

COMMONWEALTH UPDATE

DEREK INGRAM

As buses from India trundled once again across the border to Pakistan and high commissioners were exchanged, relations between the two countries thawed. Australia took on a policing role in the Pacific by sending troops to the Solomon Islands. Sierra Leone sighed with relief when Charles Taylor left Liberia for exile in Nigeria. Inflation heading for 400 per cent and unrest and hunger took Zimbabwe into deeper crisis. Widespread celebrations marked Nelson Mandela's 85th birthday, while Ugandan dictator Idi Amin died at nearly 80 and was buried unmourned in Riyadh. In Cyprus the Greek–Turkish border was opened for the first time in almost 29 years. In the UK the end of the historic rôle of Lord Chancellor was suddenly signalled by Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The road to the Abuja CHOGM

As the war in Iraq ended and the US, British and Australian occupation troops tried to restore order, other Commonwealth countries kept their distance. Canada remained critical of US policies, and when Washington pressed India to send troops for the peacekeeping operation New Delhi prevaricated. Throughout the Iraq crisis the Commonwealth as an entity remained silent on what was going on. Apart from the UK and Australia, only two or three Commonwealth members publicly supported the war.

Commonwealth eyes were still focused on Zimbabwe, West Africa and the Pacific. In all three regions the countries mainly involved were Commonwealth members. In West Africa a non-member, Liberia, was the central problem, but neighbouring Sierra Leone had suffered deeply from what had happened there. In the end it was Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa—and the regional body ECOWAS, which negotiated and orchestrated the end of President Taylor's rule.

In the Pacific, where some Commonwealth island countries were near to being labelled 'failed states', Australia led the South Pacific Forum by putting a

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substantial military and police force into the Solomon Islands, where law and order had almost broken down. The plan was to stay there for ten years and could be viewed as a virtual re-colonization. In multi-ethnic Fiji the constitutionality of the government remained in question and in Tuvalu and Nauru the parliamentary systems were under strain.

All these developments were giving the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Abuja plenty to chew on, but it was the situation of two suspended members—Pakistan and Zimbabwe—which promised to be central to the political future of the Commonwealth.

The Pakistan parliament had still not established itself as independent enough of its military president to fulfil the Harare and Millbrook principles. To raise the suspension could weaken the Commonwealth's much-trumpeted resolve to strengthen democracy within its membership. The complication was the perceived priority of the UK and the USA to keep the government on side in the war against terrorism.

Zimbabwe threatened to be more divisive. Just about every member country hoped for the end of President Robert Mugabe's rule, but disagreement arose over the route to be taken. The continuation of the suspension until the Abuja CHOGM was only just achieved. African countries were intent on reaching an African solution, as they had done in Liberia. Taylor's exit might have provided the model, in which case the Commonwealth could be off the hook by the time it met in Abuja.

Nigeria

Some 40 heads of state attended the swearing in of Olusegun Obasanjo for a second term as president (29 May 2003). A court rejected an attempt by his election opponent Gen Muhammad Buhari to block the inauguration. Buhari claimed massive poll rigging. An early act by Obasanjo after re-election was to launch a campaign against fraudsters who had given Nigeria the reputation for being the most corrupt country in the world. He declared war on scams which had been extorting millions of pounds from gullible foreigners. It was estimated that in 2002 what was known as the 419 scam had netted £150 million in Britain alone.

Oil workers on four rigs off Niger Delta struck in mid-April. Hundreds of Nigerian workers and 100 expatriates were trapped for many days, further upsetting the already-troubled industry, which in March had lost almost 40 per cent of the country's output. An oil pipeline near Umuahia fractured by thieves exploded (19 June), killing 125 people.

A general strike over a 50 per cent rise in oil prices brought the main cities almost to a standstill (30 June) and in some places riots lasted for a week. In Lagos gangs threw up barricades and set fire to tyres. Obasanjo said Nigeria could not afford cheap petrol because subsidies on refined oil products were diverting money from health and education. The strikes ended (8 July) on the eve of the arrival of President Bush.

The UK and Nigeria set up a working group to help break the impasse over Nigerian attempts dating back to 2000 to seek the unfreezing of billions of dollars looted by former dictator Sani Abacha. Britain said no progress could be

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made until it received answers to numerous questions. Nigeria said the UK was being obstructive.

Nigeria, Ghana, Togo and Benin signed a deal (21 May) letting a consortium managed by Chevron Texaco build a natural gas pipeline across the region. It would cost £306 million and be ready in 2005. A new report on Shell's operations in Nigeria gave details of payments made to Nigeria: £630 million in 2002. The report followed pressure from human rights organizations and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who called on oil companies and governments to be more transparent in their dealings. Another result of the pressure was a pledge (18 June) by Nigeria and Sao Tome to publish the financial results of their next licensing round for a £160 million oilfield.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leoneans were relieved when the arrival of Nigerian peacekeeping troops in neighbouring Liberia (4 August 2003) held out the prospect of an end to the civil war there that had spilled over into their country with such dire consequences. It was the culmination of months of UN-backed negotiations involving the whole region, and particularly Ghana and Nigeria, aimed at ending the rule of Liberian President Charles Taylor.

Taylor had been indicted (2 June) by the UN special court in Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity while he was attending peace talks with the rebels and African leaders in Accra. He left hastily before Ghana acted on a warrant of arrest as required under international law. President Bush ordered a US amphibious task force to lie off the coast.

In a formal ceremony in Monrovia (11 August) Taylor stepped down under a deal brokered in Ghana by ECOWAS, the 15-member union of West African states. The chief mediator had been Nigerian former president Abdulsalami Abubakar. Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique and John Kufuor of Ghana watched as Taylor handed over power to his vice-president, Moses Zeh Blah, and flew to exile in Nigeria. Kufuor, as chairman of ECOWAS and Chissano, as chairman of the African Union, travelled with him in the plane to Abuja, where they were met by President Olusegun Obasanjo. Taylor had agreed to go only if it was all done in a dignified and constitutional manner. As he left Monrovia the US warships hove into view, and a few days later a small contingent of American troops joined the six-country West African peacekeeping force, eventually to total 3250.

The UN Security Council ended international sanctions on Sierra Leonean diamonds (3 June 2003). Trade was handed back to the Freetown government with international support. The sanctions were devised in 2000 to curb rebel funding.

Foday Sankoh, leader of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) died aged 66 in Freetown (29 July) while awaiting trial by the UN-backed war crimes court. The RUF was formed abroad in the 1980s, entered Sierra Leone in 1991 and waged brutal war for a decade.

Another indicted war criminal, former military ruler Major Johnny Koroma, was killed in Liberia in May.

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Ghana

The budget (27 February 2003) showed GDP in 2002 up to 4.5 per cent against 4.2 per cent in 2001. A new daily minimum wage of 9200 cedis—about £1 a day—was announced. The IMF approved (12 May) a three-year poverty reduction and growth plan to support the economic reform programme, as well as extra help under the HIPC Initiative.

Kenya

Planning Minister Peter Anyang Nyong'o said (29 May 2003) that the economy had lost £600 million a year because of corruption under the government of President Daniel arap Moi. The policies of the new government of President Mwai Kibaki would produce an anti-corruption dividend. In a shake-up all procurement officers in ministries, state-owned companies and other government bodies were suspended. A pre-budget survey showed growth in 2002 at 1.1 per cent and unemployment up to 46 per cent.

Nahashon Nyagah resigned as governor of the central bank (4 March) after controversy over the collapsing Euro Bank. Andrei Mullei, head of an economic think-tank, succeeded him. The first budget of the new government cut VAT across the board and reduced duty on fuel oil.

Former President Moi said for the first time (4 April) that he would hand over to a younger person the leadership of the Kenya African National Union which he had chaired since 1978. The government ordered anti-corruption police to question Moi. He called on the government to stop a 'witch-hunt' against him (27 June), saying he should be respected as an elder statesman.

British Airways banned all flights in and out of Kenya (15 May) following warnings of an imminent terrorist attack. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office advised against non-essential travel. The BA ban was lifted after six weeks. The Tourist Board told Kibaki the ban would be catastrophic to the economy if prolonged. Four Kenyans were charged (24 June) with murdering 13 in the November suicide bombing of a Mombasa hotel. The Kenyan police formed a 450-strong anti-terrorism unit. The USA gave Kenya £60 million (29 June) to fight terrorism.

Hundreds of women in Kenya making 650 rape allegations against the British Ministry of Defence were granted British legal aid in July. The claims, covering 30 years, were made against British soldiers posted in Kenya for training. Amnesty International called on Britain to set up an independent commission of inquiry into the army's conduct.

Scotland Yard launched (14 May) a war crimes inquiry into events during the Mau Mau insurgency in the 1950s—the first time British police had investigated acts by UK citizens that could lead to prosecution for breaching the Geneva Convention.

Heavy rains caused flooding in western Kenya and elsewhere in early May, leading to 30 deaths and forcing thousands from their homes.

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Uganda

The UK, the Netherlands and Ireland threatened to cut their aid grants because Uganda was overshooting agreed limits—2 per cent of GDP—on military expenditure. President Museveni accused them of meddling and said Uganda needed to raise spending to end the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) attacks. The USA agreed to give Uganda £2 million to fight the rebels.

Although the LRA announced a unilateral ceasefire after 17 years of war (3 March 2003), fighting continued and became even fiercer. In April 180 people were reported abducted from two villages and in June guerrillas forced thousands from their homes in Soroti and stormed a girls' school. The UN believed that in 17 years more than 20 000 children had been abducted and 800 000 people displaced. The LRA had extended its area of operation from northern Uganda to the northeastern region and was now even active near the Kenyan border. Two new helicopter gunships failed to quell the rebels.

President Bush's Africa tour in July was preceded by the pledge of a \$15 billion AIDS action plan, and on his visit to Uganda (11 July) Bush met AIDS patients for the first time. Anti-retroviral drugs cost £25 a month in Uganda—far beyond the means of ordinary people—yet Uganda had cut the AIDS infection rate from 30 per cent ten years ago to 5 per cent today. Even as Bush crossed Africa, Congress had still to approve the AIDS cash and threatened to lop off \$3 billion earmarked for 2004.

In a demonstration in Kampala (28 January) 200 000 Baganda called for a new federal constitution and semi-autonomous status for Buganda. It was Uganda's biggest protest for years.

Specioza Wandira Kazibwe, vice-president since 1994, resigned (21 May 2003) to pursue a doctorate at Harvard. President Yoweri Museveni appointed Minister for the Presidency Gilbert Balibaseka Bukonya to succeed.

Idi Amin, who ruled Uganda tyrannically from 1971–79, died aged around 80 in Saudi Arabia, where he had lived in exile, and was buried the same day (16 August) in Jeddah. In 1972 he expelled 39 000 Ugandan Asians and was said to have caused the deaths of up to half a million opponents and members of rival tribes. He was overthrown when Tanzanian troops and Ugandan exiles invaded. After his death Lord Owen, British Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary when Amin ruled, revealed that he had raised the idea in 1978 of assassinating Amin as he got more out of control. Intelligence services ruled it out. Instead, Britain helped finance the Tanzanian invasion.

Another echo of Uganda's early years of independence came when Milton Obote, Uganda's first president, now 79 and living for nearly 20 years in exile in a large dilapidated Lusaka house, gave an interview to the London *Times* (23 July). He was at pains to defend his record: 'I ran a government with clean hands. I did not steal anything. I have no property or investments anywhere in the world.'

Tanzania

Seventeen by-elections held peacefully in Pemba on 18 May 2003 received a good bill of health from Commonwealth and other electoral experts. The

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Zanzibar electoral commission, accused of malpractice in the 2000 general election, now won praise for its conduct. The success was a product of agreement between the opposition Civic United Front (CUF) and the ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) after the 2000 poll, which led to the deaths of 30 CUF supporters and the boycott of parliament by 17 CUF members because of alleged rigging.

The results this time gave CUF clear victory and were accepted by both parties. CUF won 15 vacant seats in the Union parliament and 11 constituencies where it sponsored candidates in the Zanzibar House of Representatives. Observers said a lot more work still had to be done to complete permanent voters' registration before the 2005 general election. A five-member Commonwealth expert team was in Zanzibar for the polling.

Tanzanian Finance Minister Basil Mramba, launching his 2003–04 budget (12 June), forecast steady rises in GDP—6.3 per cent in 2002–03, 6.6 in 2003–04, 7.0 in 2004–05 and 7.4 in 2005–06.

Mozambique

The African Union annual conference in Maputo (10–12 July 2003)—the first since its conversion from the Organisation of African Unity in 2002—elected Alpha Oumar Konare, former president of Mali, as its chairperson by 35 of 45 votes cast. He would take over the secretariat for four years from September, in place of the interim chairperson Amara Essy. Patrick Mazimhaka of Rwanda became deputy chairperson. The conference elected the first AU permanent executive. Half were women.

The setting up of a Peace and Security Council—vital if the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is to get off the ground—was stalled because only one-third of member countries endorsed it. Mozambique, succeeding South Africa as AU chair, promised to call talks to push it along. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned the conference the international community's ability to solve African problems was limited.

Malawi

The army was called to Mangochi (28 June 2003) to quell Muslim rioters who destroyed stained glass windows and broke down doors in several churches. The riots lasted two days. The flashpoint came when the government let US security officials take out of the country five al-Qaida suspects. President Bakili Muluzi, a Muslim himself, said religious violence would not be tolerated and defiant Christian worshippers turned out at Sunday services in strength.

Zambia

Enoch Kavindele was dismissed (28 May 2003) as vice-president, a post he had also held under former president Frederick Chiluba. He was replaced by Nevers Mumba, who had been president of the opposition National Citizens' Coalition (NCC), now dissolved. Pastor Mumba joined the ruling Movement for Multi-party Democracy because he said President Levy Mwanawasa was now

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pursuing NCC ideals. Kavindele, who was put on disciplinary charges, said he wanted to rebuild the MMD, of which he remained vice-president.

The President, Vice-President and Cabinet ministers took a 30 per cent pay cut to help offset a £77 million budget overrun. The IMF and World Bank welcomed the news. Finance Minister Emmanuel Kasonde was dismissed and replaced by Peter Maganda, former secretary-general of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group. The Bank announced that Zambia was to be the first African country to print plastic banknotes.

Former president Chiluba, already on bail, was charged on 48 counts (5 August) with the theft of almost £25 million during his ten years in office.

After three months on the run, former finance minister Katele Kalumba was arrested near his farm in Luapula province. He pleaded not guilty on theft charges.

On a visit to Zambia Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon spoke of the draft being prepared by the Constitutional Commission, warning that changing the constitution 'for the sake of change would devalue it in the eyes of the Zambian people'.

Mwanawasa awarded Zambia's first president Kenneth Kaunda the Grand Order of the Eagle. He said Kaunda's fight against colonialism and later against AIDS was a 'source of pride for Africa as a whole' (15 January). Kaunda, now 79, sang the AIDS campaign song 'Every Revolution Needs a Song' at an anti-poverty conference at the UN in New York. On a radio programme in South Africa he said Mwanawasa should 'be allowed to reconstruct the country left in ruins by the previous regime'. He denied that the economic 'quagmire' had been originally caused by his UNIP government's creation of a one-party state. Kaunda's son is president of UNIP, which has all but merged with the MMD.

The USA signed a deal (17 July) under which it restored military help, while Zambia agreed to give US citizens there immunity from prosecution by the International Criminal Court. Washington had suspended military help on 1 July to 35 countries that had not granted immunity.

Tourism Minister Lillian Kapula told parliament (29 April) that the British Museum had refused to return the skull of Broken Hill Man. The skull has been in the Museum since independence in 1964 when Zambia asked Britain to look after it. The government had taken the matter up with UNESCO.

Zambia aimed to become the biggest coffee producer in Southern Africa with an output target of 40 000 tons over the next ten years, said the Coffee Growers' Association.

Torrential rains caused severe flooding in Mongu, Western Province, washing away 25 villages and killing seven people (7–8 June). Only two days earlier 100 000 people had watched the century-old annual Kuomboka ceremony, in which the traditional ruler, the Litunga, travels from his summer palace at Lealui to Limalunga, to escape floodwaters. Many people sheltered in the Lealui palace, which was untouched.

Zimbabwe

Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai was arrested (6 June 2003) and charged

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with treason for a second time at the end of a week of protest staged by his Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The party call for a stayaway or general strike was largely successful for the first three days. In big cities up to 90 per cent of businesses closed at various times. Marches failed to materialize in Harare and Bulawayo because of the hundreds of police and youth militia, as well as tanks, put on the streets, while helicopters hung overhead. Hundreds of people were arrested; others teargassed or beaten up. In the aftermath the list of services where strikes were banned was enlarged. Mugabe said (8 June) that he would not resign—‘I am fit for a fight. I am getting younger ... and I still can punch’.

As well as Tsvangirai, Welshman Ncube, MDC Secretary-General, was arrested on treason charges, but later freed. Tsvangirai appeared in the dock (12 June) in leg-irons. His lawyer, South African QC George Bizos (who defended Mandela in the Rivonia trial), protested, and Judge Susan Mavangira adjourned the court for him to change. People on the public benches stood and applauded. The court rejected government objections that Tsvangirai would incite a revolt against the president if he was freed and he was released on £77 000 bail and sureties (21 June). The judge demanded Z\$10 million in cash, but the acute shortage of banknotes meant the banks could produce the money only in Z\$50 bills. It was taken to court in three huge boxes and took an hour to count.

Inflation surged to 365.4 per cent in June in what was now the fastest-collapsing GDP in the world. The Reserve Bank ran out of banknotes. Banks had to ration customers to Z\$3000, which was about 78 British pence. Barter was returning to everyday life. In a paper to the UN World Food Programme and donors the government asked for about one-third of its food needs to avoid famine in early 2004. The salaries of Mugabe and his senior ministers were raised by nearly 600 per cent in July.

Presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria and Bakili Muluzi of Malawi visited Harare (5 May) in a bid to get talks going between the ruling Zanu-PF and the MDC and to explore ways in which Mugabe might step down. Their arrival was marked by charges in the government press that the three could be ‘British agents’ coming to ‘play British games’. The mission saw Tsvangirai as well as Mugabe but came away empty-handed. A major sticking point was the MDC refusal to withdraw its court challenge against Mugabe’s re-election in 2002. The MDC said: ‘If we drop it we effectively recognize Mugabe’s legitimacy’.

Zimbabwe was again on the agenda of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) which met in London (20 May—see Documentation, *The Round Table*, 370), two months after the decision taken to continue its suspension until the December CHOGM. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer tabled a report setting out details of Zimbabwe’s abuse and repression that violated the Commonwealth’s democratic principles. He wanted the Commonwealth to deliver a tougher message.

Three bishops led by Sebastian Bakare, president of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, called on Mugabe (27 July) to register their concern at the deepening crisis. They wanted to encourage talks between the parties ‘so that they can come up with a home-grown solution without having to get outsiders to tell us

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what to do'. They said Mugabe was 'fairly responsive'.

Although Mbeki continued to believe quiet diplomacy was the answer and had wanted the Commonwealth suspension lifted, Zimbabwean Science Minister Olivia Muchena was stopped from attending a meeting of the Commonwealth Science Council in South Africa in June. However, she did take part in a high level forum held alongside it.

President George Bush's five-day African tour in July was preceded by a call from his Secretary of State, Colin Powell, to Mbeki and other regional leaders to do more to end Mugabe's regime. He promised generous US help if Zimbabwe had new elections. The Zimbabwe *Herald* called Powell 'a disgraceful Uncle Tom'. After Bush had talked to Mbeki in South Africa he endorsed South Africa's quiet approach, saying: 'I think Mr Mbeki can be an honest broker ... We have urged the government and opposition to get together. They are indeed discussing all issues. That process is going on.' Tsvangirai disputed this. Talk of a dialogue was 'patently false and mischievous'. Since April 2002 there had been 'absolutely' no engagement.

The boycott of parliament by MDC members ended when they attended the opening by Mugabe of the new session (22 July). Tsvangirai and Mugabe sat opposite each other. There was no sign in Mugabe's address that he had heeded South African appeals for dialogue.

He threatened (12 June) to expel British High Commissioner Sir Brian Donnelly for supporting opposition attempts to bring down the government. He said Britain had supported the MDC strike, adding: 'They are giving them money. We know that ... If he continues, we will kick him out.'

When the African Union (AU) summit took place in Maputo Zimbabwe was not an issue, but was much discussed behind the scenes. President Joaquim Chissano of Mozambique took over the chairmanship from Mbeki, while Mugabe was elected to the low-level position of vice-chairman of the AU's southern Africa bureau.

A report by the Zimbabwe Research Initiative (20 May) showed that Zimbabwean trade had collapsed at a cost to South Africa of £1.25 billion—equal to 0.4 per cent of GDP. Zimbabwe had been overtaken as South Africa's largest trading partner in Africa by Mozambique and Angola. Its collapse had contributed to the loss of 30 000 jobs in South Africa.

Mugabe ordered the suspension (30 April) of Elias Mudzuri, mayor of the MDC-controlled city council of Harare, after a year in office for alleged corruption and abuse of office. Mudzuri defied the order and the woman deputy mayor refused to take over because the suspension was illegal. The government dropped a High Court order to force Mudzuri out and he went into hiding.

Chief Justice Godfrey Chidyausiku ruled unconstitutional (7 May) a key clause in the controversial media bill which declared it an offence to publish 'falsehoods'.

After a week in hiding Andrew Meldrum, London *Guardian* correspondent in Zimbabwe for 23 years, was manhandled and deported (16 May) in spite of three court orders prohibiting his expulsion. His wife was declared a prohibited immigrant and left a month later. Meldrum, a US citizen, was one of the last international journalists in Zimbabwe.

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South Africa

For several days South Africa celebrated Nelson Mandela's 85th birthday (18 July) amid 50 000 messages from all over the world. He spent the day at home in Johannesburg with his 30 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. A 1600-seat banquet next day was attended by royalty, politicians, public figures and show business stars—and Mandela's cook and gardener. Former president F. W. de Klerk was there. At the end Mandela and his wife Gracia Machel took to the dance floor. The last event was the inauguration of the Nelson Mandela cable suspension bridge, a 937 ft construction built in 22 months and designed to link the city's affluent northern suburbs and the heart of the impoverished central district.

A week later Mandela was in London to celebrate in Westminster Hall the 100th anniversary of the Rhodes Trust, attended by 1000 Rhodes scholars from all over the world. He launched the new Mandela Rhodes Foundation, which will use £10 million of the Trust's money to fund scholarships and other development programmes in Africa. It will raise a further £20 million to support South African education and strengthen leadership in business, law, government and public service in Africa. The new foundation's executive director would be former journalist and Rhodes scholar Shaun Johnson. At the celebrations in London and Johannesburg was former US president and Rhodes scholar Bill Clinton.

Missing from the celebrations was any greeting from President Bush. Relations between Bush and Mandela remained frigid. Just before his birthday Mandela repeated his condemnation of Bush for bypassing the UN on Iraq and he praised the French for opposing the war. In Paris (14 July) Mandela appealed to Europe to put more money into fighting AIDS and he praised Bush for his promise of an AIDS package. A new World Bank report had warned that South Africa would suffer 'a complete economic collapse' within four generations if it does nothing to combat the pandemic.

Nine opposition MPs joined the ruling African National Congress in April, giving it a two-thirds majority and the power to change the constitution. A party spokesman said the ANC would not be heavy-handed and would govern fairly. In the run-up to the 2004 election the fortunes of the Pan African Congress (PAC), which once rivalled the ANC in popularity, continued to decline. With the defection of anti-corruption campaigner Patricia de Lille, the PAC now held only two of the 400 seats in the National Assembly. Motsoko Pheko was elected new PAC president at a party congress (15 June)

Winnie Mandela resigned from all her positions in the ANC (25 June) minutes after she was sentenced to five years jail on 43 counts of fraud and 25 of theft. She was given bail and leave to appeal. Her trial in Pretoria had lasted ten months. She gave up her posts as an MP, president of the ANC Women's League, and member of the national executive committee. Hundreds protested outside the court at the conviction of the woman they still called 'mother of the nation'.

In sentencing her, magistrate Peet Johnson said: 'Only a fool would underplay your rôle in the history of this country.' He said she would serve only a small part of her sentence 'so that you can use your many talents to serve the public'.

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The first treason trial since the end of apartheid got under way in Pretoria (24 June) after four postponements. Twenty-two white men were accused of attempting to overthrow the government.

Security guard Luyanda Mboniswa faced a life sentence when he was found guilty in the High Court, Cape Town (13 May) of murdering in December 2001 Marike de Klerk, the former wife of F. W. de Klerk, the last apartheid president. The couple were divorced in 1998.

Walter Sisulu, secretary-general of the African National Congress in the 1950s, fellow-prisoner on Robben Island with Mandela for 26 years and often called his mentor, died aged 90 (6 May). Mandela said: 'He stood head and shoulders above all of us'. He worked in the goldmines, as a 'kitchen boy' and in a bakery, joining the ANC in 1940. He did not run for parliament when apartheid ended in 1994, saying he wanted to give 'younger and talented leaders' a chance to build the new South Africa.

Lesotho

South African consultant Jacobus Michiel du Plooy pleaded guilty (12 June 2003) to paying £225 000 to Masupha Sole, former chief executive of the Highlands water project, already in jail for accepting bribes from Western firms. It was another stage in long-running bribery cases that had serious implications for global development programmes.

Swaziland

The Commonwealth sent Justice Hillary J. Mkate, of the National Electoral Commission of Tanzania, and William A. Sage, Deputy Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta, Canada, to Swaziland (14 July 2003) to observe the voter registration exercise for elections scheduled for October. Their job was to decide whether the process provided a sound basis for polling preparations.

Botswana

Kenneth Koma, leader of the opposition Botswana National Front since its birth 37 years ago, resigned (7 March 2003) because of 'erosion of inner party democracy'. The new president was Otsweletse Moupou.

President Festus Mogae took a lead applauded by HIV/AIDS activists by declaring his negative HIV status (19 May). At the same time Botswana became the first African country to distribute anti-retroviral drugs through the public health system. About 300 000 Botswana were said to be HIV positive.

Namibia

An agreement was signed with Botswana (6 March 2003) on the demarcation of the border along the Linyanti and Chobe rivers. In 1990 the International Court of Justice had ruled against Namibia in its ownership of an island in the Chobe. Botswana was given sovereignty.

A government newspaper advert showed disappointment over the failure of

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commercial farmers to fill out land date verification forms. Only 3075 out of 12 684 had been completed. The government threatened farmers with jail if they did not fill out the forms. A newspaper report suggested it was a step towards a Zimbabwe-style seizure of land.

The 2003–04 budget (6 March) said the latest GDP projection was for 2.8 per cent growth.

Pakistan

On the eve of talks between Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali and opposition leaders on the rôle of the military in politics President Pervez Musharraf rejected (24 April 2003) demands that he step down as chief of the army and dissolve the National Security Council. Opposition deputies had for weeks been arguing over the Legal Framework Order, a set of constitutional amendments giving Musharraf power to dismiss an elected government and dissolve parliament while remaining military head. Eventually the Lower House suspended its session to give government and opposition time to resolve the impasse.

Day after day no parliamentary business had been done because the 150 opposition members always drowned out government MPs with cries of ‘Go, Musharraf, go’ and the Speaker had to adjourn the House. Under the constitution the National Assembly could only start to function after a joint session is addressed by the president.

Further trouble came when Musharraf sacked the chief secretary and police chief of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) for not curbing lawlessness. The six-party administration denied it was trying to establish fundamentalist rule and move towards a Taliban-style government. It accused Musharraf of being an American stooge. Parliament adopted *sharia* law unanimously (2 June) and the government started closing cinemas, putting curbs on music and videos, and ordering civil servants to pray five times a day. NWFP was the first province in Pakistan to enforce *sharia*.

In an interview in London after his talks with British Prime Minister Tony Blair (17 June) Musharraf said Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaida had ‘ceased to exist as an organization’. Pakistan had detained most of its kingpins. He rejected Indian charges of continuing terrorist incursion from Pakistan to Kashmir and said ‘there is not one terrorist camp in Kashmir’.

When Musharraf visited Camp David (24 June) President George Bush pledged a £1.7 billion aid and military package, saying: ‘We have no better partner in our fight against terrorism’. The package did not include sale of 28 fighters agreed 13 years ago but still blocked by the US Congress. In the past year Pakistan had handed to the USA 500 al-Qaida militants.

Suicide attackers fired machine-guns and three grenades at 2000 worshippers at midday prayers at a Shia Muslim mosque in Quetta (4 July). At least 53 people died and 65 were injured. All three attackers, believed to belong to an outlawed rival Sunni group with Taliban links, were killed. Riots followed and the city was put under curfew. Twenty people were arrested. A month earlier Islamic militants shot dead 11 Shia trainee police. Musharraf was on his way back from his visit to the USA, which took in Germany and France.

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Three hardline Islamists were sentenced to death in Karachi (30 June) for organizing the 2002 suicide attack on a submarine project that killed 11 French technicians.

At the end of the financial year (30 June) figures showed a 21 per cent rise in export income, growth up to 5.1 per cent and liquid foreign reserves at a record high, but one-third of the population still lived below the poverty line. Plans to repay a £620 million debt to the World Bank, IMF and Asian Development Bank were announced (25 July)

Pakistan's first woman editor, Maleeha Lodhi, 48, of *The News*, was named High Commissioner to London (20 May). She is a former ambassador to Washington and graduate of the London School of Economics.

A review of book studies in English courses in Punjab University suggested Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, Hemingway's *The Sun also Rises*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and many other English works contained 'vulgar' sexual connotations and should be culled from the syllabus. Senior members of the faculty were said to be appalled and university registrar Masood ul-Haq said no books on the syllabus would change.

India

Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China (22–27 June 2003)—the first prime minister to travel there for a decade. He signed nine joint declarations with President Hu Jintao aimed at forming a new relationship and banishing the mutual suspicion that had long prevailed between the two countries. Vajpayee took 40 business leaders, and one major step was to coordinate positions on key issues before the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancun in September. In the declaration China gave *de facto* recognition of India's control of Sikkim, which it had refused since China annexed Tibet in 1975. In return India for the first time recognized Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. Although the Dalai Lama and many Tibetans remained in refuge in Dharamsala, India acknowledged that it 'does not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India'. Many other issues between the two countries remained unresolved—Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin, the Chinese claim to Arunachal Pradesh, and major differences over nuclear weapons.

The government halted the building of a tourist complex of shopping malls, restaurants, and multiplex cinemas within 300 metres of the Taj Mahal. Minister for Tourism Shri Jagmohan asked the Uttar Pradesh state government how the £22 million plan was approved without federal authorization. Light from the plains across the Yamuna River is said to give the Taj its changes in colour. The new complex would cut the illumination. The Taj is a World Heritage site and news of the development produced unprecedented public outcry. Earlier, protests stopped a planned highway through the remains of Hampi, the 15th century capital of the Vijayanagar dynasty in south India.

Following the 2002 drought—the worst for 15 years—almost the entire country had a heavy monsoon, but not before searing heat had killed 1500 people in early June. One of the worst hit areas was Andhra Pradesh, where temperatures rose to almost 50 degree centigrade. When the monsoon rains arrived in July a mosquito plague brought encephalitis and killed 110 children,

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and then floods came to Bihar, as well as neighbouring Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh, killing 850 people and leaving millions homeless.

The number of people infected with HIV/AIDS surged to an estimated 4.58 million. Activists said the government was failing to recognize the scale of the problem and a conference of 1000 politicians was held in New Delhi at the end of July to symbolize a united front.

As part of a plan to become an aid donor rather than an aid recipient, India decided in July that in future it would accept government-to-government aid from only six donors, which included the USA, Britain and Russia. The 22 donors dropped—among them Canada, Sweden, and the Netherlands—were told to channel funds to NGOs and through UN agencies. About 60 per cent of India's aid budget comes from the World Bank and other multilateral agencies.

As privatization gathered pace in India, 74 per cent equity in New Delhi and Bombay airports was earmarked for sale. Meantime, work went ahead on a £200 million private airport in Bangalore, the first to be built, owned and managed by private and foreign investors.

Y. Venugopal Reddy, IMF executive director, was named (18 July) as governor of the Reserve Bank of India for five years in place of Bimal Jalan, who was to take a seat in Parliament. Kenneth Rogoff, IMF head of research, said India could not achieve China's high economic growth unless it cut its debt burden rate. India's growth for 2003 was forecast to be 6 per cent. Its foreign exchange reserves were rising fast—£51.7 billion by July.

Parliament was suspended (6 May) as MPs shouted down attempts to pass a Bill setting aside one-third of seats in the national and state assemblies for women. In the lower house women put aside political differences, but their voices were drowned by the men. The Speaker adjourned the Lok Sabha to hold cross-party talks, but only four days of the session were left. Just 10 per cent of the 545 MPs are women and three successive prime ministers have tried to pass the legislation. A two-thirds majority is needed because the constitution must be changed.

Intense pressure from right wing Hindu groups led the ruling BJP to announce its intention to build a Hindu temple in Ayodhya on the site of the mosque demolished by a mob in 1992. The move was seen as related to state elections coming up in November and general elections in 2004. The Archaeological Survey of India said in a report on its excavations (11 June) that no remains had been found of any structure remotely resembling a Hindu temple predating the mosque.

Sikh leaders formally pronounced (6 June) militant leader Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale a martyr. He was killed when the Indian army stormed the Golden Temple in Amritsar in 1984. For 19 years a faction of Bhindranwale's sect had maintained he had not been killed but would 're-emerge'.

Police in Rajasthan arrested 600 Hindu nationalists (15 April) following the arrest of Pravin Togadia, hardline fundamentalist and head of the World Council of Hindus, a sister body to the ruling BJP. He was held for carrying a trishul, or three-pronged dagger, associated with the god Shiva. Rajasthan is under the rule of Congress, which alleged the trishul was widely used in neighbouring Gujarat in 2002 when 2000 Muslims and Hindus were killed. Human Rights Watch in New York said (30 June) that Indian justice had failed to convict a single person for the Gujarat massacres because of obstruction by the government led by Chief

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Minister Narendra Modi. It added: 'The machinery of government in Gujarat is stacked against Muslims.'

The government said (11 June) it planned to feed 'nutritionally enhanced' GM potatoes to poor children in 2004. They would be given free to try to reduce malnutrition.

On the orders of the Supreme Court the Congress administration in New Delhi gave magistrates powers to dispense on-the-spot justice to litter louts. The magistrates, accompanied by police officers, travel in vans with tables and chairs, setting up courts in open places like parks or markets. They can fine people throwing down rubbish or spitting between £6 and £50 and persistent offenders up to £75.

The birth 100 years ago of Eric Blair (George Orwell) was celebrated (25 June) in the village of Motihari, Bihar, where his father was a civil servant in what was then Bengal. Chapters were read from *Animal Farm*—still a set text in schools and universities across India.

India and Pakistan

In the first public address made in Kashmir by an Indian head of government for 16 years (18 April) Prime Minister Vajpayee offered a 'hand of friendship' to Pakistan. Islamabad responded swiftly. On 28 April Pakistan's Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali Khan phoned Vajpayee—the first high-level contact for nearly two years—and asked him to talks as early as possible. Vajpayee's address took many in his government by surprise, as did a further offer of 'decisive' peace talks a few days later. He hoped full air, train and road links would be restored and the two countries would exchange full High Commissioners again. But he did not want to embark on summit talks without 'careful groundwork'. He told parliament: 'At least in my life this is the last time I will be making an attempt to resolve the Indo-Pakistan dispute ... We either live as friends or we keep fighting and make ourselves a butt of ridicule before the world.' US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage visited Pakistan and India in May, but Vajpayee denied the latest moves had resulted from US pressure.

A rebel attack on an army camp in Indian Kashmir which killed 14 people (29 June) during a visit by Indian President Abdul Kalam did not seem to affect the better atmosphere

The first buses for 18 months crossed the border between India and Pakistan (11 July). One hundred Pakistani businesspeople who had visited New Delhi earlier were the first to meet their Indian counterparts for two years. In 2002 bilateral trade between the two countries was only £120 million.

The two sides resumed full diplomatic relations in July. The new Pakistani High Commissioner, Aziz Ahmed Khan, arrived in Delhi on 30 June.

In a *Guardian* interview (18 June) following two weeks in Washington, Indian Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani said open-ended talks on Kashmir could be held if Pakistan halted its 'proxy terrorist war' against India.

Bangladesh

A series of river ferry disasters raised again the problem of the country's over-

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loaded boats. In the seventh and worst of the year, at Chandpur, 170 km from Dhaka (8 July 2003), some 800 people died. Two major inquiries were ordered. Ministers repeatedly promise to improve safety, but they lack the money and human resources. Only 80 of the country's 20 000 ferries have fitness certificates.

Bangladesh ministers became increasingly anxious in 2003 about massive Indian plans to link major rivers flowing from the Himalayas and divert them south to drought-prone areas. India was planning to seek international funds for a 14-year project that might cost £91–£120 billion. India and Bangladesh have a water-sharing agreement for the Ganges but not for the other 53 rivers that cross the border. More than 80 per cent of Bangladesh's 20 million small farmers grow rice and depend on water from India. The Water Resources Minister said in mid-2003 that India had not responded to protests from Bangladesh. He added: 'We want no kind of war, but international law on sharing water is unsure and we would request the UN to frame a new law.'

The High Court in London gave a Bangladeshi man and woman the go-ahead (8 May) to claim damages against British scientists they allege were negligent when they assessed groundwater supplies in Bangladesh. The claimants said they had developed arsenicosis. Naturally occurring arsenic is a recognized problem in Bangladesh. The World Health Organisation has said the situation could affect 80 million people and has created 'the largest mass poisoning in history'. The specific case is against a British Geological Survey carried out in 1992 with British government aid funding. It could generate broad impact because of the potential liability of other scientists working on aid projects in developing countries.

Science and Technology Minister Moyeen Khan announced plans (5 June) for a 265-acre technology park near Dhaka that would aim to capture some of India's programming market. It would be modelled on Malaysia's multi-media corridor and ready in two years and follows up the success of Dhaka's Information Technology Centre, which develops hardware and software programmes for foreign companies.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia shuffled her cabinet (22 May). Three ministers and four ministers of state quit, reducing the total from 60 to 53.

The Supreme Court overturned (20 May) government approval given five years ago for a US company to set up private shipping terminals in Chittagong and near Dhaka. Trade unions mounted the court challenge.

Three-day talks on border tensions with India, held in Dhaka (28-30 April), ended with agreement to introduce joint patrols to stop illegal movement of people and to deport illegal migrants. Commanders of the two military border bodies and ministers took part.

Sri Lanka

The seventh round of peace talks between the Tamil Tiger rebels and the government, scheduled for Thailand in April 2003, failed to take place. A week beforehand the Tigers said they were withdrawing and boycotting an international conference of 70 donor governments and agencies in Tokyo in June. Their reason was exclusion from an earlier aid meeting in Washington and

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government failure to resettle thousands of Tamil refugees. The Tigers are on Washington's list of terrorists and officials are banned from dealing with them. Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe said delays in settling the refugees were unavoidable and urged the rebels to return to the table. Tiger chief negotiator Anton Balasingham demanded (21 May) that the government set up an interim administration for the northeast of the country. The government offered a 'development-oriented structure' for the region, but the Tigers said 'no'.

At the Tokyo meeting 51 donor countries and 20 institutions pledged £1.4 billion over four years to rebuild Sri Lanka. The money had to be linked to demilitarization and progress in the peace process. Wickremesinghe offered greater political power to the Tigers to break the talks deadlock, but strains in the government showed when President Chandrika Kumaratunga refused to send a videoed message to the donors because she said she had been kept in the dark about the conference.

A dividend of the peace process was rising tourism—up 28 per cent in the first three months of 2003. Economic growth hit 5.5 per cent—the highest in years.

Torrential rains started on 17 May, causing the worst flooding for 50 years. More than 250 people died and 200 000 were made homeless in the south-central districts. India sent help and the Tigers were said to have organized 10 lorry loads of rice.

Malaysia

The annual assembly of the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) promised support (22 June 2003) for Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to succeed Mahathir Mohamad in October as the next prime minister. Abdullah, aged 63, was not expected to serve more than one five-year term, which made the choice of the next deputy prime minister crucial. Three candidates were named. At the assembly opening Mahathir warned against infighting that could damage the government ahead of the 2004 election. He said: 'The enemy within is far more dangerous than the declared enemy'.

The Court of Appeal rejected an appeal by former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim against his conviction for sodomy and upheld the nine-year sentence (18 April) passed in 2000. It refused to hear a request for bail. Anwar called the judges 'quite spineless'. Mohamad Ezam Mohamad Nor, a leading aide to Anwar, and three other supporters were released from two years' detention (10 June).

A 30-year policy was overturned by a decision to allow international companies to own fully their manufacturing operations in the country. Hitherto foreign companies had to give a 30 per cent stake to Malay interests—an obstacle to foreign investment. The move reflected growing concern about international competition, particularly from China.

Malaysia announced (19 May) a £555 million deal to buy 18 Sukhoi fighters to be delivered in 2006—the most powerful combat aircraft ever operated by a southwest Asian country.

Mahathir said (13 February) that the national school system had become too biased towards 'Malayness' and towards Islamic studies. Malay children were getting too narrow an education and Chinese and Indians were deterred from

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attending national schools.

Article 19, Forum-Asia and a number of other NGOs called for the repeal of the 1948 Sedition Act, still being widely used against opposition figures, activists and the media. A legal analysis published in August said the Act seriously breached freedom of expression. In January the online newspaper Malaysiakini.com was charged after an article criticized the government for giving special rights to the ethnic Malays. The offices were raided and computers confiscated.

Singapore

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong and President George Bush signed a free trade agreement (6 May 2003) guaranteeing immediate zero tariffs on all US exports to Singapore and phasing out US tariffs on Singaporean exports over eight years. The deal makes Singapore only the sixth country in the world to have a free trade relationship with the USA. The fifth was Chile. The others: Canada, Mexico, Israel and Jordan.

Two months after the deal Singapore succumbed to pressure from chewing-gum firm Wrigley and eased modestly the ban on chewing gum it imposed in 1992 in pursuit of street cleanliness. At first it said gum would be allowed if prescribed by a doctor, but Wrigley insisted sugar-free gums be sold over the counter and the Singapore government gave way.

A 51-hour operation to separate 29-year-old Iranian twin sisters joined at the head failed when both died (8 July). A team of 28 doctors and 100 support staff was involved. Singapore had been trying for some years to develop as a centre for medical services. In 2001 Nepalese infant twins joined at the head were successfully separated there.

To attract tourists, plans for a ferris wheel bigger than the London Eye were announced (27 June). It would be 561 ft high, cost £77 million and be ready in 2005. Shanghai plans an even bigger one in the same year.

Singapore escaped relatively lightly from the SARS outbreak which had hit China and Hong Kong in early 2003. It subsided by the end of June with 206 cases reported and 32 deaths.

Malaysia–Singapore

The two countries signed an agreement (6 February 2003) referring the dispute over Pulau Batu Putih island to the International Court of Justice. The dispute dates back to 1979. Singapore built a radar station there and in 2002 its police boats stopped Malaysian journalists landing.

The Environmental Investigation Agency accused Malaysia and Singapore (8 May) of laundering logs exported illegally from Indonesia to markets in the USA and Europe, although both countries claimed they were stamping out timber smuggling.

Hong Kong

On the sixth anniversary of the handover to China up to 500 000 people took to

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the streets for 12 hours (1 July 2003) in protest against a new security law. The law, known as Article 23, would allow the government to outlaw local groups with ties to any organization banned on the mainland. Police could hold searches without a warrant and put a ban on disclosure of state secrets. The bill was opposed by 23 of the 60-member Legislative Council. After the march James Tien, chairman of the pro-business Liberal party and a member of the executive council, resigned. Without the seven Liberal votes the bill could not be passed. After an emergency cabinet meeting Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa was forced to delay the bill. Demonstrations continued—at one point 50 000 people staged a sit-in outside the Legco. The protesters sang pro-democracy songs and called for Tung's resignation. Two of his cabinet—Regina Ip, security secretary, and Antony Leung, financial secretary—resigned (16 July). Leung had been under pressure to quit for some time because of his personal spending.

Tung replaced Ip with career civil servant Ambrose Lee Sui-kwong and Leung with businessman and friend of Beijing, Henry Tang Ying-yan—seen as a pair of safe hands. Opinion polls showed support for Tung, whose term expires in 2008, had slipped to 35 per cent.

Tung visited Beijing (19 July) and secured expressions of full support, but President Hu Jintao was said to be 'very concerned' by the situation. On Tung's return, British Prime Minister Tony Blair arrived from Beijing. He sided with the demonstrators' concerns, but added: 'Let us be fair, there wasn't democracy when Britain ran Hong Kong.' Blair emphasized Britain's role as guardian of the Joint Declaration and the Basic Law by which the colony was handed over. He cancelled a meeting with Legco members, but met Li Ka-shing, Hong Kong's richest man.

The Anti-Tung Solidarity, a pro-democracy movement dedicated to the removal of Tung, was launched (3 August). Its members included legislative and district councillors, academics, professionals, housewives and business executives.

Strict health measures overcame the outbreak of SARS and the World Health Organisation lifted its advice against travel to Hong Kong (23 June). By then 1755 cases had been confirmed with 298 deaths. Retail sales in Hong Kong had fallen by 50 per cent since the outbreak began. University researchers concluded that the virus had been carried by the masked palm civet, eaten as a delicacy in China's Guangdong province.

Papua New Guinea

Social Welfare and Development Minister Lady Carol Kidu told Parliament (12 March) that police mobile squads were perpetrating 'summary executions and brutality' on the streets of Port Moresby by trigger-happy police. She called for a human rights commission and told meetings in the Southern Highlands (26 March) that, unless the province turned away from a culture of guns and violence, there would never be proper economic development. The Australian Centre for Independence Studies said in a report that the country could slip into 'economic paralysis, government collapse and social despair'.

Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare set up a Law and Justice National Co-ordinating Mechanism in April to improve the response of the law and

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justice agencies to crime. Members would include the chief justice, police commissioner and attorney-general.

Chairman Nick Kuman said (4 April 2003) the parliamentary privileges committee would propose legislation to 'deter' writers of 'damaging' articles about the country. Peter Aitsi of the Media Council said the Council was concerned about the effect such laws might have in curbing the independent and free media. He called for a media standards committee to deal with mis-reporting.

Former prime minister Sir Mekere Morauta was reinstated as leader of the opposition People's Democratic Movement on a court order (6 February). He had been deposed after losing the 2002 election.

In March two ministers lost their seats in parliament following decisions by the Court of Disputed Returns—one because of bribery during his election. A third minister was suspended by Somare because he faced firearms charges.

In the Bougainville peace process the monitoring group said in March that 87 per cent of weapons had been handed in. The group withdrew from the island on 30 June and was replaced by a civilian transition team made up of officials from Australia, Fiji Islands, New Zealand and Vanuatu. Funding for the Bougainville Interim Provincial Government had now been promised by the Port Moresby government, Australia, New Zealand, the UK and the EU.

Ishmael Torioama, commander of the former separatist Bougainville Revolutionary Army, sent secessionist leader Francis Ona a two-month ultimatum (12 March), copied to the UN, to disarm his defence force or face the consequences.

Solomon Islands

The first contingent of a 2225-strong intervention force led by Australia flew into Honiara (24 July 2003). The operation, named Helpen Fren (pidgin for helping friend), was technically a joint one by the Pacific Islands Forum on a formal invitation from the Solomons government. Australia planned to send 1500 troops and police, New Zealand 105 soldiers and 35 police. Others would come from Papua New Guinea, Fiji Islands, Tonga and Samoa. The mission's first task was to organize the hand-over of weapons. One rebel leader said he was happy to cooperate because people were now confident that there would be security.

The £356 million operation, planned to last ten years, would be funded mainly by Australia. After the troops and police left, 75 bureaucrats would remain to control the economy and justice system.

The Solomons, with its 1000 islands, 70 languages and 480 000 people, had been in political turmoil for years with escalating violence and much corruption. Only three days before the troops arrived, Prime Minister Allan Kemakeza fled Honiara in a police boat because of kidnap rumours.

The intervention marked a major shift in Australian policy towards that of becoming Pacific policeman. It came in the wake of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, in which the Australian army took part, and the Bali bombing which killed 89 Australians. Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said: 'Sovereignty in our view is not absolute. Acting for the benefit of humanity is.'

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In the Solomons violence earlier in the year Sir Frederick Soaki, of the National Peace Council and former police commissioner, was shot dead (10 February) by a masked gunman in a provincial restaurant. He had been helping the just arrived police commissioner, William Morrell from Manchester, implement a programme to demobilize 800 special constables, suspected of violence and extortion. One of three suspects, former police sergeant Edmund Sae, escaped from prison in Honiara (22 April). In other violence 21 people were killed by supporters of Harold Keke, leader of the rebel ethnic Guadalcanal Liberation Front.

Niue

The island (population 1700) became in June 2003 the first country in the world to have a national wireless internet system. The free public service used solar-powered aeriels hung from coconut palms. Financing came from selling rights to the .nu domain name. In 1991 Niue had only 376 phone lines. Now Niueans sent 30 000 emails a week.

Kiribati

The country went to the polls (4 July 2003) for the sixth time in eight months to choose a president in an election fought by feuding brothers leading opposing parties. Anote Tong won 13 556 votes while Henry Tong scored 12 457 votes. In an election marked by bitter personal attacks, a major issue was the presence of a Chinese satellite spy base on Tarawa atoll. Harry Tong wanted it removed. Former president Teburoro Tito resigned the day before the election but held his seat.

Tuvalu

New figures suggested that over the past decade the sea level of Tuvalu had risen three times as fast as the world average. The highest point in the islands is five metres. Tofiga Falani, president of the Congregational Church, went to Melbourne in July 2003 to lobby Australia to set aside land to serve as a new home for the country's 9300 people. The government believes the only solution is to transport the entire population overseas. Government secretary Panapasik Neelesone said: 'We need to start working on this now'. Polynesians settled in Tuvalu 2000 years ago.

A month's parliamentary deadlock over failure to elect a Speaker followed by-elections in early 2003. The Governor-General convened a special session. The Opposition claimed Prime Minister Saufatu Sopoanga, who took power in August 2002, had delayed convening parliament for fear of a no-confidence vote after the by-elections.

Tonga

A court acquitted three people of sedition charges relating to a disclosure about the King's alleged secret offshore wealth (20 May 2003). MP Akilisi Pohiva, his

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son, and another MP faced 11 charges over publication of a palace office letter which the government said was a forgery.

The Times of Tonga went on sale again when the Supreme Court ruled against government attempts to ban it. Its run of 2000 copies of the first issue sold out in two hours.

Fiji Islands

Chief Justice Daniel Fatiaki ruled in the Supreme Court (18 July 2003) that the government of Prime Minister Laisenia Qarase was in breach of the 1997 constitution that requires multiracial power sharing. Section 99 says all parties with more than 10 per cent of MPs in the lower house are entitled to a place in the 20-seat cabinet. In the 2001 elections the Indian-dominated Labour Party led by ex-prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry won 27 seats, but Qarase gave him no cabinet seats. The Prime Minister mounted a two-year legal campaign to keep out the Labour Party.

After the Supreme Court ruling, which in effect ruled the government unconstitutional, Qarase offered 14 seats in a 36-member cabinet but Chaudhry wanted 17. Commonwealth Secretary-General Don MacKinnon said the Supreme Court decision had been an important landmark and he urged the two leaders to keep talking.

The spill-over from the 2000 coup by George Speight continued to embroil the country. Five men, including Vice-President Jope Seniloli, were charged (8 May 2003) with offences relating to it. Speight had sworn in Seniloli as president of an illegal government which never took office. In another coup echo the judiciary was said to be divided because Judge Michael Scott, who drafted decrees abrogating the 1997 constitution, claimed three judges had brought the judiciary in general and himself in particular into disrepute by testifying against the abrogation to a Court of Appeal a year later.

A Media Bill under which a government-controlled Media Council would replace the existing self-regulatory body met strong resistance from the Citizens' Constitutional Forum, Council of Churches, Teachers Union and other organizations. The Labour Party called it a draconian attempt to gag the media.

The launch of Radio France Internationale took place at the Fiji Broadcasting Association in Suva on 24 March. The French service was to be relayed in Suva 24 hours a day. French ambassador Jean-Pierre Vidon said other English-speaking countries in the Pacific might follow suit. He handed over French equipment and software to help Radio Fiji upgrade its broadcasting to digital.

Vanuatu

In a ceremony in Port Vila that mirrored the French one in Fiji the BBC re-launched broadcasts for Vanuatu, absent for some years because of equipment failure. Vanuatu already receives French radio for its 40 per cent French-speaking citizens and 2000 expatriates. British High Commissioner Michael Hill handed over transmitters to Vanuatu.

The OECD said it had removed the country from its tax haven black list

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following changes in the Vanuatu tax regime and its greater readiness to exchange tax information.

Nauru

Washington denied it had offered an aid package in return for the abolition of Nauru's offshore banking system, which took place in March 2003. It was said the facilities had been used by Russian organized crime for money laundering. Washington was believed to have urged Nauru to act because the offshore accounts might be used by terrorist groups.

The Asian Development Bank said (30 April) that Nauru remained in deep economic trouble despite aid from Australia and the Bank.

Acting President Derog Gioura, 71, who had recovered after treatment in Australia for a heart attack, took over responsibility for the Nauru Phosphate Royalties Trust from Education Minister Anthony Audoa (15 April). Nauru's telephone service, which collapsed in January, was repaired and back in service in early March.

Deadlock followed parliamentary elections (3 May) because of failure to elect a Speaker. In the new House six of the 18 MPs were newcomers divided into three factions. After three weeks a Speaker was elected and Ludwig Scotty was elected President. He defeated former president Kinza Clodumar and Nauru First leader David Adeang.

Pitcairn Island

A judicial delegation from New Zealand charged nine men living on Pitcairn with sexual offences, including the rape of girls of ten and seven and sexual assault against a girl of three. Opinion in Pitcairn was said to be against the trial. Parliament in Wellington was told the community could be destroyed. It was thought the governor of Pitcairn, who is the UK High Commissioner to New Zealand, could instead have set up a form of truth and reconciliation commission. Of Pitcairn's 44 population only eight are adult males—the number needed to operate the island's whaleboats.

Cook Islands

The 25-seat parliament abolished in April 2003 a New Zealand-based seat that represented islanders who had left the country. MPs called it a waste of money. The government of Prime Minister Robert Wootton continued to be in the political turmoil that had flowed from the 1999 election. Deputy Prime Minister Sir Tom Henry was dismissed at the beginning of the year and a new party, Cook Islands National, was formed.

Australia

After months of pressure and national debate Dr Peter Hollingworth agreed with Prime Minister John Howard (11 May 2003) to stand aside as Governor-General pending the outcome of civil court allegations that he raped a young woman

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nearly 40 years ago. The charges came in the wake of another scandal over his handling of paedophile cases while he was Archbishop of Brisbane. An Anglican Church report (1 May) said he had made a 'serious error of judgement' in allowing a paedophile priest to continue his ministry in 1993 and in a statement afterwards he admitted the error.

On TV (8 May) the Governor-General claimed the rape allegation was a case of mistaken identity. He denied ever raping or assaulting any person. The woman making the charges had committed suicide a few days before he spoke. Howard, who had chosen Hollingworth for the post, admitted (9 May) that he had known of the rape allegations for six months. After the suspension Sir Guy Green of Tasmania, the longest-serving state governor, took over temporarily as Governor-General.

The Supreme Court of Victoria dismissed the case against Hollingworth (23 May), saying that it was a matter of 'forensic reality' that the untested claim could never be proved. Two days later Hollingworth resigned. He said that despite 'the misplaced and unwarranted allegations' the controversy had 'the potential to undermine and diminish my capacity to uphold the importance, dignity and integrity of this high office'. He went on TV to apologise for not dismissing a paedophile priest when he was Archbishop. Hollingworth was the first governor-general to resign in Australian history.

Major-General Michael Jeffery, governor of Western Australia 1993–2000 and one time commander of Australia's SAS regiment who won the MC in Vietnam, was named the country's 24th governor-general (22 June) and took over on 11 August.

Howard, 63, ended months of speculation about his future when he said (3 June) he wanted to lead his Liberal party in 2004 to a fourth term in government. The decision dashed the hopes of aspiring leader Peter Costello, under whom, as Treasurer, the economy had become one of the world's most buoyant with growth of 3–4 per cent. Howard had enjoyed rising support by moving Australia closer to the USA, supporting the Iraq war and visiting President Bush five times after 11 September. Opinion polls showed Howard at 65 per cent against 17 per cent for opposition Labor leader Simon Crean. Howard, twice ousted from the party leadership in the 1980s, was now riding high. Yet when the government decided to take part in the Iraq war an opinion poll showed 59 per cent disapproval of military action without a UN mandate. Crean survived a leadership challenge from his predecessor Kim Beazley (16 June) by securing 58 of the 92 Labor MPs.

In his budget (13 May) Costello allocated an extra £404 million to defence and security. Indications that Australia was moving towards becoming a regional power-broker came when Foreign Minister Alexander Downer spoke (16 June) of working with Japan and the USA to stop North Korean ships trafficking nuclear material, narcotics and other illegal goods. Eleven countries had agreed to work together on the issue. Earlier, Australians boarded a North Korean-registered ship off New South Wales in a drug smuggling operation and escorted it to Sydney (20 April). The crew were arrested. It emerged that the ship had landed at least £88 million worth of heroin before being spotted.

Under new laws the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation was given far-reaching powers to detain for up to a week anyone suspected of having

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information about terrorist activities. Opponents called the powers draconian.

It was announced in March that the centres for asylum seekers in Woomera and on Christmas Island would be shut. The federal court ruled (15 April) that the government had no right to detain asylum seekers indefinitely pending deportation when they had been refused permission to enter another country.

The government announced plans (2 June) to ban shipping and commercial fishing from one-third of the Great Barrier Reef marine park—a World Heritage site. At present protected green zones comprise only 4.6 per cent of it. Environment Minister David Kemp said the plan would create the largest network of protected marine areas in the world. The tourist business welcomed the plan but resistance in the public consultations was expected from the fishing industry.

Scientists found in midyear an uncharted 120 sq km coral reef in the Gulf of Carpentaria. It had probably escaped notice because it is 20 metres below the surface and in a remote area—250 km from the nearest town. In the same area the bureau of statistics discovered Mornington island (pop 1114) had been missed off the 1996 census and wiped from government records. The island was rediscovered when Queensland officials went there to introduce mobile phone coverage.

A research team sent to a cave in an inaccessible part of New South Wales in June 2003 examined 200 Aboriginal paintings believed 4000 years old. A bush-walker stumbled into the paintings in 1995, but the cave was so remote it had taken a long time to mount a team. The paintings are in pristine condition.

The aboriginal tent embassy set up opposite the old parliament in Canberra in 1972 was partly destroyed by arson (16 June), leading to renewed calls for its removal.

New Zealand

The 13 000-strong Maori Ngati Awa tribe of the Bay of Plenty accepted by postal vote a treaty of settlement with the government of 64 hectares of Crown land and £20 million. In 1865 land had been confiscated and tribe members executed for the murder of a missionary. In 1988 the Ngati Awa were exonerated.

Prime Minister Helen Clark said (23 June) the government would legislate to ensure that the coastline and seabed were owned by the Crown on behalf of all New Zealanders. An Appeal Court ruling had said the Tauranga Maori group could claim ownership of the Marlborough Sands foreshore and seabed in South Island. A Maori spokesman said the matter could go to the International Court.

After three years' debate Parliament passed by 60 votes to 59 a bill establishing a framework for the sex industry that legalized prostitution.

The government planned a livestock flatulence tax to fund research into global warming. Livestock methane emissions were thought to create half the country's greenhouse gas emissions. Cows, sheep, goats and deer would be taxed, but not pigs and poultry.

Montserrat

A constitutional review commission chaired by Sir Howard Fergus said (21

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February 2003) the Chief Minister should be allowed to appoint the governor instead of the UK monarch and the legislative council should double its sittings from six to 11 a year. The commission was set up in 2001 following the granting of full UK citizenship to inhabitants of UK Overseas Territories.

John Edmund Wilson, deputy leader of the ruling New People's Liberation Movement, resigned as Minister of Communication and Works (4 March) and from the party. He was said to be dissatisfied with the leadership style of Chief Minister John Osborne.

Belize

Prime Minister Said Musa comfortably won a general election (5 March)—the first government to win a second successive term since independence in 1981. The ruling People's United Party (PUP) lost five seats to the United Democratic Party (UDP) led by Dean Barrow. The UDP platform included a proposal to adopt the US dollar. The PUP held 21 seats and the UDP eight. Seventeen independents failed to win a single seat. Turnout was 78.85 per cent.

An agreement with Guatemala brokered by the Organization of American States (OAS) was signed (7 February 2003) by the two foreign ministers, Assad Shoman of Belize and Edgar Armandio Gutierrez Giron. Under a series of confidence-building measures designed to reduce tension over Guatemalan claims to half of Belize, the OAS would deploy observers in the disputed border and referenda would be held in each country on the terms of the accord made in September 2002.

Grenada

Ex-civil servant Gloria Payne-Banfield was elected leader of the opposition Grenada United Labour Party (2 February 2003). She succeeded Michael Baptiste, whose leadership had been disputed by a party faction.

A controversial act approved by the Senate and then by the House of Representatives (4 April) provided for prison sentences on people who resorted to strike action without first exhausting dispute-settlement procedures.

Turks and Caicos Islands

In elections to the Legislative Council (24 April 2003), which has 13 elected members, the ruling People's Democratic Movement led by Derek Taylor won a third successive term with seven seats. It lost two and the opposition Progressive National Movement won six. In addition to the Speaker, three members are appointed by the Governor and three are ex-officio members of the Executive Council.

Trinidad and Tobago

Max Richard, 71, former principal of the University of the West Indies, was elected president by an electoral college (14 February 2003). He was backed by Prime Minister Patrick Manning and won 43 seats, against nominee of

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opposition leader Basdeo Panday Ganace Ramdial's 25. Richard succeeded Arthur Robinson, whose term had been extended because of the electoral stalemate that was ended in October 2002.

Barbados

Prime Minister Owen Arthur led his Barbados Labour Party in elections (21 May 2003) to a third consecutive term of office—the first time the party had won three straight elections. The BLP won 23 seats and the Democratic Labour Party led by Clyde Mascoll won seven seats. Attorney-General Mia Mottley became deputy prime minister.

Jamaica

Parliament voted 32 to 24 for creation of a Caribbean Court of Justice (21 May 2003) that would replace the Privy Council in London. The government ratified the agreement setting up the court (9 June). The Opposition Jamaica Labour Party boycotted the ceremony because it had wanted a referendum.

The commissioner of the Jamaican Constabulary Force disbanded (2 June) the Crime Management Unit, an elite police force created in 2000. Human rights campaigners had accused it of using excessive force and carrying out summary executions.

Finance and Planning Minister Owen Davies announced (17 April 2003) unprecedented tax rises to meet a deficit equalling 3 per cent of GDP. He put a 4 per cent levy on all imports and expanded the scope of the general consumption tax. The tourist industry had declined and the national debt rose to 152 per cent of GDP in the first quarter of 2003.

British Virgin Islands

After 17 years in power the Virgin Islands Party led by Chief Minister Ralph O'Neal was defeated in Legislative Council elections (16 June). Orlando Smith, leader of the National Democratic Party, became Chief Minister. At 72.2 per cent, voter turnout was the highest in the Islands' history and the result was a surprise.

Guyana

Robert Corbin was elected leader of the opposition People's National Congress/Reform (1 February 2003) on the death of former president Desmond Hoyte. A few days later he ended the party boycott of the National Assembly, which had lasted since the disputed election of March 2001. But when the government of the ruling People's Progressive Party/Civic voted against an opposition package aimed at countering the effects of unemployment and setting up an inquiry into police conduct, Corbin resumed the boycott.

A substantial rise in abductions and ransom demands led to the unanimous enactment of tough new anti-kidnapping legislation

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Bermuda

The ruling Progressive Labor Party narrowly won elections (24 July 2003) and Premier Jennifer Smith held her seat by just eight votes. She stepped down and Alex Scott, 63, took over. The party won 51.65 per cent of the vote. Smith came to power in 1998 on the promise of a better deal for blacks—60 per cent of the 62 000 population. The election campaign was marked by resentment over foreign workers and the hardships of the black working class.

Canada

On his way to an EU–Canada summit in Athens (28 May 2003) Prime Minister Jean Chrétien made some unusually frank remarks on his relations with US President Bush. He listed areas of disagreement—on gun control, capital punishment, abortion and tax-cutting—and said: ‘He’s a conservative from the southern United States and I’m a liberal Canadian.’ His poor relations with Bush had been worsened by his opposition to the Iraq war and then by Bush’s sudden cancellation of a state visit to Canada scheduled for early May. Now he criticized Republican election fund-raising, saying: ‘It’s only money, money, money, money in the States. It’s not healthy.’ Later Chrétien said (31 May) Canada would not sign up to a US missile defence system if the Americans wanted to put weapons into space.

The World Trade Organization ruled (27 May) that the USA erred in approving stiff tariffs on imports of Canadian softwood lumber to build homes. Trade Minister Pierre Pettigrew said: ‘Yet again it appears the US is being told that its attempts to prove that our softwood industry is subsidized are flawed.’

Deputy Prime Minister John Manley withdrew (22 July) from the race to become leader of the ruling Liberal Party on Chrétien’s retirement in February 2004. This cleared the way for former finance minister Paul Martin. Manley said Martin would have his full support as the next prime minister of Canada.

Peter MacKay, 37, a Nova Scotia MP, was elected leader of the opposition federal Progressive Conservative Party in Toronto (31 May) with a 64 per cent vote. He succeeded former prime minister Joe Clark, who was stepping down.

The World Health Organisation issued an unprecedented warning (23 April) that the SARS epidemic had made a Western city, Toronto, unsafe to visit. It advised visitors to stay away. The outbreak had been traced to a woman who had visited Hong Kong. The city was angry at the WHO advisory and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien held a cabinet meeting in Toronto (29 April) to prove it was safe. The advisory was lifted within six weeks, but further cases continued to be notified. By late June 10 000 people had been quarantined. Cases totalled 252 with 37 deaths—the highest total outside Asia. Canadian tourism was seriously hit.

The government introduced legislation (27 May) to decriminalize possession of 15g or less of marijuana. Ministers said they were not legalizing the drug, but the US ambassador warned that changing the law could lead to more border delays as customs searched Canadian vehicles.

The first case of BSE (‘mad cow’ disease) in a decade led to an immediate ban by the USA and seven other countries on Canadian beef imports (20 May).

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The disease had been found in a single cow in north Alberta and came just as Canada was recovering from the impact of SARS. Canada is the world's largest beef exporter and 78 per cent goes to the USA. The industry earns £13.3 billion.

Chrétien promised (17 June) a free vote on legislation implementing same-sex marriage following a parliamentary committee report urging approval. After a court judgement in Ontario more than a dozen homosexual couples married within a week.

Following talks in Berlin (26 May) Foreign Minister Bill Graham said Canadian troops would take over leadership of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan from Germany.

United Kingdom

In a major cabinet reshuffle (12 June 2003) Prime Minister Tony Blair made far-reaching constitutional reforms, including the proposed abolition of the post of Lord Chancellor, the setting up of a Supreme Court and the creation of a new Department of Constitutional Affairs, which would include responsibility for the Scottish and Welsh Departments. Lord Irvine left the Cabinet and was replaced as Lord Chancellor for the transitional period by Lord Falconer. The House of Lords was to decide how it would choose its own Speaker.

Earlier, differences over Blair's handling of Iraq policy led to the resignation (12 May) of Clare Short as Secretary of State for International Development—a post she had held since Labour took office in 1997. She was succeeded by Baroness Amos, who came to Britain from Guyana when she was nine and had been a minister in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Sir Nigel Sheinwald, Britain's ambassador to the European Union, replaced Sir David Manning as one of Blair's two foreign policy advisers. Manning became ambassador in Washington. Sir Stephen Wall continued as adviser on EU affairs.

Three Commonwealth countries—South Africa, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka—were added to the list of 'safe' countries from which applications for political asylum would be considered unfounded.

Gibraltar

Spanish Prime Minister José Maria Aznar wrote to British Prime Minister Tony Blair (19 May 2003) asking for the co-sovereignty negotiations to resume. Foreign Minister Ana Palacio said she would like to see 'the Spanish flag flying over the Rock' within a year. But British Minister for Europe Denis MacShane said (8 June) that a negotiated settlement with Spain over Gibraltar was years away. Britain would not agree on a deal against the wishes of the people of the colony. In newspaper interviews he said: 'We no longer live in the 18th or 19th centuries when diplomats could sign treaties and people had to obey them ... The people of Gibraltar feel their British identity with the same strength as the people of Ceuta and Melilla feel 100 per cent Spanish.' The two North African enclaves are claimed by Morocco, but Spain says they are an integral part of its territory.

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Cyprus

After 29 years of separation the ceasefire line dividing the island was opened by the Turkish Cypriot authorities (23 April 2003). The Greek Cypriot government was taken by surprise. The Turkish Cypriots saw it as a confidence-building measure following the collapse of reunification talks. A trickle of people walked across at first, but by the end of July crossings totalled 900 000, three-quarters of them by Greek Cypriots, many wanting to visit the ancestral homes they had not seen for three decades. Many were repeat visits. Most recent figures showed Cyprus's population to be 793 100—Greek Cypriots 639 400, Turkish 87 600 and foreign residents 66 100. Post-1974 illegal Turkish settlers were said to total 115 000.

The sudden border opening was partly the result of pressure from Turkey, which wanted better relations with the European Union to pave the way for EU accession talks, and partly because of popular support for unification among Turkish Cypriots. President Tassos Papadopoulos had just signed Cyprus's EU accession treaty (16 April) with the stipulation that the Turkish area would not be part of the EU unless a political settlement was reached before Cyprus became a member on 1 May 2004.

Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktaş proposed free movement of people and goods in a six-point plan (2 April) that included handing the Greek Cypriots the deserted eastern town of Famagusta (Varosha), but Papadopoulos rejected the proposals. Then the Security Council censured Denktaş (14 April) for his negative attitude towards the failed UN peace effort. Denktaş's unilateral response followed. When Denktaş proposed to reopen Nicosia airport, shut since 1974, as part of confidence-building measures, the Greek Cypriot leaders said 'no'.

The cross-border atmosphere continued to improve as Greek Cypriots were allowed to stay for three days a week in the north. The Greek Cypriot government lifted trade sanctions (30 April) so that farmers in the north could sell produce in the south and export to the EU. Papadopoulos announced further measures to make movement easier (24 June). The Turkish Cypriot authorities said they were bringing into force a law to resolve property disputes with Greek Cypriots.

When the new Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan went to Northern Cyprus (9 May)—the Cyprus government called it an illegal visit because Northern Cyprus is not internationally recognized—he repeated the Ankara line that Cyprus consisted of 'two states, two languages, two religions'.

Only days before the border opening Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis had met Turkish Cypriot opposition politicians in Nicosia (18–19 April) and called for reunification talks to be resumed on the basis of the UN plan. On a visit to Athens (26–27 May) Papadopoulos reaffirmed his readiness to resume the talks. When Simitis visited Washington (25 June) President Bush said the USA would join with the EU in a new bid to revive talks. The EU summit in Thessaloniki (19–20 June) urged the Turkish Cypriots to get back to the negotiating table.

Cyprus ratified its membership of the EU on behalf of the whole island (14 July), although without a settlement the Turkish Cypriots would be excluded. Papadopoulos signed the ratification on 28 July.

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In North Cyprus three opposition parties and 16 NGOs united as the Peace and Democracy Movement to fight December elections and replace Denktash as chief negotiator in reunification talks.

After seven years Lord Hannay stood down as UK Special Representative for Cyprus (4 June). The UK said he would not be replaced for the time being

Falklands Islands

The UK dismissed a bid by the new government of Argentina to reopen talks on sovereignty (17 June). The Foreign and Commonwealth Office said the subject was 'not for discussion'.

St Helena

The government invited online (14 April 2003) expressions of interest and proposals for the building of the island's first airport. The project would open up the island (population 5000) to tourism and business

The UK would offer up to £26.3 million. St Helena is 2730m km from Capetown—a five-day trip by the ship which calls 25 times a year. Governor David Hollamby said an airport would radically alter the island and reverse the declining economy.

European Union

On the eve of a visit to Brussels and a meeting with Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission (10–11 June), Commonwealth Secretary General Don McKinnon said it was time the voice of the Commonwealth was 'heard and clearly understood at the European level'. He feared developing countries would be sidelined in current negotiations and their concerns about the current imbalances in the international trading system would not be addressed. Six days later McKinnon met the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Dr Supachai Panitchpakdi, in Geneva to discuss the upcoming Cancun meeting. McKinnon welcomed (27 June) the EU decision in advance of Cancun to reform the Common Agricultural Policy.

The EU is giving the Commonwealth Secretariat 11 million euros for the so-called Hubs and Spokes project—a collaboration with La Francophonie to help African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and regions cope with WTO and other trade policy issues. Under the scheme advisers based in regional secretariats (hubs) will coordinate with advisers (spokes) in trade ministries.

Commonwealth Games

Final figures showed that the 2002 Games generated £22 million in investment for Manchester and created 6300 jobs. Sponsorship, TV rights and ticket sales produced £56 million—double the amount achieved by previous Games. Hamilton, Canada, and New Delhi lodged bids at Marlborough House (30 May) for the 2010 Games. For the first time the competing cities gave presentations—India with dancing and music, Hamilton with a decorated bus that toured London with children aboard.

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Commonwealth of Learning

Lewis Perinbam, a former vice-president of the Canadian International Development Agency, became chairman of the board of governors (28 April 2003). He succeeded Ian Macdonald, also Canadian, who had held the post for nine years. Perinbam, lately a senior adviser to COL, at one time represented the World Bank at the UN.

Commonwealth Youth Ministers

The fifth Youth Ministers Meeting in Gaborone (27–30 May) decided that the structures and processes of the Commonwealth Youth Programme should increasingly move into the hands of youth themselves. Young people should be more involved in the Executive Committee and the Board of Governors. The current awards would be renamed the Commonwealth Youth Gold Award and Commonwealth Youth Silver Award. Delegates examined ways in which the Youth Programme can increasingly help tackle the AIDS pandemic.

Around the Commonwealth

Twenty Central Bank Governors met in the City of London (25 June) for a symposium organized by the Commonwealth Business Council and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Discussions focused on money laundering and the impact on the developing world of what is seen as a period of major transformation in the banking industry.

The theme for Commonwealth Day—8 March 2004—was announced as ‘Building a Commonwealth of Freedom’. Lord Alan Watson, former TV and radio presenter, has succeeded Sir Peter Marshall as chairman of the Joint Commonwealth Societies’ Council, which organizes Commonwealth Day.

A workshop was held in Accra (23–24 June) in advance of the Abuja CHOGM to discuss the Commonwealth as a platform to advocate change. Participants were from five West African countries. The meeting was organized by the Commonwealth Policy Study Unit (CPSU) and the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.

The Human Rights Unit of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Centre for Human Rights in Pretoria University held a workshop in Pretoria (23–27 June) to work out how to strengthen human rights commissions in southern Africa. Delegates came from 11 countries.

The Commonwealth Association for Corporate Governance, set up only in 1998, won an international award for its work (10 July). The International Corporate Governance Network, whose members are large investment fund managers around the world (combined assets \$10 trillion), said: ‘There is no other group out on the ground promoting practical aspects of corporate governance and having such a major impact on so many countries’.

A workshop for 55 administrators from 36 Nigerian states funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation was held in Abuja (28 July–1 August). Two-thirds of Commonwealth countries now have an ombudsman’s office.

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Eighty people from ten countries took part in a pan-Commonwealth workshop in Port of Spain (26–29 July) aimed at developing small business e-commonwealth competitiveness in the region.

The Secretary General attended three annual regional summits—those of CARICOM in Jamaica (2–5 July), the African Union in Maputo (10–12 July) and the Pacific Islands Forum in Auckland (14–16 August), on the way visiting Nauru and Kiribati.

New publications from the Commonwealth Secretariat include:

From Doha to Cancun—Delivering a Development Round, papers on key issues for the 2003 Cancun Trade Ministerial Meeting;

Freedom of Expression, Association and Assembly, guidelines developed by a Commonwealth Expert Group;

Commonwealth Guidelines for the Treatment of Victims of Crime, developed by a Commonwealth Expert Group;

Post-HIPC Debt Sustainability and Commonwealth HIPCs, part of the Commonwealth Economic Paper Series;

A History of the Uganda Forest Department 1951–65, a historic and personal record from which to draw for those involved in forestry and land management today;

Raising Seedlings of Tropical Trees, illustrated manual commissioned by the Commonwealth Science Council;

A Profile of the Public Service in Canada, a revised version of the Commonwealth Profile Series.

For details, e-mail r.jones-parry@commonwealth.int.

