

COMMONWEALTH UPDATE

DEREK INGRAM

Three years after his coup General Musharraf held a long-promised parliamentary election in Pakistan. Its conduct did not satisfy observers and the country remained suspended from the Commonwealth. Drought and violence worsened in Zimbabwe, but President Mugabe did not turn up for a meeting in Abuja with three Commonwealth leaders and political deadlock continued. A surprise election result in Kashmir produced a chief minister from an almost wholly Muslim party. Sri Lanka peace talks went well. President Moi of Kenya dissolved his last parliament and tried to line up Uhuru Kenyatta to succeed him. In Canada Prime Minister Chretien announced he would retire in 2004. Australia was stunned by the loss of nearly 100 of its young people in the Bali bombing. Gibraltar voted a big No to shared sovereignty with Spain, while in Swaziland the King ran into trouble taking a tenth bride.

Pakistan

A few weeks in advance of national elections President Pervez Musharraf announced amendments to the constitution (21 August 2002) giving him the power to dissolve parliament and accord the army a formal role in government. A National Security Council, headed by Musharraf and including army representatives, would oversee the prime minister, the cabinet and parliament—the first time the army had been given a formal role in governing the country. Musharraf said the changes did not need approval by the new parliament because he had been empowered by the Supreme Court to amend the constitution. Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon said (8 August) that he had warned Musharraf when he was planning the changes that they were not in line with the roadmap to democracy outlined to him on a visit to Pakistan.

In the first national and provincial parliamentary elections to be held in Pakistan since the 1999 military coup (8 October 2002) no political party won a clear majority. In the new national assembly the pro-Musharraf Pakistan

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Muslim League (Quaid-I-Azam group) took 77 seats, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) 62, and Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), an alliance of six Islamic groups, 49. The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz Group) and numerous smaller parties held the balance of the 342 seats, of which 70 are reserved for women and non-Muslim minorities. In the run-up to the poll Musharraf had made many changes to the constitution and ensured that exiled former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif (Muslim League) and Benazir Bhutto (PPP) could not stand. When Sharif withdrew his nominations he said he was burying 'bitter relations of my party with Benazir Bhutto and ... extend[ing] support to all democratic forces for the cause of democracy'.

The anti-American MMA swept the vote in North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan, and won control of the local assemblies. This was a serious setback for Musharraf's hunt for the Taliban leaders hiding in the two provinces, where 60 000 Pakistani troops were deployed along the 1500 mile border with Afghanistan. The MMA was quick to assure the international community that 'we are not terrorists ... We will not use this country for terrorism nor allow anyone to use this country for terrorism', adding 'but we do not approve of foreign interference'. Cricketer Imran Khan's anti-corruption party defeated a government candidate and won a seat for the first time. A feature of the election was that non-graduates were barred from contesting, a ruling upheld by the Supreme Court (11 July).

Three hundred foreign observers were deployed, including a Commonwealth team of 22 from 18 countries with ten support staff chaired by former Malaysian deputy prime minister Musa Hitam. Although the election was generally seen as well organized, the chairman said immediately after polling that there had been several irregularities, and 'allegations of the widespread use of government influence and resources to favour certain parties and candidates' had 'raised doubts as to whether it can be said that the playing field was truly level'. The European Union team said there had been serious flaws in the electoral process. On the eve of the poll the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan listed many ways in which the government had rigged the poll, including creating the PML(QA), directing police and other officials to act in favour of 'chosen candidates' and other devices. The USA said the election had been 'an important milestone in Pakistan's ongoing transition to democracy'.

Three weeks after the elections the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) met in London and decided that, in the light of the observers' report, Pakistan should remain suspended from the councils of the Commonwealth 'pending greater clarity and an assessment of the role and functioning of democratic institutions'. The Group asked the Secretary-General to continue to monitor the development of democratic processes and institutions in Pakistan. India (newly a member of CMAG) and Australia strongly opposed Pakistan's return to full membership. Chairman Mompoti Merafhe, Foreign Minister of Botswana, said: 'The benchmark for Pakistan is the restoration of democracy ... we don't know how much of the executive powers held by the President are going to be transferred to the elected members of parliament.'

In a continuing series of brutal attacks on Pakistan's 3 per cent Christian minority six people were killed when men burst into a Christian missionary school near Murree (5 August 2002). A message talked of 'avenging' the blood

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of Muslims. Militants executed seven workers at a Christian charity, the Institute for Peace and Justice, in Karachi (25 September). The victims were roped to their chairs and shot at point-blank range. Since 11 September 2001 36 people had died in raids on churches and Christian schools and hospitals.

In a crackdown on al-Qaida suspects, police shot dead two suspects and arrested five more in a three-hour shoot-out in Karachi (11 September 2002). Among them was Ramzi bin al-Shibh, who claimed in a TV interview to have coordinated the World Trade Center attacks. He was flown out of Pakistan to a UN base.

Asif Ali Zardari, husband of Benazir Bhutto, already held in jail since 1996, was sentenced to seven years jail in a corruption case (12 September). An accountability court in Rawalpindi had convicted his wife in absentia (10 July) and sentenced her to three years jail on a charge that in 1994 she received a kickback for granting a gold import licence.

Abdus Sattar, a hardliner on Kashmir, resigned as foreign minister (7 June) for health reasons and was succeeded by Foreign Secretary Inamul Haq.

A special court in Dere Ghjazi Khan, Punjab, sentenced to death by hanging (1 September) four rapists and two members of a village jury that had authorized the crime. It was the first time in Pakistan that rapists had been sentenced to death. A tribal council had ordered the gang-rape as punishment for an alleged sexual affair that the woman's 12-year-old brother had had with a woman of a rival clan. In rural areas gang rapes to avenge family honour are not uncommon. Human rights groups want tribal councils banned.

The IMF said (20 August 2002) the Pakistan economy had done well. Despite the Afghanistan conflict, growth had picked up, inflation was 3 per cent and the budget deficit reasonable. The central bank said the current account surplus for 2001–02 had soared to a record £1.77 billion. Remittances from the five million Pakistanis overseas had almost doubled in a year.

The USA signed a deal with Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz postponing repayment of US\$3 billion of loans, and fulfilling a promise President Bush made to Musharraf in Washington talks in February 2002.

India

The BJP government ran into stormy weather in mid-2002. Open differences between ministers about the way privatization was being handled led Privatization Minister Arun Shourie to announce (8 September 2002) a three-month freeze on the privatization drive. Privatization of India's two largest oil refineries, Hindustan Petroleum and Bharat Petroleum, was at the centre of the latest differences. Shourie wanted to auction them to strategic bidders in a private sale as had happened with 30 other state enterprises, but other ministers, notably Petroleum Minister Ram Naik, said that in the case of oil companies this would encourage a private monopoly and risk putting national assets into foreign hands. The dispute went deeper, with charges that Naik wanted to keep two lucrative sources of patronage within his ministry's control.

Then, on the intervention of Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee, the licences of nearly 4000 petrol stations and cooking gas outlets were cancelled after charges that many had been given since January 2000 to people close to the ruling BJP.

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The opposition Congress party said the licence allocations had been orchestrated by Naik. Inder Malhoutra, the respected veteran political commentator, said: 'India's politics have become disturbingly criminalized and this has encouraged the spread of corruption elsewhere in society—in the judiciary, the civil service and police.'

Vajpayee replaced highly regarded Power Minister Suresh Prabhu after pressure from Bal Thackeray, leader of Shiv Sena, a Hindu fundamentalist party based in Maharashtra that is the second largest of the 23 propping up the Delhi government. Prabhu, a member of Shiv Sena, was replaced by Anant Gangaram Geets, of the same party. Thackeray accused Prabhu of spending too much time on his ministerial job and too little on his party's financial needs. Industry leaders were dismayed because poor power supply was holding up investment. Vajpayee said (6 October) that privatization was 'on track and irreversible'. He approved India's next five-year plan that factored in some £15 billion in revenues from privatization. In October police began investigating Thackeray's activities after he called on Hindus to form suicide terrorist squads to be used against Pakistan and other Islamic countries.

Finance Minister Jaswant Singh told ministers at the September IMF/World Bank meetings in Washington that India was the second fastest growing economy in the world, with a doubling in the first quarter of 2002 to 6 per cent thanks to growth in service and information technology and a rebound in agriculture.

A day after the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) pledged to form an economic union with China by 2010 India proposed (6 November) setting up a free trade area with ASEAN within ten years.

The first case reported since 1987 of suttee—the ancient Hindu custom of a widow burning herself to death on her husband's funeral pyre—came from the village of Tramoli, Madhya Pradesh. The woman's two sons were arrested and faced charges of murder. They were suspected of forcing the widow into self-sacrifice to claim their inheritance. The crime of encouraging suttee carries the death penalty.

The Rajdhani express from Calcutta to New Delhi jumped the tracks on a bridge over a river near Rafigani (9 September), killing 69 people. The train was mainly used by senior civil servants and army officers, but police rejected theories that Mao rebel saboteurs were to blame.

Torrential monsoon rains flooded more than half of Assam and large areas of Bihar at the end of July. Nepal and Bangladesh were also severely affected and something like 1000 people were estimated to have died in the region. Nagaland and Manipur were cut off as roads and railway lines became submerged. While all this was going on farmers in northern and western India were in despair at the continued failure of the monsoon in their region. Their summer crops had withered in the worst drought for a decade.

The Bhopal High Court reinstated (28 August) charges of culpable homicide laid against Warren Anderson, former chief executive of Union Carbide, which leaked deadly gas from its plant in Bhopal in 1984, killing or disabling 500 000 people. It was the worst industrial accident in history. Anderson, now 80, lives in New York and any extradition request was likely to be symbolic since it would not succeed. A few days after the court decision President Abdul Kalam

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opened the Bhopal Memorial Hospital (5 September) for victims of the tragedy that would finally bring the most up-to-date treatment to survivors.

The election commission ruled that early elections could not be held in riot-torn Gujarat because communal 'wounds have still not healed'. The New Delhi government asked President Kalam to appeal to the Supreme Court on the grounds that the constitution required elections to be held by October, six months after the state assembly dissolution. Opposition parties said the ruling BJP had called the elections five months early to capitalize on the bitter division between Hindus and Muslims in Gujarat.

Separatist guerrillas ambushed a bus in Raksamgiri, 250 miles west of Shillong, capital of Meghalaya state (13 August). They lined passengers up on the roadside and killed 15.

Tehelka.com—India's best-known internet news site—suspended operations (23 October). In 2001 it screened 105 hours of secretly filmed tapes showing civil servants and army officers taking bribes from an arms company. A commission of inquiry was set up, but a year later it had still not questioned any of the officials and Tehelka.com found it could not raise new funding. *Hindustan Times* editor Vir Sanghvi said: 'If anyone tries to expose corruption ... they will face the full might of the government of India.'

The Supreme Court rejected (12 September) a public interest petition opposing a new school curriculum that they said would inject religious bias into education and undermine secularism. The petition said the new curriculum tried 'to present a very lop-sided view of India's history and culture' at the expense of the Muslims. The court said the study of religions did not contravene the secular constitution.

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, announced (11 November) after seeing Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee that he was giving \$100 million towards preventing an AIDS pandemic in India. The news stirred controversy. Health Minister Shatrughan Sinha said Gates was 'spreading panic'. Gates had supported a report from the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington that 20–25 million Indians were likely to have the HIV virus by 2010.

In a move to stop begging disrupting tourists and scaring them off, the Delhi authorities said drivers giving in to beggars' demands would be fined. Objectors said not to give to the needy was against Hindu culture.

India and Pakistan

Elections held in Kashmir in four stages (12 September–10 October 2002) produced a surprise result—defeat for the National Conference (NC), which as a member of India's ruling BJP coalition supports Indian rule. The NC took 28 seats, Congress 22 and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) 16. The Hurriyat group of 23 separatist parties boycotted the poll. Turnout was 46 per cent and unofficial international observers—30 Western diplomats acting as informal monitors—rated the election cleaner than past polls, although a record 750 people died in the polling period. One victim was state Law Minister Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, gunned down with three others during a campaign rally in Kupwara (11 September). NC leader and central government minister Omar

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Abdullah, son of outgoing chief minister Farooq Abdullah, lost his seat. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said the high turnout was 'a victory for Indian democracy'.

Half way through the voting Pakistan's President Musharraf said India's claim that nearly half the electorate turned out was 'rubbish'. The figure was more like 2 to 10 per cent. The US ambassador took a different view and said the use of electronic voting machines had prevented manipulation.

Political impasse followed the election, with both the PDP and the Congress wanting their respective leaders to become chief minister. A coalition government was formed (27 October) under Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, of the almost wholly Muslim PDP. He quickly promised to apply a 'healing touch' to the separatist conflict and offered talks to the Hurriyat Conference. The new government freed a key separatist leader from jail in Jammu (11 November) as part of its policy of conciliation.

Vajpayee renewed charges (7 October) that Pakistan was not honouring the pledge it had made in August after talks with US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage to end cross-border terrorism and was backing attempts to sabotage the elections. But within a week of the Kashmir election the Indian cabinet ordered (16 October) a phased withdrawal of the 700 000 troops stationed on the border with Pakistan, ending its longest period of high alert. Within hours, Pakistan said it was pulling back its troops to 'peacetime locations'. Ninety per cent of its 400 000–500 000 troops would stand down in phases. India still insisted it would not talk to Pakistan until it stopped cross-border terrorism.

When militants attacked a Hindu temple in Gandhinagar, Gujarat (25 September) and killed 28 worshippers, Indians were quick to blame Pakistan but the government called for calm. The temple was besieged for 14 hours until commandos killed the assailants. Police said they had found two letters in Urdu on the militants' bodies. Pakistan condemned the raid and denied responsibility. The attack coincided with the second phase of voting in Kashmir and was in the constituency of Deputy Prime Minister L. K. Advani.

Just before the Kashmir elections ended and ahead of the Pakistani elections Pakistan announced (4 October) that it had fired a new Shaheen surface-to-surface missile capable of carrying a warhead to New Delhi. Hours later India tested one of its sophisticated surface-to-air missiles. Both governments said the tests were routine and they had informed each other in advance.

Cadburys apologised (22 August) for an advertisement in the *Times of India* that compared Kashmir to a chocolate that was 'too good to share'. BJP party activists stormed the Cadbury office in Mumbai. The local party president said the advertisement was 'not in good taste'.

Bangladesh

President Badruddoza Chowdhury, 71, resigned (21 July 2002) following pressure from the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party, which complained that he had not visited the grave of Major-General Ziaur Rahman on the anniversary of his assassination in 1981. Rahman was the husband of President Begum Khaleda Zia and founded the BNP. The resignation was seen as unconstitu-

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tional and the opposition Awami League called it 'a national crisis'.

The country's only independent television station, ETV, was shut down and its founder and managing director, Simon Dring, expelled (3 October). Ministers said ETV favoured the opposition and its coverage was biased. Dring, a former London *Daily Telegraph* correspondent, covered the Pakistani-led massacres in the 1971 war of independence.

Violence against journalists was on the rise. Reporters sans Frontières said (17 June) that 145 had been assaulted or subjected to death threats and one reporter murdered since the BNP returned to power in October 2001. In the first week of June five journalists had been assaulted and one stabbed. Police officers were sometimes involved.

Muhammad Ershad, president for nine years, was stopped from boarding a flight to Singapore (22 October). The government said they had barred him from travelling abroad.

Sri Lanka

As promised, the government lifted the ban (4 September 2002) on the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), in advance of peace talks, even though President Chandrika Kujmaratunga had disagreed with Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and demanded it should stay until the talks showed progress. The Tigers had refused to talk until the ban was lifted. Both sides exchanged prisoners. Western governments, including Britain, said they would maintain terrorist bans on the Tigers.

The talks, chaired by Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vida Helgesen, opened at the Sattahip naval base in Thailand (16 September). Sri Lanka's chief negotiator and Constitutional Affairs Minister, G. L. Peiris, opened by paying tribute to Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran for 'foresight' in starting to transform his movement into a political organization. At the end of the first three-day session the Tigers abandoned their long-held demand for a separate Tamil state. They said they would settle for regional autonomy.

Tiger chief negotiator Anton Balasingham left open the threat of renewed fighting if the two sides did not agree on a model that would satisfy Tamil aspirations for self-governance. Both sides appealed for international aid for mine clearance and resettlement of 800 000 people displaced by the fighting. A joint task for humanitarian and reconstruction activities was set up. Government negotiators said progress exceeded all expectations.

A further meeting in Thailand (31 October–3 November) moved faster than expected. Instead of dealing solely with humanitarian issues, such as de-mining and refugees as expected, it set up a sub-committee to look for a political solution to the war. The Tigers said they would let other political parties into the areas under their control and dropped a demand for an interim government in the northeast. They said they were looking for 'federal and confederal' solutions.

On a visit to New Delhi in June Wickremesinghe was assured by Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee of Indian support for the peace efforts, but told the Indian ban on the Tigers would remain in place and the request for the extradition of Prabhakaran for the 1991 assassination of prime minister Rajiv Gandhi

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was 'still operative'. India offered Sri Lanka wheat and a credit facility for Indian goods.

Malaysia

An immigration law that took effect from 1 August 2002 led to the expulsion of 300 000 illegal workers to Indonesia and the Philippines in the first month. Dozens of deaths were caused by insanitary conditions in camps housing the workers. The new law threatened 600 000 people with fines, six-month jail terms or six strokes of the cane if they did not leave. Neighbouring countries protested at the exodus. Indonesia and the Philippines said they could not cope with those returning. Building and palm oil businesses said they had lost out because they relied on cheap foreign labour. The government said it would recruit Vietnamese and Bangladeshis to replace the Indonesians. Foreign workers could return once they acquired working visas to join the 800 000 legally registered. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad temporarily halted the deportations to defuse the crisis as demonstrations erupted in Manila and Jakarta, where the front gates of the Malaysian embassy were torn down.

Singapore

Twenty-one suspected members of Jemaah Islamiyah, a regional terrorist group having contacts with al-Qaida, were arrested in August 2002. The Home Affairs Ministry said the group planned attacks in Singapore aimed at creating a situation in Malaysia and Singapore 'conducive to overthrowing the Malaysian government and making Malaysia an Islamic state'. The attacks would generate animosity and distrust between the two countries. Most of those arrested were being held for two years without trial under Singapore's internal security act.

The news agency Bloomberg agreed in August to pay heavy defamation damages to Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Soong, his father, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, and Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong. An article had alleged a 'corrupt motive' in the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister's wife to a government company.

The opening (12 October) of the Esplanade, a £215 million waterfront arts complex, marked the beginning of an attempt to make Singapore a regional hub for the arts. Lack of cultural activities has limited the island's attractiveness to tourists. A 2000-seat theatre, and similar-sized concert hall would attract Broadway shows and world-class jazz and classical musicians.

Hong Kong

In big management changes the editor of *The South China Morning Post*, Tom Abraham, resigned (7 August 2002) after only a year in the post. No new editor was appointed. Instead there would be an editorial committee of four senior editors. It had been said that the paper's coverage of China was becoming tamer. In April Publisher Thaddeus Beczak had fired the Beijing correspondent.

Economic growth in the second quarter of 2002 was up to 0.8 per cent against the negative 0.5 per cent in the first quarter. But the performance was

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poor compared with Hong Kong's Asian neighbours—China 8 per cent, Korea 6.3, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore 4 per cent. A survey by Mastercard International found Hong Kong people to be the most pessimistic in the region about the future.

Margaret Ng, legislator representing the legal profession, said an anti-terrorism bill before the Legislative Council in September could be used as an excuse to limit civil liberties and would give the Chief Executive too much unilateral power. It could be used to suppress legitimate protests. Audrey Eu, former chair of the Bar Association, said the new legislation could be used against the Falun Gong sect, which is banned in China but legal in Hong Kong. Other critics said the bill could give Beijing control over the mass media and all dissident groups.

Pacific governance

The leaders of ten Commonwealth states and dependencies in the Pacific held a Round Table on democracy and governance in Denarau Island, Fiji Islands (19–20 August 2002). The meeting, organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat, was along the lines of the Round Table it held in Kasane, Botswana in 1997 and was preceded by a meeting in Nadi attended by MPs and academics from Pacific countries. Measures were worked out and passed on to Heads to make democratic governance more suitable to Pacific circumstances, improve the quality of democracy in the region and reduce the potential for conflict.

The Heads were chaired by Fiji Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase. It was agreed there was no perfect constitutional model to suit all Pacific Island countries. Constitutions based on the Westminster model contained aspects foreign to the Pacific experience and did not take account of the circumstances and values of Pacific societies. Different electoral systems, including preferential voting and PR should be considered. Voter education should be increased and limits put on campaign funding and spending. Communal values were important in the devolution of power to communities. Land ownership must be respected. Corruption had to be fought. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association could help in training MPs and in closer cooperation among them.

Papua New Guinea

Sir Michael Somare, newly installed as Prime Minister for the third time, named a cabinet (13 August 2002), two-thirds of which consisted of newly elected MPs. Former prime minister Bill Skate was elected Speaker of the Parliament.

Somare asked the Commonwealth Secretariat (20 August 2002) to conduct an audit into the June election, which had been the most chaotic since independence. A five-man Commonwealth expert group headed by Ieremia Tabai, former president of Kiribati, visited the country (27 October–6 November) to examine its electoral arrangements and make recommendations for the future conduct of polling. Other members of the team came from Australia, Canada, Grenada and India.

Their report (15 November) recommended creation of a three-member

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Electoral Commission tasked to reorganize and conduct all future elections; a complete exercise of re-registration of all electors; introduction of a voter ID card; and a voter education programme.

Pitcairn Island

New Zealand Foreign Minister Phil Goff announced (14 October 2002) a law change so that 12 men from Pitcairn could be tried on sex charges before a British court to be set up in Auckland in 2003. Pitcairn is a British protectorate, but because of its isolation halfway between Chile and New Zealand and the fact that the charges would touch every family on the island (population 44), the prosecutors did not want the trials held there. The charges date back three years and Pitcairn Mayor Steve Christian told a UN conference in Fiji that the long wait was an 'abuse of process' under international law. Goff said that to hold the trial in the island was also impractical because it has no harbour, airport or hotel and could not cope with judges, lawyers, and court staff.

Solomon Islands

Minister of Youth, Sports and Women, Father David Augustine Geve, was shot dead (20 August 2002) leading a peace mission in his Guadalcanal constituency. Harold Keke, leader of the Guadalcanal Liberation Front, claimed responsibility. The Solomons Police Minister appealed to Australia and New Zealand to help bring Keke to justice.

At the end of a public inquiry it was ruled (18 June) that the death from a knife wound of New Zealand Deputy High Commissioner Bridget Nichols was the result of a freak accident and not murder, as originally thought.

Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza moved Foreign Minister Alex Bartlett to Tourism and Aviation. Bartlett, a former leader of the Malaita Eagle Force, refused at first to move, but after a period of cabinet dissension he agreed.

Vanuatu

Former prime minister Barak Sope, whose party now held only two seats, failed to hold the first sitting (3 June 2002) of the legislature after the April election. He had accused the election commission of fraud, but an independent election observer group said (11 June) that, although the electoral roll was 'fundamentally flawed', the election was relatively clean compared with previous elections.

The Supreme Court sentenced Sope (19 July) to three years jail for illegally signing government guarantees worth £13 million to foreign businessmen in his last six months in office. Opposition leader Willie Jimmy called on the president to pardon him. Sope was expected to appeal. Opposition to the conviction of Sope led to the arrest of seven police officers on mutiny charges (27 August) while 20 more, including the acting commissioner, were said to be in hiding. Prime Minister Edward Natapei took over the police portfolio from the internal affairs minister.

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Kiribati

Parliament unanimously passed a bill which opponents said would stifle opposition views and give government the right to control private and independent newspapers, especially the *Kiribati Newstar*, the country's only independent newspaper. The post of newspaper registrar would be transferred from the attorney-general's office to a ministry and a commission would deal with complaints against newspapers.

Tuvalu

In a general election (26 July 2002) Prime Minister Koloa Talake, three ministers and two other MPs in the 15-member parliament lost their seats. Saufaru Sopoanga, finance minister in the Talake government, was elected Prime Minister.

Cook Islands

On his return from South Africa, the Prime Minister's chief adviser, Puho Rua, told the *Cook Islands Herald* the government should use the Zimbabwe media law as a model to control newspapers. There was too much inaccurate reporting in the islands, he said.

Niue

Prime Minister Young Vivian sacked his Deputy, Sani Lakatani (8 August 2002), after he had voted with the opposition to ensure the defeat of Finance Minister Toke Talagi's budget. Three weeks later the Fono (parliament) passed a revised budget.

Tonga

The government launched a legal action in the US courts (6 June 2002) to recover US\$26 million lost from a trust fund by US businessman Jesse Bogdonoff, former financial adviser to King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV. The scandal had led to the resignations of two ministers. The Asian Development Bank approved a US\$10 million 24-year loan towards an economic and public sector reform programme designed to balance the country's finances.

Fiji Islands

The leaders of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group, representing 78 former European colonies, met in Fiji (18 July 2002) to discuss plans to ask the European Union for compensation for losses they expect to follow from the end of trade preferences over the next seven years. At negotiations starting in Brussels in September they would ask for a longer phase-out. Non-preferential pacts have to end to meet World Trade Organization conditions. The EU contended that the Cotonou agreement of 2000, bringing the former colonies

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£8.6 billion in aid over five years, included compensation.

Fifteen rebel soldiers were found guilty of mutiny (2 November) after a long court-martial. The men had been involved in the May 2000 attack on Parliament led by George Speight and later in a shootout at the Queen Elizabeth barracks in Suva in which eight people died. The Citizens' Constitutional Forum said the army must now prosecute all others involved in the overthrow of the Mahendra Chaudhry government.

Australia

The country was profoundly shocked by the bombing on Bali beach, Indonesia (12 October 2002). Of the 190 people killed, 81 were Australian—the largest loss of Australian lives in a deliberate act of violence in peacetime. Some were rugby players and in hundreds of venues, including many sports stadiums, memorial services were held across the country (20 October). Some people saw it as the day Australia 'lost its innocence'; others when it lost its complacency. The bombing came after several years of poor relations with Indonesia, exacerbated by the controversy over the way Australia had recently dealt with the asylum-seeker problem. The two governments were now forced into closer collaboration and Bali may have marked a turning point in relations between the two neighbours.

In a landmark decision the Canberra High Court ruled (8 August) that Aborigines had no rights to mineral or petroleum resources. The decision ended an eight-year legal wrangle between Aborigine land rights advocates and the mining industry that centred around the mineral wealth extracted from the Argyle diamond mine in the northwest—the world's biggest, owned by Rio Tinto. Chief Justice Murray Gleeson ruled that native title rights to the land had been extinguished before the Argyle lease was granted. He said rights to the assets of land could be 'partially extinguished', which seemed to reverse rulings in 1992 and 1996. Indigenous rights supporters saw it as a backward step to the notion that Australia was uninhabited at the time of European colonization.

Members of the Larrakia tribe attended a ceremony held outside Canberra's National Museum (12 August) to cleanse the remains of 85 Aborigines plundered from graves and mortuaries 100 years ago. The skeletons had been kept in Edinburgh University's anatomy collection and were being taken to the tribe's homeland in the Northern Territory for burial.

At a ceremony in Barrow Creek, Northern Territory (27 August), Governor-General Peter Hollingworth apologised for a massacre of Aborigines by settlers which took place there 130 years ago.

The Immigration department said (10 September) that only 66 of the 506 people in a detention centre on Nauru—most of them from Afghanistan—had been deemed by the UN to be refugees. The rest would be sent home and the centre closed, but there was no guarantee that the 66 would be allowed into Australia; they would have to apply separately for residency. Those returning would get £700 from the government. Amnesty International called conditions at the Nauru camp 'inhumane ... hellish'. Many of the inmates were among the 438 people on board the Norwegian ship *Tampa* left stranded when Australia and Indonesia refused to accept people rescued from a sinking boat.

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An asylum-seekers support group drove up to the Woomera detention centre in the South Australian desert (28 June), tore part of it down, and helped 34 detainees escape. Two days later 24 has been recaptured. About 120 detainees—most of them Afghans—had been on hunger strike against the conditions in Woomera. A UN working party had condemned the conditions there and at other centres. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer rejected their report.

President Rene Harris of Nauru said (9 June) Australia had broken the deadline for processing asylum applications on camps in the island, adding that Australia's 'Pacific solution' had become 'a Pacific nightmare for us'.

Although the Howard government cut migrant intake when it took office in 1996 pressure from business had since led to an increase. In 2002 the annual quota was raised from 93 000 to 100 000–110 000 for the following five years. The Business Council said that to maintain economic growth rates intake needed to be at least 140 000.

Kirsty Ruddock, government lawyer and daughter of Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock, told a television interviewer (16 September) she had left Australia partly because of her father's policies in regard to the boat people and asylum-seekers.

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja resigned as leader of the Australian Democrat Party (21 August) after months of internal dissension. Senator Brian Greig took over as interim leader, although Australia's only Aboriginal legislator, Senator Aden Ridgeway, had been expected to succeed. After the 2001 elections the Democrats held the balance of power in the Senate.

Downer became in October 2002 the most senior Western politician to visit Burma for 20 years. He saw the three top leaders of the junta and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. He said the generals had told him they were committed to greater democracy but gave no timetable. He had said political reform was the key to resurrecting the economy.

After a month-long standoff with Iraq, Australia made a deal to resume full wheat exports (20 August). The move followed an Iraqi threat to halve imports of Australian wheat. Iraq is one of Australia's top two wheat markets and Australia is Iraq's biggest wheat supplier.

Western Australia's North West Shelf Venture won the single biggest export deal in Australian history—a 25-year contract worth £8.56 billion to supply liquefied natural gas to China. The deal involves three million tonnes of gas a year starting in 2005. Rival bids had come from Qatar and Indonesia. State Premier Geoff Gallop said the royalties would be used to improve community services and infrastructure.

Two official reports (16 September) said the country's economy would benefit from ratification of the Kyoto protocol. One from the Australian Greenhouse Office said GNP would fall by 0.4 per cent by 2010 if the government did not fall into line. At the Johannesburg Earth Summit in August, Australia and the USA were the only two developed countries to oppose Kyoto.

An operation to fingerprint the 1600 people of Norfolk Island and 680 tourists began (12 August) in an attempt to solve its first murder case in 150 years. The victim, 29-year-old Janelle Patton, was stabbed. Her still-warm body was found by tourists on Easter Day. A downpour washed away crucial evidence before police could be flown from the mainland, so the mass finger-

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printing became essential. The woman was not an islander and had been working as restaurant manager in Norfolk on a temporary permit. Many Norfolk islanders are descendants of the Bounty mutineers and bear the name Christian.

New Zealand

In the wake of the July 2002 election Prime Minister Helen Clark formed a minority coalition government with the Progressive Coalition Party, which polled only 2 per cent of the votes. The coalition held 54 of the 120 parliamentary seats and would rely on the United Future party, which had achieved an unexpected eight seats with 7 per cent of the votes. Clark secured (8 August) a three-year pledge of parliamentary support from United Future. She made only minor changes to her pre-election cabinet. Former treasury secretary Alan Bollard became governor of the Reserve Bank in succession to Don Brash who resigned to stand for the opposition National Party and became shadow finance minister.

The Federated Farmers of New Zealand, the main farming union, produced figures to show how successfully they had coped since the abolition of subsidies and price controls in 1984. In those days the sector represented 14.5 per cent of gross national product. Now it accounted for 17 per cent. A typical sheep farmer has about 600 acres, keeps 2000 sheep and 100 cattle and earns the equivalent in spending power to an annual salary of £60 000 in Britain.

Trinidad and Tobago

In a third general election in three years (7 October 2002) Prime Minister Patrick Manning's People's National Movement (PNM) won a clear victory over Basdeo Panday's United National Congress (UNC), thus ending the political deadlock created by the dead-heat result of the December 2001 election. Panday, aged 69 and the first prime minister of Indian descent (1995–2001), said he would resign as opposition leader. The PNM won 20 seats and the UNC the remaining 16. Turnout was 70 per cent and voting was generally peaceful.

Manning urged all Trinidadians 'to move forward as one country and one people'. Parliament had not convened after the December election until April and then it could not transact any business because repeated votes to elect a Speaker ended in a tie. Without a Speaker parliament could not approve a budget that was due to expire in September. Emergency funds would have lasted only until 31 October and that fact dictated the election date.

The political impasse had held up negotiations to develop production of the country's huge natural gas reserves. Recent finds led to proposals to run a pipeline northwards through Martinique and Guadeloupe to Puerto Rico, Barbados, Antigua, St Kitts and Dominica.

The dispute with Jamaat al Muslimeen, the sect which had tried to stage a coup in 1990, was settled when the government awarded it disputed land outside Port of Spain. The sect said prime minister Eric Williams had given it the land in the 1970s.

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Offshore banking

The shutting down of four more offshore banks in St Lucia in September 2002 brought the total number closed by the government in 18 months to 36. Nine remained in operation. Neighbouring Dominica also closed a bank and froze its assets, saying its operations were harming its image as an offshore banking centre. Both countries had been listed by the OECD as uncooperative. A UN report (5 August) said concerns about tax competition and money laundering had helped to depress already uncertain Caribbean economies in the wake of 11 September 2001.

Jamaica

Prime Minister Percival Patterson, 68, led his People's National Party to a fourth successive victory in a general election (16 October 2002). It gave him a third consecutive term as leader but with a reduced majority. He said he would stand down before the end of his term. The PNP won 35 of the 60 seats in parliament, against 50 in 1997, and the Jamaica Labour Party took 22. Former prime minister Edward Seaga, now 72, whose fourth child was born during the campaign, hinted he also might now step down as Labour leader.

Polling had been fair and largely free of violence than previous elections. Although 60 people died in the weeks beforehand, most incidents were non-political. Former US president Jimmy Carter, who had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize a few days earlier, led a 59-strong observer group that gave the election a fair wind. Patterson won despite slow growth in the economy—1.1 per cent in 2001—and rising drug-related crime. As he began his term he vowed his priority would be to tackle crime.

The Senate removed from the Oath of Allegiance and the Judicial Oath any mention of Queen Elizabeth (20 September) following approval by the lower house. Parliamentarians and judges would swear loyalty to the constitution, but the Governor-General would continue to pledge allegiance to the Queen as head of state. The vote was 12 to five with four abstentions.

Caribbean Community

As the Caribbean Community moved towards creating its own final appellate court, several countries were changing their constitutions to speed execution for murder. Most Commonwealth Caribbean states saw the UK Privy Council as a barrier to capital punishment. The Caribbean appeal court would be part of the proposed regional common market. Prime Minister Kenny Anthony of St Lucia said the court was seen as a step by the region 'to repatriate our sovereignty'. He added: 'We cannot continue to allow UK taxpayers to finance our final court.'

The Barbados parliament agreed a Constitution Amendment Act countering restrictions on the imposition of the death penalty established in Privy Council rulings.

Jamaica had 1000 murders in 2001 and 52 people on death row. The last execution was in 1988. Trinidad had 100 on death row.

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Belize

A deal brokered under the auspices of the Organization of American States looked set to end the territorial dispute with Guatemala. Under the proposals delivered to the two countries in September 2002, Guatemala would drop its 140-year claim to half Belize for a £200 million aid package. It was expected to promote peace and investment throughout the region of Central America. Guatemala would get maritime rights in the Bay of Honduras and a trust fund would be set up by the US and European governments and financial institutions led by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

Co-authors of the deal were US diplomat Paul Reichler and former Commonwealth Secretary-General Sir Sonny Ramphal, who were appointed by the two countries in 2000 to negotiate on their behalf. Referendums were to be held in both countries within 60 days of signing. The border was still troubled. Guatemalans are often evicted by Belizean patrols and in the first half of 2001 seven peasants were shot dead. The seventh meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize was held in New York (14 September) to review developments.

The government began in September 2002 to crack down on boats fishing illegally. They would be tracked by satellite and struck off the register. Belize was named in 2001 as the world's worst offender in letting pirate boats, many from the European Union, operate under its flag.

Turks and Caicos

A Privy Council order abolished the death penalty in the islands under the 1962 West Indies Act—the last corner of British territory still retaining it. It had been kept for treason and piracy, but now the Labour government had fulfilled its policy to end the death penalty for all offences everywhere under British rule. In Britain the death penalty ended in 1965. Then only 12 countries in the world had abolished it. Now the number is nearly 100.

Montserrat

The 1640 ft high lava dome of the Soufrière Hills volcano, still spewing ash, began to show signs of collapse in October 2002. Eighty people signed up for government shelters, but six refused to leave their homes.

Guyana

In talks with President Bharrat Jagdeo and opposition leader Desmond Hoyte in June 2002 Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon agreed to send Sir Paul Reeves, former New Zealand governor-general, as his personal envoy to help facilitate the resumption of talks between the two major political parties and to promote national unity. Reeves began work a few weeks later with two Secretariat officials.

The government launched a 'national consultation' (9 September) following a record rise in violent crime. In the year so far 11 police and 30 civilians had

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died in armed robberies and hijackings. Twenty-five meetings were to be held throughout the country.

The IMF approved interim help under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative to meet debt service obligations on its existing debts to the IMF (13 September). It also released three-year support for Guyana's economic programme under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility.

Antigua and Barbuda

A royal commission of inquiry reported alleged financial irregularities in the state-run Medical Benefit Service. It said the government had not paid into the scheme funds deducted from public employees and recommended a special prosecutor should consider charging two former health ministers.

For the first time since coming to power in 1994 Prime Minister Lester Bird appointed a Deputy Prime Minister—Robin Yearwood, who already held four portfolios. Bird said he wanted to improve discipline in the Antigua Labour Party.

The BBC agreed to pay substantial libel damages to Bird (31 October) over radio reports on the World Service and its domestic Today programme that he had expropriated large sums of money from healthcare funds and been involved in gun-running or drug-trafficking. It unreservedly accepted that he had done none of these things.

Canada

Jean Chretien, Prime Minister since 1993 and now 68, announced (22 August 2002) that he would not seek a fourth mandate. He would leave office in February 2004 before the next election. The decision came after a long and bitter struggle for the leadership of the Liberal Party with the increasingly popular Paul Martin, which had intensified since his departure as finance minister (2 June). Chretien said his decision to step down was 'the best way to bring back unity, to end the fighting, to resume interrupted friendship'. For some time opinion polls had shown his popularity was waning. Two out of three people said he was 'trying to stay in power for power's sake'.

The Prime Minister carried out a two-stage cabinet reshuffle after weeks of political uncertainty. His long partnership in government with Martin had been highly successful, restoring the economy, cutting taxes and keeping the budget out of deficit for five years—a performance unmatched for five decades. In the first quarter of 2002 the economy grew by 6 per cent. But the two men disliked each other intensely. Both Quebeckers, they disagreed on the amount of constitutional power that should be given to the province. The Canadian dollar fell sharply after Martin's departure.

Martin, 63, would have three rivals for the leadership in the run-up to the election—Deputy Prime Minister John Manley, who now also held the Finance portfolio, Industry Minister Allan Rock, and Heritage Minister Sheila Copps.

In the first stage of the reshuffle (26 May 2002) Art Eggleton was removed as defence minister following months of allegations of misuse of public funds by the award of advertising and consulting contracts to companies with close ties

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to the ruling Liberal Party. John McCallum, former chief economist at the Royal Bank of Canada was moved from a junior finance post to defence. Opposition critics said the government had built up official patronage that smacked of corruption.

Allegations over the government's ethical conduct continued over several months. Later in the year Solicitor-General Lawrence MacAulay resigned (22 October) in protest at a report from the federal ethics watchdog which said he should not have intervened in a request for funding from a college run by his brother.

Joe Clark, leader of the Progressive Conservative Party and former prime minister, announced (6 August) he would resign within a year to give his successor time to prepare for the next general election.

The troubled opposition party, the Canadian Alliance (formerly the Reform Party), was trying to rebuild itself under economist Stephen Harper, the new leader it had chosen (20 March) to replace the controversial Stockwell Day. Alliance support had tumbled from 26 to 13 per cent.

Alexa McDonough, federal leader of the New Democratic Party since 1995, announced (5 June) she would retire after the election of a new leader later in the year. In the 2000 election the NDP dropped from 21 to 13 seats.

The Liberals lost two supposedly safe seats in by-elections (13 May). They then held 170, the Alliance 63, Bloc Quebecois 37, NDP 14 and Conservatives 13.

Queen Elizabeth paid an 11-day visit to Canada as part of her jubilee year Commonwealth tours. She arrived (4 October) in remote Iqaluit, Baffin Island, capital of the vast new territory of Nunavut (population 27 000). At the dedication of the legislative building she spoke from a sealskin-covered throne on what was her 22nd visit to Canada. The tour received warm Canadian media coverage, but it was not without incident. At the outset a remark by Deputy Prime Minister Manley that he would prefer a native Canadian as head of state was widely condemned and quickly described by the government as a personal view. In Winnipeg the Queen was briefly stranded in mid-river when the royal water taxi broke down in midstream.

The USA dealt a blow to the timber industry when it imposed import duties of 27 per cent on softwood timber from Canada. Up to 50 000 Canadian jobs were threatened. The US International Trade Commission said cheap timber imports could harm the US industry.

An Ontario court ruled (12 July) that the provincial government must register gay and lesbian marriages and give them the same rights as male-female couples. The historic ruling was seen as setting a precedent for other provinces.

On the anniversary of the 11 September attacks Chretien surprised diplomats in Ottawa by saying in a broadcast that the USA and the West must bear some responsibility for what had happened. They had alienated the rest of the world by trying to impose their values and through their increasing economic dominance. He said: 'You cannot exercise your powers to the point of humiliation of others.' When he praised joint efforts with the USA to boost border security, he remarked: 'Canadians don't want to be looked upon as the 51st state.'

Russell Mills, publisher and former editor of the *Ottawa Citizen*, was

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dismissed (16 June) allegedly for publishing an editorial highly critical of Chretien. The group to which *The Citizen* belonged had been taken over in 2000 from Hollinger International, owned by Conrad Black. The owners were now CanWest Global Communications headed by Izzy Asper, a staunch defender of Chretien and contributor to the Liberal Party. The International Press Institute called the sacking of Mills, the dean of Canada's publishers, 'an attack on press freedom by an unholy alliance between politics and big business'. CanWest is Canada's second biggest TV broadcaster and this overlapping ownership had already forced Chretien into parliamentary grillings.

In contrast to most other developed countries, Canada pressed ahead in 2002 with efforts to attract skilled immigrants. Opinion polls showed that, despite 11 September, Canadians were comfortable with the admission of thousands more from overseas. The annual government target is 1 per cent of the population. Citizenship and Immigration Minister Denis Coderre said 250 386 immigrants had been admitted in 2001—25 000 more than the target. The largest number (40 000) were from China, with India and Pakistan following. About 60 per cent were economic immigrants, mostly skilled people.

Nigeria

The House of Representatives, recalled for an emergency debate, voted (13 August 2002) to start impeachment proceedings against President Olusegun Obasanjo if he did not resign in two weeks. The motion attacked him for 'monumental inadequacies, ineptitude ... persistent disrespect for the rule of law'. It criticized the management of inflation, social problems and budget spending and talked of 'obvious corruption being perpetrated in the presidency'. The President's office said he would ignore the threat and carry on as normal. It added: 'The work of governing this country would have been easier and we would have made more progress if the House ... seriously and painstakingly (devoted) itself to the task of law-making rather than money-making whether by fair or foul means.' The country's 36 state governors agreed (20 August) to try to persuade the lawmakers to drop their impeachment threats.

The Lower House, dominated by Obasanjo's People's Democratic Party (PDP), began to backtrack on its threat (27 August) by voting to compile a charge sheet, alleging 17 breaches of the constitution. The Independent Corrupt Practices Commission, set up by Obasanjo when he was elected in 1999, said (17 September) it was to investigate Ghali Na'Abba, speaker of the House, over alleged misuse of public money. Na'Abba had led the attempt to impeach the President.

The Independent National Electoral Commission launched a ten-day registration programme (12 September) for the 2003 presidential election. It set up 120 000 centres to register 60 million voters, recording thumbprints and personal details. The Roman Catholic church claimed (25 September) that violence, fraud and mismanagement had prevented the registration of one-third of those who turned out. The commission said it would hold another round of registration early in 2003.

Gunmen shot dead Ahman Ahmed Pategi, a senior official of the PDP, in an ambush in Kogi state as violence increased in the run-up to the elections.

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An Islamic court in Funtua, Katsina state, dismissed (19 August 2002) a 31-year-old woman's appeal against death by stoning for bearing a child out of wedlock. It ruled that she could not be executed until she had finished breast-feeding her baby daughter in January 2004. The case was a setback for the federal government, which had used it to challenge the reintroduction of *sharia* law in 12 northern states. The lawyer for the woman, Amina Lawal, said she had been tried retroactively, her offence having been committed before the new law took effect. The European Union and human rights organizations said they would fight for a reprieve. President Obasanjo said he would weep for himself and his country if the sentence was carried out. He had no powers to commute the sentence if the Supreme Court confirmed the penalty.

In Jigawa state a man convicted of raping a nine-year-old girl was sentenced to stoning ((27 August) and in Niger state two lovers were sentenced to death for having sex outside marriage. Britain said it was considering the implications for the support its Department for International Development was giving projects to help develop judicial projects in Jigawa state. The USA said it had no objection to *sharia* law in principle, but it thought stoning contravened global agreements signed by Nigeria.

An oil terminal on Escravos island in the Niger Delta owned by Chevron Texaco was besieged by 150 women for some days in July. They wanted jobs for their sons and electricity for their villages. The sit-in was indicative of tensions between the oil companies and local communities.

An investigation by the London *Financial Times* found up to 15 London banks set to avoid prosecution for handling funds linked to former dictator Sani Abacha. In April 2002 an out-of-court settlement required the return of £1 billion in exchange for the dropping of theft and money laundering charges against Mohammed Abacha, the dictator's son, who was released from jail (23 September). A business associate rejected the settlement and an adviser to Obasanjo said the Abacha family had reneged on the agreement.

A former curator of the National Museum in Lagos said a Benin bronze sculpture presented to Queen Elizabeth in 1973 by military ruler General Yakubu Gowon should be returned. It was a gift for British help in the Biafran civil war. Gowon had ordered a replica but was dissatisfied with the workmanship and so had the original dating to 1600 removed from the museum before a visit to London. Nigeria wants all 250 Benin bronzes in the British Museum returned, but Buckingham Palace received no formal request for the head.

Cameroon

President Paul Biya appointed a new cabinet (24 August 2002) in the wake of the June parliamentary elections. New ministers were brought in, but Peter Mafany Musonge remained Prime Minister. Dissidents from the opposition Social Democratic Front formed a new party, the Alliance of Progressive Forces.

Final results of the parliamentary elections held in 30 June 2002, according to the Supreme Court, gave the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement 133 of the 180 seats in the National Assembly up from 116 in 1997. The Social Democratic Front lost half its 42 seats in an election fought by 47 parties. The

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election monitoring body, the Observatory for National Elections, deplored ‘the irresponsible attitude of some administrative authorities’.

Nigeria and Cameroon

The International Court of Justice ruled (10 October 2002) on the long-running dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon over oil-rich border areas. It awarded the Bakassi peninsula and areas around Lake Chad to Cameroon, but gave other territories near the land border to Nigeria, which had argued for retaining existing maritime boundaries between the two countries and Equatorial Guinea. Cameroon said Nigeria could now exploit big and deep offshore fields and proceed with agreements it had made recently with Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe. Cameroon said it had won the case but Nigeria had got more out of the judgement.

Before the judgement UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan brokered a meeting between President Obasanjo of Nigeria and President Biya of Cameroon (6 September) at which the two countries agreed in advance to respect the judgement.

It was a delicate moment because increasing US interest in Gulf of Guinea oil was worrying the region. A special adviser on oil to Obasanjo met President Eduardo dos Santos of Angola (3 October) to discuss their concerns at reports that the USA might set up a new military base in São Tomé and Príncipe, which lies between Nigeria and Angola.

Sierra Leone

Nineteen athletes of the country’s 21-strong team had gone missing in Britain after the Commonwealth Games. Sports Minister Dennis Bright appealed to them to turn themselves in.

UK troops completed their withdrawal (29 July 2002) after 26 months in the country to help rebuild the army. Some officers remained to continue training.

Alimamy Pallo Bangura resigned (13 August) as Secretary-General of the Revolutionary United Front Party, the former rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF). He had won under 2 per cent of the vote in the May presidential elections.

Uganda

Lord’s Resistance Army rebels continued to raid the north. In one attack (5 August 2002) on a refugee camp 55 people were killed. Five aid workers were kidnapped then released. In a village raid in October the rebels killed 52 people. In a renewed bid to end the revolt the government sent tanks and artillery and 14 000 troops.

The IMF approved (13 September) a three-year arrangement under the poverty reduction and growth facility for SDR (special drawing rights) 13.5 million.

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Congo war

Rwanda, which controlled about one-third of the Democratic republic of Congo, said (16 September 2002) it would begin withdrawing its troops, believed to number 20 000, within 24 hours in accordance with the peace deal signed on 30 July. Uganda had withdrawn 2000 soldiers. At the end of September France and Rwanda were suggesting that the pullout could leave a dangerous power vacuum. Rival Congolese in eastern Congo began fighting when the Rwandans left and peace was on a knife-edge once more.

An independent panel of experts told the UN (21 October) that 85 multinational companies based in Europe, the USA and South Africa had violated ethical guidelines in dealing with criminal networks pillaging Congolese resources. Twelve companies were registered in Britain. As well, the panel named top African military officers and officials from Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Uganda for theft, embezzlement, diversion of public funds, undervaluation of goods, smuggling, false invoicing, non-payment of taxes, kickbacks to public officials and bribery.

Kenya

The constitutional review commission chaired by Professor Yash Ghai proposed (18 September 2002) that Kenya should have an executive prime minister elected by the national assembly and drawn from the party with a majority of the popular vote nationwide. Most executive powers would be exercised by the prime minister, leaving the president to carry out special responsibilities such as national unity and safeguarding the constitution. The two chambers would be known as the National Assembly and the National Council. MPs could impeach a president with a two-thirds majority. The cabinet would have a fixed 15 members. Ministers, except for the prime minister and two deputies, would come from outside parliament.

Some ministers condemned the proposals and the opposition feared attempts would be made to 'scuttle' them by a dissolution of parliament before they were discussed. Two judges sought a High Court writ to stop the commission's proposals for judicial reform.

A historic political divide took place (14 October) when the ruling Kanu backed Uhuru Kenyatta at a rally as its candidate to succeed President Daniel arap Moi for the December 2002 elections. At another rally at the other end of Nairobi Kanu rebels—known as the Rainbow Alliance—teamed up with the opposition National Alliance and the Kenya People's coalition to present a united front against Kenyatta.

The rebels formed a Liberal Democratic Party, merged with the Coalition and began talks with the Alliance on a single candidate to oppose Kenyatta. Six senior Kanu members, including Raila Odinga, had defected because they could no longer work with Moi. In the week that followed more than 30 MPs defected in protest at Kenyatta's candidacy—leaving Kanu without a parliamentary majority for the first time since independence in 1963. Later nine more Kanu MPs defected.

Earlier (30 August) Moi dismissed his vice-president, George Saitoti because

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he had rejected the nomination of Kenyatta and sought the post himself.

The new coalition united behind a single presidential candidate—the veteran politician Mwai Kibaki, who was Moi’s vice-president in the 1980s, when he resisted the introduction of multiparty democracy. Moi dissolved parliament on 25 October and the stage was set for a generational fight. Kenyatta is 42 and Kibaki 71.

Moi dissolved parliament to forestall a no-confidence vote—and before a retirement package giving him 34 staff, seven cars, a house and a state funeral could be pushed through.

When the date of the election—27 December—was announced (30 October) electoral commission chairman Samuel Kivaitu said 10.5 million of Kenya’s estimated 29 million citizens had registered to vote, but some reports said up to one million dead people were still on the register.

Mozambique

Armando Emilio Guebeza was named at the congress (13–17 June 2002) of the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (Frelimo) as the party’s candidate for the 2004 presidential election. If elected he would succeed President Joaquim Chissano, now serving his final term. Guebeza, former minister of transport and communications, was elected the new Frelimo Secretary-General in place of Manuel Tomé, who had held the job since 1995.

Foreign Minister Leonardo Simao said (8 August) white farmers evicted from Zimbabwe were welcome to farm in his country—‘be he or she white, black, yellow’. Land had been set aside for 400.

Malawi

A campaign to change the constitution so that President Bakili Muluzi could run for a third term at the end of his presidential term in 2004 ran into difficulty when the President tried to ban demonstrations against the change. The High Court ruled (3 June 2002) that he did not have the right to do so. Three weeks later the tabling of a parliamentary private member’s bill to amend the constitution was postponed.

The Anti-Corruption Bureau called in August for the prosecution of officials for selling 166 000 tonnes of maize held in strategic reserves to prevent famine. Muluzi dismissed the Minister of Poverty Alleviation, Leonard Mangulama, who was Minister of Agriculture at the time the reserves were sold. The director of public prosecutions said he was charged with abuse of office.

The World Bank said (19 September 2002) it would lend Malawi £31 million to help alleviate food shortages now affecting three million people. The continuing drought meant the country needed 240 000 tonnes of emergency food to avoid widespread starvation.

The International Bar Association sent a delegation to examine interference with the judicial system and media. Its report (13 August) warned that such interference and Muluzi’s efforts to retain power were jeopardizing the flow of aid funds. Chronic underfunding of the judicial system and police roundups without adequate evidence were resulting in hundreds of people ‘getting lost’ in

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the prison system and facing indefinite detention. The judiciary was being intimidated and lawyers blacklisted for challenging the government.

Zimbabwe

President Robert Mugabe replaced Finance Minister Simba Makoni in a sudden cabinet reshuffle (25 August 2002) and put back in place Herbert Murerwa, who had held the post in the second half of the 1990s. Makoni had for some time called for restraint on the land reform programme and in July devalued the currency by 80 per cent in respect of import tariffs on luxury goods and 37.5 per cent for tobacco exporters. He forecast a record 11 per cent fall in gross domestic product for 2002. One other minister was removed—the only European in the 53-member Cabinet, Health Minister Timothy Stamps, who had been in poor health. Otherwise the key hardline ministers all remained in place. Mugabe called his otherwise unchanged team ‘a political war cabinet’. In July inflation was a record—123.5 per cent. Price rises were putting most food beyond the reach of even the better-off. Before the land reform campaign began in 1999, 500 grams of Zimbabwean fillet steak cost £1.40. Now it was £20.70.

Mugabe visited Libya in September. Afterwards the state-controlled *Herald* reported (11 September) that Libya had renewed for another year a £230 million fuel deal with Zimbabwe. It was supplying 70 per cent of Zimbabwe’s fuel, which was paid for by beef and tobacco. Libya was stepping up its investments in mining, tourism and agriculture. It was said to have a controlling stake in the Jewel Bank, formerly the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe, and the state travel company. The rest of the country’s oil supplies were coming from Kuwait and overland from South Africa.

A government deadline for 2900 white farmers to leave their properties was set for 8 August, but many stayed in place despite the threat of a two-year jail sentence—among them former prime minister Ian Smith. Police held 193 farmers for defying the deadline (17 August). In court they were told to go home and given a day to pack up. The move followed an amendment in May to the Land Acquisition Act. Sixty farmers met in Mutorashanga, 60 miles from Harare, for an end-of-an-era group picture (6 August). Forty were quitting the following weekend. Among those ordered off his farm was the father of Zimbabwe’s just-appointed cricket captain—Heath Streak.

In the wake of the deadline there was legal confusion. In one case a High Court judge ruled invalid an eviction order against a farmer in Karoi because the government had not served notice on the bank to which the farm was mortgaged. The Commercial Farmers Union argued that, as 90 per cent of the farmers had mortgaged their land, the ruling meant most eviction orders were null and void. Messages from Mugabe were mixed. In a Heroes’ Day speech (12 August) he said loyal farmers willing to cooperate with the government would not be kept completely landless.

By the end of August the redistribution of land seemed to be faltering. Many of the 350 000 black recipients of land had not taken up allocated plots. In the chaotic situation many Africans were the worst sufferers. In September it was estimated that 150 000 labourers had been evicted from seized farms, affecting in family terms 780 000. Large numbers were now homeless. Parliament

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pushed through a bill in a day (18 September) to speed seizures of white-owned farms, giving farmers seven days to quit instead of 90.

Violence continued. MP Learnmore Jongwe, aged 28 and a spokesman for Movement for Democratic Change leader Morgan Tsvangirai, was found dead in a cell containing 80 other prisoners. He had been accused of stabbing his wife. British lecturer Jerzy Toloczko was axed to death at his home in Ilanda, near Bulawayo. A farmer and his wife in Karoi district survived a salvo from war veterans' shotguns two days running. Tom Spicer, an 18-year-old white official of the MDC youth wing, and four black friends were arrested and given electric shock torture at Harare central police station (28 September). Tsvangirai urged the UN (11 October) to investigate the growing number of incidents of state torture. The Human Rights Forum said 1050 cases had been documented in the first nine months of 2002.

Former High Court judge Fergus Blackie was arrested (14 September) and accused of quashing a white woman's conviction for theft without consulting the black judge who sat with him on the case.

Elections for 1400 local councillors took place (26 September) amid charges from the MDC of widespread intimidation. Only 699 MDC candidates had been allowed to register, mainly for seats in rural areas where the government was strong. In the weeks before the elections organized gangs had kidnapped and beaten hundreds of opposition candidates to stop them registering.

During the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (26 August–4 September 2002) in Johannesburg British Prime Minister Tony Blair came under attack from Mugabe and President Sam Nujoma of Namibia. Mugabe accused Blair of interfering in Zimbabwe's sovereignty, adding, 'We have not asked for any inch of Europe ... so Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe'. Blair repeated his reference to the plight of Africa being 'a scar on the conscience of the world' and said he was proud of the work Britain had done for the continent.

Nujoma called Blair a latter-day colonialist and accused him of causing misery in Zimbabwe by imposing sanctions. He supported Mugabe's evictions of white farmers and was applauded by other leaders. Nujoma pointed to Blair as he spoke but left before Blair's speech. Mugabe heard only the end of Blair's speech and did not applaud. Afterwards, as he toured Alexandra township Blair said: 'The president of Namibia has sought to defend the utterly indefensible in Mr Mugabe. He is impoverishing his nation. He makes it difficult to fight for Africa.'

The troika of Commonwealth leaders set up in Coolum—Australian Prime Minister John Howard, chair, and Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria—invited Mugabe for talks in Abuja (23 September), but he did not turn up. He told Obasanjo the tone of the invitation gave the impression he was going to be court-martialled. The three leaders were divided as to how to proceed, Howard wanting the immediate full suspension of Zimbabwe and the other two pointing out that the suspension 'from the councils of the Commonwealth' they had agreed on 19 March was for a year and that only six months had expired. Mbeki said that it was better to try to engage Mugabe than to punish him.

Attempts to bring about a reconciliation of the political parties in Harare remained stalled and attempts by Secretary-General Don McKinnon to restart a

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dialogue with the government had failed. In Abuja the troika asked McKinnon to renew his efforts and said that, if Zimbabwe did not respond to the Commonwealth efforts in six months, 'stronger measures might need to be considered'. Zimbabwe Information Minister Jonathan Moyo commented on the talks: 'No serious person expected us to be part of that kind of circus. John Howard should disabuse himself of the folly that he can treat Africans the same way he treats Aborigines.'

Before the troika met in Abuja the MDC sent a petition urging them to tell Mugabe to step down to allow for a fresh election. After the meeting UK Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw criticized the governments of southern Africa for not putting greater pressure on Zimbabwe to halt the violence. He said he was acutely disappointed the Commonwealth had not taken further action against Zimbabwe.

The Mugabe government told British diplomats in Harare (27 September) they could not travel outside the capital without permission, thus making it harder for them to ensure proper delivery of food aid across the country. No other diplomats had their movements restricted.

Restrictions on Zimbabwe officials travelling abroad were not always working. Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri was allowed into France (26 August 2002) despite an EU travel ban. He had been given special dispensation to travel to a meeting of Interpol of which he was the recently re-elected vice-president. Chihuri was said to be guilty of gross human rights abuses, and human rights activists said the relaxation was disgraceful. France said the ban was being strictly adhered to and Mugabe had been among those refused entry. Zimbabwe radio said (8 November) Zimbabwe had banned Tony Blair and scores of his senior officials in retaliation for EU sanctions.

Britain imposed visa restrictions on Zimbabweans (9 November). To yield the necessary £36 revenue to the exchequer it charged the black market exchange rate—24 times more than the official rate. British Home Secretary David Blunkett said the move was to deal with 'very significant abuse' of immigration controls by Zimbabweans.

Zambia

High Court Judge Anthony Nyangulu decided (30 August 2002) that parliament had acted within its powers when it voted to strip former president Frederick Chiluba of his presidential immunity. Next day police raided Chiluba's home to search for drugs they said he had been selling since he left office. He denied the allegations and refused to cooperate with the police. In the days following, the homes of several of Chiluba's friends and supporters were also raided.

Anderson Mazoka, runner-up in the December 2001 presidential elections, produced to the Supreme Court documents he said showed that the Treasury had financed President Levy Mwanawasa's campaign. He said the poll was rigged and the chief observer from the European Union said the results were not representative of the people's will. Mwanawasa said he would step down if the court ruled that he had been elected fraudulently. He offered Chiluba a free pardon if he returned millions he is alleged to have embezzled from government funds.

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Vice-President Enoch Kavindele said 125 white farmers from Zimbabwe were exploring whether to settle in Zambia. He pointed out that vast tracts of land were not being used and the farmers would provide jobs for Zambians and earn foreign exchange.

Although drought-stricken Zambia was in dire need of food, it rejected anything that contained genetically modified organisms. Instead of accepting whole-kernel maize, described by the USA as 'the same as that consumed by millions of Americans,' it would increase its maize imports from South Africa. Two neighbouring countries rejected GM food aid—Mozambique and Zimbabwe—but Swaziland, Lesotho and Malawi accepted it. The UN World Food Programme said the food should be accepted because 'it had been consumed billions of times with no ill-effect'.

Former president Kenneth Kaunda, now 78, was named (27 August 2002) as the first participant in Boston University's Lloyd G. Balfour Presidents in Residence programme. He would spend a year giving lectures, taking part in policy discussions in Boston and elsewhere in the USA. He would get a house, a stipend—and guards. Boston hoped Kaunda would be the first of many ex-leaders to go there. Kaunda said he would help Americans understand Africa. In an interview he pleaded: 'Do not demonise Mugabe.' People should remember how he forgave Ian Smith after independence and let him keep his farm.

South Africa

President Thabo Mbeki suddenly withdrew (24 July 2002) from making the opening address at the annual conference of the South African Communist Party (SAPC). The cause was frustration in the African National Congress ruling alliance over privatization and the centralization of executive power. The ANC had now put the sale of state assets at the centre of its policy to liberalize the economy. The SACP and Cosatu, the largest labour federation, oppose privatization. Seven cabinet ministers belong to the SACP. Cosatu called a two-day national strike (1 October). The National Assembly approved (25 June) a law abolishing private ownership of mineral rights and returning them to the state. The law aimed to step up black participation in the still mainly white-owned mining industry. In October South Africa approved a charter to transfer 15 per cent of mining assets to companies controlled by 'historically disadvantaged' South Africans. A target of 26 per cent ownership over ten years was set.

Anglo-American Corporation became the first company in the world (6 August) to give its workers AIDS drugs free. Nearly a quarter of Anglo's 134 000 staff (about 23 per cent) are infected. The drugs were expected to cost up to £3.1 million in the first year. A week later De Beers, which has 11 000 employees and a 12 per cent incidence of AIDS, followed Anglo's lead. The British firm GlaxoSmithKline said (5 September) it was cutting prices of AIDS and malaria drugs in the poorest countries by up to one-third. South African AIDS activists launched a legal action (19 September) accusing the pharmaceutical firms of charging excessive prices. Deputy Foreign Minister Aziz Pahad told UN agencies (28 October) the government was putting renewed pressure on companies to help distribute anti-retroviral drugs.

Mbeki visited a clinic in Johannesburg providing drugs to pregnant women

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and infants and posed for pictures as he cradled a sick boy—the first time he had signalled approval for anti-retrovirals in such a way.

In an upbeat midterm budget statement (29 October) Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said the resilience of the economy was attracting back foreign investors. The 2002 economic forecast had been raised from 2.3 to 2.6 per cent, with 3.5 in 2003, 3.7 in 2004 and 3.9 in 2005.

Police dug up a cache of arms on a farm deep in the Boer heartland of Limpopo province (4 October). They said it was intended to supply a right-wing conspiracy to re-establish white rule. The plot stood no chance of success but several people were arrested.

A group calling itself the Warriors of the Boer Nations claimed (12 November) responsibility for ten bomb blasts in Soweto and others in Pretoria on 30 October which killed a woman and injured several others. Letters to newspapers said they marked the beginning of the end for the government. More than 80 extreme right-wing groups were thought to be operating in the country. Former president F. W. de Klerk had warned President Mbeki that Afrikaners were feeling disillusioned.

The Eastern Cape government approved a £125 000 feasibility study in October for the erection of a statue of Nelson Mandela 30 storeys high—higher than the Statue of Liberty. It would face the sea above Port Elizabeth. The cost—£18.7 million—would be recovered from a projected 5000 tourists a day. Completion date: 2006.

Mandela remained internationally active. After a visit to Scotland to talk to relatives of those killed in the 1988 Lockerbie airline crash, Mandela said (18 July) the man serving life in Barlinnie jail should be transferred to a Muslim country, as he was in effect in solitary confinement. Egypt or Tunisia would accept him. In October during the world summit in Johannesburg Mandela condemned the Bush policy on Iraq, speaking to US Secretary of State Colin Powell and phoning former president Bush to raise the issue with his son. In a *Newsweek* interview he criticized President Bush and Tony Blair. At the Earth Summit Mandela appealed to water ministers to put access to clean water and sanitation higher up the political, economic and social agendas as a basic human right. Later in the year Mandela flew to Britain to speak at a lunch to raise money for the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund for AIDS victims. He laid a wreath on the grave of Princess Diana (1 November) at Althorp. The two had met in Cape Town in 1997 when she went to Angola. Mandela became the first ANC leader to say publicly he had lost relatives to AIDS—a niece and two sons of a nephew.

South Africa planned to ship 200 elephants to Angola to restore wildlife stocks destroyed in the 27-year civil war there. The animals were the gift of the Madikwe Game Park in South Africa and the Tukli Game Reserve in Botswana.

Lesotho

Chief Justice Mahapela Lehohla found (18 September 2002) a Canadian engineering company, Acres International of Ontario, guilty of paying £168 000 in bribes to Masupha Sole, a chief executive, to secure contracts on the multi-billion Highland water project—the biggest civil engineering project in Africa.

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The company was fined (28 October) £1.6 million. Acres gave notice of appeal. Other multinational companies were to be tried and, if convicted, they ran the risk of being blacklisted by the World Bank.

In May Sole had been jailed for 18 years for accepting bribes over ten years. Acres has operations in 114 countries and was the first of 14 Western companies working in Lesotho due to face corruption charges.

The Canadian group Probe International welcomed the judgement, and said: 'Lesotho has shown it takes corruption seriously by convicting its own corrupt officials as well as the corrupt briber. If western governments don't get tough we in the west will be seen as hypocrites who preach clean government to the third world while tolerating corruption among our own corporations.'

Meantime, Lesotho was suffering one of the worst famines in Africa, caused not by drought but by an excess of rain. In 2001 farmers could not plant because their fields were waterlogged or washed away. By August 2002 people had to eat seeds needed for the new crop and had nothing to sow. Nearly 700 000 people in the treacherously mountainous kingdom were being fed by the World Food Programme.

Swaziland

Tradition was being challenged by modernity in Africa's last absolute monarchy. Legal history was made when Lindiwe Dlamini, a single mother, accused two of King Mswati III's courtiers of abducting her 18-year-old daughter, Zena Mhlangu. The King had chosen the girl as a potential bride in September 2002 during the annual Reed Dance ceremony at which he traditionally signals his interest in four particular maidens. Dlamini, communications manager of Swaziland Posts and Telecommunications, demanded the immediate return of her daughter to complete her A-levels. As the King cannot be sued she cited his courtiers. The King ordered Chief Justice Stanley Sapphire and his two High Court colleagues to dismiss the lawsuit or resign. They vowed defiance, but when it was reported that Zena was the King's official fiancée lawyers said they would end their attempt to secure her return and the case was indefinitely postponed.

After the dance ceremony the King usually marries one of the four girls. The other three are not returned but passed on to a senior prince. This year's bride was to become the King's tenth wife. His father, King Sobhuza, collected 125 wives in his 61-year reign. Dlamini's action provoked demands in Swaziland for the annual grab-a-girl custom to be abolished.

Botswana

The government ruled out offering land or providing help to farmers evicted from Zimbabwe (14 August 2002). Masego Mphathi, permanent secretary of the Agriculture Ministry, met a delegation of 17 Zimbabwe farmers and businessmen. He said: 'The constraint is land. We do not have any to allocate to them.' But if Botswana farmers were willing to form partnerships with Zimbabwean farmers 'it is a personal issue and no one can stop them'. And a week later Linah Mohohlo, Governor of the Central Bank of Botswana,

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modified the position, saying that if farmers could use their technological expertise to help develop Botswana's largely arid land they would be welcome.

Staff in Botswana hospitals were becoming concerned in September 2002 that their facilities for treating AIDS victims might be overwhelmed by sufferers arriving from neighbouring countries. Many people came in the hope that they might receive free drug treatment. Up till this time Botswana was the only country in southern Africa offering universal provision of anti-retroviral drugs.

But Botswanan policy was to treat only its nationals. Foreigners had to be turned away from its clinics. Botswana has the highest infection rate in the world—38.5 per cent of those between 14 and 49.

Namibia

In a reshuffle, President Sam Nujoma replaced Hage Geingob, Prime Minister since independence in 1990 (27 August 2002) by Theo-Ben Guirab, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Information and Broadcasting. Geingob was named as Minister of Regional and Local Government and Housing, but he was unhappy about the move and resigned from the government. Hidipo Hamutenya became Foreign Minister.

On taking over Guirab said land reform was a major priority for the government, together with poverty eradication. He said he was disappointed that white farmers were not as 'forthcoming as we would like them to be' when it came to selling land for resettlement.

A list of farms for seizure to be published would include many of the 350 German- and South African-owned estates the government said it needed to satisfy mounting demands for land reform. Emergency legislation was to be rushed through the National Assembly. Pressure was growing among members of the ruling SWAPO Party to follow the Mugabe route. Unlike Zimbabwe Namibia is arid, with only 8 per cent of its land arable. Most of the 6000 farms were bought by white settlers during the 30 years the country was a German colony.

Paramount Chief Kuaima Riruako of the Herero warned that, if his people were not paid reparations for crimes against them during the colonial era, they would forcefully repossess farms. He said: 'We have been wronged. A decree was issued regarding our extermination and our properties were expropriated. Germany owes us reparations, or otherwise the only road left to us as Africans will be the Zimbabwe way.'

Whites make up 6 per cent of the Namibian population, one-third descended from German settlers. About 4000 mostly white commercial farmers own just under half the arable land in Namibia. Namibia has a 'willing buyer willing seller' policy. No one is forced to sell, but if they do the state has first refusal.

Africa's ivory trade

After a week of heated debate the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) conference in Santiago, Chile, decided (12 November 2002) to allow South Africa, Botswana, and Namibia to sell 60 tonnes of stockpiled elephant tusks in a one-off deal after April 2004. Similar

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proposals for Zimbabwe and Zambia were voted down. In 1989 CITES banned all trade in ivory, but lifted the ban partially to let the three countries run down stockpiles with a one-off sale to Japan. African states, except Kenya, argue that they must generate revenue from ivory to protect the species from poaching and establish viable tourism. Despite the global ivory ban, elephant numbers in Africa are estimated to have fallen from 1.3 million in 1989 to 300 000 today. But South Africa, Botswana and Namibia say their conservation policies have allowed elephant to increase to the point where they are no longer an endangered species.

Cyprus

More talks took place between President Glafkos Clerides and Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash in Nicosia in August–September. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan met the two leaders in Paris (6 September) separately and at a joint working lunch. But still there was no breakthrough. By the end of September 56 sessions had been held since January. Lord Hannay, British Special Representative for Cyprus, said (26 October) ‘there are still gaps to be bridged on most of the core issues’. Clerides called these gaps ‘a giant chasm’.

International pressure on both sides was now intense because the European Union faced having to decide by 14 December whether to admit only the Greek Cypriot-controlled south as a member. Greece was threatening that, if Cyprus’s EU application was turned down, it would veto the membership of all the nine other countries competing for membership as part of the enlargement process. A further complication was that Turkey, already an EU applicant, was facing an election.

As time began to run out, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan gave Cyprus one month to secure peace and presented his own proposals for a solution (11 November). His 150-page plan called for a state in the form of an ‘indissoluble partnership’, with a ‘common state’ government and two equal ‘component states’. Switzerland was a model. The document said there would be a single Cyprus citizenship, all enjoying internal component state citizen status. It added: ‘Like the status of the European Union, this status shall complement and not replace Cyprus citizenship.’

There would be a six-member presidential council with a 10-month rotating presidency and vice-presidency, a two-chamber parliament of 48 members each and a supreme court of nine judges, three from each component state and three non-Cypriots. Clerides and Denktash both said the plan seemed to contain some unacceptable elements.

A European Commission report (9 October) confirmed that Cyprus met the political and economic requirements for entry to the EU. Clerides attended a summit in Copenhagen of the 13 applicant countries involved in the enlargement process.

Gibraltar

Only 187 people—1.03 per cent of the 18 087 votes counted—voted in favour of sharing sovereignty with Spain in a referendum held by the government of

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Gibraltar (7 November 2002). The vote was not binding on the British government, which was committed to holding its own referendum at a much later date. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said the vote was ‘illegal and irrelevant’ and Gibraltar Chief Minister Peter Caruana said London and Madrid would ignore the voice of the people ‘at their peril’.

A report by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee said ministers ‘must have known that there was no prospect whatsoever’ of any agreement on joint sovereignty being agreed by the people of the Rock. The government had been wrong to negotiate joint sovereignty when it knew the outcome would be ‘the worst of both worlds—the dashing of raised expectation in Spain and a complete loss of trust in British government by the people of Gibraltar’.

The only comfort those who voted Yes could draw was that in the only other referendum in the colony—in 1967—only 44 voted in favour.

Talks took place in London between Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary Jack Straw and Spanish Foreign Minister Ana Palacio (27 September), but early agreement on Gibraltar’s future was now ruled out. A cooling off period was expected. Gibraltar would run its own referendum and a British government referendum might be years ahead.

Falkland Islands

The government became so alarmed at the decline of communities outside the capital Stanley it appealed to British sheep farmers to move there and repopulate the rural areas. Stanley was booming—it now had six millionaires—but farming communities faced extinction. Everyone was leaving to live in the town.

Foreign Ministers

A meeting of Commonwealth Foreign Ministers was held for the first time (14 September 2002), the result of a decision taken at the 2002 CHOGM in Coolum. The talks were held in New York in the wings of the UN General Assembly. Two prime ministers and 35 foreign ministers attended. Topics discussed included Pakistan, Zimbabwe, the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), the G8 summit, terrorism, and the vulnerability of small states. Secretary-General Don McKinnon reported on his good offices work. The ministers decided to meet again in New York in 2003.

Finance Ministers

The annual meeting of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers took place in London (24–26 September 2002) and broke new ground by engaging with civil society for the first time. It was the result of a major initiative over several months by the Commonwealth Foundation. Representatives of NGOs met in six regions to work out proposals on the financing, development and implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals on reducing global poverty. Two months before ministers met, NGO representatives from each region

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met for two days in the British Treasury to formulate their proposals. The recommendations were presented to the Finance Ministers meeting, which had as its theme 'Delivering the Monterrey Consensus'. The detailed document included measures radically to reduce corruption and to fight AIDS. One call was for finance to support media advocacy to combat AIDS and make tax concessions for media programmes sponsored by groups engaged in advocacy.

When the ministers met they adopted a Commonwealth Action Plan to implement plans that came out of the UN conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico, and the World Summit just ended in Johannesburg. They acknowledged the help that had come from civil society and said they would build on this partnership. Civil society engagement would become 'a routine element' of preparations for future Finance Ministers' Meetings. Among top subjects discussed by ministers was the stepping up of Commonwealth efforts to counter money laundering.

The Commonwealth Business Forum met in London (23-24 September), attracting 400 Commonwealth business and government leaders. The theme of the meeting was 'Managing Globalisation: Challenges for Business and Governments'. At the meeting companies were urged to commit themselves to help step up the struggle against AIDS. Another call on the Forum was for urgent steps to be taken to phase out agricultural subsidies and open markets to developing countries.

During the meeting the Council launched a new initiative to reverse the African brain drain, known as CVC AfricaRecruit, and a Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network to be chaired by Dr Janie Tay of Singapore. The Council named new co-chairmen—businessmen Hugh Morgan of Australia and Rahul Bajaj of India—to succeed Lord Cairns of UK and Cyril Ramaphosa of South Africa.

When a few weeks later the European Union signalled continuation of the Common Agricultural Policy, Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon accused the EU of sending 'the most cynical message possible to the developing nations'. He said: 'To continue with the existing level of farm subsidies for a further five years shows a flagrantly arrogant, immoral and self-centred disregard for the poor of the world.'

Commonwealth Education Fund

More details came out during the Finance Ministers' Meeting of the Fund announced earlier in 2002 by British Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown to support education programmes in Commonwealth countries. The Fund, a partnership between government, business and NGOs, aims to support the UN goal of universal primary education by 2015.

The Fund is jointly run by Action Aid, Oxfam and Save the Children to mark the Queen's jubilee. It will work in 17 of the poorest Commonwealth countries.

United Kingdom

On his way to the UN world summit in Johannesburg Prime Minister Tony Blair visited Mozambique (1 September 2002) where he repeated his support

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for the Kyoto agreement to reduce greenhouse gases, distancing Britain on the issue again from President George Bush, who did not attend the summit of 109 heads of government but instead sent Secretary of State Colin Powell. Blair visited British aid projects on HIV and malaria in Dondo, and the central hospital in nearby Beira, and other towns and villages. At the summit the UK and Canada forced the USA to back down on abortion, but the British were disappointed that African countries tempered their remarks on the situation in Zimbabwe, applauding anti-colonial attacks by Mugabe and President Sam Nujoma of Namibia, which did not augur well for the newly launched NEPAD. The main British contribution to the World Summit was a voluntary anti-corruption code by which multinationals would publish all payments to developing countries and their ministers. The code was seen by the development charities as far too weak to deal with British companies' record of bribery.

The annual ranking of 102 countries published a week earlier by Transparency International put Britain tenth in the list of least corrupt—below New Zealand, Singapore and Canada. Most corrupt were Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria and Bangladesh.

The Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC), founded by the Attlee government in 1948, came under fire from MPs with the resignation of its chief executive, Alan Gillespie (4 August), who had joined from Goldman Sachs three years earlier. The CDC, wholly owned by the Department for International Development (DFID), was earmarked for partial privatization soon after Labour came to office in 1997, but that had never taken place and now the plan was to be shelved. MPs were angered at news that £95.8 million had been paid out since January 2000 to invest in or acquire assets linked to the USA and other developed countries. This was seen as a betrayal of CDC principles—always focused on investment in the developing world. The Tory opposition complained of 'morally dubious' deals. DFID, however, said that in the past five years 83 per cent of new investments had been in poorer countries. Chairman Lord Cairns said CDC was still prepared to take far bigger risks than private sector rivals. As proof of this, it had lost heavily on some investments.

Secretary-General

Secretary-General Don McKinnon pointed before he set off for the World Summit in Johannesburg to the fact that insufficient levels of aid and debt relief for poor countries, the loss of environmental resources and the over-consumption which feeds the lifestyles of the rich are not sustainable. He added: 'We are heading for a dead end. The summit must be seen as our best chance to change course before we hit a brick wall.' After Johannesburg McKinnon visited Mauritius, Lesotho and Namibia. In Windhoek he addressed the 48th Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference. In a lecture in Oxford (23 October 2002) he said: 'There are approximately 500 million Muslims who are Commonwealth citizens. They are an integral part of Commonwealth diversity. They add to our Commonwealth and to the organization's weight on the international scene.'

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CHOGM 2003

The next Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM) will take place in Abuja, Nigeria, on 5–8 December 2003. The last time Heads met in Nigeria was in January 1966—the first ever Commonwealth summit to be held outside the UK. It was an emergency meeting called at brief notice to discuss the rebellion by Ian Smith in the then Southern Rhodesia.

Commonwealth Secretariat

Matthew E. K. Neuhaus of Australia, former high commissioner to Nigeria and more recently a senior member of the Prime Minister's Office in Canberra, succeeded Jon Sheppard as Director of the Political Affairs Division in October 2002.

Around the Commonwealth

Commonwealth central bank governors meet in London annually at the invitation of the Governor of the Bank of England. In 2002 the Commonwealth Business Forum held a two-day banking and financial services symposium (3–4 July) to give private sector participants the chance to meet and put their views to the governors. The gathering brought together public and private sector leaders from throughout the Commonwealth and global business community.

At the Golden Jubilee Festival (4 June) in central London, climax of the 50th anniversary celebrations for the Queen, 4000 people took part in a Commonwealth procession that included displays by Maori dancers, South African artists, Caribbean performers in carnival costumes and Indian bagpipers. The procession ended with the hanging of a giant tapestry from the balcony of Buckingham Palace featuring the flags of all 54 Commonwealth countries.

Central bankers, senior officials in international finance and private sector executives met in London (3–4 July 2002) for a conference on Enhancing Capital Flows to Developing Countries in the New International Context. The meeting was organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat, World Bank and Commonwealth Business Council. Subjects included private sector involvement in crisis resolution and savings management in developing countries.

An International Institute on Gender Mainstreaming and HIV/AIDS is being set up at Dalhousie University, Halifax, by the Commonwealth Secretariat and Canada's Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. It will help Commonwealth countries fight AIDS, acting on evidence that women and girls are relatively more affected by HIV/AIDS than men and boys. The nine most heavily infected countries in the world are all in the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council initiated a four-day youth conference in Sunderland, UK, (2–5 July) to mark the Queen's golden jubilee. It was attended by 200 people aged 18 to 25 from 50 countries. Under the title 'Citizen You' delegates discussed young people's vision of citizenship for the 21st century. Before that, they spent a week in the UK meeting youth workers and NGOs.

Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, delivered the

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fifth Commonwealth lecture in London (6 June) on Human Rights in the Shadow of 11 September.

The Commonwealth of Learning launched in June 2002 a new programme, Poverty Reduction Outcomes Through Education Innovations and Networks (Protein), under which proposals it will seek new, workable ideas to build capacity for education delivery to the rural poor in areas of food security, environmental protection and rural development.

Part of a banking and financial services symposium held by the Secretariat, Commonwealth Business Council and World Bank in London (3–4 July) was a conference on enhancing private capital flows to developing countries in the new international context—the economic slowdown and the aftermath of 11 September.

A workshop in Mauritius (17–19 June) attended by election management bodies from 35 Commonwealth countries discussed voter registration and election systems.