

## Commonwealth Update

DEREK INGRAM

*ABSTRACT* As 2004 opened Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of India and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan met in Islamabad. The most serious attempt to achieve a settlement of the Kashmir problem for decades was under way. Pakistan made other news. Two attempts were made on Musharraf's life and the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb confessed that he had been responsible for the proliferation of nuclear weapons to Iran, Libya and North Korea. In the wake of Zimbabwe's withdrawal from the Commonwealth the political situation there remained deadlocked. Tuvalu told a climate change meeting that it would be the first country to go under the waves. And the first train to cross Australia north–south made its maiden journey.

### **Pakistan**

Abdul Qadeer Khan, regarded as a national hero for creating Pakistan's atomic bomb, was dismissed as technology adviser to the Prime Minister (31 January 2004). He was held under house arrest in his Islamabad villa, and after interrogation signed a confession that he had sold through middlemen nuclear technology and hardware to Iran, Libya and North Korea. His 12-page statement to the government said complete centrifugal uranium enrichment plants had been exported to Iran through a Pakistani businessman.

In a meeting with President Pervez Musharraf, Khan acknowledged full responsibility for the proliferation and asked for clemency. A deal was said to have been struck under which there would be no prosecution. Part of it was for Khan to make a personal apology on television, which he did (4 February). He said: "I offer my deepest regrets and unqualified apology to a traumatized nation ... there was never any kind of authorization for these activities by the government".

One effect of the Pakistan admissions was to bolster persistent US claims that North Korea was operating a secret uranium-based weapons programme. They also revealed a network run in Dubai that took in Germany, the Netherlands and Malaysia, where a company partly owned by the son of Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi was said to have made parts to order from Libya. The head of the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) said the spread of

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nuclear technology and knowledge was “out of the tube ... we won’t be able to put it back”.

Khan had first been questioned by Pakistani military authorities in November 2003 following the detention of two scientists involved in the country’s first nuclear tests. The arrest and several other detentions came as IAEA detectives visited capitals to investigate Iranian nuclear programmes. Several individuals and firms in Pakistan were said to have been sources of technology that were helping Iran move towards becoming a nuclear power. Khan founded the laboratories, the country’s main nuclear weapons facility, where uranium is enriched. He had been reprimanded in 1999 when Pakistan agents intercepted a plane carrying nuclear material to North Korea.

Officials said Khan claimed his motive was to raise funds for nuclear research and show solidarity with Muslim countries. General Aslam Beg, army chief in the late 1980s and early 1990s when technology was said to have been passed to rogue states, said Khan acted without the army knowing. But Khan was said to have told investigators that the ruling military elite, including Musharraf, had full knowledge of what he had done.

Musharraf promised to prosecute those suspected of selling secrets to Iran in the 1980s, and at the World Economic Forum in Davos (24 January 2004) called for international investigators to probe illegal traffic in nuclear secrets stretching from Asia to Europe.

Earlier (6 January) Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed had said reports of Pakistani help to Libya were “total madness ... Pakistan is a responsible state and Pakistan has never proliferated”.

The long paralysis of parliament caused by Islamists opposing Musharraf and his rôle as an ally of the USA in the war on terror ended (30 December 2003) with a deal struck between the government and the main coalition of Islamic political parties, the Muttahida majlis-e-amal. They withdrew their objections to Musharraf’s plans to increase his powers under the constitution, which include the authority to dissolve parliament and dismiss the prime minister, but only with the approval of the Supreme Court.

For his part the President agreed to step down as head of the army at the end of 2004. He would stay as civilian president until 2007. By a narrow margin the government won votes of confidence from both houses of parliament, but other opposition parties walked out, saying the deal hugely increased the presidential powers. Parliamentary business had been blocked in Islamabad for nearly two years by legislators banging on their desks, interrupting speakers and walking out. Votes of confidence were also passed in the four provincial assemblies.

The Pakistan High Commissioner in London, Maleeha Lodhi, said Pakistan had now fulfilled all the benchmarks for a return to full membership of the Commonwealth.

Musharraf escaped two attempts on his life in December. In the first incident a sophisticated, remote-controlled bomb destroyed a road bridge over which his car had just passed (14 December 2003). An electronic jamming device in the car delayed the blast by seconds. The President was midway between Islamabad airport and his house in Rawalpindi. The bomb—one of five planted on the bridge—contained 550lb of explosives. Then, on 25 December, two trucks packed with explosives rammed into the President’s motorcade from opposite sides of a road in the heart of the military cantonment of Rawalpindi. Fourteen

people, including several police, were killed and Major-General Nadeem Taj, due to take over as head of military intelligence, was injured. Involvement of al-Qaeda was suspected. A month earlier Musharraf had ordered a crackdown on outlawed Islamist militant groups. One hundred activists were reported arrested across the country. Under a new anti-terrorist law, mass religious gatherings could be held only with permission.

In October a Karachi court sentenced to 10 years jail three men who had tried to assassinate Musharraf in 2002.

Javed Hashmi, leader of the main opposition alliance, was arrested in October and accused of defaming the military. A judge rejected a petition for his release (17 November).

Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali issued a decree banning fashion shows. They were said to affront Islamic values. The ban followed a show and dance party sponsored by a tobacco company and attended by government officials and members of the Pakistan and South Africa cricket teams.

A Geneva court upheld an appeal by former prime minister Benazir Bhutto against an order to return £6.6 million in kickbacks allegedly obtained from Swiss companies nine years earlier. A six-month jail sentence was quashed, but further legal proceedings were expected to drag on for years.

## **India**

An Indian navy flotilla visited Shanghai for joint exercises with China in mid-November—an indication of the continuing thaw in Indo-Chinese relations. India said the exercises were focusing on maritime search and rescue operations and safety at sea. Earlier, joint naval exercises had taken place between China and Pakistan.

Priyanka, 32-year-old granddaughter of Indira Gandhi, formally joined the Congress Party (22 January 2004). She is the daughter of Rajiv Gandhi and the current party leader, Sonia. The move raised the prospect of her playing a leading rôle in the impending election. The Congress was at a low ebb under Sonia Gandhi, who had been disadvantaged by her Italian origin. When Priyanka appeared in her mother's constituency in Uttar Pradesh in January she was mobbed. Her brother Rahul, 34, also joined the party, but was said to be less attracted to politics.

These moves came in the wake of serious Congress setbacks earlier in elections in Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan (1 December). The party lost 212 seats in three states. Sonia Gandhi accepted some blame for the setbacks, saying "Everyone in the organization is responsible, including myself".

A general election had to be held by October, but it became clear in January that, with the economy in good shape and the best prospects for years of rapprochement with Pakistan, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee wanted an early election. He said (13 January): "I hope a new government will be in place by April". Parliament was dissolved on 6 February. In India the independent election commission sets the date of polling.

Just before Vajpayee spoke the Finance Ministry announced tax and duty cuts on such items as domestic air fares, computers, cellphones, life saving drugs and medical equipment. Employees with an income of up to 150 000 rupees were exempted from filing tax returns. Other economic reforms were

announced. The level of foreign direct investment in most parts of India's oil and petroleum sector was raised to 100% and approval for investors scrapped.

US President George Bush announced (12 January) an agreement hugely increasing technology cooperation with India. In return for US exports of sensitive civil nuclear and space equipment India would strengthen its own controls on the export of sensitive technology to other countries. Vajpayee said the two countries were rapidly emerging as "strategic partners". The relationship was "based increasingly on common values and common interests".

The Tamil Nadu state assembly ordered the arrest and jailing for 15 days of six journalists, including the publisher, S. Rangarajan, and editor, N. Ram, of *The Hindu*. Their offence was said to be to publish articles criticizing chief minister P. T. Jayalalitha. Twenty police searched the *Hindu* office, but the paper came out the next day as usual. The Supreme Court halted the arrests (10 November). Most of India's leading politicians condemned the Tamil Nadu assembly's action as a serious attack on press freedom. Jayalalitha was facing a corruption trial which the Supreme Court ordered to be moved to neighbouring Karnataka state. She had filed 16 criminal defamation suits against *The Hindu*.

Between July and September 2003 the Indian economy grew by 8.4%—matching China's growth in the first nine months of the year. Foreign exchange reserves surged above \$100 billion. Plans were announced (27 January) for the building of the world's biggest gas-fired power station that would almost double the power supply in India's largest and backward state, Uttar Pradesh.

India bought the 44 500-ton, 17-year-old Russian aircraft carrier *Admiral Gorshkov* in an £840 million deal. It came with 28 Mig jets and six anti-submarine helicopters. Russia would refurbish the ship and deliver it in 2008. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov said the deal marked a move to deeper cooperation in military research and technology. India would continue to be the only country in the region to operate an aircraft carrier; neither Pakistan nor China has one.

Communal violence broke out in Assam in November between local Assamese and Hindi-speaking settlers. In a week 25 people were killed as rampaging Assamese burned the homes of hundreds of Hindi speakers. The Assamese were trying to prevent migrants from Bihar taking recruitment exams for jobs on the railways. In this case there were only 600 jobs for 200 000 people.

Police arrested up to 60 000 activists converging on Ayodhya (17 October) for a rally of the VHP—World Council of Hindus—to demand the building of a temple to the god Rama on the site of the Babri mosque destroyed by Hindu zealots in 1992. A few thousand reached the site and in clashes with police 1000 were arrested.

India agreed with Burma and Thailand to start work in 2004 on an 870-mile road linking the subcontinent to South East Asia. It would go from Moreh, northeast India, through Pa-an in Burma to Mae Sot on the Thai border.

Dell Computers of Texas said it was shifting part of its customer service back to the USA. Business customers "had issues with differing Indian accents". Nasscom, India's softwear industry body, said employees were given intense accent training. It was the first reversal for the booming Indian outsourcing sector, which was growing at 50% a year and employing 250 000 people. But a storm began brewing when a Bill passed in the US Senate (22 January) banned the outsourcing of federal work to low-cost countries. The loss of highly paid technology jobs in the USA was becoming a political issue in American election

year. In Britain, however, the export of jobs to India seemed to be accelerating as two more financial services companies announced transfers in January.

The Delhi High Court dismissed charges of abetting bribery against the Hinduja brothers—Srinchand, Gopichand and Prakash—although they would still face charges of conspiracy to cheat the Indian government. In the Bofors arms affair of 1986 the brothers had been accused with former prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who was murdered in 1991. Gandhi's widow Sonia, now leader of the opposition Congress Party, said her husband had been vindicated. The case was brought by the government's Central Bureau of Investigation.

## **India and Pakistan**

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India and President Pervez Musharraf met for an hour (5 January 2004) during a meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in Islamabad and decided to launch in February a formal peace process. They hoped for a settlement of all disputes, including Kashmir. Both men gave ground. Musharraf promised to crush moves by extremists and not to let Pakistani territory be used for cross-border terrorism. Crucially, he had offered a ceasefire along the line of control (23 November) and said (18 December) he was prepared to drop Pakistan's 55-year-old insistence on a UN-administered plebiscite for self-determination in Kashmir. India agreed to the ceasefire and Vajpayee's concession in Islamabad was to agree that Kashmir would be discussed. "History has been made", said Musharraf.

The summit of the seven-nation SAARC agreed to set up from 2006 a free trade area for the seven member states. Until now Pakistan had said regional economic cooperation could take place only after India and Pakistan had solved their political differences. Vajpayee told the leaders: "We have to change South Asia's image and its standing in the world. We must make the bold transition from mistrust to trust, from discord to concord and from tension to peace". Regional economics had to triumph over political prejudice in South Asia. Musharraf called Vajpayee a man of peace—"a visionary, a poet, a writer and an able politician, which are the qualities of a true leader". Only 5% of South Asia's trade takes place between SAARC members, against 60% with the European Union.

The political breakthrough was preceded by several practical moves. Full diplomatic relations had been restored, the ceasefire across the line of control had held, Pakistan International Airlines resumed flights to New Delhi (2 January) after two years, and Indian Airlines began flying to Lahore and Karachi. Some bus and train services were resumed and the main highway connecting Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistani Kashmir, was to be reopened. India was to send its cricket team to Pakistan on a first full tour for 13 years.

Kashmiri separatist leaders of the 24-party Hurriyat group met Vajpayee in Delhi (22 January)—the first such meeting with an Indian prime minister since the insurgency began 15 years ago. In talks with Deputy Prime Minister L. K. Advani it was agreed to end "all forms of violence" and Delhi would step up the release of political prisoners. More than 40 000 people had died since the Pakistan-backed insurgency began in 1989.

## **Bangladesh**

The opposition alliance led by the Awami League boycotted the the 49th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Dhaka (4–12 October 2002). It was part of the boycott of parliament begun two sessions earlier by the alliance, which now pledged to build a mass movement to dislodge the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) by April. Discussion topics at the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference included reconciling human rights with cultural diversity, anti-terrorism legislation and the relationship between the Executive and Parliament. More than 300 delegates from 160 legislatures attended.

A major survey by a UN–Bangladesh task force reported (7 November 2003) that to step up the fight against crime the police force must thoroughly overhaul its recruitment and training. The army had had to be called on to the streets because of the soaring violence. Police said salaries were so low they could pay their bills only by resorting to bribery or extortion. The task force warned that the problems were so profound that they had serious implications for the social and economic well-being of the country.

A meeting of the leaders of the ruling four-party coalition decided in January that 100 more general seats would be added to the 300-member parliament, of which 50 would be reserved for women. The seats would be allocated according to the overall strength of each party. Activists said it was a step in the right direction, but pointed out that in a country with a woman prime minister and woman leader of the opposition the move did not allow women to be elected directly.

Student groups of rival parties clashed in one of the country's largest universities in Rajshahi. Twenty students were injured. The university was temporarily closed. Campus violence is commonplace in Bangladesh and 100 people have been killed in the past three decades.

## **Sri Lanka**

When Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe returned from Washington (7 November 2003) he was welcomed by tens of thousands of supporters angry that President Chandrika Kumaratunga had in his absence prorogued parliament, declared a state of emergency, taken over the defence ministry, and called on TV for a national government to be formed. Wickremesinghe rejected her call, vowed parliament would be reassembled and the peace process with the rebel Tamil Tigers resumed.

The President withdrew the declaration of emergency, but said the government had made concessions to the Tigers "who had not given up their declaration for a separate state". A first meeting between the two leaders (12 November) led the President to say that working with the Prime Minister was going to be almost impossible. A petition signed by more than half the MPs demanded parliament be reconvened and after more meetings between President and Prime Minister it met (19 November).

Speaker Joseph Michael Perera ruled that the President had exceeded her authority by acting without parliament's consent. It had been an infringement of the rights of the legislative arm.

The Tamil Tigers were prepared to honour the now 21-month-old truce on condition that the Norwegian peacebrokers could extract a similar guarantee from the Sri Lankan leaders. But chief mediator Vidar Hedhesen said holding talks in the current political situation in Colombo was impossible and Norway suspended its peacebroking role. General Tryggve Tellefsen, head of the monitoring mission, left the country, and was replaced from 1 February by General Trond Furuhovde, who had been the first person to head the monitors.

European Union external affairs commissioner Chris Patten met Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran (25 November) and warned him that his group must give up violence. In a broadcast speech Prabhakaran said the rebels' proposals had been misinterpreted as a project for a separate state; they called for a substantial self-governing authority. The EU had brokered a donors' conference in June to help rebuild Sri Lanka.

Wickremesinghe said (7 January) the President should renegotiate the ceasefire agreement with the Tigers he had signed two years ago. Since she took over control of the Defence Ministry in November and he no longer had control of the army his government did not have the power to uphold some parts of the agreement.

Kumaratunga announced on TV (14 January) that she was extending her term in office by a year. It would now end in 2006, although she was sworn in for a six-year term in December 1999. She claimed a second investiture had been held privately in 2000, admitting that only the chief justice and the then foreign minister were present. Ministers said her action was "unacceptable". A spokesman said the government did not believe the President's move was legal. He had never heard of a country where the president took part in a secret swearing-in without the knowledge of parliament and people.

Kumaratunga's People's Alliance Party formed an alliance (20 January) with the Marxist JVP. A joint statement said the peace was risking the country's territorial integrity and leading to the creation of a separate Tamil state. The government, it said, was trying to set up a one-party police state dictatorship.

After weeks of political turmoil Kumaratunga dissolved parliament (7 February), paving the way for a snap election on 2 April—four years ahead of schedule. With parliament dissolved, Wickremesinghe became caretaker and the President could make new government appointments. As Minister of Information and Telecommunications she appointed Laskshman Kadirgamar—the man who stood against Don McKinnon as Commonwealth Secretary-General in Abuja.

## **Malaysia**

The new Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, named Defence Minister Najib Razak as deputy prime minister (7 January 2004) and Nor Mohamad Yakcop as second finance minister. Abdullah would continue as Finance Minister and Najib as Defence Minister. The two men are close confidants of former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad and key figures in the ruling United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), where Abdullah's power base is weak.

Soon after taking over Abdullah set up an independent commission to investigate brutality, corruption and inefficiency in the police department, an issue exploited by the Islamic opposition party, Pas. In other moves he cut some

big infrastructure projects, including a controversial railway contract awarded to a close friend of Mahathir.

The planned elimination of tariffs on cars imported from the rest of the southeast Asia region was to be delayed until 2008. Malaysian protectionism on imported cars has helped delay creation of a free trade area among the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). As an election loomed Malaysia's economy was on the rebound, with GDP rising by 8.5% in the third quarter of 2003 from a year earlier.

The editor-in-chief of *The New Straits Times*, Abdullah Ahmad, was dismissed (21 November) on the Prime Minister's intervention. Reporters sans Frontières said the Saudi Arabian ambassador had complained about an article on the reduced quotas assigned to the Mecca pilgrimage to Malaysia's Muslim community. Abdullah said the article could upset Malaysia's relations with Saudi Arabia. The new editor was chairman of the national news agency, Bernama.

The Court of Appeal denied bail (21 January) to former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim when he appealed against conviction for sodomy.

## Singapore

Abdullah Badawi visited Singapore for five hours (12 January 2004)—the first trip since he became Prime Minister of Malaysia. Before the visit he said relations were "far from satisfactory". After meeting Abdullah Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said he had suggested that issues that had repeatedly been difficult to resolve—"dead knot issues", he called them—should be referred to a third party for arbitration.

Goh's designated successor, Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, said in early January that the government had taken responsibility for many things which citizens should deal with themselves. He added: "Whether it is a ceiling leak, a mosquito nuisance or a troublesome neighbour, usually the first question which people ask is: 'What will the government do about it?' Nanny should not look after everything all the time."

Lee's remarks came as a number of liberalization measures were announced, such as making chewing gum available on prescription, relaxing restrictions on bungee jumping, table dancing and the TV series *Sex in the City*. Lifting the ban on oral sex, a statute dating back to colonial days, was being considered. The government announced that from 1 January people could fly the national flag whenever they wanted without seeking permission. However, it must fly from a flagpole, be illuminated at night and always take precedence over other flags.

## Hong Kong

In council elections (23 November 2003) democrats delivered a big reverse for the government. The Democratic Party (DP) won 95 of the 120 seats its candidates contested in the district councils. The pro-Beijing Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB) won only 64 of its 206 contests. The DP scored a nine-seat increase on 1999 while the DAB slumped by 21 seats. At 1 065 363 voters, the turnout was 44% against 36% four years earlier. DAB leader Tsang Yok-sing resigned, saying his party had suffered "a very serious defeat".

The party's vice-chairman lost his seat. He was the man who tried to push through the Legislative Council in June a draconian National Security Bill that brought half a million people on to the streets.

The December vote was a blow to Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, whose key support comes from the DAB. Under Hong Kong's governing framework, the Basic Law, changes in the way the chief executive is elected have to be agreed by the National People's Congress in Beijing.

On New Year's Day tens of thousands marched peacefully through the city calling for one-man-one-vote. A week later Tung announced that he would set up a task force under his chief secretary, Donald Tsang, to consult the Chinese government about reforms to the constitution. Tung gave no timetable.

At a meeting in Beijing in December Chinese President Hu Jintao had told Tung of his concern at Hong Kong political developments. Beijing was upset by remarks made by US consul-general James Keith suggesting Hong Kong should begin talks on universal suffrage as soon as possible. The foreign ministry told Washington to mind its own business. Britain was also rebuked for a similar comment Beijing said had been made by a British politician.

From January banks were to be allowed to offer some services denominated in renminbi. Teng had been pressing Beijing to agree to this for some months. He hailed it as a big step towards consolidating Hong Kong as an international financial centre. In 2003 unemployment began to drop from its 8.7% high. Bankruptcies which began to fall rose again in October to nearly 2000. After the recession of 2002 the economy grew by 6.4%.

## **Papua New Guinea**

A deal at first opposed by Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare to send 300 Australian police and civil servants to Papua New Guinea was completed in Adelaide (11 December 2003). Up to 230 police would arrive in 2004 as part of Australia's new rôle as peacekeeper in the Pacific. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said at the signing: "Our close historical ties and the extensive personal relationships ... underpin a common interest in peace and stability in a region ... free from terrorism." Four Australian judges would sit on the Papua New Guinea bench and an Australian would become solicitor-general.

## **Tuvalu**

Enele Sopoaga, Tuvalu ambassador to the UN, told a climate change conference in Milan (13 December 2003) that his country and its 12 000 people would be the first to go under the waves. The main island had been inundated three times in 2003. Vegetable plots had disappeared and there was no drinking water. Some families had moved to New Zealand, but older people wanted to stay.

The Alliance of Small Island States, a coalition of 40 small islands, blocked attempts by major states to delay for 18 months ministerial climate talks scheduled for 2004. A £30 million relief fund was agreed, but it would only be released if there was agreement among the 120 countries party to the Kyoto protocol on reduction of carbon dioxide levels. The protocol was in limbo until Russia decided to ratify it.

Soponga told the Milan meeting that Kiribati and the Marshall Islands, each with 80 000 people, were also close to sinking.

### **Nauru**

Nearly 50 asylum seekers held in Nauru went on strike (10 December) because Australia refused to give them refugee status. After nearly a month the Australians told the protesters, now reduced to 33 and some seriously ill, that they would review their cases, and the strike ended. Nauru accused Australia of neglecting the protesters, mostly Afghan. All told, nearly 300 were still being held after two years while their claims for asylum were processed under Australia's plan to keep the boat people out of the mainland. Nauru had agreed to house them in return for aid. Australian Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone said: "It is wrong to say they're being detained—they can go home any time." The protesters claimed they would be persecuted if they returned.

### **Australia**

Defence Minister Robert Hill said the defence budget would double over the next three years. Over 10 years Australia would spend £21 billion. This would put it behind only Japan and Saudi Arabia on the list of the biggest military spenders outside Europe and UN Security Council members.

At its annual conference (2 December) the opposition Labor Party chose blunt-speaking Mark Latham, 42-year-old economist, to replace Simon Crean as its leader. The change was unexpected. Latham immediately put new energy into the opposition to long-standing Prime Minister John Howard. Labor had lost the past three elections. It now became neck-and-neck in the opinion polls with the Liberal–National coalition.

Under a High Court ruling in December, by a 4 to 3 majority, any non-citizen who arrived in Australia after 26 January 1949 became a foreign alien whose visa could be revoked. The decision meant tens of thousands of British residents could be deported if they did not meet visa requirements. When they went to Australia there were no regulations requiring them to take out citizenship.

Prime Minister Mari Alkatiri of East Timor accused Australia (26 November 2003) of deliberately stalling talks over the two countries' maritime boundaries and deterring investment in the country. When officials met in Darwin Australia refused to agree to monthly talks, so the next meeting was not to be until April 2004. East Timor wants the boundaries agreed by Indonesia and Australia in 1972 shifted. They put many oil and gasfields in the Timor Sea in Australian waters. Alkatiri argued that under international law the boundaries should move to a point halfway between the two countries because their traditional 200-mile boundary claims overlap.

Pauline Hanson, former leader of the One Nation party, was freed from jail in Queensland (6 November) when three convictions for electoral fraud were overturned on appeal. She served 78 days of a three-year sentence. Her co-founder of the party, David Ettridge, was also freed. Hanson had retired from politics in January.

The Ghan, the first passenger train to cross Australia from south to north, left Adelaide (1 February). It was one kilometre long with two locomotives and

43 carriages. The 1851-mile trip to Darwin, via Alice Springs, takes 47 hours and joins the list of great rail journeys of the world. Hitherto the line north from Adelaide, built in 1929, had ended at Alice Springs.

The rare marsupial, the Tasmanian devil, was threatened with extinction by a mystery virus. The 200 000 population had halved in four years. The government pledged £750 000 to investigate the virus. Another environmental threat developed in 2003—a mysterious blanket of algae began to spread over the Great Barrier Reef off Cairns.

### **Belize**

For the first time the Privy Council in London was asked to adjudicate on an environmental issue—whether the building of the controversial Chalillo dam should go ahead. Construction would involve flooding pristine forest that is home to a rare macaw and many big cats. The judges gave the go-ahead by three to two (29 January 2003). NGOs had argued that the Belize government had wrongly approved an assessment of the environmental impact.

### **Jamaica**

Police uprooted and burned 741 acres of full-grown marijuana plants in St Elizabeth (20 November 2003)—as much as they destroyed during the whole of 2002.

### **Trinidad and Tobago**

As a result of Privy Council rulings on two death-penalty appeals, lawyers said 86 death row inmates would have to be re-sentenced. Hundreds more in the Bahamas, Jamaica and Barbados had similar challenges before the Privy Council. In the appeals two convicted murderers had argued that the laws of Trinidad and Tobago were contradictory. One said murderers “shall suffer death” while another said capital punishment should be the maximum penalty but not mandatory. Two of the five Privy Council judges dissented from the rulings.

### **Barbados**

Plans to spend £60 million on expanding and upgrading 40-year-old Bridgetown Port were announced (11 November 2003). They would include enlarged berthing facilities, a cruise ship pier, a new sugar terminal and molasses tanks.

### **Cayman Islands**

Investigations into Parmalat, the Italian dairy group hit by massive scandals at the end of 2003, showed that it had used the Cayman Islands tax haven to raise more than £1 billion in funds. Parmalat’s network of finance companies stretched from the Caymans to Mauritius. The Caymans government launched an investigation to find out if people in the islands had committed fraud or money-laundering offences.

## **Grenada**

Prime Minister Keith Mitchell won a third term of office in a general election (27 November 2003). His New National Party won eight of the 15 seats. The National Democratic Congress, which had no seats before, picked up the rest. Mitchell reshuffled his cabinet and among the new faces was Emmalin Pierrel, who had been regional director of the Caribbean Centre of the Commonwealth Youth Programme and a major player in its activities for several years. At 28 she now became Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office with responsibility for Youth Development.

## **Dominica**

Prime Minister Pierre Charles, leader of the Dominica Labour Party, died of a heart attack at the age of 49 (6 January 2004). After a four-hour meeting the party nominated former teacher Roosevelt Skerrit, aged 31, to succeed. Charles had chaired the Caribbean Community in 2003. He had succeeded Roosevelt Douglas as prime minister in 2000 when the latter also died of a heart attack. A new President of Dominica, Nicholas Liverpool, 69, was inaugurated in succession to Vernon Shaw (2 October), who retired.

## **Canada**

Jean Chretien, 69, stepped down after 10 years as Prime Minister (12 December 2003) and was succeeded by the new leader of the Liberal Party, former finance minister Paul Martin. A few days earlier deputy prime minister, finance minister and former foreign minister John Manley quit politics to pursue "other challenges". Manley had challenged Martin for the party leadership. In Martin's new cabinet Bill Graham remained foreign minister, a post Manley was said to want.

Three days before Chretien stepped down he stopped off in Paris on his way back from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Nigeria and was given a glittering farewell banquet in Paris by French President Jacques Chirac. It was the beginning of commemorations for the 400th anniversary of the French settlement in Canada. Samuel de Champlain led the 1604 landings on Sainte-Croix island long before the British moved north of the 49th Parallel.

Soon after Martin took over Washington signalled a change away from the frosty attitude to Canada that had followed Chretien's lack of support for the Iraq war. In December the USA had listed 63 countries whose companies would be eligible to serve as prime contractors for £10.1 billion worth of Iraq contracts. Canada was excluded, along with France and Germany. But at the Special Summit of the Americas in Monterrey President Bush told Martin (13 January) that Canadian companies would now be eligible to bid for contracts to rebuild Iraq.

Defence Minister David Pratt said (19 January) Canadian troops had been worn out by international commitments and needed a rest. Missions in Afghanistan and elsewhere would be scaled down. Canada had been steadily cutting military expenditure, at the same time acting as peacemaker in Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, Cyprus and Afghanistan.

The Supreme Court ruled (23 December) that, under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, parliament can decriminalize possession of small amounts of

marijuana for personal use. Small fines would replace jail sentences, but heavy sentences for trafficking would stay.

A secret paper written for the government by a senior civil servant and obtained in November under the Access to Information Act warned that Canada's huge food exports were at risk from continued use of GM crops. The government had endorsed GM technology as a great chance for Canada, which is the third-largest producer of GM crops after the USA and Argentina.

Canada became the first country to introduce legislation (6 November) to allow the export of cheap generic drugs to poor countries stricken by epidemics such as AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The move followed a World Health Organisation agreement paving the way for the exports. The Canadian legislation would amend the Patents Act so that drug makers could produce patented drugs for export under temporary licence. Approval of the legislation was expected to take some time.

## **Nigeria**

As President Olusegun Obasanjo launched an anti-corruption drive five senior officials including three ex-ministers were charged (23 January 2004) with accepting bribes believed to total more than £1 million. The case was alleged to involve the French technology group Sagem. Obasanjo cited it as an example of how foreign companies perpetuate corruption.

Shell said criminal syndicates were plundering 100 000 barrels of oil a day from the reserves—£600 million in lost revenue each year. The proceeds were being used to buy arms and fan ethnic tensions in the volatile Delta region. The syndicates were said to be run by Lebanese and Russian mafia-style gangs who excavate the ground, locate the pipelines and draw the oil off to a river where barges take it on.

Funsho Kupolokun, former special assistant to President Obasanjo, was appointed managing director of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation in November 2003 to begin to deregulate the petroleum sector. He aimed to increase output, improve transparency and attract overseas and domestic investment. The government would try to seek a 51% stake in the first of Nigeria's four refineries by April 2004.

After talks in January between Vice-President Atiku Abubakar and Vice-President Yang Hyong-sop of North Korea a spokesman said (29 January) Nigeria had been offered ballistic missile technology. Washington expressed concern, but the Nigerians said they had made no commitment and were not pursuing nuclear technology.

Britain said (23 December) it had paid Nigeria £3 million allegedly stolen from the Central Bank during the dictatorship of General Sani Abacha. The money was said to have been confiscated at London airport and ended up in the UK Treasury. Nigeria had threatened court action, accusing the UK of not doing enough to help recover billions of dollars salted abroad by Abacha and his friends. Britain said the alleged seizure amount at London airport was correct, but its Financial Services Authority estimated that between 1996 and 2000 the banks processed more than £1 billion linked to Abacha.

Formation of a new national air carrier, Nigeria Eagle Airlines, to replace Nigeria Airways, was announced by Aviation Minister Isa Yuguda (15 January). Nigeria Airways was on the verge of liquidation. The new company would be

at least 30% owned by South African Airways, 40% by other core owners, and the rest put up for sale.

A 45-year-old father of three was sentenced to death by stoning in Alkaleri, Bauchi state for raping his stepdaughter (14 January). The girl, six months pregnant, was sentenced to 100 strokes of the cane.

### **Sierra Leone**

On a visit to Sierra Leone (6 November 2003) the interim president of Liberia, Gyude Bryant, expressed regret for his country's part in Sierra Leone's civil war. He said: "I beg you to forgive us." Former president Charles Taylor, indicted by the war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone, remained in exile in Calabar, Nigeria, which refused to hand him over.

News that a legal provision had been made in Washington for a \$2 million reward for the capture of an indictee of the tribunal, unnamed but clearly Taylor, angered Nigeria, which said it would resist any attempt to capture him. The UN said Taylor was still meddling in Liberians' affairs and the Bush administration said he must face trial.

Under Commonwealth auspices three High Court judges—two from the UK and one from the Solomon Islands—were sent to Sierra Leone for two years. They would help strengthen the justice system by handling criminal cases, especially fraud and corruption matters.

### **Ghana**

The National Reconciliation Commission investigating human rights violations said (15 January 2003) it would summon former President Jerry Rawlings, on his return from abroad, as well as his security chief, Kojo Tsikata, in relation to the killing of three judges during military rule in 1982. The Commission has the powers of a high court.

### **The Gambia**

In a back-to-the-land policy the men and women of the Gambian army were being turned into farmers. Each platoon was being allocated a number of hectares to cultivate with the aim of achieving sustainable development. Crops include rice, maize, watermelon and bitter tomato, all of which are consumed in the barracks. President Yahya Jammeh promised rewards for the platoon that returned the biggest harvest.

### **Cameroon**

Nigeria handed over 32 border villages near Lake Chad to Cameroon in December 2003. Cameroon also handed over a village to Nigeria. This was in accordance with the International Court of Justice ruling in 2002 which also awarded Cameroon the oil-rich Bokassi peninsula. A joint commission was implementing the ruling, and the hand-over of the peninsula, over which the two countries had gone to war, looked likely to take some time. Commission chairman Alhaji Dahiru Bobbo said the process was slow because emotions were involved. People could find themselves citizens of a completely different country

overnight and structures of customs, administration and security had to be replaced.

In a protest against destruction of crops by cattle in Wum region, northwest Cameroon, 6000 women refused to have sex with their husbands. They also took seven traditional rulers hostage. After two months a commission was set up to look at the grievances and the women called off their strike (16 December).

## **Uganda**

Taban Amin, eldest son of Idi Amin, returned to Kampala (27 October 2003) after 14 years in exile. At a meeting next day President Yoweri Museveni forgave Amin for years of plotting to bring down his government and called for "putting aside our differences and looking to the future". Amin had been living in Kinshasa. He told Museveni he was at his disposal to work under him for the good of Uganda.

Under proposed marriage law reforms men wanting a second wife would have to ask their existing wife's permission. They would also need district council approval. Bigamists would risk five years in jail. Women would have a right to veto their husbands' property decisions. The practice by which a widow is expected to marry her deceased husband's brother would be banned. Women would also get the right to refuse sexual intercourse. The Uganda Muslim Supreme Council objected to much of the bill, which was part of Museveni's programmes to boost women's position. Muslims make up 16% of Uganda's population.

In November Museveni referred to the newly formed International Criminal Court the actions of the Lord's Day Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda in abducting children and conscripting them into brutal and violent activity. LRA rebels killed 44 in a dawn raid on a camp for people fleeing fighting in the north (5 February).

## **Kenya**

The IMF ended a three-year freeze on foreign aid by approving a £148 million loan to Kenya (23 November 2003). The programme was suspended in 2000 because of widespread corruption and former president Daniel arap Moi's resistance to economic reform. Among steps now being taken by Finance Minister David Mwiraria were cuts in civil service wage bills, and privatization of state telecoms, power utilities, railways and ports. Kenyan officials said that in a six-month investigation they had uncovered £573 million of illegal gains made by politicians and civil servants. The Kenyan gemstone company Goldenburg International was at the centre of a public inquiry. It was said up to £23 billion had been stolen from the taxpayer in fictitious deals. The owner of Goldberg denied any wrongdoing.

John Githongo, permanent secretary for governance and ethics, said (21 December) that in the inquiries Moi would not be "subject to the kind of scrutiny given to others". This was because he had handed over power peacefully when the opposition won its landslide victory in the last elections. He said: "I agree that a lot of evil things happened under his leadership, but a deliberate choice has been made not to target President Moi." Earlier it had been reported that

attempts to remove Githongo, former head of Transparency International in Kenya, from the presidency had been thwarted.

President Mwai Kibaki said the 16-party National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that had won power after Moi's long reign was now obsolete and should be transformed into a single party after grassroots elections. Public Works Minister Raila Odinga, leader of one of the main coalition partners, the Liberal Democratic Party, said the coalition could be dissolved only through negotiations. Kibaki was believed to have made the statement in a bid to end feuding within the coalition.

The tourist industry reported its worst year for four decades. The IMF estimated that the country has lost a percentage point in economic growth as a result. Threats of more al-Qaeda attacks and cancellation of flights to Mombasa for four months were held to blame, but political instability, failing infrastructure and competition from South Africa were all seen as factors.

### **Malawi**

Vice-President Justin Malewezi quit the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) and joined the opposition People's Progressive Movement (31 December 2003). President Bakili Muluzi, who had tried and failed to secure a third term in office, called on him to stand down as his deputy but he was legally advised that he could stay in post unless he resigned or was impeached. Malewezi was sidestepped in May when Muluzi named economist Bingu wa Mutharika as the UDF presidential candidate for the 2004 elections. Later the UDF made a loose alliance with the second largest opposition party, the Alliance of Democracy (Aford), and its leader became second vice-president.

A Commonwealth expert team of two observed the final days of voter registration (12–17 January 2003) in preparation for May general elections.

### **Tanzania**

Prospectors were becoming increasingly optimistic about the potential of oil exploration in a large area of the coastal belt, the Rufiji river valley and delta, and the western flank of the Great Rift Valley. Companies from the Netherlands, Brazil, Romania, UK, Ireland and France were involved. Environmental problems would be many. Some of the Zanzibar islands are the home of a rich marine habitat. Oil exploration in the area dates back to 1954, but as Western governments searched for alternatives to the Middle East, offshore Tanzania was being seen as a promising drilling site. Energy Minister Daniel Yona told a Commonwealth investment conference in 2003: "Oil? We can smell it ..."

The UN tribunal prosecuting those said to be responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda opened proceedings in Arusha against four ex-ministers (6 November 2003). The hearing was expected to last two years. So far the tribunal had convicted 12 members of the former Rwanda regime. The four ministers were arrested in Cameroon and Kenya in 1999 and pleaded not guilty at an initial hearing soon afterwards. They are alleged to have incited people to eliminate Tutsis and their accomplices.

Drought was hitting Tanzania hard at the end of 2003. The USA agreed to supply 15 000 tons of maize worth £3.2 million—one-third of the amount

requested by the World Food Programme, which had agreed to provide 45 000 tons over six months.

### **Mozambique**

A Commonwealth team of two—Esther Audu, chair of Abuja Municipal Area Council, Nigeria, and Leshele Thoahlane, chair of the Lesotho Independent Electoral Commission—observed the local elections in Mozambique (19 November 2003) held in advance of the 2004 presidential elections. The observers said the elections “credibly reflected the will of the Mozambique people”.

### **Zambia**

The trial of former President Frederick Chiluba opened (9 December 2003). He faced 168 charges of theft from state funding during 10 years in office involving £27 million. The Supreme Court upheld (21 December) death sentences on 44 men involved in the failed coup against the Chiluba government in 1997. Ten other soldiers who had appealed were acquitted.

Health Minister Brian Chituwo said 2000 nurses trained in Zambia were now working in the UK. The University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka, with places for 1400 nurses, had only 700.

British satirical columnist Roy Clarke, of the independent *Post* newspaper, was given 24 hours to leave the country (6 January 2004) for insulting President Levy Mwanawasa and his ministers, but then a court blocked his deportation. Interior Minister Ronnie Shikapwasha said he would not recognize the court order. Clarke, who had been in Zambia for 42 years, went into hiding with his wife, who is a human rights activist. His column had been inspired by Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. It called the President “a foolish elephant” and his ministers giraffes and baboons.

Zambian troops took part in a 12-day exercise to enhance peacekeeping skills that was part of a French government initiative directed at selected Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. Troops from Tanzania and Zimbabwe also took part. The object was to train a cross-border contingent of up to 150 paratroopers able to respond to crises and disasters.

### **Zimbabwe**

In the wake of Zimbabwe’s withdrawal from the Commonwealth President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa spent three hours in Harare (18 December 2003) trying to persuade President Robert Mugabe to revive talks with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). He also met MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai, but Mugabe was still not prepared to talk unless the opposition dropped its High Court challenge to his re-election in 2002, the first hearing of which opened on 3 January. A month later (22 January) Mbeki claimed government and opposition were now going to negotiate, but both sides said there had been no movement.

On his return from the Abuja summit Mbeki said the Commonwealth had lost sight of the land issue which was the core of the problems in Zimbabwe. He denounced the continued suspension of Zimbabwe, which precipitated its withdrawal, in his weekly letter to the African National Congress, saying the

Commonwealth did not have the interests of Zimbabwe's people at heart. He singled out Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Secretary-General Don McKinnon and accused Britain, the UN and the EU of not honouring commitments to help finance land redistribution after colonial rule left most farms in the hands of the white minority.

Days after pulling Zimbabwe out of the Commonwealth as the Heads of Government left Abuja, President Robert Mugabe travelled to Switzerland for a UN conference on bridging the technology gap between rich and poor countries. He had been given a visa even though Switzerland had followed the EU and USA in imposing a travel ban on him, his wife and 77 associates. He addressed (10 December 2003) the leaders of 60 nations, accusing the UK and USA of using their technological superiority "to challenge our sovereignty through hostile and malicious broadcasts".

When Tsvangirai took the stand again in his resumed treason trial (19 January), he admitted he had discussed "eliminating" Mugabe, but said he had been trapped into using a word he only meant in a political sense. The hearings had already extended over nearly a year.

Editor Ian Wetherell and two reporters of the weekly *Independent* newspaper were accused of criminal defamation (10 January) for reporting that Mugabe had commandeered an Air Zimbabwe jet to take a three-week break in Malaysia. The three were held in jails for a weekend, then released on bail.

The banned independent *Daily News* continued its running battle in the courts to resume publication. The government ignored four rulings ordering it to allow publication, but the paper was back on the streets on 22 January. It had published only once—on 25 October—since being banned in September.

In his report to the House of Commons on the Commonwealth summit British Prime Minister Tony Blair said half the population of Zimbabwe now relied on food aid—with Britain the leading cash donor.

At the beginning of 2004 more than one-third of Zimbabwe's 17 commercial banks could not honour customers' cheques. Six banks did not have the necessary cash to pay other banks. Inflation had trebled in a year from 199% at the end of 2002 to 619.5%. Industrial share prices had halved in four months. When a new foreign exchange auction came into operation (12 January) the Zimbabwe dollar official rate fell from 824 to 4195 to the US dollar. A tiny majority of political chiefs and executives were profiting from the financial distortions. A businessman said: "I put Z\$450 million in a bank and in six weeks made a profit of Z\$143 million, but it was all perfectly legal."

John Nkomo, chairman of the ruling ZANU-PF party said (31 December) that the government had repossessed half a million acres of former white-owned land allocated to black farmers who were found to have one farm already. It would be reallocated "to deserving people". Nkomo chaired a committee set up by Mugabe after public outcry over political favouritism in the land reform programme. Later Nkomo admitted that in some areas fewer than half the black farmers allotted land had started farming it. Many could not get bank loans.

An application at London's Bow Street by human rights campaigner Peter Tatchell to issue an arrest and extradition warrant for Mugabe on charges of torture (14 January) was rejected. District Judge Timothy Workman said that, as head of state, the President had absolute immunity from prosecution. Tatchell cited the case of former Chilean dictator General Pinochet who was arrested when he visited Britain in 1998. He said: "What is the point of having laws

against torture if the main abusers, heads of state, are exempt from prosecution?"

Merfyn Temple, who spent 31 years in Zimbabwe as a missionary, flew there at the age of 83 in a one-man demonstration against human rights abuses. He was locked up for four days by police and deported back to Britain.

## **South Africa**

GlaxoSmithKline and other pharmaceutical companies said they would grant voluntary licences to generic drug makers in South Africa to produce cheap versions of their patented AIDS drugs. The licensees would be able to export to 47 African countries. A month's supply of the drugs was expected to drop from £107 to £27. After the decision Finance Minister Trevor Manuel said £1.1 billion over three years was to be spent on the drugs—four times current spending had been allocated over three years (20 November 2003). South Africa's anti-retroviral programme would be the biggest in the world. But in February it was announced that the government AIDS budget for the current financial year was being cut by two-thirds because of slow delivery after the decision to supply free anti-retroviral drugs in all state hospitals. The UN expressed alarm. A huge pop concert in Capetown (29 November) to raise money for the fight against AIDS was attended by Nelson Mandela, who heaped praise on the musicians for their efforts.

The African National Congress launched its campaign for the 2004 elections (11 January), pledging to halve unemployment and poverty within 10 years. Mbeki told 30 000 supporters in Pietermaritzberg: "Yesterday was worse than today and tomorrow will be better than today." Opposition Democratic Alliance leader Tony Leon scorned the promises as impractical.

Former president F. W. de Klerk told his New National Party on 3 February—the 14th anniversary of his speech that marked the end of apartheid—to work in coalition with the ANC in the forthcoming election.

Alarm arose from the revelation in November that 15 out of every 100 South Africans had obtained their jobs through bogus education credentials. Leading universities had been forced to create a National Qualification Register to help employers confirm the veracity of academic claims. The Register is updated after every graduation ceremony. In two years the University of South Africa in Pretoria prosecuted 87 people for degree fraud. It won 86 convictions.

A government commission headed by former chief justice Joos Hefer began an inquiry into charges of spying and abuse of power by senior ANC figures. Charges had been made against director of public prosecutions Bulelani Ngcuka, who had decided to drop criminal charges involving an arms deal against Vice-President Zuma. It was alleged Ngcuka had once operated as an agent for the apartheid regime.

Mbeki visited Haiti for its 200th anniversary independence celebrations (1 January 2004). Opponents of the embattled President Bertrand Aristide warned they might attack VIPs and Mbeki's helicopter was shot at on the ground. He was not present. South Africa donated nearly £1 million to the celebrations and sent a naval vessel. The opposition at home called the trip an expensive fiasco, but Mbeki said it was to cement ties between Africa and communities of the African diaspora.

The flood of Zimbabweans into South Africa was creating an underclass. In the first nine months of 2003 more than 40 000 had been arrested and deported across the border—more than all those repatriated between 1994 and 2002. Only 11 had ever been given political asylum. But tens of thousands with no legal status remained, not entitled to help from the South African government or from overseas.

Mbeki signed into law in January the Land Rights Amendment Act giving the government power to acquire land forcibly where farmers have been “unreasonably” opposed to selling or have demanded higher than market prices for their properties. Farmers must be given “just and equitable compensation” for their loss, but their right of appeal is restricted to the amount of compensation. Officials said the law would be used only in a small number of cases where talks are deadlocked. More than 45 000 of 70 000 land claims made since the end of apartheid had been settled. White farmers own 90% of farmland in South Africa.

Mbeki declared six of the nine provinces disaster areas because the worst drought in a century had left 15 million people short of food. Some 3.5 million people in rural areas were getting emergency water by lorry. In some areas the water table had dropped 30 ft. Rainfall was only 30% of normal, and many black subsistence farmers were facing ruin.

In a heated parliamentary debate (14 November) Deputy President Jacob Zuma threw the weight of the African National Congress behind plans to rename Pretoria, the capital, Tshwane. He said South Africans had the right to reclaim original place names as part of the effort to rectify past injustices. Afrikaners reacted angrily. Greater Pretoria was renamed Tshwane in 2000, but the capital had been allowed to remain. Pretoria was named after Andreas Pretorius, the Afrikaner who led the victory against the Zulus in the battle of Blood River in 1838. Tshwane was the name of the chief who ruled the area before the white settlers came in the 19th century. The city was founded in 1855 and became the capital in 1902.

Agreement to exhume the bodies and give a proper burial to the thousands of Zulu warriors interned in mass graves in the Anglo-Zulu War was reached on the 125th anniversary of the Battle of Isandlwana (22 January). Zulu King Goodwill Zwelintini and Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party, had long campaigned for a memorial to the warriors.

On the eve of the New York court hearing in which two groups of tens of thousands of victims of apartheid are suing many multinational and South African companies for “aiding and abetting” apartheid one of the groups sacked controversial US lawyer Ed Fagan representing them. Fagan had accused companies of ripping off South African workers “under cover of apartheid”. He had filed a similar lawsuit in London. President Thabo Mbeki objected earlier in the year to the overseas hearings, saying it was unacceptable that “matters ... central to the future of our country should be adjudicated in foreign courts which bear no responsibility for the well-being of the country”.

## **Botswana**

An alarming decline in the lion population—down 90% since 1980—was said to be due to FIV, the feline equivalent of HIV, and to licensed shooting. In some areas about 70% of animals were said to be FIV-infected. Hunters, mostly

American, pay up to £4000 for the privilege of shooting a lion. In 2001 the government vowed to stop lion hunting, but instead set up a system to recompense farmers for livestock killed by lions.

### **Swaziland**

King Mswati III, Africa's last absolute monarch, asked the cabinet and parliament in mid-January 2004 to approve £8 million to build nine new palaces for seven of his 10 wives and two future brides. A royal official said Swazi culture did not allow the King, now 35, to continue using his father's royal residences to accommodate his wives. After the general election in October, which was boycotted by opposition groups, the King chose most of the ministers. Swaziland was suffering severe drought, 40% unemployment, and carried an £145 million budget deficit. About 35% of the population was believed to be infected with HIV/AIDS.

### **Namibia**

Black farmers reached agreement with a white farmers' group and called off plans to invade 15 farms (7 November 2003). The government said it would not allow any illegal land occupations. It is pursuing the principle of "willing buyer-willing seller". No one is forced to sell but if they do the state gets first refusal. A government official said: "Let us be patient and follow the adopted policy of land reform. I do not see us winning via any other route." Six per cent of Namibians are white and 4000 mostly white farmers own almost half the arable land.

The trial began in October of 121 people accused of belonging to the Caprivi Liberation Army, which launched an uprising in the Caprivi strip four years ago. Sixteen died before the army crushed the rebellion. Many suspects, who say they were abducted from neighbouring countries, sued the government for torture and wrongful arrest. Eleven died in custody. Before the trial opened the accused sang independence songs and shouted "Viva Caprivi".

### **Cyprus**

Elections in the Turkish north of the island (14 December 2003) ended in a dead-heat between anti-reunification parties and their opponents. The rival blocs took 25 seats each in the 50-member parliament. The pro-reunification Republican Turkish party (CTP) won 19 seats and the ruling National Unity Party (UBP) 18. Another party allied with the CTP won six seats and the party in coalition with the UBP took seven. Prime Minister Dervis Eroglu resigned and after some delay the President, Rauf Denktash, nominated Mehmet Ali Talat as leader of the largest party, the CTP, to succeed him. Talat agreed (13 January) to take over as prime minister of a coalition government by teaming up with the rightwing Democratic Party headed by Denktash's son, Sardar. Their two parties would work towards reunification.

Denktash comes up for re-election as president in 2005. After a visit to Ankara he said he would discuss the UN plan. Turkish political and military leaders pledged support for new talks, having been urged on by

European Commission President Romano Prodi on a visit to Ankara (15 January) and by pressure from President Bush when Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan visited Washington (28 January). Talat's aim was to restart quickly the UN-sponsored talks with the Greek Cypriots so that Cyprus could join the European Union on 1 May as a reunified state.

A month before the election 10 000 Turkish Cypriots demonstrated against their government's granting of citizenship to thousands of mainland Turks. It was seen as an attempt by Denktash to increase the anti-reunification vote. A visit to North Cyprus by Erdogan (15 November) upset the Cyprus government because it seemed to be an attempt to stop the pro-settlement parties winning the upcoming election.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Abuja in December called for a political settlement that would allow a reunited Cyprus to join the EU. It regretted that Denktash remained negative and was hindering resumption of talks on the UN plan. In a last-minute bid to get a settlement before 1 May UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan invited (5 February 2003) Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders to restart the talks.

### **Malta**

As the country prepared to enter the European Union a lack of linguists able to translate its annual tens of thousands of pages of documentation a year into Maltese gave Brussels a big headache. Malta had insisted that Maltese become an official EU language, yet it is spoken by only 400 000 people and finding translators and interpreters proved tough. Only four applicants for the 135 jobs made it to the second round and they all failed. The EU spends £483 million a year on interpreters and translators. With enlargement the figure could rise to £700 million.

### **Gibraltar**

Chief Minister Peter Caruana won a third term of office in elections (27 November 2003). His Social Democratic Party won 51% of the vote—12% more than its main rival, the Socialist Labour Party led by former chief minister Joe Bossano. Caruana's winning margin was slightly lower than in 2000 and the turnout was also down, at 75%.

### **United Kingdom**

In a single year the number of international students studying in UK universities and higher education jumped by 23%. In 2002–03 non-European Union students totalled 174 575—up from 142 000 the year before. A main reason for the rise was the universities' growing financial crisis and their need to take full fee-paying students—a burning political issue in Westminster as 2004 began. The number of Chinese and Indian students was up by 80%, with Nigerians, Ghanaians and Bangladeshis not far behind.

Home Secretary David Blunkett on a visit to Pakistan and India announced in Mirpur (3 February 2004) that visa restrictions which had stopped many of the 100 000 Pakistanis who travel to Britain every year were to be lifted. The big Kashmiri communities in Bradford and Sheffield come from Mirpur, which

ranks third for visa applications to Britain after Lagos and Mumbai. Much of the visa service had been suspended in May 2002 when most visa staff left the country because it was unsafe.

In India Blunkett signed an agreement to exchange counter-terrorism intelligence and to ensure that Indian visitors and rejected asylum-seekers who stay in Britain without permission would be returned within weeks rather than months. About 500 000 Indians visit Britain every year.

### **1973 Records made Public**

Classified Commonwealth documents up to 1973 were made public in January 2004. They include records of the Ottawa CHOGM, the Commonwealth Sanctions Committee, and other files relating to the Rhodesia crisis. The list of files is on the website [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org).

### **Centre for Commonwealth Education**

Professor Christopher Colclough, Director of the Global Monitoring Report on Education for All at UNESCO in Paris, was named as the first Director of the new Centre at Cambridge University. The Centre will be funded mainly from the proceeds of the sale of the Kensington High Street building of the Commonwealth Institute, which was scheduled to close in mid-year. Formation of the new Centre was agreed at the Abuja summit. It aims to "help address the educational challenge facing the Commonwealth. It will allow practitioners, experts and policy makers to communicate across the Commonwealth." Professor Colclough, who is also Professorial Fellow in Development Economics at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, was expected to take up his new duties in the second half of 2004.

### **Association of Commonwealth Universities**

The Commonwealth Universities Database Online Service (CUDOS) went live in September 2003. It offers information to help find people, study options, research areas or universities around the world. It also provides targeted information with access to: more than 500 listed higher education institutions in 36 countries; 178 000 named senior academic and administrative staff members; 23 000 listed academic departments; and 58 000 listed phone numbers, fax numbers and e-mails in 45 administrative areas. The council of the Association of Commonwealth Universities elected (27 November 2003) as its chairman Professor Goolam Mohamedbhai, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius since 1995.

### **Around the Commonwealth**

When the new Commonwealth Chairperson-in-Office President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria visited the Commonwealth Secretariat (23 January 2003) for talks with the Secretary-General, he also addressed the staff, held a reception for the High Commissioners in Marlborough House and gave a press conference.

A workshop aimed at helping police and prosecutors in Africa to enhance their counter-terrorism skills and knowledge was held in Windhoek, Namibia

(2–6 February). Nine Commonwealth countries and two others (Ethiopia and Sudan) were represented, as well as such bodies as the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, Interpol and the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group.

One hundred senior officials responsible for national economic planning and trade development from 24 countries attended an Executive Forum for Small States in Trinidad and Tobago (18–21 January). The aim was to improve national export strategy management. Delegates came from Africa, Asia and the Pacific as well as the Caribbean.

MPs, party managers and civil society representatives from 13 Commonwealth countries met in Maputo, Mozambique (26–30 January) to discuss the contribution of government and opposition in the democratic process. The workshop was organized by the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum and FECIV, Mozambique, a democracy NGO.

President A. P. J. Abdul Kalam of India presented to Sridath Ramphal, Commonwealth Secretary-General 1975–90, the 2002 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development (19 November 2003). The award, made by the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust, is regarded as the Indian 'Nobel'. Previous recipients have included US President Jimmy Carter and Soviet Union leader Mikhail Gorbachev. Recently Ramphal has been facilitator for Belize in the OAS process to resolve its dispute with Guatemala.

The 49th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference was held in Dhaka (4–12 October 2002). Discussion topics included reconciling human rights with cultural diversity, anti-terrorism legislation and the relationship between the executive and parliament. More than 300 delegates from 160 legislatures attended. At the time of CHOGM in Abuja the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, British Council and Commonwealth Foundation ran a workshop on gender issues.

One of the many reports before heads of government in Abuja was *Building on Achievements*, which records implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development. It reveals that 24 member countries have more women MPs since 1999. Top countries are St Vincent and the Grenadines and Guyana, with rises from 4.6% to 22.7% and 3.3% to 20%, respectively. But 15 countries recorded a reduction.

A new phase of the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative (CYCI) began in the Caribbean with 2.7 million Guyana dollars being made available to young people aged between 18 and 30 in Guyana who want a micro-credit loan to start their own business. Since its inception in 1996 the CYCI has made £300 000 available for more than 160 projects in the Caribbean region.

A Commonwealth workshop for Caribbean civil society and government representatives on how to help governments protect and promote human rights was held in Kingston, Jamaica (4–5 February).

Workshops in Maputo and Kingston on planning for e-governance took place in November. At both it was emphasized that, if implemented effectively, e-governance benefits government and individual, but only if stakeholders have trust and confidence in the business environment, legal framework and valid laws of evidence.

A two-week training conference on Supporting Public Sector Reform was

held in Wellington in October with 27 participants from around the Commonwealth.

New Commonwealth Secretariat publications at the end of 2003 included:

*Commonwealth Human Rights Law Digest*, Vol. 1. A periodical compendium of the latest human rights law across 50 common law jurisdictions around the Commonwealth. Summaries of decisions, many unreported elsewhere.

*Engendering Budgets—A Practitioners' Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender-Responsive Budgets*. By Debbie Bujdklender and Guy Hewitt, 108 pp.

*A Framework for Heritage, Multiculturalism and Citizenship Education*. Edited by Amina Osman and Brenda Leibowitz, 136 pp.

*Investment Incentives in Commonwealth Developed Countries and the WTO Investment Negotiations*. Edited by Michael Davenport, 192 pp.

*Commonwealth Public Administration Reform 2004*. Edited by Richard Green, 388 pp.

## HODSON MEMORIAL PRIZE

This is an Annual Award by *The Round Table*, in memory of the journal's late Editor, Harry Hodson, and to mark his association with *The Round Table* for nearly 70 years. It is awarded for a publishable article, contributed by an undergraduate *or* graduate of a recognized university in the Commonwealth. The first award, made for the year 2001, was announced early in 2002.

### **Topic**

The topic may be freely chosen by applicants, but should be of significance to the contemporary Commonwealth, should demonstrate freshness of material and analysis, and where possible will be of interest to the media and policy makers. These articles will be refereed, and assessors will take into account qualities of reportage and/or awareness and use of relevant theory.

### **Length and deadlines**

Applicants for the award should contribute articles of 3000 to 5000 words in length by the end of October 2004, of a standard appropriate to publication by *The Round Table*. Entrants will be judged on the clarity and readability of their contributions.

### **Other conditions**

Applicants should be aged under 30 at the time of submission of an article. Although they must be an undergraduate or have graduated from a recognized university in the Commonwealth, it is not a requirement of the award that they retain an academic affiliation.

### **Judging**

Judging will be by a panel of three, chaired by the Editor of *The Round Table*, normally including the Chairman of *The Round Table* and a representative of the publisher. Their decision will be final. Although only one Hodson Prize will be awarded each year, the Editor may offer publication to other entries submitted. Applicants should retain copies of their articles, which will not normally be returned.

### **Hodson Memorial Prize**

The Prize will have two components. First, publication of the winning article in *The Round Table* in the year in question. Second, a sum of £500 Sterling. Where the winner is resident in the UK, or another Commonwealth country in which *The Round Table* holds activities, it is hoped that the prizewinner may be invited to take part (e.g. by attending a Round Table dinner). *The Round Table* will seek to publicize the name of the winner.

### **Applications**

Entries for the third award, in 2004, should be sent by 30 October 2004 to Professor Andy Williams, Editor, *The Round Table*, Department of Politics and International Relations, Rutherford College, University of Kent, Canterbury CT2 7NX, UK. Email: Roundtable@kent.ac.uk. Entries should be clearly marked 'Hodson Memorial Prize'.