

Algeria attempts to overhaul system

CAIRO, March 18. — Algeria is attempting to completely overhaul its economic and political system, hoping to make the former more market-oriented and the latter more open, reports ANI.

More than a dozen political parties have since been legalized. The freedom of expression displayed on radio, television and in the Press, and inflections which often attract tens of thousands of people, is unsurpassed in West Asia.

But Algerians are discovering that the path of economic reform and political freedom can be demanding, as the President, Mr Chadli Bendjedid, has realized since he began his bold economic reforms.

He has made abundantly clear his conviction that freedom to speak, publish and form political parties must accompany the radical changes in the management of the economy which the government is seeking to implement.

The Prime Minister speaks of a market-based economy, an expression which would have been viewed as total heresy only 15 months ago.

Three challenges confront the authorities. The first is to absorb the "informal" economy — or that

U.S. contractor pleads guilty

WASHINGTON, March 18. — The USA's 10th largest defence contractor, Grumman Corporation, has pleaded guilty to illegally trafficking in secret Pentagon budget reports in the early eighties and agreed to pay \$2.5 million in fines and penalties, reports PTL.

Grumman is the fourth major contractor to plead guilty in Operation Uncover, a Federal sting operation to uncover a network of corporate executives who obtained and traded long-range Pentagon budget documents to boost their chances of getting the proposed defence contracts.

Boeing Co., RCA Corp. and Hughes Aircraft have already pleaded guilty.

The document-trafficking network targeted in Operation Uncover came to light last autumn during the trial of Richard Lee Fowler, a former Boeing executive, who was convicted of 39 related charges.

Fowler is still in jail for refusing to cooperate with a grand jury seeking his Government source for the classified documents he obtained.

AID official admits taking bribes

WASHINGTON, March 18. — A deputy director of the Agency For International Development, Mr Donald F. Enos, has pleaded guilty to charges of accepting bribes from a medical consulting firm that won \$2.6 million in Government contracts with his help, reports PTL.

Mr Enos, who directed an AID programme to provide medicine, food and clothing to Nicaraguan rebels, admitted before a Federal Court on Friday that over the last five years he had accepted \$93,000 in bribes from Mr George Kraus of Kraus International.

The AID employees have been the subject of several investigations in recent months.

Mr James M. Rickson, chief of AID's malaria research and treatment programme, pleaded guilty last month to charges of lying to a Government agency and accepting an illegal gratuity.

In 1988, an employee in the AID Congroller's Office admitted to funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars in AID money into his personal accounts.

Bazoft no naive reporter

JERUSALEM, March 18. — Evidence is emerging that Farzad Bazoft, the 31-year-old, Iranian-born journalist hanged in Baghdad on Thursday, was not the naive, over-enthusiastic young reporter his Observer editor thought.

A handwritten confession, released yesterday by the Iraqi authorities, claimed that he had been in contact with an Israeli intelligence agent he named as "Mike", and with a Scotland Yard officer in London.

Scotland Yard confirmed that he had indeed been in touch with them, but claimed he was offering "information" on Lord Lucan, a British aristocrat who vanished after his children's nanny had been found murdered.

The Home Office also confirmed reports in Fleet Street newspapers that Mr Bazoft had served an 18-months prison sentence in Britain for robbing a building society branch in 1981.

The Statesman has also learned that Mr Bazoft was expelled from Tunisia two years ago when he was alleged to have photographed sensitive buildings.

The Palestine Liberation Organization, which has its headquarters in Tunis, declined to join Jordan in appealing to the Iraqi President, Mr Saddam Hussein, to exercise clemency because of this episode.



A South African mother raises her fist in a Black Power salute at a mass burial on Saturday for those killed during two weeks of factional violence in the Katlehong township east of Johannesburg.

Russians vote for local bodies

From ERIC SILVER

MOSCOW, March 18. — Millions of voters in Estonia, Latvia, Russian Federation, Byelorussia and Ukraine voted today to elect their Parliaments and local councils, reports PTL.

In Estonia and Latvia, it was the first round polling while in the rest three it was the second round.

The Popular Fronts' candidates, campaigning for independence of Estonia and Latvia are expected to do well in both the republics but their victory would not be as sweeping as the Sajudis' in Lithuania.

The Sajudis unseated the Communists as only 20% of the 3.5 million population is non-Lithuanian. But in Estonia and Latvia the non-indigenous population makes up between 35 and 46% and these voters are certain to vote for candidates opposing independence.

In the Russian Federation, Byelorussia and Ukraine, the second round has been necessitated as very few candidates made it in the first round.

The Russian Federation is witnessing a struggle between the conservative and radical Communists and in the two other republics, Popular Fronts are the main challengers to the Communists.

Poland local polls on May 27

WARSAW, March 18. — The Polish Prime Minister, Mr Tadeusz Mazowiecki, said today that post-war Poland's first fully democratic local elections would be held on May 27, reports Reuter.

Poland's first partially-free national elections were held last June.

No going back : Lithuania

MOSCOW, March 18. — Mr Vitautas said the Sajudis rejected the suggestion. The present Government in Lithuania was democratically elected and there was no need for a referendum on the issue, he said.

A referendum has been suggested in a Draft Bill on the mechanism of secession. The Bill is to be considered by the USSR Supreme Soviet.

Mr Landsbergis was meeting today two senior Soviet military officers, amidst reports of troop movements and military aircraft flights around the Baltic Republic.

Mr Landsbergis was meeting the region's military commander, General Vladimir Achalov, Chief of Commando Units, the President's office said.

No reason was given for their pendent Communist Party, Mr Alvisas girdas Brazauskas, who had been appointed the Republic's Deputy Prime Minister, he said.

The group had been authorized to hold preliminary talks when the no indications as to where the talks would begin, Mr Vitautas said.

In a speech to Parliament yesterday Mr Gorbachov that troop movements would assure Mr Gorbachov that Lithuania, but said he did not lic would protect the safety of all known regular army manoeuvres. He said more information was needed, as quickly as possible, negotiations on settling the issues arising out of declaration on restoring Lithuania's independence, he said.

Mr Vitautas said a draft of the reply was discussed by the Lithuanian Parliament yesterday and would be finalized today.

Mr Gorbachov sent the telegram to the new Lithuanian President, Mr Vitautas Landsbergis, with a copy of the resolution of the Congress of People's Deputies, the Soviets' Super Parliament, declaring null and void the independence proclamation.

Mr Gorbachov's telegram gave Mr Landsbergis three days to reply. The telegram has been interpreted as an ultimatum by certain circles, but the Lithuanian Government did not consider it so instead believing it to be an invitation for talks.

Though Lithuania has proclaimed independence, its Deputies would continue to attend the USSR Supreme Soviet observers, Mr Vitautas said.

The Lithuanian Deputies had boycotted the voting to elect Mr Gorbachov as the country's first Executive President last week. Asked about the possibility of holding a referendum in the Republic on the independence issue,

Mr Vitautas said the Sajudis rejected the suggestion. The present Government in Lithuania was democratically elected and there was no need for a referendum on the issue, he said.

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India, Bhutan to have wildlife corridor

The Governments of India and Bhutan are working for the creation of a wildlife corridor along the Indo-Bhutan border to help free passage of animals between the two countries, according to an official release, reports PTL.

India and Bhutan have a long common border along the four States of West Bengal, Assam, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

The forestry border along the foothills of Bhutan has been subject to extensive degradation due to deforestation, poaching, over-grazing, mining, encroachments, forest fire and land-use changes. This degradation has led to fragmentation and isolation of wildlife habitats.

Among the many animals found, there are Asiatic elephant, tiger, gaur, Asiatic buffalo, sambar, one-horned rhinoceros and many species of reptiles and turtles, the rare golden langur and pygmy hog.

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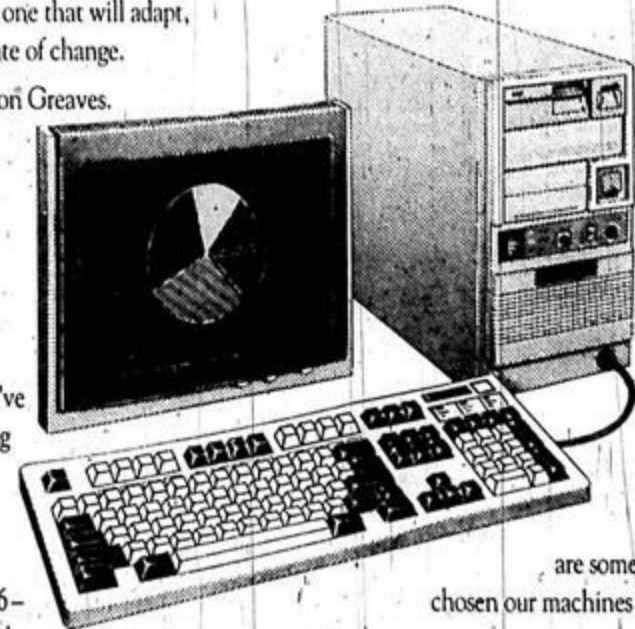
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