmes the return is four-fold in terms of benefits such as re-training, absenteeism and productivity.

"There is an overwhelming business case," said BHP Billiton's regional health adviser for Southern Africa, Andre van der Bergh. "When we started our HIV programme we didn't wait for any government to say yes or no, if there is a risk for an organisation we take appropriate action."

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Italy wrings hands over work death "plague"

ROME—Albanian immigrant Artan Plaka was 19 when his head was crushed in the machinery of a Tuscan textile firm and he became, officially, the 435th death at work in Italy since the start of the year.

The frequency of fatalities at work, known in Italy as "white deaths", is considered a national scandal in one of the Group of Seven (G7) rich nations. One report has compared it, unfavorably, with the death rate of U.S. soldiers in Iraq.

Data from the International Labour Organisation shows the rate of workplace deaths in Italy is more than 40 percent higher than in France, nearly twice as high as Germany's and seven times as high as in Britain.

Artan's death, like the previous 434, earned short articles in local media, with the added tragic point of interest that it was his first day at work—or so his employers declared. But police soon discovered otherwise and the owner of the company came under investigation for employing him without a con-

tract and for manslaughter. Prosecutors suspect Artan, like many immigrants, was set to work without proper safety measures or training to work the machinery.

"They always say it's their first day at work," said Nazareno Bisogni, spokesman for the CGIL, Italy's biggest trade union confederation. "These immigrants are employed off the books with no labour protection so when they die, the firms say it was their first day and they were still sorting out their paperwork. It's an old trick but no one believes them any more."

Experts say the structure of Italy's economy and labour market makes it a breeding ground for tragedies like Artan's. It has a huge underground economy, high illegal immigration and a prevalence of very small, low-technology companies relying on a low cost base and temporary, often immigrant staff.

The result is reduced protection for workers, a problem compounded by a lack of inspectors employed by the cash-strapped government

which is struggling to rein in a high budget deficit.

Worse Than War

The penny-pinching has a high cost in terms of hospital care and lost work hours estimated at nearly 45 billion euros per year, or 3 percent of gross domestic product.

"Worse than War" was the title of a research document by the Eurispes institute, a private think-tank. It compared the 3,520 deaths in the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq from April 2003 to April 2007 with the 5,252 workplace deaths in Italy from the beginning of 2003 to October 2006.

Unions, political parties and media groups campaign on the issue, the Vatican's official newspaper lobbies against what it calls the work death "plague" and President Giorgio Napolitano has often spoken out on the subject.

A National Day for Work Victims is held every year in October, but the fatalities continue unabated and are now well past 500 this year. Last year's official total was 1,302. Labour groups say the real count is higher.

"Labour conditions have worsened with the rise in illegal immigration and a lot of accidents and even deaths involving immigrants aren't reported," said Marinella de Maffiis of the National Association for the Injured at Work. "It all boils down to the fact that many Italian employers don't obey the rules."

In Front Line

Immigrant workers, often working in high-risk sectors like construction, have less protection than their Italian counterparts.

More than 11 percent of those who died between 2002 and 2006 came from outside the European Union. Just 4.7 percent of Italy's population is made up of foreign citizens, including those from EU states.

At dawn each day, car parks around Rome are filled with African and Eastern European immigrants offering their services to anyone needing builders or labourers for a daily rate a fraction of what an Italian firm would charge. They are more likely to be climbing scaffolding wearing caps and training shoes rather than the hard hats and boots prescribed by regulations.

Yet immigrant workers from the developing world are probably safer in Italy than if they had stayed at home. India has a ratio of workplace deaths some five times as high as Italy's and Ukraine's is nearly twice as high. No figures are available for China.

Immigrants can also be reluctant to criticise employers who have offered them work,



Labourers work at a building site at Rome's GRA ringroad July 10, 2007. The frequency of fatalities at work, known in Italy as white deaths, are considered a national scandal in one of the Group of Seven rich nations.

however badly paid or protected.

Artan, who left his parents in the southern Albanian village of Vidhist two years ago, lived with relatives near the textile firm where he died.

"He had been working there on and off for two months while he was waiting for his papers," his uncle Yvi said. "The owner was fond of him, he tried to help us—and now he's ended up in trouble."

Gazprom picks Total for Shtokman field

MOSCOW—Russia's Gazprom chose Total as development partner for a giant gas field on Thursday in a sign of closer Moscow-Paris ties, but the move left questions over how good a deal the French group had won.

The Shtokman field, which has been at the centre of recent political and commercial tensions between Russia and the West, contains enough gas to supply the world for

Gazprom said Total would receive a 25 percent stake in the company that will build and own the pipes right and other infrastructure for the first phase of development of the Shtokman field, which industry sources said would cost \$15-\$18 billion. Total said the agreement it planned to sign on Friday only committed it to a "study phase", prompting analysts to ask whether Gazprom's refusal to cede a stake in the field itself could yet hold up a final agreement.

Shares in Total rose 1.5 percent on Gazprom's statement. "The deal was done at the very top level," said a diplomatic source. The Kremlin said Russian and French presidents Vladimir Putin and Nicolas Sarkozy had talked on the phone on Wednesday and a spokesman

for Sarkozy confirmed this. The news marked the culmination of years of talks in which consortiums collapsed twice, first due to very low oil prices, and then over political tensions between Moscow and Washington. Gazprom said in October it would develop Shtokman, which sits inside the Arctic circle, on its own.

Jason Kenney, oil analyst at ING, said the selection of Total showed Gazprom now realised it needed the expertise of an international oil major to develop Shtokman. However, the terms outlined by Gazprom resemble the type of service contracts which oil majors generally dislike, because such contracts make it hard to book reserves and usually offer low returns.

"This is great news for Gazprom, as it has found a partner who agreed to share financial risks," said Standard and Poor's analyst Elena Anankina. "But it is not clear what guarantees there are for Total to make the project interesting."

Gazprom added that other firms, including Norway's Statoil and Norsk Hydro, and U.S. ConocoPhillips and Chevron—which were previously shortlisted as potential partners—could still get stakes in the project.

Rio Tinto to buy Alcan for \$38 billion, Alcoa bows out

MONTREAL/LONDON—Anglo-Australian miner Rio Tinto Ltd/Plc offered \$38.1 billion to buy Canada's Alcan Inc an agreed deal to create the world's No. 1 aluminium producer, trumping a hostile bid by Alcoa Inc. Alcoa withdrew its offer after markets closed on Thursday and is now seen as a potential takeover target itself.

Rio, the world's No. 2

miner, said on Thursday it would pay \$101 a share, 13 percent above Alcan's New York closing price on Wednesday and 33 percent above U.S. Group Alcoa's bid. Rio said the deal would help it diversify beyond its strength in iron ore and copper, and boost its position in fast-growing aluminium markets. Analysts and bankers familiar with the sector said the Rio offer, which beat Alcoa's cash-and-stock bid by about \$24 a share, threatens Alcoa's independence. "(It) makes them vulnerable to a BHP Billiton offer," said Charles Stanley analyst Tom Gidley-Kitchin.

BHP Billiton would want to sell Alcoa's packaging and downstream metal-production businesses, people familiar with the matter said. BHP declined to comment.

Analysts speculated that Alcoa is a takeover target, in part because of its hostile offer for Alcan. Alcoa shares closed up 6.7 percent at \$45.29 in the New York Stock Exchange, down from an all-time high of \$46.15 earlier in the session.

Alcan's shares rose 9.9 percent during the session to close at \$38.45 in New

York, 2.5 percent below Rio's offer. In Toronto, the stock rose to CS102.75. Rio's shares in London fell 4.6 percent to 3,810 pence.

The mining industry is benefiting from soaring metals prices, and established players are seeking deals to fight rising competition from emerging markets. "There is a lot of cash in the market and a lot of cash being generated in the mining sector generally, so you'll continue to see M&A across the board," said Greg Goodsell, equity strategist at ABN AMRO.

The combined Rio-Alcan group will have the capability to make 4.4 million tonnes of aluminium a year, making it the top global producer ahead of the current leader, Russia's UC RUSAL. Aluminium is used in a wide range of products from drinks cans to airplanes.

"The demand outlook (for aluminium) for the next 10 years is quite positive, with expected world demand growth to 2011 of over 6 percent and demand growth in China alone of over 15 percent per year," Rio Chief Executive Tom Albanese told a conference call.

Stock Market Report

Key Stock Movements July 12 2007

	DAYS CLOSE	CHANGE IN POINTS	HIGH LOW
NEW YORK	13,861.73	+243.36	15,665.11 12,133.40
			(Mar 15)
LONDON	6,697.7	+82.6	6,722.4 6,058.7
			(Jun 15) (Mar 05)
TOKYO	17,984.14	+65.37	18,261.58 16,642.25
			(Mar 05)
FRANKFURT	8,053.43	+154.89	8,090.49 6,447.20
			(Jun 20) (Mar 14)

London Currency Fixing Rates July 12 2007

Following are the middle exchange rates for leading currencies against the dollar:

	CURRENT	HIGH	LOW
Euro	1.3787	1.3799	1.3744
Japanese Yen	122.4	122.59	121.84
British Pound	2.03	2.0364	2.0272
Swiss Franc	1.2029	1.2058	1.2006
Australian Dollar	0.866	0.8663	0.8604
Brazilian Real	1.8718	1.891	1.868
Canadian Dollar	1.0456	1.0553	1.0451
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8199	7.8169	7.8142
Mexican Peso	10.753	10.812	10.753
South African Rand	6.939	7.0395	6.9611

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Made in where? Say what!

I had an interesting experience one day, in a particular Caribbean island, when I attempted to purchase a cold drink. I was offered a beverage where the label on the drink was written in a language other than English and the other details were not easily decipherable. It was an unsuccessful challenge to find the date of expiry on the product. Needless to say, the adventure of this effort encouraged me to find an alternate source to quench my thirst.

This simple attempted business transaction is not singular in nature, but represents a wider problem that the Caribbean Community will have to confront aggressively and overcome.

I am referring to what I

like to call "mass product dumping." My personal definition for this term is the targeted manufacturing of products devoid of specific standards, to supply a willing market eager for a "cost savings." The unfortunate catch is that the willing purchasers are blinded by the smoke screen of a low cost with a superficially high satisfaction yield, while not mindful of the potential health and environmental safety issues which are a part of the production cycle of the particular product.

Consumer education is essential to the resistance to this illusion of a deal. This form of "pirating" products from the Caribbean Community is against practical consumer safety standards. Clearly this is a strong need for a

coordinated, consistent and regulatory-compliant oversight of this sector.

Too often many food products arrive in well packaged and "convenient" containers (some don't even bother with this vital attraction), but have not been tested for the quality of what is being offered in terms of actual palatability, and more importantly the guarantee of safety standards with regards to the process of preparation.

With a potentially troubling hurricane season facing the Caribbean, food security is certainly a major priority, as the need for the procurement and storage of emergency rations is an essential part of disaster management. But this should not be the only fac-

tor to prompt a call for the imposition of acceptable standards.

The reality of the words often spoken, "You are what you eat" is very true. An entire society's productivity can be undermined by the consumption of food materials which may affect the metabolic processes of the human body, as well as the possibility of altering or undermining other abilities and functions.

Only through a deliberate strategy and an active agenda can we hope to fully harness the raw human resource potential of the Caribbean lands, with the aim of promoting positive attitudinal change in the area of how we see ourselves in the chain of consumption and needs linkages.

Perhaps with a strong work ethic of responsibility and quality, there would be a better understanding of how informed decisions can be the stimulation for not only producing goods made with a Caribbean focus, but to create an appreciation for things that are indeed made in the Caribbean. But of course, our Caribbean producers must have accountability & transparency in the production process to ensure quality control.

A revitalized mood of seeking and creating entrepreneurial opportunities through initiative and creativity should be the forward thrust for a new Caribbean.

Products with the illusion of satisfaction, made in whichever country, should be seen and avoided, particularly if they have a vague label with absolutely no supporting evidence that it has a healthy track record.

As we focus on Caribbean products, I would like to say to all consumers that we should follow a quote, which I believe is applicable, from the late General Douglas MacArthur who said, "We are not retreating - we are advancing in another Direction."

About the writer

Mr. Clarence E. Pilgrim is an environmentalist, advocate for human rights, educator, a senior officer in the Antigua & Barbuda Civil service and volunteer for various non-profit organizations. His pen and speeches are consistent platforms for Caribbean Integration, social policy issues, environmental protection, development of alternative energy and the careful management of our natural resources.

The real enemy al-Qaeda is growing stronger

By Eugene Robinson

WASHINGTON--Let's hope that Michael Chertoff's "gut feeling" that something bad might happen this summer is just the result of something he ate.

But what has the Homeland Security czar been doing, besides monitoring his belly? While Chertoff was sharing details of his physical distress over the possibility of an al-Qaeda attack, a new congressional report showed how easy it was to fraudulently obtain a license to buy radioactive material. All it took for undercover investigators to infiltrate the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was a post-office box at Mail Boxes Etc., a telephone, a fax machine and some fast talking.

"If al-Qaeda had set up a U.S. corporation in the U.S., they could have gathered enough material to make a dirty bomb," said Sen. Norm Coleman, R-Minn., who requested the sting operation.

That makes me want to reach for the Pepto-Bismol too.

At this point, the most powerful nation on Earth has been at war with al-Qaeda for nearly a decade - much longer than it took to defeat the Nazis in World War II. Why does Chertoff still have to worry about al-Qaeda at all?

Maybe because a new U.S. intelligence estimate reportedly concludes that al-Qaeda is growing stron-

ger, not weaker. The terrorist group's leadership - presumably including Osama bin Laden, whom we haven't seen in a while - has found safe haven in the remote fastness of western Pakistan. There, essentially unmonitored, the group has been able to rebuild and develop a capacity for mayhem that it hasn't had since 2001, the report is said to assert.

"We see more training. We see more money. We see more communications," a CIA official told a House committee Wednesday.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, whom the Bush administration considers a key ally in the "war on terror," declines for political reasons to send troops into the region in pursuit of the terrorists. He also refuses to allow the United States to do so.

Of course, this could have been prevented in 2002 after U.S.-led forces routed the Taliban in Afghanistan and drove al-Qaeda into the mountains. If the Pentagon and the CIA had maintained the focus on Bin Laden, it's hard to imagine that at this point he would be plotting how to grow his organization. But the administration's focus - and the necessary resources - shifted to Iraq, where there was no al-Qaeda presence. The rest is history.

"The same folks that are bombing innocent people in Iraq were the ones who attacked us in America on

September the 11th," President Bush insisted Wednesday. But those who planned and executed the Sept. 11 attacks are either dead, in U.S. custody or holed up in Pakistan. They are nowhere near Iraq.

The U.S. invasion did give inspiration and opportunity to terrorists who renamed their organization "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" and pledged fealty to Bin Laden and the real al-Qaeda. That is Bush's rationale for saying the two groups are the same, even though they're really not.

Bush said he is determined to fight al-Qaeda wherever he finds it. As a practical matter, al-Qaeda's Iraq franchise has been able to lure the United States into the middle of a sectarian civil war, in which U.S. forces not only have to fight terrorists but also Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias. Bush has tied U.S. prospects to an Iraqi government that has failed, according to the White House's own new assessment, to make progress toward a political solution.

With U.S. forces bogged down in Iraq and the nation preoccupied with finding a way to end Bush's war, I wonder how Bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri and the rest of the al-Qaeda headquarters leadership are taking advantage of this respite. Are they planning another spectacular attack? Are they communicating with autonomous, like-minded terrorist cells in Europe, Africa, the Mid-

dle East or even the United States? Are they content, for the moment, just to inspire their followers around the world with occasional videotaped exhortations?

I agree with Bush on one thing: Surely al-Qaeda's surviving leaders are up to no good. We haven't neutralized al-Qaeda, we've dispersed it; we haven't decimated the organization, we've inspired new recruits to take the place of those members we have killed or captured. And Bush has us worrying about the political leanings of obscure tribal leaders in Iraq's Anbar province, while the real enemy schemes and waits - and probably laughs.

Meanwhile, we haven't even put in place effective controls over radioactive materials. I guess it makes sense that Chertoff is feeling a little queasy.



Sergio Patricio Blijden better known as Gio

Who passed away tragically on Wednesday, July 11th, 2007

Funeral announcement will be announced at a later date.

The Davis and Blijden family would like to announce the sudden passing of our beloved son:

By Charles Krauthammer

Al-Qaeda can be defeated

The costs are heartbreakingly high — increased American casualties as the enemy is engaged and spectacular suicide bombings designed to terrify Iraqis and demoralize Americans. But the stakes are extremely high as well.

WASHINGTON—Finally, after four terribly long years, we know what works. Or what can work. A year ago, a confidential Marine intelligence report declared Anbar province (which comprises about a third of Iraq's territory) lost to al-Qaeda. Now, in what the *Times*' John Burns calls "an astonishing success," the tribal sheiks have joined our side and committed large numbers of fighters that, in concert with American and Iraqi forces, have largely driven out al-Qaeda and turned its former stronghold of Ramadi into one of our most secure cities in Iraq.

It began with a U.S.-led offensive that killed or wounded more than 200 enemy fighters and captured 600. Most important was the follow-up. Not a retreat back to American bases, but the setting up of small posts within the population that, together with the Iraqi national and tribal forces, have brought relative stability to Anbar.

The same has started happening in many of the Sunni areas around Baghdad, including Diyala province — just a year ago considered as lost as Anbar — where, for example, the Sunni insurgent 1920 Revolution Bri-

gades have turned against al-Qaeda and joined the fight on the side of U.S. and Iraqi government forces.

We don't yet know if this strategy will work in mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhoods. Nor can we be certain that this cooperation between essentially Sunni tribal forces and an essentially Shiite central government can endure. But what cannot be said — although it is now heard daily in Washington — is that the surge, which is shorthand for Gen. David Petraeus' new counterinsurgency strategy, has failed. The tragedy is that, just as a working strategy has been found, some Republicans in the Senate have lost heart and want to pull the plug.

It is understandable that Sens. Lugar, Voinovich, Domenici, Snow and Warner may no longer trust President Bush's judgment when he tells them to wait until Petraeus reports in September. What is not understandable is the vote of no confidence they are passing on Petraeus. These are the same senators who sent him back to Iraq by an 81-0 vote to institute his new counterinsurgency strategy. A month ago, Petraeus was asked whether we could still


win in Iraq. The general, who had recently attended two memorial services for soldiers lost under his command, replied that if he thought he could not succeed he would not be risking the life of a single soldier.

Just this week, Petraeus said that the one thing he needs more than anything else is time. To cut off Petraeus' plan just as it is beginning — the last surge troops arrived only last month — on the assumption that we cannot succeed is to declare Petraeus either deluded or dishonorable. Deluded in that, as the best-positioned American in Baghdad, he still believes we can succeed. Or dishonorable in pretending to believe in victory and sending soldiers to die in what he really knows is an already failed strategy.

That's the logic of the wobbly Republicans' position. But rather than lay it on Petraeus, they prefer to lay it on Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and point out his government's inability to meet the required political "benchmarks." As a long-time critic of the Maliki government, I agree that it has proved itself incapable of passing laws important for long-term national reconciliation.

But first comes the short term. And right now we have the chance to continue to isolate al-Qaeda and, province by province, deny it the Sunni sea in which it swims. A year ago, it appeared that the only way to win back the Sunnis and neutralize the extremists was with great national compacts about oil and power sharing. But Anbar has unexpectedly shown that even without these constitutional settlements, the insurgency can be neutralized and al-Qaeda defeated at the local and provincial level with a new and robust counterinsurgency strategy.


In the long run, agreements on oil, federalism and de-Baathification are crucial for stabilizing Iraq. But their absence at this moment is not a reason to give up in despair, now that we finally have a counterinsurgency strategy in place that is showing success against the one enemy that both critics and supporters of the war maintain must be fought everywhere and at all cost — al-Qaeda.



On behalf of
**INTERMAR
COMMERCIAL
CENTER**
with profound
sadness we
heretby
announce the
passing away
of

**MRS. IMELDA
LINT**
a.k.a. Meme, former employe of Nichirei

Our deepest condolences to the family of
the deceased.
MAY HER SOUL REST IN PEACE.



"He that dwelleth in the
secret place of the most high
shall abide under the shadow
of the almighty."

We regret to announce the
sudden death of our beloved
father and best friend:

NORMAN CARL WINDFIELD

Praying the lord's presence is especially real
to you today, as he brings you the
comfort that only he can give.

You will truly be missed!!!

From your daughters: Arabella and Alexandria
Hassel, your best friend Louise Hassel (Weezy)
and the rest of our family...

MAY YOU REST IN PEACE



One thing I ask of the Lord, this I seek to
dwell in the Lord's house all the days of
my life, to gaze on the Lord's beauty to
visit his temple.
Psalm 27, verse no. 4.

**Imelda Lucrecia
Lint-Alee**
(better known as Meme)

Left to mourn:
Husband: Stanley F. Lint
Children: Stanley Lint, Jr.,
Alen Lint,
Shamira Lint,
Eugene Willems,
Sharolee Beudeker


Extended family:
Grandchild: Rogene Willems
Beloved little ones: Jada, DiSanka, Meshach,
Mhakeda, Diamondique,
Rosa & Kets van der Poel
Brother & Sisters: Hippolyt (Boeboe) Alee,
Elsa & Jossy Ascension,
Edgard & Diocina Alee,
Sylvester & Marie Alee

Nieces & Nephews: Sherman Ascension & Family,
Magali Martina & Family,
Elined Ascension & Family,
Winonah Samerel & Family,
Silvania Alee & Family

God Children: Sharine, Sabrina, Emma & other
god children

Close Friends: Bernadine Stephens & Family,
Amoree Richardson & Family,
Wiolet Gumbs & Family,
R.C. La Sallette Group,
R.C. Legion of Mary Group,
Emma & Family,
Christina & Family (hairdresser)

Many friends too numerous to mention, including the staff &
family of former Nichirei and the Roman Catholic Community.
Funeral services will be held in Curacao on Saturday, July 14,
2007, at 11am in the Catholic Church of Groot Kwartier.




Condolences

On behalf of Intermar Shipping and St.
Maarten Shipping & Stevedoring
with profound sadness we hereby announce
the passing away of

Mrs. Maria Martina Wiel
the mother of our colleague
Mr. Arnaldo Martina
a.k.a. Nol

Our deepest condolences go out to the
family of the deceased.

May her soul rest in peace



On behalf of
**INTERMAR
SHIPPING**
with profound
sadness we
heretby
announce the
passing away
of

**MRS. IMELDA
LINT**
a.k.a. Meme, former employe of Nichirei

Our deepest condolences to the family of
the deceased.
MAY HER SOUL REST IN PEACE.

China's internal tensions can threaten communist rule

By Jim Hoagland

WASHINGTON—China's Communists always have been quick to execute political dissidents as a warning to follow the party's ideological line. Now the regime summarily executes people for being bad at capitalism.

Zheng Xiaoyu was put to death the other day not only for multitudinous sins but also to reassure foreign markets that China's manufacturing industry will no longer mindlessly poison some of its customers. With Zheng's execution, Mao Zedong's revolution has reached the stage of becoming a focused exercise in marketing—skilfully gathering profits abroad to make the party rich and powerful at home.

Mao promised socialism with Chinese characteristics. His political heirs have delivered a fierce capitalism

with Chinese characteristics. The party struggles to rein in the free-enterprise monster it has created through its quasi-ideological emphasis on wealth and consumption. To counter emerging threats to global market share, the government produced—what else?

A five-year plan to eliminate health hazards from its food and medical exports. It reinforced the message by executing the unfortunate Zheng.

Zheng, 62, rose through party ranks to become the head of the State Food and Drug Administration. According to prosecutors, he also became inordinately rich from the bribes he took as his agency approved untested medicines and adopted procedures that eventually allowed the export of toothpaste, pet food and cough syrup that contained poisonous industrial sol-

vents. The official Xinhua news agency did not say how Zheng—sentenced on May 29—was killed on July 10. So we do not know if he was shot in the back of the head, as is customary. Nor do we know if his family was then presented with a bill for the cost of the bullet that killed him. This cruel twist has long been standard practice for dissidents in China, which carries out more court-ordered executions than the rest of the world combined, according to human rights groups.

Mao proclaimed the victory of his revolution in 1949 by saying that "the Chinese people have stood up." Nearly three decades ago Deng Xiaoping ordered the Chinese people to sit down and get to work in factories. They obeyed with breathtaking determination and skill.

President Hu Jintao now concentrates on protecting China's reach into foreign markets that buy more than \$1 billion worth of the nation's exports every day. Hu must respond to the freedom of choice possessed by the world's consumers, who are on notice about health hazards in a tiny fraction of China's exports.

The dramatic change in the national mindset produced by Deng's administrations to get rich was apparent throughout a recent visit to China. A senior military official interrupted a conversation on world politics to marvel that "when China's stock market went down sharply in February, markets around the world went down and everybody reacted." I had never heard a national stock-market plunge described with pride before.

What is not talked about freely is the corrupt interaction between the new entrepreneurs and the party

officials whose permission is needed for almost every phase of commercial and industrial activity in China—the kind of transactions that finally caught up with the recently departed Zheng.

A leading real estate developer talked breezily over lunch about the system of bank loans, mortgages and market research that fuels China's economic boom. When I asked about the party's involvement in granting permits and setting land prices in urban areas, the response was brief, evasive and a change of the subject.

But the government's own concern makes clear that corruption is rampant enough to become the Achilles' heel of the party's monopoly rule.

"In Mao's time it was disgraceful to talk about money," recalled a former senior party official who disagrees with Hu's marketplace approach to politics. "Mao believed money would destroy the revolution. Now money

is the new ideology. If you want to get rich, you only have to walk along with the Communist Party and obey it."

Despite predictions by others that economic engagement would inevitably bring democratic reforms to China, free-market conditions have not forced political liberalization here. The party feeds on the boom it has helped create. Leaders reward their children and other relatives with choice jobs and investment opportunities.

It is the boom's side effects—primarily official corruption—that can come to pose a threat to communist rule. Flagrant abuses of power discredit the party with a people who value morality and decency in public life. One well-publicized execution may reassure markets abroad, but it is unlikely to defuse China's own internal tensions.

Is the "R" sign the culprit?

Dear Mr. Editor,

Again today, July 11, in a press briefing, I had to learn from the Commissioner of Public Transportation that it is the identifiable R-license plate which is the culprit of the tourists, who visit our no longer so friendly, deteriorating island, when they are driving, lingering, tolerably sightseeing on our congested road network, cograte intensify, ready with road-rage, who are being car-jacked, ill-treated, robbed and victimized, with the consequences, when back home, that St. Maarten will be marked by getting a bad name.

This letter is not intended to embarrass, my Commissioner of Public Transportation, always genuinely presenting his most innovative ideas, but this one is way beyond the truth of the matter, a very shallow concept of reality. It would be like arguing that guns kill people, so if people are killed by guns, then their relatives or next of kin of these same victims cannot get legal justification or satisfaction, because a gun has killed their loved one, so the human factor or culprit goes free, whereas the next of kin have lost their loved one.

Just as a refresher, my friend Louie already for years has his hands full with an "unsolvable gypsies phenomenon," pirating taxis or car rentals without the necessary licenses and permits, where even Dutch St. Maarten car rental companies operate and "rent out" cars with French license plates as car rental units without the nec-

essary legal documents issued by our local authorities. Now, without an identifiable "R" license plate, it will be easier for the "Gypsies" to continue to pirate unnoticed, having their day.

On another tangent argument, what if French car rental units are never car-jacked with plain French car licenses, and proviso that would-be the case, the offer and demand would then be so huge, it simply would drive Dutch Car rental Companies out of business, wouldn't it be?

So my conclusion is then that it is not the marked "R" car license that is the reason, but it is more a human factor.

It is more so, considering the incidence that marginalized, alien, undocumented visitors, whose "survivability" is at risk, who either cannot get a job on our local labour market without the necessary legal documents, are so "pay-

roll" to commit economic sabotage as agents of other countries, who are in competition with our "St. Maarten Tourist Product" and want to see it destroyed, why otherwise would one seek to harm an American tourist, or as a matter of fact any other nationality as tourist, who is the very heartbeat of our St. Maarten economy, who makes it a sustainable and thriving economy, the marvel of the Caribbean and where competition is getting stiffer.

St. Maarten's economy is beneficial for the locals here, but more so for the immigrant as well, who send their hard-earned dollars abroad to maintain their families.

We should learn to protect the economy we have, we should be over zealous, like taking care of our very own child? Is this message so far-fetched?

Ronald Peterson

UNIVERSAL Sudoku Puzzle

Complete the grid so every row, column and 3 x 3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 inclusively.

Previous puzzle solution

	3	7	2	8				
1			3		9	4		
2	5	9			5		7	
8			8			1		4
3	9			1			5	
	6	3		8				6

3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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ACROSS

- 1 Part of TGIF
- 6 Chummy sediment
- 10 Branch
- 14 Aaron Copland ballet
- 15 Canal of song
- 16 Kentucky neighbor
- 17 Open and shut
- 19 Suffer defeat
- 20 Mildew
- 21 Olfactory organ
- 22 Fog or mist
- 23 Current
- 25 Sluggish's stat
- 27 Executive nay
- 29 Small and mischievous
- 34 Quicker witted
- 38 Patrician Russian composer
- 39 Sovereign
- 40 Dispose (of)
- 42 Run... of the law

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52
53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65
66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78
79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91

7/13/07

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

MOLTS	AMES	ROMP
EVERT	LAME	EPEE
LEVEE	OLIN	PETE
TRIMESTERS	TRAP	
OPT	SERIALS	
STARLETS	SAL	
OAR	EVITA	YETIS
BUTS	ECRUS	SOSO
STEPS	SUDAN	FNN
PLAS	TIMEOUTS	
SPRINTS	BUR	
TROT	ITERATIONS	
ROME	LOLA	ROMEQ
IVAN	TOMS	ALOO
POND	SLOP	LEONA

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DOWN

- 1 The Donald
- 2 Point code
- 3 Shake up
- 4 Calls for
- 5 Thor Heyerdahl's _
- 6 Abalone eater
- 7 Eyeballs
- 8 Tanker
- 9 Place-kicker's
- 10 Gwen Verdon in "Damn Yankees"
- 11 Flapjack
- 12 Japanese soup
- 13 Africaner
- 14 Kind of circle or city
- 15 Rural inhabitant
- 16 Common
- 17 Panhandle
- 18 Hunter constellation
- 19 Generic poolside name
- 20 Part of
- 21 Predatory shorebird
- 22 Passageway
- 23 Rugged rock
- 24 Humdinger
- 25 Blues great
- 26 Fitzgerald
- 37 Sverre
- 38 Pharmacist
- 39 Yuletide carol
- 40 Utopian
- 41 Wipe out
- 42 San __, CA
- 43 Sign of the ram
- 44 Bikini blast, for short
- 45 Affirmatives
- 46 Biblical prophet
- 47 Yuletide carol
- 48 Regular guys
- 49 Capital of Norway
- 50 Peak
- 51 White lie
- 52 Little devil

World's tallest man marries, sweeps bride off her feet

ERDOS, China—The world's tallest man married a woman two-thirds his size and almost half his age on Thursday in a traditional Mongolian ceremony sponsored by at least 15 companies hoping to cash in on his fame.

Bao Xishun, 56, a 2.36-metre (7-ft, 9-inch) herdsman from China's vast Inner Mongolia region, was carried to his wedding on the back of a mobile yurt pulled by camels at the Genghis Khan holiday resort on the grasslands near Erdos

city.

Hundreds of people, some travelling for hours, turned up to see Bao wed saleswoman Xia Shujuan, a mere 1.68 metres (5 ft 6 inches) tall and just 29 years old. Draped in a shimmering blue silk coat, Bao waved to the crowd before going into an enormous yurt where guests ate lamb and cheese and watched Mongolian song and dance shows.

"If we can have children, we'll have children," Bao told Reuters before the wedding.

"If not, then not. If we have a child, I hope he or she can be 1.8-1.9-metres tall. Then he or she can play basketball."

Xia said she was madly in love. "You need to have feelings for someone to be in love. Even if he is a big shot, you can't love him without feelings," Xia said.

Bao was confirmed as the world's tallest living man by Guinness World Records last year. He overtook the previous holder, Radhouane Charbib of Tunisia, by just 2 mm.

The Guinness World Records says Bao was of normal height until 16 but then put on a spurt that doctors were unable to explain, reaching his full height in seven years. He put out marriage advertisements around the world, but ended up wedding somebody from his home town, Chifeng. Bao and his wife were legally married in March, but wanted to also have an authentic Mongolian ceremony.

After a career in the army, where he was recruited for a basketball team, he returned to Inner Mongolia. He now herds livestock and hires himself out for publicity stunts. In December, Bao saved the lives of two dolphins by reaching deep into their stomachs with his 1.06-metre long arm to pull out pieces of plastic, according to Chinese media.

Because of his fame, Inner Mongolia decided to turn the wedding into a branding event. "He has a very good image among us in Inner Mongolia," said Bao's agent, Xin Xing. "We plan to use his name as a brand to develop tourism. We want to better help and serve our hometown."

Everything from the liquor drunk at the wedding to the shoes Bao wore were sponsored by a different company. One firm made a 2.9-metre blanket of camel hair just for the marriage.



Revelers attend the Exit music festival in the Serbian town of Novi Sad on Thursday.

Serbian festival serves up music with a message

NOVI SAD, Serbia—The Petrovaradin fortress held off the Ottoman empire in 1716, but stood no chance on Thursday against 50,000 partygoers converging on "Exit", one of Europe's biggest music festivals.

The event kicked off in the summer of 2000 as a 100-day parade of defiance against the nationalism that ripped the Balkans apart in the 1990s and made Serbia a pariah state for its role in brutal wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. It has since evolved into the biggest festival in southeast Europe, with acts in this year's four-day event including legendary hip-hop group Beastie Boys, cult dance act The Prodigy and veteran rocker Robert Plant, formerly of Led Zeppelin.

"If you tell anyone you are going to Serbia, they ask if you are taking a bullet-proof vest," said Paul Maynard from London, at Exit for the second time. "But it's great here. I came back because it's more than a festival, you get a holiday at the same time, whereas in Britain you just roll around in the mud."

Some 400 artists are to perform in the 18th century fortress on the Danube, ranging from big-name DJs like Frankie Knuckles to the eclectic Franco-Algerian band Gnawa Diffusion and the Balkan jazz-fusion of Serbia's Shaban Bajramovic.

"This year for the first time we have a sold-out festival," said Exit spokesman Sagor Meskovic. "Half the audience is international, some 5,000 from the former Yugoslavia, 10,000 Brits, even Australians, Mexicans, Japanese. Technically we are also better, we have a bigger dance stage, an improved sound and light system, everything is on a higher level, more spectacular."

The laid-back, optimistic atmosphere of the festival harks back to the inaugural event in 2000, which wrapped up a few days before the elections that led to the overthrow of Yugoslav strongman Slobodan Milosevic in a

popular uprising. Serbia was welcomed back into Europe and Exit was hailed as galvanizing force for liberal and pro-Western Serbs.

"It's great to be in Serbia," said 18-year-old Damir Džanjovic from Bosnia. "I came for the music, of course, but also to meet others with the same ideas, so hopefully we can all create a movement of all young people in the former Yugoslavia."

Evel Knievel, Kanye West seek deal over suit

TAMPA, Florida—Evel Knievel and rapper Kanye West have agreed to mediate a copyright lawsuit the motorcycle daredevil filed over a music video West made last year.

In the "Touch the Sky" video, West appears as "Evel Kanyevel" and wears a white jumpsuit like the one made famous by Knievel during a series of dangerous stunts in the 1960's and 1970's.

Knievel sued, saying West was infringing on his trademark and likeness. Complaining that West's video contained vulgar and offensive language and sexual images, he asked that use of the video be stopped and sought all profits from it.

Roc-A-Fella Records, which produced the video, was also named as a defendant.

But in a filing in U.S. District Court in Tampa on Tuesday, the parties said they had agreed to try to reach a settlement. The mediation is scheduled for Nov. 7 in Tampa.

Knievel, 68, lives in Clearwater, Florida.



Bao Xishun (R), 56, a 2.36-metre (7 feet, 9 inches) herdsman listed by the Guinness World Records as the tallest living man, and his bride Xia Shujuan, 29, 1.68 metres (5 feet, 5 inches), stand during their wedding ceremony on the outskirts of Erdos in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region on Thursday.

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529-2236

Charlie Sheen engaged to marry girlfriend

LOS ANGELES—Charlie Sheen, star of the television comedy "Two and a Half Men", is engaged to marry his girlfriend, aspiring actress Brooke Mueller, a representative for the actor said on Thursday.

Sheen, 41, and Mueller, 29, met last year at a party at the home of director Brett Ratner, and Sheen proposed on a recent trip to Costa Rica where he gave Mueller an 11-carat, natural yellow diamond ring, according to Sheen's spokesman, Stan Rosenfield.

The actor has enjoyed a

long career in Hollywood that includes work on TV and in movies ranging from 1986 Vietnam War film "Platoon" to baseball comedy "Major League". In "Two and a Half Men", Sheen portrays a 40ish bachelor who does not want to grow up and who likes to go out at night and date a lot of women. In many ways, the role mocks Sheen's former real-life image as a Hollywood party boy.

The program finished this past season as the No. 1 comedy on U.S. television, and last year it earned the

actor a nomination for an Emmy, the U.S. TV industry's top honor. It is also aired in many other countries around the world.

Sheen is the son of actor Martin Sheen and brother to actor and director Emilio Estevez. He has been married three times, and has two children with his former wife, actress Denise Richards, from whom he was divorced last year.

Mueller, who is now a Los Angeles real estate agent, had a small role in 2004 film drama "A Love Song for Bobby Long".

6th graders
St. Dominic primary school

BBC apologises to Queen Elizabeth over photo shoot

LONDON—The BBC apologised to Queen Elizabeth on Thursday for wrongly implying that she had stormed out of a photo shoot with American photographer Annie Leibovitz.

The British broadcaster blamed a production com-

pany for sending it clips edited out of sequence which implied the monarch had lost her temper when asked to remove her crown. The footage should never have been shown, the BBC said.

The British broadcaster blamed a production com-

pany for sending it clips edited out of sequence which implied the monarch had lost her temper when asked to remove her crown. The footage should never have been shown, the BBC said.

"In this trailer there is a sequence that implies that the Queen left a sitting prematurely. This was not the case and the actual sequence of events was misrepresented," the corporation said in a statement. "The BBC would like to apologise to both the Queen and Annie Leibovitz for any upset this may have caused."

The flap was a further embarrassment for Britain's venerable public broadcaster days after it was ordered to pay an unprecedented 50,000-pound (\$100,000) fine for faking a phone-in contest on the 50-year-old children's show "Blue Peter." The BBC is funded by a tax on televisions and its reputation for quality and fairness is highly sensitive.

Queen Elizabeth, being filmed for the behind-the-scenes documentary, was depicted as apparently having flogged out of a room at Buckingham Palace with an aide carrying her robes. The trailer showed Leibovitz asking the monarch, who had worn her crown and formal robes for the sitting, to remove her crown. The Queen gave her an icy stare and replied: "Less dressy, what do you think this is?," pointing to her outfit.

The footage that followed showed the queen walking briskly down a corridor, telling her staff: "I'm not



Britain's Queen Elizabeth poses for photographers in Brussels, Belgium on Thursday.

changing anything. I've had enough dressing like this thank you very much."

The footage which appeared to show her storming out was actually filmed earlier as she made her way to the sitting. A BBC spokeswoman later blamed

the production company, RDF Media Group for supplying the footage out of sequence.

"At the time of the press conference yesterday, the controller of BBC One was not aware that those clips had been edited out of sequence. They were supplied in that sequence to the BBC by the independent production company making the film. So in good faith we actually thought that was the sequence."

TV 15 (local) St. Maarten Cable TV

Local time	Programme
Friday, July 13	
8:00am	Replay AVS News
8:30am	Music Videos
9:00am	Prime Time Caribbean
5:00pm	Music Videos
5:30pm	Prime Time Caribbean
6:00pm	Youth News and Views
6:30pm	Gillette World Sports
7:00pm	GIS Ballerin
7:30pm	AVS News
7:58pm	Medical Edge
8:00pm	Sharing the Vision
9:00pm	ICC Cricket World
9:30pm	Robbie's Lottery
9:55pm	Enzo
10:00pm	St. Maarten Lottery
10:05pm	Caribbean Vibrations
10:30pm	Transparence Kompa
11:00pm	AVS News
11:30pm	Caribbean Newsline

TeleCuraçao

Channel 30 St. Maarten Cable TV

Local time	Programme
Friday, July 13	
6:30am	Musi Biondi
9:30am	TeleCuraçao Speshal
10:30am	Buen Provecho
11:00am	Gana Cash (r)
12:00pm	Al Dia
12:30pm	Telenovela Meridia
1:00pm	Bo Tra'Merida
3:30pm	Telbell
3:45pm	Atardi Hubenil
4:00pm	Glamur (r)
5:00pm	Video Zoo
6:00pm	Deporte Internashonal
6:30pm	TeleCuraçao Speshal
7:00pm	Telbell
7:30pm	Destree's Gourmet
8:00pm	Telenovela
9:00pm	Wega di Number Korou
9:10pm	Partisipashon di Morto
9:15pm	Antillan TV
10:15pm	NOS Journaal
10:40pm	Telenovela (r)
11:40pm	Estreno

BNV (Dutch/Flemish) TV

Channel 46 St. Maarten Cable TV

Local times	Programme
Friday, July 13	
12:00pm	VRT Journaal
12:25pm	De Canvascrack
1:00pm	Vinger aan de pols
1:30pm	Natuur in stand
1:50pm	De wereld draait door compilatie
2:00pm	Nieuw in Nederland
2:30pm	NOS Journaal
3:05pm	Tik Tak
3:10pm	Sesamstraat
3:35pm	Go IV
3:40pm	Krijg toch allemaal de kolere
4:05pm	Heug Klekheim
4:20pm	Jeugdjournaal.nl
4:25pm	Vriend of vijand
5:00pm	FC de Kampioenen
5:40pm	Dunya & Desic
6:05pm	De rode loper
6:20pm	VRT Journaal
6:55pm	Een Vandaag
7:20pm	NOS sportjournaal
7:30pm	NOS Journaal
7:55pm	Weerbericht
8:00pm	Stop de tijd
8:35pm	The Phone
9:05pm	Vlootshow Michiel de Ruyter
9:15pm	De Lantaar
10:10pm	NovoDen Haag Vandaag
10:45pm	De slimste mens
10:45pm	Studio Sport zomer
11:30pm	1000 zonnen en garnalen

Royal sues French magazine over bathing suit photos

PARIS—Defeated French presidential candidate Segolene Royal is suing a glossy magazine after it published photos of her in her bathing suit on its front page, her lawyer said on Thursday.

Royal, a 53-year-old Socialist regional leader, has fascinated France both for her rapid political ascension and her relationship to party leader Francois Hollande. The couple, together for some 30 years during which they had four children, an-

nounced last month they were separating.

"Segolene Royal—Solitary holidays in Corsica", ran the front-page headline in this week's Paris Match, accompanied by a photo showing Royal bathing in the sea wearing a purple and white swimsuit and dark sunglasses. Royal felt the pictures violated her private life, her lawyer Jean-Pierre Mignard said. "It's important for public personalities to defend themselves, to launch pro-

ceedings so that this debate is constantly brought before judges," he told France Info radio.

The Paris Match photos came just a year after two magazines published paparazzi pictures showing Hollande and Royal in swimsuits on a joint holiday last summer. Royal lost the presidential election to conservative Nicolas Sarkozy in May, but she has since made clear she hopes to represent the party in the next poll in 2012.

PRE-BASTILLE'S DAY CELEBRATION
FRIDAY JULY 13TH, 2007

starting at 2pm

DANCE FLOOR
OPENS AT
10:00PM

FIREWORKS AT
THE MARINA ROYALE
STARTING AT
10:30PM

MUSIC,
HUSTLE & BUSTLE
ON THE STREET

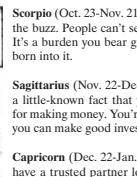
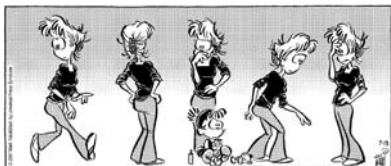
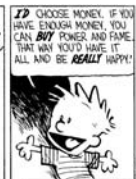
FROM 6:30PM
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By Linda C. Black

Today's Birthday (July 13). You're especially smart this year, compassionate and wise. People near and far request your advice. And, you make money, too.

To get the advantage, check the day's rating: 10 is the easiest day, 0 the most challenging.

Aries (March 21-April 19) - Today is an 8 - The time for talking is over. The time for action is here. You know what you need to make your home more comfortable. Go and get it.

Taurus (April 20-May 20) - Today is an 8 - You've learned a lot. Now you're starting to come up with innovations. Build on the wisdom of the past to solve a present predicament.

Gemini (May 21-June 21) - Today is a 9 - You have the opportunity to gather up great abundance. This could mean the zucchini crop's come, in but it looks like money.

Cancer (June 22-July 22) - Today is a 7 - You're right on target with your comments. Everyone will agree that your analysis of the situation is accurate. Take a bow.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22) - Today is a 6 - The underground economy is doing very well. Get what you need from what you have without going to the malls.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) - Today is a 6 - Meetings go well again today. You'll hear lots of good ideas. Join a group that already knows where they're going and how to get there.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) - Today is a 7 - You're doing complicated work. You could be asked to take on more responsibility. But there's no more money yet. Think about it.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) - Today is a 7 - You're all the buzz. People can't seem to get enough of you. It's a burden you bear gracefully, as if you'd been born into it.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) - Today is an 8 - It's a little-known fact that you have a natural talent for making money. You're secretly very frugal. And you can make good investments. Keep practicing.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) - Today is a 7 - If you have a trusted partner looking out for your interests, relax and let that happen. If you don't, go out and get one.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) - Today is a 9 - The work you're doing now could bring in a vast fortune. That's not exactly for sure, but it could happen, theoretically. Push in that direction.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20) - Today is a 6 - Promises you make now have extra significance. There will be work involved and your whole life could change for the better. Just do it.

By Queenie

**SEND LETTERS TO P.O. BOX 828
or e-mail queenie@thedailyherald.com**

Dear Queenie,

The other day I went shopping with some friends and I saw one of them slip a T-shirt into her bag. When I left the store she didn't pay for it. I was so shocked I didn't know what to do so I didn't do anything.

Queenie, what should I have done?—**Shoplifter's friend**

Dear Shoplifter's friend,

There's an old saying, "With friends like this you don't need enemies," that certainly applies here. Sooner or later this girl is going to get caught, and if you're with her at the time you may be considered equally guilty.

If you don't want to drop this girl from your list of friends, make a point of telling her how much you disapprove of her shoplifting and ask her never to do it again when you are with her. And if you ever see her shoplifting again, remind her as you pass the cashier that she has "forgotten" to pay for the item.

If this action causes her to end her friendship with you, so be it. If I were in your place, I would end the friendship immediately and count myself lucky to not have gotten into trouble already because of her.

Only notices of fund-raising events for non-profit or educational organisations will be placed in the Events/Notices column. Notices/Events should be sent to notices@thedailyherald.com in the format used on this page. Do not send fliers or press releases to this address.

NOTICES**Animal Volunteer**

Animals R Friends Foundation needs volunteers 15 years up and not afraid of handling animals for various tasks: feeding cats and dogs, walking dogs, transporting (sick) animals, guest-speakers for ARE lesson materials for schools, etc. For more information call at 580-1627, 556-3688; 5561191 or e-mail: arff_xsm@yahoo.com

Summer Camp

The Soualiga Capoeira Foundation still has a few spots left in its new summer camp. The following weeks are still available: Week 3: July 16 to 20: "You Got Rhythm!" a drumming and percussion workshops. Week 4: July 23 to July 27 "The Circus Is In Town!" a juggling, magic, stilt walking and much more camp. US \$50 per week and classes are Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 1:00pm at the Motiance Dance School. To register, e-mail tyroneph-elipa@gmail.com or call 553-5355.

Storytelling Workshop

The Ark Foundation is registering children ages 10-15 for a free storytelling workshop July 11-12, 8:00am-12:30pm, and parents, teachers, youth leaders, etc. for workshops

Saturday, July 14, 9:00am to 2:00pm, cost US \$ 20 per person. Registration required for all workshops at The Ark Outreach Centre, Cannegieter Street #14.
A special musical storytelling event "Het Zilveren Zaadie" on tour from the Netherlands will be held in L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium on July 16, 4:00-6:00pm. Admission: US \$10. Tickets available at The Ark Outreach Centre.

Volleyball Camp

Register for super six volleyball summer camp for boys and girls 8-12 at L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium July 16-20, 8:00am to 1:00pm. For more information call 552-2945, 544-5411 or 556-1779.

English Classes

Oasis Foundation is registering persons for its course English as a Second Language, introducing the True Colors English Course with Everyday Life. For more information call 580-5639.

St. Lucia Meeting

St. Martin St. Lucia Friendly Society Foundation invites all St. Lucia-born persons to a meeting at the WIFOL building, Sunday, July 29, starting 2:00pm. For more information call 586-6859, 523-1187 or 0690-355-448.

Sailing Camp

St. Maarten Yacht club has added two additional camps to their summer programme July 10-13, July 31 to August 3 and August 7-10. During these camps the children sail each morning and in the afternoon they visit a company in the marine industry. All camps are basically the same the children are advised to join only one summer camp. The cost per summer camp is US \$175 for members and \$200 for non-members.

Story Time

'Story Time' at the Philipsburg Jubilee Library will take place during the month of July. There will be reading activities for children 4-6 Tuesdays, 10:00-11:00am, children 7-12 will be coming on Wednesday mornings, same time. Admission is free.

Children's movies will be shown every Friday at 10:00am.

Tentative list:

July 13: Shaggy Dog
July 20: Duma
July 27: The Red Sneakers
August 3: Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
August 11: The Wild
All activities are free. For more information contact the library at 542-2970.

Pageant Registration

Lifeline Association is registering young Christian ladies ages 13-25 to be contestants in the Queen Esther Pageant 2007. For registration and information call (00590) 690-820-12 or email lifeline_xsm@hotmail.fr

Percussion Workshops

Pernell Saturnino, a percussionist from New York will be hosting percussion workshop in Caribbean and Latin music in St. Maarten in July. Zeus Art Foundation is registering participant for the workshops, ages 7 and up. Call 554-8537, 554-1941 or email Zeus_artfoundation@yahoo.com. See also Saturnino's website: <http://www.pernellsaturnino.com>

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Dance Classes

Soaring with the Spirit Prophetic Dance and worship institute is registering students 6 and up to its Christian dance classes at Rupert Maynard Community Centre in St. Peters starting August 21 for adults, 4:30-5:30pm, and August 25 for children 7:30-9:00pm respectively. For more information call: Minister Miranda Patterson 526-3193/543-2004 or e-mail: mirandapatterson32@hotmail.com

Youth Pool and Billiard lessons

Pool and Billiard lessons for young shooters ages 12-17 are held at Pineapple Petes's Fridays and Saturdays, 4:00-7:00pm. Sessions include both 8-ball and 9-ball as well as shot selection, game strategies and stick work. For more information contact coach Rudolph Hyman at 524-5026

Tae Kwon Do Classes

Dragon Princess Tae Kwon Do School is registering students for classes in Simpson Bay Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, 5:00-6:30pm and in St. Peters Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, 5:00 and 6:30pm. For more information call 526-6073.

School Volunteers

The Community Schools Project of St. Maarten is looking for qualified volunteers to assist and share their skills with our youngsters. Persons skilled in drama, local dance, track and field, cooking, story telling, handicrafts, aerobics, computers, Math, English, Dutch and other areas are needed. For more information, call Project Leader Lusandra Wilson, tel. 542-2056.

Volunteers Needed

Nature Foundation needs storytelling volunteers (English and/or Dutch speaking), to record pirate stories for a new educational programme. Help is also requested for performing the "turtle puppet show" in schools. For more information, contact Dominique at dominique@naturefoundation-sm.org, call 544-4267 or fax 544-4678.

Volunteers Needed

St. Maarten Animal Welfare foundation is seeking volunteers during the morning hours for special activities. For more information call 520-8887.

Practice Sessions

St. Martin Pony Baseball/Softball League informs all players of the Belvedere, Dutch Quarter and Middle Region areas that practice sessions will take place at Belvedere Ballpark every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 3:00-6:00pm.

Tai Chi classes

The Buddhist Compassionate Organisation Tzu Chi is offering free Tai Chi classes at John Larmonie Centre on Long Wall Road on Saturdays 8:30-10:00am and Sundays 8:30-10:30am.

Daytime Bible Study

God Answers Prayer (GAP) Ministries meets for Bible Study at Rupert I. Maynard Community Centre, St. Peters Road, St. Peters, every Thursday, 10:00am to 12:00 noon. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more information call 548-3051 or 554-9590, or e-mail gapministries-sm@hotmail.com.

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St. Maarten's Hyacinthe Christine Williams looks over the new international Federation of Body Builders web site at www.ifbbcaribbean.com.

New IBFF web site caters to body builders, fitness athletes

PHILIPSBURG--Body builders and fitness enthusiasts have a new website for guidance on how to prepare for both regional and international competitions.

While traditional body builders still pump iron to produce bulging muscle, a growing number of men and women are entering fitness competitions that place less emphasis on mass and more on body tone.

The web site, www.ifbbcaribbean.com, is hosted by the International Federation of Body Builders and developed by Hyacinthe Christine Williams.

Williams, of St. Maarten, is the executive assistant to IFBB president Javier Pollock. Based in the United States, Williams is currently visiting St. Maarten to attend a wedding. She used the opportunity to visit local athletes.

"The new web site is up and running," beamed Williams. "I'm very proud of it."

Besides, having the usual facts and figures of the organization, the site also has lots of photos which demonstrate the proper form and poses athletes need to perfect to compete at top level competitions. The photos show

exactly what the judges look for in each category of body building and fitness.

"Athletes will find a calendar of events of up coming competitions too," said Williams.

The Central American and Caribbean Championships are scheduled to be celebrated in Bermuda, October 11 to 14. Prior to the regional premier event, the Eastern Caribbean Championship is set for Trinidad and Tobago July 27 to 29 and plans are in the works for the annual Netherlands Antilles competition.

St. Maarten to tackle Cuba in Stanford 20/20 opener

PHILIPSBURG--St. Maarten will once again open the now annual Stanford 20/20 tournament against debutant Cuba. Last year, the local team played the first game of the tournament but lost to the United States Virgin Islands.

Cuba is the only Spanish-speaking team in the tournament, and is also one of the two new additions. Argentina is the other newcomer.

This year, 21 teams will compete for US\$1,000,000 from Friday, January 25 to Sunday, February 24.

Eight teams that made the quarter-final last year were seeded and placed in one of two boxes when the draw took place at the Sticky Wicket Restaurant in Antigua in front of 10 of the 14 legends that make up the board which runs the tournament. The teams are: Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Nevis, Jamaica, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada and St. Vincent and the

Grenadines. The other 13 teams were placed in the other box. The legends took out the names to match them against each other before going over to the seeded box.

Former West Indies fast bowler Andy Roberts has been assigned as mentor for St. Maarten this year. He has been coming regularly and

talking to the team which trains under John Archibald and assistant coach Steven Evans.

St. Maarten will be hoping for a better showing this year against the new teams. All the matches will be played at the Stanford Cricket Ground and will be televised live in the Caribbean and around the world.

Dream team St. Maarten creams Team Dominicano

CUL DE SAC--The ball was too hot to handle as Dream Team St. Maarten blasted past Team Dominicano in the Battle of the Softball Bats at John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark yesterday.

St. Maarten won game two of the best of three series 20-3, after winning game one Wednesday.

"We will play game three tonight for fun," said St. Maarten Softball Association president Patrick Driegers. First pitch is scheduled for 7:30pm.

Al Gumbs went three for three for St. Maarten, while Miguel Eusebius was three for four with a three run four bagger.

KFC Twisters out to snatch local trophy

PHILIPSBURG--The newly formed KFC Twisters have a very good chance to win their first local trophy when they tackle the Future Champs B team at the Caribe Lumber Ballpark on Sunday.

Three teams polled two wins each in the B-Division; however, Twisters and the youth team tipped Mary's Boon Strikers to the final on better net run rate.

In the three games played, Strikers scored 409 runs in 80 overs at an average of 5.11, Future Champs B amassed 517 runs in 71.1 overs which left them with an average 7.27 and Twisters tallied 531 runs in 71 overs for an average of 7.47 runs per over.

In the head to head battle in the preliminary rounds, Twisters convincingly beat their young opponent.

Ironically, Twisters depend heavily on batsmen Damien Beckford and Akeem Charles who are players in the Future Champs team. If these two players play for the youth team it will be very difficult for the Twisters to be crowned B-Division champion in the Rams Duty Free tournament.

But, they played for Twisters in the preliminary round.

Presently, the members of the youth team are going through some soul searching after their less than impressive showing in the Leeward Islands under 19 tournament.

Captain Kenroy David will have to motivate his troops to pick themselves up and at least repeat their performance against the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) in the just concluded tournament.

Ronel Blondell scored a century in that game and David cracked 57 off 31 balls.

Twisters' overseas player Leon Lake from Anguilla also got some runs in the tournament with a top score of 50 against St. Kitts. But, if he is available for the B-Division final, it will be a cause of concern because he has to represent Anguilla in the Under 19 final against Antigua. That game was scheduled to start yesterday but Antigua was unable to get reasonable airfare for the two day game in Anguilla.

It is now speculated that the final will be either postponed or played in St.

Kitts where the Leeward Islands under 19 team will assemble for the TCL West Indies tournament.

Neither Future Champs B nor Twisters have won any championship in their brief existence, but with one of

them having a chance to be crowned champion, an epic battle awaits cricket lovers.

The final will bowl off at 11:00am and each team will be able to bat a maximum of 40 overs.



Pastor Franklin Bell from the Praise Tabernacle Church in Cole Bay presented Project Neglect coordinator Nickie Owen with a check to replace to rotten wooden doors at Raoul II Ildige Sports Complex.

Praise Tabernacle Church helps Project Neglect fix sports complex

PHILIPSBURG--Project Neglect continues to slowly upgrade Raoul IIldige Sports Complex.

Organized by the Who Cares Foundation and driven by youth soccer coach Nickie Owen, Project Neglect aims to improve conditions at the sports facility.

"The kids need a safe, clean place to play," Owen said. When the bathrooms broke and sewage poured on the floor, it was Owen who found sponsors to purchase new plumbing fixtures and arranged for the repairs.

Now Project Neglect has found a sponsor to replace two of the old wood doors that are rotting off their hinges.

Pastor Franklin Bell from the Praise Tabernacle Church in Cole Bay presented Owen with a check

yesterday. The new doors will be installed shortly.

"I work with children all the time," Pastor Bell said. "I know the importance of having a place for the children to exercise and do sports. I'm glad we could help here," said Bell as he inspected one of the doors in need of repair on the main stadium building.

There is still much work needed at the sports complex, according to Owen who is one of the many coaches that use the facilities to train future soccer stars.

Across the grass and sidewalk, Owen pointed to the swimming pool area building. "We're working on that too," he beamed. "The wood panel below the windows has also rotted out. That will all be replaced with (concrete) block."



Commissioner of Sports Maria Buncamper-Molanus (center) chairs the meeting at the Culture and Sports Department on Wednesday.

Commissioner of Sports wants a sports policy

PHILIPSBURG—Commissioner of Sports Maria Buncamper-Molanus met with several sector heads to discuss establishing a sports policy, Wednesday.

The new commissioner of sports is adamant about putting in place systematic and comprehensive policy to guide the development of sports on St. Maarten.

The Commissioner believes that while there are adamant sport fans and talented athletes on St. Maarten, sports is often looked at as the "unwanted stepchild" instead of it being supported and strengthened as a developmental tool. "For some strange reason, the support for sports isn't where it should be. The aim is to change that, to change our attitude towards sports," Buncamper-Molanus said.

The Commissioner met with Sector Head of Welfare Claudette Labega, Head of the Culture and Sports Department Neville York and Policy Elmora Avenirkin to discuss a policy.

"Sports are an important means of building and developing the character of the individual as well as that of the community," the Commissioner said. "It builds and nurtures the spirit of friendly competition, it provides healthy entertainment, it exercises the body, it focuses the spirit, it creates a climate of achievement and it challenges the youth in particular to higher levels of endurance and attainment," she added.

Buncamper-Molanus explained that while many local athletes do their best at regional and international

events to bring the island recognition and inspire their peers, without a proper guidance mechanism, "it feels like we're not moving forward to keep pace with the rest of the Caribbean."

The Commissioner also spoke about the more holistic approach to school sports, meaning not only two hours a week of recreation activities, but also activities focusing on good nutrition, physical anatomy education that looks at how muscles in the human body are formed and used etc. "Focus will be on developing sports programs since we now have the facilities," she said.

The Commissioner stressed

Klien and Bourdais stake claims to drives

LONDON—Austrian Christian Klien kept up his hopes of a Formula One comeback with Spyker on Thursday after testing with the team for the first time at the Spa circuit in Belgium.

The Silverstone-based team are looking for a new driver from next week's European Grand Prix at the Nurburgring after terminating the contract of Dutchman Christijan Albers for financial reasons.

"Obviously it was a new team, new car and a new seat and it took some time to get used to it, but there is a good bunch of people here and I felt at home straight away," said the 24-year-old Klien in a team statement.

"I think it all went well,

that implementation of a successful sports policy will depend on public and governmental support, but in a large part, the political will she's brings with her. She appears determined to see sports develop further and improve in St. Maarten. She said discussions are in the "infant" stages, but she expects finance, program development, training, media and the education system to form part of the components of a comprehensive sports policy.

"When that time comes, I am looking forward to the input of all relevant partners in sports to contribute to the establishing of such a policy," she concluded.

There is potential in the car and I enjoyed the day," added the Honda test and reserve driver, who raced for Red Bull last year.

Klien, whose main rival for the Spyker seat looks to be Indian Narain Karthikeyan, completed 63 laps but ended the day propping up the timesheets with a best lap more than two seconds off the pace of Kimi Raikkonen's Ferrari.

France's triple Champ Car champion Sebastian Bourdais was also in action, pressing his claims for a race seat with Toro Rosso next season. Bourdais was eighth fastest of the 11 on track. "Towards the end of July we should know something," he said of his prospects.

St. Maarten has a tennis champion

PHILIPSBURG—Crowded and celebrated, Kim Verschuren won the girl's 14 and under tennis title of the 5th St. Maarten Open Tennis Federation tournament yesterday. She won the final in her division 6-0 and 6-2.

"St. Maarten has a champion," said an exuberant tennis federation president Rudy Engl.

Some 120 athletes from more than 20 countries registered to play in the week long the 5th St. Maarten Youth Open Tennis tournament that culminates with the boys 18 and under final Saturday.

Athletes representing Trinidad, Grenada, Curacao, Aruba, Bonaire, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, Japan, Sweden and Portugal battled for ranking points at Port de Plaisance in the 18 and under division and at Maho Resort in the 14 and under group.

Lately, Verschuren, 13, has been playing a lot of tennis and winning. She won the St. Maarten Open Adult Tennis Tournament at Raoul Illidge Sports Complex, in June.

She also qualified last month to represent St. Maarten on the Netherlands Antilles team that will compete in the Kingdom Games which will be celebrated in Netherlands later this month.

Verschuren, who plays the piano and trains in capoeira, the Brazilian martial art disguised as dance, has been playing tennis for four years. She started with LAB Sports Academy and coach Les Brown. She now trains with Marc Grenouilleau the tennis pro at Raoul Illidge Sports Complex.

Yesterday, Kim won the final 6-0 and 6-2.

In the girl's 18 and under, about 32 athletes drew number one seed Laura Alicia Aguilar of Mexico who advanced to the final. She defeated number three seed Anuz Gymzan of Guyana 6-2, 6-1. Today, she will face Number four seed Sarai Lazarevic of Canada for the championship.

Lazarevic advanced to the final defeating number two seed Danielle Mills of the United States 6-4, 2-6 and 6-3.

In the boys 18 and under, only four of the 64 players in the main draw remain. Alex

Lompart booked his spot in today's semi finals with a 6-2 and 6-4 victory over Fernando Larrea Gonzales of Mexico.

Lompart, of Peru, was the number one seed in the tournament. He had an International Tennis Federation ranking of 162 coming into the St. Maarten tournament. He will face Maciel Rajski of Poland. Seeded 43 in the tournament, Rajski battled his way past num-

ber 14 seed Sho Higuchi of Japan. Rajski won 6-2 and 6-0.

Venezuela's David Souto, seeded eighth, breached into the semis when his opponent, Igor Bujdo of Poland, withdrew.

Number two seed Jason Zafiros of the United States worked hard to get past Diego Acosta of Ecuador. Zafiros is in the semis.

Play resumes this morning at 9:00am.

Championless Caribbean boxers still in turmoil

BARBADOS—The St. Maarten Amateur Boxing Association was one of 13 organizations represented at a meeting of the International Amateur Boxing Association (IABA) in Barbados, Tuesday.

President of the local boxing association Bobby Otley attended the meeting on behalf of St. Maarten.

Recently elected president of the IABA, Dr. C. K. Wu of Taiwan called the meeting of the 22 Caribbean associations to discuss the needs of the region and detail opportunities for young boxers to progress to the world level.

"The world championships will be held in Chicago," Otley said. "I think we have an opportunity to send a couple of boxers."

Dr. Wu's visit had been planned months in advance. He had promised to visit the region during his election at the IABA general meeting in the Dominican Republic last November.

"While the meeting was not called to discuss the St. Maarten fiasco, the subject did come up," said Otley.

St. Maarten was scheduled to host the annual Caribbean Amateur Boxing Association tournament last month. More than 300 fighters with coaches, trainers and fans arrived on the Friendly Island to box. Instead, the visitors had scuffle around for a place to spend the night and then were sent home without "a fight."

Financing for hotel accommodations fell through. At the time, Otley produced a pile of documents detailing financial assistance requests submitted to Government by the boxing association. Some dated as far back as a year ago. He further produced letters from Government in support of the tournament.

Commissioner of Sports Franklin Meyers contended

Government never pledged financial support of the tournament and in a last ditch effort to salvage the event could only come up with half of the nearly US \$10,000 needed to house the delegations for the week long event. Meyers did not seek re-election and has since been replaced as commissioner of sports by Maria Buncamper-Molanus.

The lack of a Caribbean Boxing Championship has left the region in turmoil. Normally the regional winners would have been eligible to compete at the next level and advance to the Worlds in Chicago and possibly the Olympics in Beijing.

"It looks like there will be a small tournament in Santo Domingo," said Otley.

RIO

Continued from page 48.

prizes.

With the IOC eager to bring the Olympics to South America for the first time, the Rio bid would receive a considerable boost if it can run a smooth Panam Games.

Over 5,500 athletes from 42 countries are expected to take part in the 16-day competition which opens on Friday with many of the 31 Olympic events played in new or renovated facilities.

The opening and closing ceremonies will be held in the refurbished Maracana Stadium with athletics and soccer taking place in the new 45,000-seat Joao Havelange Stadium.

A new state-of-the-art swimming stadium and multi-purpose arena give the 15th Panam Games an impressive list of first class venues eclipsed only by Rio's breathtaking backdrops.

Di Luca cleared of doping by judge



Danilo DiLuca cleared the first hurdle of avoiding a doping ban when a judge cleared him of involvement in a long-running doping investigation.

AUTUN, France--The 2007 Giro d'Italia winner Danilo Di Luca moved a step closer to avoiding a doping ban on Thursday, when he was cleared by an Italian judge of involvement in a long-running police investigation into doping.

"Danilo Di Luca will not be called upon to answer any charges in the 'Oil for Drugs' enquiry. The Giro d'Italia winner's case has actually been dismissed by the examining judge of

Pescara," his team Liquigas said in a statement on Thursday.

Di Luca was under investigation by Italian police in the probe, which has been running since 2004 and focuses on doctor Carlo Santucci, who is alleged to have supplied athletes with doping products.

On Saturday, the 31-year-old rider is set to meet with the anti-doping wing of the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) to answer ques-

tions relating to the investigation.

His chances of avoiding a ban are improved by the decision of the civil judiciary to close the case against him.

"I've always said I was convinced the case against me would be closed. I can't therefore say I'm surprised, even if I feel huge relief," Di Luca was quoted as saying on the Liquigas Web site (www.teamliquigas.it).

"Now I face another important step -- the meeting with CONI's anti-doping prosecutor Ettore Torri.

"For me, the judgement of the sports justice system counts as much as that of the ordinary justice system.

"I know that many young people look up to me as a role model, especially after my win at the Giro. This is another reason why I don't want, and can't allow, my credibility to be questioned.

"I will go to Saturday's hearing with a constructive approach, certain of being able to demonstrate my innocence just like I have in the civil investigation."

A second rider called in for questioning in the 'Oil for Drugs' probe, third-place Giro finisher Eddy Mazzoleni, will appear before CONI's anti-doping committee on Friday.

Pakistan's Shoab says free hit law nonsense

KARACHI--Pakistan's fast bowler, Shoab Akhtar has described as nonsense the free hit experimental law to be enforced in one-day internationals from Oct. 1 this year.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) last month agreed to penalise bowlers for sending down a no-ball by allowing the batsman to take a free hit off the next ball without being dismissed in one-dayers.

The law will be tested on an experimental basis and is already allowed in a different form in Twenty20 cricket.

"I don't support this law because already life is tough for the bowlers. It is nonsense. Why make it more difficult us," Akhtar told reporters in the Pakistan camp on Thursday.

He said they already had to bowl on flat pitches and had the rules loaded against them.

"Why put more pressure on them (bowlers) with such laws that give the full advantage to the batsmen," he added.

He said the free hit law was fine for Twenty20 cricket, which was not really that serious, but not meant for one-dayers which are a

more competitive brand of cricket.

Akhtar also said he was keen to make an impact in September's Twenty20 World Cup in South Africa if selected because he was making a comeback after a long time.

Akhtar was picked in Pakistan's squad for two one-day games in Scotland this month which were rained off. "It was very frustrating not being able to play cricket at all," he said.

Padres' Wells suspended seven games for tirade

NEW YORK--San Diego Padres southpaw David Wells was suspended for seven games for his tirade during a game last week, Major League Baseball said in a statement Thursday.

Wells will also be fined an undisclosed amount for his heated argument with home-plate umpire Ed Hickox last Saturday in a game against the Atlanta Braves.

Bob Watson, baseball's Vice President of On-Field Operations, said the 44-year-old Wells was suspended for his "inappropriate actions".

Unless appealed, the suspension is scheduled to begin during San Diego's game on

Friday.

GENEVA-- BMW Oracle's Golden Gate Yacht Club (GGYC) has contested the way Alinghi has set up the next America's Cup, arguing that it unfairly favours the

Swiss defender.

Under the America's Cup rules, the winner decides where, when and how to race the next event, agreeing the details with the first yacht club to challenge them for the "Auld Mug".

After Alinghi won the 32nd America's Cup last week, they signed a protocol for the next event with newly-established Club Nautico Espanol de la Vela (CNEV), agreeing to race in bigger boats. They did not set exact yacht design rules, a time or a place.

"The Alinghi Protocol for the 33rd America's Cup alters the very nature of the competition giving unprecedented and unfair advantages to the Defender," GGYC said in a statement on Thursday.

"Without the basic elements of regatta venue, date and boat design rules as required by the Deed of Gift (which governs the America's Cup), the Alinghi Protocol provides no opportunity for a fair and equitable competition."

An Alinghi spokesman declined to comment.



The pack of riders cycle during the fifth stage of the 94th Tour de France cycling race between Chablis and Autun, July 12, 2007.

TOUR DE FRANCE

Continued from page 48.

"I was hoping Alejandro Valverde would not attack but he did not move. During the final sprint, I touched Benatti and attacked Freire who then could not keep the pace. It's a great result for me."

CSC rider Cannellara retained the race leader's yellow jersey after finishing safe in the main pack. "We managed to defend the jersey with the help of

the Liquigas team, who deserve the stage win today," Cannellara said. Cofidis rider Sylvain Chavanel took the polka-dot jersey of team mate Stéphane Augé's shoulders.

With Belgian Tom Boonen struggling on the category-three ascent to the Cote de la Croix de la Liberation, German Erik Zabel of the Mirram team took the green jersey.

BMW Oracle contests Alinghi over America's Cup

declined to comment.

The GGYC also said the new Spanish club was an illegitimate challenger under the Deed of Gift, which says a challenging yacht club must hold annual races on an arm of the open sea.

CNEV said there were precedents in the 156-year history of the Cup of a new club challenging and a protocol being signed with neither a time nor a place set for the next event.

In an e-mail, it added it was organising two open-sea regattas in northern Spain this year.

The GGYC has now challenged Alinghi itself, rather than putting its name on a list of teams who would fight it out for the right to race Alinghi for the America's Cup. It said it had a lot of support from other clubs in its case.

The Golden Gate challenge is the latest in a line of disputes that have dogged the history of the America's Cup, the most prestigious regatta

in sailing.

At the very first race in 1851, members of the British fleet that had been battered by the "America" argued the U.S. schooner had an unfair advantage and may even have had a secret motor.

Most recently, in 1988, New Zealand made a rogue challenge in a huge monohull. The defending San Diego Yacht Club beat them in a zippy catamaran but a final decision over whether the victory was legitimate was held up in court for months.

The GGYC, represented by software billionaire Larry Ellison at the last two America's Cups, said Alinghi could already begin to design their defence while leaving potential challengers in the dark about the new boats they will have to build.

Alinghi have said they will tell other teams where and when the next Cup will be by Dec. 31 and will set the exact rules over how to build the new class boat by the end of the year.

FIFA confirm squad lists for Mandela's birthday match

BERNE, Switzerland—FIFA have unveiled the full list of players taking part in next week's charity match in honour of former South African president Nelson Mandela.

Pele, Ruud Gullit and French World Cup winner Christian Karembeu head the line-up for the Rest of the World team, most of whom are retired.

Pele, the World's greatest ever player who retired in 1977 but still looks in remarkably good shape at 66, is expected to make a cameo appearance in the match.

Three-time African Player of the Year Samuel Eto'o and former FIFA World Player of the Year George Weah are among the 22 players selected to represent Africa, whose squad, like the Rest of the World's is mainly comprised of former stars.

The game is due to be held at Cape Town's Newlands Stadium on July 18, Mandela's 89th birthday, with proceeds going to local charities.

The squads named by FIFA are:

Rest of the World:

Goalkeeper: Andoni Zubizarreta

Defenders: Zoubaier Baya, Christian Karembeu, Gary Mabbutt, Patrick M'Boma, Santos Muntubile, Lucas Radebe

Midfielders/Forwards: Ali Daei, Emilio Butragueno, Stephane Chapuisat, Youssef Fofana, Julien Guercier, Ruud Gullit, Jo Sung Kim, Leonardo, Pele, Fernando Redondo, Winton Rufer, Ivan Zamorano

Coaches: Roy Hodgson, Claude Le Roy

Africa:

Goalkeepers: Ezaki Baou, Jacques Songo'o

Defenders: Owen Augustine Eguavon, Mark Fish, Stephen Keshi, Doctor Khumalo, David Ouba, Stephen Tataou, Okchukwu Uche.

Midfielders/Forwards: Abedi Pele, Daniel Amokachi, Kalusha Bwalya, Samuel Eto'o, Hossam Hassan, Lomana Lua-lua, Rabah Madjer, Pedro Mantorras, Phil Masinga, Francois Omih, Bényk Denis, Olesch, Samson Siasia, George Weah

Coaches: Jean Manga, Jomo Sono.



Chelsea's new signing Florent Malouda (R) attends a news conference with coach Jose Mourinho in Los Angeles yesterday.

Malouda no replacement for Robben, says Mourinho

BEVERLY HILLS, California—Chelsea coach Jose Mourinho has denied rumours that French international Florent Malouda was recruited to replace Dutch winger Arjen Robben.

Midfielder Malouda, signed from Lyon earlier this week, had been widely regarded in the media as a replacement for Robben, who has been linked with a move to Real Madrid.

"I want to make it very, very clear that Florent is not here to replace anybody," Mourinho told a news conference at the Beverly Hills Hotel on Thursday after introducing his new signing.

"The objective is to have a very good player with a very good mentality who will be very easy adapt, in my opinion, to English football. He is also a player with ambition."

"We have competition in almost every position and I think that is very, very important. I know that everybody is watching us with Florent and Robben in the same squad."

"In my opinion, the best football we have played in the last three years was when Robben and (Damien) Duff were playing together in the same team, so why can't Robben and Florent play together?"

The 27-year-old Malouda, a powerful left-footed attacking midfielder, has played 30 times for France.

He was signed by the FA Cup holders on Tuesday from the French champions on a four-year deal reportedly worth 20 million euros (\$27.26 million).

"For me, it's another challenge in my career," Malouda said after being presented to the media in his number 15 shirt.

"I came to Chelsea to try to win all the other competitions I have not won already. I think the group and the players here are very competitive and it will be a big experience for me."

"The English championship is very hard, it's strong and you have to be at 150 percent every time. I hope that it will be a success for me."

Mourinho expects Malouda to settle quickly into the Chelsea squad alongside his former team mates Didier Drogba and Michael Essien.

"We already know a lot about him, both as a player and as a personality," Mourinho said.

Chelsea play their first pre-season match in the U.S. against Mexico's Club America in the Disney Friendship Cup in Stanford, California on Saturday.

They then return to Los Angeles for the World Series of Football where they will take on the Sunwong Blueswing on July 17 and the Los Angeles Galaxy on July 21.

Messi brings football magic to the Amazon

MARACAIBO, Venezuela—Sweltering Puerto Ordaz, lying halfway between the Caribbean coast and the Amazon jungle in the heart of Venezuela's savannah, is not noted for being one of international soccer's great venues.

On Wednesday, however, the remote, riverside town witnessed a rare moment of football magic when Lionel Messi stamped his indelible mark on the Copa America with a sublime goal.

Picking up a short pass from Carlos Tevez on the right, Messi spotted Mexico goalkeeper Oswaldo Sanchez off his line and chipped the ball delicately over him from the edge of the area.

The goal, the second in Argentina's 3-0 semi-final win over Mexico, was arguably the best goal of the tournament and one of the best scored this year anywhere.

It signalled a great transformation for Messi, who only a year ago sat forlornly on the bench as Argentina lost to Germany on penalties in the World Cup quarter-final in Berlin.

It was also a fitting reward for the Venezuelan organisers who have invested in state-of-the-art stadiums for an event where, in recent editions, facilities have often been basic.

The Venezuelan government has spent an estimated \$1 billion, building three stadiums from scratch and refurbishing another six to bring the Copa to what is primarily baseball territory.

The Cachamay stadium where Messi scored his goal was, until recently, a humble arena with no terraces behind the goal, where the tropical sun beat down on hapless fans.

It is now an impressive, covered 41,000-capacity stadium.

When Brazilian pair Ronaldinho and Kaka announced earlier this year that they would not take part because they were too tired, it was feared that other top players would follow suit and the tournament would become a damp squib.

Their decision seemed typical of an era in which top players ply their trade almost exclusively in Europe, leaving regions such as Latin America and Africa to act as nothing more than providers of raw material.

So, the decision of Argentina to bring a full complement of players was greeted with great enthusiasm by the Venezuelan public.

Messi, in particular, has



Messi, in a file photo, went from bench warmer to hero, when he kicked the second goal in Argentina's 3-0 win against Mexico on Wednesday.

been greeted rapturously every time he appears on the pitch.

Wednesday's goal, almost inevitably, sparked a war of superlatives among the media and led to comparisons with Diego Maradona.

"The Maradona of the 21st century scored an anthological goal," said the Argentine sports daily Ole.

La Nacion described it as "a magic touch" and wrote: "On Sunday, Argentina will have to show against Brazil (in the

final) that they are the best team in the Copa America."

Argentina coach Alfio Basile quickly played down comparisons with Maradona, who never won the Copa America as a player.

"His career has just got off the ground and you can never compare Diego's career with a boy who is starting out," he said.

"The only thing the coaches should do is not inhibit him in the slightest, we have to let him fly."

Brazil orders Berezovsky, soccer bosses detained

SAO PAULO—A Brazilian federal court on Thursday ordered Russian tycoon Boris Berezovsky and several directors of the Brazilian soccer team Corinthians detained on money laundering charges.

Judge Fausto Martin de Sanctis froze the bank accounts of one of Brazil's most prominent and controversial businessmen in the mid- and late-1990s and a Kremlin insider under Russia's first post-Soviet president, Boris Yeltsin.

But he fled to London in 2000 and has become a vocal critic of President Vladimir Putin. Britain has annoyed Moscow by rejecting requests to extradite the businessman to Russia on corruption charges.

Berezovsky was Russia's most prominent and controversial businessman in the mid- and late-1990s and a Kremlin insider under Russia's first post-Soviet president, Boris Yeltsin.

MSI bought a majority stake in Corinthians in 2004, but its authority was later challenged by longtime Brazilian directors of the club.

Corinthians and MSI denied the charges on Thursday and said they obeyed all laws.

Berezovsky was Russia's most prominent and controversial businessman in the mid- and late-1990s and a Kremlin insider under Russia's first post-Soviet president, Boris Yeltsin.

But he fled to London in 2000 and has become a vocal critic of President Vladimir Putin. Britain has annoyed Moscow by rejecting requests to extradite the businessman to Russia on corruption charges.

Brazilian authorities have said Berezovsky is an investor in the sports management group Media Sports Invest-

SPORTS ARENA

Astana hit by crashes in fifth Tour stage



CSC team rider Fabian Cancellara of Switzerland wears the leader's yellow jersey on the podium after the fifth stage of the 94th Tour de France cycling race between Chablis and Autun, yesterday.

AUTUN, France— Race favourite Alexander Vinokourov lost ground on the leaders in the Tour de France and suffered a deep cut on his right knee after crashing during Thursday's fifth stage.

In a bad day for the Astana team, his super-domestic Andreas Kloeeden injured his coccyx in a separate incident.

"It is as serious for him as it is for Andreas," team spokeswoman Corrine Druecy said of Vinokourov.

A snapped chain caused Vinokourov to crash with 25 km remaining of stage from Chablis to Autun and the Kazakh crossed the fin-

ish line one minute and 20 seconds behind winner Italian Filippo Pozzato.

Liverpool agree deal to sign Ajax striker Babel

AMSTERDAM— Liverpool have reached agreement with Ajax Amsterdam to sign forward Ryan Babel for 17 million euros (\$23.4 million), the Dutch club said on Thursday.

"The striker, who had a contract until 2010 will sign a five-year deal with the Champions League finalists," Ajax said on its official Web site.

German Kloeeden had crashed earlier in the 182.5-km ride.

"The diagnosis is a fissure in his coccyx," Druecy said. "It is very painful. If he doesn't have a bad night he should start tomorrow's stage."

Astana manager Marc Biver put a brave face on things.

"If we are not to win the Tour this year, we will come back next year," he said. "But you know Vino, he has never been stronger than when things become harder."

Vinokourov, who ripped his shorts and also suffered grazing to his right buttock in the crash, tried to rejoin the peloton with the help of six team mates but to the collective effort failed to bear fruit and the Kazakh went solo to limit the damage.

He dropped to 81st in the overall standings, two minutes 10 seconds adrift of leader Fabian Cancellara.

Continued on page 48



An Argentine swimmer practices during a training session for the Pan American Games at Maria Lenk Aquatic Center in Rio de Janeiro, yesterday. Brazil will host the Pan American Games from July 13 to 29.

Rogge welcomes Rio bid for 2016 Olympics

RIO DE JANEIRO—International Olympic Committee (IOC) president Jacques Rogge encouraged Brazil's bid for the 2016 Summer Olympics on Thursday despite Rio staging the most expensive Pan-American Games in history.

Rogge, who has vigorously campaigned to reduce the cost and size of the Olympic Games, took no issue with the estimated \$1.5 to \$2 billion price tag put on the Rio Panam Games and welcomed the city's candidature to host the 2016 Olympics.

"I would like to say that the International Olympic Committee is very happy that we have six excellent candidates (for the 2016 Summer Games)," Rogge told reporters. "The IOC can be very happy to have received the candidature for Rio."

"The six candidates have very good potential and I can say Rio will be a very strong contender."

"At the IOC we always take good care that the operation budget is as minimal as possible and we succeed at

that and that the interest of the budget also leaves a very good legacy for the organising city."

"I can say having seen the infrastructure that will be a tremendous legacy for Rio not just for the 16 days of competition but for decades to come."

"Many generations will benefit from this legacy and I think this aspect is socially well developed and responsible."

Like the fight to host the 2012 Olympics won by London over Madrid, New York, Paris and Moscow, the 2016 Summer Games has attracted another list of heavyweight contenders.

Chicago, Madrid, Tokyo and Rio along with Doha, Qatar and Baku, Azerbaijan are set to battle for one of world sport's biggest

Continued on page 48

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