

Southampton tells truckers to book

Radical scheme to ease congestion will be first time that any British port has introduced a mandatory requirement for hauliers, writes Janet Porter — Thursday April 28 2005

EVERY truck arriving at Southampton Container Terminals will be forced to book ahead under a radical scheme to end landslide congestion at one of Britain's premier box ports.

The scheme will ensure that this year's peak season will see no repeat of the delays experienced at Southampton last year.

Although SCT and many other terminals have experimented with vehicle booking systems, this is the first time that any British port has introduced a mandatory requirement.

SCT, jointly owned by P&O Ports and Associated British Ports, has suffered more than most facilities from overcrowding as imports from Asia have increased much faster than anyone in the industry had anticipated over the past two years.

The company has received plenty of criticism in the past for not doing enough to relieve the situation.

The new scheme will be introduced on June 6, SCT's managing director Patrick Walters announced yesterday, and will apply to all vehicles without exception, including local shunters.

The idea is to smooth out the peaks and troughs during a 24-hour period, with SCT now planning to receive 120 vehicles an hour.

Lorries that miss their slot and arrive late, by "even a minute", will be penalised with a charge of £25 (\$47), although Mr Walters assured hauliers that the scheme

was not as punitive as it seemed at first sight with plenty of ways to avoid a no-show fine.

A booking fee of £1 will be levied, but truckers prepared to work during off-peak hours will not have to pay.

Mr Walters described the scheme as "revolutionary", with SCT aiming to process up to 3,000 vehicles in a 24-hour period rather than around 1,900 at present by forcing hauliers to spread their arrival times throughout the day instead of bunching deliveries and pick-ups in the very early morning or the afternoons, as at present.

Addressing Containerisation International's Freight UK 2005 conference in Liverpool, Mr Walters also said SCT had created an additional 400,000 teu of annual capacity by acquiring more land and reorganising the yard.

It has bought another dozen straddle carriers, arranged to have more manpower available in the busy second half of the year than in the first and undertaken training to create a multi-skilled workforce.

Overall, the port had invested three times as much over the past six months as in its entire history "in order to see us through the peak", he said, even if that meant surplus equipment and manpower for nine months of the year.

Container lines are more concerned about port capacity in Britain than anywhere else in Europe, with Chris Bourne, managing director of MOL

(Europe), admitting he was "nervous" about the next pre-Christmas season but praising the ports for doing "remarkably well" in the circumstances.

While calling for more feederling to help overcome inland congestion problems, Mr Bourne also questioned why this was not being done over British hubs rather than Rotterdam, which has seen a 40% increase in feederling to Britain over the past year.

Mr Walters said he was keen to develop more feeder services from Southampton to other parts of country and "claw back" some of the business lost to continental ports.

Speaking at the same conference, Drewry Shipping Consultants managing director Neil Davidson predicted there would be a British ports policy within five years but questioned how detailed or influential it would be.

In the meantime, feederling was one solution to the port capacity squeeze, he agreed. But Mr Davidson said he was unconvinced that the plans of some northern ports to attract direct calls could be made to work.

However, industry-wide efforts involving the Freight Transport Association, the UK Major Ports Group, British Shippers Council, Bifa, the Confederation of British Industry and other are now under way to find ways to resolving the country's looming transport infrastructure crisis, Mr Walters disclosed.

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

Vessel	Type	Flag	Class	GT	DWT	Bit	Casualty
<i>AGNES</i>	general	EST	RS	2,351	2,350	1977	In collision with chemical/oil carrier Themsestern on the north-east ship canal, near Rendsburg, Apr 13. Damage sustained. Towed to Rendsburg Apr 17 for repairs.
<i>CSAV RIO MAIPO</i>	container	LBR	GL	32,322	39,128	1999	Towed into Cape Town Apr 15 due to main engine damages sustained at sea. Repairs expected to take about 10 days.
<i>INDEPENDENTE</i>	ro-ro	BRA	BV	15,768	17,500	1992	Grounded in strong winds while attempting to anchor off Nassau Apr 15. Refloated by local tugs same day. Suspected damages to underwater gear.
<i>JING BOHU</i>	product tanker	CHN	CS	11,780	19,989	1982	Leaked oil, through ageing hull, while berthed at Dalian Apr 18. Oil cleaned up in two hours.
<i>MEMA</i>	general	PRK	—	973	1,097	1972	Capsized and sank in lat 33 01 N, long 34 16E, Apr 19. Three of the 7 crew rescued. Search under way for others.
<i>MOBY RIDER</i>	ro-ro	ITA	RI	21,886	6,633	1968	Grounded on sand in way of Vegliaia breakwater in bad weather, while leaving Leghorn Apr 19. Five tugs on scene. Initial refloating attempts failed. Still aground Aug 20.
<i>NOVA SCOTIA</i>	refrig	ATG	BV	5,875	6,060	1983	Grounded on Cochon Island, Berkeley Sound, Apr 19. Presently at anchor at entrance of sound. Awaiting underwater survey.
<i>PETR ZHITNIKOV</i>	refrig	RUS	RS	32,096	9,910	1989	Had oil spillage while docked at the Slavyansky ship repair yard Apr 9. Large slick reported covering the bay and shore. Inquiry under way.
<i>STOROE</i>	general	CYP	—	3,183	4,450	2004	Grounded 1.5 nautical miles outside Kristiinankaupunki Apr 19. Safely steady on ground. No leaks noted. Refloated by tugs Apr 20 and berthed at Kristiinankaupunki. Minor holes in stern. Bow thruster out of action. Sailed Apr 20 for Emden.
<i>TOWER BRIDGE</i>	container	SGP	NK	34,487	34,245	1985	Grounded at the North Mole, Fremantle port Apr 16 after losing engine power. Refloated same day and towed to deeper water. Engine repaired and sailed same day.
<i>WEEKS 538</i>	crane barge	USA		912	—	1942	Caught fire while in dry-dock at Pier 41, Honolulu, Apr 16.. All workers were evacuated.
<i>YES SIR</i>	fishing	PAN	BV	287	220	1967	Sank off the coast of South Africa Apr 9. All 21 crew rescued.

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The following reports are reprinted from Lloyd's List



AGNES (Estonia)

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: General cargo Agnes (2351 gt, built 1977) was in collision with chemical/oil carrier Themsestern (14400 gt, built 2000) on the north-east ship canal, Rendsburg at 2150, Apr 13. (Note -- Themsestern, Klaipeda for Bordeaux, subsequently passed Brunsbuttel West at 0335, Apr 14.)

London, Apr 15 -- Following received from Brunsbuttel VTS, timed 1910, UTC: General cargo Agnes, ESRC, was in collision with chemical/oil carrier Themsestern near Rendsburg Apr 13. Agnes was damaged in the collision and is currently at Brunsbuttel. Two tugs are due to tow Agnes to Rendsburg for repair, Apr 17. Themsestern has proceeded on voyage.

Cuxhaven, Apr 21 -- General cargo Agnes was towed to the shipyard at Rendsburg to effect some repairs and is still there. Chemical/oil carrier Themsestern has only minor damage and sailed, direction North Sea. -- Lloyd's Agents.

London, Apr 20 -- Chemical/oil carrier Themsestern arrived Ambes Apr 17 from Klaipeda, to unload gasoil, and sailed Apr 18.

ALGONORTH (Canada)

London, Apr 18 -- Bulk Algonorth (18496 gt, built 1971) had engine trouble, losing propulsion, while upbound at Cap Aux Oies, Fleuve St Laurent, PQ, in lat 47 27 24N, long 70 14 48W, at 1520, EDST, Apr 16.

London, Apr 18 -- Following received from Quebec MRSC, timed 1835, UTC: Algonorth is currently operating normally. It is presently in the St. Lawrence Seaway, heading for Hamilton, Canada, where ETA 0300, UTC, Apr 16.

ANDREW J. BARBERI (U.S.A.)

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: A federal official involved in the investigation into the fatal crash of ferry Andrew J.Barberi in 2003 emphasised yesterday that the ferry system's rules were so vague as to be essentially useless, a finding that could have implications for the pending criminal trial of a former city official who oversaw the system. The finding was presented to the City Council yesterday by the executive director of the National Transportation Safety Board, who gave an overview of the board's inquiry into the Oct 15, 2003, accident in which 11 people died. The board released a summary of its findings on Mar 8. The executive director, Daniel D.Campbell, amplified some of the findings, including a conclusion that the ferry system's operating rules were not even distributed or read, much less

enforced. As part of its investigation, the safety board found that the procedures "were too ambiguous to be of use in addressing potential risks to passenger safety," he said. Mr Campbell noted that the ferry system had not had a fatal accident since its creation in 1905, but he said "safety margins had been seriously compromised" before the crash. The findings could play a role in the trial of Patrick Ryan, the former director of ferry operations, who has been charged with seaman's manslaughter and lying to investigators. Federal prosecutors have argued that Mr. Ryan failed to enforce a ferry rule, in place since 1908, that requires two licensed pilots to be in the wheelhouse at all times. The city is paying for his legal defence. Only one pilot, Assistant Captain Richard J.Smith, was at the controls. He pleaded guilty to manslaughter and is to be sentenced next Friday (Apr 22). In testimony yesterday, Iris Weinsahl, the commissioner of the city's Department of Transportation, reviewed what she called aggressive changes, including the purchase of safety equipment, the hiring of dozens of new employees and the development of a safety plan.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: A year and a half after the deadly crash of ferry Andrew J.Barberi, the trial of two former ferry officials charged in the case is set to begin in two weeks' time. Jury selection will get underway on May 2 in Brooklyn Federal Court in the trial of the former head of ferry operations, Patrick Ryan, and former Port Captain John Mauldin. Ryan is charged with 11 counts of seaman's manslaughter, one count for each of the 11 passengers who died. He is accused of not properly enforcing ferry rules. Mauldin is charged with obstructing the crash investigation. Michael Gansas, the master of the ferry that crashed, may testify against Ryan. Gansas agreed to co-operate with prosecutors in return for having the charges against him dropped. The pilot of the ferry, Assistant Captain Richard Smith, pleaded guilty to 11 charges of seaman's manslaughter. He passed out at the controls of the vessel on Oct 15, 2003, and the vessel crashed into a maintenance pier at the St. George Terminal on Staten Island. Smith admitted taking medications with drowsy side effects, but the National Transportation Safety Board's report concluded that Smith's incapacitation was "unexplained."

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: The National Transportation Safety Board has published its final report on the crash of ferry Andrew J.Barberi. The conclusions were announced by the NTSB last month in Washington, but only became available over the Internet today. The report examines the Oct 15, 2003, crash that killed 11 passengers and injured 70 more, some severely. It examines the emergency response, the actions of the crew members and the cost of the damage to

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people and property. As for blame, the NTSB says the probable cause of the accident was, "The assistant master's unexplained incapacitation and the failure of the New York City Department of Transportation to implement and oversee safe, effective operating procedures for its ferries." The NTSB identified safety issues in the actions of the master and his assistant, medical oversight of mariners and safety management systems.

APOSTOLOVO (Malta)

London, Apr 21-- Following received from Dartmouth, NB, dated Apr 11: Bulk Apostolovo sailed Halifax Apr 5.

ARKTIKA (Russia)

Busan, Apr 18 -- Fishing Arktika sailed from Busan bound for Okhotsk, Apr 8 after completion of permanent repairs. -- Lloyd's Sub-agents.

ARTEAGA (Madeira)

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: The Dalian Municipal Marine Court has so far received more than 190 lawsuits from fisheries against crude oil tanker Arteaga, which struck a rock 4.2 nautical miles off Dalian Port on Apr 4 and spilled crude oil into local waters, court personnel stated yesterday. Around 100 fisheries are demanding compensation from the vessel's operator. It remains unclear whether the accident poses a serious threat to the environment, Li Weisheng, director of the accident assessment centre under the Maritime Court, said. The vessel was carrying about 120,000 tons of crude oil from Yemen to Dalian New Port. Early reports indicated that about 10,000 tons of oil had been safely lifted from the vessel and that the vessel had sustained damage to the starboard hold, with a storage capacity of 7,000 tons. The Liaoshen Evening News reported on Apr 14 that the Dalian agency responsible for assessing the extent of the spill had declined to release any estimates. Preliminary investigations indicated that the accident was caused by the master's negligence, leading to a deviation from the prescribed course. After the accident, almost 1,000 aquatic breeding companies and households began seeking compensation. Six teams made up of the Maritime Court's 16 judges went to the more heavily polluted areas to offer legal services on Apr 9. The same day, representatives of the International Tanker Owners' Pollution Federation and a British protection and indemnity association, which insured the vessel, arrived to investigate the pollution. Crude oil could still be seen floating in the affected area, which smelled acrid several days ago, said Li Jingyang, manager of Shanri Marine Co. The company's aquatic breeding area is located just one nautical mile from the accident site. "Although we can't see the oil now, large amounts of shellfish and sea cucumbers that we bred have died. We're suffering heavy losses," he

said. Yu Zhiman, manager of the Jingang Earth Industrial Co, said that after the incident, a Japanese food company canceled a yuan-one-million (US\$120,000) contract with the firm. The Maritime Court has enlisted experts from the Liaoning Provincial Maritime Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Station to collect samples. Representatives of plaintiffs and defendants have also been taking samples in the area. Due to the number of species involved and the size of the affected area, examinations will not be completed until the end of this month, experts said. Sources from the court said that as new lawsuits are being filed every day, a definite date for the opening of hearings cannot be finalised.

ATHOS I (Cyprus)

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: The crude oil tanker Athos I oil spill left a discoloured coastline along the Delaware River. At low tide, oil from last year's big Delaware River spill can still be seen along much of Gloucester City's waterfront. It clings to the pilings of old industrial piers like tar, drips out of cracks in bulkheads and coats the undersides of rocks that bolster the river's banks. While the river is vastly improved from the days after the spill on Nov 26, when undulating waves of oil rolled onto blackened beaches, plenty of tough work lies ahead. "By no stretch of the imagination is the cleanup over," says Bob Saunders, Gloucester City's emergency management coordinator. "It's going to be a continuous, laborious type of thing." Questions are surfacing about how much oil will be left behind when hundreds of cleanup workers finally pack up and leave, perhaps over the summer. With the onset of spring, crews are shifting to the tedious process of cleaning up oil that has worked its way into countless nooks and crannies along the river, staining reeds and even settling deep into the coarse sand of beaches. Officials acknowledge they'll never get all of the estimated 265,000 gallons of thick crude that spilled from Athos I. But they insist they will get a lot of it. "The goal is to get the environment back to or better than it was before, as much as is reasonably possible," Coast Guard Petty Officer Kimberly Smith said. In Gloucester City, even as crews remove oil, more seems to appear, creating sheens along much of the city's shoreline, Saunders said. "It looks clean, but when you pull rocks up there's oil underneath and it's percolating into the sand," Saunders said. As a result, the city has decided to keep the municipal marina closed at least through early spring. The Coast Guard says no-wake zones around cleanup areas may be in effect over the boating season but that recreational boating will be allowed. Just five months after the spill, many of the river's banks now show no outward signs of oil. A stretch of riverbank in West Deptford near Soupy Island seems pretty clean.

While officials continue to monitor the impacts of the spill on wildlife, they say there are no indications that fish are being affected. Edwin Levine, a scientist with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said some patches of oil likely will be left on the bottom. But he doesn't expect this to create widespread ecological problems. Just a few months ago, officials expressed fears that the heavy crude, spilled as Athos I was approaching an asphalt plant in West Deptford, was sinking throughout the river and would resurface this spring, possibly as tar balls. Today, officials are more optimistic. While they don't have an accurate gauge of how much oil has been collected, they believe they've gotten a lot of it on the beaches. The Coast Guard's Unified Command hopes the bulk of cleanup will be completed by midsummer, although spot cleanup could continue for months or years. Much of the current work is taking place between the mouth of Mantua Creek, where the spill occurred, north to Big Timber Creek, along the boundary between Gloucester and Camden counties, state officials said.

ATLANTIC HICKORY (Canada)

London, Apr 19 -- Tug Atlantic Hickory (886 gt, built 1973) grounded on muddy bottom while under pilot's advice at Rio de Plata, at 0332, EST, Mar 6. No damage reported. (Note -- Atlantic Hickory arrived New Orleans at 0155, Apr 11.)

AURORA (U.K.)

London, Apr 16 -- Passenger Aurora sailed Bremerhaven 1210, Apr 14.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Passenger Aurora which was forced to abandon a world cruise due to propulsion problems will return to its home port of Southampton today. The P&O liner has since undergone a 10-week repair programme in Bremerhaven, Germany, by German engineering company Lloydwerft. Its two main propulsion motors have now been replaced and tested.

BALTIC PRESS (Sweden)

London, Apr 20 -- Following received from Sandnes, dated today: Ro/ro Baltic Press sailed from Rubbestadneset at 2000 hrs, today, after having completed repairs.

BALUEIRO TERCERO

Suva, Apr 21 -- Fishing Balueiro Tercero is still lying aground, and it appears that salvage operations may not take place at all. Understand the insurers have settled the owners' claim, but the wreck removal is not covered by the hull underwriters in Spain. -- Lloyd's Agents.

BIG LEAP (U.S.A.)

Portland, ME, Apr 14 -- Fishing Big Leap has been intentionally grounded and is in the process of being stripped of all salvageable parts, after which the vessel will be scrapped. -- Lloyd's Agents.

BRENTLAND (Norway)

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: Emergency efforts have controlled a leak on board general cargo Brentland (299 gt, built 1963) which ran aground in Vattlestraumen outside of Bergen today. Brentland touched bottom in the northern part of Vattlestraumen, causing a hole in the hull and a leak. "The situation is under full control and the freighter is no longer taking in water. Divers are in the process of closing a hole about 20 centimetres in diameter," operation leader Terje Langas at the Rescue Coordination Centre in Southern Norway said. Divers were on site and a rescue smack with a boom pump was working by the side of the ship. A Marine tug and the patrol ship Alesund were on the way to aid the freighter. The weather was fine in the area and neither of the crew of two was injured after the incident, Norwegian news agency NTB reported.

London, Apr 15 -- Following received from Stavanger RCC, timed 1140, UTC: General cargo Brentland touched ground outside Bergen about 1150, local time, today. Vessel has a minor hole in its hull and is currently proceeding under own power to Bergen shipyard. There is no cargo on board.

Bergen, Apr 20 -- General cargo Brentland will complete repairs on Apr 22 and should then leave the yard. -- Lloyd's Sub-agents.

BURHOU I (U.K.)

London, Apr 16 -- General cargo Burhou I (674 gt, built 1978), Antwerp for Sutton Bridge, loaded, dropped anchor due main engine blackout at Buoy 30, River Scheldt, about 1600, local time, Apr 15. The shipping control ordered that the vessel had to get out of the river and tugs Drado and Zelzate from Terneuzen sailed from there and towed the vessel to Terneuzen and into the canal, mooring it in the Massagoed harbour. Engine repairs were effected there and vessel sailed about 1900, local time, today for Sutton Bridge.

CANADIAN RANGER (Canada)

London, Apr 19 -- Bulk Canadian Ranger (16358 gt, built 1943) while underway below lock 1 in the Welland Canal, the No. 3 generator failed and the vessel experienced a blackout at 2300, UTC, Apr 18. Power was restored shortly and the vessel was permitted to proceed with two generators.

CAP ANAMUR (Germany)

See under "Miscellaneous."

COLE (U.S.A.)

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: A judge has set an Aug 23 trial date in the case filed against the Republic of Sudan by the families of the victims of the 2000 attack on US destroyer Cole. Sudan is accused of providing the financing and training for al-Qaida terrorists who carried out the attack. US District Judge Robert G. Doumar, who is

presiding over the suit, ruled on Wednesday (Apr 13) that the case will go forward even though Sudan has never responded to the legal action. The suit, initially filed in July by seven victims' relatives, now includes all 17 families of those killed in the blast. They will be seeking tens of millions of dollars from the East African nation. The attack on the Norfolk-based Cole in the harbour at Aden killed 17 sailors on Oct 12, 2000. Six suspected al-Qaida operatives were charged in Yemen with plotting the attack. There are 58 family members involved in the suit, including 10 children, according to James Cooper-Hill, a Texas attorney for the plaintiffs. "Understandably, for many, it's a very emotionally draining situation," Cooper-Hill said on Thursday. "Some people really don't want to testify. It's very painful for them." He said he planned to have six to eight relatives of Cole victims testify at the Aug 23 trial. He and other attorneys involved are scheduling depositions with all family members. Initial court filings said that the suit would seek \$105 million for the seven families that filed first. The total amount sought for all 17 families has not been disclosed. Cooper-Hill said he realises that Sudan is a poor nation. He and the other attorneys have sought congressional approval for payment from \$29 million in Sudanese assets that the United States has frozen. A number of families initially did not want to sue and instead sought compensation through the Sep 11, 2001, fund set up by Congress, Cooper-Hill said. When legislation to add those names failed to get approval, those families joined the suit. Sudan has not responded to the lawsuit and is not expected to participate in the trial. Papers were served at the country's Washington embassy and with officials in Khartoum, the nation's capital. Sudan was named in 1993 by the US State Department as a state sponsor of terrorism. Al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden operated training camps in Sudan through the 1990s. It was at those camps that al-Qaida militants trained to manufacture and detonate explosives, the lawsuit said. The Sudanese government allowed bin Laden to ship explosives out of the country, including four crates of explosives used in the Cole bombing, the lawsuit alleges. Six al-Qaida operatives were charged in Yemen with plotting the attack. One of the six, Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, believed to be an al-Qaida leader in the Gulf region, has been sentenced to death in Yemen. Another organiser had his death sentence commuted last month to 15 years in prison.

CORNER BROOK (Bermuda)

London, Apr 21 -- Following received from the managers of general cargo Corner Brook, dated today: Corner Brook remains at Tilbury, with investigations and cleaning work under way. Repairs have not yet commenced.

CSAV RIO MAIPO (Liberia)

Cape Town, Apr 18 -- C.c. CSAV Rio Maipo (32322 gt, built 1999) was towed into Cape Town by salvage tug Smit Amandla on Apr 15, due to main engine damages sustained at sea. Understand the vessel will undergo repairs which are expected to take approximately 10 days afloat. -- Lloyd's Agents. (Note -- CSAV Rio Maipo sailed Rio Grande Mar 20 for Durban.)

DIEPPE (France)

London, Apr 14 -- Passenger ro/ro Dieppe sailed Ferrol Apr 2 for Dieppe.

ECE (Marshall Islands)

London, Apr 19 -- Acid tanker Ece arrived Port Arthur Apr 13.

EIRIK RAUDE (Bahamas)

See "Barents Sea" under "Pollution."

EL SAFA (Panama)

Hodeidah, Apr 14 -- Passenger ro/ro El Safa is still at Hodeidah anchorage. Bunkers have been delivered to the vessel, but the master now reports that the "winch" requires urgent repairs. As no funds are available to undertake the repairs the master has decided to remain at anchorage until the owners transfer their remittance and the repairs are undertaken. -- Lloyd's Agents.

EMC 423 (U.S.A.)

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: Investigators trying to determine the cause of a fatal barge explosion (tank barge EMC 423) Jan 19 have shifted their focus to a propane torch that may have been used to heat the lines used to pump out the cargo. John Gamboa, a special agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, testified at a Coast Guard hearing Friday that a crewman aboard the barge had previously used a torch that way. Tugboat captain Dennis Egan said while it "wasn't standard operating procedure," he knew crewman Alex Oliva had in the past used a propane torch to heat the lines, Gamboa testified. Egan did not know whether Oliva used a propane torch Jan 19, Gamboa said. Gamboa interviewed Egan about two hours after the barge exploded on the Chicago Sanitary & Ship Canal, just east of the Cicero Avenue bridge near 40th Street. Oliva, of Oak Lawn, was killed. His body was found more than a week later in the canal. Oliva boarded the barge about an hour before it was to arrive at the Ameropan Oil Co. in Chicago. He was told to "start the pump" that helps heat the slurry oil so it can be pumped onto another barge. Officials originally thought a boiler used to heat the oil had ignited, setting off the explosion. But the boiler was later found intact. William Ryan, an attorney representing Egan Marine Co., suggested the slurry oil may have been contaminated when it was loaded onto the barge at the Exxon Mobile plant

near Joliet. More than 14,000 barrels of the slurry oil were loaded onto the barge at 0700 for the trip to the Ameropan Oil Co. Each barrel contains 42 gallons of oil. There has been no analysis conducted on the cargo the barge was hauling. Peter Lamanna, a fire marshal with the Chicago Fire Department, also interviewed Dennis Egan shortly after the explosion. Lamanna said Egan told him that he had hauled the same slurry oil on the barge three previous times without mixing products. The two-week hearing was recessed Friday (Apr 15) until the barge is raised and can be examined. Once that is done, the hearing will reconvene. Officials said the barge should be raised within a week.

ENSCO 70 (Bahamas)

See Stevns Ocean.

FINNCLIPPER (Germany)

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: Passenger ro/ro Finnclipper (30500 gt, built 1999) leaving Travemunde, entering River Trave sustained main engine problems and started drifting towards shore. Both anchors were dropped and tug assistance required. The river was blocked until tug Michael succeeded in getting the vessel free at 0445 hrs in its second attempt to assist.

FLOATING CRANE SUNK, KOLA PENINSULA, BARENTS SEA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: Rescuers have pumped out 36 tonnes of oil from a floating crane of the Arktikmorneftegazrazvedka Company that sank offshore the Kola Peninsula in the Barents Sea on Apr 12. The pollution hazard is now gone, a source in the Murmansk regional service of the Russian Emergency Situations Ministry told Itar-Tass today. The crane sank while being towed to the Saida Bay. The towboat's engine suddenly failed and the caravan drifted to the shore. The towboat and the crane ran aground. The towboat was rescued, and the crane, which had a large hole in a side, sank and threatened with an oil spill. Arktikmorneftegazrazvedka is considering the crane's rescue.

FRIENDSHIP IV (U.S.A.)

Miami, Apr 15 -- Passenger Friendship IV is currently undergoing repairs. Traffic is still moving over the John's Pass drawbridge. -- Lloyd's Agents.

IBIS ARROW (Bahamas)

See "Vessels from China Quarantined at Canadian Ports" under "Miscellaneous."

INDEPENDIENTE (Panama)

Freeport, Bahamas, Apr 19 -- Understand bulk Independiente (4936 gt, built 1980), Freeport for Nassau, with a part cargo of bulk cement on board, reportedly grounded while attempting to anchor off Nassau in strong northerly winds at about 1600,

Apr 15. Local tugs succeeded in pulling it free from the shoreline and the vessel is now safely afloat. Suspected damages to its underwater gear but the hull appears sound and the cargo is undamaged. -- Lloyd's Agents.

LAIETA (Panama)

Barcelona, Apr 14 -- Lng Laieta has been anchored outside Barcelona since yesterday and repairs have commenced. ETC next Saturday (Apr 23). -- Lloyd's Agents.

LT LLOYDIANA (Italy)

London, Apr 14 -- C.c. LT Lloydiana is currently at Tuas Finger Pier East, Singapore.

LYKES CHALLENGER (Bermuda)

San Juan, PR, Apr 14 -- C.c. Lykes Challenger (40439 gt, built 1986) touched bottom off Pier 16, Graving Dock Channel, San Juan, PR, about 0930 today. Tugs are assisting and vessel has moved. -- Lloyd's Agents. (Note -- Lykes Challenger sailed New Orleans Apr 10.)

London, Apr 14 -- Information received, timed 1740, UTC, states: C.c. Lykes Challenger has now refloated with no problems.

San Juan, PR, Apr 14 -- C.c. Lykes Challenger has refloated and we have been advised by the agents that vessel's classification society will be arriving to inspect vessel and, once confirmed to sail, it is scheduled to leave tomorrow for Italy. -- Lloyd's Agents.

San Juan, PR, Apr 20 -- C.c. Lykes Challenger sailed as expected Apr 15 for Italy. -- Lloyd's Agents.

LYKES VOYAGER (United Kingdom not Isle of Man as before reported)

London, Apr 15 -- Understood that c.c. Lykes Voyager currently at Hud Taikoo Dock, Hong Kong, is no longer under arrest. (See issue of Apr 12.)

MARITIME WISDOM (Singapore)

Singapore, Apr 20 -- Bulk Maritime Wisdom arrived Singapore Apr 18 and sailed Apr 19 for Qingdao. -- Lloyd's Agents.

MARTINA M (St. Vincent & Grenadines)

Ymuiden, Apr 14 -- Wijsmuller Salvage BV redelivered general cargo Martina M at 0900, local time, today. The vessel, which grounded on rocks off Tunisia in early February, was refloated by Wijsmuller after earlier attempts by others failed. The vessel upon grounding ended up high and dry on a rocky patch with its complete bow and propeller shaft above water level. Refloating it required a newly developed pulling system capable of pulling 600 tons in combination with a conventional ground tackle of 100 tons and the use of a single tug. Upon having refloated the vessel last Friday morning (Apr 8), tug and tow with a Wijsmuller team and equipment on board headed for Sousse and, after being released there, the convoy

proceeded to Bizerta. Bad weather in the region forced the vessels to take shelter in the Bay of Tunis over the weekend and early this week. A lull in the weather allowed the convoy to arrive at Bizerta roads late yesterday evening. This morning the vessel subsequently entered port and was delivered to its owners at the local shipyard at 0900 hrs. -- Wijsmuller Salvage BV.

MARVITA (Malta)

London, Apr 15 -- Following received from Associated British Ports, Hull, dated today: General cargo Marvita arrived Alexandra Dock, Hull, at 2155 yesterday.

Hull, Apr 15 -- General cargo Marvita is presently discharging its cargo at Hull. Vessel will proceed shortly to a lay-by berth, where it will remain for three to five days awaiting parts for repairs, which will be effected at Hull. -- Lloyd's Agents.

MARWA M. (Tonga)

Valletta, Apr 18 -- General cargo Marwa M. is still in Malta. -- Lloyd's Agents.

MEMA (North Korea)

London, Apr 21 -- Following received from Larnaca RCC, timed 2256, UTC, Apr 20: General cargo Mema (973 gt, built 1972), El Arish for Syria with cement, capsized in lat 33 01N, long 34 16E, at around 0500, local time, Apr 19. Three of the seven crew were rescued, and four are missing. A search is under way.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: US, French and Israeli forces were today searching for four people whose vessel sank in the eastern Mediterranean, an Israeli army spokesman reported. General cargo Mema sank en route from Egypt to Syria. Another vessel, Andora, reported the sinking in international waters and rescued two Syrians and an Egyptian who had been on board the sinking vessel. The Israelis sent a force, backed by a helicopter, to search for survivors. Searches were stopped for the night, but were to resume tomorrow morning, a military spokeswoman said. A Syrian vessel reached the area today and picked up the three survivors who had been on board Andora, the spokeswoman said.

Ashdod, Apr 21 -- General cargo Mema, en route from El Arish, Egypt, to Syria, with 7 crew members of Syrian and Egyptian nationalities, capsized for unknown reason in lat 32 59.6N, long 34 11.8E Apr 20. Three crew members, two Syrians and one Egyptian, were collected alive by vessel Andora and landed in Mersin, Turkey. There is a search for the remaining four crew members. No salvage attempt made so far. -- Lloyd's Agents.

MOBY RIDER (Italy)

Leghorn, Apr 20 -- Ro/ro Moby Rider (21886 gt, built 1968), Leghorn to Olbia, with 21 passengers and vehicles and 29 crew members on board, while leaving Leghorn, stranded at about

2000, Apr 19. Vessel remains in way of the "Vegliia" breakwater in bad weather conditions. All attempts to refloat the vessel with the assistance of four tugs have proved fruitless so far. Weather conditions continue to be bad with strong south westerly winds. All the passengers and crew are still on board. They are all reported to be unhurt. -- Lloyd's Agents.

London, Apr 20 -- Following received from Rome MRCC, timed 0910, UTC: Ro/ro Moby Rider, Leghorn for Olbia, with 21 passengers and 29 crew as well as cars, trailers and motorhomes on board, grounded on sand near breakwater outside Leghorn in high winds yesterday evening. No damage or injuries. Five tugs are on scene. It may be necessary to remove some fuel from the vessel to facilitate refloating. Winds are still strong on the scene at the present time.

London, Apr 20 -- Following received from Rome MRCC, timed 1530, UTC: Ro/ro Moby Rider is still aground after initial refloating attempts were hampered by bad weather. The passengers remain on board and efforts to refloat are continuing.

MONTANA (Netherlands)

London, Apr 15 -- Pusher tug Montana, built 1973, length 17 metres, owned by Holkamp & van den Bergen VoF at Wormer, was lying last night in Ymuiden with two push barges in the Spuikanaal near the locks. When they started to sluice water out of the canal into the outer harbour through the sluice, one of the connecting wires to the barges broke and the push tug swung around with the barges. Montana hit the dyke and the rudder touched the stones heavily damaging the steering outfit. Thereafter the other connecting wire also broke and the tug started drifting. Another tug, the Obelix, came to assist Montana and moored it first, followed by the two barges.

NORWEGIAN DAWN (Bahamas)

London, Apr 17 -- A press report, dated today, states: A seven-storey-high wave damaged passenger Norwegian Dawn (92250 gt, built 2002) returning from the Bahamas over the weekend, smashing windows, flooding more than 60 cabins and injuring four passengers. The vessel was diverted from its route when it ran into rough weather on the way back to New York. The vessel was docked in Charleston harbour by late yesterday afternoon for repairs, officials said. "The ship was hit by a freak wave that caused two windows to break in two different cabins," Norwegian Cruise Line said in a statement. It said 62 cabins flooded and four passengers had cuts and bruises. The wave reached as high as deck 10 on the vessel, company spokeswoman Susan Robison said today. The hull was damaged but the vessel was not taking on water, said Keith Moore of the Coast Guard Group Charleston. "All the passengers had donned personal flotation devices as a precaution," Moore said. The cruise

line said passengers whose cabins were flooded were being flown home from Charleston and the safety of the vessel "was in no way compromised by this incident." The vessel left New York last Sunday (Apr 10) with 2,500 passengers on board. It was expected to arrive back in New York tomorrow.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: As passenger Norwegian Dawn began to steam home to New York in calmer waters yesterday, the Coast Guard launched an investigation into whether the ship's captain sent a distress call during the storm. The storm hit Friday night (Apr 15), as tiles exploded out of the ceiling and vases and glasses shattered, sending terrified passengers scurrying for cover as the liner rocked side to side. At least four passengers were injured and 62 cabins were flooded. The vessel abandoned its journey to New York, it had been scheduled to arrive yesterday, and instead retired to the port of Charleston, S.C. According to the Norwegian Cruise Lines, the veteran captain of the vessel, Niklas Peterstam, had signalled to the Coast Guard that the vessel had come under duress. But the Coast Guard said yesterday that it has no record of a distress call. Petty Officer Bobby Nash of the Florida Coast Guard said the incident was under investigation. Norwegian Cruise Lines spokeswoman Susan Robison said the vessel was never in any danger. She confirmed the cruise cancelled its normal stop in the Bahamas in order to arrive earlier in New York so it could load new equipment. After undergoing repairs and a Coast Guard inspection, the vessel steamed out of Charleston yesterday and was expected to arrive in New York today. Passengers whose cabins were damaged were placed on a charter jet that was to return to Newark at 0200, EDT, yesterday. Others opted to drive home rather than stay on the vessel.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Passenger Norwegian Dawn, struck by a freak seven-storey-high wave that smashed windows and sent furniture flying returned to New York Harbour today and docked at its berth on the Hudson River. The vessel arrived with more than 2,000 passengers still on board after some 300 others decided to disembark early in Charleston and fly or drive home. It docked at Pier 88 on Manhattan's West Side, with passengers due to begin disembarking at around 1100 hrs. The Norwegian Dawn docked at Charleston for repairs and a Coast Guard inspection before continuing its voyage to New York early yesterday. The cruise line said passengers whose cabins were flooded were flown home from Charleston and the safety of the vessel "was in no way compromised by this incident." Each passenger got a refund of half the trip's cost and a voucher for half the price of a future cruise, Norwegian Cruise Line spokeswoman Susan Robison said. Robison said about 300 passengers decided not to return by

ship from Charleston. About 100 were flown back to New York and the rest made their own arrangements, Robison said.

London, Apr 20 -- Passenger Norwegian Dawn sailed New York Apr 18 for Port Canaveral.

NOVA SCOTIA (Antigua & Barbuda)

Stanley, Apr 20 -- Ref Nova Scotia (5875 gt, built 1983) ran aground in Berkeley Sound on Cochoon Island last night. A diver has been arranged for an underwater survey this will take place as soon as the weather improves. The vessel at the moment is at anchor at the entrance of Berkeley Sound. -- Lloyd's Agents.

PETR ZHITNIKOV (Russia)

See "Slavyanka Bay, Russia" under "Pollution."

QUEEN ELIZABETH 2 (U.K.)

London, Apr 17 -- A press report, dated today, states: Three crew members on passenger Queen Elizabeth 2 (70327 gt, built 1968) have been arrested on suspicion of damaging the cruise liner. The men are being questioned over an incident on Thursday night (Apr 14), when damage costing thousands of pounds was caused. A 1969 tapestry of the Royal family was vandalised and police believe it may have been thrown overboard. There was also damage to the vessel's entertainment area, crew toilets and a lifeboat. The men were held after the vessel docked in Southampton yesterday. Hampshire police are questioning them at Southampton Central Police station. Officers are appealing to anyone who may find the tapestry, which was commissioned to mark the vessel's launch, to make contact. They say it could be washed up on shore or picked up by fishermen.

SAGA MORUS (Hong Kong)

See "Vessels from China Quarantined at Canadian Ports" under "Miscellaneous."

SEA CLOUD (Antigua & Barbuda)

St. Croix, Apr 14 -- C.c. Sea Cloud: Minor damage was sustained during soft grounding. Vessel then moved on to Jacksonville. No special dry-dock for repairs per GL class, until next drydockng due before Apr 30, 2006. -- Lloyd's Agents.

SOLWAY HARVESTER (United Kingdom)

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: Jury members in the trial involving fishing Solway Harvester are set to see the wreck of the vessel in Douglas Harbour on the Isle of Man. The jury will be told not to discuss what they see, even among themselves, and will be sent home for the weekend. The seven men and five women will initially meet at the Courts of Justice in the Isle of Man, before being taken to the remains of the trawler. They will be accompanied by Judge Andrew Moran, who has

prepared the jury for conditions on board. He has warned them to wear old clothes and boots or heavy shoes. They will be given hard hats and protective suits. Small groups will tour the wreck, inspecting various features, such as the flood pumps, which have been labelled and named. No direction will be given from either the prosecution or defence. Next week, the trial is expected to hear from a succession of fishermen, who will be questioned about working conditions on the vessel.

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

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: A fund has been established to help repay creditors who lost money when the original owners of passenger ro/ro Spirit of Ontario I shut down. The \$700,000 fund was set up by the city of Rochester, which purchased the vessel six weeks ago at a foreclosure auction. The fund will partly compensate unsecured creditors who are not part of the federal bankruptcy case against the former fast ferry operator -- Canadian American Transportation Systems. The company, known as CATS, halted ferry operations just after Labor Day last year following just three months of service to Toronto. Most of the unsecured creditors are small businesses such as florists and printing firms. Contractors and businesses who hope to recover their losses need to file an application by Jun 15.

STA.ELENA (Philippines)

Manila, Apr 18 -- Passenger Sta.Elena reportedly sailed from Dalahican port Apr 15, destination unknown. -- Lloyd's Agents.

STAR EAGLE (NIS)

London, Apr 14 -- Following received from Coast Guard Juneau, timed 1605, UTC: General cargo Star Eagle sailed Dutch Harbour yesterday afternoon after it had been ascertained that the fire had been completely extinguished.

Seattle, Apr 19 -- General cargo Star Eagle did not sustain any significant damage, and sailed Dutch Harbour Apr 13 for Hachinohe. -- Lloyd's Agents. (See issue of Apr 18.)

STENA EUROPE (U.K.)

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 15, states: Passenger ro/ro Stena Europe (24828 gt, built 1981), Fishguard for Rosslare, sustained fuel leakage Apr 10. Voyage to Rosslare abandoned after 15 minutes sailing and returned to Fishguard as precaution. No pollution loss. Subsequent voyages cancelled.

STEVNS OCEAN (DIS)

London, Apr 14 -- Following received from Coastguard Humber MRSC, timed 1830, UTC: Tug Stevens Ocean, collision with drill platform Enco 70: Enco 70 is at full muster stations with all persons accounted for. The platform is jacking up and pinning to assess damage. It is now in lat 53 53.9N, long 00 32.9E, which is the

final position with watertight integrity intact. Damage to the platform and the tug both superficial.

STOROE (Cyprus)

Turku, Apr 19 -- General cargo Storoe (3183 gt, built 2004) grounded outside Kristinestad, Finland, at approximately 0600, local time, today. Vessel was steaming empty towards Kristinestad in order to load approximately 2000 tons of peatmoss. Storoe was coming from Antwerp, and after Kristinestad its next port of call would have been Papenburg. Reason for grounding not yet known. Currently safely steady on ground. Not known when attempts will be made to refloat. -- Lloyd's Agents. (Note -- Storoe sailed Antwerp Apr 14 for Parnu.)

London, Apr 19 -- Following received from Turku MRCC, timed 0930, UTC: General cargo Storoe grounded in lat 62 14.48N, long 21 21.66E, at 0340, UTC, today. Vessel remains aground at present and commercial salvors will carry out operation to refloat.

Helsinki, Apr 19 -- General cargo Storoe grounded off the port of Kristiinankaupunki, Finland, early today. No leaks were noted in the vessel. The vessel still remains grounded on the west side of the fairway. The 10 people on board were not in danger. Storoe was on its way to Kristiinankaupunki to load when it drifted off the fairway approximately 1.5 nautical miles before the harbour. A Finnish pilot was on board the ship. According to preliminary investigation, the vessel experienced a technical fault. So far it has not been decided when the vessel will be refloated. -- Lloyd's Agents.

London, Apr 20 -- Following received from Turku MRCC, timed 0950, UTC: General cargo Storoe was refloated by tugs at 0805, local time, today. Diver inspection revealed a few minor holes in the stern. Vessel is now berthed at Kristiinankaupunki.

Turku, Apr 21 -- General cargo Storoe was assisted by two tugs and refloated approximately 0815, local time, Apr 20. Vessel arrived Kristinestad 0900, where it was inspected by representatives of Germanischer Lloyd and Finnish Maritime Authority. Some punctures were noted in two ballast tanks and bow thruster out of order. Storoe left Kristinestad at 1900, Apr 20, and currently steaming for Emden, Germany. -- Lloyd's Agents.

SUDE 1 (Turkey)

Istanbul, Apr 14 -- General cargo Sude 1 is still lying "as is" and there is no progress in the vessel's situation. -- Lloyd's Agents.

Istanbul, Apr 19 -- General cargo Sude 1 completed repairs by own means and, upon inspection/formalities, sailed from Canakkale 0904, local time, today. -- Lloyd's Agents.

London, Apr 21 -- General cargo Sude 1 passed Dardanelles at 0915, Apr 19, bound for Tuzla.

SUN RISE I (Cambodia)

Bucharest, Apr 18 -- General cargo Sun Rise I completed repairs Apr 15 and sailed at 0240, Apr 16, bound for Nikolayev. -- Lloyd's Agents.

TASMAN SPIRIT (Malta)

Karachi, Apr 15 -- A local press report, dated Apr 14, states: "Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) MNA Kunwar Khalid Younus yesterday questioned claims of \$6.640 billion made by four departments on account of losses suffered by them due to the sinking of crude oil tanker Tasman Spirit. The MQM MNA was speaking on the floor of the National Assembly during the question-hour. In response to a question by MMA lawmaker Mohammad Laeeque Khan, the house was told that the Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Pakistan Navy, Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works and the Defence Housing Authority had collectively made a claim of over \$6.640 billion. Mr Younus said that he had studied a few similar cases in history when ships met with similar accidents in the US and Japan, but that such huge losses were never reported in any of the cases. He asked the Federal Minister for Communications: Shamim Siddiqi, who was responding to the question in the absence of the Minister for Ports & Shipping Babar Khan Gouri, to provide a breakdown of the claims, made by each Department. Responding to Mr Younus' point, the minister said that the real picture would emerge when the Government received the report of the Special Environment Committee, assessing losses from the accident. He said the committee was busy assessing the damage caused to marine life and natural resources. He said the departments would be asked to submit their claims to the company only after receiving the committee's final report. Earlier, Federal Minister for Communications Shamim Siddiqi informed the National Assembly that a the KPT had made a claim of \$1.034 billion, the navy of \$5.547 million, Karachi Shipyard & Engineering \$0.700 million & the Defence Housing Authority \$5.600 billion." -- Lloyd's Agents.

THEMSESTERN (Isle of Man)

See Agnes.

THOR ENTERPRISE (Thailand)

London, Apr 15 -- During the early evening of Apr 12, bulk Thor Enterprise, began heeling over and listing at quay 252, Antwerp. Two tugs came alongside to push the vessel against the quay to prevent it from capsizing. The aft of the vessel sank slowly to the bottom of the 14 metres deep dock, most probably as a result of a leak in its double bottom ballast tanks. As a precautionary measure to prevent any leakage from the fuel tanks, a boom was laid around the vessel. After the vessel had been stabilised the cargo was unloaded on Wednesday (Apr 13) and yesterday. The vessel had been loaded with long

heavy pipes. No one was injured in this accident and it did not disrupt other shipping traffic in the docks. Currently the vessel is still in Antwerp docks, at Quay 252/254.

Maassluis, Apr 20 -- Understand bulk Thor Enterprise is still alongside for inspection. -- Lloyd's Sub-agents.

THULE (Germany)

Stockholm, Apr 14 -- General cargo Thule (2842 gt, built 1996) experienced engine problems outside Gotland and was towed to Oxelosund, where it arrived Apr 12. The vessel effected repairs and sailed at 1400 today for Pietarsaari. -- Lloyd's Agents. (Note -- Thule sailed Cardiff Apr 6 for Pietarsaari and subsequently passed Brunshüttel Apr 9.)

TIM BUCK (Cyprus)

See "Somalia" under "Piracy."

TOR HUMBRIA (NIS)

London, Apr 15 -- Ro/ro Tor Humbria arrived Rotterdam 0720 today.

TOWER BRIDGE (Singapore)

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: Tugs have freed c.c. Tower Bridge (34487 gt, built 1985) after it ran aground at Fremantle Port. The vessel became stranded at the North Mole this morning after losing engine power. Three tugs are now towing the vessel to deeper water ahead of its voyage to Asia.

Sydney, Apr 18 -- C.c. Tower Bridge ran aground in Fremantle on Saturday morning (Apr 16) at the start of its northbound voyage to Asia. The vessel, which was under pilotage, partially lost power and was grounded for some hours near the North Mole at the entrance to Fremantle's Inner Harbour. The vessel was refloated and anchored in deeper water with the aid of three harbour tugs. The vessel finally left Fremantle on Saturday evening after a hull survey and inspection by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. The vessel operates in a joint weekly shuttle with Maersk Sealand between Fremantle, Singapore, and Tanjung Pelapas, with a southbound call in Jakarta. -- "Lloyd's List Daily Commercial News."

Fremantle, Apr 21 -- C.c. Tower Bridge ran aground at Fremantle's North Mole on Apr 16, due to engine failure. The vessel refloated at high tide with the assistance of four tugs, and anchored at Gage Roads for engine repairs. The vessel's agent advised that there was no damage to the vessel. The engine problem was repaired and the vessel sailed at 2000, Apr 16, for an Asian port. -- Lloyd's Agents.

VICTORIAN RELIANCE (Australia)

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: Toll Shipping says the master of ro/ro Victorian Reliance has been sacked because the vessel hit rocks off Penguin on Tasmania's

north-west coast. Victorian Reliance hit an uncharted rock near Penguin last November. The vessel was taken off the Melbourne to Burnie run for two months for repairs. The maritime union claimed cargo was being held up while the vessel sat in dry dock. Yesterday, the managing director of Toll, Paul Little, confirmed the master of Victorian Reliance was sacked over the incident.

WEEKS 538 (U.S.A.)

Honolulu, Apr 18 -- Crane barge Weeks 538 (912 gt, built 1942) official No 527059, caught fire during the evening of Apr 16 while in dry dock at Pacific Shipyards International, Pier 41, Honolulu Harbour. It was reported that workers were evacuated and no injuries were sustained. The cause is unknown at this time. -- Lloyd's Agents.

YES SIR (Panama)

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Four Kenyan sailors and 17 others are stranded in South Africa after being rescued from a sinking Spanish vessel. The Kenyans are seeking help to return home. They want to be paid their benefits after fishing Yes Sir (287 gt, built 1967) sank off the Coast of South Africa on Apr 9. They were rescued by another fishing vessel. The Kenyan coordinator of the Seafarers Assistance Programmes (SAP), Mr Andrew Mwangura said the others stranded were 10 Mozambicans, two Namibians and five Spaniards. The seafarers accused the Spanish shipping line of abandoning them. Mwangura forwarded the details to the Ministry of Transport. He said the four Kenyans had telephoned him saying they were dumped by the company after their vessel capsized. Speaking in Mombasa, Mwangura said one of the Kenyans had called him explaining their fate. The four said their passports were expiring yesterday, a situation that would make them illegal aliens in South Africa. They claimed the shipping company wanted to return them to Kenya without paying benefits. Mwangura said it was illegal to send such people home without any benefits. He said the vessel's owner should take care of their living expenses.



SOMALIA

Dar es Salaam, Apr 18 -- Bulk/c.c. Tim Buck was attacked by armed pirates Apr 10. The vessel sailed from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, towards port of destination, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, with a cargo of 15751.472 tonnes of urea in bulk. At 1249, local time,

vessel in position lat 03 24.0N, long 048 17.0E, approximately 60 nautical miles from the coast of Somalia with course 221, speed 12.1 knots. Vessel was under Security level 2 according to ISPS code. Two speedboats were sighted approaching the vessel from stern starboard side. At 1250, local time, general alarm was sounded, the master was on the bridge. All crew hid in the superstructure and all doors were locked from inside. Two speedboats with four armed pirates in each boat armed with automatic guns and grenade launchers approached the vessel on starboard quarter. Immediately under master's command at 1253, the vessel made maximum possible speed. The pirates opened fire with machine guns and grenade launchers in the direction of the superstructure and navigation bridge and gave an order by hand signal to stop the vessel. Distress message was sent through Inmarsat-C. One grenade hit lifeboat No.1, starboard side, and the lifeboat caught fire. The pirates kept shooting and attempts to board the vessel by means of rope ladder with hooks were made. At 1300 a second grenade was shot in the direction of the navigation bridge and at the same time, they boarded the vessel in the area near holds No's 5 and 6, starboard side. As per master's order all crew hid inside the superstructure for safety reasons. At 1315 vessel reduced speed. Master Sergey Potemkin had heart pains. First medical assistance arranged. At 1333 vessel proceeded at slow ahead speed and continued to reduce speed from the engine-room. At 1345 hrs first exploring squad was sent through the keel tunnel to monitoring situation from cranes one and two. At 1410 second exploring squad was sent on upper platform of funnel. At 1430 received report from exploring squads that the pirates had left the vessel and no boats sighted in the vicinity of the vessel. The crew left the safety area. Firefighting of burning lifeboat No. 1 commenced. At 1500 vessel in lat 03 24.2N, long 048 15.0E. Firefighting completed but lifeboat completely burned. All crew OK, no injuries. Vessel proceed to port of destination. After a search of the vessel it was found that pirates had tried to penetrate inside superstructure but unsuccessful, window on navigation bridge, stern part, port side, was shot at. At 1520 the master had a heart attack and after attempts to revive him he was pronounced dead. Chief Officer Tischenko Konstantin, took command of the vessel which arrived at Dar es Salaam Port without further problems. Minor repairs, boarding up of broken windows and replacement of damaged navigation lights, was carried out by the crew prior to arrival. Further repairs are being arranged with the ship's agents prior to departure. -- Lloyd's Agents.

Seizures & Arrests



AFRICAN PRIDE (Panama)

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), Vice Admiral Samuel Afolayan, has replied to the House of Representatives Committee on Defence over its demand that President Olusegun Obasanjo should sanction him for "lying on oath" over the missing product tanker African Pride. "I told them the truth as I knew it then," the CNS, who stated he was misled on the matter, said in Abuja. The House Committee had asked the President to punish Afolayan for perjury which stemmed from his claim at a public hearing organised by the House that the detained African Pride became missing while in the custody of the police. It was later established at the hearing that the controversial vessel was in the Navy's custody at the time of its disappearance. Afolayan said at the weekend that the essence of convening the Rear Admiral Joseph Ajayi General Court Martial, after a Board of Inquiry (BOI) was set up, was to punish those responsible for making him swear on oath and make claims that amounted to misleading the House.

CAN GIO (Honduras)

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Six of the 12 Vietnamese crewmen from general cargo Can Gio, which was seized in Tanzania over eight months ago, have returned home, an executive of the ship's owner, the Sea Saigon Shipping Company (SSS), has said. Deputy Director General Pham Ngoc Son said that the sailors' labour contracts signed with SSS company have expired and that the company has paid the salaries of these sailors up to Mar 31. The other six crew remain in Tanzania. Son also said that SSS company had spent more than three billion VND "for" Can Gio, since it was seized in Tanzania, on Jul 27, due to a trade dispute. The case resulted from a commercial dispute relating to a trading contract for 6,000 tonnes of Vietnamese rice between Tanzania's Mohammed Enterprises and Tien Giang Province's Thanh Hoa Co.Ltd. The issue should have been solved by the two companies and concerned parties. However, under pressure from Mohammed Enterprises, Tanzania's Supreme Court ordered the seizure of Can Gio and named the Vietnamese Government as a defendant in the case.

EGEON P. (Greece)

London, Apr 18 -- A report in the Apr 15 issue of "Newsfront" states: After being seized several times, the latest by a private creditor at the end of November 2004 in pursuit of a

Euro9,102 claim in an action against the registered owners, Egeon P. Shipping Company, cement Egeon P. (992 gt, built 1971) has once again been listed for hammering down, this time May 18. Lying at Perama, the vessel is carrying start-up price of Euro60,000.

ELQUI (Uruguay)

Stanley, Apr 20 -- Master and owners of fishing Elqui have been found guilty of fishing illegally in South Georgia waters. -- Lloyd's Agents.

INDONESIAN FISHING VESSELS SEIZED BY AUSTRALIA

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Australia's largest-ever operation targeting illegal fishing has netted more than 20 foreign boats carrying about 200 crew. There was some evidence the boats were part of a large-scale operation involving a number of Asian countries, federal Fisheries Minister Ian Macdonald said today. He said the foreign fishing boats had been caught in the past nine days in Australia's northern waters under Operation Clearwater, a joint initiative of customs, navy, and immigration officials. "Those that haven't been arrested I think will be high-tailing it back to Indonesian ports as we speak," Senator Macdonald told ABC radio. "Investigations are continuing, but there is some evidence that this is organised, transnational criminal activity. Most of the parties involved, however, came from Indonesian fishing ports.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Australian authorities believe they have uncovered an organised Asian crime syndicate after netting 27 illegal Indonesian boats in the country's largest unlawful fishing operation. Warning shots and navy boarding parties were necessary in two of the captures. A total of 240 crew were caught on the illegal boats in Australia's northern waters in the past nine days, with 27 charged with illegal fishing and facing fines of up to \$250,000. Another 109 individuals were under investigation. Federal Fisheries Minister Ian Macdonald said most of the 27 captured boats would be burnt, rather than sent back to Indonesia. The Indonesian boats were caught under Operation Clearwater which began in the Gulf of Carpentaria on Apr 11. Navy patrol boats fired warning shots during two of the apprehensions when the boats refused to stop to be boarded, Senator Macdonald said. A crew of armed navy personnel boarded the fishing boats only when the boats continued to fail to comply with the navy after the shots were fired, he said. Sophisticated navigational and high-powered communication equipment on board the boats indicated an organised crime ring, Senator Macdonald said.

LYKES VOYAGER (United Kingdom)

See under "Marine."

MARWA M. (Tonga)

See under "Marine."

PATMOS (Greece)

London, Apr 18 -- A report in the Apr 15 issue of "Newsfront" states: Passenger ro/ro Patmos, seized at the end of March by private creditors against the registered owners Dane Sea Line, has been listed for hammering down May 5. Vessel is currently lying at Perama.

RODOS (Greece)

London, Apr 18 -- A report in the Apr 15 issue of "Newsfront" states: Ro/ro Rodos (10298 gt, built 1973), seized at the end of March by private creditors against the registered owners Dane Sea Line, has been listed for hammering down May 5. Vessel is currently lying at Perama.

SOUTH KOREAN FISHING VESSEL SEIZED BY JAPAN

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: A South Korean vessel has reportedly been seized by a Japanese patrol boat in Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone, some 200 kilometres south-east of Jeju Island. Officials at the Jeju Coast Guard said the vessel was carrying seven fishermen, including the skipper, when seized at 1715 yesterday.

TALAVERA (St. Vincent & Grenadines)

Leghorn, Apr 19 -- General cargo Talavera is still under arrest by the Criminal Court at Chioggia. Understand that the vessel may be put up for auction in about six months time. -- Lloyd's Agents.

Pipeline Accidents



GRAND ISLE AREA, LOUISIANA, UNITED STATES

See "Grand Isle Area, Louisiana, United States" under "Pollution".

MENDAHARA VILLAGE, EAST TANJUNGPABUNG, INDONESIA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: A leaking oil pipe in Mendahara village, East Tanjungpabung regency, some 100 kilometres east of Jambi city, was apparently to blame for the polluted river and forest in the area, an official said yesterday. Head of the Jambi environmental impact management agency, Saleh Sibli, said yesterday that the pipe, was still discharging oil and had been for a week. He said that no serious action had been taken so far against PT Petro China company, which is responsible for the pipeline. He said although the leak was not located in a residential area, it had polluted the Mendahara river, which is used by residents downstream for their daily water needs, and had affected the peat land ecosystem in

the area as well as dozens of hectares of industrial forest. Saleh said his staff had inspected the site and assigned a team with environmental and forestry expertise to conduct a thorough investigation of the pollution.

NORTH SLOPE, ALASKA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: Pipeline corrosion was the cause of an oily water spill in the Kuparuk oil field, officials said. The spill, discovered Mar 26, released an estimated 111,300 gallons of salty and oily water, ranking it as the third largest industrial spill ever recorded in the North Slope oil fields. The spill was traced to corrosion in a six-inch pipeline that was carrying water to a drill site on the western side of Kuparuk, according to officials with ConocoPhillips and the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation. Corrosion has been the cause of many North Slope spills. Damage from the Kuparuk Spill could be minimal because the ground is still frozen, reducing seepage into the tundra, officials said.

SANLIURFA PROVINCE, TURKEY

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: Several thousand barrels of crude oil that spilled into Lake Ataturk in eastern Turkey caught fire, causing damage to the environment before being brought under control, local officials said today. A crack in the pipeline from the oil-producing region of Batman in the east to an terminal in Dortyol in the south was reported late Wednesday (Apr 13) in the province of Sanliurfa, officials said. The crude then spilled into Ataturk, the country's artificial lake. According to the daily Zaman, up to 35,000 barrels of crude escaped from the pipes before they were closed, forming a oil slick one-kilometre long and four-centimetres thick. Teams from the oil distribution company Botas, owner of the pipeline, erected a dike to stop the pollution from spreading and began to pump out the oil, but were unable to avoid triggering a fire yesterday. The television station NTV showed pictures early today of the flames several metres high on the lake and some animals, especially turtles, burned by the fire. Later yesterday, with the fire under control, the Botas workers began clean-up operations, local officials said.

TIGRIS RIVER, IRAQ

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



Pollution

BARENTS SEA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 15, states: Norwegian

authorities today ordered drill platform Eirik Raude to remain shut down until the cause of its third spill into ecologically fragile Arctic waters since February has been investigated. The rig was voluntarily shut down by Statoil immediately after Tuesday's (Apr 12) spill of 1.75 tons of hydraulic oil into the Barents Sea. A news release from the Norwegian Petroleum Safety Authority, or PSA, said that it and the Norwegian pollution control board SFT had jointly ordered the rig to remain shut down while they investigate. Statoil has said it also takes the spill very seriously, and was investigating.

DALIAN, CHINA

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Oil leakage caused Monday (Apr 18) morning by an oil tanker berthed in the new port of Dalian in northeast China's Liaoning Province has been removed due to timely cleaning-up measures, said source with the local port office today. The product tanker Jing Bohu (11780 gt, built 1982), berthed at the No.4 berth in the new Dalian port on Apr 16, the source said, adding the leakage occurred after the oil tanker loaded with 14,000 tons of crude oil. Oil drops and stains were discovered around the tanker immediately after the leakage took place, and four rescue boats rushed to the scene to stop the leakage and cleaned up the floating oil drops. All the cleaning-up work was completed in about two hours, the source said. The current leakage was the third one occurred in the port in the recent period. The aging part of the tanker hull was blamed for the leakage, the source added.

DELAWARE RIVER, UNITED STATES

See Athos I under "Marine."

GRAND ISLE AREA, LOUISIANA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: A crude oil pipeline broke in a bay near this Grand Isle and about 100 workers were called in to contain and clean up the spill, the Coast Guard said today. An ExxonMobil pipeline that brings sweet crude oil from offshore to inland refineries burst at about 1430 hrs, yesterday, six miles north of Grand Isle in Barataria Bay, which is made up of marshland and oyster grounds. It was not immediately known how much oil got out, but the sheen was large enough to require about 100 workers to operate skimmers, booms and other equipment to deal with the spill. A command center was set up in Houma to co-ordinate the clean-up, the Coast Guard said. Coast Guard Lt. Commander Cheri Ben-Iesau said there were no immediate reports of damage to wildlife. Wind blew the sheen north by northwest and away from Grand Isle in the hours after the spill was discovered, she said. ExxonMobil spokesman Brian Dunphy said it was unclear how the pipeline broke. The line was shut down and

divers were set to inspect the pipeline to figure out what happened to it. "Our focus now is to try to protect public safety and environmentally sensitive areas," Dunphy said. "We regret the incident and we are trying to respond as quickly and effectively as possible."

JING BOHU (China)

See "Dalian, China - Poll" under "Pollution".

KUPARUK, ALASKA, UNITED STATES

See "North Slope, Alaska, United States" under "Pipeline Accidents."

LAKE ATATURK, TURKEY

See "Sanliurfa Province, Turkey" under "Pipeline Accidents."

SLAVYANKA BAY, RUSSIA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: An oil spill from ref Petr Zhitnikov (32096 gt, built 1989) has been recorded in Slavyanka Bay, in the south of Russia's far-eastern Maritime Territory. Although the incident occurred on Apr 9, it only became known today, the ITAR-TASS news agency reported, citing an environmental group. The oil spillage happened at night when the ship docked at the Slavyansky ship repair yard, the Feniks environmental foundation told ITAR-TASS. Special sea inspectorate experts, who learned about the circumstances of the incident a week later, have launched an inquiry. At present a large oil slick covers a stretch of the bay, and the shore, the quays and resort facilities have been contaminated, Nikolai Fedyushkin, head of the special sea inspectorate of the Maritime Territory's Khasansky district, said. It is impossible to estimate how many tons of oil spilt into the sea after so many days have passed. A rigorous inquiry into the incident is under way.



CHINA

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: A tornado killed seven people and injured at least 60 when it struck a city in eastern China, state-run media said. The twister hit at about 1640 hrs, 0840, GMT, sweeping through several townships round Yancheng city in Jiangsu province with strong gale-force winds, the Xinhua news agency said. The exact number of casualties was still unclear, a city government official told Xinhua, which added the tornado destroyed about half of the houses in a village in Shanggang Town. "The only township hospital was crowded with some 60 villagers waiting for treatment," Xinhua said. More than 30 of the patients were seriously injured, it added, quoting the head of the

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township, surnamed Xiao. Residents affected by the tornado had been provided with temporary accommodation, a local official said.

EUROPE

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Heavy snowfall and torrential rain have caused serious disruption in much of eastern France, the south of Switzerland and across Italy, and may have contributed to a serious accident in Switzerland in which 12 people died when their a bus skidded off a wet road. The Italian authorities have issued a nationwide warning, stressing the risk of avalanches in the Alps after heavy snowfalls and downpours and gales in the south of the country caused by a deep depression centred on the Mediterranean. Heavy snowfall in the French Alps and other southeastern regions left some 78,000 homes in the Rhone-Alpes region without power late yesterday as rainstorms also caused rivers to burst their banks, French authorities said. Earlier 145,000 households had been without power. In the Isere, Ardeche and Drome departments in the southeast the national power company EDF said it was working to restore power lines, damaged by falling trees and branches brought down by the snow. EDF said it had 1,000 staff in the field but that work was complicated by the poor weather conditions. Road traffic was seriously disrupted in the Ain region in the Jura mountain range, with a major highway shut down entirely for a time, regional officials said. Flood alerts were issued in the southeastern Rhone-Alpes region as well as in southern Auvergne and Burgundy, where more than 200 people had to be evacuated as several small rivers burst their banks, firefighters said. Twelve Swiss holidaymakers were killed Sunday when a coach carrying 27 people skidded off a wet mountain road and plunged 200 metres into a ravine in southern Switzerland. Four of those injured in the crash near the southern village of Orsieres were in a serious condition in intensive care, authorities in the southern canton of Valais said. Some 200 rescuers, 15 ambulances and a helicopter were rushed to the site of the crash, north of the Great St Bernard pass that links Switzerland and Italy. Authorities said the road was wet but not snowed up, while the valley was partly foggy at the time of the accident, the cause of which has yet to be determined. After heavy falls of wet snow, which closed roads and railways, police in the Lausanne area in southern Switzerland banned people from walking in parks and woodland, fearing they would be injured by tree branches collapsing under the weight of the snow. Many cars were reported to have been damaged.

RUSSIA

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: According to the latest reports, coming in from Leningrad Region, the floods are

beginning to recede there, Chief of the Regional Department of the Ministry for Emergency Situations Colonel Vladimir Kudryavtsev reported to Regional Governor Valery Serdyukov today. Water in Tikhvinka River is only 642 centimetres high today, but as many as 113 one-storey log buildings with a total population of 320 people are still inundated there. Food and potable water are being delivered to them. A special mobile team was formed for this purpose. It is provided with all the necessary rescue equipment. However, there is no need of evacuating people, the Regional Information Department reports. According to the Leningrad Regional Department of the Ministry for Emergency Situations, several inhabited localities, located along the banks of the Tigoda, Tosna, Svir, and Tasha rivers, are partially flooded. The district centre of Tikhvin is flooded most of all. The water there is far above the normal level. The administration has allocated 500,000 roubles to the rescuers so that all they could cope with all the problems posed by the spring floods. In the meantime, Chairman of the Regional Roads and Transport Committee Vasily Sokolov reported that all the motor highways, linking Russia with the European Union, were functioning normally on the territory of Leningrad Region. In spite of the floods, the situation on the roads is stable, he stated. The roads, running to Finland and Estonia, are under special control. Information is being constantly exchanged with the respective services of the EU countries. As many as 737 dwelling houses and ten industrial enterprises are still flooded in the Volga and Urals Federal Districts. There is damage to four buildings, sixteen kilometres of motor roads and eight bridges. The Volga-Urals Regional Centre of the Ministry for Emergency Situations reported today that an area of 8.5 square kilometres was flooded there, fifty per cent of which is arable land. The population of the flooded territory tops two thousand people, but only 231 of them were evacuated so far. According to the Ministry for Emergency Situations, the biggest floods were recorded in Penza Region of the Volga District, where almost four square kilometres of arable land are under water, four buildings are damaged, as well as 14.2 kilometres of motor roads and four bridges. There are 368 dwelling houses and nine industrial enterprises in the flooded zone.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: Specialists across Russia continue to fight against flash floods, trying to avert a possible negative aftermath from floods. Field engineers from the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations are blasting ice on the Severnaya Dvina River in Russia's Arkhangelsk region to avert ice blocks. Forecasts say about 120 settlements may be partially flooded. The press service of the regional administration has reported that foodstuffs and drinking water have been stored in case of emergency.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: A powerful cyclone from South East Asia last night brought hurricane winds with gusts up to 30 metres per second and downpours to the Primorye Territory. It will swoop down on the Khabarovsk Territory and the Amur Region over the next few days. Wind gusts tore away house roofs in Vladivostok. Windows were smashed in many houses. Several flights were stranded at the Vladivostok airport due hurricane winds. The Primorye weather centre told Tass today that two cyclones, from China and Mongolia, approached Primorye last night. They joined into a powerful whirlwind over the territory. The cyclone will rage up to Apr 24. A storm warning was also flashed out in the Amur Region. Heavy precipitations in the form of rain and wet snow may aggravate the flood situation in the south of the Russian Far East.

SOUTH AFRICA

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: Damage to infrastructure in South Africa's Overberg caused by torrential rains is likely to cost tens of millions of rands and repair work will probably take about four months to complete. The Western Cape minister for housing and local government, Marius Fransman, has dispatched a joint operational disaster team to the flooded Overberg region which has borne the brunt of the storm that hit the Western Cape on Sunday (Apr 10). An assessment meeting between the disaster team and the municipality is planned for tomorrow. Fransman said: "The impact of the damage and clear timeframes for the full recovery of the area, including roads infrastructure, will be discussed at the meeting. We will only decide after this meeting whether we will announce a disaster area." Important road links in the Overberg have been damaged, including the road between Bredasdorp and Arniston and between Swellendam and Bredasdorp.

UNITED STATES

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: Straight-line winds caused major structural damage to three houses, damaged several others and downed trees and power lines last week prompting an emergency declaration for Neshoba County, in Mississippi state. The hardest-hit area in the storm that struck shortly after 1600 yesterday was in a line from near Union to the House community along Mississippi 492. Mississippi 19 was closed briefly near House because of downed trees. Golf-ball size hail was reported in the county as well. County and state personnel worked through the night removing downed trees on houses and across county roads and state highways. Storm damage stretched eastward to the Kemper County line, officials said. Major structural damage was reported to three houses and minor damage to nine others. Three

mobile homes sustained minor damage and several outbuildings were reported damaged or destroyed, officials said. Two vehicles were damaged and two others were listed as being destroyed. Volunteers from House, County Line, Tucker and East Neshoba fire departments and work crews from the sheriff's department, county road department, Central Electric, and the state Department of Transportation worked until 0300 today removing debris and trees, some of which were estimated as large as 48 inches in diameter, from seven county roads and three state highways. Trees were removed from several highways and county roads. The storm moved into the county from Newton County where it left six houses, two businesses and 15 agricultural buildings damaged. Long's Building Supply on Mississippi 15 in Union reported sheds blown down. The storm came from the south-west of town knocking down trees near Marshall Ford, Woodland Drive, old Decatur Street and old Mississippi 15, Union Mayor Max Sessums said. The Union mayor said that by 1915 hrs most roads were clear there. The storm which moved across the county was part of a system which spawned tornadoes in several parts of the state throughout the day yesterday. A total of 19 other counties reported some type of weather damage from the storm system. The American Red Cross declared Central Mississippi a disaster area and is providing assistance to those affected by the storms. A declaration of emergency allows county workers to go onto private property for life safety or health issues and to remove hazards such as trees which pose a problem. It also allows emergency purchases by setting aside bid and quote requirements by which the county is normally bound. Neshoba County Emergency Management Director Jeff Mayo said the damage was from straight-line winds and no tornado had been confirmed as touching down in Neshoba County.

London, Apr 16 -- A press report, dated Apr 15, states: The January 2005 ice storm is the most expensive disaster in Kansas history, officials said this afternoon. Damage from the storm had been placed at more than \$150 million, said Maj-Gen Tod Bunting, the adjutant general of Kansas. The damage assessment was validated by Kansas Emergency Management and FEMA, he says. More than 85% of the disaster expense for local and state government was to municipal utilities and rural electric cooperative (REC) infrastructure. Included in the estimate is \$17 million reported by the Kansas Insurance Department as a result of more than 7,000 insurance claims; \$38 million to \$42 million in damages reported by Westar Energy Inc; and more than \$100 million in damage to units of local and state government. The state and federal government are reimbursing municipal utilities and RECs 85% of their cost to bring storm-

damaged power line systems up to the newer standards, Bunting said, in order to make them more resistant to possible future storm damage.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: The Delaware River flood earlier this month caused about \$1.5 million worth of damage to bridges owned by the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission. The Northampton Street Free Bridge, which connects Easton and Phillipsburg, may need about \$150,000 in repairs, commission engineer Henry Fix said. However, the cosmetic fixes are nothing compared with the repairs needed at the Washington Crossing Bridge in lower Bucks County, he said. The bridge, which connects state Route 532 in Upper Makefield Township to county Route 546 in Hopewell Township, N.J., sustained a seven-foot-by-10-foot hole on the side of a masonry pier, Fix said. The hole, discovered Apr 7, is now just above the nearly normal water level. "Without knowing what's underneath [the water], we shut the bridge down," Fix told the board of commissioners today. Engineers have determined that, unlike the Washington Crossing Bridge, the Northampton Street span is safe for traffic. The April 3-4 crest of 35.2 feet in parts of the Delaware River was the third highest in recorded history. Fix said the Washington Crossing Bridge's five piers date to 1831, and the bridge decking to 1904. Fix said a diver, who inspected the pier, thinks either a trash bin or massive logs cracked the outside masonry. He said the exterior stone work protects the pier's inner masonry core, which holds up the bridge decking. After hearing Fix's presentation on flood damage, the commission voted to allocate up to \$500,000 in emergency repairs for the historical bridge, which has remained closed. The board did not vote on spending money to repair any other bridge, including the Northampton Street bridge. Fix said a cost analysis has not been completed yet for Northampton Street, but he estimates it will cost about \$150,000 to repair a buckled sidewalk, a broken railing and shattered lights underneath the bridge. Executive Director Frank McCartney said that by Wednesday (Apr 20) the commission expects to receive a final damage report on the Washington Crossing Bridge. But before any repairs can start, he said, the commission must receive approval to work in the water from the Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Coast Guard and New Jersey Environmental Protection Agency. Other damaged bridges include Riverton-Belvidere, Scudder Falls, Stockton-Centre and Uhlerstown-Frenchtown. The Federal Emergency Management Agency on Friday (Apr 15) declared Bradford, Bucks, Columbia, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Wayne and Wyoming counties federal disaster areas. McCartney said if FEMA declares New Jersey counties along the Delaware River disaster areas,

too, then the commission will be eligible for about a 75 percent reimbursement for all flood-related costs.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: More than a dozen flights destined for Denver International Airport were diverted to other cities last night after a quick-moving thunderstorm pounded the airport with hail. United Airlines expected delays and cancellations through this afternoon after diverting 16 flights, airline spokeswoman Andrea Arroyo said. Eleven flights landed in Colorado Springs, five flights were sent to Pueblo and one flight landed in Grand Junction. An American Airlines flight was delayed three hours after landing in Colorado Springs, spokesman Billy Sanes said. Lightning prompted several airlines to pull flight crews off the runways at the peak of the storm, airport spokesman Chuck Cannon said. Windshields were shattered by grapefruit-sized hail in Washington County in the north-east corner of the state, but no injuries were immediately reported, Barjenbruch said. Hail the size of golf balls was reported in parts of Arapahoe and Adams counties. Sheets of hail fell briefly in downtown Denver, sending pedestrians running for building awnings and setting off car alarms. The National Weather Service expected the storm to move out of Colorado by this morning.

ZANZIBAR ISLANDS, TANZANIA

Dar Es Salaam, Apr 19 -- The heaviest rains to strike Tanzania's Zanzibar islands in thirty years have forced at least 400 families from their homes, the government said today. Said Shabaan, deputy permanent secretary in the chief minister's office, said parts of Zanzibar's island of Unguja had been flooded after receiving nearly half a metre of rainfall in three days. "We have about 400 families displaced by the rains, but this is a conservative estimate," he told Reuters. The last time the Indian Ocean island off the east African coast received that much rain was in 1975, Shabaan said. One case of cholera was reported today, he said. -- Reuters.

Earthquakes



BOLIVIA

London, Apr 18 -- A report, dated Apr 16, states: A moderate earthquake occurred at 2241, UTC, today. The magnitude 5.6 event has been located in La Paz, Bolivia, in lat 17.38S, long 69.46W, depth 117 km.

INDONESIA

London, Apr 15 -- A moderate intensity quake today shook the Indonesian island of Sumatra, the

Indian Meteorological Department said. The tremor, measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale, was felt at 1700, Indian Standard Time, yesterday. It was epicentred off the West Coast of Sumatra and there were no reports of damage to property or human casualty, the Met Office said.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Two earthquakes measuring 4.5 and 5.6 on the Richter scale have rattled the western coast of Indonesia's Sumatra island. The Meteorology and Geophysics Office says there have been no reports of damage or casualties. The first tremor hit at 0328, local time, with a magnitude of 4.5 and an epicentre some 33 kilometres under the floor of the Indonesian Ocean, some 240 kilometres south-west of the West Sumatra town of Pariaman. The second, a magnitude-5.6 earthquake, struck at 0423, local time, and was centred some 15 kilometres below the ocean floor, around 140 kilometres south-west of the West Sumatra town of Painan.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: A powerful undersea earthquake struck the Indonesian island of Nias late last night causing widespread panic, officials said. The quake measured an estimated 6.3 on the Richter scale and struck about 220 kilometres out to sea south-southwest of the city of Medan at 2344 hrs, the Hong Kong Observatory said in a statement. Wijayanto, a Meteorology and Geophysics Agency official based in the town of Gunung Sitoli, on the eastern side of Nias island, said there was no tsunami threat from the tremor. The quake cut off the town's electricity supply and caused widespread panic for residents in the town.

JAPAN

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: A powerful earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale jolted the Pacific Ocean east of Japan today but there was no risk of a tsunami, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The quake struck about 560 kilometres south of Tokyo at 1148 hrs, the agency said. The quake was a relatively deep 420 kilometres under the surface. There was no immediate word on any damage.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale has jolted Japan's southern Kyushu island, injuring at least 10 people in an aftershock exactly a month after a major tremor, officials said. The quake took place at 0611 hrs, off the coast of Fukuoka, 850km south-west of Tokyo, with its focus 14km below sea level, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. It was believed to be an aftershock of a 7.0-magnitude quake on Mar 20, which killed one person and injured more than 700 people in the Fukuoka region. Police in Fukuoka said the 10 injured people had minor cuts and bruises. Apart from the injury reports,

police said six glass windows at Fukuoka airport were broken due to the quake, which earlier had been estimated at 5.7 on the Richter scale. The meteorological agency said no tsunami warning was issued. Bullet train services were temporarily suspended on part of the Sanyo Shinkansen line linking Fukuoka with Osaka, western Japan.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: An earthquake measuring 5.8 on the Richter scale jolted Japan's southern Kyushu island, injuring 22 people, several seriously, in an aftershock exactly a month after a major tremor, officials said. The quake took place at 0611 hrs off the coast of Fukuoka, 850 km south-west of Tokyo, with its focus 14 km below sea level, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. Twenty-one people were injured in Fukuoka. Four suffered injuries which were serious although not life-threatening, police said. At least five landslides were reported in Fukuoka, where 31 houses and buildings were badly damaged. Six glass windows at Fukuoka airport were also broken as a result of the powerful tremor while bullet train services were temporarily suspended on part of the Sanyo Shinkansen line linking Fukuoka with Osaka, western Japan.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: An earthquake registering a magnitude of 5.8 jolted the northern Kyushu area this morning, rattling the city of Fukuoka and surrounding areas, and causing at least 57 injuries. At least five of them were injured seriously, local authorities said. The focus of the quake was some 14 km below the surface of the Sea of Japan west of Fukuoka Prefecture, the agency said. The quake triggered landslides at five or six locations on Genkai Island off Fukuoka. Bullet train services were suspended on part of the Sanyo Shinkansen Line for safety checks but resumed operations shortly after 1000 hrs. Train runs on some conventional lines in the Kyushu area and on the Fukuoka city subway system were also temporarily suspended, while some expressways were closed. About 220,000 household suffered 40-minute power cuts immediately after the quake, Kyushu Electric Power Co. said. Gas supplies were cut at several hundreds of households after a safety system was triggered by the quake, Saibu Gas Co. said. At Fukuoka airport, a glass wall at the terminal was damaged but flight operations have not been affected.



MOUNT ASO, JAPAN

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: A volcano in southern Japan erupted today,

spewing a plume of white smoke 200 metres into the sky and sprinkling ash around the edge of its crater. The eruption of Mount Aso came after hundreds of small quakes rumbled through the mountain over the past two weeks, Japan's Meteorological Agency said. Small- to medium-scale eruptions might continue, the agency said, warning residents to be careful near the crater. Kyodo News reported five tourists were evacuated by bus, but there were no reports of damage or injuries.

MOUNT KARTHALA, COMOROS ISLANDS

Moroni, Apr 17 -- Hundreds of villagers fled the slopes of a volcano in the Indian Ocean Comoros islands today as fumes belched from the crater and black rain pounded houses, sparking fears of an eruption, witnesses said. "Villagers are in total darkness, gritty rain is falling and visibility is zero," a resident from the village of Idjinkoundzi on the western flank of Mount Karthala, said. The 2,361-metre Mount Karthala and its forested slopes form most of the land mass of Grande Comore, the main island in the Comoros chain which lies 190 miles off east Africa, and which has witnessed periodic eruptions. Frightened families from the villages of Trelezini and Tsorale piled into taxis and buses and headed for the capital Moroni, which lies on the west coast of Grande Comore, about nine miles from Karthala's giant crater. "Dust is still falling, with torrential rains and high winds sweeping across the region," said Ibrahim Youssouf, a resident in the town of Fomboni on the south-eastern coast of Grande Comore who visited the scene. Defence Minister Houmed Msaidie warned residents to avoid the area to avoid the risk of exposure to dangerous gases. "The volcano has started to erupt and two regions are exposed for the moment, Dimani and Badjini," Msaidie said. "We cannot rule out the risk that gases could escape and it would be wise to not approach the zones at risk." Dry river beds turned to raging torrents as rainwater coursed down the volcano's slopes, according to residents. "The ground has started trembling and we have seen cracks appearing," said one official near the flanks of the volcano. Comoran officials appealed to inhabitants in the area to exercise caution, and urged residents on the mountainside nearest to the 1.8 mile-wide crater to evacuate their homes. Msaidie said authorities were checking for contamination after locals reported a gray discoloration in water near the volcano. "Measures have been put in place to analyse the water ... and tell the population about any risks as soon as possible," he said. Vulcanologists at the archipelago's Centre for Documentation and Scientific Research said the activity did not necessarily imply the volcano would spew rivers of lava, one of the more destructive scenarios in the event of an eruption. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A volcano erupted on the main island of the Comoros archipelago in the Indian Ocean today, sending thousands of people fleeing from their homes at the urging of the government, officials said. There were no immediate reports of deaths or injuries, said Mohamed Maanfou, deputy secretary general of the Comoros Red Crescent. Lava started flowing out of the 7,746-foot Mount Karthala hours after the volcano started spewing ash and dark smoke over Grand Comore, the largest of the three Comoros islands, said Bernadette Ninyaratunga of the United Nations Children Fund. A team of experts is flying over the volcano to assess the dangers and the damage caused so far, she said. Some 10,000 people have fled their homes in fear of the eruption. They have taken shelter with relatives in several towns, including the capital, Moroni, Maanfou said. While the volcano spewed ash and smoke before the eruption, officials urged residents to leave eastern parts of Grand Comore, and mobilised trucks and other vehicles to evacuate people from the area most affected by volcanic ash, Giuseppina Mazza, head of the UN team in the Comoros, said yesterday. The lava is flowing to the eastern and probably south-eastern slopes of the mountain, Maanfou said in the Comoros capital, Moroni.

London, Apr 18 -- Hundreds of people on the Comoros islands in the Indian Ocean have fled their homes because of a volcanic eruption. At least 17 people were killed when Mount Karthala spewed ash and flung boulders of molten lava down its slopes. Some of them died when they inhaled noxious gases. Reports from the islands, which are situated off the coast of east Africa, say the area around the mountain is in total darkness with ash and gritty rain falling. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: The skies cleared over the Comoros Islands yesterday and thousands of people returned to their homes on the slopes of a volcanic mountain, a day after it erupted on the main island of the Indian Ocean archipelago. Lava flowed out of the 2361-metre Mount Karthala on Monday (Apr 18), hours after the volcano started spewing ash and dark smoke over Grand Comore, the largest of the three Comoros islands. "There is no risk of eruption in the short term. There is no more ash, no more smoke and fog, all these things have cleared," said Salimou Mohammed, spokesman for the emergency team monitoring the eruption. "Even the Government has called on people to return to their homes." Lava had stopped flowing from the mountain, lying at the centre of the southern half of the main island of Grande Comore, Major Mohammed said. Flights to the main island also resumed yesterday, he said. Some of the 10,000 people who fled their homes near the volcano began returning while the Government

assessed whether anyone needed treatment for breathing problems that might have been caused by the ash and smoke. Two volcanologists from the Saint Denis University on the French Indian Ocean island of Reunion are scheduled to arrive today to evaluate the situation following the eruption. They will fly over Mount Karthala and take samples of ash from the lava lake that has formed, observatory director Philippe Kovalski said.

MOUNT TALANG, INDONESIA

Tanjung Aua, Indonesia, Apr 13 -- More than 25,000 residents have been evacuated from the slopes of a volcano on Indonesia's Sumatra island and officials raised the alert level today as the mountain's activity intensified. The heightened rumbling of Mount Talang has coincided with a string of moderate earthquakes on Sumatra. "The status of Mount Talang is now at top alert," Suroono, a volcanologist from the Directorate of Vulcanology and Geophysics in the Java city of Bandung, told Reuters. Local officials said 26,000 people had been evacuated from the slopes and areas around the 2,690 metre volcano in West Sumatra province, adding that number was likely to rise. Witnesses saw sparks of fire coming out of Mount Talang early this morning. Vulcanologists said they could not confirm whether lava had actually spewed out, but smoke had billowed up to 1,000 metres high from the volcano's crater and ash had travelled up to 12 km away, Suroono said. "The activity has definitely stepped up and we have alerted airport officials to watch out for smoke," Suroono said. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 14 -- Operations at ports in Sumatra have not been disrupted by the volcanic activity on the island this week. The 2,572-metre high Mount Talang, 40 km east of the port city of Padang, erupted about 0300, local time, Apr 12, throwing hot ash 10 metres into the air. The eruption is likely to have been triggered by the two recent earthquakes off the west coast of Sumatra. No casualties have been reported so far. Despite the eruption, operations at Padang port and the city's Tabing airport remain unaffected, although outbound flights from Padang are reported to be very busy.

TANGKUBAN PERAHU, JAVA ISLAND, INDONESIA

London, Apr 13 -- A press report, dated today, states: A second Indonesian volcano sprang to life today after a series of terrifying quakes, intensifying fears that the archipelago's violent geological forces will unleash a new disaster. Tangkuban Perahu, a smouldering 2,076-metre mountain near the city of Bandung on Java island, began rumbling overnight, prompting scientists to raise the alarm and declare the summit around the open crater off limits. "There is possibility that poisonous gas may come out," said Suroono, a vulcanology and

geological disaster mitigation official, who said the volcano's alert status had been raised from "alert" to "prepare".

Political & Civil Unrest



AFGHANISTAN

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A firefight between Afghan soldiers and suspected Taliban rebels left at least eight militants dead in a remote mountain region of southern Afghanistan today, officials said. Eleven other Taliban fighters were captured in the fighting in Zabul province, including Chechens and Arabs, said a spokesman for the governor. The spokesman, Ali Khail, said that the US military provided air support for the Afghan forces and that some of the captured militants were turned over to US custody. He said that a local Taliban commander named Mullah Abdullah may have been among those killed but that there was no confirmation of his death. A spokeswoman for the American military, Lt Cindy Moore, said she had received no reports of fighting in the area involving US forces. The region is extremely remote, and there was no way to immediately reconcile the two stories. In another incident, suspected Taliban rebels ambushed a patrol of Afghan soldiers in south-western Oruzgan province, sparking a one-hour firefight, Governor Jan Mohammed Khan said. Two Taliban were killed in the fighting yesterday and Afghan soldiers arrested a regional Taliban commander named Mullah Allah Noor. The other militants escaped into the mountains. Meanwhile, the US military said today one of its CH-47 helicopters operating in the south made a "precautionary landing" near Kandahar after developing a mechanical problem. Moore said there were no injuries in the incident, which occurred early yesterday, and that the helicopter was repaired on site. A rapid reaction force was sent out to bring the soldiers on board safely back to base. The military today also said an investigation into a weekend explosion that destroyed five fuel tankers parked outside its main base in southern Afghanistan has found it was an accident, not the result of a Taliban attack. At least three drivers were injured in the incident early yesterday and Afghan officials were quick to blame Taliban rebels. Moore said the blast, which sent plumes of black smoke billowing over Kandahar, was caused by "faulty fuel tanks." She said military investigators determined that the blast originated inside one of the trucks, not outside. "More than likely it was some type of problem with the tank," she said. The explosion took

place while Pakistani and Afghan drivers were waiting to deliver fuel to the US base at Kandahar airport. Tight security measures mean long waits for drivers delivering fuel to US bases in Afghanistan.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: US forces killed more than 12 insurgents in a clash in south-eastern Afghanistan, the military said today, while two former Taliban leaders joined a reconciliation drive that American commanders hope will undermine a three-year-old insurgency. The rebels were killed late Tuesday (Apr 19) when US troops fired artillery and scrambled warplanes following a rocket attack on an American base in Khost province, close to the Pakistani border, a military statement said. It said the aircraft dropped two 500-pound bombs. "We were able to see the launching point of the rockets and we brought everything we had to bear on it," Maj. J.R. Mendoza, a US Army official based in Khost, said in the statement. "More than a dozen insurgents were killed." The four rockets fired at the base near Khost city caused no damage or injuries, the statement said.

ALGERIA

Algiers, Apr 14 -- Algerian Islamic militants killed five people, including three security force members, and injured eight others in attacks ahead of an expected general amnesty, newspapers said today. Three guards were killed when a bomb exploded yesterday in Tebessa province, 390 miles east of Algiers, the "Liberte" newspaper said, citing sources. Three paramilitary policemen were seriously wounded in simultaneous explosions of two bombs in the same area two hours later, the daily said. In another attack yesterday, two civilians were shot dead and five more wounded in a rebel ambush in a forest near Relizane, 280 miles west of Algiers, newspapers said. Authorities were not immediately available for comment. Government troops have been carrying out a large offensive on Islamic strongholds in eastern and western Algeria. No militant group has claimed responsibility for the latest attacks. -- Reuters.

BURUNDI

London, Apr 13 -- A press report, dated today, states: Burundi's last active rebel group had offered to hold peace talks with the government and halt its campaign of insurgency, officials said. Ethnic Hutu FNL rebels announced the move after discussions in Tanzania. Communications Minister Onesime Nduwimana said he thought it was a positive development that would end the country's bloody civil war. A statement after talks between the Tanzanian government and FNL delegates said the movement led by Agathon Rwaswa was ready to hold talks with the Burundian government without any pre-conditions and to suspend all hostilities on the ground.

CAMEROON

Yaounde, Apr 14 -- Marauding former soldiers who helped stage a 2003 coup in Central African Republic are kidnapping people for ransom in remote eastern Cameroon, driving thousands of people from their homes, a U.N. official said. Jacques Franquin, the resident representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cameroon, said the security situation in the area on the border between the two countries required urgent attention. "According to our rough estimates, there are some 3,000 Central African Republic refugees in the region plus about 15,000 internally displaced Cameroonians," Franquin told Reuters yesterday, after a trip to the eastern region. "If the situation of insecurity continues it could mount in the days ahead. That's why it needs urgent attention," he said. Franquin said former soldiers from Central African Republic, who helped bring President Francois Bozize to power in a 2003 coup, were behind the mounting insecurity in Cameroon's Adamawa province, some 180 km east of Ngaoundere. After the coup, the former soldiers moved through Central African Republic, plundering villages and sending residents fleeing across the border into Cameroon. Franquin said the ex-soldiers kidnapped people, mainly women and children, in Cameroon and then took them back across the border to two camps and demanded a ransom for their release. "We were told they ask for 1 million CFA francs (\$1,970) per individual," he said, adding that the armed men mainly targeted nomadic Mbororo cattle herders because of their wealth. Last month, Cameroon's state radio reported that hundreds of villagers in the eastern region had fled a wave of night-time attacks by bandits who killed three people and kidnapped 24. -- Reuters.

COLOMBIA

Bogota, Apr 14 -- Dozens of left-wing guerrillas attacked five towns in mountainous southern Colombia today, killing a girl and four police officers before retreating, authorities said. Army and police said the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia battled with government forces after attacking the towns of Ricarte, Samaniego and Gachavez in the province of Narino, as well as Jambalo and Toribio in Cauca province. The guerrillas, commonly known by their group's Spanish initials FARC, were bombed into retreat by army planes and helicopters after a battle of about six hours, authorities said. One police officer was killed in Gachavez. Three more died in Toribio along with a girl whose age was unknown, police said. Eight police were injured in the fighting along with 15 civilians. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: At least 16 rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and one soldier and a policeman died during a clash in the

south-west region of Toribio, amid a counter-offensive operation by the military, officials said. "During the offensive manoeuvres, in which some 2,000 soldiers and police participated, the lives of 16 guerrillas were lost and one soldier, another soldier was wounded," director of the office of public order of the Cauca department, Juan Pablo Mata told AFP. Mr Mata said a police officer had also been killed in the clashes and another police officer had been wounded. The Colombian military counter-offensive came after a FARC assault Thursday (Apr 14) on two towns in the region that resulted in the deaths of three policemen and a girl. Authorities say the rebel attack also left 23 people wounded.

Bogota, Apr 18 -- The Colombian government's attempts to set up peace talks with the country's second-largest Marxist rebel army suffered a setback today when the guerrillas rejected Mexico as a mediator after almost a year of behind-the-scenes work. The National Liberation Army, known by the Spanish initials ELN, said in a communique that it objected to a recent vote by the Mexican government condemning human rights abuses in Cuba. The ELN's objection came after the Mexico had worked since June last year mediating between the rebels and the Colombian government, setting the stage for possible talks between the two sides in Mexico city. "The current Mexican government is not qualified to facilitate peace in Colombia," the ELN said, adding that the rebel army had "an irrevocable commitment to seeking peace." The group wants President Alvaro Uribe to free ELN prisoners from Colombian jails and negotiate a bilateral cease-fire. Uribe has said the ELN, which funds itself by kidnapping, must unilaterally disarm if talks are to take place. -- Reuters.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Bunia, Apr 14 -- The remaining 416 militiamen of the Forces armees du peuple congolais (FAPC) surrendered their guns to UN troops yesterday, effectively dismantling the movement and boosting efforts to pacify the troubled Ituri District in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). "The FAPC no longer exists. This movement is now history," Kwaje Duku, a Congolese army colonel heading the government-run National Disarmament Commission in Ituri, said. The militiamen, loyal to Jerome Kakwavu-Bukande, surrendered at Mount Awa, 25 km from Aru in northern Ituri. They can either enter the programme for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) into civilian life or be integrated into the new national Congolese army. FAPC has already said 2,014 of its fighters have disarmed, among them 251 children. The adult fighters are being registered after which they will be sent to Aru and provided food aid and undergo four days of counselling in transit

sites before choosing whether to integrate into the army or return to civilian life. However, rather than surrender, some fighters have fled, Elongi Mabe, an ex-combatant who surrendered at Mount Awa yesterday, said. Duku said these were isolated cases and the culprits would be considered as bandits. Meanwhile, at a news conference in Kinshasa the military chief of staff of the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC), Col Jean-Francois Collot d'Escury, said yesterday the UN knew the fighters were fleeing or hiding and would hunt them down. MONUC said by yesterday a total of 10,020 ex-combatants, from various movements, had entered the DDR process in Ituri, leaving some 2,000 more to be disarmed. There are at least seven militia groups in Ituri. In Bunia, the main town in Ituri, a MONUC public information officer, Mohammad Abdul Wahab, said the disarmament programme would continue to accept militiamen even though MONUC's Apr 1, deadline to hand in guns has expired. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: The UN Security Council has widened an international arms embargo to include all rebel and militia groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It will punish violators with a travel ban and freezing of assets. The ban follows a recent push to disarm militias in the volatile east and comes after a pledge from the main Hutu rebel group to disband and go home to Rwanda. The French-drafted Security Council resolution expands on a weapons ban first imposed in 2003 on armed groups in eastern provinces that refused to accept the peace deal. Only soldiers and police which have integrated into a national army are exempt from the weapons ban, but they must notify a UN committee in advance, co-ordinate with UN peacekeepers and have weapons delivered to designated sites. Neighbouring countries are also ordered to keep a registry of all flights.

ECUADOR

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: Thousands of demonstrators brought parts of Ecuador's capital Quito to a standstill yesterday after the Congress and government failed to reach a deal over control of the country's courts. Police fired tear gas to disperse the opposition protesters who chanted slogans against President Lucio Gutierrez and burned tyres on the streets. Quito Mayor Paco Moncayo, a leader of the opposition Democratic Left Party, has ordered a suspension of the city buses and closed all municipal offices. Ecuador has been gripped by a political crisis since December when the single-chamber Congress restructured the Supreme Court in a move which favored the president. The opposition condemned the restructuring, saying there was a breach in the balance of powers and the move was steered to fend off corruption charges against the president's political allies. In a bid to

ease the political turmoil, Gutierrez proposed a judicial reform in late March that would replace the new court and establish new methods for selecting judges.

London, Apr 17 -- A press report, dated today, states: Ecuadorian President Lucio Gutierrez has lifted a state of emergency in the capital, Quito, less than 24 hours after he imposed it. Thousands of people had taken to the streets of the city in defiance of the new emergency powers. They were also protesting about his decision to dismiss the Supreme Court. The magistrates were appointed by the president's allies in Congress in December, sparking a wave of popular street protests. Mr Gutierrez had blamed the unpopular judges for three days of anti-government street marches. Speaking on national television yesterday, Mr Gutierrez said he was lifting the emergency measures because he had "obtained the principal objective, which is the dismissal of the Supreme Court." Congress had agreed to hold a special session to ratify his dismissal of the Supreme Court and debate a measure to depoliticise appointments, he added. Up to 10,000 people have been protesting in the streets of Quito since Thursday (Apr 14), demanding the president's resignation.

HAITI

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: A United Nations peacekeeper from the Philippines has been shot dead in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. The soldier was killed near the Cite Soleil slum, an area of the city where UN troops have clashed with gangs. According to UN officials, the peacekeeper was killed as UN troops prepared to set up a checkpoint at the entrance to City Soleil, in an effort to control the movements of gang members. He is the third soldier to be killed since the UN mission in Haiti began a year ago. According to General Augusto Helenoribeiro, the Brazilian commander of the UN forces, the soldiers came under heavy gunfire, and they shot back. The area is the most dangerous slum in the capital and is a stronghold of support for the ousted Haitian leader, Jean-Bertrand Aristide. In a meeting with the visiting UN mission today, interim Prime Minister Gerard Latortue asked council members for more international help in disarming the militant groups. Options said be under consideration by the Security Council delegation include plans to expand the peacekeeping operation to include more police and international observers for the elections. It has recommended that the mandate for its 6,700-strong peacekeeping mission be extended when it expires in June. The team also said urgent changes were needed in the justice system, which it said allows hundreds of prisoners to remain in jail for months without charge.

INDIA

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: A self-styled

company commander of Hizbul Mujahideen and two other militants of the outfit were killed while an army officer was injured in an encounter in Kashmir Valley today, official sources said. Acting on specific information, the armed forces raided Kellar village in Pulwama district in the small hours of today. The forces came under fire from militants and in the ensuing gunbattle three militants were killed and an army officer was injured, the sources said, adding that some arms and ammunition were recovered from them. Army troops apprehended a militant during a search operation at Devar village of Kupwara district, the sources said, adding that some arms and ammunition were also seized. They said a Hizbul Mujahideen militant was arrested by the army at Batmaloo in central Srinagar.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: Four persons, including three militants, were killed while a Municipal Councillor was shot at and injured by unidentified gunmen in the Jammu and Kashmir overnight, an official spokesman said today. Militants shot at and critically wounded a Municipal Councillor Ghulam Mohammad Teli at his Model Town (Sopore) house this afternoon in Baramulla district. The injured Teli was immediately evacuated to hospital, the spokesman said. Security forces on a tip-off conducted search operation at village Kumdalan in Shopion area of Pulwama district late last night. During the search, militants hiding in a house opened fire and also hurled grenades, to which troops retaliated and in the ensuing encounter, two militants of Hizbul Mujahideen were killed. The slain militants were identified as Sheer Ahmad Rather, alias Faiz-ul-Islam and Ashiq Hussain Ganai, alias Ishtiyaq Sani, the spokesman said, adding some arms and ammunition were also recovered from the slain militants. In another encounter at Brinal Lamad village in Anantnag district, security forces killed a militant. One AK rifle, one wireless set, two hand grenades and three magazines were recovered from the encounter site. Militants abducted and later killed one Mushtaq Ahmad Mir at Larnoo Kokernag last night. One person was injured when a blast took place at Pleara in Mandi sector this afternoon. The injured have been shifted to hospital, he said. Security forces recovered arms and ammunition from across the state during search operations and raids which include 1.5 kg RDX, two detonators, four hand-grenades, five anti-tank rifle grenades, one 303 rifle, 24 pencil cells, one magazine and 19 rounds, the spokesman added.

Srinagar, Apr 20 -- Suspected Muslim rebels hurled a grenade into a crowded market in Indian Kashmir today, killing two people and wounding 15, police said. The attack comes two days after the leaders of India and Pakistan declared their peace process irreversible and agreed to open up the militarised frontier that divides Kashmir to help resolve their

longstanding dispute over the region. The grenade was apparently aimed at a security patrol but it missed its target and exploded on the street in Sopore town, about 50 km north of Srinagar, summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir state, police said. -- Reuters.

INDIA-PAKISTAN

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: India and Pakistan issued a joint statement today that said their peace process was "irreversible." The nuclear-armed neighbours also agreed to increase business ties and cross-border travel in disputed Kashmir and other parts of the two countries. The statement was read aloud by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in the presence of visiting Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf near the end of his three-day trip to India. "The peace process is now irreversible," the statement said. Earlier, Musharraf said talks with his Indian counterpart were more successful than he had expected but warned that settling the dispute over Kashmir would take a long time.

INDONESIA

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: Indonesian troops have shot dead seven separatist guerrillas in tsunami-hit Aceh, as violence continues in the stricken province despite ongoing peace talks. Aceh military spokesman Ari Mulya Asnawi says infantry soldiers killed the seven during a clash in Jeuleubeuh village, in the east Aceh town of Peureulak yesterday. He says the shooting followed an attack by an armed rebel gang on a military outpost in Jeuleubeuh. In a separate incident, a former rebel was also shot dead after he was abducted from his home in Sawang, northern Aceh, by an armed gang believed to be from the rebel Free Aceh Movement (GAM).

IRAN

Tehran, Apr 18 -- Iran said today some 200 people had been arrested in ethnic unrest in its south-west in recent days and closed the offices of the Arab language "Al Jazeera" television channel, accusing it stirring up trouble. At least one person died after Arab-Iranians went on the rampage in the city of Ahvaz, near the border with Iraq, on Friday (Apr 15) and Saturday, smashing and setting fire to police cars, banks and government buildings and clashing with police. Government officials have said the violence in Iran's traditional oil-producing heartland was sparked by a forged letter, supposedly penned by a senior government official, discussing the idea of relocating ethnic Arabs from the area. "Many of those arrested are young, innocent people. The real criminals are those who provoked them," the official IRNA news agency quoted Intelligence Minister Ali Yunesi as saying. "We have arrested many of those behind the scenes and it became evident that

they have ties to anti-government (television) channels," he said. The Tehran bureau of Qatar-based "Al Jazeera" television was later closed, said a senior Culture and Islamic Guidance Ministry official in charge of supervising the foreign press. "Until further investigation about the role of this channel in the recent protests in Ahvaz, its offices will be closed," Mohammad Hussein Khoshvaght said. The channel was closed "for their coverage of these demonstrations which possibly provoked bandits in south-western Iran." Broadcast media in Iran are in the hands of the state but many Iranians tune in to foreign channels via illegal satellite dishes. Some Iranian lawmakers also called for the expulsion from Iran of "Al Jazeera." One exile opposition group campaigning for the region's independence from non-Arab Iran, the London-based Ahvaz Arab People Democratic-Popular Front, said the violence was far worse than official accounts and put the death toll much higher. However, officials said peace and order had been restored to the area by yesterday and there were no other reports of renewed violence. Arabs make up about 3% of Iran's 67 million people and most of them live in the south-west of the country. -- Reuters.

IRAQ

Baghdad, Apr 15 -- Two bomb attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces in Baghdad today killed one civilian and wounded seven people and left the bodies of several civilians strewn in a street, police and witnesses said. A bomb attack on Iraqi National Guard troops in eastern Baghdad killed one civilian and wounded three, police said. A blast targeting a U.S. convoy in the upscale Mansour district wounded at least four people, police and witnesses said. Several bodies were seen lying in the street after the Mansour attack and several cars were burned. A witness said he saw smoke and flames rising near a restaurant following the blast. The U.S. military said it had no immediate information on the attacks. U.S. commanders say the number of insurgent attacks has dropped by around a fifth since a January general election, but the scale and sophistication of militant operations has increased. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 17 -- A press report, dated today, states: Iraqi security forces raided a town in central Iraq and freed some 15 Shiite families being held hostage today, an official said, after Sunni militants threatened to kill dozens of captives unless all Shiites left the area. The government said it was trying to resolve the standoff peacefully, while Shiite lawmakers called for action to stop "terrorist groups from promoting sectarian violence." Security forces, who had the town of Madain surrounded, began raiding sites today in search of those abducted, said Qassim Dawoud, the minister in charge of national security. Witnesses said roadblocks were set up and no one

was allowed to leave or enter the town of about 1,000 families some 15 miles south-east of Baghdad. However, shops opened and the streets were calm. Iraqi forces had freed about 15 Shiite families, said Haidar Khayon, an official at the Defence Ministry in Baghdad. He said five hostage-takers were captured in a skirmish with light gunfire but no casualties were reported. Sabah Khadum, an interior ministry adviser, said officials didn't know how many hostages were being held or whether it was a sectarian crisis or merely a tribal dispute. He said the interior and defence ministries hoped to resolve it peacefully. "The military presence near the city is to control any developments and to protect innocent people," Khadum said in a telephone interview. Iraq's most feared terror group, meanwhile, accused the Shiite-dominated government of making the whole thing up. Elsewhere, three American soldiers were killed and seven service members wounded overnight when insurgents fired mortar rounds at a US Marine base near Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad, the military said today. Residents said dozens of armed militants had tried to force their way into Camp Blue Diamond but the US military denied that. The assault raised to 24 the number of people who died in Iraq yesterday, including an American civilian who died in a car bomb attack in the capital. The US Embassy said it believed the slain American was Marla Ruzicka of the Washington, DC-based human rights group Civic Worldwide but it was still waiting for DNA results. Insurgents also killed seven Iraqis in scattered violence around Iraq, including assassinations and drive-by shootings, police said. The hostage crisis began Thursday (Apr 14) when Sunni militants attacked a Shiite mosque with explosives. Haitham Hussein, a spokesman for the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the country's largest Shiite group, said the mosque was badly damaged. The next day, Hussein said about 100 masked militants drove through Madain, capturing Shiites. Shiite leaders and government officials estimated 35 to 100 people were taken hostage. A resident reached by telephone said the militants had returned early yesterday, shouting through loudspeakers that all Shiites must leave or the hostages would be killed. Later, residents said the town appeared calm and there was no sign of insurgents. Some said they had seen no evidence any hostages had been taken. The conflicting accounts could not be reconciled. Other retaliatory kidnappings by Sunni and Shiite groups have occurred in the violent, ethnically mixed region but the abductions appeared to be the first attempt by insurgents to forcibly evacuate a town along sectarian lines. Dawoud told Iraqi legislators in Baghdad today that Iraqi soldiers, police and US forces were sent to Madain yesterday afternoon. "Our plan is by the end of this week we are going

to launch a military operation in this area." The US military said it had no information about a US role in the deployment.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Iraqi officials say militants have set off an explosion that's heavily damaged an oil pipeline near the country's largest refinery. The blast has sent burning oil floating across the surface of the nearby Tigris River. Flames and smoke shot high into the air and engulfed parts of a nearby railroad bridge. No injuries have been reported. The pipeline had once exported oil to Turkey, but many attacks have heavily damaged the line.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: Hundreds of Iraqi security forces launched an operation today to root out Sunni insurgents at the tip of Iraq's "Triangle of Death," but found no hostages despite reports that up to 100 Shiites may have been seized. Iraqi forces fanned through the dusty streets of Madain and took positions on rooftops in the town south of Baghdad, while Sunni leaders dismissed the reports of a hostage crisis as a hoax. The US military, whose forces only stood by in case they were needed, called the operation in Madain a significant step forward in the training of Iraqi forces, which is key to America's exit strategy in the two-year-old war. "The city is now under full control," interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's office said, adding that 10 suspected insurgents were arrested and large amounts of weapons seized. In Baghdad, Iraq's most powerful Shiite bloc said it wanted ousted leader Saddam Hussein put to death if he is convicted of war crimes. If the interim president will not sign the execution order, he should resign, an alliance spokesman said. "This is something that cannot be discussed at all," said Ali al-Dabagh, a lawmaker from the Shiite clergy-led United Iraqi Alliance. "We feel he is a criminal. He is the No 1 criminal in the world. He is a murderer." Interim President Jalal Talabani was quoted today as saying he probably would abstain from signing any execution order because of his opposition to the death penalty. No date has been set for Saddam's trial. Madain is an agricultural town of about 1,000 families, evenly divided between Shiites and Sunnis, located at the northern edge of a region considered to be a stronghold of the Sunni insurgency. National Security Minister Qassim Dawoud had warned parliament yesterday of attempts to draw the country into sectarian war. He pledged today to "chase down terror everywhere" and said Iraqi forces had discovered mines, ammunition and bomb-making equipment along with six completed car bombs in Madain. Those detained included four "sword men" believed to have conducted killings for the insurgents, national security adviser Mouwafak al-Rubaie said. Cells for holding prisoners were also found, he

said. The country's most-feared insurgent group, al-Qaida in Iraq, denied any fighters were captured in Madain, saying in a statement posted on an Islamic Web site that only unarmed Sunni civilians were detained. Six Iraqi police and special forces battalions, each of which typically includes about 300 troops, participated in the operation, the Interior Ministry said. Fewer than 200 American troops were on stand-by to help, including providing air cover, the US military said. Lt Col Clifford Kent, a spokesman for the US 3rd Infantry Division, said it was the first time that Iraqi forces had conducted an operation of this scale on their own. He called it a "significant step forward" for the Iraqis. Streets were largely deserted as the troops moved in, searching farms and orchards on the outskirts of town as American helicopters circled overhead. At one farm, they found stolen cars, bomb-making materials, training equipment and instructions on how to use weapons, a witness said. Shiite leaders and government officials initially claimed Sunni militants captured up to 100 Shiites in and around Madain last week and were threatening to kill them unless all Shiites left the area. Over the weekend (Apr 16-17), Iraqi police and military circled the town and raided suspected hideouts. By today, however, Iraqi officials had produced no hostages, and some were saying the number taken had been exaggerated for political purposes. Madain residents; the Association of Muslim Scholars, an organisation of Sunni clerics; and al-Qaida in Iraq denied any hostages had been taken. Al-Qaida in Iraq said the claim was used to justify a military attack on Madain aimed at Sunnis. About 150 Shiites from nearby Hurriyah village staged a demonstration in Baghdad today, holding photos of 18 men and boys they said had been missing for about 10 days. In another protest in Baghdad, hundreds of Shiites demanded the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq and condemned all terrorist attacks against Iraqis.

Baghdad, Apr 19 -- Guerrilla attacks on Iraqi forces in Baghdad and in a town west of the capital killed at least eight people and wounded 25 today, police and hospital officials said. Insurgents opened fire on members of Iraq's National Guard in Khaldiya, west of Baghdad, killing five people. In Baghdad, a suicide car bomber killed three National Guards in the Athamiya district, where insurgents are active, the police and hospital officials said. Twenty one people were wounded in the blast. Iraq's politicians, who have yet to form a government 11 weeks after elections, have been confronted with a resurgence of violence over the past week, after signs of a decline in activity immediately after the January ballot. Sabotage attacks have increased on Iraq's oil infrastructure, such as twin blasts at an internal oil pipeline near the city of Kirkuk

yesterday, as rebels attempt to set back the country's reconstruction. Iraqi officials are concerned that the longer it takes to form a government, the more encouragement insurgents will take from the indecision, allowing them to exploit the political vacuum. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: A suicide car bomb exploded outside an Iraqi army recruitment centre here today, killing two Iraqi soldiers and a civilian and wounding 20 people, police said. The blast occurred in the Azamiya section of the capital about 20 yards from the front gate of the centre, said police Col. Rashid Ibrahim. All the victims appeared to be Iraqis, another police official said. One of the main goals of the U.S. led coalition in Iraq has been to train Iraqi security forces to replace American soldiers in the field, and insurgents often target centres where such security forces are being recruited and instructed. Two other Iraqi civilians died in other attacks today. In Baghdad, masked men armed with machine guns and travelling in two cars in the capital shot and killed Prof. Fuad Ibrahim Mohamed Al-Bayati as he left his home for work at the University of Baghdad. A roadside car bomb that exploded 30 miles south of the capital killed one man, police said. In Baqouba, 35 miles north-east of Baghdad, a roadside bomb missed a U.S. military convoy but wounded three nearby civilians, police said. Late Monday night, gunmen ambushed a senior Defence Ministry adviser, Maj. Gen. Adnan al-Qaraghulli, as he drove home in Baghdad, killing him and his son, the Interior Ministry said. Elsewhere, Iraqi security forces began scaling back their search operation in Madain, a town south of Baghdad in Iraq's "Triangle of Death," where reports that Sunni militants had taken up to 100 Shiites hostage turned out to be false. The reports had startled the entire nation, including the country's new National Assembly, raising fears that such a crisis could set off Sunni-Shiite fighting in Iraq. In Baghdad, the assembly delayed its planned meeting this morning to protest the alleged detention and beating of an Iraqi legislator by U.S. forces at a checkpoint outside the heavily fortified Green Zone where parliament meets. The alleged beating occurred when Fattah al-Sheik, whose small party has been linked to radical Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, showed his identity card at the checkpoint and was asked to get out of his car, said legislator Tourkit al-Ta'i. U.S. forces said they had heard of the incident and were investigating it. The search of Madain by hundreds of Iraqi security forces was launched Monday to root out Sunni insurgents in Madain. They found weapons and car bombs but no hostages. Today, shops began to reopen in the agricultural town of about 1,000 families, far fewer security forces were seen on patrol, and the ones who had been guarding

rooftops were removed. However, Madain remained surrounded by the Iraqi forces, who continued to search all vehicles leaving or entering it. The U.S. military, which has praised Iraqi security forces for conducting the operation on their own, continued to stand by in case they were needed. Madain, evenly divided between Shiites and Sunnis, is located at the northern edge of a region considered a stronghold of the Sunni insurgency. When an AP photographer joined hundreds of police entering the town Monday, they met no resistance and found no hostages. "The city is now under full control," interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's office said yesterday, adding that 10 suspected insurgents were arrested and large amounts of weapons seized. On Sunday, National Security Minister Qassim Dawoud warned parliament of attempts to draw the country into sectarian war. Yesterday, he pledged to "chase down terror everywhere" and said Iraqi forces had discovered mines, ammunition and bomb-making equipment along with six completed car bombs in Madain. Those detained included four "sword men" believed to have conducted killings for the insurgents, national security adviser Mouwafak al-Rubaie said. Cells for holding prisoners were also found, he said. Shiite leaders and government officials initially claimed Sunni militants had captured up to 100 Shiites in and around Madain last week and were threatening to kill them unless all Shiites left the area. Over the weekend, Iraqi police and military circled the town and raided suspected hideouts. By yesterday, however, Iraqi officials had produced no hostages, and some were saying the number taken had been exaggerated for political purposes. Al-Qaida in Iraq, the country's most feared insurgent group, said the claim was used to justify a military attack on Madain aimed at Sunnis.

Baghdad, Apr 19 -- Guerrilla attacks killed at least 12 people in Iraq today as a resurgence in violence piled pressure on politicians struggling to form a government more than 11 weeks after elections. In Baghdad, a suicide car bomber killed four National Guards in the Athamiya district, police and hospital officials said. Thirty-eight people were wounded in the blast, the latest in a string of car bombings in the capital in the past week. West of the capital, insurgents opened fire on members of Iraq's National Guard in the restive town of Khaldiya, killing five people and wounding four. Near Haditha, a violent city on the river Euphrates north-west of the capital, residents said US warplanes bombed a suspected insurgent hideout. Local doctor Waleed al-Hadithi said two people were killed and three wounded. Al Qaeda's wing in Iraq, led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, said a member of its "martyrs' brigade" carried out the attack, according to a statement posted on the Internet. Insurgent

suicide bombings and shootings have killed hundreds of Iraqi security forces and police in recent months, raising concerns that the people who are supposed to protect Iraqis can't even protect themselves. Gunmen also killed Baghdad University professor Fouad al-Bayati today, riddling his car with bullets as he drove to work, police said. While insurgents frequently kill members of Iraq's security forces because they see them as co-operating with US troops, there are no clear reasons why dozens of university professors have been gunned down or kidnapped over the past two years. Iraq's new leaders have been confronted with renewed violence over the past week, after signs of a decline in attacks immediately after the Jan 30 ballot. In a sign of the growing cynicism of Iraqis towards their elected leaders, people accused politicians of fabricating a hostage crisis in a town south of Baghdad for political ends. Shi'ite politicians said Sunni insurgents were holding up to 150 Shi'ites hostage and were threatening to kill them unless Shi'ites left the area. But raids in the town by Iraqi forces failed to produce kidnappers or hostages. Suicide bombings have returned to the high levels seen over the past two years at a volatile time, as leaders try to form a government that balances sectarian interests. Majority Shi'ites, who were long oppressed under Saddam Hussein, now have most political power after winning the polls, while once-dominant Sunnis are increasingly marginalised. Because many of their voters boycotted the election, Sunni politicians hold only 17 of the 275 seats in parliament. Iraqi officials fear the longer it takes to form a government, the more encouragement insurgents will take from the indecision, allowing them to exploit the political vacuum. -- Reuters.

Baghdad, Apr 20 -- A suicide car bomber launched an attack near the headquarters of Iraqi caretaker Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's political party today, killing at least one person and wounding four, a police official said. The blast struck a checkpoint near the headquarters, a building that has been targeted by guerrillas before. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: The bodies of more than 50 men, women and children have been recovered from the River Tigris at the town of Suwayra, south of Baghdad. Some had been decapitated or had their throats cut. Iraqi President Jalal Talabani said the bodies were those of people who had been taken hostage and killed in the nearby town of Madain. And in the town of Haditha, north-west of Baghdad, at least 19 men were found dead at a football stadium. They had apparently been lined up against a wall and shot. The interior ministry said they were Iraqi soldiers who had been abducted by insurgents while travelling to Haditha. Suwayra is downstream from the town of Madain,

where there was tension over the weekend after reports that Sunni Muslim militants had taken a large number of Shia Muslim residents hostage. It is not clear when the killings took place, though police in the area said the bodies had been pulled from the river over a period since the end of February. Some were badly decomposed.

ISRAEL

Jerusalem, Apr 14 -- Israeli troops killed a Palestinian militant in a raid in a West Bank refugee camp today, triggering a vow by a leading militant group to retaliate "like an earthquake." But al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades said it wanted to otherwise stick to a ceasefire, and both Israeli and Palestinian officials signalled a determination to press on with peace efforts despite violence over the past week that threatens to derail them. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned the killing as a "serious violation" of the ceasefire he and Sharon declared in February. Israeli officials said the army reserved the right to pursue "ticking bombs" -- militants planning imminent attacks. It was Israel's first killing of a militant in more than a month and followed Sharon's accusations that Abbas, elected in January to succeed the late Yasser Arafat, was not doing enough to rein in militants as he had promised. The militant was identified as Ibrahim Isneiri, a member of al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, an offshoot of the Fatah movement led by Abbas, and the killing took place in Balata camp in the West Bank city of Nablus. Israel said the killing occurred when soldiers tried to arrest a man suspected of plotting suicide attacks on orders from the Lebanese guerrilla group Hizbollah. Palestinians said Israeli undercover troops started shooting without provocation. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 21 -- An Israeli military vehicle struck an explosive device near the border with the Gaza Strip today, wounding at least three soldiers, rescuers said. The Zaka paramedic service said one of the soldiers was critically wounded, and that the soldiers were being taken to a hospital. The incident occurred near Nahal Oz, an Israeli communal farm located along the border with Gaza. Palestinian residents in the area said Israeli troops began firing machine guns after the explosion, and an army helicopter was seen landing in the area. The Israeli army said it was investigating the incident.

IVORY COAST

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: The head of Ivory Coast's loyalist army is meeting the rebel military chief with the aim of kick-starting the much delayed disarmament process. The two men are in the rebel stronghold of Bouake, guarded by UN peacekeepers. The meeting is part of a deal reached last week to bring an end to the conflict which has divided Ivory Coast since

September 2002. Yesterday, Ivory Coast was urged to let an opposition candidate contest elections -- another part of that deal. The disarmament meeting is the first since the army smashed a ceasefire by attacking rebel positions in Bouake last November. In another development, army commander Marcellin Kofi Mbahia has been arrested by armed paramilitary troops at his house for allegedly plotting a coup. He denied the charges, saying he had no power and no troops.

London, Apr 17 -- A press report, dated Apr 16, states: Army and rebel commanders in Ivory Coast have agreed a provisional timetable for disarmament. Full details are to be confirmed next month but both sides will pull back heavy weapons from frontline areas from Apr 21 as a sign of goodwill. The agreement came during talks in the rebel stronghold of Bouake. The peace process was boosted yesterday when the rebels rejoined the country's power-sharing government for the first time in six months. Getting the former rebels back into the government and agreeing a withdrawal schedule were key requirements of the Pretoria Accord signed earlier this month in the South African capital. Under that deal, President Laurent Gbagbo's troops and rebel New Forces agreed to stop fighting, disarm militias and hold presidential elections in October. However, the key issue of the crisis remains unresolved. South African President Thabo Mbeki has suggested that all major opposition leaders should be eligible to run for president in October's elections but Mr Gbagbo has not yet announced whether he will accept Mr Mbeki's recommendation. According to the new statement signed by army chief Col Philippe Mangou and rebel forces chief of staff Col Soumaila Bakayoko, the disarmament should take place between May 14 and Jul 31. Further details are to be worked out at a meeting on Apr 19 and a conference beginning on May 2. "The war is finished," Col Mangou was quoted as saying after the meeting.

NEPAL

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: Nepal's army said today it killed at least 60 communist rebels in fighting in the remote mountains in the country's mid-west. An army patrol came under attack late last night near the village of Dalfing in Rukum district, about 250 miles west of the capital, Kathmandu. In the ensuing fighting, the army killed at least 60 rebels, said Major Sushil Dahal at the Royal Nepalese Army headquarters in Kathmandu. Details were still sketchy because the fighting was in a remote part of the country which is mostly controlled by the rebels. No casualties were reported on the army side. (See issue of Apr 15.)

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A number of private schools in eastern Nepal have shut down following threats by Maoist rebels. The rebels have been

demanding that the government should take over private schools, accusing their operators of being driven by profits. The rebel threat shut down private schools in the country's western region last week, though schools in the capital, Kathmandu, have defied it. More than 1.5 million students attend some 9,000 private schools in Nepal. The rebels' students wing, the All Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary), has threatened to bomb the schools if they defied the closure call. Yesterday, suspected rebels bombed a school in the south-western town of Nepalgunj after operator defied the threat. Though the school building suffered some damage, nobody was hurt in the incident. Schools in Kathmandu have defied the rebel threat and opened after a long vacation. School operators and human rights organisations have appealed to the rebels to stop targeting schools, but the rebels have ignored the appeal.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Nepalese soldiers killed 22 communist guerillas in fighting today in the country's mountainous mid-west, the army said. Three soldiers also died in the clashes in Rolpa district, a rebel stronghold about 125 miles west of the capital, Kathmandu. The Royal Nepalese Army headquarters in Kathmandu said two separate gunbattles were involved, one near the village of Rakot and the other at Rumja. Maj. Susil Dahal said troops had recovered several guns and ammunition. There was no comment from the rebels, who control most of the Rolpa area, enforcing their own laws and even collecting taxes.

Kathmandu, Apr 20 -- A bomb blast rocked eastern Nepal today, killing four people in fresh violence just hours before King Gyanendra left for his first foreign tour since seizing power two months ago. Three policemen and a civilian were killed and five policemen were wounded in the blast in the temple town of Janakpur as the monarch left for Indonesia to participate in the Asian-African summit, his first foreign trip since the Feb 1 power grab. "The bomb was concealed in a sack of sand and it exploded as policemen tried to clear it," one government official told Reuters. -- Reuters.

PAKISTAN

Karachi, Apr 21 -- Suspected tribal rebels in Barkhan district blew up four electricity pylons in the early hours of yesterday as a result of which power supply to Kohlu district was cut off in Balochistan Province of Pakistan. According to local media reports, some people had planted explosives on the pylons in the Hun Naddi area of Barkhan district which blew them up. Quetta Electric supply Cor (Qesco) authorities claimed that repair work was in progress necessitating suspension of power supply. Supply to several areas of Kalat, 120km south of Quetta, was cut off after the pylon blast, said Gibreel Khan, a spokesman for the state-run power company. Since

the beginning of the year, it has been wrecked by violence blamed on insurgent tribesmen demanding more royalties from the region's rich natural resources and a rollback of military forces in the region. -- Lloyd's List Correspondent.

PHILIPPINES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Talks have begun between the Philippine government and rebels from the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), in an effort to end decades of conflict. The three-day talks are being held at a secret location in Malaysia. The two sides are said to be discussing ancestral land in the disputed south of the country - and the rights of ethnic tribes to the area's natural resources.

Port Dickson, Malaysia, Apr 20 -- Philippine Muslim rebels and the government hailed a breakthrough today in preliminary peace talks as both sides look to end a three-decade conflict. After a marathon third day of "technical meetings" in Malaysia, the Philippines government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) said they had reached agreement on substantial issues over ancestral land, the biggest hurdle to a peace deal. A joint statement did not give details of the specific agreements reached but said the talks were a breakthrough "toward a just and durable solution to the Mindanao conflict". "Since we have been talking peace to the Philippine government this is the first time we have touched on the substantive agenda of the peace process," MILF chief negotiator Mohaqher Iqbal told reporters. "I suppose if we can fully harness this issue, then the next issue ... finding a negotiated political settlement in the province of Mindanao, would be quite easy for us." Both parties are already most of the way toward resolution of the issue of ancestral land, government envoy Afable said. "We have had some detailed consensus points. We agreed that we have bridged 60 or 70 percent of the issue in the area of ancestral domain," he said. Both sides hope to begin formal peace talks by June, with more preliminary meetings to be held in about a month in mainly Muslim Malaysia, which has helped to broker the negotiations. -- Reuters.

SOMALIA

Nairobi, Apr 12 -- United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has named a four-man panel of experts to monitor the arms embargo against Somalia, UN News reported yesterday. The re-establishment of the monitoring group follows reports that various armed Somali factions were still receiving weapons from various sources. In a letter to the UN Security Council's president, released yesterday, Annan re-appointed an American, Melvin Holt Jr, and a Colombian, Joel Salek, both of whom had served on the last Somali monitoring group. Also on the team will be Harjit Singh Kelley of Kenya, who previously served on an expert

panel on Liberian sanctions, and Bruno Schiemy of Belgium, who served on a group monitoring an embargo against the Democratic Republic of Congo. On 15 March, the Council requested that the secretary-general re-establish "within 30 days and for a period of six months" a monitoring group "to continue investigating the implementation of the arms embargo by member states and violations, inter alia, through field-based investigations in Somalia." It asked the group to assess actions taken so far by the Somali authorities and other UN members states, especially Somalia's neighbours, "fully to implement the arms embargo". The Council imposed a weapons ban on Somalia in 1992, at the onset of civil war. A four-member panel of experts to investigate violations of the embargo was then appointed by Annan in September 2002. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 13 -- A press report, dated today, states: At least 13 people were reported killed in renewed inter-clan fighting in Hobyo district, Mudug region of central Somalia, sources told IRIN. At least 30 others were reported wounded, the sources added. The latest fighting pitted militiamen from two sub-clans, the Saad and Seleeban of the main Hawiye clan and was reportedly sparked by misunderstanding over the right to use grazing lands and water points in Hobyo area. A local journalist in Galkayo, the capital of Mudug told IRIN that the latest fighting broke out on Monday afternoon (Apr 11). It escalated in the evening, leading to the destruction of property and torching of houses in south Galkayo. Medical sources in Galkayo said the wounded, most of whom were women and children, had been admitted at two hospitals in the town run by the medical charity MSF-Holland. Hassan Ahmed, a medical doctor in one of the hospitals told IRIN that some of those admitted had "serious gunshot wounds". By yesterday, the number of internally displaced persons in the town had risen amid fears that the militiamen were regrouping to launch fresh hostilities.

SRI LANKA

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: Five renegade Tamil Tiger rebels are reported to have been killed in shooting in eastern Sri Lanka. Two others have been injured in the incident, the Sri Lankan military and international peace monitors say. It is not clear who is behind the killing as details of the latest violence are still unclear. "There has been a shooting incident in the jungle. At the moment we know five are dead and two injured," Steen Jorgensen, head of the Sri Lankan Monitoring Mission in the eastern district of Batticaloa is quoted as saying by Reuters. However, Sri Lankan army spokesman Brigadier Daya Ratanayake said that the five dead were led by Col. Karuna, the rebel who broke away from the main

Tamil Tiger organisation last year. The attack took place in the Welikanda area of Polonnaruwa, nearly 150 km north-east of the capital Colombo, in territory controlled by the government. Brigadier Ratanayake said it looked like an insider had led the attack. However, it is not clear if that would have been someone who had infiltrated into the breakaway rebels or someone who had become disaffected with it. There has been no word from the Tamil Tigers but the pro-rebel Tamilnet website reported that nine renegades were killed in the attack, without specifying who was behind it. Since Col Karuna split from the northern-based leadership of the Tamil Tigers in March, 2004, there have been frequent inter-rebel clashes. The Tamil Tigers accuse the government of backing the Karuna faction - a charge the authorities deny. Continuing violence in Sri Lanka's east comes amid deadlock in negotiations between the Tamil Tigers and the government. Peace talks between the two sides have been suspended since April 2003.

TOGO

Lome, Apr 17 -- At least six people were killed in fighting between rival political supporters in Togo's capital yesterday, a human rights group close to the ruling party said today, just a week before presidential polls are to be held. "Sadly six supporters of the ruling party were killed," said Claude Vondoly, secretary general of the Togolese Movement for the Defense of Liberties and of Human Rights (MTDLDH). He said around 100 ruling party supporters were injured in the fighting. An opposition leader, Yawovi Agboyibo, said one of their supporters was killed in the clashes, which broke out in a northern suburb of the coastal capital, which has been on edge ahead of the Apr 24 presidential elections. Agboyibo said 55 opposition supporters were injured. Hospital officials in Lome said that they had treated 30 people with injuries and that five were still under observation. Vondoly, whose group is close to the ruling RPT party, said people were attacked just for wearing T-shirts with a picture of the party's candidate Faure Gnassingbe. A statement from the RPT's youth wing blamed opposition supporters for attacking a convoy of vehicles campaigning for Gnassingbe. Agboyibo said the RPT supporters attacked opposition activists. The polls, called after a constitutional crisis sparked by the death of former ruler Gnassingbe Eyadema and the army's attempts to install his son as successor, have raised fears of unrest in a West African nation used to political violence. -- Reuters.

TURKEY

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels have killed three Turkish soldiers in an

overnight clash in Turkey, reports said today. The clash occurred near the town of Pervari in Siirt province, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported. Private CNN-Turk television said that Turkish troops killed 21 Kurdish rebels in the clashes but that report could not immediately be confirmed. CNN-Turk said Turkish troops were pursuing rebels believed to have infiltrated into Turkey from neighbouring Iraq in the area during the past week and the clash erupted overnight. The Turkish casualties were a lieutenant and two sergeants, the news channel reported. Violence has increased since June, when the rebels declared an end to a five-year old unilateral truce, saying that Turkey had not reciprocated. The rebels had declared the cease-fire in 1999, following the capture of their leader Abdullah Ocalan.

Diyabakir, Apr 15 -- Turkish troops pursued Kurdish rebels today in the second day of an operation which has left 25 people dead, including 21 guerrillas, military officials said. Three soldiers and a state-sponsored village guard were also killed in the fighting with Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants, which began yesterday morning in the Besta area bordering Sirnak and Siirt provinces. Aircraft and helicopters took off from an airbase in the main southeastern city of Diyarbakir to support the operation involving soldiers from three brigades along with 2,000 village guards. -- Reuters.

UGANDA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: The Ugandan army has announced that it had killed 16 rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), rescued at least 28 abducted people and recovered an assortment of ammunitions during numerous battles with the LRA in the war-torn northern part of the country. The northern Ugandan army spokesman, Lt. Tabaro Kiconco said today that the operations took place over the weekend in Gulu and Kitgum districts. He commented that though the army has greatly weakened the rebels, there are still a few remnants carrying out attacks on civilians. Meanwhile, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said in its latest report for the month of March that 80 percent of the 1.4 million internally displaced persons in northern Uganda are women and children. The report said that an estimated 30,000 children sleep on shop verandas in the affected towns for fear of attacks from the rebels. "Each evening, the threat of attacks and abductions by LRA rebels deprives approximately 30,000 child 'night commuters' to seek the relatives safety of urban centers, primarily in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader districts," the report said. The report added that displacement, poverty and heightened violence in the war-torn region continue to deprive children

and women of their rights to fully access basic health care, safe water, primary education, protection and shelter.

Labour Disputes



BANGLADESH

Karachi, Apr 21 -- Import-export activities at Benapole land port at western Bangladesh resumed yesterday afternoon when the port users on the Indian side withdrew the strike after three days. The strike enforced to protest atrocities of BSF was called off at 1600 after fruitful negotiations, according to local media reports. About 100 trucks loaded with Indian goods entered Benapole and a few trucks with jute and jute products crossed the border to Petrapole after the strike was withdrawn. Bangladeshi truckers said their vehicles were intensely checked by BSF at no man's before entry into Petrapole. Travellers from Bangladesh with valid passport are also harassed at Haridaspur BSF camp. -- Lloyd's List Correspondent.

CHINA

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: All 17,000 workers at a factory of Japan-based wireless manufacturer Uniden Corp in Shenzhen, southern China, are striking over their right to unionize and working conditions, Hong Kong newspapers reported today. More than 100 riot police have been dispatched to the factory in case more radical actions are triggered amid escalating anti-Japan sentiment throughout the country, according to the English-language South China Morning Post. Employees were quoted by the Post as saying they were working 11-hour days and getting paid just 480 yuan (around \$58) a month.

ECUADOR

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 15, states: Today, Ecuadorian authorities announced that public health doctors on strike for over eight weeks would be fired. The doctors are striking for better wages. The Communications Ministry announced that it would begin processing applications to replace the strikers. Over 120,000 public health doctors began their strike on Feb 21. The doctors are demanding that President Lucio Gutierrez fulfill a promise made last year to raise wages. The government claims that it lacks the resources.

FINLAND

London, Apr 15 -- Finland's port and logistics sector was paralysed yesterday by a dockyard workers' strike, set to hit more than Euro195m (\$254m) worth of daily international trade. Port of Helsinki union

representative Patric Kollin said members had left work at the nation's top 10 port facilities. Transport workers' union AKT now plan to widen the industrial action to a nationwide strike on Apr 29, if a deal is not reached with bosses beforehand. Finnish stevedores want employers to cut their use of casual labour, with the walkout action also aimed at attempts by Helsinki bosses to overturn an overtime ban. Top Finnish shipowner and ro-ro operator Finnlines, in a separate profits warning, said, yesterday, the AKT action had hit the ports of Helsinki, Turku and Kotka in which it operates. Other main Finnish cargo ports affected included Hamina, Kaskinen, Naantali, Oulu, Pori, Rauma, Turku and Uusikaupunki. The oil port of Kilpilahti is the only large facility that remained open yesterday. The Finnish Port Operators Association claimed that the strikes were illegal and would hinder further negotiations and the nation's economy. Around 80% of Finland's foreign trade is seaborne and the one-day strike will hold up Euro90m of imports and Euro105m worth of export revenue. The dockers strike has almost fully halted exports from the Finnish mills of the world's top paper and board maker Stora Enso and M-real, the companies said yesterday. "It has halted our exports almost totally," a Stora Enso spokeswoman said.

FRANCE

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A call has been made today for an immediate strike at the ports of Lavera and Fos. It is understood that all vessels have already stopped at Fos Oil Terminal. Vessels are still operating at Lavera Oil Terminal, but no connection or disconnection is possible. There is currently no information about the anticipated duration of the strike.

Marseilles, Apr 18 -- French seafarers of SNCM shipping firm, National Maritime-Corsica Mediterranean Company, are striking at Marseilles port, blocking the entrance of the docks today. The workers were protesting against the passage of legislation creating a new low-cost French international register. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 18 -- The strike announced this morning at the ports of Lavera and Fos appears to have been called off, with staff resuming work at about 1400 today.

London, Apr 21 -- The chairman of France's state-owned Mediterranean ferry company, SNCM, has claimed that the company is in an "insurrectional situation" after striking seafarers ordered officers to leave the company's vessels. The seafarers, who have been on strike for nine days, asked officers, including masters, to leave the five SNCM vessels, which they are currently occupying in the port of Marseilles, on Monday and Tuesday (Apr 18-19). Seafarers' union representative Jean-Paul Israel said: "We asked the officers to disembark to avoid

inflaming the situation. The company's management was no longer assuring its role and certain officers were putting pressure on the seafarers." However, SNCM chairman, Bruno Vergobbi, said in an interview published in a local paper yesterday: "In the navy, that is called a mutiny." An officers' union representative said that the term was not applicable to the situation at SNCM, however, on the grounds that the strikers who ordered the officers to disembark were not part of the crew of the vessels. He added that two officers had remained on board each of the vessels for security reasons but that there were concerns as to who would be responsible in the event of any incidents while the masters were absent. The strike began on Apr 12 to protest over the French government's plans to create a new second register, allowing crews to be composed of up to 75% of non-European Union seafarers. The register is not applicable in the ferry sector but the strike call was taken as an opportunity by seafarers at SNCM to react to the threat to jobs posed by the company's financial difficulties and the government's search for a private sector investor to take a capital stake in the company. "The RIF (French international register) has come to aggravate the crisis situation at SNCM," said Mr Israel. "We want explanation on our future which only the politicians are able to provide." The company, which announced losses totalling Euros 28 million (\$36.6 million) last year and claims to have lost more than Euros 1.5 million since the start of the latest strike, has announced plans to axe 210 jobs as part of a series of measures to stem loss-making but the unions have steadfastly blocked its efforts to discuss the measures. Yesterday, SNCM closed its Marseilles head office and put all its shore staff and non-striking seafarers on leave.

GERMANY

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Some 14,000 workers in northern Germany staged a brief sympathy strike today, throwing their support behind other steel workers who want a 6.5 percent increase in their wages a new collective bargaining agreement. The IG Metall Union said that workers from 40 different companies participated in the brief walkout. Steel employers are offering a 1.9 percent raise over 19 months as well as several payments that would total euro500 for workers in North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Bremen. To show support for those workers, some 2,800 workers in Bochum didn't work for more than hour, while in Duisburg, some 6,000 members of the trade union did the same. There were more brief strikes in Muelheim, Duesseldorf, Siegen and in Bremen.

INDIA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: Petrol dealers

across India today observed a one-day nation-wide strike to press upon the government to increase their commission on the sale of petrol and diesel, last revised in 2001. However, company-owned-company-operated outlets, constituting nearly 20 per cent of over 25,000 petrol stations in the country, remained unaffected. Though an official panel submitted a report to the government in February recommending an increase in remuneration paid to the dealers, government has given no indication to implement the report, said Mr Ashok Badhwar, President, Federation of All-India Petroleum Traders. "We were on a day-long strike today. Petrol pumps all over the country shut operations at midnight. This is a 24-hour strike. We will intensify the agitation if our demands are not met," he said.

ITALIAN AIRLINE PERSONNEL

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Flight attendants at Italian state carrier Alitalia were set to stage a four-hour strike today, prompting the airline to cancel 168 flights. Of the flights scrapped, 92 were domestic, 70 were within Europe and six were intercontinental, the company said. Flight attendants from three labour unions said they would stay off the job from noon until 1600 hrs, today. Cabin crews have gone on strike several times in recent months over concerns that include a restructuring plan at the airline that includes 3,700 job cuts.

MOROCCO

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Industrial action has been affecting port towage services at Casablanca since Mar 28 due to a dispute involving tug operators Offshore Maroc. According to the Union Syndicale des Travailleurs des Ports au Maroc (USTPM), the dispute relates to tug crews working 240 hours per month, when they are only supposed to do 191 hours. The union has called on Offshore Maroc to pay for the extra hours worked and has warned that the dispute may spread to other Moroccan ports.

NEW ZEALAND

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Solid Energy miners will begin a 48-hour nationwide strike tomorrow as they up the ante in their fight for pay parity between mines. The Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union (EPMU) said today Solid Energy had offered a 2.8 per cent increase. EPMU southern regional operations director Jed O'Connor said Westport's Stockton Mine, Huntly, the Ohai opencast in Southland and Rotowaro in the Waikato would all strike. Only the Terrace Mine near Reefton would be unaffected as its staff were still under agreement, he said. "It's the result of a breakdown in negotiations for a mining multi-employer collective, negotiated over the last six weeks. "We can't make any progress." Workers

wanted pay parity between mines which Solid Energy claimed could amount to increases of between 20 and 30 per cent, Mr O'Connor said. The nationwide strike follows a 24-hour wildcat strike at Spring Creek. Miners returned to work at 1500, yesterday. The strike will begin at 0700, tomorrow.

PHILIPPINES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Thousands of commuters in Manila and other Philippine cities were stranded today as public transport operators went on a one-day strike to demand a fare hike amid rising oil prices. The organisers apologized to the public for inconvenience, but said they were forced to take action because high world oil prices "have put us all in dire crisis," said one of the strike leaders, Armando Naul. They are demanding a 2.50 peso increase in the basic transport fare, now at 5 pesos, as well as a repeal of the oil deregulation law that gives oil companies freedom to set fuel prices. The strikers also were protesting heavy fines imposed by traffic officers. The main streets of Manila, usually bustling with noisy traffic snarls, were almost empty of public utility vehicles. The Department of Transportation and Communications said they deployed tourist buses and trucks to help stranded commuters.

ROMANIA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Some 35,000 postal workers today began a 10-day strike in Romania to demand higher salaries, paralysing mail delivery and payments of pensions and child benefits. Mariana Kniesner, a senior union leader at the National Trade Union Bloc told Realitatea TV, "The whole Romanian Postal Service is on strike." Postal workers, who earn an average monthly salary of 6.3 million lei (US\$225; euro175), are demanding a pay rise of 16 percent. Managers say that they cannot afford the raise and point to the fact that spending at the post office is monitored by a Romanian government agreement with the International Monetary Fund. The strike began at midnight yesterday, and all post offices across Romania were closed today, said Marian Ciubeica, another union leader. The 10-day strike will halt all mail delivery, money transfers and payments of government pensions, disability and child benefits handled by Romania's post offices.

UGANDA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report from La Salle, dated Apr 14, states: The two-week workers' strike at Uganda Railways Corporation has cost government over Shs 1 billion, Parliament heard yesterday. The Corporation workers laid down their tools a fortnight ago, demanding for the consolidation of their monthly pay package before URC is sold off. The State Minister for Transport, Mr

Adraule Awuzu, told the House yesterday that by the time the strike was called off on Tuesday (Apr 12), the government had lost Shs1 billion. The Ministry of Labour amicably brought the strike to a halt. Awuzu said the figure could shoot up because traders would definitely charge extra costs for loss of business. "Many containers that were supposed to be transported by the trains were held up and the businessmen will have to pay extra charges," he said. The workers, mainly terminal operators, pilots, engineers and cargo handlers went on strike saying management was not responding to their demands.

Awards & Settlements



ALLEGED MISLEADING OF INVESTORS, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Investors who lost money following the split-capital investment trust scandal are now able to claim compensation. About 50,000 investors who lost money will have until Jul 18 to claim their share of the £144m split-cap industry compensation package agreed last year. Splits were marketed as a low-risk way to benefit from rising share prices. But when the stock market collapsed in 2000, investors were estimated to have lost £700m. Claim forms are now being sent out to those hit by the scandal. The compensation package is the end result of an exhaustive investigation and negotiation process between the firms at the centre of the split-capital scandal and the Financial Services Authority. The FSA investigated whether investors were misled about the risks posed by split-capital investment trusts. Firms involved were presented with 780 files of evidence detailing 27,000 taped conversations and over 70 interviews. However, at the time of the scandal the FSA did not regulate the investment trust industry and as a result they had little power to force the firms involved in the scandal to compensate. Throughout the second half of 2004 the FSA tried to get the firms to voluntarily offer compensation to investors. Finally, on Dec 24, the firms agreed to a limited compensation package, at a figure far short of what the FSA had originally asked for. The company set up to oversee the compensation payout, the Fund Distribution Limited (FDL), will now begin mailing application forms to investors who may have lost out. Completed applications must be returned to the FDL no later than 1630, Jul 18. Cases will be judged on a case-by-case basis and successful compensation claims will be paid out in the autumn. Investors who lost money through Aberdeen Asset Management's split-capital funds are

to receive compensation direct from the investment firm rather than through the FDL.

ASBESTOS AND POLLUTION-RELATED CLAIMS, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Apr 20 -- Equitas is to pay Goodyear Tyre & Rubber \$22 million in an insurance settlement for asbestos and pollution-related claims previously filed by the tyre maker. The money will come from London underwriters reinsured by Equitas.

BODY SEARCHES, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: Three women activists, strip-searched after being arrested during the 2003 free-trade demonstrations, have forced Miami-Dade County to end its indiscriminate searches. In addition, the county today agreed to pay \$4.5 million to more than 100,000 people as part of its settlement of a class-action lawsuit filed by Judith Haney, Liat Mayer and Jamie Loughner. The tentative settlement was signed today by U.S. District Judge Adalberto Jordan; final approval could come on Sep 23. "Body cavity searches are extremely violating for anyone but particularly for women," said Terry Coble, president of the Greater Miami Chapter of the ACLU. "This settlement reinforces that principle." The women were arrested and searched during a Free Trade Area of the Americas meeting in Miami in 2003. The longstanding practice of such invasive searches was discovered only after police arrested 234 people at protests during the meeting. "We didn't know this was going on for at least seven years," said Randall Berg, executive director of the Florida Justice Institute and a lawyer for the women. "That's how we found out about it, the FTAA." Miami-Dade County denies all allegations of wrongdoing and agreed to the settlement because it's a favourable resolution. Assistant County Attorney Jeffrey Ehrlich said. The county has changed its procedures and agreed to comply with state law, which bars jail officials from strip-searching people who have been arrested for minor offenses unless the person is arrested on a drug charge, is suspected of having contraband or is booked on a violent offense. The law requires supervisors to give written authorisation for such a search. "We have become aware of our strip-search practices and as a result of the lawsuit we have changed our policy," Miami-Dade Corrections Department spokeswoman Janelle Hall said. "We want to compensate those people who have been hurt." Hugh Graf, a spokesman for the Broward Sheriff's Office, said officials would conduct a strip search of a non-violent offender only if jail officials had reason to think the person was hiding a weapon or contraband. Officials from the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office said deputies may not strip-search

anyone arrested for a "traffic, regulatory or misdemeanor offense" except in cases involving violence, weapons or drugs. However, all incoming inmates into Palm Beach County Jail are visually inspected after taking a shower and before putting on an inmate uniform, said Capt. Mark Chamberlain, head of jail intake and release. Haney, one of the women who sued Miami-Dade, said Monday from Tampa that she felt attacked when jail officials ordered her to take off her clothes, bend over and hop as she was being booked. The procedure is supposed to dislodge any hidden weapon or contraband. "It was a small room with a door facing a hallway where anyone on legitimate business could walk by and see me naked," said Haney, 50, a project manager at a California biotech firm. The three women were later joined by four other plaintiffs. According to the payout formula, the seven will divide \$300,000. Women taken to the Women's Detention Center and strip-searched before their first appearance in front of a judge will get at least \$1,000, but some could receive as much as \$10,000, depending on how many times they were strip-searched before seeing a judge, said Mark E. Merin, a California attorney representing the women. Men also could benefit from the settlement. Anyone arrested on a charge dealing with violence, drugs or weapons who was strip-searched without the approval of a supervising officer is entitled to \$10, according to the settlement. Terms of the settlement apply to those arrested between Mar 5, 2000, and Feb 28, 2005.

DAMAGE CAUSED BY FERTILISERS, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: A Fresno-area raisin grower has been awarded \$7.5 million in damages from a fertilizer company found to have severely damaged 1,000 acres of the man's Thompson seedless grape crop. After a four-week trial, a Fresno County jury found Britz Fertilizers at fault for spraying Ahmad Skouti's vineyards with a chemical cocktail during the 2002 season. Skouti's lawyer, James Betts, said the damage was so severe that future crops also were affected. "He had significant crop losses for several years and he had to replant vines," Betts said. A spokesman for Britz Fertilizers said the company plans to file a motion for a new trial. Betts said the problem started in 2002 when Skouti, on the advice of a Britz Fertilizer employee, used a chemical mixture that was supposed to speed up the maturing of the Thompson grapes the dominant grape used to make raisins. Skouti then noticed evidence of spray damage, including shriveled berries, dropped berries, burnt and stunted leaves and canes. Court records also show that the product label for the plant growth hormone Ethrel did not recommend mixing it with other additives.

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE, AUSTRALIA

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: AN Adelaide woman who became a paraplegic after a cyst on her spine was wrongly diagnosed has had her damages increased to more than \$3.25 million. The South Australian Supreme Court today increased the amount of damages awarded to Vivien Kaye Waller by \$50,000, finding the original amount awarded for future economic loss was unreasonably low. The court dismissed an appeal by Flinders Medical Centre and its former neurologist Richard Burns, who had argued the initial payment was excessive. Mrs Waller, 51, will now receive \$3,252,000. After complaining of back pain, Mrs Waller was misdiagnosed in 1975 as suffering from multiple sclerosis and became wheelchair bound in the late 1990s. An MRI scan in 1997 finally located a rare form of cyst growing on Mrs Waller's spine, which was subsequently removed. Chief Justice John Doyle said today the cyst would have been discovered much earlier if more extensive tests had been carried out. "There was sufficient uncertainty about the cause of Mrs Waller's symptoms to call for further investigations as a matter of proper neurological practice," Chief Justice Doyle said. "Had those investigations been carried out the presence of a cyst would have been disclosed and the cyst could, and would, have been removed, and Mrs Waller's condition thereafter would have been about the same as it was during her period of remission between 1982 and 1986." Chief Justice Doyle said the initial payment awarded to Mrs Waller was slightly conservative and at the "lower end of the range" that he would have determined. The court doubled the amount initially awarded for future income loss to \$100,000 but noted that if Mrs Waller had been able to work full-time until the age of 65, she could have earned \$273,000.

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: A child left severely brain-damaged after a caesarean delivery is set to receive in excess of £1m damages. A judge ruled five-year-old Jake Smith's brain damage was caused by a surgeon pulling too hard during his delivery at Watford Hospital, Herts. Jake, who lives with his parents in Epping, Essex, has needed 24-hour care since his birth in May 1999. There will now be a further hearing to assess the exact amount of damages to be awarded to Jake. In the two minutes it took to deliver his head, Jake suffered "sudden and torrential" bleeding which led to a loss of up to a third of his circulating blood volume, said Mr Justice McKinnon at London's High Court today. Jake's mother, Abigail Smith, had elected for a caesarean birth because he was upside down in the womb. The judge said it was

planned to avoid the complications and risks of a vaginal breech delivery. But, consultant obstetrician Richard Sheridan, who was treating Mrs Smith privately, used a "hard pull" with forceps to deliver Jake's head, which was stuck in the uterus. The baby showed no signs of life at birth and needed 17 minutes of resuscitation, which exacerbated the massive bleeding. Mr Sheridan and his insurers had denied liability and causation, claiming that such an injury in these circumstances would be a "world first" and that Jake's problems must have been caused by a pre-existing clotting disorder. Mr Sheridan said he had pulled as hard on many occasions with no ill effect, and did not think that trauma had been caused to the baby. He added that he had never seen or heard of trauma to a baby in a caesarean forceps delivery. But, the judge reached the "firm conclusion" that all the damage was caused by what Mr Sheridan did. He said that the surgeon fell below the standard of care expected of a reasonable obstetric practitioner. He was negligent in failing to make more space for the baby by enlarging the uterine incision and then in using "excessive force" to deliver his head. The judge ruled the baby had no previous abnormality and was subjected to more than normal mechanical forces which tore veins in his head.

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: A jury awarded \$17.1 million to a woman who sued a hospital and two doctors after her son nearly bled to death in the womb, one of the largest malpractice verdicts in Washington history. A Snohomish County Superior Court jury found Stevens Hospital in Edmonds, WA, responsible on Friday (Apr 15) for 80% of the damages, or \$13.7 million, and the doctors responsible for the rest. Because of a rare medical condition called foetal maternal haemorrhage, Tami Lafferty's son's lost 75% of his blood before birth in 1998 and had to be resuscitated after an emergency delivery by Caesarean section. He was left with serious brain damage, impaired vision and cerebral palsy. She said the hospital failed to discover the problem when she reported to her doctor in November, 1998, that the foetus was not moving as much as before.

ROAD ACCIDENT, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: A Palm Beach County jury today found a van driver responsible -- "to the tune" of \$10.3 million -- for brain injuries suffered by a former English teacher at the Saint Andrew's School in Boca Raton. In 2001, Conrad Lawrence struck David Jones, 63, as Jones rode his bicycle along Military Trail in Boca Raton, according to Greg Zele, one of Jones' attorneys. At the time, Jones was

training for a 500-mile charity race in Montana. Thrown 100 feet from his bike, Jones suffered severe head trauma. For two weeks, he lay unconscious in the hospital. Today, Zele said, Jones is in a wheelchair but can walk short distances with a cane. The brain injury ended Jones' teaching career. He had worked at Saint Andrew's since 1977. Lawrence pleaded guilty to DUI causing serious bodily injury and was sentenced to five years of probation in March 2004, court records show. Lawrence has since moved out of the area. Though jurors found Lawrence liable for Jones' injuries, they rejected the argument that bike helmet manufacturer Bell Sports was also partly responsible. Zele and Reiter argued that the helmet design was defective. The helmet popped off Jones' head on impact. Of the \$10.3 million award, \$3 million was awarded for lost wages and medical expenses, and \$2 million was part of a consortium claim for Jones' wife, Lynn, according to Zele.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENT, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: A jury awarded more than \$43.7 million to the family of a 74-year-old man who died when his Lincoln Town Car caught fire after it was struck from behind. The July 2003 accident also severely burned John Jablonski's wife, Dora, 72. The family of the Florissant, Mo., couple sued Ford Motor Co., the manufacturer of the couple's 1993 Lincoln Town Car, alleging the location of the car's fuel tank behind the rear axle caused the fire. The Madison County jury yesterday awarded the family \$15 million in punitive damages, \$23.1 million for Dora Jablonski's claim and \$5.67 million to John Jablonski's estate. The family's attorney, Brad Lakin, told jurors Ford should have warned car owners or retrofitted the vehicles with safety devices. But Ford attorney Jim Feeney argued that no similar accidents have occurred involving the same Town Car model as the one driven by John Jablonski. Feeney also said the Town Car's fuel tank was in "the optimum location for that car."

SEXUAL ABUSE, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: A jury yesterday awarded nearly \$5.8 million in damages to three men and a woman who were childhood victims of sexual abuse by a Roman Catholic priest. The archdiocese acknowledged at the start of the trial that although church officials knew in the 1970s that the Rev. Joseph Pritchard had been accused of molesting young parishioners in San Jose, the church did not investigate the allegations and took no steps to protect the children. As a result, the only question put to jurors in the two and a half week long trial was how much the plaintiffs should be compensated. The plaintiffs had sought \$20 million; the archdiocese suggested \$1 million. "The

church was forced to admit that molestation had been occurring and they should have known what was occurring," said Larry Drivon, an attorney representing one of the victims. During the trial, the plaintiffs testified Pritchard, who died in 1988, fondled them under their clothes, sometimes with other children or other priests watching. Yesterday's consolidated cases were the third of more than 750 lawsuits against Catholic dioceses in California to go to trial since the state in 2002 temporarily lifted the statute of limitations for filing old sex-abuse claims.



RAILWAY ACCIDENTS

AVELLANEDA AREA, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA
London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: At least 44 people have been wounded, some of them seriously, after two trains collided in a station on the outskirts of the Argentine capital, a metropolitan transport official said. The collision between the two trains occurred at the Sarandi station in the Avellaneda neighbourhood during the evening rush hour. Local media reports said at least one person had died in the crash.

AVOCA, LUZERNE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: It will take heavy equipment to clean up a train derailment in Luzerne County. A train jumped the tracks while passing through Avoca this afternoon. Nine cars tipped over. No one was hurt, and traffic was not affected. Officials from Reading Railroad and Northern Railroad came in to check out the damage. Heavy equipment will be brought in to clean up the wreck tomorrow.

BACHUMA AREA, VOI REGION, KENYA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: Train services between Mombasa and Nairobi were suspended yesterday after a goods train derailed near Bachuma station, near Voi, spilling thousands of litres of crude palm oil. The suspension is expected to cause a cargo pile-up at the Mombasa port, especially of goods destined for Kampala, which uses mainly rail transport. The oil was being transported upcountry from Mombasa. Several villagers were arrested as they scooped the spilled oil and taken to Voi Police Station. But the oil would be of no use to them in its crude form. A Kenya Railways official supervising the line repairs said enough workmen had been sent to the scene and that the services would soon resume. He regretted the accident, saying that there was a huge

volume of cargo to be moved from the port to Nairobi and then to Kampala. Sources at the scene said 14 wagons had piled on one another, blocking the line. "We are investigating the accident, which occurred sometime before midday today, and as the investigations go on, our immediate task is to clear the line and reopen it for traffic," he added. When the Nation arrived at the scene yesterday afternoon, police had sealed off the spot to keep away the villagers.

BLAIRSTOWN AREA, IOWA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: The Union Pacific's main rail line across Iowa is back in business after a train derailment near Blainstown, west of Cedar Rapids. The line was closed Wednesday afternoon (Apr 13) after two freight trains collided, tearing up about 600 feet of track. The line reopened yesterday. Officials say the collision happened when a coal train was stopped for traffic and another train hit it from behind. Four locomotives and six rail cars jumped the tracks. Three crew members were injured. The cause of the accident remains under investigation.

BOUGHTON, KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

Durban, Apr 19 -- It has been reported that a cargo train has derailed at Boughton Station, near Cedara, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. The cause of the derailment is not yet known. It has been reported that the train consisted of 50 wagons containing import cargo on its way from Durban Harbour to Johannesburg. Each wagon can carry two x 20 feet containers or one x 40 feet container. The nature of the cargo is not known at this time, nor how many containers were empty and how many full. Officials from the local rail authority, Spoornet, are at the scene evaluating the situation and will make a decision as to what will be done with the damaged containers. The line between Durban and Johannesburg has been closed by the accident and it is not clear how long it will take before traffic can resume, however Spoornet are making use of alternative routes through Empangeni for cargo traffic. There are no reports of any casualties at this time. -- Lloyd's Agents.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated Apr 19, states: Toxic chemicals are feared to have spilled into the river after a train accident near Boughton on Sunday night (Apr 17). The train derailment caused serious damage to the tracks and the train's cargo, with two wreckage sites still cordoned off late yesterday. The train carriages, which stretched for 800 metres along the track, were derailed at two points. The accident happened about 1830 on Sunday. A source said the derailment occurred when an unmanned, runaway train from Cedara crashed into stationary rail trucks. Spoornet spokesperson

Likhethe Molotwane, however, said there was no collision of trains when the derailment occurred between Cedara and Braeside. Molotwane said there were "no fatalities or injuries in the accident". Molotwane said the train was carrying "a variety of goods", although he could not specify. Timothy Fasheun, manager of environment and technology development in KwaZulu-Natal, confirmed that chemicals were being transported. He was unsure which chemicals were spilt, as he was still waiting for the manifest from the driver. The manifest, along with placards posted on tankers containing hazardous chemicals, identifies the chemicals being carried. Fasheun said "there appeared to be no placards on the tanker". Another source said the chemicals were dimethyl ether and sodium metabisulphite. Dimethyl ether is highly volatile and toxic, and affects the heart, lungs, intestines, liver, kidneys, and nervous system. Sodium metabisulphite, a mineral salt, is not regarded as problematic. Molotwane said: "The chemicals that were spilt are under control. We have a Spoornet Hazmat team rehabilitating the area. Everything possible will be done, but it has been contained." A source, who inspected the damage said "it could take four to five days to clean up the scene and get the line back open. This will cost tens of millions."

FALLS VILLAGE, CONNECTICUT, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A derailed freight train full of lumber and plywood left quite a mess in Falls Village yesterday, officials said. "It just went off the tracks and lost a lot of its lumber," Chief Curt Mechara of the Falls Village Fire Department said. "Mostly building materials went off the tracks and spilled along the banks." The derailment occurred on the tracks off of Route 7, parallel with Warren Turnpike Road, near Housatonic Valley Regional High School, he said. Mechara said there were only two engineers on the train, neither of which was injured. Five or six cars came off the tracks, a few of which rolled over down an embankment, completely disconnecting and spilling their contents. "It won't be cleaned up for probably a week. It's quite a mess," he said. "They're going to have to redo probably 1,500 feet of rail and the bed's all tore up." State Police Troop B responded to the incident, as did the state Department of Environmental Protection. "There were two tankers on the train that had the potential to spill but they didn't spill," Mechara said. Dwayne Gardner, spokes-person for the DEP, said the Falls Village Fire Department requested his department's assistance in assessing the situation. Gardner said the rail company would maintain security overnight yesterday and today they'd put the cars back on the track and

clear the scene. Mechara said officials aren't sure exactly what caused the derailment and the incident is under investigation.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: The line of the Housatonic Railroad where a freight train derailed Sunday (Apr 17) could be back in service as soon as tonight or tomorrow morning, officials said yesterday. Edward Rodriguez, executive vice president of the Housatonic Railroad Co., said the company hired a contractor from R.J. Corman Derailment Services in Newburgh, N.Y., who will use specialized equipment to move the derailed cars. "And that will be followed up with our own crews doing the track repair," he said. The Federal Railroad Administration will assist in the investigation of what caused the train to derail.

GRAND SALINE AREA, TEXAS, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: An Amtrak train headed from Los Angeles to Chicago derailed yesterday evening, stranding 74 passengers and 11 crew members, Amtrak officials said. No injuries were reported. All four wheels of the Texas Eagle train's engine lost contact with the track at about 1820, CDT, but the train remained upright near Grand Saline, about 65 miles east of Dallas, said Amtrak spokeswoman Tracy Connell. Connell said passengers remained in the train, which still had power, and were offered a free dinner. She said Amtrak planned to replace the engine and pull the train back to Dallas, where passengers would be offered accommodations while waiting for another Amtrak train to pick them up this afternoon. Amtrak was still investigating the cause of the derailment, Connell said.

JESSUP, MARYLAND, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: A freight train derailment in Jessup delayed several commuter trains today. A Maryland Transit Administration release issued shortly after 1730 cites a CSX freight train derailment near the Jessup station on MARC's Camden Line. The derailment closed the Camden line's tracks in both directions this afternoon, interrupting freight and MARC train service, according to state transit officials and CSX, the freight operator which owns the tracks. Four cars in a 67-car train carrying automobiles derailed in the yard around 1500, CSX spokeswoman Misty Skipper said. The MTA said northbound Camden trains (Nos. 850, 852 and 856) will operate as scheduled, but the No. 854 train has been cancelled. Officials expect to reopen one track late this evening after cars were cleared away, the tracks were inspected and any necessary repairs were made, Skipper said. The cause of the derailment was still under investigation this evening, she said.

Receive immediate notice as soon as a Casualty occurs. For further information please contact Andrew Luxton on +44 (0) 20 7017 4625.

MOUNT PLEASANT, IOWA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: Eleven cars of a Burlington Northern and Santa Fe train carrying coal derailed directly north of the two apartment buildings on Haynes Court, in Mount Pleasant. There were no injuries reported. Steve Forsberg, general director of public affairs for BNSF said the train was heading east from a coalmine in Wyoming to a utility station near St. Louis. The 130-car train derailed cars 106-116 shortly after crossing the Cherry Street crossing. Ten cars are on their sides and one is upright, but missing wheels. The crossing at Cherry Street was closed because the train tore up the pavement there. Forsberg said the railroad does not have a definite cause of the accident as yet. The preliminary cause is that there was some sort of bearing failure. "It's still under investigation," he said. BNSF crews will be working all day to clean up the mess from the derailment. Along with twisted metal and smashed rail cars, there is about 1,110 tons of coal to be cleaned up.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: Railroad officials say a bad wheel bearing on a rail car is apparently what caused a coal train to jump the tracks in Mount Pleasant earlier this week. Eleven cars on the B-N-S-F train derailed Monday morning (Apr 18) in the southeast Iowa town, dumping tons of coal in the right of way. No one was hurt. Rail spokesman Steve Forsberg says the 130-car train was hauling coal from Wyoming to a power plant near St. Louis. The derailment began with the 106th car, and a burned out wheel bearing is suspected. (See issue of Apr 20.)

SAMLAYA STATION, GUJARAT STATE, INDIA

Ahmedabad, Apr 21 -- A passenger train collided with a stopped goods train in western India today, killing at least 11 people but authorities said dozens more were feared dead. Casualty reports varied widely as rescue teams reached the site of the early morning crash in Gujarat state and began removing the dead and injured from the crumpled wreckage. "Eleven bodies have been recovered. Not more than 20 are feared dead," state police chief A.K. Bhargava told Reuters. However, another police officer said dozens were feared killed in the crash and state Chief Minister Narendra Modi told NDTV television news more than 80 may have died. National Railway Minister Lalu Prasad Yadav said rescue workers had removed the bodies of the passenger train driver, his assistant and some passengers after the crash at Samlaya station, about 30 km north of the industrial town of Baroda. "The goods train was parked on the track when the Varanasi-Ahmedabad Express hit it," Yadav said. "One of the cars is badly stuck at the bottom, we have to find out the casualties from that car. It could have been a signal problem, but we'll have to investigate." At least four cars of the

passenger train, called the Sabarmati Express, jumped the tracks after the collision. Officials said 50 injured passengers had been treated at the scene before being sent to hospitals. Television reports said the train was packed with young people on their way to sit tests for coveted railway jobs. The train had been travelling from the northern holy city of Varanasi to Ahmedabad, Gujarat's main city. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: At least 17 people were killed and around 150 injured when a passenger train collided head-on with a freight train in western India, police and officials said. "So far 17 bodies have been recovered. Rescue operations are on. There might be more bodies," Bhagesh Jha, district magistrate of Vadodara, also known as Baroda, in Gujarat state, said today. Gujarat police chief A.K. Bhargav put the number of injured at 150, of whom 27 were in serious condition. The dead and injured had been removed from three of the coaches while troops and civilian volunteers were searching through the wreckage of the fourth, Kumar said, adding there were fears the death toll could rise. According to a television report, the lever used for changing tracks was found broken but this was not immediately confirmed by officials.

OLON SPRINGS AREA, WISCONSIN, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: Nineteen cars of a freight train derailed today, sparking a fire and forcing the evacuation of 30 nearby homes because of fears the flames could cause a pressurized tanker car to explode, officials said. No one was hurt in the derailment of the Union Pacific train just outside the village of Solon Springs in far northwestern Wisconsin. Firefighters, however, had to back a half-mile away from the burning wreck until they could be sure the tanker containing petroleum residue wouldn't shoot off like a missile, according to Douglas County Emergency Management Director Keith Kesler. The fire was contained tonight, said Jim Kvedaras, spokesman for the Canadian National Railway, which owns the rail line. The railway hoped to have the line cleared and open for traffic by tomorrow night, he said. Kvedaras said residents of all but three of the evacuated homes had been allowed to return home tonight. The 56-car train left from Superior and was on its way to Chicago, said John Bromley, spokesman for the Union Pacific Railroad. Of the cars that derailed, seven were hauling lumber, seven had wheat and five were empty. At least one or two cars of lumber burned, he said. There were no hazardous materials. An investigation was under way. Bromley said he didn't know why some cars caught fire.

VOI AREA, KENYA

London, Apr 20 -- Following received from LaSalle, Quebec, datelined Nairobi, Apr 18: Train services in

Kenya between Mombasa and Nairobi were suspended yesterday after a goods train derailed near Bachuma station, near Voi, spilling thousands of litres of crude palm oil. The suspension is expected to cause a cargo pile-up at the Mombasa port, especially of goods destined for Kampala, which uses mainly rail transport. The oil was being transported upcountry from Mombasa. A Kenya Railways official supervising the line repairs said enough workmen had been sent to the scene and that the services would soon resume. He regretted the accident, saying that there was a huge volume of cargo to be moved from the port to Nairobi and then to Kampala. Sources at the scene said 14 wagons had piled on one another, blocking the line. "We are investigating the accident, which occurred sometime before midday today, and as the investigations go on, our immediate task is to clear the line and reopen it for traffic," he added.

VOSZHAYEVKA, AMUR REGION, RUSSIA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report dated today, states: Seven people were killed in Russia's Far East region early today when a cargo train slammed into a bus, local prosecutors were quoted as saying. They said the driver of the bus had ignored a red light and driven onto the tracks, causing the crash near the Voszhayevka station in Russia's Amur region. Of the bus' 26 passengers, seven died on the spot and 12 more were rushed to a nearby hospital with various injuries, officials said.



SOBER WORM

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Users are being warned to watch out for a Windows virus posing as a complaint about misdirected e-mail. The variant of the Sober worm tries to trick users into opening an infected e-mail attachment by claiming it contains copies of the wrongly addressed messages. But the file contains the virus which scours computers for e-mail addresses. Any harvested address is sent back to the worm's creator and will probably be sold to spammers. The original Sober virus debuted in October 2003 but since has been regularly updated to appear in a new guise. The latest variant, like many of the others, is bilingual. The text of the message travelling with the infected attachment is in German when being sent to e-mail addresses ending in .de. All others are in English. The subject line of the Sober.N variant reads: " I've got your EMail on my_account!" The text claims that someone else has been receiving the recipient's e-mail messages by mistake. It asks the recipient to open up the attached file and review the mis-

directed messages to make sure the problem is resolved. However, the attached file only holds code for the Sober virus. The broken English the message uses has been seen by some as an attempt to give it authenticity and make people more likely to click on it. The Sober.N variant was first found on Apr 19. Users of Windows 2000, 95, 98, Me, NT, Server 2003 and Windows XP are at risk from the virus. Security firms urged users to be on their guard and to make sure their anti-virus software was up to date. The BBC News website has received warnings about Sober.N from Sophos, Blackspider and F-Secure. The number of copies of the virus caught by security firms suggests it is catching out quite a lot of users. Earlier versions of Sober posed as error messages and claims that a recipient was sending out e-mail infected with a virus.

Miscellaneous



ACCIDENT AT COAL MINE, LUSAKA, ZAMBIA

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: At least 19 miners have died today in a mine accident at the Chambishi copper mine, about 400km north of Lusaka, a mine official said. "I can confirm to you that 19 miners are confirmed dead after an accident at our mine," Ruiyong Xu, manager for administration at the Chinese-owned mine, said. The mine was investigating the cause of the underground accident, he said.

BLOCKADE OF PORTS BY FRENCH FISHERMEN

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: The blockade of Marseilles, Fos, and Lavera ports by protesting fishermen ended at about 1200, local time, today.

CAP ANAMUR (Germany)

London, Apr 16 -- General cargo Cap Anamur sailed Rijeka Apr 14 for Gdansk.

COLLAPSE OF BUILDING, PALASHBARI, BANGLADESH

Dhaka, Apr 14 -- More than 100 people remained trapped today under the rubble of a collapsed nine-storey factory in Bangladesh but the slow pace of rescue efforts suggested that few survivors would be found. The Shahriar Fabrics plant at Palashbari, 18 miles from the capital, Dhaka, collapsed early on Monday (Apr 11) as hundreds of workers packed it for a busy night shift. At least 34 people died and more than 100 have been rescued from the mountain of bricks, concrete slabs and twisted iron rods. "We are trying to find more people but hopes of finding them alive are evaporating. Only a miracle would keep them alive now," rescue operator

Mohammad Selim said today. Large numbers of firefighters, police and troops have worked day and night using heavy equipment to try to clear the rubble, a task they said was difficult to complete quickly. "The rescue operation is progressing but digging through the piles of concrete slabs, bricks and mangled iron is a gigantic task," army Brigadier-General Nizam Ahmed said. "It will take a few more days to finish the job but it may be too late for any survivors who may still be holding on," one police officer said. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: The number of people killed in the collapse of a Bangladeshi garment factory climbed to 69 yesterday as rescuers recovered nine more bodies, a rescue official said, adding there is scant hope of finding anyone else alive. A boiler explosion on Monday (Apr 11) brought the nine-storey building down on nearly 300 workers at the factory near Savar, an industrial town 20 miles north-west of the capital, Dhaka. About 96 more workers were still missing and feared dead. "There is little scope of finding anyone alive now, but we never give up hope," said Brig. Gen. Nizam Ahmed, an army officer who was supervising the rescue work. Most of the corpses were badly mangled and decomposing, and relatives struggled to identify them by clothing or other personal effects. The factory was built on a swamp three years ago, and building investigators suspect poor construction may have led to the collapse.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated Apr 19, states: Rescuers have called off their search of a collapsed Bangladeshi factory and say the number of people confirmed killed in the disaster is 73. "This morning we've called off the rescue operation as we have already cleared the rubble of all nine floors," Brigadier General Nizam Ahmed, head of the army rescue operation, said. Since the building collapsed on Monday last week (Apr 11), rescuers have found 73 bodies in the ruins of the nine-storey building. Around 100 people have been rescued alive. "There is no chance of finding any other dead bodies as the debris is cleared down to the ground floor," Brigadier General Ahmed said. He says of the bodies, five still remained unidentified. The illegally-constructed nine-storey building housing Spectrum Sweater and Knitting Industries at Palash Bari, 30 kilometres north-west of the capital, was packed with night-shift workers when it collapsed in the early hours of April 11. Officials say some families have reported that their relatives are still missing. "But we told them that there was no way anyone could be in the rubble as we've cleared it in the most meticulous manner," Salim Newaz, the head of Dhaka fire department, said. He says some missing workers have been reported twice. Survivors say the building collapsed after a boiler exploded, but officials say the boiler has been discovered "intact".

Engineers who inspected the the collapsed building say poor-quality building materials and faulty construction of the building on low-lying marsh land without proper foundations had led to its collapse. Two government bodies have launched investigation into the accident.

DELAYED OPENING OF SAIMAA CANAL

St. Petersburg, Apr 15 -- The opening of the shipping season on the Saimaa Canal did not occur as planned on Apr 6, because Russian customs had no checkpoint working, Finnish information agency STT reported Wednesday (Apr 13). It eventually opened late yesterday afternoon. The canal, which runs from Vyborg through a series of locks to Lappeenranta, is the main cargo shipping transit connection from the Baltic Sea to the lakes of Central Finland. Fifteen cargo ships, carrying 30,000 metric tons of freight were stuck in the canal by Wednesday afternoon. Finnish companies face financial losses from the delays of more than \$650,000, STT reported. "Several ships are stuck now and cannot sail into Lake Saimaa because the Russian customs will not let them go through the canal," Jukka Vaisanen, head of the Finnish Maritime Administration Traffic Division, said yesterday in a phone interview before the opening. "The losses are estimated to be several thousand euros," he said. The problem arose in fall last year when Russian customs started to implement a decision taken in 2002 to move the canal's border checkpoint from Brusnichnoye to Pyalli, closer to the Finnish-Russian border. "We informed the authorities at the federal and regional level that it was necessary to set up suitable conditions for the operation," Kommersant quoted Anatoly Utkin, a Northwest customs representative, as saying Thursday. "But after half a year the check point has still not been set up, so for this reason we can not register cargo ships or let them through." On Wednesday, the Finns offered Russian customs the use of a small building that belongs to Finland in order to start operations. In addition, the Finnish Maritime Administration has offered to contribute \$3 million to Russian customs to organize the work of the new checkpoint. -- Lloyd's Agents.

OUTBREAK OF "BIRD FLU"

Hanoi, Apr 18 -- The bird flu virus that has killed 36 people in Vietnam may not be contained until 2007 because the way it is spreading still baffles experts, officials said today. The government aimed to contain the H5N1 virus by next year or 2007 and eliminate it by 2010, Deputy Agriculture Minister Bui Ba Bong told a conference reviewing the fight against bird flu in Vietnam, the country hit hardest by the epidemic. Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung told health, agriculture officials and foreign experts it was still not

known for sure how the virus was transmitted from water fowl, who carry it without getting sick, to poultry and then to people. Bird flu has killed 51 people in Asia -- 36 Vietnamese, including 15 since December, 12 Thais and three Cambodians -- since arriving in Asia in late 2003, brought probably by migrating wild fowl. A ban on hatching and raising water fowl until Jun 30 would be extended until the end of the year, Bong said. The one-day conference in Hanoi is expected to resolve if all the water fowl carrying the H5 component of the bird flu virus in the Mekong Delta would be slaughtered. -- Reuters.

Hanoi, Apr 20 -- A 20-year-old Cambodian woman who was rushed to a Vietnamese hospital with suspected bird flu, died today, the World Health Organization (WHO) said. The woman from Kampot province had been taken across the nearby Vietnamese border suffering a high fever and respiratory problems, symptoms of the H5N1 virus that has killed 51 people in Asia, Vietnam's Tuoi Tre newspaper said. "We know that a Cambodian woman went to hospital in Vietnam and died in Vietnam but there is no confirmation yet that she died of bird flu," said Megge Miller of the WHO in Phnom Penh. Test results from samples taken by doctors at the Kien Giang provincial hospital and sent to Ho Chi Minh City's Pasteur Institute 250 km away should be available tomorrow, she added. -- Reuters.

OUTBREAK OF MARBURG VIRUS, ANGOLA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Officials in Angola believe they have the world's worst outbreak of Marburg virus under control but international medical organisations say it may worsen. The Angolan Government says the outbreak of Marburg Virus remains contained to the town of Uige in the country's north, helped by poor roads out of the area. While people outside the district have fallen ill with the disease, the Government says all had visited Uige, which is the centre of the outbreak. The virus has killed 235, said to be more deadly than Ebola. Most of the victims have been children. But the World Health Organisation says the cycle of the disease has not been broken, and it is not yet controlled. Doctors say new cases are still being found.

POWER OUTAGE, REFINERY, AMUAY, VENEZUELA

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: Venezuela's giant Amuay refinery is currently processing 450,000 barrels a day of crude, but some units remain down as the refinery continues to recover from a blackout on Mar 31, the president of Venezuela's state-run petroleum company said today. Rafael Ramirez, who serves as oil minister and the president of Petroleos de Venezuela, must restart a flexicoker that normally produces 64,000 barrels a

day along with several compression units. Ramirez said the refinery has deferred some gasoline shipments to the United States, but will use supplies from other refineries to meet client orders.

TEMPORARY SHUT-DOWN OF REFINERY, ST.CHARLES, LOUISIANA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: Valero Energy Corp. today said it had to shut down a coker at the company's St. Charles, La., refinery for unscheduled maintenance. Valero shut down the unit on Saturday, Apr 16. Mary Rose Brown, a spokeswoman for the company, said that management anticipated the coker, which is a furnace used in manufacturing gasoline, will be down 10 to 14 days before coming back online. Valero expects to lose 8,000 barrels per day in gasoline production and another 25,000 barrels per day in distillates.

VESSELS FROM CHINA QUARANTINED AT CANADIAN PORTS

Vancouver, Apr 18 -- While general cargo Ibis Arrow (28239 gt, built 1986) was discharging material from China at Fraser Surrey Docks, Surrey, BC in March, quantities of straw packing material were found within steel pipes originating from China. As China is not certified as being free of foot and mouth disease, under Section 55 of the Health of Animals Act, the Canadian federal government quarantined the cargo and ordered that all material be cleaned to remove the straw. This operation is ongoing. In the meantime, during discharge from general cargo Saga Morus (36463 gt, built 1997) at Vancouver on Apr 16, inspectors again noted straw packing materials within steel products originating from China. Instructions have been given that no cargo can be landed until it is cleaned in the vessel's hold, in the presence of government inspectors. Understand it can take up to two weeks for this to be completed and the cargo to be discharged. Reportedly, if a third vessel arrives with similar infestations, the government will refuse to allow the entry of any cargo from the vessel's holds and the only option would be for the vessel to return to its point of origin. Understand that the Chinese Ports have been made fully aware of this situation and all efforts are being made to ensure that only straw-free material is forwarded from China. -- Lloyd's Agents.



COAL MINE, ZHANGJIAKOU, HEBEI PROVINCE, CHINA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Five miners were

confirmed dead in Friday's (Apr 15) coalmine blast in north China's Hebei Province, the local government said today. All the five were natives of Zhangjiakou city, where the mine is located. Their bodies had been retrieved over the weekend. The gas explosion occurred in the No 1 shaft of the Xinglongshan Coal Mine in Xiahuyuan district of Zhangjiakou. Thirteen miners were working underground and eight of them managed to escape. Investigation into the accident is under way, Xinhua news agency reported.

FACTORY, CHAMBISHI, ZAMBIA

Lusaka, Apr 20 -- At least 46 people were killed today when a blast tore through an explosives factory at a Zambian copper mine, destroying the plant and ripping bodies apart, the country's mining minister said. "I cannot explain this tragedy which has killed 46 people so far. The entire plant has been razed. Most people were burned badly while others were just in pieces," Kaunda Lembalemba said, from the mine, 400 km north of Lusaka. Officials said the explosion occurred at an explosives factory on the premises of the Chambishi mine, owned by China's NFC Mining Africa Plc. The mine itself was not affected by the blast. Lembalemba said Bgrimm officials had told him that there were 50 people in the plant at the time of the blast, although other people said there could have been more. An eyewitness told Reuters that four of those who died were standing more than 100 metres away from the plant when the blast occurred. "It was such a big explosion that it caused extensive damage to an office block which was 100 metres away and killed four people who were standing by," the witness said. Chambishi administration manager Xu Ruiyong said a mine rescue team had been joined by rescuers from the two bigger mining units, Konkola Copper Mines (KCM) and Mopani Copper Mines (MCM). "Although the accident has happened within our premises, our production has not been affected," he said. -- Reuters.

FACTORY, DERBY, DERBYSHIRE, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: Firefighters are damping down at a Derby factory eight hours after explosions ripped through the area. Acetylene cylinders were seen shooting 400 feet into the air by fire crews called to British Oxygen on Raynesway in the city at about 2100, BST, yesterday. The area was sealed off while the remaining canisters were cooled with water to prevent further explosions. It was treated as a "major incident" before being brought under control, Derbyshire fire service said. No-one was injured during the fire or the explosions, which were triggered when a batch of cylinders fell off a lorry as they were being unloaded with a fork lift truck. The Health and Safety Executive were due to arrive on site

today to carry out a full investigation into how the fire and subsequent explosions happened. Derby's ring road was closed for two hours and the neighbouring Rolls-Royce plant was also evacuated. A fire crew was expected to remain at the scene for up to 24 hours to damp down.

FACTORY, GLASGOW, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 15, states: Investigations are continuing into an explosion at a plastics factory which left two men with severe burns and four others with minor injuries. The blast happened at Carrick Plastics in the Springburn area of Glasgow about 1515, BST, today. The factory will remain closed while the police, fire brigade and the health and safety executive try to find out what caused the explosion. The factory, which employs up to 100 people, produces plastic bottles and containers. A spokesman for the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) said: "One of our inspectors is liaising with the emergency services and will be trying to establish what happened, how it happened, if anyone is at fault and what lessons can be learned." After the blast, the two most badly injured were taken to the city's Royal Infirmary. Four others were taken to the city's Stobhill Hospital with minor injuries.

FOREST, GREECE

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Greek fire-fighters brought a blaze under partial control that destroyed hundreds of hectares of pine forest on the island of Evia, central Greece, media reported today. The forest fire, Greece's first this season, broke out early yesterday afternoon in the mountainous north of the island. Fueled by gale-force winds, it destroyed between 600 and 1,000 hectares of pine, according to a community official. "The fire had a front of several kilometres," fire department deputy chief Andreas Kois told Net state television channel today. Early information suggests it started from a garbage dump, but that's being investigated. Some 150 fire-fighters, 40 fire-trucks and four airplanes participated in efforts to put out the blaze, the fire department said in a statement.

HOTEL, PARIS, FRANCE

London, Apr 15 -- Following received from the BBC, dated today: At least 13 people have died and 57 people have been injured in a devastating fire at the Paris-Opera hotel in central Paris, a fire service spokesman said. At least 12 of the wounded were in a serious condition after the blaze, in the city's 9th arrondissement. The fire, which broke out at about 0200 hrs (0000 UTC), gutted the six-storey Paris-Opera hotel. Some of the guests leapt from windows to escape the flames. Dozens of fire engines, 250 firefighters and 10 ambulances were called to the scene. The flames were extinguished

by 0330 hrs (0130 UTC). The toll is provisional because of the fear of more victims on the upper floors. There was only one staircase and the fire broke out on the lower floors. There was no explosion. An emergency hospital and a makeshift morgue were set up in the nearby Galeries Lafayette department store. Many of the injured were suffering from burns and smoke inhalation. Seventy-six people were reported living in the 32-room hotel on rue de Provence. It is not clear who was staying in the hotel. There have been reports of tourists being among the wounded, but local witnesses said the building was used to put up people waiting to be housed.

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: Firefighters sorting through the debris of a burned-out Paris hotel found the body of a small child today, raising the death toll from Friday's (Apr 15) blaze to 22, police said. Half of the victims were children. The fire at the Paris Opera hotel, housing mostly people in need who were placed there by social services, was Paris' worst in recent memory. Police said firefighters digging through debris early today found the body of a young child. The body of a woman was found on Friday night, hours after the blaze had been extinguished. The overcrowded 32-room hotel, in the 9th district popular with tourists, was meant to accommodate 61 people, but at least 90 people - many of them Africans - were known to be living there. The blaze was believed to have started shortly after 0200 hrs. An investigation for manslaughter has been opened, but officials suggested the probe could be lengthy, given the devastation caused by the fire. Parts of the fragile structure risked collapse. The hotel's fire prevention system had been checked on Mar 24, and four recommendations to improve safety were issued. However, the measures were insufficient to close down the hotel, the police headquarters said.

Paris, Apr 18 -- French police detained a woman today over last week's fire in a Paris hotel that killed 22 people, a police source said. The woman -- the girlfriend of one of the hotel's nightguards -- had been held for questioning since this morning, the source said, without giving any further details. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: A woman detained in connection with a fire that killed 22 people at a budget hotel in Paris last week admitted that she started the blaze by accident, police said today. The woman was identified by judicial officials as the girlfriend of one of the hotel's night watchmen. She acknowledged starting the fire accidentally, police said without providing details. Hours after the fire, which devastated the hotel, firefighters speculated that it had started accidentally in a breakfast room. The prosecutors office opened an investigation for manslaughter.

The exact origin of the blaze was not immediately known. The hotel's fire prevention system had been checked on Mar 24, and four recommendations to improve safety were issued, but the measures were insufficient to close down the hotel, police said.

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: A young woman has admitted accidentally causing last week's deadly fire in a Paris hotel after throwing clothes over candles in an argument with her boyfriend. The death toll in Friday's (Apr 15) fire rose to at least 23 when another victim died from injuries sustained in the blaze that engulfed the six-storey Paris-Opera hotel, a hospital official said. The young woman, the girlfriend of one of the hotel's night watchmen, admitted to accidentally starting the fire by throwing clothes over candles in the hotel breakfast room after a row with her boyfriend, the Paris prosecutor's office said. "Following a violent argument that she put down to the intoxicated state of her companion, she left the hotel, throwing piles of clothes on the floor in anger, without paying attention to the candles," the prosecutor's office said in a statement. The boyfriend is in a coma after being caught in the fire. Eleven of those killed in the fire were children. About 50 people were injured. The woman was placed under official investigation, one step short of pressing charges in France, and held in jail, judicial sources said. The woman had been held for questioning since Monday morning. She had been detained after an anonymous tip-off.

PREMISES, DERBY, DERBYSHIRE, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 17, states: A home improvements centre in Derby has been destroyed in a fire. The fire at the Glyn Webb store in Ascot Drive broke out at about 1730, BST, yesterday. More than 60 firefighters were called to the scene. Fire crews remained at the scene overnight and throughout this morning, damping down the fire.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: A fire which destroyed a home improvements store in Derby was started deliberately, investigators have said. More than 60 firefighters attended Glyn Webb on Ascot Drive on Saturday (Apr 16), but they were unable to save 90% of the building from being destroyed by fire. No-one was injured in the fire. Structural engineers were on site today to determine whether the remains of the building should be demolished. Keith Brooks from Derbyshire Fire and Rescue said: "We've located the main seat of the fire which was in the carpet area at the rear of the store. The service concluded an almost day long investigation yesterday with the police scenes of crimes and they have concluded that the fire at the Glyn Webb store was a deliberate ignition fire."

PREMISES, OTTAWA, CANADA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Ottawa fire department officials say last weekend's fire at an RV dealership on Prince of Wales Drive was one of the costliest in Ottawa in recent memory. The fire consumed about \$4 million worth of motorcycles, ATVs and RVs - most of them brand new. Between 300 and 400 motorcycles and ATVs and about 20 RVs were destroyed. Firefighters were able to stop the fire just short of the main showroom. Investigators believe the blaze started in the adjoining lot.

REFINERY, LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: An oil refinery at 2400 E. Artesia Blvd. in North Long Beach caught fire early this morning, possibly after seals in a pipeline failed, firefighters said. Though still under investigation, the 0332 hrs fire at Edgington Oil refinery appears to have originated in an 8-inch, above-ground pipe carrying heavy crude oil, said Capt. Jim Arvizu of the Long Beach Fire Department. Oil leaking from the pipes fueled 30-foot flames and a 200-foot smoke column. More than 50 firefighters from the Lbfd and Los Angeles County Fire Department responded to the two-alarm fire, which was under control by 0530 hrs. Crews from the Long Beach Health Department assisted with the cleanup. No one was injured.

WAREHOUSE, ELLESMERE PORT, CHESHIRE, UNITED KINGDOM

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated Apr 16, states: The fire service have said the cause of a blaze at a paper warehouse in Cheshire is not yet known. Firefighters were called to the fire at Merseyton Road, in Ellesmere Port, yesterday evening. Five appliances and a hydraulic platform were used by the crews to tackle the blaze. Three crews were still at the scene of the fire this morning. An investigation has begun into what caused the fire.

WAREHOUSE, HOUSTON, TEXAS, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A huge fire that sent flames 100 ft into the sky last night destroyed a north-east Houston warehouse. The fire broke out shortly before 2100 hrs at Super Packaging at 7707 Wallisville Road, company security officials said. Superior Packaging employees said the facility stores and packages industrial materials used for off-shore oil drilling. Firefighters attacked the blaze in a defensive mode for at least two hours. There were no reports of injuries.

WAREHOUSES, SCHOOLCRAFT, MICHIGAN, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: Fire burned two ELC Corporation warehouses in Schoolcraft to the ground last night. The fire started around 1745 hrs in one of the 15,000 square foot warehouses located at 14179 S. 14th Street, and then quickly spread to a second of the same size. It took seven fire departments several hours to put the blaze out. Smoke reached thousands of feet in the air and could be seen 25 miles away. The warehouses were used for storage, which housed \$3 million worth of contents, all destroyed. Investigators are still looking for a cause.

WILDFIRE, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: A wildfire stretching for at least five miles bore down on Fort Washakie, Wyoming, yesterday, forcing officials to evacuate all 250 residents. No injuries were reported and only the abandoned Bureau of Indian Affairs headquarters for the Wind River reservation had burned by late afternoon. Much of the north end of town was shrouded in smoke. All roads into Fort Washakie had been cut off, including US 287, officials said. Ivan Posey, chairman of the Eastern Shoshone Tribe, said the flames were being fuelled by thick vegetation in the Little Wind River bed and winds gusting to 35 mph. The cause of the blaze was not immediately known. The reservation, about 160 miles west of Casper, is home to about 8,000 members of the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapahoe tribes.

WILDFIRES, AUSTRALIA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Victoria's famous Wilsons Promontory National Park has finally reopened after a government-lit fire, which closed the park for 17 days and cost more than \$2 million to contain. Parks Victoria reopened the park at 1000, AEST, today in time for the Anzac Day weekend, but sections that were devastated by the bushfire will be closed indefinitely. About 6,139 hectares - or 13 per cent of the park - have been destroyed since the fuel reduction burn leapt containment lines on Apr 1, forcing the evacuation of hundreds of campers. It had begun as a fuel reduction burn in late March. Environmental groups believe hundreds of native animals may have been killed, and have called for an open inquiry into the management of so-called controlled burns in forest areas. The state Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) said it had contained the fire after completing the final 250-metre fire control line at Mount Wilson yesterday.

**ACCIDENT, BANGKOK INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THAILAND**

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: Investigators are looking into why two passenger aircraft clipped wings on the tarmac at Bangkok's international airport, cracking a wing on one of the aircraft, Thai authorities said today. No one was injured in the accident, which occurred late yesterday when a Singapore Airlines aircraft was taxiing to a gate and a Thai Airways plane was travelling to the runway for take-off, said Surapol Isaragura, director of Thai Airways' emergency operations. The accident cracked the wing of the Thai Airways aircraft, and all its passengers were transferred to another aircraft. No damage was reported to the Singapore aircraft. The air transportation agency ordered the captains of both aircraft to undergo medical check-ups. If the accident was caused by human error, authorities will revoke the responsible captain's licence, said Chaisak Angsuwan, the agency's director general.

ACCIDENT, MAKASSAR AIRPORT, SULAWESI, INDONESIA

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: A commercial Merpati aircraft skidded off the runway upon landing at Makassar Airport in South Sulawesi Province in Indonesia yesterday evening, wounding 22 people, local media reported today. The accident took place at 1915, local time, amid heavy rain and strong wind, officials said. The accident has forced the airport to close as the runway was obstructed by the aircraft's broken wheel, he added. Merpati's General Manager at the local office named only as Zainuddin blamed the crash on bad weather. "It was caused by heavy rain and strong wind at the airport," the manager was quoted as saying. At least 10 of the injured passengers were hospitalised. The passengers were injured because they were panicked while being evacuated, said Zainuddin.

C-FGWT

London, Apr 15 -- The left main landing gear on the Gulfstream Aerocommander (690D), C-FGWT, operated by Grenfell Regional Health Services remained locked in the "Up" position while landing Runway 28 at St. Anthony, NL at 1142, NDT, Apr 10. The left wing dropped, the aircraft skidded on the left side of its belly and veered left coming to a halt just outside the runway side lights. There was impact damage to the propeller

and scraping damage to the fuselage. There were no injuries. The aircraft was subsequently placed on jacks, and the gear operated normally.

CRASH, DEER VALLEY MUNICIPAL AIRPORT AREA, ARIZONA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: The pilot who crashed into a truck carrying plywood on Interstate 17 yesterday had reported a loss of power several miles north of Deer Valley Municipal Airport where he hoped to land. Scottsdale City Councilman Bob Littlefield, a flight instructor, was in the traffic pattern with a student at the time of the crash and heard the conversation between 57-year-old pilot Randall Kidd and Deer Valley traffic controllers. "Sounded like he was having a true mechanical problem," Littlefield said, adding that the tower called back and told Kidd to proceed to the airport. "Next thing I know the pilot is declaring an emergency," Littlefield said. Kidd's Cessna Centurion continued to lose altitude as he made a final approach from the west. "I heard him say 'I'm not going to make it,'" Littlefield said. After the plane struck the truck, everything at the front of the plane, including the controls, the engine and the two front seats, was sheared off. The plane skidded into the median before coming to a stop, scattering debris in the northbound lanes. Kidd, who is in critical condition, was flying from Nevada to Phoenix. The driver of the tractor-trailer was not injured. Both lanes of I-17 were closed. The northbound remain shut until after 1700 hrs, with a backup of at least two miles, according to a spokesman for the Arizona Department of Public Safety. The southbound lanes reopened at 1630 hrs. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating.

CRASH, FESTUS MEMORIAL AIRPORT, JEFFERSON COUNTY, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: Officials are investigating the crash of a Cessna aircraft at Festus Memorial Airport in Jefferson County. The pilot was killed and a co-pilot was injured. Witnesses say the aircraft, registered in Western Missouri, stopped to refuel and then took off in rainy, windy conditions. It crashed on the runway after circling the airport.

CRASH, HALL COUNTY, GAINESVILLE, ATLANTA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A Cessna aircraft clipped some power lines and made a crash landing about 1600 yesterday in Hall County. The pilot says he lost power and was trying to make it back to Lee Gilmer Airport in Gainesville. He was not hurt.

CRASH, NORTH HAMPTON AREA, NEW HAMPSHIRE, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: Two men from Rhode Island were seriously injured today when their small aircraft crashed in New Hampshire. News Channel 10 reported that the pilot was severely burned and the passenger was seriously hurt. At least one of the men was taken to UMass Medical Center in Worcester, Massachusetts. The aircraft crashed in North Hampton just after taking off from a small airstrip. Federal Aviation Administration officials said the aircraft was taking off for North Central State Airport in Smithfield when it lost power. The aircraft was destroyed on impact and consumed by fire. Firefighters responding to a nearby brush fire arrived at the scene quickly. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash.

CRASH, PIARCO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: A De Havilland DHC-8 (Dash 8) crash landed on its belly at Trinidad's main airport today when the aircraft's landing gear failed, injuring several people, officials said. The Tobago Express flight was carrying 46 passengers and three crew members, said George Bell, the airline's general manager. The aircraft left Piarco International Airport, located outside the country's capital, for a 15-minute flight to the smaller island of Tobago, Bell said. On approach to Crown Point Airport in Tobago, the pilots noticed that the landing gear had failed to come down, he said. They tried unsuccessfully to release the landing gear manually as they returned to Piarco, Bell said. Before the pilots brought the aircraft down, the airport was evacuated. Bell said several people were injured, including two who required emergency treatment. The aircraft's manufacturer was sending a team of investigators to the island, Bell said.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: A commercial airline's entire fleet remained grounded yesterday as Trinidad and Tobago's aviation authority investigated what caused the landing gear to fail on an aircraft that crash landed on its belly, injuring several people. Tobago Express' five De Havilland DHC-8-300 (Dash 8) aircraft were grounded immediately following the crash landing on Monday afternoon (Apr 18). The airline flies between the Caribbean country's two islands. "This is normal procedure in the airline industry," said George Bell, Tobago Express' general manager. "The Civil Aviation Authority wants to be sure that this is an isolated problem and not a general problem with our fleet." Tobago Express Flight 534 was carrying 46 passengers plus three crew members -- a pilot, co-pilot and flight attendant, authorities said.

It left Piarco International Airport, located outside the country's capital, for a 15-minute flight to the smaller island of Tobago, Bell said. On approach to Crown Point Airport in Tobago, the pilots noticed that the landing gear in the aircraft's nose did not come down, he said. They circled the airport several times and attempted to release the landing gear manually using a lever in the cockpit, but failed. They decided to return to Piarco and continued trying to release the gear as they circled the airport four times. The airport was evacuated before the pilots brought the aircraft down on its belly. The landing gear in the back was working properly, but the pilots followed emergency procedure and did not leave it down for the crash landing, officials said. Several people were injured, Bell said. Three people remained hospitalised with various injuries and they were also recovering from shock, a hospital official said. Tobago Express officials had contacted the aircraft's manufacturer, which was sending a team to investigate, Bell said. (See issue of Apr 20.)

CRASH, SOUTHURBY, CONNECTICUT, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated Apr 20, states: A small aircraft crashed in Southbury today, leaving the pilot injured and causing a brush fire near a senior citizen housing community. The pilot, John Thorp, 52, was taken to Waterbury Hospital to be treated for facial injuries, the Connecticut Post reported. A witness said the single-engine aircraft clipped trees, flew across a road and hit power lines before landing, WTNH-TV reported. State police say the flight originated in Ohio and was headed to Providence, R.I., when Thorp reported engine trouble. He tried unsuccessfully to land at Oxford Airport. The state Department of Environmental Protection went to the scene. Environmental officials are not certain if the aircraft's fuel tanks ruptured in the crash, but they could not approach the aircraft until electrical power lines were disabled. The National Transportation Safety Board was investigating.

EMERGENCY LANDING, DOLAND AREA, SOUTH DAKOTA, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: A helicopter en route to a traffic crash had to make an emergency landing last night, according to officials. A spokeswoman at Avera St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen said a bird hit the chopper, forcing the emergency landing in the Doland area. No patients were on the helicopter at the time, and no injuries were reported.

EMERGENCY LANDING, ELISTA AIRPORT, KALMYKIA, RUSSIA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated yesterday, states: All forces of the Ministry for Emergency Situations and Civil Defence in the internal republic of Kalmykia were alerted

today over a forced landing of an aircraft at Elista airport, spokesman for the ministry Vladimir Obrotkin told Interfax today. He said the alarm was sounded at 1310 hrs when Elista airport air traffic service was informed that a Yak-40 airliner of Ruslain airlines on a flight from Moscow would make a forced landing at 1430 hrs. The alarm was sounded because fragments of an undercarriage tyre were discovered on the runway of Moscow's Vnukovo airport after the aircraft's departure. Before landing the aircraft extended its undercarriage and circumflaw Elista airport several times. "When ground services saw that the undercarriage was in order, they gave permission for the landing after which the airliner made a safe landing," Obrotkin said.

EMERGENCY LANDING, KERTEH AREA, MALAYSIA

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 16, states: A Sikorsky helicopter carrying two crew and seven offshore workers to an oil rig in the South China Sea was forced to make an emergency landing shortly after taking off from the Kerteh Airport today. Hussin Ismail said that according to reports he received, the helicopter which was carrying the crew of a contractor for Esso, was forced to make the emergency landing in a bushy area about two kilometres from the airport at 1056 hrs. "The reports said that one of the passengers broke an arm and has received treatment while the others only sustained very light injuries," he said. Hussin said that the Sikorsky helicopter belonging to Malaysian Helicopter Services (MHS) had a capability of carrying a maximum of 20 passengers per flight and added that this was the first such incident this year. Department of Civil Aviation Air Traffic director, Harizan Mohd Yatim when contacted confirmed that DCA had received a report of the emergency landing.

EMERGENCY LANDING, WAROOKA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIA

London, Apr 18 -- A press report, dated today, states: Three men were lucky to escape serious injury during an emergency landing at an airport on South Australia's Yorke Peninsula. The police say the single engine Cessna experienced a sudden downdraft while taking off at Warooka airport around 1600 hr. The pilot was then forced to ground the aircraft. Peter Gibson from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) says the plane sustained serious damage during the emergency belly landing. The Australian Transport Safety Bureau is investigating the incident.

FLIGHTS GROUNDED DUE TO POLLUTED FUEL, ISRAEL

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Flights from Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport were temporarily grounded for several hours yesterday by the discovery of fuel that did not meet

international standards, Israeli media reported. Flights resumed early today with the Ha'aretz daily newspaper reporting planes were being sent to the nearby coastal cities of Larnaca in Cyprus and Antalya in Turkey for refuelling. No immediate explanation was given for what caused the polluted fuel, but flights were delayed for up to four hours while airport officials dealt with the emergency. Ha'aretz reported the faulty fuel, which was supplied to all airlines at the facility, contained dirt and may have been watered down. Ben Gurion, which is just outside Tel Aviv, is considered the "gateway to Israel." It is Israel's only international airport and the busiest civil airport in the Middle East. Ha'aretz reported that an airport service company tested the fuel supplied to the airlines and found it to be faulty. The paper said some of the faulty fuel had been used on flights before the problem was discovered. Israel's national carrier, El Al, delayed at least five flights out of Israel for late yesterday. The destinations of those flights included New York, Hong Kong, Bangkok, Paris and Toronto. Two of the El Al flights were operating under code share agreements with US carriers Delta Air Lines and Continental. Other airlines, including Thai Airways, were also forced to temporarily cancel their flights because of the problem. A statement from El Al late yesterday said routine tests on the fuel "showed that the fuel delivered to all airlines taking off from Ben Gurion Airport is polluted and does not meet the international standards." "The fuel companies, therefore, decided not to deliver fuel to flights taking-off from Ben Gurion until clean fuel can be delivered," the airline said. "We are doing all possible efforts to assure delivery of usable fuel to our flights."

INCIDENT AT DON MUANG AIRPORT, THAILAND

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: An investigation has begun into an accident at Don Muang airport, where two loaded passenger jets "scratched" each other during taxiing operations on Tuesday night (Apr 19). Thai Airways International flight TG 602, bound for Hong Kong, lost the tip of its right wing in the accident. Transport Minister Suriya Jungrungreangkit ordered the inquiry yesterday. It will be undertaken by staff of the Aviation Department and Aeronautical Radio of Thailand Co, the agency in charge of air traffic control. A statement issued by Thai Airways yesterday said that flight TG 602, an Airbus A330-300, was preparing to take off with 183 passengers on board at 1950 on Tuesday, when the pilot felt an abnormality with the right wing. A subsequent check found the right wing tip was missing. The missing part was left on the wing of Singapore Airlines flight SQ068, which was parked in bay 52. An inspection found its left aileron was torn. The Thai Airways captain requested a replacement aircraft and the flight took off at 2315 hrs. Thai Airways, which has also set up a

committee to look into the problem, said there were two possible lines of inquiry -- "whether or not the Singapore Airlines aircraft was parked in the right position," and "whether or not the Thai Airways aircraft reversed along the right path." The minister said he expected the findings in the next few days.

INCIDENT AT TEHRAN, IRAN

London, Apr 20 -- A press report, dated today, states: A passenger plane caught fire while taxiing at Tehran airport, injuring scores of passengers, Iranian state-run television reported today. The station initially reported 50 people were killed; a later report said the deaths were not confirmed. The plane's left engine caught fire on the runway at Mehrabad airport, the TV report said. The Saha Airlines plane then plunged into a river at the end of the runway, the broadcaster said. "No deaths have been confirmed by the officials," the television said, backing off its earlier report that 50 people had been killed. The plane, carrying 157 passengers, eight of them children, had just arrived from the tourist island of Kish in the Persian Gulf.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: One child was killed and several other passengers were injured today when an aircraft caught fire upon landing at Tehran airport, state television and the official IRNA news agency reported. The Boeing 707 operated by Saha Airlines, which belongs to the Iranian military, had 157 passengers and crew members on board, state television said. A child died after trying to escape the flames by throwing himself in a river at the edge of the runway, IRNA said. Iran's official news agency said both passengers and crew members were forced to jump from the aircraft to safety after the emergency slides did not work. Several passengers had broken limbs and were taken to hospital, IRNA reported. An airline official told state television that the landing gear fell into a hole at the end of the runway, causing the fire, but a civil aviation official said he could not say why the aircraft had caught fire. Passengers criticised the design of the airport which allowed a river near the runway. "I would like to know what a river is doing in an airport," said one passenger interviewed by state television. "Right from the take-off, the plane had problems. After the fire, people rushed to the exit and I saw a child fall in the river," said another passenger. Most of Iran's commercial fleet was acquired by the country before the 1979 Islamic revolution, and the country has since been hit by US sanctions that have prevented it from buying new spare parts. Most parts are bought second hand or on the black market.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: SAHA passenger aircraft's Kish-Tehran flight had a bad landing at 2315 last night, local Tehran time, in Mehrabad Airport, in which an infant lost his life and a larger number of passengers got injured. According to IRNA

correspondent at the international airport, the incident occurred due to blowing off of one of the Boeing 707's tyres while landing. SAHA managing director told IRIB Channel 1 midnight news that the aircraft, with 157 passengers, had "due to a still unknown reason" fallen into a ditch in Kan River while touching down. According to eye witnesses at the scene of the incidence, the aircraft's tail caught fire due to friction with the runway after its front tire blew off while landing. It is also said that the 707 had detoured from the runway and was being dragged toward Kan River, where its turbulent movement due to its bad landing finally halted. The initial report based on eye witnesses also reiterates that the emergency facilities of the aircraft including the air cushion slides for emergency exit none functioned properly and that was why the horrified passengers had to jump out relying on their own skills, which led to many of them breaking their limbs. It is also said that the aircraft's attendants left the aircraft before the passengers. Most of the injured passengers were transferred to hospitals in ambulances by the time this news item was being dispatched. Some foreign news agencies have also quoted eyewitnesses as having seen the starboard engine of the aircraft catching fire while landing.

N299X

London, Apr 21 -- Beechcraft Bonanza C35 N299X crashed near Paso Robles, California, at 0123, Apr 19. The aircraft sustained substantial damage. The two persons on board were seriously injured.

N3363P

London, Apr 19 -- At 1513, Apr 17, The pilot of N3363P, a privately owned Piper PA 23-160 aircraft, unintentionally landed, at Belleville, Ontario, with the gear retracted. There were no injuries, but the aircraft sustained damage to the propellers and fuselage.

N53548

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated Apr 14, states: Two Mississippi men are lucky to be alive after their plane crashed into the woods in western Maryland. It happened this morning at the Garrett County Airport. The crash happened about 0730 hrs, when a Cessna 337-G Skymaster went down into the woods on the western side of the airport. Witness Peggy Gosnell said, "The fire was huge after. You didn't see any flames, but the black smoke." Gosnell said two men walked away from the wreckage and were then flown to Cumberland for treatment. The two men told Gosnell that they were flying too high and too fast - that's why they went down. The FFA will now talk to the men as part of their investigation. The FFA said all that's left of the plane is a wing. Everything else is burned metal. The insurance company is now in charge of removing that

wreckage from the scene. The pilot of the plane remains at Cumberland Memorial Hospital in stable condition.

London, Apr 18 -- Cessna 337G (Skymaster), N53548, crashed near Oakland, Maryland, at 1133, Apr 14, while on a flight from Cumberland, MD. The aircraft was destroyed. The two persons on board suffered minor injuries.

PK-LTZ

Jakarta, Apr 17 -- Searchers today found the wreckage of DeHavilland Canada DHC-6 Twin Otter PK-LTZ, which crashed into a mountain in Indonesia's remote Papua province, killing all 17 people on board, the official Antara news agency reported. Five days after it went missing, searchers found the wreckage of the Twin Otter five miles from its destination, the town of Enarotali, Antara said. The aircraft, with 14 passengers and three crew, vanished Tuesday (Apr 12) during a one-hour flight by regional airline GT Air from the mining town of Timika. The dead were all local. -- Reuters.

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated Apr 18, states: Rescue workers today began recovering the bodies of 17 people killed when a GT Air De Havilland DHC-6 Twin Otter (PK-LTZ) crashed at the foot of Laurent mountain range in Indonesia's easternmost province of Papua last Tuesday (Apr 12). The chief of the Timika search and rescue unit, John Rettob, said today that only one aircraft could be sent from Enarotali, the capital of Paniai district, to recover the victims. The aircraft went missing last Tuesday while on its flight from Timika to Enarotali, both in Papua. The wreckage of the aircraft was spotted by an aircraft owned by Association Mission Aviation at the foot of Laurent mountain range, some five miles from Enarotali, on Sunday.

UB-1700

Lima, Apr 19 -- A small aircraft, make not informed, UB-1700, owned by Aerocondor, made an emergency landing in a tomato field a few kilometres from Jorge Chavez International Airport at 1715, yesterday. The aircraft with 10 passengers and two crew, was returning from the north of Peru. All passengers and crew were safe. There are reported damages to the undercarriage and the left engine as well as 200 metres of damage to crops. Formal investigations have commenced. -- Lloyd's Agents.



ALL TERRAIN VEHICLES, WORLDWIDE

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: Honda is recalling about 200-thousand all-terrain

vehicles after receiving more than two dozen reports of defective steering rods. The callback involves Honda's 2004 and 2005 FourTrax A-T-V's. The complaints concern steering rods separating, which could cause drivers to crash. But the Consumer Product Safety Commission says so far the company has not received any injury reports. Honda motorcycle dealers nationwide sold the A-T-V's from August 2003 to February 2005. They came in red, olive, yellow or blue. Consumers are being urged to stop riding the A-T-V's. The C-P-S-C says the company will directly contact registered owners and provide free repair. Recalled model numbers are 2005 TRX250TE/TM, 2004-2005 TRX350FE/FM/TE/TM, 2004-2005 TRX400FA/FGA, 2005 TRX500FE/FM/TM, 2005 TRX500FA/FGA, 2005 TRX650FA/FGA.

GENERAL MOTORS DAEWOO VEHICLES, SOUTH KOREA

London, Apr 15 -- A press report, dated today, states: GM Daewoo Auto & Technology Co., General Motors Corp.'s (GM) South Korean unit, said today the carmaker plans to recall a total of 63, 928 vehicles of its Kalos and Lacetti subcompacts and Magnus mid-size sedan models due to defects in parts. The recall will affect 1,161 units of the Kalos 1.2 Diamond model produced between Jul 1, 2004 and Feb 28, 2005 because the front brake disk and caliper assemble of the models doesn't meet GM Daewoo's specification in some cases, a problem that could affect braking performance, the car maker said. A total of 49,480 units of Lacetti subcompact manufactured between Nov 4, 2002 and Jul 7, 2004, and 13,247 units of Magnus sedan built between Aug 4, 2004 and Jul 6, 2004 are to be recalled due to a misadjusted brake light switch. Another 40 units of Magnus produced Mar 11-29, 2005 will also be recalled because of a defective steering gear inner tie rod, which could result in the loss of steering function, according to the company's statement. The recall doesn't apply to exported units, a GM Daewoo spokesman said.

KARAOKE MACHINES, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated Apr 13, states: Wal-Mart is recalling about 220,000 children's karaoke machines over concerns about lead paint on the control buttons, the Consumer Product Safety Commission announced today. Bentonville, Ark.-based Wal-Mart Stores Inc. has reported no injuries as a result of the paint, the commission said. The recall affects the Nu-tronix Karaoke Cassette Player and Recorder with digital radio and alarm features. The gray and purple machine, which reads "Nu-tronix" on the front, comes with a microphone and two cassette tapes. The paint on the five control buttons of the player contain lead. The karaoke machines, made in China,

were sold in Wal-Mart stores nationwide from June 2003 through to March 2005 for about \$20.

MITSUBISHI MOTOR VEHICLES, JAPAN

London, Apr 13 -- A press report, dated today, states: Mitsubishi Motors Corp has announced a recall of 179,000 cars because of a defect in the air conditioning system that has injured at least two people. The recall, reported to the government yesterday, covers three sedan models, including the Galant, manufactured from 1996 to last year. A wiring defect in the air conditioning fan can cause a fire in the glove compartment, the automaker said today.

London, Apr 21 -- A press report, dated today, states: Mitsubishi Fuso Truck & Bus Corp said yesterday it is recalling a total of 25,220 trucks and buses for free repair of defects. The vehicles were manufactured between Jan 1993 and Dec 2004 and their defects include the possible leakage of oil from brake pipes and of air from air hoses for brakes, Mitsubishi Fuso said in four recall notices to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport.

VACUUM CLEANERS, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated today, states: Hoover Co. is recalling 636,000 vacuum cleaners after receiving about 250 reports of overheating that caused the handle area to smoke, melt or catch fire. The North Canton, Ohio-based subsidiary of Maytag Corp. is aware of only one injury - a minor burn - caused by overheating, the Consumer Product Safety Commission said Thursday. The Hoover self-propelled upright vacuums, made in the United States, have defective on-off switches. The recall covers the following models: U6423-900, U6425-900, U6425-950, U6445-900, U6445-960, U6449-900, U6450-900, U6451-900 and U6455-900. The beginning of the serial numbers range from 0598 to 1199. Household appliance and floor-care

retailers nationwide sold the vacuums from May 1998 to July 2000 for \$259 to \$279.

SUZUKI MOTOR VEHICLES, JAPAN

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Suzuki Motor Corp said yesterday it is recalling a total of 37,465 mini-commercial vehicles in three models for free repairs to prevent excessive noise from improper welding of exhaust pipes. Subject to the recall are the Carry, Every and Scrum models manufactured between May and October last year, Suzuki said in a report to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport.

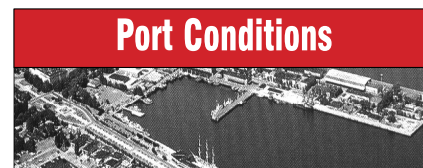
TOY FISHING POLES, UNITED STATES

London, Apr 14 -- A press report, dated Apr 13, states: About 1.5 million toy fishing poles featuring the cartoon characters SpongeBob Squarepants, Dora the Explorer, Tigger and the cast of "Rocket Power" are being recalled because their paint contains lead, the government said today. Zebco, a fishing equipment manufacturer based in Tulsa, Okla., is not aware of any injuries that have occurred because of the paint, the Consumer Product Safety Commission said. The fishing poles feature bright pictures of popular characters like SpongeBob, Patrick Star and Sandy Cheeks and have "Floating Catch 'Em Kit" on the handles, except for the "Rocket Power" model. That model is a two-piece rod with "Rocket Power" written on the rod. It was sold with sunglasses. The poles, made in China, were sold at discount department, sporting goods and toy stores nationwide from August 2001 through to March 2005. They retailed for between \$9 and \$13. Newer models with a date code on the handle of the rod are not included in the recall.

TOYOTA MOTOR VEHICLES, JAPAN

London, Apr 19 -- A press report, dated today, states: Toyota Motor Corp said today it is recalling 1,668 Crown

passenger vehicles used as police cars due to a braking system problem. In a report to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, Toyota said the cars produced between July 1996 and June 2001 could have longer-than-usual braking distances due to a brake booster that might deteriorate from engine heat.



FINLAND

See under "Labour Disputes."

ITALY

Genoa, Apr 19 -- Port situation Apr 18: Genoa: One general cargo vessel and one container vessel awaiting berth. Average delays in berthing 24 hrs. La Spezia: No vessels awaiting berths. Savona: Two vessels awaiting normal berth. Two vessels awaiting special berth. Average delays in berthing 12 - 24 hrs -- Lloyd's Agents.

PANAMA CANAL

Balboa, Apr 18 -- Due to heavy arrivals over the past weekend we continue to see transit delays for Panamax/restricted at two-three days. Regular/non-restricted, one - two days. The Canal is using all available resources to reduce delay time but arrival numbers continue to be high. -- Lloyd's Agents.

SICILY

Messina, Apr 18 -- Port of Gioia Tauro closed between 1455, Apr 17, and 0830, Apr 18, due extreme weather conditions. Commercial operations resumed but stopped again at 1050, Apr 18. -- Lloyd's Agents.

SYRIA

Lattakia, Apr 2 -- Waiting time is presently 24 hours at Lattakia and five days at Tartous. -- Lloyd's Sub-agents.

Port Delays

Country/Port	Date of report	No.of vessels waiting and/or days delay
Australia		
Abbott Point	18-Apr-2005	Coal: One vessel at berth; 11 vessels due by 11/5; up to 1 day's delay expected.
Brisbane	18-Apr-2005	Coal: Fisherman Island coal berth; Five vessels due by 14/5; no delays expected.
Dalrymple Bay	18-Apr-2005	Coal: Three vessels at berth, 39 at anchor; 33 vessels due by 20/6; 20- 30 days delay expected. Vessels are berthing in order of cargo availability. Shippers have a certain entitlement of coal shipped through the terminal. If they exceed their entitlement, additional vessels are moved further down the list, with a resulting additional delay in berthing.
Dampier	18-Apr-2005	Iron ore: Shippers are experiencing some grade/stockpile problems. Some vessels will berth out of turn and the berthing lineup may change at short notice. Parker Point: One vessel loading at berth, 2 at anchor; 9 vessels due by 28/4; up to 7 days delay expected; 5-day maintenance shutdown starting around 18/4; East Intercourse Island; One vessel at lay-by, 5 at anchor; 9 vessels due by 30/4; up to 7 days delay expected; a shift to lay-by on completion of loading always possible.
Gladstone	18-Apr-2005	Coal: R.G. Tanna coal terminal: Two vessels at berth, 2 at anchor; 36 vessels due by 22/5; up to 3 days delay expected; Barney Point: 7 vessels due by 20/6; up to 1 day's delay expected. CQPA have proposed a shutdown of Barney Point shiploading activities commencing 06:00 16/5 and completion 06:00 26/5 for section replacement of wharf deck.
Hay Point	18-Apr-2005	Coal: Two vessels at berth, 13 at anchor; 1 vessel due 20/4; up to 12 days delay expected.
Newcastle	18-Apr-2005	Coal: Kooragang 4, 5 and 6: Two vessels at berth, 13 at anchor; 20 vessels due by 1/5; Dykes 4+5: 2 vessels at berth, 4 at anchor; 11 vessels due by 1/5; Kooragang and Dyke terminals: 1 unallocated vessel due 29/4; 4-21 days delay expected.
Port Hedland	18-Apr-2005	Iron ore: BHP Iron Ore Pty. Ltd., Mt. Newman (Nelson Point), "A" berth: One vessel loading at berth, 5 vessels at anchor; 3 due by 27/4; up to 7 days delay expected; "B" berth: 1 vessel loading at berth, 4 at anchor; 5 vessels due by 27/4; up to 6 days delay expected; BHP Iron Ore Pty. Ltd., Goldsworthy (Finucane Island "C" berth): 1 vessel loading at berth, 2 at anchor; 3 vessels due by 20/4; up to 7 days delay expected.
Port Kembla	18-Apr-2005	Coal: Three vessels at anchor; 14 vessels due by 12/5; CB1: 1 vessel at anchor; 3 vessels due by 20/4; up to 4 days delay expected.
Port Walcott	18-Apr-2005	Iron ore: Two vessels loading at berth, 2 at anchor; 19 vessels due by 18/5; up to 3 days delay expected; cargo grade shortages and stockpile may result in vessels berthing out of turn; shippers request that load plans be submitted as early as possible (8 days) so they can coordinate stockpiles more effectively; shippers advise that stores, air freight and baggage can no longer be delivered to the vessel or taken off at berth, but must be delivered/removed by launch.
Bulgaria		
Bourgas	18-Apr-2005	Thirteen vessels in port of which 9 loading (1 empty, 1 military, 3 coils, 1 bulk ammonium nitrate, 1 cigarettes, 1 container, 1 steel sheets), 4 discharging (2 metal, 1 billets, 1 container); 4 vessels in roads of which 3 to load (1 steel sheets, 1 coils, 1 scrap), 1 to discharge iron ore; 10 vessels due of which 8 to load (1 coils, 1 sulphur, 1 coils/steel sheets, 1 equipment, 1 container, 2 steel sheets, 1 metal), 2 to discharge (1 machines, 1 metal).
Varna	18-Apr-2005	Varna East, Varna West, Balchik: Forty vessels in port operating of which 27 loading (5 sunflower seeds, 2 scrap, 7 soda, 1 silica sand, 1 equipment, 1 hardboard, 1 silica sand/kaolin, 1 bulk coal, 3 sulphuric acid, 1 salt, 1 bulk cement, 1 TSP, 1 container, 1 metal constructions/containers), 5 discharging (3 bulk coal, 1 bulk gypsum, 1 container), 8 discharging/loading (6 containers, 1 feldspar/kaolin, 1 bulk clinker/misc. cargo).
Chile		
Antofagasta	18-Apr-2005	Three vessels berthed, 4 berths vacant; 11 vessels due this week to load/discharge concentrates, bulk copper, containers and general cargo.
Valparaiso	18-Apr-2005	Two vessels berthed, 6 berths vacant; 4 vessels anchored; 12 vessels due this week.
Egypt		
Alexandria	18-Apr-2005	Thirty-four vessels berthed (loading/discharging), of which 26 general cargo, 3 bulk carriers, 3 Ro/Ros, 2 tankers; 14 vessels dry-docked; 25 vessels at inner anchorage, 5 at outer anchorage.
Damietta	18-Apr-2005	Twenty vessels berthed (loading/discharging), of which 11 general cargo, 3 bulk carriers, 2 tankers, 4 containers.
Suez Canal	18-Apr-2005	Thirty-two vessels transiting Northbound, 30 Southbound.

Port Conditions

Israel

Ashdod	18-Apr-2005	No labour problems. Eight vessels loading at berth (7 general cargo, 1 bulker), 13 vessels discharging at berth (12 general cargo, 1 bulker), 8 vessels loading/discharging at berth (5 containers, 1 car carrier, 1 tanker, 1 passenger vessel); 3 general cargo vessels waiting at anchorage to load, 4 vessels waiting at anchorage to discharge (3 general cargo, 1 bulker), 1 container vessel waiting at anchorage to load/discharge; 2 vessels under repairs/dry-docked, 1 awaiting orders; 19 vessels due, with 2-3 days delay expected.
Haifa	18-Apr-2005	No labour problems. Three vessels loading at berth (2 general cargo, 1 bulker), 5 vessels discharging at berth (4 general cargo, 1 bulker), 12 vessels loading/discharging at berth (5 containers, 1 car carrier, 6 tankers); 1 general cargo vessel waiting at anchorage to discharge, 1 container vessel waiting at anchorage to load/discharge; 3 vessels under repairs/dry-docked, 1 awaiting orders; 22 vessels due, with 2-3 days delay expected.

Pakistan

Karachi	19-Apr-2005	Four vessels loading at berth (3 rice, 1 cement), 5 discharging at berth (1 chemicals, 2 general cargo, 2 jute); 1 vessel waiting at anchorage to load containers, 1 waiting at anchorage to discharge (1 container, 2 general cargo, 1 vehicles, 2 crude oil, 1 chemicals, 1 MEG); 7 vessels due (4 containers, 1 soybean meal, 1 cement, 1 rice), with no delays expected.
Port Qasim	19-Apr-2005	One vessel loading machinery at berth, 2 vessels discharging at berth (1 praxylene, 1 coal); QICT berth: 1 vessel loading/discharging containers.

Poland

Gdansk	18-Apr-2005	Ten vessels loading at berth (3 coal, 7 general cargo), 2 bulkers discharging at berth; 8 vessels under repairs/dry-docked; no vessels waiting at anchorage, 1 bulker waiting in roads; 24 vessels due.
Gdynia	18-Apr-2005	Three vessels loading at berth (1 general cargo, 1 bulker, 1 coal), 4 discharging at berth (2 general cargo, 1 grain, 1 bulker); 18 vessels under repairs/dry-docked; no vessels waiting at anchorage, none waiting in roads; 40 vessels due.

Russia

Novorossiysk	18-Apr-2005	Nineteen vessels in port operating of which 13 loading (1 bulk cement, 1 bulk urea, 1 scrap, 1 lead, 1 pig iron, 1 pipes, 1 steel billets, 1 bulk ammonium nitrate, 1 coils, 1 aluminium, 1 wheat, 1 UANS, 1 D/O), 5 discharging (1 construction materials, 3 bulk sugar, 1 citrus), 1 discharging/loading containers; 16 vessels in roads of which 14 to load (1 WRIC/pipes, 2 bulk ammonium nitrate, 1 aluminium, 1 pig iron, 1 blooms, 2 steel billets, 1 coils, 1 bulk urea, 1 bulk cement, 1 scrap, 1 lead, 1 wheat), 1 to discharge bulk sugar, 1 to discharge/load containers; 69 vessels due of which 65 to load, 4 to discharge (1 bulk NPK, 1 non-ferrous metal, 1 bulk sugar, 1 equipment); Oil terminal: 1 tanker loading crude oil at berth; 5 tankers in roads, all to load crude oil; 8 tankers due, all to load (7 crude oil, 1 fuel oil).
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Spain

Cadiz	19-Apr-2005	Sixteen vessels in port of which 8 operating (3 Ro/Ros, 1 sand, 1 cereals, 1 wheat, 1 vehicles, 1 passenger vessel), 8 vessels under repair; no delays.
Sagunto	19-Apr-2005	Twenty-three vessels in port operating of which 12 discharging steel products, 3 loading (1 bulk fertiliser, 1 baled scrap, 1 cement), 7 Ro/Ros discharging/loading general cargo, 1 vessel discharging/loading steel coils; no vessels outside commercial wharf; no berthing delays at present.

Sri Lanka

Colombo	18-Apr-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 berthing at breakbulk berths if there is container congestion; conventional cargo vessels at BQ 1 & 2 are facing delays in navigation after commissioning of SAGT 1 & 2 berths (former QEQ 1 & 2). Thirteen container/feeder vessels loading at berth, 17 vessels discharging at berth (13 containers/feeders, 1 essential services, 1 bulk wheat, 1 bulk palm oil, 1 bulk cement); 1 vessel waiting at anchorage to discharge bulk cement; 4 vessels dry-docked, 1 under arrest, 1 bunkering; 5 container/feeder vessels due, with no delays for general cargo, bagged cargo, containers/feeders expected.
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Ukraine

Illichevsk	18-Apr-2005	Eight vessels in port operating of which 6 loading (4 steel products, 2 wheat), 1 discharging ore, 1 discharging/loading containers; 3 vessels in roads, all to load (1 granite, 1 steel products, 1 oil); 15 vessels due of which 12 to load (11 steel products, 1 wheat), 1 to discharge/load containers.
Mariupol	18-Apr-2005	Nine vessels in port operating of which 8 loading (5 steel, 1 fire-clay, 1 coal, 1 sulphur), 1 discharging/loading acid/brans; SRY: 1 steel vessel; 10 vessels in roads, all to load (5 steel, 3 fire-clay, 1 sulphur, 1 equipment); 42 vessels due of which 39 to load (22 steel, 1 coke, 7

Port Conditions

Odessa	18-Apr-2005	coal, 4 fire-clay, 2 wheat, 1 equipment, 1 sunflower beans, 1 sulphur), 1 to discharge equipment, 2 to discharge/load (1 container, 1 equipment). Eighteen vessels in port operating of which 9 loading (7 metal, 1 scrap, 1 pig iron), 7 discharging (1 passenger vessel, 1 baggage, 3 citrus, 1 sugar, 1 metal), 2 discharging/loading containers; 5 vessels in roads of which 4 to load metal, 1 to load/discharge containers; 49 vessels due of which 34 to load (21 metal, 2 pig iron, 3 ore, 2 wheat, 3 wood, 2 oil, 1 ferroalloy), 6 to discharge (1 metal, 2 citrus, 1 oil, 2 ore), 9 to load/discharge containers.
United States		
Houston	19-Apr-2005	Normal 40 ft. 0 ins. max. channel draft reported. Channel open under normal traffic. LDC Dreyfus terminal: no delays expected; Cargill terminal: 1-2 days delay expected.
Kalama	19-Apr-2005	Kalama export terminal: 3 days delay expected; United Harvest terminal: 4 days delay expected.
New Orleans	19-Apr-2005	Mississippi River terminal berthing delays: Cenex-Harstates/Myrtle Grove: 4-5 days delay expected. Cargill-Westwego: 2 days delay expected. ADM/Ama: 3-5 days delay expected. Bunge/Destrehan: 3 days delay expected. ADM/ Destrehan: 3-5 days delay expected. ADM/Reserve: 3-5 days delay expected. Cargill/Reserve: 1 day's delay expected. Peavey/Paulina: no delays expected. Zen-Noh/Convent: 2-3 days delay expected. Cargill/Baton Rouge: no delays expected. Mississippi River mid-stream buoys - estimated berthing delays based on new vessel presented as load-ready and weather permitting: Mile 121.5 ADM (Gemini) - Destrehan: no delays expected; Mile 158.0 Cargill (K2) - Convent: 4 days delay expected; Mile 180.0 Cooper (America) - Darrow: 7 days delay expected. Nine-day forecast for Carrolton Gauge/New Orleans: expected to decrease to 8.7 ft. by 28/4/05 Mississippi River recommended draft restrictions: SW Pass to Pilottown - 47 ft. for all vessels; Pilottown to Nola - 47 ft. for all vessels; New Orleans (Mile 233.5) to mile 180 in. - 45 ft. for all vessels (vessels with drafts up to 47 ft. have been handled but are approved by pilots on a case-by-case basis based on current river conditions); Note: Motiva Convent dock No. 1 is restricted to a maximum draft of 38 ft, (fw) until dredging is completed. Dock No. 2 is restricted to 30 ft, (fw); Mississippi River Gulf outlet: 34 ft. from Bouy 1 - Mile 28.3; 36 ft. from Mile 28.3 Mile 66.9
Portland	19-Apr-2005	Columbia Grain terminal: 2 days delay expected; CLD Irving terminal: 3 days delay expected; CLD, O Dock terminals: no delays expected.
Tacoma	19-Apr-2005	Temco terminal: 3 days delay expected.

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