

By JOHN VINOCUR  
Merkel is upbeat about U.S.

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for 2 boys from Brazil

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## Netanyahu stands by in an uncertain Israel

Ex-leader could be heir to his old rival

By Steven Erlanger

**TEL AVIV:** Benjamin Netanyahu says his fondest memory of Ariel Sharon is his first. During the 1973 Yom Kippur war, as Sharon was planning the daring Suez Canal crossing that turned the tide of that war, Netanyahu and another future prime minister, Ehud Barak, were sent to the small armored personnel carrier Sharon was using as a command post.

"Here we were, three future prime ministers, though no one knew it then, in this small APC," Netanyahu said in an interview on Monday. "Sharon was very calm and very resolute, and said, 'If you want to help, Egyptian commandos are stalking our armored positions — why don't you go and hunt them?' We took that as our mission," Netanyahu said.

"The meeting lasted maybe 10 minutes, but it was enough to form an indelible impression of this man and his invaluable contributions to Israel and its wars," Netanyahu said, including "the war against terror, the war between the wars."

All that, he said, even separately from a remarkable political career, made Sharon "one of the great generals that the Jewish people and state have put up in modern times."

But Netanyahu and Sharon were also fierce rivals, even when in the same government and party, and Netanyahu and his allies were the main reasons that Sharon decided just weeks ago to break with Likud and form a new centrist party, Kadima, bringing some of Likud's best ministers with him.

With Sharon now incapacitated from a massive stroke, Netanyahu stands to gain politically from Israelis worried about security and the rising power of the radical Islamic Hamas movement in the Palestinian world.

In the 90-minute interview, he portrayed himself as Sharon's most direct inheritor, especially in the single issue that Israelis care most about — security and dealings with the Palestinians.

Netanyahu wants to bring a lot of Likud voters who were tempted by Kadima and Sharon back into the fold before the March 28 election, and if he can, there is a good chance that he may find himself back in government or even, just possibly, as prime minister.

### Sharon leaving coma

Prime Minister Sharon of Israel showed some improvement on Monday, breathing on his own and slightly moving his right arm and leg as doctors began bringing him out of a coma. *Page 8*

He refused to speak on the record about political strategies, saying he wanted to keep a public moratorium on political debate while the proper focus was on Sharon's "battle for life."

Still, Netanyahu was eager to praise Sharon and their partnership, especially in the wide-ranging economic reform that has helped produce growth in Israel last year of 5.2 percent. "We transformed Israel's economy from a monopolistic, high tax, statist economy into a more vibrant free market one, and we rescued Israel from an Argentinian-style collapse," Netanyahu said, citing challenges to unions, raising the retirement age, opening up the banking market and enduring a four-month general strike.

"It was a very important passage for

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Rina Castelnovo for The NYT  
Netanyahu, in his Tel Aviv office Monday, says Sharon taught him "how to wait."



Mustafa Ozer/Agence France-Presse  
Residents of Dogubayazit, in eastern Turkey, waiting in line Monday for a checkup at the emergency room of the town's hospital.

## Bird flu's spread in east Turkey

By Elisabeth Rosenthal

**DOGUBAYAZIT, Turkey:** Almost three weeks ago, poultry started dying in biblical numbers in the town of Diyadin in eastern Turkey, Mehmet Yenigun said Monday. In two days, the village said, all of the birds — thousands of them — were dead.

Alarmed farmers rushed to local officials to report the "plague" and to seek advice and help. But one official was away on vacation. Another, the regional veterinarian, took down the particulars and said someone would come investigate. No one has so far.

"Could it be bird flu?" one of the farmers had asked. They were told, "No, don't worry about that."

Yenigun did what farmers have done for centuries here in these high, snow-covered hills: He, his wife and their six children slaughtered and ate their 12 chickens. He threw two pigeons over the fence. "I don't know, maybe dogs carried them off," he said. That could have spread the infection.

On Sunday, officials finally reported an outbreak of bird flu in Agri Province, which includes the village of Diyadin, though they have not yet reported an outbreak in Diyadin itself.

The slow response, experts said, has helped bird flu take hold in the vast eastern reaches of this country. It allowed the disease to move from village to village unchecked, and — in the last week — from bird to human. Fifteen cases have been confirmed so far.

None of Yenigun's six children fell ill. But here in Dogubayazit nearby, Zeki Kocyigit and his wife buried three

of their four children this week. They had all died from bird flu. The fourth, who was presumed to have caught the flu by playing with the family's chickens, went home Monday night after more than a week in the hospital.

"The unfortunate thing about Turkey is that people died before officials realized that there was bird flu in the region," said Ahmet Faik Oner, head of childcare at Van Hospital, who is now treating seven people with flu and took care of the three siblings who died. "If the outbreak was noticed earlier and necessary precautions were taken immediately, things could have developed differently."

In their tidy cement, two-room house on the outskirts of this bustling border town as they awaited the arrival of their surviving child, Marifet Kocyigit sobbed on a bed. Her husband, Zeki Kocyigit, said they had not heard of bird flu in late December when their children got sick. "Of course my children played with our chickens, they are children," said Zeki Kocyigit, who is unemployed and goes to town each day to find jobs.

Many residents of this region regard the children as martyrs whose deaths finally called attention to their suffering. "Did we really need to have children die to have officials pay attention to us?" Yenigun asked.

The World Health Organization says 15 people have been infected with bird flu in Turkey. Five of those — reported by the Turkish Health Ministry on Monday — are considered "preliminary positives" because the organization has not yet received enough information about them, said Maria Cheng, a spokes-



Murad Sezer/AP  
Women peering from the house of the family that lost three children to bird flu.

woman for the WHO. A team that began investigating the cases has initially reported that the cases were caused by "direct contact with diseased poultry," Cheng said. But she added: "We are certainly still investigating the possibility of human to human transmission."

The Turkish tally on what regions

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EU issues new limits on imports  
of bird products. *Page 3*

## Iran plans to reopen nuclear facility

High-stakes gamble;  
Germany calls it  
a 'disastrous' signal

By Elaine Sciolino

**PARIS:** Defying European negotiators and the United States, Iran plans to reopen its vast uranium enrichment facility to resume sensitive nuclear activities that it suspended 14 months ago, officials involved in negotiations with Iran said Monday.

Iran had told the International Atomic Energy Agency last week that it was planning to restart nuclear research and development activities, without specifying where and what type of activities it would resume. But in messages and letters in recent days to the agency, Iran said it planned to reopen the enrichment facility in Natanz in central Iran and perhaps an unspecified number of less sensitive sites, said the officials, who declined to be identified by name because they lack such authorization.

The move reflects a high-stakes gamble by Iran to test its legal right to conduct certain nuclear activities under the main treaty governing the spread of nuclear technology.

The United States and to an increasing extent European governments believe that Natanz is part of a long suspected nuclear weapons program that is more advanced than the Iraqi program under Saddam Hussein's rule.

The construction of the site was kept secret from the IAEA and was only confirmed by agency inspectors in February 2003. The inspectors found preparations for more than 50,000 centrifuges — tall, thin machines that spin at supersonic speed to purify or enrich uranium that can be used in a nuclear weapon. The fast-spinning centrifuges could make fuel for up to 20 nuclear weapons a year, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. But for Iran's clerical leadership and even much of its population, Natanz is synonymous with modernity and power.

Iran's announcement that it planned to proceed with the resumption of its nuclear research sparked a new flurry of international condemnation.

"Very, very disastrous signals" are coming from Iran, the German foreign minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, told reporters before a cabinet meeting. He added, "It cannot be left without con-

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## China finds energy source in Nigeria

A state-owned energy company in China said Monday that it had agreed to pay nearly \$2.3 billion in cash to acquire a 45 percent stake in a Nigerian oil and gas field. If approved by the Nigerian authorities, the deal would be one of the biggest overseas acquisitions ever by a Chinese company.

The company, Cnocc, has also agreed to spend \$2.25 billion over the

next few years to help develop the Nigerian project. The stake, in the Niger Delta, is being sold by South Atlantic Petroleum, a privately owned Nigerian company.

The field is believed to hold more than one billion barrels of oil and is now operated by Total, the French oil company, which also holds a large stake in the field. *Page 11*

## Up and over 11,000 for the Dow index

The Dow Jones industrial average pushed above 11,000 points on Monday for the first time in more than four years, and traders credited a slide in oil prices.

The milestone "is going to draw a lot of investors back to the market," said Louis Navellier of Navellier & Associates in Reno, Nevada.

The Dow average ended up 52.59 points at 11,011.90, its first closing above 11,000 since June 7, 2001.

The average's record close was 11,722.98 points, reached on Jan. 14, 2000. *Page 16*

## EU executive urges open services sector

José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, urged EU members on Monday to tear down the barriers to an open market in services.

He said that a deal on legislation allowing cross-border trade in everything from hairdressing to chimney-sweeping was vital for Europe's stagnating economies.

The European Parliament is scheduled to vote next month on a proposal to open up the services sector. *Page 11*

### In Business

■ An investor in the phone company TDC threw a monkey wrench into what was to be Europe's biggest private equity takeover yet. *Page 11*

■ Internet access frees users from the grip of cell operators. *Page 12*



### 18 police die in attack on fete in Baghdad

A U.S. helicopter near the Interior Ministry on Monday. Tight security failed to prevent a suicide hit on the compound on National Police Day. *Page 4*

## India's lost daughters: Abortion toll in millions

Vast scale is laid to ultrasound equipment

By Amelia Gentleman

**NEW DELHI:** As many as 10 million female fetuses may have been aborted in India over the last 20 years as families try to secure a male heir, according to a study published Monday in *The Lancet*, the British medical journal.

In the two decades since ultrasound equipment, which allows prenatal determination of sex, became widely available, the number of girls born in India has declined steeply, despite a law banning doctors from disclosing the sex of a fetus to parents.

Although the routine aborting of female fetuses has been well documented, the study puts new light on the scale of the practice. Experts in India said Monday that they hoped the study would prompt the government to enforce laws against the practice that are already on the books.

Campaigners have been trying to alert the government to the potential long-term social impact of the phenomenon, warning that, among other problems, it will make it harder for men to find wives. In China, where a one-child policy is strictly enforced, prenatal sex selection has resulted in an estimated 40 million bachelors.

"We conservatively estimate that prenatal sex determination and selective abortion accounts for 0.5 million missing girls yearly," Dr. Prabhat Jha, a public health professor at the University of Toronto, who headed the research

team, said in a statement. "If this practice has been common for most of the past two decades since access to ultrasound became widespread, then a figure of 10 million missing female births would not be unreasonable."

The preference for sons has distorted the gender ratio throughout India.

As ultrasound equipment becomes cheaper, allowing more and more Indian clinics to purchase it, the gender imbalance in the population has grown greater. In 1991 there were some 945 women for every 1,000 men. The ratio dropped to 927 females per 1,000 males in 2001.

Jha's team found that parents were more likely to abort a female fetus if the previous child had been a girl. Basing their conclusions on an ongoing Indian national survey of 133,738 births, the researchers concluded that in families where the first child was a girl, the ratio of girls to boys among second children was 759 girls per 1,000 boys — a reflection of the efforts made by families to ensure that at least one of their children was male.

"To have a daughter is socially and emotionally accepted if there is a son, but a daughter's arrival is often unwelcome if the couple already have a daughter," Professor Shirish Sheth of the Breach Candy Hospital in Mumbai wrote in a commentary on the findings.

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CURRENCIES   New York			
Monday 4 P.M.		Previous	
£1 =	\$1.2084	\$1.2153	
€1 =	\$1.765	\$1.7706	
¥1 =	¥114.30	¥114.405	
\$1 =	SF1.276	SF1.2697	
Full currency rates   Page 16			
OIL   New York			
Monday 4 P.M.			
Light sweet crude	\$63.50	↓	\$0.71
STOCK INDEXES			
Monday			
The Dow 4 P.M.	11,011.90	↑	0.48%
FTSE 100 close	5,731.50	↓	0.01%
Nikkei 225	Closed		

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