

Lloyd's

Lloyd's Casualty Week contains information from worldwide sources of Marine, Non-Marine and Aviation casualties together with other reports relevant to the shipping, transport and insurance communities

CasualtyWeek

March 11 2005

UK P&I Club defends safety of gas carriers

Insurer says vessels don't deserve bad reputation, writes James Brewer - Thursday March 10 2005

EXPERTS at the top liability insurer for liquefied natural gas and petroleum carriers have delivered a stout defence of the vessels' safety record.

UK P&I Club set out to put the record straight, because it said that such vessels have often been portrayed unfavourably in sections of the media "and are not necessarily well perceived by the public".

Special inspection

Some administrations and port state control organisations target them for special inspection, although serious accidents affecting the ships and their cargoes have been few and the safety record has been good, according to the club's regular publication, Carefully To Carry.

The mutual has insured the protection & indemnity risks of LNG carriers since 1964. It currently has 43% of the world's LNG ships by tonnage and 47% by number.

Herry Lawford, chairman of Thomas Miller (Asia-Pacific), part of the club's management structure, said that the club's own analysis of claims over \$100,000 showed just 32 LNG-related claims in 18 years, costing \$17.5m.

He told an LNG trade conference, organised by the International Association of Maritime Universities, at Pusan, South Korea: "Given that LNG ships are exceptionally carefully designed, built and maintained, the weakest link in the chain is, as usual, human error by crew and pilots.

Pilot error

"Collision and grounding claims on all vessels are caused primarily by deck officer error which should not surprise anyone. However, no less than 5% of major claims are caused by pilot error with 14% of collisions due predominantly to pilots."

In recent years, collision claims in Chinese waters had shown a noticeable increase. Mr Lawford said this was hardly surprising given the higher number of ship movements, "but a worry nonetheless for the upcoming LNG project now being undertaken in that country, although the frequency of such cases seems to have stabilised". The club publication said that the gas trade still employs relatively few

ships — just under 1,000 carriers with over 1,000 cu m capacity — compared with over 16,000 oil tankers.

Among casualties have been the Gaz Fountain, hit by rockets in the first Gulf War. The club said that despite penetration of the containment system and huge LPG fires, the fires were extinguished and the ship and most of the cargo salvaged.

The club quoted a study by Sandia laboratory of the US energy department in December 2004: "The combination of LNG ship designs and current safety management practices for LNG transportation have reduced LNG accidents to a level such that there is little historical or empirical information on breaches or spills."

Sandia claimed that "risks from accidental LNG spills, such as collisions and groundings, are small and manageable with current safety policies and practices."

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Summary of Major Cases in this week's issue of Lloyd's Casualty Week

Vessel	Type	Flag	Class	GT	DWT	Bit	Casualty
<i>ARKLOW SAND</i>	general	NLD	BV	2,224	3,193	1998	Reported Feb 23 in lat 52 59.8N, long 00 20.2E, with starboard rudder defect. Had previously grounded and refloated in the Wash. Deemed unsafe to proceed. Tug <i>Sun London</i> on scene Feb 26 & took in tow Feb 27. Arrived London Mar 1.
<i>BREANNA LYNN</i>	fishing	USA	—	120	—	1981	Found adrift in North Pacific 700 km north-west of Samoa with heavy weather damage from cyclone "Percy" Mar 1. No engine or power, windows blown in, no communications. Fishing Apera II due on scene same day to take in tow.
<i>GOODRICH BAY</i>	chem tanker	LBR	LR	8,823	14,326	1984	Holed by unknown object in lat 49 30N, long 66 00W, Feb 25. Damage 300 by 25 cm in way port tank No.1 at waterline. Cargo contaminated by seawater. Being inspected by class.
<i>KARMSUND</i>	general	NOR	NV	2,728	1,250	1979	Had engine breakdown outside Molde Feb 22. Towed to Molde, where arrived Feb 23. ETC for repairs about Mar 10.
<i>ROBERT J. BOUCHARD</i>	tug	USA	AB ABS	591	634	1994	Had minor explosion in engine-room about 10 miles off Mount Pleasant, New Jersey, Feb 27 while towing barge. One crew member injured. Taken in tow and arrived New York prev Mar 1. Barge taken in tow by sistership.
<i>SIRIUS</i>	general	RUS	RS	2,452	3,122	1984	Struck a rock and ran aground south of Ocheretay Bay at the Tarkhankut in the Crimea Feb 27. Vessel holed, engine-room and cargo hold submerged. No injuries. Stormy weather hindering rescue attempts.
<i>ZUL DAI A NO.20137</i>	fishing	CHN	—	120	—	1950	In collision with general cargo <i>Brother Joy</i> and sank 93 km south-east of Jeu, Korea, in lat 32 56N, long 125 18E, Feb 25. Two crew rescued, 10 missing.

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The following reports are reprinted from Lloyd's List



ACACIA (Bermuda)

London, Feb 28 — A report, dated today, states: Ro/ro Acacia (13436 gt, built 1974) lost one anchor and six cables of chain while anchored in Baie des Anglais, Baie Comeau, Quebec, lat 49 14 12N, long 68 07 06W, at 0230, EST, Feb 27.

AKAMAS (Singapore)

Honolulu, Feb 26 — Product tanker Akamas arrived Honolulu Feb 20. — Lloyd's Agents.

London, Feb 28 — Product tanker Akamas anchored off Honolulu Feb 20 and entered port Feb 25.

AKKOC 1 (Turkey)

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Ankara MSRCC, timed 1428, UTC: General cargo Akkoc 1 is still aground, no change in situation.

ALKMINI A. (Greece)

London, Mar 1 — Lloyd's Casualty representatives in Piraeus report: Passenger ro/ro Alkmini A. (28559 gt, built 1983), undergoing conversion/repairs at Perama, had a fire break out on deck 8, which spread aft to the self service restaurant area of the vessel, yesterday morning. The fire was extinguished by the fire brigade and there were no injuries.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated Mar 1, states: Tugs joined fire engines yesterday to put out a blaze on passenger ro/ro Alkmini A. which caught fire at the Perama shipyards.

AMIRANTE (Malta)

London, Feb 26 — General cargo Amirante arrived Koping Feb 17 and sailed Feb 18, for Kaliningrad.

ARION (Greece)

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1215, UTC: Passenger ro/ro Arion is still aground at Chios. Salvors are removing fuel from vessel.

London, Mar 1 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1055, UTC: Passenger ro/ro Arion remains aground at Chios.

London, Mar 3 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1020, UTC: Passenger ro/ro Arion is still aground at Chios, with fuel-removal operations in hand.

ARKLOW SAND (Netherlands)

London, Feb 24 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC, timed 1453, UTC: General cargo Arklow Sand (2224 gt, built 1998) Boston for Spain, 3,000 tonnes wheat, seven persons on board, had a starboard rudder defect in lat 52 59.8N, long 00 20.2E at 2119, UTC, Feb 23. Wind Beaufort 5 (fresh breeze), sea state rough. Vessel had

previously ran aground in the Wash and was successfully refloated. After sea trials, vessel deemed unsafe to travel without steering and manoeuvring assistance. Tug Grey Tess has been tasked.

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC, timed 1115, UTC: General cargo Arklow Sand is still at anchor awaiting the arrival of tug Grey Tess, which ETA 1500, UTC. Understand vessel is likely to be taken to a berth in the River Thames for inspection.

London, Feb 26 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC timed 0640, UTC: General cargo Arklow Sand: As of yesterday afternoon, tug Grey Tess was unable to tow vessel and is alongside casualty. Tug Sun London contracted to tow vessel to a River Thames berth.

London, Feb 26 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC, timed 1755, UTC: General cargo Arklow Sand is still in the same position, with tug Grey Tess on scene. Tug Smit London is approaching.

London, Feb 26 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC, timed 1840, UTC: Tug Sun London is now reporting an ETA alongside general cargo Arklow Sand of 1900, UTC. Tug will remain alongside the vessel overnight and then attempt to secure the towline at first daylight. Winds on scene currently force 9 (strong gale).

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC, timed 1225, UTC: General cargo Arklow Sand: Tug Sun London arrived on scene at 1900, UTC, yesterday and is currently waiting for the winds on scene to drop below 20 knots before attempting to connect a tow.

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC, times 1351, UTC: General cargo Arklow Sand is now in tow of tug Sun London, bound River Thames.

London, Feb 28 — Following received from Coastguard Yarmouth MRCC, timed 1740, UTC, Feb 27: General cargo Arklow Sand in tow of tug Sun London with tug Grey Tess assisting rounding North Docking Buoy to pass through the Race Channel at 1730, UTC. Weather and sea conditions moderating.

London, Feb 28 — Following received from Coastguard Thames MRCC, timed 1620, UTC: General cargo Arklow Sand is reportedly heading for anchorage off Leigh-on-Sea at present, awaiting favourable tide to proceed to a Medway port.

London, Mar 1 — General cargo Arklow Sand arrived Thames Wharf at 0454 today. — Port of London Authority.

ATHOS I (Cyprus)

London, Feb 24 — A Delaware River Oil Spill Joint Information Centre report, dated Feb 23, states: Crude oil tanker Athos I, latest updates: Four hundred and fifty-eight responders are working in the command centre and along the Delaware River. Some

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129,186 gallons of oil and oily liquid has been recovered, and 12,732 tons of oily solids (cleanup materials and oil) have been collected. Seventy-eight per cent of the heavily oiled areas, 55% of the medium oiled areas, and 34% of the lightly oiled areas have been grossly decontaminated. Thirty-eight facilities have been grossly decontaminated with seven currently being decontaminated. Out of 21 marina's needing decontamination, seven have been fully decontaminated. Experts report 383 birds have been released and 181 birds are reported deceased.

London, Mar 1 — Crude oil tanker Athos I departed from Mobile on Jan 27.

London, Mar 2 — A Delaware River Oil Spill Joint Information Centre report, dated Mar 1, states: Crude oil tanker Athos I, latest updates: Seventy responders are working in the command centre and along the Delaware River. Some 129,436 gallons of oil and oily liquid has been recovered and 12,926 tons of oily solids (cleanup materials and oil) have been collected. Seventy-eight per cent of the heavily oiled areas, 55% of the medium oiled areas, and 34% of the lightly oiled areas have been grossly decontaminated. Thirty-eight facilities have been grossly decontaminated with seven currently being decontaminated. Out of 21 marina's needing decontamination, seven have been fully decontaminated. Experts report 383 birds have been released and 182 birds are reported deceased.

ATLANTIS CHARM (Cyprus)

London, Mar 1 — Bulk/c.c. Atlantis Charm sailed Las Palmas on Feb 3 (? for trials) and arrived back Las Palmas Feb 4.

BALTIYSKIY 21 (Russia)

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1200, UTC: General cargo Baltiyskiy 21 remains at anchor off Zakynthos.

London, Mar 1 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1050, UTC: General cargo Baltiyskiy 21 has now sailed from Zakynthos after receiving permission to carry out one voyage, which is to Spain for repairs.

BARGE BREAKAWAYS, MISSISSIPPI RIVER, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: Coast Guard officials say it will be months before completion of a final report on barges hitting the Mississippi River bridges at Vicksburg since late January. In an eight-day period beginning Jan 24, barges being pushed by three different towboats struck one or both of the bridges. As a result, two barges were sunk and several were grounded on the river banks. No one was injured. Two of the tows were being pushed by tug Dan MacMillan (963 gt, built 1974) and tug Joyce Hale (760 gt, built 1980), owned by the American River Transportation Co, on Jan 24 and Jan 29. The third was being pushed by tug

Hortense B.Ingram (800 gt, built 1977), owned by Ingram Barge Co, on Feb 2. After the first two incidents, the Coast Guard imposed restrictions on the number of barges that boats could manoeuvre while headed downstream through a safety zone that extended from upstream of the mouth of the Yazoo Diversion Canal to south of the 75-year-old U.S. 80 bridge and the nearby Interstate 20 bridge. They also imposed minimum horsepower requirements per barge. After the third accident, the Coast Guard increased the restrictions on tow size and horsepower and said southbound tows had to check in by radio with an industry-provided traffic information centre before entering the safety zone. "We are conducting a casualty inquiry," said Lt. Cmdr. Paul Dittman, commander of the Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit in Baton Rouge. The Coast Guard can take enforcement action against the pilot of the vessels involved in hitting the bridges as well as the company that owns or operates the boats, Dittman said. He said information being gathered will be incorporated in plans for the next time the river conditions are so dangerous.

BOW MARINER (Singapore)

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 26, states: A year after the sinking of chemical/oil carrier Bow Mariner the investigation into the sinking remains under wraps, except for one salient conclusion: "Twenty-one people didn't need to die," said Jerry Crooks, chief investigator for the Marine Safety Office in Norfolk. "This accident should not have happened." Release of the document is expected to be months away. Only six crewmen survived the Feb 28, 2004, explosion 50 miles east of Chincoteague off Virginia's Eastern Shore.

BREANNA LYNN (U.S.A.)

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: A Royal New Zealand Air Force Orion has located fishing Breanna Lynn (120 gt, built 1981) missing in an area of the Pacific Ocean ravaged by cyclone "Percy", finding the crew safe and well. The Orion flew to the area this morning after a distress beacon alert was received by Rescue Co-ordination Centre New Zealand (RCCNZ) yesterday afternoon. The missing American Samoan vessel was believed to be 700km northwest of Samoa. RCCNZ spokeswoman Heidi Brook told NZPA Breanna Lynn had been found, with all seven people on board safe and well. The vessel itself was in a pretty bad state, she said. "It has got no power or working engine," Ms Brook said. "When it was in the cyclone area and the weather conditions were pretty bad it had all its windows blown in, but the crew had managed to board them up and pump out most of the water," she said. "By the time the Orion found them they had no means of communicating that they were in trouble so they were

basically just floating, hoping that somebody was going to come." RCCNZ mission co-ordinator Neville Blakemore said yesterday the weather conditions would have been atrocious with a wind speed of up to 100km/h and a sea swell of up to 10m. The Orion is staying on scene to assess the vessel and ensure it will be safe. Fishing Apera II is expected to rendezvous with Breanna Lynn late tonight and will tow the vessel to safety. The weather in the area is abating as cyclone "Percy" heads southwest. The wind speed is currently about 35kms per hour.

BROTHER JOY (South Korea)

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: A Chinese fishing boat sunk after colliding with a South Korean merchant vessel today off the peninsula's south coast, the Korea Coast Guard said. Two Chinese sailors were rescued by the Korean ship after it collided with the Chinese vessel but 10 other crew members were still missing several hours after the incident, said Son Min-ho, an officer with the Jeju Coast Guard. The collision occurred at 1315 hrs, 93 kilometres southeast of Jeju, reported local authorities. The Coast Guard and the Navy dispatched eight rescue boats and helicopters to the area to search for the missing Chinese sailors, but had to call off the search two hours later after thick fog and inclement weather, including waves that rose to 3-4 metres. All of the crew from the South Korean commercial vessel were found safe, the Coast Guard said, adding that nine of the 10 missing sailors from the Chinese vessel were reportedly in their bunks at the time of the accident. Officers are questioning both the Korean seamen and the rescued Chinese sailors to piece together the exact cause of the collision. The Chinese vessel from Zhejiang Province left Busan yesterday for Shanghai.

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Coast Guard Jeju, timed 1455, UTC: General cargo Brother Joy (5402 gt, built 1986) was in collision with Chinese fishing Zul Dai A No.20137 in lat 32 56N, long 125 18E.

Busan, Feb 28 — General cargo Brother Joy, Vladivostok for Shanghai, via Busan, was in collision with fishing Zul Dai A No.20137, 120 gt, some 93 km south west of Jeju Island, Korea at about 1315, Feb 25. As a result of this collision, the fishing vessel completely sank, leaking oil over an area some 30 x 200 mm from the site. Two out of a total of 12 crew members were rescued, but the remaining 10 crew members remain missing. Brother Joy reportedly sustained minor damage but the exact extent of damage is unknown. Vessel is at present lying afloat anchored at the outer harbour anchorage, Jeju, Korea for inspection and investigation. — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

CAP ANAMUR (Germany)

See under "Miscellaneous."

CARNIVAL GLORY (Panama)

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: Temporary repairs have been completed on passenger Carnival Glory (101300 gt, built 2003) so the Port Canaveral-based vessel can sail on its regular Western Caribbean itinerary this week. But some of the 3,400 passengers on the vessel's last weeklong cruise, which returned to Port Canaveral on Saturday (Feb 26), were still fuming yesterday from the treatment they received after propeller problems forced the vessel to travel slower than normal. That required Carnival Cruise Line to change the vessel's itinerary from an Eastern Caribbean sailing to a shorter trip to the Bahamas and Key West. "The technicians have made a temporary repair that has restored sufficient speed to the vessel that we believe will allow us to operate the scheduled itinerary this week," said Carnival spokeswoman Jennifer de la Cruz. "We anticipate the ship will continue to sail a normal itinerary." The customers on last week's cruise were offered the option to disembark in Nassau, Bahamas, and receive a free flight home and partial reimbursement for the trip or remain on board the ship and receive a \$100 shipboard credit, de la Cruz said. De la Cruz said the company did not know prior to departure from Port Canaveral that the vessel had propulsion problems.

CASSIOPE (Cambodia)

London, Feb 26 — General cargo Cassiope arrived Diliskelesi Feb 20.

CELEBRATION (Panama)

See "Outbreak of Gastrointestinal Illness on Panamanian-Flagged Passenger Vessel" under "Miscellaneous."

CIBELES (U.K.)

Belfast, Mar 2 — Fishing Cibeles sailed from Killybegs at around 2100, local time, Mar 1 bound for the deep sea fishing grounds. — Lloyd's Agents.

COLE (U.S.A.)

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated today, states: A Yemeni appeals court yesterday upheld a death sentence against an al Qaeda militant found guilty of the 2000 bombing of the US destroyer Cole, but commuted a death sentence against another. Jamal Badawi had his sentence commuted to 15 years in prison but Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri still faces the death penalty for the attack in Aden harbour which killed 17 US sailors.

CORN BROOK (Malta)

Maassluis, Mar 2 — General cargo Corn Brook (4983 gt, built 1984) on departure struck the lock door while entering the Boudewijnsluis at 2245, last night. The lock door and vessel were both damaged. The port authorities will examine the door and the vessel to decide if it can proceed on voyage or has to return to the port. — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

Maassluis, Mar 2 — General cargo Corn Brook is returning to the harbour berth Nr 317 due to the damage. Vessel is not currently seaworthy. — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

DAN MACMILLAN (U.S.A.)

See "Barge Breakaways, Mississippi River, United States."

ELANTA**(St. Vincent & Grenadines)**

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1210, UTC: General cargo Elanta remains aground at Chios.

London, Mar 1 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1100, UTC: General cargo Elanta remains aground at Chios.

London, Mar 3 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1025, UTC: General cargo Elanta is still aground at Chios, with fuel-removal operations in hand.

ELEFThERIA (Greece)

London, Mar 2 — Bulk Eleftheria arrived Jebel Ali Feb 23 and sailed Feb 27, destination Goa.

EMC 423 (U.S.A.)

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated Feb 25, states: The cold water of the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal has hampered the unloading of cargo from tank barge EMC 423 and delayed efforts to find out what caused the fatal explosion last month. Salvage crews yesterday began pumping water out of the barge's cargo hold in the hope of getting the craft to float. Once it is raised from the 15-ft-deep canal, the slurry oil can more easily be heated and transferred to another barge. Meanwhile, experts have determined the explosion Jan 19 near 40th Street and Cicero Avenue in Chicago was not caused by an on-board heater used to keep the oil from solidifying. Officials recently discovered the barge's boiler intact, authorities said. Tom Neumann, a spokesman for Meredith Management Co., a Philadelphia-based emergency management company, said initial recovery plans had to be altered. Using a large heat exchanger to bring the slurry oil to 91 degrees — the temperature at which the oil will flow — failed to work because of the cold water inside the cargo hold, Neumann said. Pumping out the water will allow the heater to do its job so the oil can be liquefied and pumped onto another barge. "We're hoping to raise the barge little by little," Neumann said. "The idea is to add buoyancy by removing the water and the cargo. This is a very slow process." The cost of the recovery effort could reach \$2 million, and is being paid for by the insurance company of Egan Marine Co of Lemont, owners of the barge. The canal was closed immediately after the explosion but has since reopened on a limited basis to allow narrower dry-cargo barges to pass and unload materials to businesses along the shore. A US Coast Guard spokesman said the possibility of the

slurry oil polluting the waterway is low because once the oil met the water it solidified.

EXPLORER (Bahamas)

London, Feb 25 — Passenger Explorer is estimated to dock in Ho Chi Minh City at 1700, local time, today. On ship time for students, faculty, and staff has been set at 2300 hrs and the vessel will depart for India shortly thereafter.

FANTASY (Greece)

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Coast Guard New Orleans, timed 1515, UTC: Product tanker Fantasy (39900 gt, built 2002), bound Valero refinery, loaded with crude oil, grounded at Mile 117, River Mississippi, at 0550, UTC, today. Tugs are on scene providing assistance and endeavouring to refloat the vessel. No damage, pollution or injuries reported.

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Coast Guard New Orleans, timed 2233, UTC: Product tanker Fantasy was refloated at approximately 1200, UTC. Vessel is now anchored at Mile 115, River Mississippi, pending an inspection by its Classification Society.

London, Feb 26 — Following received from Coast Guard New Orleans, timed 2123, UTC: The Marine Safety Office have advised that the port order on product tanker Fantasy has been lifted and the vessel was granted permission to proceed.

FRITIND (Bahamas)

London, Feb 27 — General cargo Fritind sailed Rotterdam Feb 25.

GANT VISION (Malta)

Cadiz, Mar 2 — Bulk Gant Vision: Vessel's rudder stock has been dismantled and sent to Denmark for repair. Understand the vessel is supposed to be sailing in three or four weeks. — Lloyd's Agents.

GENMAR KESTREL (Marshall Islands)

Piraeus, Feb 28 — Crude oil tanker GenMar Kestrel arrived Piraeus Feb 23 from Egypt and sailed Feb 26 for Skaramanga. — Lloyd's Agents.

GERRITA (NIS)

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Lerwick harbour-master's office, timed 1120, UTC: Tug/supply Bourbon Chieftain will enter Sullom Voe in about one hour to tow crude oil tanker Gerrita to Germany. Tug and tow are expected to depart this afternoon.

London, Feb 26 — Following received from Coastguard Shetland MRSC, timed 1505, UTC: Crude oil tanker Gerrita sailed Sullom Voe about midday yesterday. It was reported in lat 60 03N, long 00 30E, a short while ago.

GODEWIND (Antigua & Barbuda)

London, Mar 1 — C.c. Godewind, now renamed Tali Mar, sailed Husum previous Feb 27 for Ipswich.

GOODRICH BAY (Liberia)

London, Feb 28 — A report, dated today, states: Chem.tank Goodrich Bay

(8823 gt, built 1984), loaded with methanol, was holed in the hull by an unknown object in lat 49 30N, long 66 00W, at 1605, EST, Feb 25. Damage 300 by 25 cm in way port tank No.1 at waterline. Cargo was contaminated by sea water and vessel is being inspected by class.

HAI LUNG NO.1 (Taiwan)

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 27, states: Five Chinese sailors were killed when fishing Hai Lung No.1 sank off Taiwan and the vessel's missing Taiwanese skipper and another sailor were also feared to have died, the coast guard said today. The 35-tonne Hai Lung No 1 from Taiwan sank around 45 nautical miles northwest of Fukuichiao on the northernmost tip of the island yesterday, the Coast Guard Administration said. A police helicopter picked up a 32-year-old Chinese sailor, who survived by floating on a door of the ship, and the body of one of the drowned men, it said. Coast guard units found the other four bodies while battling the high waves whipped up by strong winds. Rescuers continued their search for the missing skipper and sailor today, but the coast guard said they were feared to be dead.

HIGHLINE 26 (Malaysia)

See "Malacca Strait" under "Piracy."

HOHESAND (U.K.)

Istanbul, Feb 28 — C.c. Hohesand completed repairs by own means and upon inspection/formalities sailed from Canakkale at 1345, local time, Feb 27. — Lloyd's Agents.

HORTENSE B.INGRAM (U.S.A.)

See "Barge Breakaways, Mississippi River, United States."

INTREPID B. (U.K.)

Ymuiden, Feb 27 — Wijsmuller Salvage B.V. today succeeded in refloating sunken tug Intrepid B. in Fishguard Bay, Wales. The vessel sank, with only a small section of its accommodation above water, while being moored at its buoy in the bay on Feb 14. Wijsmuller Salvage B.V. teams were sent in immediately and, on Feb 19, the refloating contract was awarded, following which further team members and the necessary salvage equipment were sent from the Netherlands. Preparations to refloat the vessel were completed in four working days, with three more or less idle days waiting on the weather, caused by storm conditions. Wijsmuller Salvage naval architects had prepared a dedicated refloating plan based on regaining buoyancy techniques. Divers then separated the vessels' three compartments, forward accommodation, hold and engine-room and pumping equipment inclusive of the necessary watertight bulkhead throughout of hoses/powerlines were installed. During all of the operations safety of staff and prevention of environmental damage were of a main concern of the Wijsmuller Salvage

team and the authorities, including the MCA and the SOSREP, which followed the operations closely. Final meetings were held on Friday, Feb 25, with the authorities concerned. At 1230, UTC, today, all preparations had been completed and testing had started at 1330, UTC. At 1400, UTC, the final go-ahead for the operation was given, with the vessel finally being released from the bottom at 1705, UTC. Wijsmuller Salvage naval architects, based on details known, later calculated that a 70 ton bottom-suction needed to be compensated before the vessel finally was released by the sea bottom, which the vessel had sunk four metres into. The vessel will be stabilised, with preservation work planned to start tomorrow. Damage to the vessels' hull is being repaired as part of the process. — Wijsmuller Salvage BV.

Ymuiden, Mar 2 — Wijsmuller Salvage BV yesterday redelivered refloated tug Intrepid B. back to its owners in Fishguard. The tug sank some 14 meters under water on Jan 14 and was refloated by a Wijsmuller Salvage team using regaining buoyancy techniques last Sunday, Feb 27. The Wijsmuller team subsequently stabilised the vessel, executed underwater repairs to the hull and performed engine-room preservation work to prevent deterioration of the engine-room equipment. The owners yesterday accepted redelivery of the vessel. — Wijsmuller Salvage BV.

IRMGARD (Malta)

Taranto, Feb 28 — Ref Irmgard arrived Taranto Feb 24 from Misurata. — Lloyd's Agents.

ISLAND PARK TWO

See "Hong Kong" under "Weather & Navigation."

ITA (Panama)

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Rome MRCC, timed 1100, UTC: General cargo Ita has broken into two pieces, both of which are aground, in lat 38 43N, long 13 10E. There has been no pollution.

London, Feb 28 — Following received from Rome MRCC, timed 1030, UTC: General cargo Ita: Situation unchanged, no salvage developments. Vessel is still lying on rocks in two pieces.

JOYCE HALE (U.S.A.)

See "Barge Breakaways, Mississippi River, United States."

KARMSUND (Norway)

Trondheim, Mar 2 — General cargo Karmsund (2728 gt, built 1979) had an engine breakdown outside Molde on Feb 22. The vessel was towed into Molde, arriving on Feb 23 and is now repairing the damage to the main engine, alongside a quay. Repairs are expected to be completed on/about Mar 10. — Lloyd's Agents. (Note — Karmsund sailed from Aalesund at 1000 hrs, Feb 20, bound for Molde.)

KESTUTIS (South Korea)

London, Feb 27 — General cargo Kestutis sailed Ymuiden Feb 26 for Sweden.

LEGACY (Bahamas)

See "Marsh Harbour, Bahamas" under "Pollution."

MAHARAJ (Bangladesh)

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated Feb 25, states: The death toll from the ferry Maharaj disaster near the Bangladesh capital Dhaka rose to 150 yesterday as police kept up a search for victims, watched by family members from the riverbank. Relatives have been congregating daily on the bank as a rescue team searches the waters for bodies still missing from the accident late last Saturday (Feb 19), in which Maharaj capsized when it was struck by a cyclone. "We found another body from the place where the ferry capsized. The death toll has now reached 150," a police spokesman said.

MAURICE EWING (U.S.A.)

London, Feb 28 — The Mexican federal attorney general's office is investigating whether the captain of oceanographic research Maurice Ewing violated any Mexican laws when his vessel ran aground and damaged a coral reef off the Yucatan peninsula, AP reports. Mexican environmental authorities last week suspended exploration permits for the vessel, which was in Mexican waters to examine the Chicxulub Crater using seismic pulses. The 120-miles-wide depression is located just outside the port of Progreso, 190 miles west of Cancun. Officials with Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, which is in charge of operating Maurice Ewing, declined to comment. The attorney general's office is waiting for reports from maritime authorities to determine to what degree the master was responsible for reef damage and whether any maritime navigation laws were violated, according to a written news release. Environmental authorities have called the accident "inexplicable" because the reef was clearly marked on navigational charts and the vessel was supposed to be carrying state-of-the-art equipment. About 20 sq m of underwater rock formations and about 10 sq m of coral were affected, according to the environmental prosecutor's office. The vessel could be subject to fines and payment for environmental damage. But authorities have not yet arrived at a financial estimate for the damages, said Sergio Chan Lugo, a representative of the environmental prosecutor's office. The vessel, which ran aground 22 km off the small port of Sisal, was docked at Progreso as the investigation continued.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: Oceanographic research Maurice Ewing left Mexico yesterday after a string of controversies caused by the vessel's sonic-pulse experiments and its

contact with a coral reef. In its first public explanation of the Feb 14 accident in which the ship ran aground on a coral reef, Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, which operates the vessel, said the crew had relied on apparently flawed or misleading navigational charts. "The ship's charts indicated adequate water depth at the location of the grounding," the observatory said in a press statement. "There was no damage to the vessel." Mexican authorities had claimed the reef was clearly marked on maps, and had called the accident, which damaged about 20 square yards of underwater rock formations and about 10 square yards of coral, "inexplicable," considering the ship's state-of-the-art equipment. On Monday the observatory paid a fine of pesos 2,221,720 (\$200,000) for damaging the reef. "The research vessel Maurice Ewing sailed from Progreso, Mexico, yesterday, after completing a research mission that began on Jan 12," according to the press statement. The observatory said the international research team had completed its five-week research mission examining the Chicxulub crater to learn about the asteroid impact that might have led to the extinction of the dinosaurs.

MELFI ITALIA II (Antigua & Barbuda)

See "Gibraltar" under "Port State Control."

MERYEM (Turkey)

Istanbul, Feb 28 — General cargo Meryem completed repairs by own means and upon inspection/formalities sailed from Canakkale at 0724, local time, Feb 26. — Lloyd's Agents.

MISS HAYES (U.S.A.)

London, Feb 27 — A press release from the United States Coast Guard, dated Feb 26, states: The Coast Guard responded to sinking fishing Miss Hayes (102 gt, built 1979) 35 miles off John's Pass, this morning. The Coast Guard provided dewatering pumps and escorted the vessel back to port once it was stabilized. The two-man crew of the vessel out of Tampa, called the Coast Guard at 0112 hrs to report a large amount of flooding in the engine-room. Rescue boats from Station Sand Key and Station St. Petersburg were directed to the scene along with an HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter from Air Station Clearwater. The helicopter lowered a dewatering pump and by 0240 hrs, the crew of the vessel reported that the water level was dropping. The Coast Guard vessel arrived a short time later delivering three more pumps and a crewman to help stabilize the vessels' condition. The Coast Guard is currently escorting the vessel back to homeport and they should arrive sometime this evening.

MSC AL AMINE (Morocco)

Tunis, Feb 25 — General cargo MSC Al Amine remains in the same position. Another attempt to refloat

the vessel will be made tomorrow by salvage company SMIT Salvage. — Lloyd's Agents.

Tunis, Feb 28 — General cargo MSC Al Amine was refloated at 1300, local time, Feb 26 and directly towed by two tugs to Menzel Bourguiba shipyard, where repairs have now commenced. — Lloyd's Agents.

MSC DENISSE (Panama)

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Australia RCC, timed 0002, UTC: C.c. MSC Denisse is currently down about 12.8 metres at the stern. Welding work is in progress in way of the vessel's sea chest, although the source of the leak has not been positively identified. Pumps are en route to the vessel and are expected to be on board in about one hour. A tug is proceeding from Singapore, ETA around 20 hours.

London, Feb 25 — Following received from Australia RCC, timed 0624, UTC: Pumps have been placed on board c.c. MSC Denisse, but the water level in the vessel's engine-room has not yet been reduced.

London, Feb 26 — Following received from Australia RCC, timed 0350, UTC: C.c. MSC Denisse: Salvage operations are continuing. Water ingress has been reduced and salvors are stabilising vessel. Vessel will be towed back to Jakarta on completion of pumping of water.

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Australia RCC, timed 0345, UTC: C.c. MSC Denisse: Five more pumps have been placed on the vessel. Vessel is almost stabilised and salvors anticipate vessel will be ready for towage to Jakarta today.

London, Feb 28 — Following received from Australia RCC, timed 0345, UTC: C.c. MSC Denisse: Salvage operations are continuing, water is still being pumped from the vessel.

Sydney, Feb 28 — C.c. MSC Denisse has been taken in tow off Christmas Island by the Singaporean tug Nimble. A spokesman for MSC Australia in Sydney said that the agent was still awaiting directions from head office on the new destination of the vessel, and the plans to relay the cargo onwards to Australia. The vessel was bound for Fremantle, with an ETA of last Friday (Feb 25), when the engine-room flooded last Tuesday, some 40 nautical miles north-west of Christmas Island. The Royal Australian Navy frigates HMAS Arunta and HMAS Stuart both stood by the vessel for two days each from last Thursday, and over the weekend, before handing over to Nimble yesterday. The navy provided diving parties, pumps and generators in an effort to repair the leak to the vessel's sea chest and stabilise flooding. — Lloyd's List Daily Commercial News.

London, Mar 1 — Following received from Australia RCC, timed 0600, UTC: C.c. MSC Denisse: As of approximately eight hours ago, towage preparations were almost complete and MSC Denisse was about to commence towage to Jakarta.

MYRA (Bahamas)

London, Feb 27 — General cargo Myra departed Antwerp 1908, Feb 26, bound Nouackchott.

NAZEK T. (North Korea)

Bucharest, Mar 2 — General cargo Nazek T. is still at Constantza shipyard, under repair. — Lloyd's Agents.

NOBLE (Antigua & Barbuda)

Taipei, Feb 25 — C.c. Noble (9601 gt, built 1992) contacted the eastern breakwater in Keelung harbour while entering the port at 1115, Feb 17. The vessel did not sustain damage that affected its seaworthiness, and sailed Keelung later the same day. — Lloyd's Agents. (Note — Noble subsequently arrived Hong Kong Feb 19 and sailed same day for Manila.)

NORLAN (U.K.)

Glasgow, Feb 24 — Fishing Norlan was escorted into Kinlochbervie at 1930, Feb 19. Engineers attended the vessel on the morning of Feb 21 and it sailed Kinlochbervie, thought to be back to fishing grounds, at 1700, same day. — Lloyd's Agents.

NORRVIK (Isle of Man)

London, Mar 2 — Following received from Coastguard Thames MRSC, timed 0854, UTC: One of the containers lost overboard from general cargo Norrvik on Jan 24, was located on Feb 25. Support Gray-Mammouth departed Felixstowe to recover the container. A line was secured on the container, but while returning to Felixstowe, the container sank in lat 51 56.89N, long 01 40.46E, in a depth of 26 metres. The position has been marked by two orange buoys and the container may be inspected by divers to ascertain whether it is laying on its side or end.

NORWAY (Bahamas)

London, Feb 26 — Passenger Norway remains in Bremerhaven as of Feb 25.

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 25, states: Passenger Norway could end up as scrap metal if it doesn't find a buyer by next week, its owner, Norwegian Cruise Lines, has said. The liner has been docked at Bremerhaven in Germany since 2003. Norwegian Cruise Lines representative Niels North said the firm wants 20 million Euros for the vessel and plans to sell it for scrap if no buyer is found by Monday (Feb 28).

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: The widow of a Filipino seafarer who perished in the passenger Norway explosion of May 2003 has launched a \$1m legal malpractice lawsuit against the estate of William Huggett, the dead lawyer who had represented her husband in compensation proceedings against operator Norwegian Cruise Line. Mr Huggett is alleged to have forced the 10 blast victims, including the families of six dead seafarers, to reject an \$11m out-of-court settlement offered by NCL in 2003, before the legal pendulum swung decisively in the cruise company's favour.

OBELIX (Netherlands)

London, Mar 1 — At about 0630, local time, Feb 28, while tug Obelix was pushing two barges, loaded with 5,200 tons of coal, from the Eastern Scheldt towards the River Scheldt, the barges ran aground on a sandbank in the fairway Mastgat, off Ouwkerk, at Schouwen Duiveland. Tug Zephyrus came to assist from Stavenisse and together with Obelix managed to pull the barges off, without damage, at about 0800, local time. Obelix then continued on voyage with the two barges.

ONGIARA (Canada)

Troy, Michigan, Feb 23 — Ward's Island ferry service stopped yesterday when ferry Ongiara (180 gt, built 1963) was hauled out at the Atlas Crane, Toronto, for repairs to its propeller. It is expected the ferry service will resume by Friday (Feb 25). — Great Lakes & Seaway Shipping.

Troy, Michigan, Mar 2 — Ferry Ongiara was "refloated" Thursday (Feb 24) at the Atlas crane, after its propellers were changed. Vessel returned to Ward's Island service Friday. — Great Lakes & Seaway Shipping.

ORADE (Antigua & Barbuda)

London, Mar 2 — Following received from Coastguard Humber MRSC, timed 0820, UTC: At 2210, UTC, Mar 1, general cargo Orade (1354 gt, built 1991) was reported aground at the point where the River Trent and the River Ouse meet. Understood vessel was outbound, in ballast. Hull based tugs Lady Elizabeth and Lady Constance contracted and ETA alongside the vessel is 0830, UTC. (Note — Orade sailed Howdendyke 2005, Mar 1 for Antwerp.)

London, Mar 2 — Following received from Coastguard Humber MRSC, timed 1328, UTC: General cargo Orade, Howdendyke for Antwerp, has been refloated and has arrived, under escort of two tugs, at Alexandra Dock, Hull.

OZCAN ATASOY (Turkey)

London, Mar 1 — General cargo Ozcan Atasoy was reported passing through the Dardanelles, in an easterly direction, 1658, Feb 28, on a reported passage of Bari for Tuzla.

P&O NEDLLOYD BRISBANE (Netherlands)

Singapore, Feb 24 — C.c. P&O Nedlloyd Brisbane arrived Singapore Feb 18. — Lloyd's Agents.

PAN AMBITION (South Korea)

Portland, Ore, Feb 25 — The transloading of cargo from bulk Pan Ambition into bulk Seafriend was completed today. Pan Ambition will be proceeding to the Portland Ship Repair Yard, later today, to effect repairs to its rudder and rudder stock. — Lloyd's Agents.

PASSAT (Isle of Man)

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: General cargo

Passat, drifting amidst a 32-mile ice floe near the southern tip of the Sakhalin Island, has been assisted by product tanker Renda, reports the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk Maritime Rescue centre. Passat was on voyage from Korsakov for Busan when it found itself hemmed in by heavy ice while trying to cruise through the Straight of Laporyz near the Okhotsk Sea. With every mile it advanced, the ice became thicker and pressed tighter against the hull of the struggling vessel. By the time the decision was made to turn back, the ship's exit had already been choked off by ice. The master of Passat sent out a distress call that was picked up by Renda. Today Renda managed to punch a 60-mile path through the channel to reach the icebound Passat.

London, Feb 25 — Following received from the owners of general cargo Passat, dated Bremen today: Passat is currently being escorted out of the ice by product tanker Renda. Vessel, crew and cargo are all in good condition.

PETRA (Netherlands Antilles)

London, Mar 2 — General cargo Petra sailed Grangemouth 2125, Feb 17, bound Rostock, where it arrived on/about Feb 20.

POLO M. (Bahamas)

London, Feb 25 — Bulk Polo M. sailed Hamburg 1240, local time, Feb 17, for Antwerp. — Lloyd's Agents.

PONTODROMON (Cyprus)

London, Feb 25 — Bulk Pontodromon sailed Falmouth Feb 12 and arrived Murmansk Feb 19.

London, Mar 2 — Bulk Pontodromon sailed Murmansk Feb 22, bound Huelva, where ETA Mar 5.

QUEEN OF VANCOUVER (Canada)

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Ongoing mechanical problems caused ferry mayhem this weekend, in some cases stranding travellers on both sides of their return trip. Ro/ro Queen of Vancouver (9357 gt, built 1962) was taken out of service, causing delays and cancellations as early as Friday (Feb 25). Despite work on the ferry's gearbox, it was forced out of service again on Sunday for the same mechanical problem. By Sunday evening, travellers were facing another wave of delays and cancellations on the Swartz Bay-Tsawwassen run. B.C. Ferries spokeswoman Deborah Marshall said the problem is being worked on, but the aging fleet was the real cause of the delays. "We have engaged the gearbox manufacturer, so they are going to help us assess exactly what the problem is," said Marshall. "Certainly our vessels are getting older. And our engineers do their best to maintain them, but some of these older assets do break down." The Sidney terminal was finally emptied out late Sunday, with the last dozen or so vehicles headed to the Lower Mainland on a midnight sailing.

ROBERT J. BOUCHARD (U.S.A.)

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: A crew member was flown to a hospital with burns after a minor explosion on tug Robert J. Bouchard (591 gt, built 1994) yesterday about 10 miles off Point Pleasant, NJ. Coast Guard officials said they and state police had responded to Robert J. Bouchard after getting a call about noon. The injured crew member was in critical condition last night at St. Barnabas Medical Centre in Livingston, NJ, officials said. The other five crew members were unharmed. Coast Guard workers and the tug's owner and crew yesterday evening were still trying to put out the fire on the tug, which had a large amount of fuel in its tank. They were also trying to separate the tug from the empty fuel barge it was towing before hauling both to port. The Coast Guard's marine-safety office in Philadelphia is investigating the explosion.

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: An engine-room explosion rocked tug Robert J. Bouchard about nine miles off the coast of Seaside Heights yesterday afternoon, sending one man to the hospital with burns, according to the U.S. Coast Guard. The tug was towing an empty oil barge off of Seaside Heights when an explosion in the engine-room occurred at about noon yesterday, according to Petty Officer John Edwards. Edwards said the Coast Guard did not know early yesterday what exploded in the engine-room or what may have caused the explosion.

London, Feb 28 — Following received from Coast Guard Portsmouth, Va, timed 1125, UTC: Tug Robert J. Bouchard has been taken in tow for New York. The barge the tug was towing has been taken in tow by a sistership.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: A 30-year-old man remained in critical condition yesterday night after an explosion on a tug nine miles off the coast of Seaside Heights on Sunday (Feb 27). Kelsey Cooper was on the boat when there was an explosion in the engine room about noon, authorities said. Cooper was airlifted on a Coast Guard helicopter and taken to Saint Barnabas Medical Centre in Livingston. He is listed in critical condition, said Peggy Mason, burn unit nursing supervisor. Coast Guard Petty Officer Jason Horton said the tug, which continued to smolder, was towed to New York where the New York City Fire Department was called to assess it. Robert J. Bouchard, based in New York, sent out a distress call following the explosion, authorities said. After Cooper was taken away and the other crew members were taken to safety, the Bouchard tug company sent two boats with firefighting capacity to put out the fire and tow the boat home, which continued to burn, Horton said. The burning boat did not pose an environmental risk, Horton said. "As

long as it stays afloat," it did not pose a risk to the water, he said. A second Coast Guard helicopter flew over the scene to be sure nothing was leaking from the vessel, he said.

ROCKNES (Antigua & Barbuda)

London, Feb 26 — As of Feb 25, bulk Rocknes remains in port of Gdansk (not Gdynia as before reported.)

RODON AMARANDON (Greece)

London, Mar 1 — Bulk Rodon Amarandon arrived Mobile Feb 20 and departed Feb 22, destination Varna.

ROSTOK (Russia)

Bucharest, Feb 25 — The companies involved in removal of general cargo Rostok and clearance of the Sulina channel are Multraship Salvage BV of Netherlands by a sheerleg barge, Titan Maritime Industries Inc., USA and a Romanian privately owned civil engineering company based in Tulcea, Deltacons SA. The removal actually started on Nov 6, 2004 and the estimated time of completion is the end of March 2005. Wreck parts are carried by barges to a demolition yard on "Sf. Gheorghe" tributary of the Danube. — Lloyd's Agents.

RYU GYONG (North Korea)

See "Cargo Dispute, Chittagong, Bangladesh" under "Miscellaneous."

SAIL (Belize)

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1205, UTC: General cargo Sail is still anchored off Mytilene.

London, Mar 3 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1030, UTC: General cargo Sail remains in the same position off Mytilene.

SAWAT (Liberia)

Santiago, Feb 24 — Bulk/c.c. Sawat (17098 gt, built 1983) yesterday informed that 79 containers fell into the sea in Channel Castillo about 70 miles south of the Golfo de Penas. The vessel is expected to arrive at Punta Arenas "today" and the Maritime Authorities will inspect the security onboard before allowing the vessel to sail. — Lloyd's Agents. (Note — Sawat was reported sailing Punta Arenas Feb 23.)

London, Mar 1 — Following navigation warning issued at 2306, UTC, Feb 26: Seventy-nine containers (? from bulk/c.c. Sawat) adrift vicinity lat 48 47.5S, long 75 55.5W.

Santiago, Feb 28 — After inspection of security of containers on board, bulk/c.c. Sawat was authorised to sail and left Punta Arenas for Ushuaia on Feb 24. — Lloyd's Agents.

SEA EAGLE S. (St. Vincent & Grenadines)

London, Feb 27 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1220, UTC: General cargo Sea Eagle S. is still aground off Salamis.

London, Mar 1 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1110, UTC: General cargo Sea Eagle S. is still aground off Salamis.

London, Mar 2 — Understood salvage services are being rendered to general cargo Sea Eagle S. under Lloyd's Open Form dated Feb 17.

London, Mar 3 — Following received from Piraeus RCC, timed 1035, UTC: General cargo Sea Eagle S. remains aground off Salamis.

SEA VENTURE II (Cyprus)

Aarhus, Feb 25 — General cargo Sea Venture II docked out on Feb 21. Loading is in progress and will be completed on Feb 28. — Lloyd's Agents.

SHEN NONG FENG (China)

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated Feb 28, states: Bulk Shen Nong Feng (39894 gt, built 2002) arrived Kiel Feb 26 with heavy weather damage sustained off northern Norway. As a result a hatch was damaged and the vessel took on water and the entire electrical connection for hoists and pumps within the foredeck range was damaged. The repairs to the vessel will be carried out by HDW Nobiskrug. Repairs should be completed by Mar 5, after which the vessel will proceed to Poland to load. (Note — Sheng Nong Feng arrived Narvik Feb 4, sailed Feb 6, arrived Oxelosund Feb 12 and sailed Feb 23 for Gdansk.)

SHINKO OCEAN (Panama)

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: All 20 crew members onboard "grounded" general cargo Shinko Ocean (5399 gt, built 1997) are believed to be safe after some of them were airlifted by helicopter to Penghu Island off Taiwan's southwest coast today, while the rest await rescue, Coast Guard sources reported. The vessel sent out an SOS at approximately 1400 hrs, from waters some 14 nautical miles from Makung, Penghu, after it "ran aground" because of engine failure and stormy weather. A Seagull rescue helicopter took off from an air base in Chiayi, southern Taiwan and successfully airlifted part of the crew to Makung Airport, where they were transferred to two hospitals in Penghu for treatment. The Seagull shuttled back and forth from Penghu to transfer the crew ashore. The vessel was on its way from Malaysia to Taichung, in Taiwan, when its engines failed. Stormy weather then caused the captain of the ship to lose control and the vessel eventually "hit a rock formation in shallow water off Penghu Island." (Note — Shinko Ocean sailed Bintulu Feb 16 for Taichung.)

London Mar 3 — Following received from Taipei RCC, timed 1335, UTC: General cargo Shinko Ocean did not run aground, but listed after losing power. Ten of the 20 crew have been taken off by helicopter. Nine remain onboard and one is missing. The vessel was carrying a cargo of logs. However, all cargo has been lost overboard and the vessel's list has been reduced to eight degrees. Vessel has managed to regain power, but due to the bad weather on scene, will not resume

passage to Taichung until tomorrow. Three rescue vessels are on scene and monitoring the situation.

SIEMPRE CASINA (Spain)

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated Feb 24, states: The bodies of four out of the eight fishermen missing in the shipwreck of fishing Siempre Casina were found in the evening by a rescue team of divers inside the ship. In all 10 divers began the search at 1600 hrs to try to find the eight crew members that were still missing. The boat is at the Viveiro Ria and tied up to another boat to avoid possible movement. The Public Works minister, Magdalena Alvarez, is in a nearby ship witnessing the rescue works together with the Sea Fishing secretary general, Juan Carlos Martin Fragueiro, the delegate of the Government, Manuel Ameijeiras, and Sasemar technical experts.

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: Divers have found a seventh corpse inside the wreck of fishing Siempre Casina. According to the rescue team, the skipper's corpse has not been found yet, his son is the only survivor. He saw his father jumping out of the boat and disappearing in the sea. The search has been resumed.

SNOW CRYSTAL (Cayman Islands)

London, Feb 25 — As of Feb 21 ref Snow Crystal was still at the Dormac repair quay, Durban.

SPETSES (Greece)

London, Mar 1 — Crude oil tanker Spetses arrived Mohammedia on/about Feb 28.

SPIRIT OF ONTARIO I (U.S.A.)

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated Feb 28, states: The city of Rochester paid \$32-million at auction today for passenger ro/ro Spirit of Ontario I. The foreclosure auction for Spirit of Ontario I, built in Australia in 2003 for \$42.5-million, was virtually a foregone conclusion. With the ferry's chief investor as the only other bidder, the city's sole worry was how much it would have to fork out. Officials seemed pleasantly surprised with the winning bid, which was at least \$1-million less than what they had expected to pay. The ferry's main financial backer, Australia's Export Finance and Insurance Corp offered Rochester a \$40-million line of credit to bid for the ferry. The city hopes to relaunch daily voyages to Toronto in May. The vessel sailed for 80 days before its private owner, Canadian American Transportation Systems, abruptly suspended twice-a-day roundtrip crossings on Sep 7. It has been tied up at the Port of Rochester ever since. The company ran up \$1.7-million in debt and blamed mainly regulatory hurdles, chiefly the failure to get approval from US Customs to carry commercial vehicles, which could have injected up to \$18,000 in daily revenue. That

issue has now been largely resolved, trucks will be allowed on board under certain restrictions.

STEPAN RAZIN (Russia)

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Last night the crew of K-32 helicopter of the Murmansk air company evacuated a group of divers from the bulk/c.c. Stepan Razin, which had an accident in the Kola gulf last October. Four divers of the North Sea firm Hydrotechservice had been preparing the vessel for refloating since Feb 22, RIA Novosti learnt from the company. "According to schedule, rehabilitation work such as underwater welding was to be over by the end of last week. Strong winds began to roll the vessel", the spokesman for the company said. Leaving the divers in that storm was dangerous. Evacuation by helicopter was the only way out, he explained. "Despite the wind and snow storm it took only four minutes to lift them aboard the helicopter", the interviewee said. The vessel was damaged in the Kola gulf on Oct 23, 2004. The vessel was carrying 27,000 tonnes of apatite concentrate to Europe.

SVEAFJELL (Norway)

Trondheim, Mar 3 — General cargo Sveafjell is still at Kvernhusvik Shipyard. — Lloyd's Agents. (See issue of Feb 22.)

SWING (Netherlands)

Maassluis, Feb 28 — General cargo Swing is effecting repairs at Balck BV shipyard in Rotterdam and should be ready in Week 10 (Mar 7-11). — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

TICU TICU (Denmark)

Suva, Feb 27 — Villagers of Yanuca Island, near Taveuni, discovered sunken yacht Ticu Ticu. According to today's press release the yacht is registered in Denmark and is owned by the Danish Ocean Cruising Association. The yacht is believed to be lying at grid "179 degrees north and 17 degrees east" of the Duff reef. Police confirmed that three Danish passports were found and nothing else. It has also been reported that a source in the Fiji Navy confirmed the yacht was on its way to Fiji from Tonga when it was reported missing on Jun 1, 2004. — Lloyd's Agents.

TOMMA (Norway)

London, Feb 28 — Information received from Sandnes, dated today, states: When arriving Nesna at 0625, local time, Feb 25, ro/ro Tomma (560 gt, built 1974) lost engine power and made hard contact with quay. No injuries to the six passengers or crew of four but the ferry was damaged. Vessel is now docked in Sandnessjoen and will likely be back in service Mar 1.

TONE (Faroe Islands)

Aarhus, Feb 25 — General cargo Tone sailed under its own power from Grenaa to Moss, Norway on Feb 18

after a divers' inspection, which reportedly only revealed scratches to the hull, and distortions of the propellers. — Lloyd's Agents.

TRANSFER (Antigua & Barbuda)

Belize City, Feb 24 — Part c.c. Transfer is still aground. There is seawater in the engine-room — at the level of the engine's crankshaft — and other holds, decreasing to nil in the forward. The owners have received three salvage bids to date but as yet no contract has been awarded. — Lloyd's Agents

UNION PEARL (Barbados)

Falmouth, Feb 28 — General cargo Union Pearl completed repairs and sailed Falmouth 2330, Feb 27, bound Cork. — Lloyd's Agents.

URVAAG

Trondheim, Mar 3 — There is no change in the situation of fishing Urvaag. No scrapping date fixed. Decision may be reached at the end of April. — Lloyd's Agents.

VICUNA (Chile)

London, Mar 2 — The bridge and some superstructure from sunken chemical/oil carrier Vicuna have been raised from Paranagua Bay by Smit Tak. Owner Ultragas was insured with the Britannia P&I Club, and its agents in Paranagua are Wilson Sons.

VOLCAN DE TACANDE (Canary Islands)

Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Feb 28 — Ro/ro Volcan de Tacande is at present in ASTICAN, Las Palmas, drydocked and waiting for decisions to be taken as to its future. — Lloyd's Agents.

VOYAGER (Bahamas)

London, Feb 25 — Following received from managers of passenger Voyager, dated today: V.Ships, managers of passenger Voyager, involved in a heavy weather accident in the Mediterranean on Feb 14, report that the vessel departed Cagliari, Sardinia, on Wednesday, Feb 23, and arrived at Genoa on the morning of Feb 24, where full repairs will be completed. Roberto Giorgi, Chief Executive Officer, V.Ships Shipmanagement comments, "We remain deeply concerned that this heavy weather incident should have occurred involving our managed passenger Voyager and wish a speedy recovery to those who suffered any injury during the voyage. We are continuing with a full investigation into the root cause of this incident. This investigation involves Flag State, Classification Society, underwriters, owners and our own ship management technical experts, all of whom will determine with maximum accuracy all the circumstances and aspects of this incident. Voyager is a new and powerful cruise liner and thanks to its overall integrity and the professionalism of the crew on board, power could be restored within a relatively short period of time and safe navigation resumed. We must also

establish whether there was a common cause between this incident and the similar circumstances that affected sister ship passenger Explorer, in the Pacific Ocean."

ZUL DAI A NO.20137 (China)

See Brother Joy.



MALACCA STRAIT

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: A Malaysian tug was attacked by gun-wielding pirates in the Malacca Strait in what is said to be the first incident since the deadly tsunami disaster, an official said today. "Pirates fired at the tugboat and boarded it. They kidnapped the Malaysian captain and Indonesian chief officer," Noel Choong, regional manager of the Piracy Reporting Centre of the International Maritime Bureau, told AFP. "It is not known whether it happened in Malaysian waters or Indonesian waters," he said. The incident happened on Monday (Feb 28) over 50 nautical miles off Penang in the northern end of the Malacca Strait, he said. The vessel was heading towards Lumut in northern Perak state where Malaysia's naval base is located.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: The master of tug Highline 26 (271 gt, built 2002) and his Indonesian chief officer were abducted after the boat they were on, together with six others, were attacked by pirates about 50 nautical miles west of Penang. An Indonesian crewmember was shot in the left leg and has been admitted to the Penang Hospital. He is reported to be in a stable condition. Lumut Naval Base public relations officer Karimah Awi said the incident occurred at about 2100 hrs. Highline 26, was towing coal-laden barge High Line 22, from Bengkulu to Lumut. An Indonesian fishing boat, with four men wearing black onboard, had approached the tug, Karimah said. The men jumped onto the tug and attacked the crew. The bandits fired several shots, one of them hitting a crew member's leg. Karimah said the four men were believed to be Indonesians, judging from their dialect. "The master of the tug identified as Capt Wong Check Tung and the chief officer identified as only Munaji were taken hostage. The four men also destroyed the goods in the tug and left the others on board," she said. Karimah said information on the attack was received by the Lumut Maritime Enforcement Coordination Centre. She said KD Perdana, which was carrying out its routine surveillance near Pulau Perak, rushed to the scene immediately after its commander Lt-Comm Badrul Hisham Mohamed was told about the incident.

When KD Perdana arrived at the scene, the tug was floating aimlessly. "The pirates also took the tug's documents and it is believed that they had done so to show that the two crewmembers were abducted," she said, adding that the two had yet to be located.

London, Mar 2 — A notice to mariners, dated today, states: Armed pirates in a fishing boat fired upon a tug (Highline 26) towing a barge in lat 05 01.2N, long 99 32.6E, at 1440, UTC, Feb 28. They boarded the tug and damaged all communication equipment and shot at chief engineers leg causing serious bleeding. They took master and chief officer as hostages and escaped. Vessels requested to be cautious.

Port State Control



GIBRALTAR

Gibraltar, Feb 28 — C.c. Melfi Italia II was released from preventative detention by the Port Surveyors at 1400, local time, Feb 26 and sailed 1530, local time, same day, for Halifax. — Lloyd's Agents.

Seizures & Arrests



ALCOR (Comoros)

Limassol, Mar 3 — General cargo Alcor (208 gt, built 1974), which arrived Limassol Jan 25 from Djibouti, was placed under arrest Mar 2. — Lloyd's Agents.

ARDEAL (Romania)

Khulna, Mar 3 — General cargo Ardeal is still under attachment at Mongla Outer anchorage for subsequent break-up. — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

CAP ANAMUR (Germany)

See under "Miscellaneous."

CAPO GRIFO (Italy)

Genoa, Feb 21 — Chemical tanker Capo Grifo is still laid-up at Genoa under care of a liquidator. — Lloyd's Agents.

CHINESE FISHING VESSELS SEIZED BY SOUTH KOREA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated Mar 1, states: Two Chinese fishing boats were seized today for illegally fishing in South Korea's southern territorial waters, local maritime police said. The Jeju Maritime Police Agency said it seized the two fishing vessels for illegally operating inside the country's Exclusive Economic Zone.

ENDEAVOR II (Greece)

Karachi, Mar 2 — The Sindh High Court (SHC) has set the date of Mar 21, to rehear the case of crude oil tanker Endeavor II, which is still under arrest at Karachi Port. However, the court has accepted the highest bid of \$7.011 million from a foreign buyer: Kanika Marine Ltd for the purchase of the vessel and given the new owners 15 days to submit the amount, for taking delivery. According to industry sources, the buyers will resell the vessel either in Bangladesh or any other country where they get an attractive price. Funds will remain with the court until the case is resolved. — Lloyd's List Correspondent.

HIBA-B (Georgia)

Limassol, Feb 25 — General cargo Hiba-B was released and sailed Feb 16 for Tartous. — Lloyd's Agents.

INDIAN FISHING VESSELS ARRESTED BY PAKISTAN

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: Pakistan has arrested 101 Indian fishermen and impounded 16 boats for illegally entering its territorial waters in the Arabian Sea, the Maritime Security Agency said today. The fishermen were arrested over the weekend about 70 to 120 km inside Pakistani waters, a statement issued by the agency said. The men, believed to be from the western Indian state of Gujarat, had been handed over to the police, the director of operations of the MSA, Mohammed Zakir, said. Pakistan and India frequently arrest each other's fishermen for trespassing in their territorial waters despite a recent thaw in their relations. Police said the fishermen had been sent to a local jail. Adam, an arrested Indian fisherman, said that they were unaware that they had floated into the Pakistani waters. "The Pakistan Navy came and detained us with our boats," he said. Zakir, the MSA official, said last month Pakistan released 266 Indian fishermen, including four children, who had been in jail since last year. But at least 663 Indian fishermen and their 113 boats still remain in Pakistani custody. They have been arrested over a period of more than a year and a half, MSA officials said.

JOSE ANTONIO NORES (Spain)

Vigo, Mar 1 — Fishing Jose Antonio Nores (1576 gt, built 1989) has been detained on the high seas by Argentinian naval authorities and taken to Comodoro Rivadavia, risking a fine of up to Euro 500,000, plus the loss of the 500 tons of hake and squid on board. — Lloyd's Agents.

Vigo, Mar 3 — Local press sources indicate that the arrest file on fishing Jose Antonio Nores was sent yesterday to the Ministry at Buenos Aires for resolution. These same sources commented that "most probably the owner will have to accept the government line and accept the fine imposed, otherwise the vessel may be

in port well over a year and lose many fishing opportunities". — Lloyd's Agents.

MASAI (Togo)

Vigo, Feb 23 — Fishing Masai is still under repair at Marin. — Lloyd's Agents.

UMM SHAIH (United Arab Emirates)

London, Feb 28 — Following received from the Admiralty Marshal: Lpg Umm Shaif (3378 gt, built 1991) was arrested at Milford Haven Feb 23 on behalf of Petredec Ltd due damages for breach of Charter Party in respect of lpg Garrison Savannah. Vessel was released same day. (Note — Umm Shaif sailed Milford Haven Feb 23 for Belfast.)

VINDEMIA (Malta)

Limassol, Mar 1 — Product tanker Vindemia was released from detention and sailed Limassol Feb 25 for Laurium, Greece. — Lloyd's Agents.

Pipeline Accidents



AL-SAFRA AREA, IRAQ

See "Iraq" under "Political & Civil Unrest."

Pollution



DELAWARE RIVER, UNITED STATES

See Athos I under "Marine."

MARSH HARBOUR, BAHAMAS

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Over 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel spilled from the deck of general cargo Legacy (470 gt, built 2004) into the sea while the vessel was moored at the government dock in Marsh Harbour yesterday morning. The oil flowed through two holes punctured in a 7,000 gallon Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC) tank on wheels when it listed against metal protrusions on the guardrail, as members of the crew were attempting to reposition it on the deck. Using a crane and a forklift, they were eventually able to set the tank upright again and stop the spillage. There were approximately 4,000 gallons in the tank, according to Benjamin R. Beneby, BEC manager, Abaco, who said Legacy, the island's mailboat, was transporting the fuel from Grand Cay to Nassau by way of Marsh Harbour. Mr Beneby said the tank had been supplying fuel to the generator on Walker's Cay. By 1030 hrs, about an hour or so after the

accident, upon inspection of the harbour from a vessel by Mr Beneby and two BEC personnel, accompanied by Captain Cyril Roker, port director, and Chris Greene, of the Department of Health and Environmental Services, large patches of the oil slick were well on their way to the end of the inlet, about a mile away from the dock. "We're very concerned about the damage this can do to the maritime life in the harbour," Mr Beneby said, "so we're airlifting Pat Bain and a crew from BayChem Spill Technologies in Nassau to contain it." Mr Bain, BayChem's operations manager, and a crew with containment booms and Peat Sorb, a hydrocarbon absorbent, were ready to tackle the spill by 1400 hrs, but were delayed by rain. The fuel had already come ashore near the Fish House, at the eastern end of the harbour, by that time. "We have identified four key patches of fuel that we will contain with the boom," Mr Bain said, "then apply the Peat Sorb and remove it from the water." Mr Bain said he regards the 2,000-plus gallons' spill as significant because the harbour is a small area in which the environmental impact can be easily magnified. Captain Roker said he did not think the listing of the tank and spillage of the fuel were due to any negligence or lack of skill on the part of the crew, but an unavoidable accident.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Environmental officials in the Bahamas are expressing concern over some 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel which spilled from general cargo Legacy into the sea while moored at the government dock in Marsh Harbour. Health officials said that the oil reportedly escaped through holes punctured in a 7,000 gallon Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC) tank which got damaged when it struck a guardrail. According to Benjamin Beneby, BEC's Manager, there were approximately 4,000 gallons in the tank of Legacy which was transporting fuel from Grand Cay to Nassau. Health officials said that several yachts at anchor in the harbour were surrounded by the shiny, brownish oil slick that was filling the air with a pungent, oily smell. Pat Bain and a crew from BayChem Spill Technologies in Nassau are contracted to contain it. "I am very concerned about the yachting trade, the seabirds, and the fish in the harbour," said Bain, who pointed out that the process should take about two to three days to complete the containment and removal.

Freeport, Bahamas, Mar 3 — Understand that approximately 2,000 gallons of diesel fuel spilled from general cargo Legacy at Marsh Harbour, Abaco Is, Bahamas, on Feb 28. Reportedly the fuel was being carried in a road tanker on the ship's deck and the tanker toppled, puncturing the tank, and spilling the fuel. Full incident details not known. Clean-up operations were organised by the cargo consignee (Bahamas Electricity Corp) using the services of

a Nassau based pollution control team. Understand that the product "Peat Sorb" was used effectively in the clean-up process and that matters are now well under control. Marsh Harbour is a popular hub for cruising yachts plying the south-east USA coast and Caribbean and there can be dozens of such vessels either at anchor or in the several marinas all in the immediate vicinity of the spill. We have no reports of specific damages involving any vessels. — Lloyd's Agents.

NEWFOUNDLAND, CANADA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Wildlife officials in Newfoundland are trying to determine the source of oil endangering hundreds of seabirds. Dead and oiled birds have been found over a large area of shoreline from Old Perlican to as far south as St. Shotts. Bruce Turner of the Canadian Wildlife Service said yesterday that up to 500 birds have been found so far. He said crews will head out to the Cape St. Francis area today to see if they can determine the source of the pollution. There are also reports of over 100 sick or dying ducks being spotted around Pouch Cove and Flatrock. Turner said it doesn't take much oil to cause a lot of damage because the ducks tend to gather in large flocks. Transport Canada was reviewing vessel traffic in the area to locate the source of the oil. A coast guard surveillance flight yesterday found no evidence of a spill.

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: County health officials said Monday that there had been a large sewage spill in North County over the weekend. According to authorities, more than 73,000 gallons of treated effluent began flowing into Escondido Creek at about 1130, yesterday. Although the spill on Lone Jack Road in the Olivenhain neighbourhood of Encinitas was stopped by 1500 hrs, the sewage flowed in to the San Elijo Lagoon and from there into the Pacific Ocean at Cardiff State Beach. The County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health was notified of the spill this morning.



AUSTRALIA

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: The total damage bill from a string of big storms in rural New South Wales in December and January is now estimated at more than \$27 million. The State Government has announced Natural Disaster Assistance for farmers, after the severe storms hit the central west, the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area and

New England north-west. Around Orange and Forbes, \$12 million worth of damage was caused to fruit crops. A severe dust, hail and rain storm in the Riverina caused \$6 million in damage and there were some complete crop losses around Moree. Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald says the Government is providing working capital to help farmers recover. "Primary producers can apply for loans of up to \$130,000 at 3% interest with a two-year interest and repayment free period," he said. Mr Macdonald says the storms represented a double whammy because they caused damage but did not break the drought.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: A passenger train derailed and homes were damaged when wild storms ripped across Victoria last night. About 80 State Emergency Service crews were called to Wodonga in northern Victoria to remove fallen trees, three of which fell on the train tracks just south of the Murray River town. A train carrying 40 people from Melbourne to Albury hit one of the trees and the front two wheels of the locomotive section left the tracks about 2030 hrs. No one was injured and passengers were taken by bus to Albury in NSW, north of Wodonga, V-Line spokeswoman Dionne Lew said. The carriages remained on the tracks, she said. Bureau of Meteorology senior forecaster Ken Dickinson said the storms began in the state's north, around Shepparton and Yarrawonga about 1800 hrs and moved east, hitting Wodonga on the NSW border and stretching as far as Sale in the south east. Mr Dickinson said the severe storms were triggered by a surface pressure drop in the area. Maintenance crews will work to repair the train last night, while the first return service from Albury today will be replaced by a bus. Ms Lew said that would be the only service affected. A Pacific National spokesman said his company, which owns the train tracks, would investigate the incident. He was unable to confirm how fast the train was going last night but said usually in that area, trains travelled about 100 km per hour.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: Emergency crews are cleaning up today after storms battered homes and derailed a train in Wodonga on the Victoria-New South Wales border last night. About 80 State Emergency Service crews were called to remove fallen trees, three of which fell on the train tracks just south of the Murray River town. Bureau of Meteorology senior forecaster Ken Dickinson said the storms began in the state's north, around Shepparton and Yarrawonga about 1800, AEDT, before moving east, hitting Wodonga and as far as Sale in the south-east. A train carrying 40 people from Melbourne to Albury hit one of the trees and the front two wheels of the locomotive section left the tracks. The first train service was delayed 20 minutes this morning but services would run as normal today,

V/Line spokeswoman Dionne Lew said. A spokesman for Pacific National, the owner of the tracks, said the company would investigate the incident.

CHINA

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Heavy snowfall in a remote mountainous part of southwestern Tibet has claimed the life of at least one person and left 2,481 injured, mostly with frostbite, state media reported today. The massive snowfall has also killed 24,000 head of livestock in 10 counties where animal husbandry forms an essential part of the local economy, Xinhua news agency reported. "A large number of livestock starved or froze to death because of the heavy snowfall," a civil affairs official told Xinhua. "This may have a great effect on the local people's lives because raising livestock is their main means of livelihood," the official said. Tibetan government departments have allocated 18 million yuan (2.2 million dollars) for disaster relief in the area around Shigatse city.

CYCLONE "PERCY"

London, Feb 25 — Following received from the Meteorological Office: Tropical cyclone "Percy" located near lat 8.6S, long 177.6W at 0600, UTC. Movement past six hours: 110 deg at six knots, position accurate to within 60 nautical miles, position based on centre located by satellite. Maximum sustained winds: 55 knots with gusts to 70 knots. Radius of 50-knot winds: 30 nautical miles. Radius of 34-knot winds: 95 nautical miles north-east and north-west quadrants, 110 nautical miles south-east and south-west quadrants. Forecast for 0600, UTC, Feb 26: Centre predicted to be near lat 9.9S, 174.0W, with maximum sustained winds of 80 knots and gusts to 100 knots. Radius of 64-knot winds: 15 nautical miles. Radius of 50-knot winds: 40 nautical miles. Radius of 34-knot winds: 115 nautical miles north-east and north-west quadrants, 130 nautical miles south-east and south-west quadrants. Tropical cyclone "Percy" located approximately 450 nautical miles north-west of Western Samoa, has tracked east-south-eastward at six knots over the past six hours. During the next 72 hours "Percy" is forecast to track south-eastward. Maximum significant wave height at 0600, UTC, today, is 18 feet.

London, Feb 26 — A press report dated today, states: Storm warnings have been issued across the South Pacific as Cyclone "Percy" became the fourth violent storm in a month to hit the region and had the tiny island group of Tokelau directly in its path. Eight other territories were warned to monitor the cyclone's route closely for any deviation. "Direct or near direct hits by "Percy" are possible for all Tokelau islands on the current track," the Australian-Pacific Centre for Emergency and Disaster Information warned. Authorities in American Samoa, Samoa Tuvalu, Wallis and Futuna, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Niue

and French Polynesia were also warned they could be hit. Gale and storm warnings were posted in most areas with winds up to 200 kilometres-an-hour expected, along with heavy rain and sea swells up to 10 metres. On its present course "Percy" was expected to directly threaten Tokelau and then move towards Swains Island in American Samoa and the northern Cook Islands. The 1,400 residents on Tokelau's three main atolls were told "Percy" could be a category two-three cyclone on a scale up to five by the time it hits.

Sydney, Feb 27 — Cyclone "Percy" tore across the Pacific island group of Tokelau, causing widespread damage and injuring one person, authorities said today. Strong wind and surging sea had begun to batter Swain's Island, about midway between the Hawaiian Islands and New Zealand, said the Australian-Pacific Centre for Emergency and Disaster Information. In Tokelau, a New Zealand protectorate of 1,400 people, the storm battered three atolls and caused widespread damage, said Tino Vitale, general manager for telecommunications on the atoll of Nukunonu. Winds of 200 km per hour swept across Tokelau and were expected to build to 230 kph in the next 24 hours, said Tropical Storm Risk, a group that tracks storms around the world. "The storm surge resulted in at least five houses on Nukunonu being washed away and damage to many other houses," Vitale said in a statement. The atoll's only school was largely destroyed as the storm tore down trees, power and telephone lines, he said. Communication was lost with Swain's Island in American Samoa as "Percy" approached, the Centre said. The island, home to only seven people, is likely to be battered for about six hours before the storm heads off between Niue and the Cooks Islands. — Reuters.

London, Feb 27 — Following received from the Meteorological Office: Tropical cyclone "Percy" located near lat 10.9S, long 168.8W, at 0600, UTC. Movement past six hours 100 deg at 11 knots. Position accurate to within 40 nautical miles, position based on eye fixed by satellite. Maximum sustained winds 115 knots with gusts to 140 knots. Radius of 64-knot winds 20 nautical miles. Radius of 50-knot winds 50 nautical miles. Radius of 34-knot winds 120 nautical miles. Forecast for 0600, UTC, Feb 28: Position lat 12.8S, long 167.3W. Maximum sustained winds 125 knots with gusts to 150 knots. Radius of 64-knot winds 30 nautical miles. Radius of 50-knot winds 50 nautical miles. Radius of 34-knot winds 125 nautical miles.

Wellington, Feb 28 — Cyclone "Percy" battered the northern Cook Islands in the Pacific today, lifting roofs of some buildings, but authorities said it was expected to weaken as it moved south towards the capital Rarotonga. The cyclone had passed over the northwestern island of

Pukapuka and was expected to hit the small atoll of Nassau later on Monday, said Cook Islands Meteorology Service supervisor Tekii Lazaro. "It's made a lot of mess over there, it destroyed some of the buildings," Lazaro said. There had been reports of roofs lifting off some buildings, but no injuries. Lazaro said he expected "Percy", which was gusting up to 125 knots, to turn south and weaken before reaching Rarotonga in the next 24 to 48 hours. The 600 people on Pukapuka had been evacuated to the island's school, and the 70 residents of Nassau were in a cyclone shelter, according to the Australian-Pacific Centre for Emergency and Disaster Information. Further north, around 1,600 people in the New Zealand protectorate of Tokelau were cleaning up after the cyclone caused widespread damage and injured one person yesterday. "Damage is still being assessed but we know that much of Nukunonu (atoll) was under water at one stage, and buildings and crops have been affected," said New Zealand Aid Minister Marian Hobbs. — Reuters.

London, Feb 28 — Following received from the Meteorological Office, dated today: At 0600, UTC, today, the centre of tropical cyclone "Percy" was located near lat 12.0S, long 165.4W, approximately 340 nautical miles east-north-east of Pago Pago, American Samoa, and has tracked south-eastward, or 140 degs, at six knots over the past six hours. The position is accurate to within 60 nautical miles and is based on the centre being located by satellite. Present wind distribution: maximum sustained winds: 105 knots, gusts 130 knots. Radius of 64 knot winds: 20 nautical miles in all four quadrants. Radius of 34 knot winds: 120 nautical miles in all four quadrants. Maximum significant wave height is 46 feet. At 0600, UTC, Mar 1, the centre is predicted to be near lat 14.8S, long 165.0W, with maximum sustained winds of 95 knots and gusts to 115 knots.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: A major clean-up is under way on the northern Cook Islands, after disaster authorities reported widespread damage after Cyclone "Percy" slammed into the area. On Pukapuka island, with a population of 600, only 10 houses survived the storm, while one person reported missing was later found safe, said Chief Inspector John Tini of the Cooks Emergency Centre said. On the neighbouring island of Nassau "all the homes are reportedly severely damaged or destroyed," Chief Inspector Tini said from the main island of Rarotonga. Chief Inspector Tini said leaders on Pukapuka and Nassau were meeting to assess their immediate needs and may evacuate the women and young children from Nassau while repairs are made. A New Zealand Air Force Orion making a reconnaissance flight over the area located an American Samoan fishing boat 35 kilometres north of Pukapuka and dropped supplies to the crew

while another fishing vessel was diverted to the area. Meanwhile "Percy" continued to weaken as it turned south, taking the storm away from the populated islands of the Northern Cooks. The Fiji Meteorological Service maintained a tropical cyclone alert for the southern Cooks including a strong wind warning for Palmerston, while authorities in Niue and American Samoa were urged to remain on alert should "Percy" make a southwesterly turn.

London, Mar 1 — Following received from the Meteorological Office, dated today: At 0600, UTC, today, the centre of tropical cyclone "Percy" was located near lat 13.5S, long 165.2W, approximately 320 nautical miles east of Pago Pago, American Samoa, and has tracked south-south-westward, or 205 degs, at four knots over the past six hours. The position is accurate to within 40 nautical miles and is based on the centre located by satellite. The intensity of the system has reached its maximum intensity and is expected to slowly decrease as it tracks poleward into an environment of increasing vertical wind shear. Maximum sustained winds are 115 knots, gusts 140 knots. The radius of 64 knot winds is 30 nautical miles in all four quadrants. The radius of 34 knot winds is 105 nautical miles in all four quadrants. Maximum significant wave height is 50 feet. At 0600, UTC, Mar 2, the centre is predicted to be near lat 16.8S, long 165.6W, with maximum sustained winds of 110 knots and gusts to 135 knots.

London, Mar 2 — Following received from Meteorological Office, dated today: At 0600, UTC, today, the centre of tropical cyclone "Percy" was located near lat 16.4S, long 165.3W, approximately 430 nautical miles north-west of Rarotonga, and has tracked southward, or 180 degs, at eight knots over the past six hours. The position is accurate to within 30 nautical miles and is based on the eye fixed by satellite. Present wind distribution: maximum sustained winds: 140 knots, gusts 170 knots. Radius of 64 knot winds: 30 nautical miles in all four quadrants. Radius of 34 knot winds: 110 nautical miles in all four quadrants. The maximum significant wave height is 52 feet. At 0600, UTC, Mar 3, the centre is predicted to be near lat 20.4S, long 165.0W, with maximum sustained winds of 130 knots and gusts to 160 knots.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: The Cook Islands' main island of Rarotonga was battering down yesterday as Cyclone "Percy" continued to batter the tiny South Pacific nation. The cyclone, which was upgraded to a maximum category five storm with gusts over 310 kilometres per hour overnight, passed to the west of the island of Palmerston early yesterday, the Australian-Pacific Centre for Emergency and Disaster Information (APCEDI) said. "Percy" did not get any closer than 160 km from Palmerston,

saving the population of about 50 from the most destructive winds, APCEDI said. The cyclone lay 175 km south-southwest of Palmerston island yesterday morning and was moving south-southeast at 18 kph. Superintendent Tai Isamaela, officer in charge at the Cook Islands national emergency centre, said Palmerston residents were sheltering indoors from winds gusting up to 150 kph. No injuries had been reported. "There is moderate to heavy rain, very rough seas and heavy swells at the same time, and wave reach is about 30 metres inland," Isamaela said. If "Percy" maintained its present course it should not get closer than about 240 km to Rarotonga, he said. But if it changed to a more southeasterly course, the cyclone would have a more devastating impact. "We'll probably start getting the wind effect sometime later this afternoon and through the night," he said. Businesses, schools and government offices in Rarotonga, which has a population of about 10,000, were closed yesterday as residents completed preparations to protect themselves and property. Even if "Percy" keeps its distance, Rarotonga and the island of Mangaia to the east could expect a strong tidal surge and damaging gales. However, sustained hurricane-force winds would remain well offshore, APCEDI said.

London, Mar 3 — Following received from Meteorological Office, dated today: At 0600, UTC, today, the centre of tropical cyclone "Percy" was located near lat 20.5S, long 164.1W. Movement over the past six hours 145 degs at eleven knots. The position is accurate to within 40 nautical miles and is based on the centre located by satellite. Present wind distribution: maximum sustained winds: 110 knots, gusts 135 knots. Radius of 64-knot winds: 20 nautical miles in all four quadrants. Radius of 50-knot winds: 40 nautical miles in all four quadrants. Radius of 34-knot winds: 100 nautical miles in all four quadrants. Forecast for 0600, UTC, Mar 4: Centre predicted to be near lat 24.3S, long 160.9W with maximum sustained winds of 85 knots and gusts to 105 knots. Radius of 64-knot winds: 20 nautical miles. Radius of 50-knot winds: 40 nautical miles. Radius of 34-knot winds: 95 nautical miles in the east semicircle and 85 nautical miles in the west semicircle.

HONG KONG

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: Thick fog and smog caused chaos in Hong Kong, forcing several international flights to be diverted to the Philippines and delaying the arrival of a US Navy aircraft carrier and battle fleet. Visibility was reduced to less than 200 metres in the early morning, increasing as the fog lifted by the afternoon, the Hong Kong Observatory said. A total of 23 flights to Hong Kong International Airport had to be diverted, at least nine of them to Manila in the Philippines, and the rest to Taipei in Taiwan,

authorities said. Twenty-two departure flights had been delayed, they said, adding that the airport was running normally by midday once the fog had begun lifting. All ferries to China were cancelled in the morning with just a few resumed by the afternoon, said the Marine Department. The department issued a warning at around 0500 hrs urging all vessels to proceed slowly and it was still in place at 1430 hrs. "It is a regulation that we issue a slow-progress warning to shipping when visibility falls below two kilometres," said a department spokesman. However the city's port was still open. Only one marine collision was reported, he said, a domestic ferry carrying 30 passengers, which struck an oil barge at around 0800 hrs. No one was injured. A visit by the US Navy's USS Kitty Hawk aircraft carrier and its attendant group of warships was also delayed for at least four hours by the gloom, a US Consulate spokeswoman said. Visibility has been worsened by high pollution levels throughout the territory. Pollution here is blown in mostly from neighbouring southern China's heavily industrialised Pearl River Delta Region.

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: Thick fog created chaos for air and sea traffic yesterday, with dozens of flights delayed or diverted, ferry services cancelled and a collision in waters off Tsing Yi. About 30 passengers were aboard the ferry Island Park Two when it collided with an oil barge off the north side of Tsing Yi Island at 0750 hrs. The ferry's starboard side was slightly dented, but no one was hurt. It was the third consecutive day visibility in parts of Hong Kong had fallen below 100 metres. With visibility less than 200 metres at Chek Lap Kok early yesterday, 22 incoming flights were diverted to neighbouring airports, mostly in Taiwan and Manila. Twenty-three departing flights were delayed. The Airport Authority said visibility at Chek Lap Kok improved after 1030 hrs and aircraft movement returned to normal. A Marine Department spokesman said it issued a warning at 0500 hrs cautioning vessels to proceed slowly. He added "it's up to individual ferry operators whether to cancel ferry services". Eleven mainland ferries operated by Chu Kong Passenger Transport, running between Hong Kong and Pingzhou in Nanhai, Lian Hua Shan in Panyu and Humen in Dongguan were cancelled yesterday. The ferry company estimated that about 400 passengers were affected by the cancellations. The observatory attributed yesterday's fog to a humid maritime airstream, but expected visibility to improve over the weekend.

ITALY

Messina, Feb 28 — Port of Gioia Tauro was closed due to adverse weather conditions at 2000, Feb 26, and re-opened at 0010, Feb 28. — Lloyd's Agents.

Messina, Mar 3 — The port of Santa Panagia was closed due to adverse weather at 0800, local time, Mar 1, and was re-opened at 0700, local time, today. — Lloyd's Agents.

PAKISTAN

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Three people have been killed and four injured in roof collapses caused by heavy downpours in southwestern Pakistan, while thousands had to run for safety after a dam overflowed, officials said today. The incidents are the latest in a bitter winter that has gripped South Asia, with nearly 550 dying in Pakistan alone from torrential rain, snow and avalanches in recent weeks. The victims in Chaman, a town bordering Afghanistan, included a 14-year-old girl and two elderly men, who died when rains damaged their homes last night, Mayor Salahuddin Achakzai said. An emergency has been declared in Chaman, where the death toll from three weeks of rain has risen to 15, he said. Meanwhile, more than 5000 residents moved to safer locations after a dam overflow swamped villages in the Arabian Sea coastal district of Gwadar. "There are no casualties so far," said Raziq Bugti, spokesman for the government of Baluchistan province. "After the warning of increasing water level in Akra Kur dam and its overflowing, the population of all these villages was shifted," he said. Gwadar airport was also closed due to flooding, he said, while local roads were also under water. Last month floods were believed to have claimed at least 85 lives in Baluchistan, many when the Shadi Kor dam burst under pressure from rain and runoff from melting mountain snow.

ROMANIA

Bucharest, Feb 25 — Midia port was re-opened at 2315, local time, Feb 24, while Sulina channel was re-opened today at 0630, local time. Constantza and Mangalia ports were re-opened also today, at 0500 and 0400, local time, respectively. — Lloyd's Agents.

Bucharest, Feb 28 — Sulina channel was closed at 0815, Feb 27, due to bad weather, wind north-north-east force seven (near gale), sea six, and was re-opened at 0620, today. — Lloyd's Agents.

RUSSIA

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: The air service between Kamchatka and the mainland, interrupted by a heavy snowfall, has resumed. The airport in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, the administrative centre of the Kamchatka Region, is ready to receive airliners, airport air traffic controllers report. Aircraft which could not arrive at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky yesterday from Moscow, Khabarovsk, Krasnoyarsk and Novosibirsk due to the foul weather landed at stand-by airports in Magadan and Khabarovsk. In the meantime, Kamchatka remains

under the influence of the cyclone which is now in the Pacific east of the peninsula.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Moscow airports have resumed a normal flight schedule by this morning, a central information office of Moscow air terminals said. A visibility range on runways remains within the normal range. Air traffic controllers have been monitoring flights with the help of a powerful anti-fog system established in all the city airports. Whatever flight delays were registered the delays are within permissible norms and were mainly caused by clean-up continued at airports with special reagents used to prevent ice-formation, the information service said. Airport services have taken advantage of a period of fairly good weather today so as to catch up with the schedule of flights, dozens of which were directed to reserve airports in Novgorod, Kirov, Voronezh, St. Petersburg because of no-fly weather in Moscow yesterday. Yesterday afternoon all Moscow airports switched over to an emergency flight schedule when aircrews are authorised to make decisions on landing depending on actual weather.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Gale Warning No.2 was declared for Novorossiysk port at 1120, today and a deterioration in the weather is expected this afternoon. From 1500 hrs to 1800 hrs, the northeasterly wind is expected to increase to 25-30 m/sec with a further increase in the evening up to 35 m/sec (hurricane force). Sea swell of 1.5-3 metre, and icing of vessels are also forecast. The CPC-R Terminal has already cancelled all berthing operations due to the rising swell and wind. For the time being, Sheskharis Terminal is still operating, but no new berthing is scheduled.

TURKEY

London, Feb 25 — Bosphorus traffic was suspended at 1230 hrs, today, due to dense fog in the northern Bosphorus.

UKRAINE

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Frosts and blizzards that again hit Ukraine complicated the cleanup operation to eliminate the aftermath of the flood of houses and farms in southern Ukraine. Around 296 houses and 1372 countryside houses were still flooded in the Zaporozhye, Nikolayevsk and Kherson regions by this morning. Most flooded houses are located in the Kherson region where irrigation systems have been destroyed completely in the recent years. The number of flooded houses tripled as compared with Monday (Feb 28). The rise of the underground water caused a mudslide in Dnepropetrovsk that destroyed an industrial facility and damaged several houses where 15 people live. Specialists do not rule out that these buildings may be destroyed.

UNITED STATES

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated Feb 24, states: While skies cleared over Southern California yesterday, a six-day drenching left city workers scrambling to keep up with a rush of calls for collapsing homes, roads choked with mud and house-sized boulders seemingly ready to tumble down hillsides. At least nine people died in the deluge. In Los Angeles, city engineers declared more than 100 homes temporarily uninhabitable or safe for only limited entry. Crews responded to 270 mudslides, some of which forced evacuations after crashing into homes, said Los Angeles Public Works Department Commissioner Janice Wood. The damage spread south into Orange and San Diego counties, where dozens of homes were slipping or evacuated following landslides, and across the border into Tijuana, Mexico, where the Office of Civil Protection reported at least seven homes had collapsed and more than 150 people were evacuated. Warnings have been placed on thousands of houses, Tijuana Civil Protection Director Humberto Garcia said, though some families don't want to leave for fear their belongings could be looted. A house-sized boulder teetered above Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu, forcing the closure of a two-mile stretch of the road. Crews planned to inject the rock with a type of gel that would cause it to disintegrate from the inside. Everyone in the Los Angeles Public Works Department licensed to evaluate whether shifting ground had made homes uninhabitable was in the field, according to commissioner Janice Wood. City fire spokesman Brian Humphrey said some ambulance crews had been diverted to work as reconnaissance teams to spot signs of flooding and mudslides. At least nine people died throughout the state during the six-day deluge that pushed rain totals to their highest level since Los Angeles was a small outpost in the desert. In downtown Los Angeles, rainfall reached 9.14 inches, bringing the total since Jul 1 to 34.36 inches, the most in Los Angeles since 1889-90. The calmer weather that began yesterday was expected to continue into today with some cloudy conditions, forecasters said. Officials estimated that damage to roads and facilities in Los Angeles County alone reached \$52.5 million since Jan 1, with up to \$10 million in damage caused by the latest storm. In Ventura County, the small Santa Paula airport remained closed after more than 155 feet of runway crumbled into the rushing Santa Clara River. Mudslides forced Amtrak to suspend train service between Los Angeles and Santa Barbara through at least today.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A massive snowstorm that hit the northeastern United States today has caused many flight cancellations at New York area airports, officials said. The Port Authority of New York said John F. Kennedy International Airport was

experiencing some minimal delays on flight arrivals and departures, with only 46 flight cancellations reported by airlines. LaGuardia Airport is experiencing scattered delays of up to 45 minutes on arrivals and departures as airlines cancelled a total of 114 flights, the authority said. Delays were worse at Newark Liberty International Airport in New Jersey, which reported 230 flight cancellations. However, all airports remained open despite the bad weather, officials said.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated Mar 1, states: This latest winter storm caused a lot of problems at Bradley International and other major airports across the North-east. At Bradley, airport operations spokesman John Wallace says there were about six flight cancellations last night, which resulted in some extra flight delays this morning. Up north at Boston's Logan Airport, more than 50 inbound flights and about 90 outbound flights scheduled for today have been cancelled. To the south, New York's LaGuardia Airport was hardest hit with 30 to 60 minute delays on arrivals and departures this morning. A spokesman says 56 departing flights were cancelled and 28 arriving flights were cancelled this morning because of the snow. At John F. Kennedy Airport there were minimal delays, but six arrivals were cancelled and eleven departures were cancelled. No delays were reported at Newark Liberty Airport. However, 24 departures were cancelled and 28 arrivals were cancelled this morning.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated Mar 1, states: Traffic is snarled, air travel is disrupted and many schools are closed across the North-east after the second snow storm in less than a week. The storm dumped moderate to heavy snowfall from Massachusetts to North Carolina and lingered as flurries early today across the region. As much as ten inches was recorded in New York. In North Carolina, the storm shut down schools and businesses and knocked out power to thousands of customers, while also reviving ski slopes that have been barren much of the winter. Across most of Massachusetts, snowfall ranged from six to eleven inches. In Maine, hundreds of schools and businesses are closed today. In Augusta, state government workers were told to stay home. Hundreds of airline flights have been delayed or cancelled.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: Hundreds of schools were closed and crews worked to clear slush and ice from highways today following the latest in a series of snowstorms to batter the Northeast this winter. A foot of snow hit cities in southeastern Massachusetts, where a January storm buried some towns under six-foot-tall drifts. A foot also was possible by this morning in parts of Maine, New York and Pennsylvania. The storm marked the third snowfall in the Northeast in a week. Schools were closed from North Carolina to

Maine, where state government workers in Augusta also were told to stay home. Boston schools had used up all of their allotted snow holidays, and spokesman Jonathan Palumbo said the school year will now go right up to June 30. Airlines cancelled dozens of flights yesterday at Boston's Logan airport and three major airports in the New York City area. Thousands of customers lost power at the storm's peak.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated Mar 2, states: The cost of repairs being triggered by storms that have repeatedly hammered Riverside County since New Year's Day has reached \$60 million, county and state officials said today. That total includes \$32.4 million for private property, including homes, businesses and farms; \$21.6 million for county roads, city streets and other public facilities; and \$5.9 million for damage to state highways such as Interstate 15 in Temecula, officials said in telephone interviews. Meanwhile, inspectors from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and state Office of Emergency Services were out around the county today, for the second time in two months, to view damage firsthand, Mary Moreland, deputy county fire director in charge of emergency services, said. Those assessment teams focused attention on Lake Elsinore, Idyllwild, Moreno Valley and Desert Hot Springs. Moreland said inspectors are scheduled to deliver a report to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Friday (Mar 4). Earlier this week, the Riverside County Board of Supervisors voted 5-0 to declare a local emergency, and to ask the governor to expand his January declaration of an emergency for Riverside and other hard-hit Southern California counties to include last month's storms. That state declaration freed up state money for repairs to roads and other public facilities. County officials also are hoping that the governor will press President Bush to expand the federal emergency declaration he subsequently issued for the region to include new damage caused by February rain, Moreland said. As well, she said, the county is trying, for a second time, to persuade the president to make federal grants available to cover private losses. Bush's declaration freed up grants only for repairs to public facilities. However, earlier this week the federal Small Business Administration announced it was offering low-interest loans to Riverside County homeowners and business owners whose properties were damaged by rising mud and water. Loans of up to \$200,000 are available for home repairs, Riverside County officials said, in a news release. Loans of up to \$40,000 are available to both homeowners and renters to replace damaged or destroyed personal property. And businesses may borrow up to \$1.5 million to repair offices, machinery and equipment. Rose Melgoza, a spokeswoman for the California

Department of Transportation in San Bernardino, said the storm-damage total for Riverside County highways has reached \$5.9 million, about half of that for emergency repairs to the slope along I-15 at Highway 79 South that was undermined by a mudslide last month. Because of those repairs, the far-right northbound lane remains closed just south of Temecula. Melgoza said it is not known when the lane will reopen. The most recent batch of storms triggered new damages of \$16 million to farms all over the county, \$700,000 to roads and streets around the county and \$800,000 to homes in Moreno Valley, Moreland said. Hardest hit among farms were dairies. She added that the estimate for roads is "extremely conservative" because county emergency officials are still waiting to receive updates from a number of cities. Revised estimates also include \$500,000 damage in Idyllwild when the mountain resort community was hammered by wind a few weeks ago, she said. Although homes were crushed by trees felled by wind on dry days, county officials contend that the damage is rain-related. "The wind, in and of itself, was not the problem," Moreland said. "It was the saturated soil. The wind would not have blown the trees down had it not been for the goeey soil." The public-sector damage includes \$538,000 in Lake Elsinore, said city spokesman Mark Dennis. "That ranges from storm drain damage and sinkholes in roads to the failure of Railroad Canyon Road due to a rockslide," Dennis said. "It also includes some lake costs — debris cleanup and damage to the levee that is being graded and repaired, as we speak." Damage in Temecula exceeds \$3 million, city officials said. The city is making repairs to the channels of Temecula and Murrieta creeks, and is having to fix footings supporting the Main Street Bridge in Old Town. Some major parks also sustained damage.

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

London, Mar 2 — Severe weather disrupted shipping in the western Mediterranean for the second day in a row yesterday, with most regular ferry services linking Spain to north Africa suspended due to rough seas and high winds. A tailback of vessels was piling up in Gibraltar, where bunker operations in the bay have been on hold since midday on Monday (Feb 28).

YANGTZE RIVER, CHINA

London, Feb 28 — The Shanghai Maritime Safety Administration has begun to clear old wrecks from the deep waterway at the mouth of the Yangtze River, reports the Shanghai Daily. Up to 145 vessels have capsized in the busy shipping channel since 1997. About a dozen wrecks have not been raised and have become an underwater threat to passing vessels. First to be moved is the Le'an No. 11, a 495 gt vessel carrying 1,000 tons of cement that sank Waigaoqiao port in

1998. The vessel will be broken into pieces and then lifted bit by bit out of the water.

Earthquakes



AFGHANISTAN

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: An earthquake of moderate intensity shook the Hindukush mountain ranges in Afghanistan today. The quake, measuring 5.5 on the Richter scale, was recorded at 0751 hrs, the New Delhi Meteorological Department said. It was epicentred in lat 36.3N, long 71.3E, in the Hindukush ranges. No damages or casualties were immediately reported.

AUSTRALIA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: A strong earthquake has hit parts of Darwin, with the tremor lasting several minutes and felt right across the city and in rural areas. Geoscience Australia says the earthquake measured 7.2 on the Richter scale with its epicentre about 500 km east north-east of East Timor in the Banda Sea. The director of the Australia Seismological Centre in Canberra, Kevin McCue, says the earthquake is unlikely to have caused any damage because it occurred at a great depth. Residents reported the earthquake hitting the capital of the Northern Territory at around 2020, ACST.

INDONESIA

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: A quake measuring 6.0 at Richter scale rocked Simeulue Island in the Indonesian tsunami-hit province of Aceh yesterday afternoon. The quake occurred at 1445, local time was hardly felt by people living in Banda Aceh, the capital of the Aceh province, said Head of the Provincial Meteorology and Geophysics Syahnun, who was quoted by the state News Agency Antara. The epicentre of the quake was located 40 km under the sea level.

London, Feb 28 — A report, dated Feb 26, states: A strong earthquake occurred at 1256, UTC, today. The magnitude 6.8 event has been located in Simeulue, Indonesia, lat 02 96N, long 95 51E, depth 30 km.

JAPAN

London, Feb 28 — An earthquake measuring 5.7 on the Richter scale was reported east of Honshu, Japan at 1237, UTC, Feb 26, at a depth of 63 metres.

MEXICO

London, Feb 28 — A report, dated today, states: A moderate earthquake occurred at 0106, UTC, today. The magnitude 5.7 event has been located

offshore Colima, Mexico, lat 18 91N, long 104 24W, depth 26 km.

PERU

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: A strong earthquake shook Peru's capital and the surrounding coast and mountains yesterday, but it did not cause injuries or damage, Peru's Geophysics Institute said. The quake with a preliminary magnitude 5.7 struck at 0848 hrs in the Andes about 60 miles east of Lima, where it was felt as a momentary shudder. Closer to the epicentre, it caused people to flee their homes and shops in Matucana, a town 50 miles east of Lima, about 7,850 feet above sea level, local media reported.

TAJIKISTAN AND PAKISTAN

Karachi, Feb 27 — An earthquake of moderate intensity jolted Peshawar and Chitral cities of northern Pakistan at 0404 yesterday. According to preliminary analysis of the meteorological department, the magnitude of the earthquake was 5.9 on Richter scale and its epicentre laid about 500 kilometres north of Peshawar in Tajikistan. — Lloyd's List Correspondent.

Volcanic Activity



AMBRYM, VANUATU

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: Residents of Ambrym Island in Vanuatu are calling for international assistance to help with the disaster caused by the ongoing volcanic eruptions. Ambrym is one of the world's most active volcanoes and has been in almost continuous eruption for the past 200 years. One year ago there was a change in eruptive activity which caused damage to food crops and created health problems for the residents. One year later, the volcano is still creating problems for the local communities, and the population is still calling for food aid to help prevent a famine on the island. During a survey of the volcano in November 2004, Volcanologist John Seach surveyed the damage to the island and made observations of the changes in volcanic activity. A new report received from the island 4 days ago by John Seach indicated that the situation is getting desperate for some residents who do not have enough food.

KLYUCHEVSKAYA SOPKA, RUSSIA

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: Powerful lava discharges to the altitude of up to one kilometre from the Klyuchevskaya Sopka volcano crater have been reported from Kamchatka. A steam column as high as 1.5 km is also billowing from the volcano. Its active

eruption is continuing, but there is no danger for residential areas, a specialist with the local seismological station, Yuri Demyanchuk, told Itar-Tass by telephone from the city of Klyuchi located some 30 km from the volcano. One can see from Klyuchi lava flowing from the crater. The flow is 2.5 km long, Demyanchuk said. The lava has melted part of the glacier on the slope.

KOROVIN, ATKA ISLAND, ALASKA, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A volcano on Atka Island in the Aleutians erupted briefly, sending ash and steam to about 8,000 feet and making some residents nervous. The Alaska Volcano Observatory reports that two other restless volcanoes - Mount Spurr west of Anchorage and Mount Veniaminof on the Alaska Peninsula - remained relatively quiet yesterday. Several Atka village residents reported seeing a burst Wednesday (Feb 23) evening from the 5,029-foot Korovin volcano that drifted east, followed by more steaming yesterday. Korovin has erupted at least nine times since 1950, producing minor amounts of ash and occasional small lava flows.

MOUNT TAVURVUR, PAPUA NEW GUINEA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated Mar 1, states: Ash emissions from a Rabaul volcano have caused cancellation of flights from Tokua airport, East New Britain, Papua New Guinea. An Air Niugini aircraft travelling from Hoskins to Rabaul had to fly direct to Port Moresby. About 100 passengers were affected due to the cancellation of five flights.

Political & Civil Unrest



AFGHANISTAN

Kandahar, Feb 25 — At least 22 rebels and troops have been killed in a renewed surge in violence in Afghanistan, U.S. and Afghan officials said today. Gunmen killed nine Afghan troops in southern Helmand province near the border with Pakistan, a provincial government official said today, in one of the bloodiest attacks against Afghan forces for months. The soldiers were killed while on a night patrol in the Chakool Ghar area of the province. "Two of those killed were officers and the other seven were soldiers," said Haji Mohammad Wali, spokesman for the provincial governor. "The car they were travelling and their weapons have gone missing, too." Wali said it was not clear who was behind the attack but a Taliban spokesman said their fighters were responsible. The U.S. military said seven Taliban rebels also died yesterday during a U.S. helicopter raid in the southeastern province of Khost

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after five Afghan soldiers were wounded in an ambush. Afghan officials said their forces killed six more Taliban guerrillas after the ambush. A Taliban spokesman said five Taliban fighters died. A U.S. military statement said there were no casualties among U.S.-led forces. Wali said the Taliban also killed an Afghan soldier and wounded three others in an attack on their post in a mountainous area near the eastern city of Jalalabad today. — Reuters.

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 27, states: Nine Afghan policemen and 10 Taliban died in two separate ambushes, US and Afghan officials said on Friday (Feb 25), in a burst of violence that could herald more fighting as the winter weather gets warmer. The police officers died late on Thursday when their patrol was ambushed by suspected militants in Chakul, area of Helmand province, officials said. "The policemen were on a routine patrol when they were attacked "nine policemen were killed," provincial spokesman Wali Mohammad said. He blamed the attack on remnants of Taliban. Also on Thursday the Taliban attacked a government convoy in south-eastern Khost province, injuring five Afghan security force personnel but losing 10 of their own fighters, the US military said in an emailed statement. The five Afghans were injured in the initial Taliban ambush near a Pak-Afghan border post, and three insurgents were killed and one injured when Afghan government forces gave chase. "Hours later, two coalition helicopters were surveying the ambush area and received small arms fire. One of the helicopters returned fire, resulting in the death of seven more insurgents," the statement added. Meanwhile on the same day in southern Kandahar province a US soldier and an insurgent were injured when US-led forces investigating a bomb were fired at from a moving vehicle, the military said in a separate press release. Both men are now in a stable condition and being treated at the Kandahar Airfield hospital. Meanwhile, Taliban claimed responsibility for the Thursday night attack. The soldiers were ambushed while on night patrol in the remote Chakool Ghar area of southern province of Helmand. A Taliban spokesman said their fighters were responsible. "Our Mujahideen killed the soldiers in an ambush," spokesman Abdul Latif Hakimi said by telephone from an undisclosed location.

BURUNDI

Bujumbura, Feb 28 — Voters in Burundi took part in the country's first democratic poll in 12 years today, a constitutional referendum to prepare for elections to build an ethnically balanced government from the ruins of civil war. If approved, the constitution would enshrine power-sharing between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority, which has dominated politics and the military in the tiny central African nation since independence from Belgium in 1962.

Three million have registered to vote in the poll, twice delayed by logistical problems such as the absence of voter rolls, electoral laws and ballots. Polls opened in most places around 0730 hrs (0530, UTC) and were due to close at 1600 hrs (1400, UTC). The referendum, the result of a peace agreement signed in 2000, is the first crucial step towards later local, parliamentary and presidential elections. The power-sharing government the constitution would produce is supposed to, once and for all, settle ethnic divisions that so frequently have turned into political bloodshed since independence. The only rebel group that has not joined the peace process, the militant Hutu Forces for National Liberation (FNL), has promised not to disrupt the vote with violence. The FNL, which regularly skirmishes with government troops from its stronghold in the hills around Bujumbura, has offered to hold peace talks but a dispute over who would mediate has forestalled them. There are 6,000 polling stations throughout the country, and local and international observers including the United Nations are on hand to monitor the voting. Results are not expected until at least tomorrow and possibly later, the electoral commission said. — Reuters.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: Voters in Burundi have approved a new power-sharing constitution designed to end 12 years of ethnic conflict. With 80% of the votes counted, an overwhelming majority have said Yes to a proposed constitution which would see power shared along ethnic lines. President Domitien Ndayizeye said the vote opened an "era of democracy" for the country. Election officials said 88% of the 3.1 million eligible voters had taken part in yesterday's poll and some 90% had voted Yes. The new constitution aims to offer guarantees to both ethnic groups by setting out the share of posts they will have in parliament and government and crucially also in the army. Tutsis, who make up 14% of the population but have traditionally dominated power, will have 40% of seats in the national assembly, compared to 60% for Hutus. Military posts will be shared equally between the two groups. Parliamentary elections are due in April and the MPs will in turn elect a new president.

COLOMBIA

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 27, states: At least 14 people were killed in attacks in southwestern Colombia and the perpetrators were still unknown, authorities said today. Most of the victims were residents of small villages in the Narino and Valle de Cauca department. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the principal rebel organisation in Colombia, recently launched an offensive against several targets in Narino province.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Kinshasa, Feb 25 — Militiamen killed nine United Nations Bangladeshi peacekeepers in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo today in the worst attack against the U.N. force in the central African country, a U.N. spokesman said. "I can confirm that nine Bangladeshis were killed," spokesman Mamadou Ba said in the capital Kinshasa. One U.N. source said U.N. soldiers had recovered the bodies of their comrades after two U.N. patrols were ambushed in the lawless Ituri district of the former Zaire. "The peacekeepers were fired upon from all sides," said a second U.N. military source. The second source said it was not clear how many troops had been on patrol but that the number should have been between 20 and 30. He said 90 peacekeepers backed by two Mi25 attack helicopters had since been sent to the scene. The United Nations has a 4,800-strong force in Ituri made up of four contingents from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Morocco and Nepal. The total U.N. force in Congo numbers 16,000, making it the world body's biggest peacekeeping operation. One of the U.N. sources said the patrols were attacked in Ndoki, some 19 miles east of Ituri's main city of Bunia and an area controlled by a predominantly ethnic Lendu militia known as FNI. It was not clear if the peacekeepers were all killed on the spot or if some of them were first taken into the bush and murdered later. "Lendus are not people that take hostages, they just kill," the source said, adding that it was raining heavily in Ituri, making search and rescue operations difficult. In a statement, MONUC called the killings a "premeditated attack" against its troops because of their recent drive to arrest and disarm militias terrorizing civilians in Ituri. Despite the size of the U.N. force in Ituri, attacks on civilians remain frequent. Clashes between militia during the last two months alone have displaced some 70,000 civilians, aid workers say. — Reuters.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: A militia leader in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has reportedly been arrested over the killings of nine UN peacekeepers last week. Floribert Ndjabu was arrested in a health clinic in the capital, Kinshasa, an intelligence source said. His Nationalist and Integrationist Front is one of the militias operating in lawless north-eastern Ituri, where the Bangladeshi troops were killed. The UN has suspended aid work in Ituri, saying it is too dangerous. A spokesman for the UN humanitarian agency Ocha said that more than 50,000 people would be affected. Neither the Congolese government nor the UN have officially confirmed the arrest. Three more senior Ituri militia leaders, including two recently appointed as generals in the DR Congo army, are also being questioned in connection with the deaths. Armed policemen have been stationed outside

the luxury Kinshasa hotel rooms of Generals Goda Sukpa and Germain Katanga, both from Mr Ndjabu's group. There are some 12,000 UN peacekeepers in DR Congo, following a 2002 deal to end five years of civil war, but bitter ethnic fighting continues in Ituri.

Kinshasa, Mar 2 — U.N. Pakistani peacekeepers killed at least 50 to 60 militiamen in a clash in northeastern Congo yesterday, a week after nine Bangladeshi U.N. troops were killed there, senior U.N. sources said today. "The number of militia dead is now 50, maybe 60, but there may be more because they were engaged by helicopters as well," said a senior source in the U.N. peacekeeping operation in the Congo. The clash happened 30 km outside the town of Bunia, the main city in the troubled Ituri region. — Reuters.

HAITI

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated today, states: At least 18 people died in shootings on Thursday (Feb 24) and yesterday around Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince, a police source said. Thirteen people were killed late Thursday by armed individuals in the Eternal City slum neighbourhood of the capital, a police officer said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Some 20 others were wounded by gun shots, and three houses were torched, as armed individuals opened fire on youths who had set up a security brigade to fight crime in their area. Five people, believed to be supporters of ousted president Jean Bertrand Aristide, were also killed in exchanges of fire with police in the poor district of Saline, the source said.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Two people have been killed and several others injured after shooting erupted during a pro-Aristide march in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. The protest in favour of the ousted Haitian leader comes a year after he left the country for a life in exile. Police first fired tear gas to try to disperse the demonstrators and then reportedly shot into the crowds. Jean-Bertrand Aristide fled Haiti after several months of protests and an armed rebel uprising against him. The crowd of several hundred supporters waved posters of the former leader and carried banners calling for his return as they marched through a pro-Aristide slum in Port-au-Prince. UN peacekeeping troops lined part of the route. As the crowd headed in the direction of the national palace they encountered a police roadblock. The police first fired tear gas to try to disperse them. Then, according to witnesses at the scene, they shot bullets into the throng of people.

INDIA

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: India's parliament closed for the second consecutive day after the opposition protested against political developments in Jharkhand state. The main opposition BJP has

opposed a governing alliance member being sworn in as the leader of the next government in Jharkhand, despite a hung assembly. Elections were held in Jharkhand recently along with Bihar and Haryana. While the Congress party won in Haryana, its performance was much poorer in Jharkhand and Bihar. In Jharkhand, Governor Syed Sibte Razi has sworn in the leader of the regional Jharkhand Mukti Morcha party, Shibu Soren, as the state's new chief minister and asked him to form the next government. The Congress-led alliance, of which he is a member, won only 26 of the state's total 81 assembly seats in contrast to 36 for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The NDA which had asked to form the government saying they had the support of four independents- and thereby a majority- is upset with the developments. Mr Soren has been asked to prove his majority by Mar 21. BJP MPs shouted slogans in the lower house of the parliament when it assembled after a 30-minute adjournment this morning. A spokesman for the NDA quoted by the United News of India said the opposition had decided to disrupt the proceedings and launch a "war in the defence of democracy". The elections took place earlier this month, with voting in Bihar and Jharkhand divided into three separate phases to allow greater security. It is still not clear who will form the government in Bihar, where no side has a clear majority. In Haryana, Congress President Sonia Gandhi is expected to announce the name of the new chief minister shortly. (See issue of Feb 25.)

Patna, Mar 3 — Schools, offices and banks were shut in India's Jharkhand state today as the national opposition called a strike to protest against what it sees as its wrongful exclusion from power following a state election. The election produced a hung assembly in the eastern state, with the opposition Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) the largest party. But instead of calling the BJP to try and form a government, the governor swore in an ally of the ruling Congress party-led federal government, triggering an uproar. Media has criticised Governor Sibtey Razi, himself a member of the Congress and appointed by New Delhi, for bias. In Jharkhand, police patrolled the largely empty streets of the state capital, Ranchi, today, while BJP activists, some armed with bamboo sticks, enforced the strike. The BJP, which lost power to the Congress at the national level in a general election last year, also stalled parliamentary proceedings in New Delhi yesterday and today in protest. The party said it had been ignored despite parading 41 members, including independents, out of the 81-seat assembly before Governor Razi on Tuesday (Mar 1). — Reuters.

IRAQ

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated Feb 24, states: A suicide bomber

wearing a police uniform blew up his car at police headquarters in Tikrit, killing at least 15 people in Saddam Hussein's hometown in the bloodiest of several attacks today that claimed 30 lives. Two American soldiers were among the dead. The suicide bombings and other attacks came as politicians negotiated behind the scenes to forge the alliances needed to win enough backing in the 275-seat National Assembly for the post of prime minister. The US command said two American soldiers were killed and two wounded in separate bomb attacks, one north-east of Baghdad in Qaryat, and a second near Samarra, west of Qaryat. In the Sunni Arab stronghold of Tikrit, 80 miles north of Baghdad, a man dressed as a police lieutenant drove through the station's gates and blew himself up just as dozens of policemen were arriving to relieve colleagues who had worked through the night, police Col Saad Daham said. "He waited until the shift change, then he exploded the car," Daham said, adding the aim was "to kill as many as possible." At least 22 people were wounded. Twenty cars were set ablaze after by the blast, sending up clouds of smoke. A suicide bomber killed five other people in Iskandariyah, 30 miles south of the capital, when he blew himself up in front of the local headquarters of a key Shiite alliance member, the Shiite Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq. Police initially said the attack targeted the police chief, Col Salman Ali, who escaped unharmed. In Baghdad, gunmen fired on a bakery, killing two people and wounding a third, police said. Several blasts echoed through the capital at midday and several more after nightfall. Their cause was not known. Two roadside bombs in Qaim, near the Syrian border, killed four Iraqi National Guardsmen, Iraqi Lt. Col. Abid Ajab Al-Salmani said. Elsewhere, insurgents ambushed a police patrol in the northern city of Kirkuk with a roadside bomb, killing two policemen and injuring three. US Marines and Iraqi troops, meanwhile, pressed a joint operation to root out insurgents in parts of the so-called Sunni triangle. The military said it detained 17 suspected insurgents and seized several weapons caches.

Baghdad, Feb 25 — Iraq's government said today it had captured a key lieutenant of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian militant who is al Qaeda's leader in Iraq and has been behind some of the country's worst attacks. It said Talib Mikhliif Arsan Walman al-Dulaymi, also known as Abu Qutaybah, was captured on Feb 20 in Anah, a town northwest of Baghdad, about 35 miles from the Syrian border. "Abu Qutaybah was responsible for determining who, when and how terrorist network leaders would meet with Zarqawi," the government said in a statement. "Abu Qutaybah filled the role of key lieutenant for the Zarqawi network arranging safe houses and transportation as well as passing

packages and funds to Zarqawi." Another militant, Ahmad Khalid Marad Isma'il al-Rawi, also known as Abu Uthman, was captured during the same raid. Abu Uthman arranged meetings for Zarqawi and occasionally acted as his driver, the government's statement said. Zarqawi is the U.S. military's most-wanted man in Iraq, with a \$25 million bounty being offered for information leading to his death or capture. — Reuters.

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: An oil pipeline in northern Iraq was ablaze today after saboteurs blew it up in the latest attack against the country's vital petroleum industry. In the capital, a roadside bomb killed two people, officials and witnesses said. The U.S. military also said a soldier died during a sweep for insurgents west of Baghdad. The pipeline connecting oilfields in Dibilis with the northern city of Kirkuk about 30 kilometres away was blown up late yesterday, an official of the state-run North Oil Co. said on condition of anonymity. He said repairs would take at least four days. In Baghdad, insurgents detonated a roadside bomb in the west of the city, killing two civilians. In the northern city of Mosul, a female Iraqi television presenter kidnapped last week was found dead from a gunshot wound to the head. Several masked gunmen abducted Raiedah Mohammed Wageh Wazan last week, and her corpse was found yesterday, said her husband, Salim Saad-Allah. Wazan was working for a local state-owned television station in Mosul. It was unclear what prompted the kidnapping, but her station was attacked last week with mortar rounds after it aired interviews with alleged insurgents in captivity. To the south, a suicide car bomber killed an Iraqi national guardsman and wounded seven people near Musayyib, police Capt. Muthana Khalid said. Musayyib is about 80 kilometres southwest of Baghdad. The U.S. command today announced the death a day earlier of an American soldier west of the capital in Anbar province, where the military launched a massive sweep last week to root out insurgents.

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: Two car bombs targeting police and Iraqis looking for work at a government office exploded south of Baghdad yesterday, inflicting dozens of casualties, police and witnesses said. The bloodiest attack occurred in Hilla, about 60 miles south of Baghdad, where a suicide car bomber drove into a crowd of people applying for work at a government office. Dozens of bodies could be seen laying on the ground after the blast, and half a dozen ambulances raced to the scene, witnesses said. In a separate attack just north of Hilla, a car bomb exploded at a police checkpoint, killing at least one policeman and wounding several others, police said. That blast occurred in Musayyib, about 40 miles south of Baghdad

Hilla, Mar 1 — A suicide bomber killed 125 people and wounded 130 by detonating a car near police recruits in a crowded market south of Baghdad yesterday, the single bloodiest attack in Iraq since the fall of Saddam Hussein. The bomber blew the car up next to a line of recruits waiting at a health centre to take an eye test so they could join the Iraqi police in the town of Hilla, 100km south of the capital, witnesses said. An official in Hilla's health directorate told Reuters the latest death toll was 125. Coalition forces confirmed at least 110 dead. No one claimed responsibility for the attack. — Reuters.

Baghdad, Mar 1 — Kidnapped French journalist Florence Aubenas, taken hostage with her driver in Baghdad more than seven weeks ago, made a desperate appeal for help in a video tape released by Iraqi insurgents today. "My health is very bad. I'm very bad psychologically also," she said, staring at the camera intently. The tape is the first of Aubenas to be released since she and her Iraqi driver Hussein Hanun al-Saadi were seized in Baghdad on Jan 5, and the first indication that she at least is alive. The driver does not appear in the tape. The French embassy in Baghdad and the Foreign Ministry in Paris had no immediate comment on the tape of Aubenas. Aubenas is one of two female journalists currently being held. Italian Giuliana Sgrena, a reporter for Rome daily *Il Manifesto*, was abducted early last month as she conducted interviews in Baghdad. A tape of her pleading for her life was released nearly two weeks ago, but no word has been heard since. — Reuters.

Baghdad, Mar 2 — Gunmen shot and killed a senior judge working for the Iraqi special tribunal set up to try Saddam Hussein and leading members of his regime, Interior Ministry officials said today. The judge, Barawiz Mahmoud, was shot by unknown gunmen as he left his house in the Adhamiya district of Baghdad yesterday with his son, another lawyer, who was also killed in the attack. Mahmoud's assassination came a day after the special tribunal referred its first charges against defendants, saying it had enough evidence to put five former Baath party officials on trial, including Saddam's half brother. The five include Barzan Ibrahim al-Hassan al-Tikriti, one of Saddam's half-brothers and a former intelligence chief, and Taha Yasin Ramadan, a former deputy prime minister. The others were all senior members of the Baath party. The trial is not expected to begin for at least seven weeks. The special tribunal was set up in December 2003 to try members of the former regime for crimes against humanity, war crimes, genocide and other violations during the Baath party's more than 30 years in power. The tribunal is made up of around 50 trial judges, investigating magistrates, prosecutors and appeals court judges. — Reuters.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: A suicide car bomb exploded outside an Iraqi army base in Baghdad today, killing at least six people and wounding some 28 others, an Iraqi army officer said. "A suicide bomber drove an explosive-laden vehicle into one of the main gates of the Iraqi military base at al-Muthanna airport at 0710 hrs (0410, UTC), killing at least six soldiers and wounding 28 others, including several civilians," the officer told reporters. The blast targeted people who were lining up for army recruits, he said. Five cars could be seen badly damaged in the street and human parts scattered in the area. Iraqi security forces and US troops sealed off the area preventing people from approaching the blast scene.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A blast hit a gas pipeline west of Kirkuk today, an oil company official said, as security forces in the oil rich northern city said they found the bodies of two Iraqi contractors. The attack on the pipeline happened at about 1900, GMT, near the town of Al-Safra, 50 kilometres west of Kirkuk, an official with the Northern Oil Company told AFP. There were no immediate details on what caused the explosion but fires could be seen raging from the scene of the attack. The pipeline connects to the major refining and power plant complex at Baiji.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Two car bombs have exploded near the Iraqi interior ministry in Baghdad, killing five people, witnesses say. The attacks reportedly targeted a main police checkpoint outside the ministry in the east of the Iraqi capital. Iraqi security forces opened fire on the cars, trying to prevent them from reaching their target. Meanwhile, a US marine was killed in Iraq on Wednesday, raising to 1,500 the number of US military deaths since the war began, according to an AP tally. The latest death occurred in Babil province, south of Baghdad, the US military said. The two car bombs went off within minutes of each other at about 0730 hrs (0430, UTC), today. The first vehicle reportedly served as a decoy for the second - more powerful - blast. "There was a KIA vehicle that tried to enter the checkpoint and at this moment blew up. It was not that effective but made a large amount of smoke so we couldn't see anything," policeman Mohamed Jaafar was quoted by the AFP news agency as saying. He said that two minutes later a Jeep Cherokee reached the checkpoint and opened machinegun fire. "Police responded... but it was too late because he reached the checkpoint and blew up," the policeman said. Several people were injured in the blasts, police and witnesses said.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Iraq has extended the state of emergency for another 30 days from Feb 28, giving the Government the right to impose curfews and restrict movement around

the country. "Due to the persistent circumstances that led us to implement the state of emergency, we have decided to extend it all over Iraq except for the Kurdistan region for another 30 days," the statement signed by outgoing Prime Minister Iyad Allawi dated Monday (Feb 28) said. The law was been extended twice previously, with the last extension coinciding with the elections on Jan 30.

ISRAEL

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: A suicide bombing has killed four and injured about 30 outside a popular seafront night club in the Israeli city of Tel Aviv, police report. The attack is the first since Israeli and Palestinian leaders agreed earlier this month to end violence in pursuit of peace efforts. The Palestinian authority has pledged to punish those behind the blast. It condemned the attack, describing it as a bid to sabotage the peace process. Mahmoud Abbas, its leader, called an emergency meeting of his security chiefs and reportedly asked for a joint investigation along with Israel. There have been conflicting claims about who carried out the attack. The Israeli army has enforced a curfew and made several arrests in a West Bank village, said to have been the bomber's home. Palestinian security officials say the brothers of the alleged bomber as well as the local priest had been detained in Deir al-Ghusun, north of the town of Tulkarm. The bomber set off a device as people queued to get into the club, reportedly after security guards spotted him and kept him out. The attack happened at the entrance to the Stage club on Herbert Samuel Street, close to the promenade, Tel Aviv police chief David Tsour said. The bomber struck at a busy time for the club. The whole area of the club was destroyed. Debris fell to the ground and cars were smashed. Israeli media report the blast occurred at 2315 (2115 UTC). The Stage, usually very busy on a Friday night, had just opened its doors when the bomb went off, its manager said.

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated today, states: Israeli and Palestinian security services yesterday arrested seven persons in connection with the suicide bombing the night before, a sign that a budding co-operative spirit had not been crippled. Israeli government officials decided against a massive retaliation for the bombing outside a Tel-Aviv disco Friday night (Feb 25) that killed four Israelis and wounded nearly 50 others. The restraint came as evidence mounted that the bomber's goal was to sabotage new Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and his policy of renewing negotiations with Israel. However, Israeli Defence Minister Shaul Mofaz said the attack would affect the pace of the planned transfer of some West Bank cities to Palestinian control. Talks to give Palestinians control over two cities already had been stymied before the

bombing. Mr Mofaz also blamed Syria for the bombing and said Israeli officials would go abroad soon to present the case against Damascus, according to his office. Israeli and Palestinian relations have grown stronger since a summit two weeks ago between Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and the Palestinians' Mr. Abbas. Both sides said yesterday that they were committed to continuing diplomatic and security talks. In a videotape released after the attack, bomber Abdullah Badran, 21, declared that his mission was to protest and harm the Palestinian Authority, "which acts according to American interests." Syrian-based Palestinian leaders of the Islamic Jihad faction later said Badran was acting on orders from their organisation, a claim that contradicted earlier denials from local Islamic Jihad leaders that their faction had no part in the attack. Mr. Abbas said Israeli and Palestinian officials co-operated through the night Friday to find those responsible for the bombing, which he called an attack against the Palestinian national interest. Israeli soldiers moved swiftly overnight Friday to raid the village of Deir al Ghusun, where Badran lived. Israelis arrested two of his brothers as well as the leader of the village mosque. In a separate operation, newly empowered Palestinian security forces arrested two other men in the same area of the West Bank. Their identities were not released but Palestinian security sources said they were Islamic Jihad members. Israeli and Palestinian security officials said their agencies had no specific warnings that a suicide bombing, the first in Israel in nearly four months, was being planned. Since the summit two weeks ago in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, Palestinian militants had not launched offensive actions against Israelis.

Nablus, West Bank, Mar 3 — Palestinian militants detonated a car bomb near Israeli soldiers guarding a shrine in the West Bank city of Nablus early today, the Israeli army said. No Israeli soldiers or Jewish worshippers were wounded in the blast near Joseph's Tomb, but a Palestinian mother and her four children were taken to a local hospital with shrapnel injuries, Palestinian security sources said. The explosion underlined the fragility of an Israeli-Palestinian ceasefire, already battered by a Palestinian suicide bombing that killed five Israelis in Tel Aviv last Friday (Feb 25). The car bomb blew up shortly after midnight as a small contingent of Israeli troops guarded a group of religious Jews praying inside the Joseph's Tomb shrine, an army spokesman said. The blast damaged adjacent cars and nearby buildings. A Palestinian security source said a local cell of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, part of the mainstream Fatah faction, had claimed responsibility for the incident. — Reuters.

IVORY COAST

Abidjan, Feb 28 — Pro-government militia attacked rebel fighters in

western Ivory Coast today in the first outbreak of hostilities since forces loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo bombed rebel towns in November. The fighting erupted around 0400 hrs, in Logouale, 34 miles north of Duekoue and on the rebel side of buffer zone policed by peacekeepers, said the U.N. and fighters on both sides said. There was no immediate word of casualties. "It's correct that the militias are attacking rebel positions in Logouale. They are in the town of Logouale but I cannot say any more," said a U.N. officer in Duekoue. There are some 2,700 U.N. troops from Bangladesh deployed in the west. "We started fighting with the rebels in Logouale this morning," said Felix Maho, head of administration for the FLGO militia based in the western town of Guiglo, a group that has fought alongside Gbagbo's forces in the past. There are some 4,000 French and 6,000 U.N. troops policing the cease-fire zone between the two sides stretching right across the country. Today's fighting started north of the zone after pro-government forces crossed the cease-fire line. "Our men are heading toward Logouale as we speak because of the fighting which started this morning. We don't know if there have been any injured or dead yet," said David Cisse, a rebel fighter in Man, a major rebel town north of Logouale. There were unconfirmed reports from rebel and U.N. sources that 70 militia fighters have been taken prisoner. The French army, which has soldiers nearby, said it had dispatched a team to check reports of fighting. "We have a meeting with the U.N. at 12 o'clock to find out exactly what is happening," said French army spokesman Colonel Henry Aussavy. Jules Yao Yao, a spokesman for Ivory Coast's army in the main city of Abidjan, said he was not aware of any fighting. A source at an Ivory Coast command center in Yamoussoukro said the country's armed forces were following events closely but the attack was nothing to do with them. In the town of Duekoue, Panou Charlemagne, manager of the Sifca-coop, said Ivory Coast's army had blocked all traffic from heading north on the road toward Man this morning. — Reuters.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: Rebels in Ivory Coast say the peace process is now dead and buried after their positions were attacked. Rebels said the attackers belonged to a pro-government militia. This was denied by a presidential aide who, however, also cast doubts on mediation efforts. Rebel New Forces spokesman Sidiki Konate said the militiamen had crossed the buffer zone in order to attack their positions. "By these acts of war, [President] Laurent Gbagbo has definitively buried all the mediation efforts of the African Union and the international community," he said. "The New Forces' armed forces decree a maximum alert in all their zones and are currently carrying out systematic searches." Another rebel commander said that 32 people had

been killed in the fighting - 30 attackers and two rebels - but this has not been independently verified. Presidential adviser Etienne Tahizoue said that the attack had been carried out by local villagers without any official backing. These are the first clashes since last November, when loyalist forces bombed rebel positions in their Bouake headquarters.

LEBANON

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 22, states: The assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Beirut has had a direct impact on tourism and the economy, an expert said today. "Lebanon needs a positive shock to counter the negative shock on the economy and finance of Hariri's assassination," economic expert Elie Yashoui said. Yashoui said tourism was the hardest hit sector as a result of Hariri's Feb 14 assassination. The explosion that killed Hariri occurred in a seaside area lined with Beirut's luxury hotels. The damage sustained by several hotels in the area was estimated at \$60 million. About 90 percent of hotel reservations in the area and 65 percent of airline reservations were cancelled in the days following the bombing, officials reported.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: A search for a new prime minister has begun in Lebanon after the government of Omar Karami resigned amid massive street protests. President Emile Lahoud has given political groups in parliament 48 hours to agree on a candidate, reports say. Hundreds of people are rallying again in the capital, Beirut, demanding the pullout of some 15,000 Syrian troops. The cabinet resigned two weeks after the killing of the former Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Hariri. "We want an interim cabinet to uncover the truth about Hariri's assassination, draft a law and oversee elections this spring," opposition MP Ghassan Mukheiber told the AFP news agency. The lawmaker stressed that Syria must withdraw its troops - which have been in Lebanon for some 30 years - before the elections. The opposition is also calling for the resignation of a number of senior officials in Lebanon's security services. Mr Karami's government will stay on as caretakers while the president consults on a new administration. The post of prime minister is customarily given to a member of the Sunni Muslim community, while the country's president is Christian and the speaker of parliament is a Shia Muslim. The immediate reaction from Syria, which backs the Lebanese government, was non-committal, saying only that it was "an internal affair" for Lebanon. Some 25,000 people in Beirut's Martyr Square erupted in huge celebrations after the government announced its resignation late today. They had gathered in the city centre despite a ban on demonstrations.

NEPAL

Kathmandu, Feb 26 — Nepal's Maoist rebels today called off a transport blockade that had disrupted supplies and travel for two weeks across the country, saying they did not want people to suffer any more. The Maoists imposed the blockade to protest King Gyanendra's Feb 1 power grab, in which he took over the country and arrested political leaders. The rebel move follows calls by rights groups and community organizations to abandon the blockade because of its impact on ordinary people. The army said it killed dozens of rebels in various encounters over the past two days as part of a stepped-up offensive to end a nine-year revolt. "We have called off our indefinite transport strike and blockade considering the responsibility toward the public," Maoist chief Prachanda said in a statement. He said the rebels would step up their struggle throughout the country and would call a nationwide strike next month if the situation did not improve. At least three soldiers and a policeman were also killed in clashes on Thursday (Feb 24) and yesterday in Kailali district, a Maoist stronghold 410 miles west of Kathmandu. An army officer said four rebel bodies were recovered, but more than three dozen guerrillas were believed to have been killed in those battles. The army also said at least 13 guerrillas were killed in fighting in the country's east. — Reuters.

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: At least 15 people, including a senior police officer, were killed in violence in Nepal, authorities said today, a day after Maoists ended a crippling road blockade against King Gyanendra's power grab. In the latest strikes by Maoists, a deputy police superintendent and his bodyguard were shot dead at the officer's home at Butwal, 300km west of Kathmandu. Five policemen and three soldiers were killed when rebels ambushed a security patrol in Bara district, 150km southeast of Kathmandu, the army said. And a police officer and a soldier were killed in another ambush in Solukhumbhu district, near Mount Everest. Elsewhere, soldiers gunned down three guerrillas in separate clashes.

Kathmandu, Mar 1 — At least 50 Maoist rebels have been killed in a gunbattle with Nepali soldiers, the army said today, in the deadliest fighting since King Gyanendra seized power last month. Four soldiers were also killed in yesterday's clash in the western rebel stronghold of Bardiya district, near the border with India, an army spokesman said. "We have found bodies of terrorists scattered in the fields and the forest," another officer said, adding he expected the rebel death toll to rise as soldiers searched the remote area. Analysts say the army crackdown could also be aimed at forcing the Maoists — who want to overthrow the monarchy — to resume peace talks, suspended in Aug. 2003. Local TV reported surviving rebels ran from the scene of yesterday's fighting,

leaving behind unexploded bombs, sleeping bags, shoes and sandals strewn in wheat fields. The latest violence came as Human Rights Watch said today the king's seizure of power had set the scene for greater abuses by Nepali troops and more disappearances of people. "Given the scale of 'disappearances' we have documented, the heightened role of the army after the king's seizure of power is frightening," Brad Adams, Asia Director of the New York-based group, said in a statement today. Residents in Gulariya, the nearest town to yesterday's fighting, said soldiers picked up 46 rebel bodies scattered in wheat fields and forests today and took them away in trolleys attached behind tractors for mass burial. The fleeing rebels carried other bodies, the army said. The army said the latest fighting began after rebels fired on a group of soldiers who had gone to remove barricades set up by the rebels to enforce a transport blockade last month. The Maoists, who have since lifted their blockade of the landlocked nation, have urged political parties to join their campaign against the monarch. About 150 people have died in guerrilla violence since Gyanendra's power grab. The United Nations' internal displacement division said today it was worried about the growing number of people displaced due to the fighting in the country. "There is no authoritative figure (for the number of internally displaced), but some governments have estimated that it is up to 400,000 people," Dennis McNamara, head of the division, told reporters in Geneva today. — Reuters.

PHILIPPINES

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated today, states: The Philippines military reached an informal truce with a Muslim rebel group, allowing troops to concentrate on pursuing al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf extremists, an official said yesterday. Ben Loong, the governor of southern Jolo island, told government officials he helped broker the agreement with Muslim leader Habier Malik, who led Moro National Liberation Front forces in an uprising on Jolo earlier this month. "We cannot say it's a cease-fire but we call it a gentleman's talk between the armed forces and the MNLF," Loong said. Malik, a loyal follower of jailed MNLF founder Nur Misuari, led about 300 MNLF fighters supported by the Abu Sayyaf in attacks on military outposts in Jolo on Feb 6, triggering fighting that claimed the lives of 25 soldiers and about 70 rebels. More than 27,000 people fled their homes due to the clashes. Although Malik's base in the jungles outside Panamao town had been captured and his forces dispersed, the fugitive religious leader remains in hiding with many of his armed followers still at large. Loong said he was able to contact Malik, with both sides agreeing to refrain from attacking each other. But Loong added the Abu Sayyaf "are a different story from the MNLF," recalling that

both Washington and Manila had linked the group to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terror network. "We cannot blame the military if they are still having their military offensive... because there are so many Abu Sayyaf (members) who are being pursued by the soldiers," he said. The agreement gives the Philippines military the freedom to send more troops after the Abu Sayyaf who are largely based in the towns of Patikul and Indanan. Loong told Social Welfare Secretary Corazon Soliman and visiting Senator Richard Gordon there had been no fresh fighting since soldiers overran an Abu Sayyaf camp in the jungles outside of Indanan town in Jolo island on Thursday (Feb 24), killing about 10 rebels.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Philippine marines and police today rescued an agriculture expert kidnapped by a group of armed men more than two weeks ago in Cotabato City, Mindanao. Philippine navy spokesman Capt. Geronimo Malabanan said the victim, identified as Rogelio Creencia, was an employee of the Department of Agriculture (DA). He would be handed over to Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap after a debriefing by the marines. Creencia, a technician of the DA's Bureau of Soils and Water Management, was abducted on Feb 14 by at least three armed men on his way to Sitio Pantar Bato in Barangay Tugayak, Cotabato City. He was about to conduct an inspection of the DA's "Technology Tipid Abono" programme when he was seized by the suspects. The kidnappers reportedly asked for "reform" of the local agriculture policy. The navy official could not ascertain if the suspects have a group affiliation although the province is known as a stronghold of the secessionist Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the "Pentagon" kidnap-for-ransom group. The "Pentagon" group is reportedly a special operation arm of the MILF tasked to raised funds for the secessionist movement, which is negotiating a peace accord with the government.

RUSSIA

Moscow, Mar 2 — One policeman died and 16 others were wounded in an attack on a police station in Russia's restive Chechnya, Interfax news agency reported yesterday. Interfax, quoting a law enforcement source, said the attackers fired automatic guns and grenades at the building yesterday. A ceasefire announced by Chechen separatists — which they hoped would lead to peace talks — expired last week. — Reuters.

SOMALIA

London, Feb 24 — A press report, dated today, states: Somalis have greeted exiled President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed and Prime Minister Mohammed Ali Ghedi on their arrival for a landmark visit. Thousands holding Somali flags and placards lined the 15km stretch between the airfield where the leaders arrived and

Jowhar town, north of Mogadishu. They are heading a large delegation who will be examining the possibility of relocating his government from Kenya. It is unclear if the leaders will visit Mogadishu during the visit because of security concerns. The Somali leaders flew out from Nairobi, Kenya, in separate planes and touched down by 1230 hrs (0930, UTC) at an airstrip in Jowhar, 90 km north of the capital. The delegation headed to the centre of Jowhar, the provincial capital of the Middle Shabeelle region, amid the cheers and applause of crowds of Somalis lining the road. Details of their visit have not been disclosed in advance for security reasons. Problems in securing the right type of aircraft to take off from short runways had delayed the delegation's 10-day visit. Mr Ghedi has said the speed of the move to Somalia depends on how soon donors meet a six-month relocation budget of \$77m. Only about \$8m has been received so far. According to the United Nations, most of that money will be spent on setting up a new national police force to establish law and order in a country accustomed to anarchy. Another portion will be for the disarmament of Somalia's notorious militia and over \$1m is budgeted for the cost of moving 275 Somali MPs from Kenya back home. Some ministers have already visited Mogadishu and other areas of their country.

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 27, states: A group of Somali cabinet ministers and MPs has denounced government proposals to deploy foreign peacekeepers. They issued a statement saying troops from neighbouring Ethiopia and Djibouti would not be acceptable. The move came as exiled President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed continued his tour of Somalia, as part of plans to relocate the government from Kenya. Among those who signed the statement - issued after talks in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi - was Hussein Mohammed Aideed, a deputy prime minister. Also on the list were Security Minister Mohammed Qanyare Afrah and Trade Minister Musa Sudi Yalahow. President Yusuf Ahmed, who has been in Somalia since Thursday (Feb 24), has repeatedly insisted during his visit that peacekeeping troops from neighbouring countries should be deployed - and he says that most Somalis support the idea, but without the warlords' support, there is little prospect that the deployment can go ahead.

SPAIN

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 27, states: A bomb exploded today at a resort hotel in southeastern Spain, reports said. The building had been evacuated and no one was injured. The Basque separatist group ETA was suspected in the explosion, TVE1 television said. The bomb went off at 1515 hrs (1415, UTC) in the Mediterranean town of Villajoyosa, the

EFE news agency said. The resort hotel, used as a vacation retreat by employees of the bank BBVA, had been evacuated, EFE said. TVE1 said a warning had been telephoned to an office of the Basque newspaper Gara, the usual method for ETA warnings.

SRI LANKA

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: An attack on a top female Tamil Tiger leader in Sri Lanka has raised more fears of a return to violence threatening a fragile three year truce. Unidentified gunmen shot and wounded the female rebel leader, Kuveni, in the eastern district of Ampara on Monday, along with two other female rebels. All three women have been admitted to a local hospital with reports saying Kuveni's injuries were serious. The rebels have blamed the military for carrying out the attack. "[The] attack took place in an area very close to a Sri Lankan army checkpoint, so there is no doubt in our mind that it is the Sri Lankan military," S Puleedevan, head of the Tiger's peace secretariat, told Reuters. The army dismisses the rebel allegation. European peace monitors have expressed their concern over the rising violence. Peace talks between the two sides have been suspended since April 2003.

TOGO

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: The West African regional grouping Ecowas says it is lifting sanctions against Togo with immediate effect. The move follows the announcement by Togolese leader Faure Gnassingbe that he is stepping down after increasing international pressure. Mr Faure was installed three weeks ago as president by the military, immediately after the death of his father, Gnassingbe Eyadema. He will be replaced on an acting basis by parliament speaker Abass Bonfoh. Faure Gnassingbe said he wanted to ensure the transparency of the election now due in April, in which he plans to stand as a candidate. The UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, also welcomed Mr Faure's decision. A spokeswoman for Nigerian President Olesegun Obasanjo, who chairs the African Union, described Mr Faure's decision as a "victory for democracy". "What happened in Togo was a coup d'etat dressed in the borrowed robes of democracy and we are glad that Faure Gnassingbe has finally realised the folly of what happened," Remi Oyo said, quoted by AFP news agency. The UN and African Union imposed sanctions on Togo after Mr Faure was installed as president by the army hours after the death of his father earlier this month. Although he promised elections within 60 days, as stipulated by the constitution, this did little to quell protests from African neighbours and beyond. Constitutional amendments swiftly introduced to legitimise Mr Faure's appointment have since been partly reversed. Late yesterday, the country's ruling party nominated Mr Faure as its new

candidate for the presidential election. Earlier this week, he visited Gabon and then Libya, for a meeting with President Muammar Gaddafi.

UGANDA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: An official at the Uganda Amnesty Commission has said that over 14,000 Ugandan rebels had been given amnesty since the government enacted the amnesty act four years ago. The official who preferred anonymity said today that the figure includes among others the West Nile Bank Front II, who have been fighting since the fall of president Idi Amin in 1979, the Allied Democratic Forces who were fighting in western Uganda in the 1990s and the notorious Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda who have been fighting for the last 18 years.

ZIMBABWE

Harare, Mar 1 — New commercial farmers who benefited from Zimbabwe's fast-track land reform programme are now hamstrung by a lack of labour to work their fields. Unions representing farmers and farm workers admit that the shortage of labour is acute, and have warned that urgent action is needed to revive the agricultural sector, thrown into disarray by the land redistribution programme that began in 2000. An estimated 300,000 farm workers were displaced during the government's accelerated land reform programme, when white commercial farmers were removed from their farms to make way for black settlers. Only a small number of the workers remained on the land because of the poor wages being offered by the new farmers, who were struggling to get on their feet. Some preferred to return home, while others sought employment in nearby towns or took up illegal gold panning. "The problem is very serious, and even though there are other factors like drought, there is hardly anything going on the farms. Farm workers are shunning us for a number of reasons, but the foremost factor is that of wages," acknowledged Denford Chimbwanda, chairman of the Grain and Cereal Producers' Association. "The workers are asking for unrealistic wages", he told IRIN. "Farmers are still struggling to consolidate their activities and there is no way in which the workers should ask for so much, otherwise we will collapse." There was a real danger, Chimbwanda said, of the maize and wheat that had already matured rotting in the fields because the new commercial farmers could not get enough labour to harvest their crops. The minimum monthly wage for a general farm worker is currently Zim \$169,000 (about US \$28), but according to the latest report by the Consumer Council of Zimbabwe, an average family requires Zim \$1.5 million (\$248) a month to live on. Julius Ngorima, president of the Zimbabwe Association of Tobacco Growers, said if the current labour

shortage persisted, production would continue to suffer. "This tragedy could not have come at a worse time. The production of tobacco is a labour-intensive process and the leaf could rot if it is not speedily cured," he told IRIN. Before the advent of the land reform programme, Zimbabwe accounted for 19 percent of the world's total tobacco exports, but since then production has slumped from 237,000 mt in 2000 to 60,000 mt in 2004, according to a US Department of Agriculture report. The official daily newspaper, the Herald, recently reported that the electricity supply of a significant number of new farmers had been discontinued because of unpaid bills, jeopardising the tobacco curing process. — Reuters.

Kidnappings



PHILIPPINES

See under "Political & Civil Unrest."

Labour Disputes



ANGOLA

London, Mar 2 — Luanda Port workers are starting a strike this morning for a 150 percent salary increase, restoring of shift bonuses and bank grants for housing, transport and ration card for every worker. A source told Angop the strike will last until the management agrees to satisfy the demands. The ministries of Public Administration, Employment and Social Security, Transport and Interior have been notified on the strike. The workers are also demanding for workers' career re-conversion, transport bonuses, restoring of scholarships, extra-time pay and cancellation of private residence security contracts in favour of members of the management.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney, Mar 3 — Waterside workers in Fremantle were set to join construction industry workers today by downing tools in support of BHP Billiton maintenance workers in the southwest of Western Australia, who have been on strike for a month. However, the Maritime Union of Australia said shipping movements would not be affected. It is anticipated that about 400 members of the MUA and the Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union in Perth and Fremantle will travel 200 km south to Collie to join fellow unionists on a picket line. A group of 430 contract workers at BHP Billiton's Worsley alumina refinery walked off the job a

month ago, seeking to be paid as construction workers while the refinery was expanded. On Tuesday (Mar 1), the Federal Court ordered 66 of them to return to work, but a mass meeting of Worsley workers yesterday resolved unanimously to stay out. According to The Australian, MUA state secretary Chris Cain said his members were keen to support their Collie comrades and show the Federal Government they would not be intimidated by its industrial relations reforms, including a proposal to sue individual workers who take unlawful strike action. Mr Cain said a skeleton staff would remain in the port to keep the shipping going. — Lloyd's List Daily Commercial News.

CANADA

Vancouver, BC, Feb 26 — Northgate Minerals Ltd. and striking workers reached a labour agreement yesterday, ending a work stoppage that started three days ago at the firm's only mine. The small Canadian gold and copper miner said in a statement that operations at the Kemess mine, which produces about 300,000 ounces of gold and 75 million pounds of copper a year, will restart over the next few days. The three-year agreement gives workers at the mine in north-central British Columbia a 4.5 percent wage increase in the first year and four percent for the following two years. Some employee benefits were also increased. Northgate's stock rose more than six percent, or 11 Canadian cents, to C\$1.89 after news of the settlement, which was reached with the help of a mediator. Some 260 of Northgate's production and maintenance workers walked off the job on Tuesday (Feb 22) after rejecting a tentative labour agreement that the union bargaining committee had recommended they accept. — Reuters.

CYPRUS AIRLINE PERSONNEL

Nicosia, Mar 1 — The entire fleet of Cyprus Airways has been grounded in a staff walkout over redundancies at the loss-making national carrier. About 14 scheduled flights carrying 2,500 people would be affected by the action today, an airline spokesman said. Industrial unrest has been simmering for months over plans to sack more than 100 employees from a workforce of around 2,000 to cut staff costs. The company announced record 2004 pretax losses earlier this week of 36.9 million pounds (\$83.8 million), as margins were hit by fleet renewal costs and competition. The airline yesterday pleaded for financial backing from the government to cover short and long-term operational needs. The state controls more than 65 percent of Cyprus Airways. The carrier fired a dozen top executives in late 2004 and warned more redundancies would follow. It sacked 22 senior flight stewards yesterday, triggering a walkout by flight attendants. They were joined by pilots today. Most of today's scheduled flights were to European destinations. "We will try to carry all the

passengers either through our subsidiaries or other airlines," spokesman Tassos Angelis said. — Reuters.

Limassol, Mar 2 — Cyprus Airways flights resumed today after the airline withdrew redundancy notices which triggered a strike grounding the fleet yesterday, officials said. "Everything is back on track and flights are going ahead as planned," said airline spokesman Tassos Angelis. Compounding mounting financial problems, Cyprus Airways' 2,000 staff walked out yesterday over management's decision to sack 22 pursers in a cost-cutting drive. The airline backed down amid scathing criticism from the government — its main shareholder — which said it had not followed proper dismissal procedures. The action disrupted 14 flights carrying 2,500 people, but the airline said most people got to their destinations with other airlines. — Reuters.

GREECE

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Passenger ferries in Greece are to remain moored today and tomorrow after sailors called a second 48-hour strike just a few hours before the first ended. Apart from disrupting coastal shipping, the strike is expected to upset the supply of basic goods to islands and will also affect some mainland imports, mostly from Crete. Unionists claimed Merchant Marine Minister Manolis Kefaloyiannis had backtracked from supporting their demands for improved social security benefits.

NIGERIA

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: Junior staff of the Maritime Workers Union (shipping and allied branch) have started a strike action today in support of their demands for a salary increase and improved service conditions. Nigerian ports will be affected by this strike, mostly for inshore operations, and some will be closed.

London, Mar 3 — A press report dated yesterday, states: The strike by junior staff of the Maritime Workers Union of Nigeria (shipping and allied branch) was called off yesterday afternoon.

SOUTH AFRICA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: If the truckers' strike centred on wage demands continues, it will cost the strikers about R12 million a day and the economy more than R100 million a day, Nico Badenhorst, the CEO of Road Freight Employers Association (RFEA), said tonight. Strikers clashed with police, who used rubber bullets and arrested 29 demonstrators in the Johannesburg city centre earlier in the day. Nine were taken to hospital and all 38 will face public violence charges. Demonstrators also forced non-striking drivers out of vehicles and the SA Transport and Allied Workers Union (Satawu) has said the

shooting happened at a different location to intimidation and that it was "unprovoked". Protests by 25 000 participants took place in Johannesburg, Vereeniging, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Pinetown, Newcastle, Port Shepstone, Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth and East London, according to Satawu. Talks with the RFEA failed on Friday last week. Demonstrations will continue tomorrow. Badenhorst said that the striking unions - representing about 33% of the employee base of some 3200 companies that the industry's National Bargaining Council embraces - appeared to have ignored the RFEA's request for union intervention in dealing with the situation. However, the RFEA was still willing to meet with them. The RFEA is offering an above inflation 6.5% across-the-board increase and a 7% hike in minimum wages. He further added that the five unions that embarked on the action following six months of annual wage negotiations were calling for a double-digit increase at a rate of 10%.

SWITZERLAND

London, Feb 24 — A press report, dated today, states: Switzerland's national carrier, Swiss, has criticised an "illegal" strike by maintenance staff that affected flights out of Geneva this morning. The four-hour stoppage came amid growing industrial unrest at the airline, which last month announced plans to axe up to 1,000 jobs by 2007. Union leaders said 25 maintenance staff downed tools in protest at what they described as "shabby treatment" by management. R'my Pagani, secretary of the Public Workers' Union, said Swiss had failed to respond to a request sent ten days ago for talks on a collective labour contract and the airline's restructuring plans. Employees of Swiss Technical Services in Geneva fear they will be hit by flight cutbacks from Mar 1. Swiss announced in January that it would cut between 800 and 1,000 jobs over the next 18 months. It also plans to reduce its fleet by 13 aircraft in a bid to cut costs by SFr300 million (\$258 million). Today's industrial action prevented three flights - one to London and two to Zurich - from taking off. Pagani said the strike had been called off after Swiss agreed to talks and assured maintenance staff that destinations served from Geneva would not be scrubbed from the summer timetable. Swiss said it regretted the "illegal" work stoppage, which had led to one flight being cancelled and replacement aircraft having to be found for the other two affected flights. It said the strike had had "a moderate impact on flight operations". Today's industrial action came 24 hours after unions representing ground staff broke off negotiations over a new collective labour contract. They blamed Swiss management for taking an uncompromising line on plans to freeze salaries, cut holiday

entitlement and extend working hours. Unions warned that they were prepared to take tough action to break the deadlock.

UNITED KINGDOM

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: Striking firefighters at Glasgow Airport are to return to work on Monday (Feb 28) after reaching a settlement. The 59 officers "overwhelmingly" accepted a BAA deal which will see the recruitment of eight specialist officers. The firefighters walked out earlier this year following safety concerns over the decision to withdraw a fire appliance from the airport terminal. The T&G union confirmed the deal included seven voluntary redundancies. The firefighters will also receive a one-off £1,500 payment. Airport operators BAA insisted the industrial action was motivated by the loss of "traditionally high levels" of overtime, but a T&G spokesman said today: "This dispute was always about health and safety and we feel this settlement does not compromise that." The strike saw staff from other BAA UK airports drafted in to provide cover in order to avoid disruption for passengers. BAA, which also owns Heathrow and Gatwick, said Strathclyde Fire Brigade had always been responsible for "land side" incidents while the airport fire service was trained and responsible for airfield fire and rescue. The tender at the centre of the dispute was brought in as an extra precaution during refurbishment in the 1990s when parts of the airport were effectively a building site, according to BAA. It argued that the decision to remove it would free four firefighters from the terminal to boost the pool available for airfield duties. Glasgow Airport managing director Stephen Baxter welcomed the "positive resolution" to the strike. BAA has been investing more resources in a new fire safety team - already in place at its other Scottish airports, Edinburgh and Aberdeen - which will promote fire prevention and minimise risks.

Awards & Settlements



CLASS-ACTION SETTLEMENT, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: Wayne County and eight suburban cities will pay \$12.75 million to settle flooding claims by as many as 9,000 Downriver homeowners whose basements were filled with raw sewage during a massive 2000 storm. The class-action settlement, tentatively approved by U.S. District Judge John Feikens and believed to be the largest flood settlement in the state, was made public Friday (Feb 25), ending a nearly five-year court

battle. Homeowners who file claims will be eligible for reimbursement of cleanup costs and property lost during the storm, so amounts paid to each will vary. Most insurance companies declined to pay for damages, contending the flooding was an act of God. The communities that have agreed to pay are Allen Park, Dearborn Heights, Ecorse, Inkster, Lincoln Park, Southgate, Taylor and Riverview. Wayne County will pay \$5.2 million, but much of the bill will be footed by insurance carried by the county, said County Executive Robert Ficano. Allen Park's share is \$3.35 million, the most of any of the cities. More than 2,700 city residents reported flooded basements. Some homeowners got checks from the Federal Emergency Management Administration, which declared the region a disaster area. That could reduce the amount paid under the settlement. The homeowners said the cities had a duty to prevent raw sewage from discharging into their homes and said the sewer system was inadequate to handle such a large storm. Three other communities, Dearborn, Wyandotte and River Rouge, and Dearborn Heights previously settled most claims of their residents covering about \$4 million and 4,000 homeowners, said Steven Liddle, the lead lawyer for the homeowners. Wyandotte paid \$1.7 million, he said. "This is the largest flooding settlement in the state's history," Liddle said of the Friday settlement, a claim not disputed by Wayne County. Of the 9,000 homeowners who are eligible, about 1,600 already have filed claims with the U.S. District Court in Detroit, with some claiming losses of more than \$25,000. The remaining affected households will be required to file claim forms in the next four months. During the Sep 10-12, 2000, storm, raw sewage was discharged into thousands of basements and businesses, with people in a dozen communities losing millions. Detroit Metro Airport reported 3.7 inches of rain between 1600 and 2100, Sep 11, 2000, the fifth-wettest day in Metro Detroit since the National Weather Service began keeping records 130 years ago. Some spots recorded more than 5 inches of rain, while 80% of Wyandotte residents reported water in their basements. The storm forced the cancellation of hundreds of flights, and the area was declared a national disaster by President Clinton. Notice of the settlement will be sent to thousands of homeowners this week. They will be required to submit documentation of losses, like pictures or receipts. The law firms representing the homeowners stand to receive about \$4 million under the settlement. Craig Hupp, who represented Wayne County, said the cities have taken great strides to improve the sewers and the system's capacity, before and especially after the 2000 storm. Wayne County and Downriver communities have spent more than \$300 million improving

their sewers under a federal court order that's been in place since 1994 and are planning to spend at least another \$100 million on improvements over the next 20 years, including \$36 million over the next five years. The cities and Wayne County settled a 1987 suit by federal and state environmental regulators and admitted to repeated violations, specifically by sending untreated waste into drains that spilled into local rivers. In November 2000, Wayne County said planned improvements to the sewer system would have improved conditions and prevented some flooding. A county report said lightning struck the Wyandotte Wastewater Treatment plant at the peak of the September storm and knocked out pumps for 20 minutes, and water surged at the treatment plant by as much as 40 feet in two minutes during the outage. The settlement came after more than a year of negotiations. Feikens appointed a mediator in 2003 to help in the negotiations between Wayne County and lawyers who filed lawsuits. Feikens appointed a Farmington Hills lawyer, Ronald Longhofer, to administer the settlement and review proposed settlements for individual claims. Any contested claims will go to Feikens for resolution, who will give final approval to all settlements. He is set to hold a hearing in April to give final approval to the class-action settlement and hear any objections.

DEFAMATION, CANADA

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated Feb 24, states: Media baron Conrad Black has agreed to settle a \$2.1 million defamation lawsuit filed against Toronto Life magazine after the publication this month printed an apology. In a lawsuit filed in September, Black alleged that a satirical July story depicted him as "so irredeemably evil that he should be consigned to Hell." Black demanded \$2 million for general and aggravated damages for defamation and \$100,000 in punitive damages. Toronto Life's one-paragraph apology appeared in its February issue. "Toronto Life did not intend in this article and illustration to question Lord Black's observance of the Roman Catholic faith. Toronto Life accepts and recognises without reservation or qualification that Lord Black is an observant Roman Catholic. Toronto Life apologises to Lord Black for the pain that the article and illustration have caused him," the apology said. Lawyers for Black and Toronto Life confirmed the lawsuit had been settled. Toronto Life editor John Macfarlane said the magazine did not pay Black as a result of the settlement. Also named as defendants in the lawsuit were London-based Canadian writer Robert Mason Lee, who wrote the four-page article titled "A Toast to Lord Black on his arrival in Hell," and illustrator Barry Blitt. Blitt's satirical illustration accompanying the story showed Black

arriving in the back of a convertible sedan giving a thumbs-up signal to a host of demons, devils and other underworld ghouls. In Black's statement of claim, five sections of the article were highlighted in boxes to draw attention to Toronto Life's alleged defamation. "But the why of Lord Black's downfall has never been a mystery to those of us with eyes to see," begins one of the sections. "Consider Citizen Kane, whose life so closely echoes that of Lord Black — the lust for prestige and influence, the unquenchable thirst for possessions, the acquisitive spouse, the immolating lack of proportion and self-control." Black alleged that the Toronto Life article and illustration brought him "into hatred, ridicule and contempt." Black also attacked the article's alleged suggestion that his "conversion to Roman Catholicism was a hypocritical sham" and claimed the magazine's conduct was "vindictive, high-handed, contemptuous and demonstrated reckless and deliberate disregard for the damage that might be done to Black's good name."

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Feb 24 — A press report, dated today, states: A severely brain-damaged seven-year-old girl has been awarded £1.57m in agreed High Court damages. Meghan Murtough, who was born at Princess Margaret Hospital, Swindon, in June 1997, has a form of cerebral palsy which has left her profoundly disabled. Her parents claimed the care received at the time of her birth fell below the level they had a right to expect. The Swindon and Marlborough NHS Trust admitted liability. Judge Mr Justice Holland approved the award. Meghan, who has a life expectancy of 15 years, also has osteoporosis which causes her to fracture easily - most recently when her nappy was changed by a carer. Counsel Ben Collins, for the Trust, offered its sincere apologies and said he hoped that the sum would provide for Meghan's future.

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A 23-year-old man crippled by catastrophic brain injuries suffered at birth has secured a £4.85 million compensation settlement. The High Court in London heard that Gordon Chilcott had suffered from severe cerebral palsy since he was born at Halifax General Hospital in May 1981. Because of his severe physical and mental disabilities, he was confined to a wheelchair and dependent on others for all his needs. Through his parents, Mary and Gordon Chilcott, of New Road, Brixham, Devon, he sued West Yorkshire Strategic Health Authority, claiming that medical staff failed to recognise signs of foetal distress during his mother's eight-hour labour. It was argued that he should have been delivered earlier by forceps or Caesarean section. Andrew Spink QC, for Mr Chilcott, told Mrs Justice Dobbs that the health authority had

agreed to settle his claim for £4.85 million on the basis of 85% liability. His mother had “not had a night without disruption” for more than 20 years, he said. She and her husband had cared for him with virtually no assistance, but a professional care regime was now making a huge difference to their lives. Defence counsel, Christopher Johnston, said the health authority was “very sorry indeed” for the injuries Mr Chilcott suffered during his birth.

RESTITUTION OF FOREST, UNITED STATES

See “Wildfire, United States” under “Fires & Explosions.”

ROAD ACCIDENT, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated Mar 2, states: A jury in Texas found Ford Motor Co. liable for \$31 million in the deaths of two 19-year-old women in an Explorer rollover accident. The women, Corina Garcia and Diana Alicia Alonzo, were ejected from a 2000 Explorer in which they were passengers when it turned over in May 2003 outside of San Antonio. Their families sued Ford, alleging the automaker should have used stronger glass in the vehicle. “Ford’s body-engineering office did a cost evaluation, and their own documents showed this would cost only \$6 to \$10 a car,” Mikal Watts of the Watts Law Firm of Corpus Christi, Texas, the lawyer for the women’s families, said. The verdict, awarded yesterday by a Crystal City, Texas, jury, is the third against Ford in an Explorer rollover lawsuit. “There was no credible evidence introduced at this trial to support a jury finding that a vehicle defect caused this accident or the death and injuries,” Ford spokeswoman Kathleen Vokes said. Alonzo and Garcia were ejected and killed after driver Saul Guerrero Jr. lost control of the Explorer when he missed a sharp turn on a highway and went onto an unpaved road, Watts said. A third passenger, who also was ejected, suffered an ankle injury, Watts said. The jury awarded \$15 million each to the Alonzo and Garcia families; \$500,000 to the third passenger, Arturo Guerrero Jr.; and \$500,000 in punitive damages against Ford. The jury found Ford 90 percent liable for the accident and assigned 10 percent of the responsibility to the driver. Under Texas liability law, Ford must pay the entire amount because it was found more than 50 percent responsible and the driver has no assets, Watts said. Ford said it is responsible for the full amount. Ford argued to the jury that the driver’s speeding caused the one-vehicle accident and that the deaths were caused by the women’s failure to wear seat belts. The four occupants of the vehicle — all high school seniors — were returning to San Antonio from several graduation parties. They were all unbelted and ejected during the accident, Ford said. “This was another terrible reminder that people should

not drink and drive and that seat belts can help protect occupants only when they are worn,” Vokes said. Ford introduced evidence that the driver had a 0.02 percent blood alcohol level, one-fourth of the level that is illegal in Texas. Watts claims alcohol wasn’t a factor in the accident. Attorneys for the Garcia and Alonzo families said that Ford should have used laminated instead of tempered glass in the vehicle’s side windows to prevent ejections. Ford said laminated glass wouldn’t have kept the women from being ejected and was hardly ever used in side windows when the vehicle was made. “At that time, 99.9 percent of all vehicles made by all manufacturers, through the 2000 model year, had the kind of tempered glass used in this vehicle,” Vokes said. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration doesn’t require laminated glass in side windows, she said.

WRONGFUL DEATH, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A Texas jury awarded \$19.5 million to relatives who brought a wrongful-death suit against Emeritus Assisted Living. The relatives of Florine Ofczarszak, who lived in a San Antonio home, claimed that Emeritus’ negligence caused the elderly woman’s death in 2003. The Seattle-based company says it will appeal. The award included \$18 million in punitive damages and \$1.5 million in compensatory damages.



BALTIMORE, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated Feb 24, states: Three freight cars that derailed on a CSX train were cleared today from the Howard Street Tunnel. Misty Skipper, a CSX spokeswoman, said the three cars were cleared at about 1030. The railroad was inspecting the line, and expected to have it re-opened this afternoon. “We are currently inspecting the track and will make any repairs necessary,” Skipper said. The derailment caused delays in rail traffic through the area. The cars in the middle of a 114-car train heading from Philadelphia to Florence, S.C., derailed around 2150 yesterday in the tunnel. The cars remained upright. They were empty and there were no hazardous materials involved, officials said.

IRBAIN, BANGLADESH

Karachi, Feb 26 — Bangladesh Railway said five bogies of Chandpur-bound Sagarika Express train, from Chittagong, derailed at Irbain, near Daulatpur Bridge, in Southern Bangladesh yesterday. As a result, at

least 30 passengers were injured. It is said the bogies of the train, carrying about 1,100 passengers, ran off the track at about 1240 hrs. Some 30 passengers, including women and children, were injured when they tried to get down from the train hurriedly, they added. A relief train from Laksam reached the site and started a salvage operation at about 1430 hrs. An inquiry is being ordered. — Lloyd’s List Correspondent.

KALISIMA, NEAR BRAHMANBARIA STATION, BANGLADESH

Karachi, Mar 1 — Three rear bogies of the Dhaka-bound inter-city Jointika Express train of the Bangladesh Railway derailed at Kalisima, near Brahmanbaria railway station, near Chittagong in southern Bangladesh at 1330, local time, yesterday. As a result, one person was killed and at least 50 others were injured. Rail communications on the Dhaka-Chittagong route were suspended until 1500, local time, when the train left the station, leaving behind the three bogies. Officials rushed to the spot after the accident and supervised the rescue operation. — Lloyd’s List Correspondent.

NEW YORK, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A subway shuttle pulling in to Grand Central Terminal derailed early today, injuring four people and limiting rush hour service. The train hit a bumper block at the end of the track around 0500 hrs, New York City Transit spokesman Charles Seaton said. Four passengers reported minor injuries. The train operator was not physically injured but complained of trauma and was taken to a hospital. He will be tested for drug and alcohol use as the accident is investigated, transit officials said in a statement. The derailment disrupted service on one of the three tracks for the morning and evening commutes. The wait for a shuttle increased from about three minutes to about five minutes, NYC Transit said. The shuttle runs between Grand Central Terminal and Times Square.

NEWARK, WORCESTER COUNTY, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 26, states: Investigators were uncertain late yesterday why train cars jumped the track, spewing tons of corn in the yards of Newark neighbours. Eight freight cars from the 50-car caravan loaded with grain toppled about 0820 hrs, yesterday and there were no injuries reported. The Worcester County Sheriff’s Office is investigating why the train derailed in the last stretch of a 26-mile trek from Frankford to Snow Hill, said Fred Webster Jr., assistant director at the Worcester County Department of Emergency Services. “Eight cars are off the track and fortunately, the only thing that spilled was corn,” said Webster, who was at the scene. Skies

were overcast with snow flurries, and temperatures were below freezing when the accident occurred about five miles northeast of Snow Hill, according to a statement by Worcester County officials. Drastic changes in temperatures could have caused a rail to break, Eric Callaway, president of the Maryland and Delaware Railroad, said. A clean-up crew, Crane Masters of Richmond, was on the scene within hours and preparing to raise the railcars, Webster said. It was unclear how long the clean-up would take, but officials on the scene said the first task would be to vacuum grain from boxcars. Callaway estimated train damage and cleanup at \$150,000. Damage to property would be assessed, he said.

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated Mar 1, states: Clean-up of a train wreckage and 800 tons of grain entered a fourth day as crews worked to clear away corn and boxcars that overturned in a resident's yard Friday (Feb 25.), crushing a garage and closing a roadway and railway line near Snow Hill for days. An initial inspection by local officials indicates no foul play is involved in the derailment that toppled eight boxcars from a Maryland and Delaware Railroad caravan en route to the Tyson Foods' feed mill in Snow Hill, Worcester County Sheriff Chuck Martin said today. Safety officials at Maryland and Delaware Railroad are conducting an investigation into the cause of the crash, Martin said. Maryland and Delaware President Eric Callaway was not available today to comment, but has estimated railway-related damages at \$150,000. Callaway has said the Maryland and Delaware line, which operates 120 miles of railway between Delaware and nearby Snow Hill, would compensate residents for property damage. The train track will remain closed until work is completed to replace the rail and rebuild a road bed, Martin said. Basket Switch Road at Route 113 will also remain closed during repairs, sheriff's Capt. Stuart Murray said late today.

NIZHNY NOVGOROD REGION, RUSSIA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: Railway traffic in the Nizhny Novgorod region has been fully restored after a derailment of a cargo train yesterday morning. The train was carrying a load of coal and sheet steel. Some 400 people have been engaged in the restoration and repair work with the employment of six restoration trains of the Emergency Situations Ministry and three tractors that cleared approaches to the tracks. The efforts to liquidate the aftermath of the accident continued throughout the night. Four trolley system masts have been repaired and tracks replaced at the site by 0610, Moscow time, today, a duty officer of the Emergency Situations Ministry told Itar-Tass. The

accident took place at 0741, Moscow time, yesterday. Thirty-seven freight wagons of the train en route from Yekaterinburg to St. Petersburg derailed on the Kamenishchi-Tartalei haul of the Murom section of the Gorky Railway. Thirty-one freight cars capsized damaging the masts of the trolley system and destroying 125 metres of railway tracks. A field criminalistic laboratory, a special commission of railway specialists, officials of the regional Prosecutor's Office, FSB and Transport Police officers worked at the scene. According to preliminary version, the cause of the accident was a damaged rail.

SUKUMO, KOCHI PREFECTURE, JAPAN

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: An express train of Tosa Kuroshio Railway rammed into the Sukumo station building in Kochi Prefecture yesterday night, killing its driver and injuring 10 people, police said. The three-car train bound for Sukumo from Okayama with 12 passengers on board failed to stop at Sukumo station and rammed into the two-storey station building at around 2040 hrs, police said.

SYDNEY AREA, AUSTRALIA

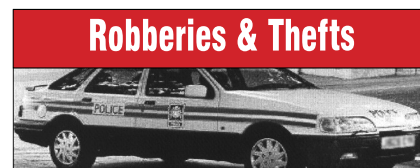
London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: A freight train derailment is expected to cause Sydney train passengers lengthy delays on the city's western outskirts today. A wagon came off the train travelling between Emu Plains and Lapstone near the Blue Mountains about 1355, AEDT. No injuries were reported. A spokesman for Pacific National, a loaded coal service, said the train, destined for Port Kembla, was about 800m in length and consisted of 45 wagons, eight locomotives and was carrying about 4,500 tonnes of coal. "What's basically happened is that one of the wagons has derailed," the spokesman said. "We have people attending the scene, Pacific National representatives." The line was expected to be reopened tonight, he said. A spokesman for CityRail said serious delays could be expected on the Blue Mountains line this afternoon. "At the moment we are bussing (passengers) between Penrith and Springwood in both directions," the spokesman said.

VERMILLION COUNTY, INDIANA, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Crews are busy cleaning up a train derailment in Vermillion County early today. Three CSX traincars veered off the track this morning. The Clinton City Police Department said the cars were empty and not a threat to the community.

WODONGA, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA

See "Australia" under "Weather & Navigation."



ART AND ANTIQUES, UNITED KINGDOM

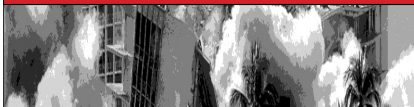
London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated Mar 2, states: Two men and a woman have been arrested as part of an investigation into the theft of millions of pounds worth of art and antiques. Much of the property was stolen from country houses and galleries across the UK during night time burglaries. Police recovered £500,000 in goods from London, Essex and Kent today. Two men, aged 46 and 73, and a woman, aged 50, are being questioned on suspicion of money laundering offences. For two years police have been trying to trace a south London gang believed to have stolen £30m worth of property. Now Scotland Yard's art and antiques unit believe an organised criminal network was operating from Flogg It auction house, Catford, south-east London. Among the recovered property were valuable miniature paintings stolen from Madresfield Court, in Worcestershire, where thieves rowed across a moat during a night-time raid. There was also silverware valued at £1m taken in a raid on a dealers in Petworth, Surrey, and a £50,000 Thomas Sidney Cooper painting snatched from a house in Windsor, Berkshire. Det. Chief Insp. David Thompson said: "The operation identified a professional criminal network which was responsible for the wholesale theft and sale of valuable items from country houses." The goods will be displayed during a series of roadshows over the next two months in order to return them to their rightful owners.

GEMS FROM ARMOURD CAR, AMSTERDAM AIRPORT, NETHERLANDS

London, Feb 26 — The BBC reported today: Robbers have made off with millions of euros' worth of diamonds and other gems after hijacking a cargo vehicle at Amsterdam's airport. "A KLM Cargo armoured car containing valuable goods was hijacked on the cargo ramp at Schiphol this morning," the Dutch airline KLM said. Unconfirmed reports say the haul was worth at least 75m euros (£52m, \$99m). The gems were on their way to a flight bound for Antwerp, when the robbers struck. Nobody was injured in the raid, KLM said. The vehicle was later recovered in Hoofddorp, a town near the airport. Schiphol police said that the robbery happened just before the "high value goods" were going to be loaded onto the aircraft and that there were plenty of witnesses. A team of 25 detectives is investigating the robbery, spokeswoman Frederique Hermie said.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated Mar 2, states: KLM made grave errors in guarding the transport of diamonds stolen in a spectacular armed heist last week and is trying to shift responsibility, it was reported today. Newspaper De Volkskrant reported today that reliable sources claim that poor security measures at the Schiphol Airport freight terminal led to last Friday's (Feb 25) Euro 75 million theft. The sources claim KLM is trying to cover up the exact circumstances of the incident. The airline's claims that KLM security officers could not intercept the stolen truck because it suspected employees might have been kidnapped has been dismissed as an "excuse". Otherwise, KLM said it could have switched off the fuel lines of the hijacked bus. But it was immediately clear that security officers were being confronted with a robbery and not a kidnapping, De Volkskrant said. What is clear so far is that the truck was not an armoured van, contradicting an earlier KLM statement. And it appears that the fuel-stop system allowing KLM to block the truck's fuel supply did not work. The drivers of the KLM truck were not trained security officers, the diamonds were not packed in special material making it more difficult for robbers to take them and the gang managed to obtain a KLM car in the secured area of the Amsterdam airport because the keys had been left in the ignition. Using the cover of the KLM car, the three of four robbers drove up to the cargo terminal and forced staff at gunpoint to lie on the ground while they escaped in the truck. They exited the secured area by riding through the boom gates immediately behind another truck. Justice Minister Piet Hein Donner told MPs yesterday that security measures had been tightened at Schiphol in response to the theft. These measures include assigning extra military police officers to surveillance and money transports being accompanied by armed military guards. KLM security staff had previously only guarded transports. Donner also said the validity of staff entrance cards can be shortened and the use of biometric details will be studied. Screening of staff by the security service AIVD will be intensified.

Miscellaneous



CAP ANAMUR (Germany)

London, Feb 24 — Italy has released general cargo Cap Anamur which had been under arrest for seven months in the Sicilian port of Porto Empedocle. Its owner, the refugee aid organisation Cap Anamur, will inspect the ship in Rijeka. "We will have to discuss how to proceed with the vessel," Cap Anamur director Bernd G'ken said. "The sale of the ship is an option," he added. The

organisation bought the ex-feeder trades vessel for Ero 1.8 million last year. For the release, it had to deposit a bank guarantee. Cap Anamur was arrested in the aftermath of an operation to rescue 37 African refugees in the Mediterranean last July. The Italian authorities accused the crew of aiding illegal immigration by bringing the refugees to Empedocle. As a result of the row with the authorities, the former head of the relief organisation, Elias Bierdel, the ship's master and first officer, had been briefly arrested. Mr G'ken said that Cap Anamur would now concentrate its work on projects ashore with an emphasis on medical aid. Earlier, the organisation's new head, Edith Fischnaller, said operations such as the one in the Mediterranean should no longer be part of Cap Anamur's policy. This could mean a change in the focus of the society, which has become famous for saving refugees stranded at sea.

Rijeka, Feb 24 — General cargo Cap Anamur, which was blocked from departing Porto Empedocle on Jul 11, 2004, pending an investigation regarding illegal refugees, arrived at Rijeka Feb 21 from Porto Empedocle. — Lloyd's Agents.

CARGO DISPUTE, CHITTAGONG, BANGLADESH

Karachi, Mar 1 — General cargo Ryu Gyong is still at Chittagong. It has provisionally informed the Port Authority that it is to leave on Mar 3. — Lloyd's List Correspondent.

COLLAPSE OF RAMP, CALAIS, FRANCE

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: Ferry firm P&O is to sue the port of Calais for millions of pounds after weeks of disruption caused by berth closures. Safety alerts have closed three of the port's four large-ferry berths leaving it with just one to handle scores of vessels and even that has to shut in bad weather. Hundreds of thousands of cross-Channel passengers have endured delays of up to six hours and freight carriers claim to be losing up to £2m a day. P&O, Britain's biggest ferry company, has cancelled day trips to France for this week and has taken two vessels out of service. The problem escalated as it ran over the busy half-term holiday. The closures started three weeks ago when the linkspan collapsed, prompting an investigation. Ferries have been left waiting outside the port until a berth comes free. P&O is currently in the process of closing its Western Channel routes with the exception of Portsmouth to Bilbao. Its plan to transfer its Portsmouth to Le Harve route to Brittany Ferries has hit the rocks after the deal was referred to the Competition Commission. SeaFrance, which competes on the Dover Calais route, said it was still investigating whether it would launch a claim for compensation.

CRACKS DETECTED IN CRANES, LOS ANGELES PORT, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: Cracks have been found, some as long as 9 inches, in eight out of 10 cranes that were installed just over two years ago in the newly built Pier 400 at the Port of Los Angeles. The cranes are still running at the APM facility, but the cracks have raised concerns among their operators. Stress fractures are not uncommon for such cranes. The cranes stand nearly 200 feet tall and have arms that can reach out to 220 feet to lift containers from docked ships. They cost between \$5 million and \$7 million, according to reports. The first crack was found Monday (Feb 28) during a routine inspection. Fearing for their safety, workers requested a survey of other cranes at the APM terminal, according to documents. That inspection revealed cracks in other cranes. There was rust present, indicating that the cracks have been there for a while. The tenth crane is undergoing maintenance and was not inspected. Workers did not want to return to the job, said David Beeman with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 13. "It snowballed at that point," Beeman said. "We told the employer it wasn't safe to work. They said it was." An arbitration was held late Monday, with the arbitrator saying that while three cranes could continue operating, five were to remain offline until they are "certified as safe by a competent inspector." The union was not happy with the ruling, Beeman said, because the arbitrator was in no position to determine which cranes were safe. "These are cracks that are not surface cracks," he said. They go all the way through whatever the thickness of the metal is." They were also unhappy with the inspection that took place the next day. "The language the arbitrator used was they should be certified by a competent inspector," Beeman said. "There's only one inspector in the area and he has great credibility with all parties, but he's not a structural engineer." Based on assurances they received from the cranes' manufacturer, Noell Crane System, operators returned to the job Tuesday. But after learning that the inspection was not certified, the workers again refused to go to work for a few hours Wednesday. "As far as we're concerned, and we're very familiar with certification, somebody who has the authority has to say the equipment is operating up to the manufacturer's specifications," Beeman said. "That can only be given by a specific individual." A second arbitration was called for Wednesday and this time both parties agreed with the outcome, Beeman said. All eight cranes resumed operation. Among the rulings, the cranes must be inspected three times during each shift to make sure the cracks are not getting bigger. The workers will also not be held liable for any structural failure on the cranes. And a Noell engineer is

expected to arrive today to inspect the cranes and begin planning for any necessary repairs.

London, Mar 3 — Repairs are now being carried out on some of the super post-panamax cranes installed at Maersk Sealand's terminal in the port of Los Angeles after cracks were found during a routine inspection early last week. Safety concerns prompted a brief stoppage at the Pier 400 facility on Monday, but work has now resumed after the lift manufacturer Noell Crane Systems provided instructions about the correct procedures to be taken until the cracks are repaired. The Maersk Sealand terminal, operated by sister company APM Terminals, has 12 giant cranes on Pier 400 of which eight are believed to have developed stress fractures, a not uncommon occurrence. The cranes are just two years old. Representatives of Noell Crane Systems arrived last weekend to inspect the damage and began repairs on Sunday. One crane has now been fixed, Anne Kappel, corporate communications director at Maersk Inc, said. Repairs are continuing on the others.

OUTBREAK OF "BIRD FLU"

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated Feb 25, states: Vietnam has reported its first case of bird flu to affect a human in more than three weeks. Doctors say a 21-year-old man was admitted to hospital in Hanoi suffering from fever, respiratory problems, and liver failure. Thirteen people have died of bird flu in Vietnam since the start of this year. The World Health Organization wants animals to be raised separately, and for birds to be kept in pens so that they cannot mix with wildfowl, who are believed to be the main carriers of the disease. There is particular concern about ducks, who can carry the disease with no apparent symptoms. Thailand is to slaughter about 2.7m free-range ducks. The latest Vietnamese victim, from Thai Binh province in the north of the country is in a serious state. "His condition is worsening and he is expected to be hooked to a respirator later today," said Nguyen Thi Tuong Van of Bach Mai Hospital in Hanoi. The victim's 14-year-old sister is also in hospital with a high fever, and is being tested for bird flu. The two had both eaten poultry during Lunar New Year celebrations earlier this month. Vietnam has seen bird flu outbreaks in 35 of its 64 provinces.

OUTBREAK OF BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY, WORLDWIDE

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: Japan has confirmed its 15th case of mad cow disease in a cow from the country's north. The eight-year-old Holstein cow was already dead when it was brought in for testing from a ranch in Hobetsu, Hokkaido prefecture earlier this week. Preliminary tests indicated it had the fatal brain-wasting disease, and more precise tests conducted at a state-run research near Tokyo confirmed those

results, the Agriculture Ministry said in a statement. Eating beef from a diseased cow is thought to cause the fatal human variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. On Feb 4, Japan confirmed its first human case of mad cow disease following the death of a man with symptoms of the illness. Japanese health authorities have said it was likely the man contracted the disease while living for a month in Britain - where mad cow first surfaced - in 1989.

OUTBREAK OF CHOLERA, NIGERIA

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: At least 51 people have died and hundreds more have been admitted to hospital, following a major outbreak of cholera in south-western Nigeria. Health officials say five people have died in Edo State, and 46 others have died in a remote mining village, about 110 kilometres north of the city of Ibadan, where the first case was reported 11 days ago. The deaths have come three months after 50 people died in a similar outbreak in Edo State. The World Health Organisation says more than 1,600 Africans died last year of cholera.

OUTBREAK OF GASTROINTESTINAL ILLNESS ON PANAMANIAN-FLAGGED PASSENGER VESSEL

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated Mar 1, states: Nearly 100 passengers and crew members were sickened with a gastrointestinal illness on a five-day Carnival Cruise Line voyage, the company said today. About four per cent of passengers and crew were infected with what officials believe was a norovirus epidemic on a cruise from Jacksonville to Key West and the Bahamas on board passenger Celebration (47262 gt, built 1987). The cruise ended Saturday. In total, 69 of 1,647 passengers and 30 of 693 crew members were sick. Final test results were still pending. Noroviruses cause acute gastroenteritis in humans and last between 24 and 48 hours, according to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention. Symptoms include vomiting and diarrhea. Celebration was at sea on another voyage Tuesday and cases of gastroenteritis were below outbreak levels, de la Cruz said.

REVISION OF INSURANCE LAW, JAPAN

Tokyo, Mar 1 — A toughened ship insurance law took effect in Japan today that will exclude most North Korean vessels from its ports and slash trade. Tokyo is wary of imposing full-fledged economic sanctions on Pyongyang, however, despite public anger over Japanese citizens abducted decades ago. A majority of Japanese voters support sanctions but Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has been wary of taking such tough action, fearful it could scuttle international efforts to bring North Korea back to six-nation talks on its nuclear

program. The revised insurance law requires ships 100 tonnes or over entering Japanese port to be insured against spilling oil or being grounded. Most North Korean ships travelling between the North and Japan are over 100 tonnes but only 2.5% of them were insured as of 2003, a Japanese Transport Ministry official said. The two countries have no diplomatic relations but Japan is North Korea's third-largest trading partner after China and South Korea. Japan decided to revise the law after several uninsured North Korean ships went aground in Japanese waters in recent years, causing oil spills and forcing taxpayers to pay for the cleanup. "The law is not targeted at a specific country such as North Korea," the ministry official said. A transport ministry official in Shimonoseki, where many North Korean ships dock, said vessels entering port today would be unaffected because they had completed port entry procedures the day before. Those planning to dock tomorrow must provide documents today. Sixteen North Korean ships have so far applied for insurance, and have been given approval to enter Japan. In 2003, Japan received nearly 1,000 port calls by North Korean vessels, many of them bringing seafood and returning with items such as used bicycles and old tyres. Media reports said about 100 vessels had made the voyages. The insurance law will also halt a passenger ferry service between the two countries. — Reuters.

Fires & Explosions



BUSH, JAMAICA

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated today, states: The rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) is projecting that damage to farm lands by the raging bush fires engulfing sections of St. Elizabeth could reach \$15 million. Howard Hines, parish manager of the Rural Agricultural Development Authority (RADA) in St. Elizabeth, told Farmers Weekly that the damage to agriculture "might come to about \$15 million which, we are using as a guide." He said preliminary assessment of the damage in the Woodside area alone has been estimated to cost in excess of \$10 million. Mr. Hines said more than 56 hectares of farm lands used for cultivating mainly tomatoes, thyme, escallion, water melon and sweet peppers have so far been damaged by the fire that has been raging since Feb 9.

CHEMICAL FACTORY, JIANGSU, CHINA

London, Feb 24 — A press report dated today, states: Five workers were killed and 11 injured in an explosion at a chemical factory in east China's Jiangsu province, state media

reported today. The accident at the Tianyin Chemical Company happened today when a chemical exploded, Xinhua news agency said. The blast ignited a fire in a nearby storehouse and killed and wounded the workers. Officials were still investigating the cause of the explosion.

FACTORY, NAGAR KHANPUR, BANGLADESH

Karachi, Feb 26 — A large fire broke out in privately owned dying factory, Grameen Dying and Printing Factory, at Nagar Khanpur, in Narayanganj, Bangladesh, on Thursday evening (Feb 24). The blaze engulfed the factory, damaging a huge quantity of dyes, chemicals, and bundles of cloth. Narayanganj Fire Service took about one hour to bring the fire under control. — Lloyd's List Correspondent

FOREST, PORTUGAL

Lisbon, Feb 28 — A rare winter forest fire killed four Portuguese firefighters today, authorities said. The four from the Coimbra fire brigade were among a group of five battling a blaze in mountains near Mortagua, about 210 km north-east of Lisbon. Coimbra Mayor Carlos Encarnacao told private TSF radio. "There was a shift in the wind and they were overwhelmed by flames. One was able to get away, but four were caught in the fire," Encarnacao said. About 90 firefighters were fighting the blaze, backed by one helicopter and 22 vehicles, the Lusa news agency said. Portugal is suffering one of its worst droughts in 100 years and the fire broke out today during what is usually the Iberian nation's rainy season. — Reuters.

PREMISES, LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Karachi, Feb 27 — A big fire broke out in the privately owned Kamal Market at Ichhra in Lahore city of Punjab in Pakistan yesterday, injuring four people and reducing 12 shops of clothes, shoes and blankets to ashes. Cloth and valuables worth millions of rupees were gutted in the fire, which erupted due to a short-circuit, a preliminary report said. This is second fire incident in Ichhra area in a week. The fire erupted in Kamal Market, situated at Usman Road Ichhra, in the early hours of yesterday and quickly engulfed the ground and first floor of the three-storey commercial building. The residents of the upper-portion, escaped from the flames by jumping from the rooftop. At least 12 fire brigade and WASA vehicles took part in the rescue operation and extinguished the fire after four hours, officials said. A few days ago, two major shopping centres of the provincial capital, situated in the main bazaar of Ichhra in the same area, were reduced to ashes. Four people were burnt to death while no less than 450 shops gutted in the fire, which broke out there following a blast in the transformer, fitted in the congested commercial market. — Lloyd's List Correspondent.

PREMISES, NORFOLK, NEBRASKA, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: A fire caused an estimated \$5 million damage to a carpet padding plant early yesterday and residents were told to expect a considerable amount of smoke as the fire continued to burn and smolder. The blaze was reported at Midwest Padding about midnight. No injuries were reported but several roads were closed as fire departments from Norfolk, Hadar, Pierce, Stanton and Madison helped fight the fire. The blaze spread quickly after starting during the manufacturing process, in which the raw materials of the padding are melted together, Norfolk Fire Chief Shane Weidner said. Midwest Padding employs about 70 people in Norfolk. Owner Al Collison said those workers would be given paid time off. Collison said he doesn't not yet know if Midwest Padding, which has plants in other locations around the country, will rebuild its Norfolk operation. "This place is a total loss," Collison said. Weidner said fire crews were letting the fire burn itself out because using water on the padding materials only causes the flames to smolder.

PREMISES, PORTAGE, WISCONSIN, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: Firefighters from Portage and Poynette battled a fire at Portage Casting and Mold early yesterday morning, according to Portage Fire Chief Clayton Simonson. At approximately 0400 hrs, 14 Portage firefighters and 10 from Poynette responded to a call at the company's location at 2901 Portage Road. Simonson said the fire originated from insulation in the attic area, which he said is largely unused. It took less than half an hour to put the blaze out, but Simonson said it was 0900 hrs before his department was back at the station. The plastics manufacturer was closed at the time of the fire and no injuries were reported. Simonson said there are no damage estimates at this time and that the cause of the fire is being investigated by Portage Fire Inspector Craig Ratz. Arson is not suspected.

PREMISES, RIVERSIDE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 24 — A press report, dated Feb 23, states: A Rancho Mirage home is a total loss tonight after fire broke out there around 1100 hrs, this morning. The two million dollar house is located on Strauss Terrace in The Renaissance gated community. Firefighters say when they got there, 25 percent of the home was already engulfed in flames. They also say the fire was dangerous to fight because it spread so quickly. "Part of the roof collapsed," said Ignacio Otero with Riverside County Fire. Just a few minutes later, the fast spreading fire consumed almost the entire house.

PREMISES, TAICHUNG, TAIWAN

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated today, states: At least four people died in a blaze that engulfed the upper floors on a Taiwan high-rise, trapping several more people and raining debris down onto the streets below, fire officials and news reports said overnight. Nine people thought to have been eating in a restaurant had to be plucked from the roof of the Golden Plaza Tower by helicopters lowering rescue baskets through thick smoke and swirling clouds of ash, Taiwanese television reports showed. Television reports also showed flames and heavy black smoke pouring out of the upper floors of the 25-storey high-rise, one of the largest buildings in central Taiwan's Taichung city. A security officer working in an 18th floor pub was rescued, but later died of his injuries, said Lin Te-chang, an official at Taichung firefighting bureau. Another body was later recovered from the 18th floor, he said, adding that two more people were found dead in an elevator. Two other people suffered minor smoke inhalation. Reports on television said a news cameraman was injured by falling glass. Television images showed scores of panicked people streaming out of the building onto the street as ash and pieces of blackened debris fell through the air. Authorities were investigating the cause of the fire, which erupted about 1615, local time, yesterday. Police said it could have started in the 18th or 19th floors of the building, which house several restaurants, bars and a department store.

RETIREMENT COMPLEX, BILLINGS, MONTANA, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A giant blaze has destroyed an under-construction retirement complex on the West End last night. Fire Marshal Frank Odermann said there was no indication yet as to what might have caused the fire in the 76-unit Primrose Retirement Community, an \$8 million apartment and town house complex that was supposed to open in September. Investigators hadn't set foot on the actual fire scene - just east of 32nd Street West about midway between Central Avenue and Monad Road - as of late this morning and probably wouldn't until late in the day or early tomorrow, Odermann said. The 80,000-square-foot retirement complex, being built by Primrose Retirement Communities of Aberdeen, S.D., consisted of 36 independent-living apartments, 32 assisted-living apartments and eight townhouse villas, all connected in one horseshoe-shaped building and all destroyed by the fire yesterday. Two townhouses on Solar Boulevard, just south of the Primrose complex, were also damaged. Odermann said one house was destroyed and the other suffered heavy exterior damage.

WAREHOUSE, AUCKLAND AREA, NEW ZEALAND

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: Forty firefighters spent more than an hour trying to extinguish a suspicious fire which destroyed hundreds of appliances at a warehouse owned by former Olympic chef d'mission Ralph Roberts. The fire, which started early yesterday, gutted the 464sq m Roberts Electrical warehouse in Takapuna on Auckland's North Shore, where hundreds of appliances including fridges, washing machines and televisions were being stored. Senior Station Officer Jeff Mills said the fire appeared to have started outside the stairwell to the building which was also used as a service department. It spread quickly, at times threatening the neighbouring NZ Post building. Mr Mills said the internal walls collapsed not long after firefighters arrived and there was little that could be done to save the old building. The main Roberts Electrical store in front of the warehouse also received fire damage along the back wall. It was also badly smoke damaged inside and was yesterday closed to the public. Mr Roberts said the appliances were insured and he hoped the front store would be open for business again today.

WILDFIRE, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated Feb 24, states: A lost hunter who started a forest fire in northern California while trying to keep warm was ordered to pay \$18.2 million in restitution yesterday. The fire in the Mendocino National Forest burned 6,058 acres and cost \$33 million to suppress, authorities said. The restitution covers the US Forest Service's cost of fighting the fire and restoring the burned area, prosecutors said. Jason Hoskey lit a campfire when he got lost hunting on Sep 27, 2003. The fire spread after he fell asleep. Flames had been banned in the area because of extreme fire danger. Prosecutors said Hoskey also violated the ban by smoking several cigarettes. Hoskey pleaded no contest in September to a federal misdemeanour of leaving a fire burning or unattended. In addition to the restitution ordered at his sentencing, Hoskey was banned from the Mendocino National Forest for five years.

WILDFIRES, MALAYSIA

London, Feb 25 — A press report, dated today, states: Emergency services in Malaysia are tackling hundreds of fires sweeping across the country which come after a long spell of dry weather. The capital, Kuala Lumpur, has been blanketed in haze and visibility at the city's international airport has dropped to around two kilometres. The haze is being blamed on hundreds of forest fires burning across the states of Perak, Pahang, Johor, Kelantan and Kedah. Selangor is the worst affected area. In some cases, the fires have taken hold in the peat soil and those

are proving hard to put out. Extra firefighters have been drafted in from outside the affected areas. Aircraft have also been deployed to drop water.

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated today, states: The peat swamp and forest fires in the country are under control, with the fires in about 70% of the affected areas already doused, said Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting. The air quality, however, continued to drop yesterday, with the Department of Environment's (DOE) operations room recording unhealthy air levels at 11 locations in the Klang Valley and surrounding areas compared to eight on Friday. Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had instructed the Health Ministry and the Meteorological Services Department to update the public on the air quality index. Stressing that the current poor air quality was due to thick smoke and not haze, the Prime Minister said it was important to let the public know so that they could take precautions. Fires in 6,747ha of the 9,177.2ha of land had been extinguished. Fire department assistant director-general (operations) Mohd Husain Ahmad Takin said it would take one or two weeks to douse the fires and embers, and even sooner if there was rain. (See issue of Feb 28.)

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: Heavy rainfall has doused 95% of forest fires raging in six Malaysian states and helped lift a smoky haze enveloping parts of the country, a minister said. Meteorologists warned the respite was likely to be brief with the current dry spell expected to last until the end of March. Housing and Local Government Minister Ong Ka Ting was quoted by Bernama news agency as saying only 880 hectares of land was still burning, compared with 9,177 hectares before the five hours of rainfall. Most of the fires in central Selangor, the worst hit state, and in Johor, Kedah and Perak had been put out by the rain as well as increased efforts by about 2,000 firefighters, he said. He said fires that hit rubber estates and fruit orchards in Kelantan and Pahang had been brought under complete control. The Environment Department said air quality had improved sharply, with only one area in southern Malacca state still showing unhealthy readings yesterday compared with 11 areas nation-wide the previous day. But a meteorological department officer said the rain was unlikely to persist, with only scattered showers expected for the rest of the week. "We are still in a dry period. We expect the weather to improve only when the inter-monsoon season begins in late March or early April," she said. Kuala Lumpur and surrounding areas have been shrouded in smoky haze for more than a week.

WOOL PROCESSING PLANT, PUNTA ARENAS, CHILE

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated today, states: British owned Standard Wool in Punta Arenas which

processes 60% of Magallanes Region wool will be out of the carding and combing business for the next 12/18 months following a devastating blaze that razed with all the plant's equipment, several warehouses and over a thousand bales of greasy wool. Losses estimates range as high as US\$6 million since the Punta Arenas scouring, carding, combing and baling section, with machinery less than a year old, was completely destroyed by the fire. "To this we have to add the buildings costs, some of which collapsed, and the thousand bales stored in the warehouses", said Standard Wool president, David Bell, who nevertheless indicated that in spite of the overall disaster "fortunately last week we had shipped all of our processed production to Europe, Iran and Japan". A total of 85 people work in the plant which had a daily processing production of 14,000 kilos of wool, operating round the clock almost the whole year. According to Punta Arenas press the fire broke out in a small storage warehouse during the Sunday night (Feb 27) shift when only 16 people were working in the scouring and carding section, rapidly spreading to the whole processing plant. All of Punta Arenas Fire Department was called in to fight the blaze and two units were still in the plant yesterday checking among the remains since Standard Wool is next to the Simunovic meat packing plant, the largest in Magallanes. Carlos Calixto Miranda, plant manager, said that the equipment was insured and over 60% of greasy wool bales stored in other warehouses "a whole year's production" had been saved. "However we're still not sure how the fire started but there's an investigation into the incident", added Mr. Calixto Miranda. The company's president Mr. Bell estimated that replacing the plant's equipment will take anywhere from 12 to 18 months but assured labour stability for the staff during that period of time. Mario Vega president of Magallanes Cattle Breeders Association described the blaze as a great blow for regional farmers but also highlighted that only the processing plant was destroyed and "Standard Wool will keep purchasing wool in Magallanes. They are a multinational corporation and have several plants round the world".

**ACCIDENT AT MUMBAI AIRPORT, INDIA**

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated Feb 27, states: An Air Deccan A320 airbus was grounded today after a step-ladder hit the rear portion of the aircraft, in Mumbai, airport sources said. The aircraft had arrived from Delhi and was scheduled to fly back there when the step ladder hit

the aircraft damaging the “stabiliser and the elevator”, they said. Passengers were refunded their fares after the aircraft was grounded following the incident at 1315 hrs, sources added.

C-GAQW

Vancouver, Mar 1 — Low clouds and rain hampered the search today for an aircraft, with five people on board, reported missing off British Columbia's Pacific Coast. The float aircraft disappeared yesterday while transporting a logging crew on a 125 km flight from Campbell River, British Columbia, to a lumber camp on Knight Inlet, according to the Pacific Search and Rescue Service. — Reuters.

London, Mar 3 — DeHavilland DHC-2 Mark I Beaver, C-GAQW, operated by MJM Air Ltd., departed the Campbell River Spit (Water Aerodrome) on a planned trip to deliver one passenger to Frances Bay, and to transport the remaining three passengers to a logging camp at the head of Knight's Inlet on Feb 28. There was no further contact with the aircraft after it departed Campbell River and the company reported the flight missing at about 1400, PST. DND/SAR and company aircraft as well as Coast Guard surface vessels are searching for the aircraft.

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated today, states: After a massive two-day search for five men aboard a missing single-engine Beaver floatplane (C-GAQW), a body had been found by a hiker on the east side of Quadra Island on the shore south of Village Bay. The body was not that of Doug Decock 38, or his brother Trevor, 34. But the RCMP confirmed the body was one of the two other passengers aboard the small aircraft owned by MJM Air Ltd. and flown by Arnold Feast, 52, of Courtenay. The aircraft has not been found. The search by the 442 Squadron Comox for the four men still missing will be concentrated in the waters off Campbell River, near Quadra Island. The Decocks are contract employees for G.W. Cox and Sons. They were heading to a logging camp in Knight's Inlet Monday (Feb 28). One of the other passengers is a contract employee on his way to International Forest Products's logging camp at Frances Bay.

C-GOPW

London, Mar 1 — At 1925, Feb 27, Canadian North Boeing 737-200, C-GOPW, was inbound to Calgary, AB when the No 1 engine (Pratt & Whitney JT8D-17) indicated low oil quantity and oil pressure. The engine was shut down and priority handling was given by Calgary ATC. The flight was cleared straight in for runway 16, landed safely and taxied to the ramp without further incident. Emergency crews were requested by ATC and were waiting for the arrival. There were no injuries. Maintenance is looking into the problem.

CRASH INTO SEA OFF PENGHU ISLAND, TAIWAN

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated Feb 25, states: A small crack, caused when the tail of a Boeing 747 struck a runway on takeoff from Hong Kong in 1980, probably caused a China Airlines craft to break up in midair in 2002, killing 225 people, investigators in Taiwan said today. The crack deteriorated over two decades because it was not repaired in line with Boeing's repair manual, the Taiwan Aviation Safety Council said. The plane finally came apart, and Flight 611 plunged into the ocean about 50 kilometres off the coast of Taiwan on May 25, 2002, just as it had reached cruising altitude after taking off from Taipei. The report confirmed the suspicions of investigators that not only had the repair been handled improperly, it involved covering the area with an aluminum plate that hid the crack's slow growth to about 180 centimetres, or nearly six feet.

CRASH, FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA, UNITED STATES

See N1623H.

CRASH, MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

London, Mar 3 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Federal Aviation Agency investigators are investigating a crash involving a Cherokee 6 aircraft this morning. The two occupants started to have engine problems in the air and struggled to get back to 12 Oaks Airport, a private airstrip in Citrus County. They crashed deep in the woods of Marion County, about 500 yards behind Stumpknockers Restaurant. Fire Rescue personnel say the aircraft practically disintegrated on impact, but the two men miraculously made it out of the wreckage alive. Both patients were airlifted to Shands Burn Unit in Gainesville with second to third degree burns across their upper torsos.

CRASH, MICHOACAN STATE, MEXICO

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: The governor of Mexico's western state of Colima, Gustavo Vazquez Montes, has died in a plane crash. At least five other people were killed when the light executive jet went down in the neighbouring state of Michoacan. An investigation has been launched to determine the possible cause of the accident, officials say. Mr Vazquez Montes was a member of Mexico's main opposition party, the PRI. The accident happened as the governor was returning from meetings in the capital, Mexico City. Investigators are now trying to determine what caused the crash. Three other passengers and the two-man crew also died when the aircraft lost contact shortly after taking off from the airport in Toluca, the government said. “We have been told that there were no survivors,” Mexico's Interior Minister Santiago Creel told reporters. The crash site

was later located about 200km west of Toluca. Reports in local media say that there could have been a total of seven people on board of the aircraft. The jet was identified as the 12-seater Israeli-built Westwind twin-engine jet.

EMERGENCY LANDING, FREDERICTON AIRPORT, CANADA

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: A Delta Airlines flight was forced to make an emergency landing at the Fredericton airport this morning. Officials say a flight from Boston radioed in around 0200 hrs to say it was having problems with its landing flaps. Emergency procedures were put in place with firefighters from the airport, Oromocto and Fredericton standing by with ambulances and police. The aircraft, with 18 or more passengers on board, landed safely - no one was injured.

EMERGENCY LANDING, GUERNSEY AIRPORT

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated Feb 25, states: A full scale emergency was declared at Guernsey airport last night after an aircraft bound for Devon was struck by lightning. A distress call was received from the captain of a Dash-8, heading for Exeter, five minutes after take-off. The Flybe aircraft, with 57 passengers and crew on board, had to return to the island where it landed safely.

EMERGENCY LANDING, KHABAROVSK AIRPORT, RUSSIA

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: A Tu-214 passenger aircraft made an emergency landing at the Khabarovsk airport today. Its passengers included the Russian president's representative in the Far Eastern Federal District Konstantin Pulikovskiy. The aircraft was to fly to Moscow, but shortly after the departure from Khabarovsk, the crew found a malfunction in the control system. The captain made the decision to return to Khabarovsk. The aircraft circled over the airport several hours to spend fuel in order to lessen a possibility of a fire in case of a crash landing. All passengers, including Pulikovskiy, flew to Moscow on another aircraft. The air company Dalavia, to which the Tu-214 is registered, is probing into circumstances of the incident.

EMERGENCY LANDING, ORLANDO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: An American Airlines flight from Fort Lauderdale to Los Angeles made an emergency landing at Orlando International Airport today after the smell of smoke filled the cockpit, officials said. The Boeing 757 carrying 187 passengers and six crew members was met by several fire trucks, whose crews reportedly checked the left engine. No injuries were reported, said American Airlines spokesman Sonja Whitemon.

"They declared the emergency as a normal precaution," Whitemon said. The aircraft left Fort Lauderdale at 1106 hrs, and passengers smelled smoke about 20 minutes into the flight. The aircraft landed in Orlando at 1215 hrs, according to Kathleen Bergen, a Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman in Atlanta. She said there was no fire. "The preliminary report was that there was an indicator of smoke in the cockpit," Bergen said. A replacement aircraft was brought in to take the passengers to Los Angeles, Whitemon said.

EMERGENCY LANDINGS, QUETTA AIRPORT, BALOCHISTAN PROVINCE, PAKISTAN

Karachi, Mar 2 — An A-320 aircraft of privately owned airline Airblue Airline with 150 passengers on board made two emergency landings at Quetta airport in Balochistan province of Pakistan due to a technical fault yesterday. The first landing was made at 1515 and the second at 1625. This was the first inaugural flight of the airline from Karachi. According to a local media report, the aircraft took a team of officials and media men along with the Governor of Balochistan to Quetta. After a reception at Quetta airport the flight took off for Karachi at 1500. However, after fifteen minutes the Captain announced that due to a technical fault the flight would return back to Quetta and it landed safely at the Quetta Airport. After one hour the flight again took off and after only ten minutes it again returned to Quetta airport due to a technical fault. Reportedly the flight's autopilot system as well as the auto thrust system were not operating. — Lloyd's List Correspondent.

HELICOPTER DITCHED INTO NORTH SEA

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: A report published into a North Sea helicopter crash off the Norfolk coast which killed 11 people says the crew could not have prevented the accident. The Sikorsky S76 came down in July 2002 as it ferried men between North Sea gas installations. There were no survivors among the nine passengers and two crew. The accident is blamed on the failure of the rotor assembly blade. During the investigation it was established that the blade had been hit by lightning three years earlier. This had further weakened a manufacturing fault, causing a crack which was not picked up on inspection.

INCIDENT, MANCHESTER AIRPORT, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Mar 1 — A press report, dated today, states: More than 300 passengers escaped down emergency chutes after a Pakistan International Airlines flight caught fire at Manchester Airport today. The Boeing 777 had just landed from Karachi and was taxiing on the runway when a fire began in the undercarriage, said an

airport spokesman. The 323 passengers and 12 crew are waiting airside for another flight. Flight PK789 was stopping at Manchester en route to Toronto, Canada, when the emergency happened. The flight had landed at 0903, GMT and passengers were due to disembark at Terminal Two. A small fire in the undercarriage was spotted and the aircraft stopped near Terminal One where the airport's firefighters tackled the blaze. Russell Craig, a spokesman for Manchester Airport, said: "It was a very small fire that was dealt with very quickly by our fire service." Emergency services helped lead the passengers and crew from the plane, a Greater Manchester Police spokesman said. He said the airline's staff made sure passengers were safe before they were taken to Terminal Two to await a new flight to Toronto. The airport was not closed during what was classed as a "ground" incident. The aircraft is still in position and will be towed away at some point. None of the runways are closed or affected. A full investigation into the fire will take place, said Mr Craig.

N1623H

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: A light plane crashed into the front garden of a home in Fargo, North Dakota. Firefighters removed two people from the crushed wreckage of the aircraft. The extent of their injuries was unknown. The crash happened at about 1400 hrs, today. Witness Terry Reynen said the plane hit a street sign and a parked vehicle. He said the plane narrowly missed a home. Terry Reynen said he helped free the pilot from the wreckage, but the passenger was trapped. He said the pilot was conscious, but he did not know his condition or the condition of the male passenger. A wing of the aircraft was found about a block away and the plane may have clipped a light pole as it crashed, officials at the scene said. Police dispatchers told emergency responders that a pilot and passenger were in the four-seat aircraft.

London, Mar 1 — Cessna 177RG, N1623H, privately operated, experienced engine loss and crashed in a residential area at Fargo, North Dakota, at 2003, local time, Feb 26.

N2954P

London, Mar 2 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: Two Japanese flight students and their American instructor were killed when their small aircraft crashed on a mountain in San Bernardino County. The aircraft was destroyed in yesterday's crash and there were no survivors, said Donn Walker, a spokesman for the Federal Aviation Administration. The identities of the victims were not immediately released. The three men were headed for San Bernardino International Airport when the aircraft hit a mountain, Walker said. The students and instructor were from the M.I. Air Flight School, which owned the aircraft. It was the first

crash in the company's 13-year history, according to Lt. Col. Ron Butts of the Civil Air Patrol, the civilian auxiliary responsible for inland search-and-rescue flights. Butts said the aircraft's disappearance was reported at 2200, yesterday. The Piper Cherokee took off around 1830, yesterday from the airport in Redlands. The wreckage was spotted this afternoon at about 4,000 feet on a mountain near Yucaipa, Walker said. The National Transportation Safety Board will investigate the crash, he said.

London, Mar 3 — Piper PA-28-181, N2954P, operated by M.I. Air Corp, on a flight from Redlands, California, to San Bernardino, California, crashed under unknown circumstances at the 4,000-foot level of a mountain near Yucaipa, California, at 0200, Feb 28. The three persons on board were fatally injured. The aircraft was destroyed.

N6685M

London, Feb 28 — A press report, dated today, states: Two men were killed yesterday afternoon when their private plane crashed shortly after take-off at a small, northern New Jersey airport. The Cessna 182 had just left the runway at the Greenwood Lake Airport in West Milford when it crashed said Lt. Gene Chiosie of the town's police department. The single-engine plane slammed through trees and a power line before bursting into flames. "The cockpit was stuck into the ground," said Kathleen Escobedo, who witnessed the deadly crash. A Federal Aviation Administration spokesman said the pilot reported engine problems shortly before the crash.

London, Mar 1 — Cessna 182P, N6685M, privately operated, experienced an engine problem on take-off and crashed at the departure end of the runway at West Milford, New Jersey, at 1815, local time, Feb 27. The two persons on board were fatally injured, and the aircraft was destroyed by fire.

N97VB

London, Mar 2 — Aero Commander 500S, N97VB, operated by Clair Aero Inc., on flight from San Juan, PR, to Virgin Gourda, crashed shortly after take-off at 1521, local time, Feb 28. Seven persons on board, three seriously injured. The aircraft was destroyed.

Product Recalls



BATHROOM LIGHT FIXTURES, UNITED STATES

Washington, DC, Mar 1 — The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission announces the recall of about 5,900 Ginger Kubic, K2 and Surface Bathroom Light Fixtures in voluntary co-operation with Ginger, of Fort Mill,

S.C. Consumers should stop using recalled products immediately unless otherwise instructed. The glass shades can separate from the light fixture, posing a risk that a consumer could be cut by the broken glass if the shade were to fall and break. The firm has received one report of a consumer who suffered a minor cut to his foot after stepping on broken glass from a fallen shade. The Ginger Kubic, K2 and Surface collection light fixtures feature eight-inch-long, cylindrical, white glass shades that are about three-inches in diameter. They have chrome or satin nickel wall plates, some decoratively encircled with wood. The lights can be installed horizontally or vertically. The lights use incandescent bulbs up to 100 watts. No screws are used to attach these shades. They are glued to a metal base, which screws onto the fixture. No writing is visible on the mounted light fixtures. For more information on model numbers and distinctive features of these fixtures, contact GingerÆ. Sold to commercial dealers and to consumers through select showrooms and retailers nationwide from August 2003 through September 2004 for between \$240 and \$355. Assembled in United States. Remedy: Contact GingerÆ to receive free replacement shades. — Consumer Product Safety Commission.

DISHWASHERS, UNITED STATES

London, Feb 27 — A press report, dated yesterday, states: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has announced a recall Whirlpool and Kenmore brand dishwashers. Consumers should stop using recalled products immediately unless otherwise instructed. Whirlpool says this recall is for about 162,000 units. An electrical defect within the dishwashers' wash motor wiring poses a risk of the motor overheating and

possibly catching fire. Whirlpool Corporation has received three reports of overheated wash motors. There are no reports of personal injury or property damage. These units were sold at department and appliance stores and through homebuilders nationwide from June 2004 through January 2005 for between \$350 and \$600. The dishwashers were manufactured in Findlay, Ohio, and the motors were manufactured in China.

LEXUS MOTOR VEHICLES, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Mar 1 — Lexus have recalled 5,937 RX300 4x4's due to a brake light problem. A Lexus spokesman said there have been no reported accidents relating to the recall.



ANGOLA

See under "Labour Disputes"

AUSTRALIA

London, Feb 26 — A press report, dated today, states: Federal Resources Minister Ian Macfarlane is concerned that delays at a north Queensland port is forcing international shipping companies to source coal from outside Australia. More than 40 vessels are waiting to be loaded at the Dalrymple Bay coal terminal in Mackay in Queensland. Mr Macfarlane says he has received unconfirmed reports that companies are turning away from the terminal because they cannot afford to moor there for extended periods. He

says the Queensland Government should have acted when it learned about the port's anticipated growth three years ago. "We have, in the last 24 hours, received unconfirmed reports that these ships are being pulled out of the queue by the customers," he said. "That is bad news for Australia and it's bad news for our reputation as a reliable exporter of metallurgical coal." Greg Smith from Prime Infrastructure says the port currently has spare capacity, and that the real problem is getting enough coal into the terminal. He says Prime is in discussions with the mining companies and Queensland Rail to address the problem.

ITALY

Genoa, Mar 1 — Port situation Mar 1: Genoa: No vessels awaiting berths. La Spezia: No vessels awaiting berths. Savona: Two vessels awaiting normal berths. Average number of days delay in berthing, one day. No vessels awaiting special berths. — Lloyd's Agents.

NIGERIA

See under "Labour Disputes."

PANAMA CANAL

London, Mar 1 — Work on the locomotive tracks at Gatun Locks was completed on Feb 26 and additional crews are now working to reduce the back-log in the Panama Canal. Currently, the following delays can be expected: Panamax vessels: two days; Regular vessels: one-two days. It is hoped that the delays shall be cleared by the end of the week.

SYRIA

Lattakia, Feb 12 — Waiting time is presently 24 hours at Lattakia and 48 hours at Tartous. — Lloyd's Sub-agents.

Port Delays

Country/Port	Date of report	No.of vessels waiting and/or days delay
Australia		
Abbott Point	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Coal: 1 vessel berthed; 8 vessels due by 12/3; no delays expected.
Albany	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: 2 vessels due by 27/3, both to load wheat; up to 1 day's delay expected due to berth congestion and cargo availability.
Brisbane	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Coal: Fisherman Island coal berth: 1 vessel due 6/3; no delays expected. Grain: 1 vessel due 10/3 to load wheat; no delays expected.
Dalrymple Bay	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Coal: 41 vessels anchored; 55 vessels due by 29/4. Up to 30 days berthing delay subject to cargo availability and berth congestion; waiting time vary greatly due to different stem supply issues.
Dampier	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Iron ore: Parker Point: 1 vessel berthed and loading; 12 vessels due by 18/3; 1-8 days delay expected due to berth congestion and cargo availability; East Intercourse Island: 1 vessel berthed and loading, 1 anchored; 11 vessels due by 11/3; up to 7 days delay expected due to berth congestion and cargo availability; shippers will always consider a shift to a lay-by berth for loaded vessels awaiting HW; shippers are experiencing cargo shortages of some grades and stockpile problems; some vessels will berth out of turn and berthing line-up may change at short notice.
Esperance	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: 2 vessels due 1/3, both to load barley; no delays expected.
Geraldton	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: 2 vessels due by 3/3, 1 to load wheat, 1 barley; up to 5 days delay expected due to berth congestion and cargo availability.
Gladstone	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Coal: R.G. Tanna coal terminal: 3 vessels berthed, 3 anchored; 34 vessels due by 10/4; up to 7 days berthing delay expected subject to port congestion and cargo availability; Shiploader No. 2 will be shutdown for maintenance for 4 days from 14-18/3. Barney Point: 1 vessel berthed; 8 vessels due by 23/3; up to 2 days delay expected due to cargo availability and berth congestion; shiploading activities will cease from 06.00 hrs. 3/4 until 06.00 hrs. 13/4 to enable repairs to be carried out to wharf deck.
Hay Point	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Coal: 2 vessels berthed, 4 anchored; 4 vessels due by 5/3. Up to 9 days berthing delay expected subject to cargo availability and berth congestion; vessels berthing in order of cargo availability; Berth No. 2 will be shut down from 2-14/3.
Melbourne	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: 1 vessel berthed loading wheat; 3 vessels due by 11/3, all to load wheat; no delays expected.
Newcastle	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Coal: Kooragang 4, 5 and 6: 3 vessels berthed, 20 anchored; 25 vessels due by 16/3; Dykes 4+5: 2 vessels berthed, 6 anchored; 11 vessels due by 17/3; 3 unallocated vessels due by 10/3; 3-10 days delay expected prior to berthing due to planned maintenance at Kooragang terminal, coal product problems with some shippers and cargo receipt. Grain: Eight vessels due by 18/3, 1 to load barley, 7 wheat; up to 5 days delay expected due to berth congestion and cargo availability.
Port Adelaide	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: No. 27 berth: 1 vessel due 20/3 to load barley; no delays expected.
Port Kembla	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: 1 vessel due 7/3 to load wheat; no delays expected.
Port Latta	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Iron ore: 2 vessels due by 12/3; no delays expected.
Port Lincoln	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: 4 vessels due by 19/3, 3 to load wheat, 1 barley; no delays expected.
Port Pirie	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: No. 2 berth: 1 vessel due 13/3 to load wheat; no delays expected.
Portland	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	One vessel due 11/3 to load wood-chips; no delays expected.
Thevenard	28 Feb-2 Mar-2005	Grain: no vessels; no delays expected.
Bulgaria		
Bourgas	28 Feb-2005	Eleven vessels in port operating, of which 6 loading (1 concrete/iron, 1 bulk ammonium nitrate, 1 copper anodes, 1 metals, 1 coils, 1 empty), 5 discharging (1 zinc concentrate, 1 metals, 1 kaolin, 1 lead concentrate, 1 equipment); 3 vessels waiting in roads, of which 2 to load (1 coils, 1 unknown cargo), 1 to discharge coils; 13 vessels due, of which 9 to load (1 seeds, 4 coils, 1 baryte concentrate, 1 concrete/iron, 1 containers, 1 bulk ammonium nitrate), 4 to discharge (1 containers, 1 iron ore, 1 LAB, 1 lead concentrate).
Varna	28 Feb-2005	Varna East, Varna West, Electrical Power Station, Balchik: Conditions 21-27 February: Thirty-seven vessels in port operating of which 18 loading (3 bulk maize, 1 scrap, 2 bulk wheat, 1 cigarettes, 1 cement, 3 soda, 2 sulphuric acid, 1 manganese ore, 1 copper concentrate, 1 silica sand, 1 petcoke, 1 TSP/NP compound fertiliser), 10 discharging (2 bulk coal, 2 feldspar, 3 copper concentrate, 1 gypsum board, 1 raw phosphate, 1 equipment), 9 discharging/loading containers; no vessels waiting in roads.
Chile		
Antofagasta	28 Feb-2005	Four vessels berthed, 3 berths vacant; 11 vessels due this week to load/discharge concentrates, bulk copper, containers and general cargo.
Valparaiso	28 Feb-2005	Three vessels berthed, 5 berths vacant; 2 vessels anchored; 11 vessels due this week.
Egypt		
Alexandria	28 Feb-2005	Thirty-seven vessels berthed (loading/discharging), of which 29 general cargo, 4 bulk carriers, 3 containers, 1 passenger vessel; 16 vessels dry-docked; 19 vessels at inner anchorage, 3 at outer anchorage.
Damietta	28 Feb-2005	Eighteen vessels berthed (loading/discharging), of which 12 general cargo, 2 bulk carriers, 1 tanker, 3 containers; 1 vessel at outer anchorage, 6 at inner anchorage.
Suez Canal	28 Feb-2005	Nineteen vessels transiting Northbound, 21 Southbound.

Port Conditions

Israel

Ashdod	01 Mar-2005	No labour problems. Eight general cargo vessels loading at berth, 12 vessels discharging at berth (9 general cargo, 3 bulkers), 4 vessels loading/discharging at berth (2 containers, 1 car carrier, 1 tanker); 4 vessels waiting at anchorage to discharge (1 general cargo, 1 bulker), 2 container vessels waiting at anchorage to load/discharge; 1 vessel awaiting orders; 23 vessels due, with 2-3 days delay expected.
Haifa	01 Mar-2005	No labour problems. Four vessels discharging at berth (2 general cargo, 2 bulkers), 4 vessels loading/discharging at berth (1 containers, 3 tankers); 1 bulker waiting at anchorage to discharge, 2 tankers waiting at anchorage to load/discharge; 3 vessels under repairs/dry-docked, 1 awaiting orders; 25 vessels due, with 2-3 days delay expected.

Pakistan

Karachi	28 Feb-2005	Three vessels loading at berth (1 rice, 2 cement), 5 discharging at berth (2 phosphate, 1 coal, 1 sugar, 1 jute), 2 container vessels loading/discharging at berth; 5 vessels waiting at anchorage to load (4 containers, 1 cement), 4 container vessels waiting at anchorage to discharge; no vessels bunkering; none under repairs/dry-docked, none awaiting orders; 1 coal vessel due, with no berthing delays expected.
Port Qasim	28 Feb-2005	Four vessels discharging at berth (2 wheat, 1 fuel oil, 1 iron ore), 1 container vessel loading/discharging at QICT berth; 4 vessels waiting at anchorage to discharge (2 wheat, 1 HSD, 1 paraxylene).

Poland

Gdansk	28 Feb-2005	Two vessels loading at berth (1 coal, 1 bulker), 2 discharging at berth (1 bulker, 1 general cargo); 8 vessels under repairs/dry-docked; no vessels waiting at anchorage, none waiting in roads; 23 vessels due.
Gdynia	28 Feb-2005	Three vessels loading at berth (2 general cargo, 1 tanker), 5 discharging at berth (2 general cargo, 1 grain, 1 bulker, 1 coal); 14 vessels under repairs/dry-docked; no vessels waiting at anchorage, none waiting in roads; 44 vessels due.

Russia

Novorossiysk	28 Feb-2005	Fifteen vessels in port operating, of which 13 loading (1 HBI, 2 bulk NPK, 1 DRI, 1 WRIC, 1 scrap, 1 steel billets/coils, 2 steel billets, 1 bulk urea, 1 steel billets/steel sheets, 1 cellulose, 1 UAN solution), 2 discharging (1 bulk sugar, 1 construction materials); 14 vessels waiting in roads, all to load, of which 1 WRIC, 2 copper, 1 bulk urea, 1 pig-iron, 2 steel billets, 1 coils/steel billets, 2 coils, 1 aluminium, 1 scrap/steel billets, 1 UAN solution, 1 diesel oil; 78 vessels due, of which 74 to load (1 lead/copper, 1 zinc/lead, 10 aluminium, 6 pig-iron, 6 copper, 1 WRIC/steel billets, 1 steel billets/pipes, 1 steel eets/coils, 1 HBI, 3 scrap, 2 slabs, 5 bulk NPK, 1 barley, 1 WRIC/pipes/steel billets/tin plate/coils, 1 copper/lead, 1 WRIC/coils, 1 pipes, 1 bulk ammonium nitrate/bulk urea, 1 steel, 9 coils, 4 steel billets, 1 WRIC/pipes, 1 slabs/steel billets, 2 DRI, 1 steel sheet, 4 diesel oil, 1 zinc, 2 paper, 2 bulk cement, 1 copper/cellulose), 3 to discharge (1 non-ferrous metals, 1 bulk sugar, 1 citrus), 1 to load/discharge containers. Oil terminal: 1 tanker berthed loading fuel oil; 11 tankers in roads, all to load, of which 10 crude oil, 1 fuel oil; 1 tanker due to load fuel oil.
Tuapse	28 Feb-2005	Oil products: Two crude oil vessels in roads; 10 vessels due by 4/3 (6 gasoil, 3 naphtha, 1 crude oil).

Spain

Bilbao	28 Feb-1 Mar-2005	Twenty-seven vessels operating (6 tankers, 21 others), of which 2 loading, 14 discharging, 11 Loading/discharging.
Cadiz	28 Feb-1 Mar-2005	Fifteen vessels in port of which 6 operating (3 Ro/Ros, 1 vegetable oil, 1 wheat, 1 cereals), 9 vessels under repair; no delays.
Sagunto	28 Feb-1 Mar-2005	Twenty-five vessels in port operating of which 19 discharging (17 steel products, 1 anhydrous ammonia, 1 vehicles), 3 Ro/Ros discharging/loading general cargo, 3 vessels loading/discharging steel products; no vessels outside commercial wharf; 60 hours berthing delay at present.

Sri Lanka

Colombo	28 Feb-2005	Berthing/unberthing (pilotage) delays being experienced on breakbulk/conventional vessels. Delays to conventional vessels are due to the fact that container/feeder vessels are given priority at breakbulk berths if there is container congestion. Conventional cargo vessels at BQ 1 and 2 are facing navigation delays. Four container/feeder vessels loading at berth, 15 vessels discharging at berth (8 containers/feeders, 2 bagged maize, 1 bagged cement, 1 bulk palm oil, 2 bulk cement, 1 general cargo); 1 vessel waiting at anchorage to load tea on pallets, 1 container/feeder vessel waiting at anchorage to discharge; 4 vessels dry-docked; 5 container/feeder vessels due, with no delays expected.
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Port Conditions

Ukraine

Illichevsk	28 Feb-2005	Seventeen vessels in port operating, of which 14 loading (1 oil, 1 potash, 1 wheat, 1 ferro alloy, 10 steel products), 1 discharging iron ore, 2 discharging/loading containers; 8 vessels in roads of which 6 to load steel products, 2 to discharge/load containers; 15 vessels due, of which 13 to load (1 ferro alloy, 11 steel products, 1 wheat), 2 to discharge ore.
Mariupol	28 Feb-2005	Eleven vessels in port operating, of which 10 loading (4 steel, 1 fire-clay, 1 coal, 2 sulphur, 1 soya beans, 1 kaolin), 1 discharging foodstuffs; 6 vessels in roads, all to load, of which 5 steel, 1 sulphur; 41 vessels due, of which 40 to load (22 steel, 1 pig-iron, 7 coal, 2 fire-clay, 5 sulphur, 1 wheat, 1 pitch, 1 soya beans), 1 to discharge equipment.
Odessa	28 Feb-2005	Seventeen vessels in port operating, of which 11 loading (6 metal, 1 wood/metal, 1 corn, 1 scrap, 1 barley, 1 oil), 4 discharging (1 luggage, 2 citrus, 1 sugar), 1 discharging/loading containers, 1 passenger vessel; 9 vessels in roads, of which 6 to load (3 metal, 2 scrap, 1 ferro alloy), 3 to discharge (2 citrus, 1 general cargo); 69 vessels due, of which 39 to load (31 metal, 1 pig-iron, 1 ferro alloy, 1 paper, 1 barley, 2 wood, 1 corn, 1 wheat), 8 to discharge (4 citrus, 3 oil, 1 bananas), 22 to discharge/load containers.

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