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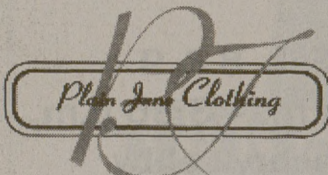
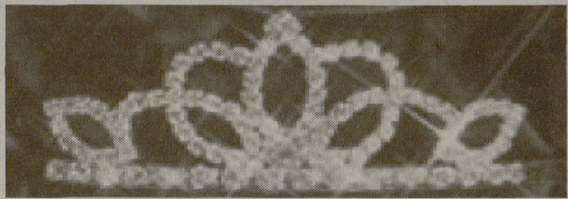
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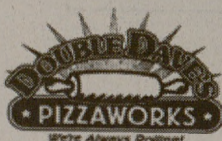
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WORLD

Page 10 • Thursday, February 4, 1999

Y2K Russian style

Officials ask for \$3 billion to update systems

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia needs up to \$3 billion to tackle the Year 2000 computer glitch — six times the original estimate — a top official announced Wednesday as he appealed to the United States and NATO to help fix computers that control Russia's nuclear weapons.



VELTSIN

While many countries have been working on the so-called Y2K "millennium bug" problem for years, some key players, including Russia and China, have been slower to address it.

Last month, U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary John Hamre acknowl-

edged "some nervousness" in Washington about potential computer problems in Russia. "They don't seem to have the same level of urgency that we have had over it," he said.

The man leading Russia's efforts to solve the Y2K finally responded Wednesday by asking NATO and the U.S. Defense Department for advice — and money.

Russia wants all sides to "speak the same language," Alexander Krupnov, chairman of the Central Telecommunications Commission, said Wednesday. "We're in a critical situation in several areas" — including the Defense Ministry.

The problem arises because early programmers trying to save memory space used only two digits to identify the year — meaning that

2000 looks the same as

ing off calculations from

Russia has already e-

NATO experts investigate

tial danger to Russian systems. While an errand brought on by a computer

ure would be highly to

puter snags could be

and telecommunications

that are the backbone

system to detect foreig-

Radars screens out-

and the bug could thro-

clear systems into a

which is apparently th-

making the computer

cessible.

"It's not that nuclear

going to pop off out

Paul Beaver, an analyst

Information Group in

Kosovars demand vote on region independence

DRAGOBILJE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Separatists in Kosovo demanded a guarantee Wednesday that a vote on independence for their province would be part of any peace accord with Serbia — a move that dimmed prospects for this weekend's peace talks in France.

The rebel Kosovo Liberation Army has accepted the U.S.-European summons to the talks. And in Belgrade, the government gave its strongest signals yet that Serbia — Yugoslavia's dominant republic — will also join the negotiations.

Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's Socialist party hinted at attendance, saying that Yugoslavia supported solving the Kosovo issue "through political means."

Serbia's hard-line Parliament, under Milosevic's de facto control, is due to decide Thursday whether to accept the summons to talks scheduled to start Saturday in Rambouillet, France, outside Paris.

NATO is threatening to attack if the Serbs and ethnic Albanians don't start talking by Saturday and strike a deal by Feb. 19 to end 11 months of fighting.

The allies are pushing a peace deal providing for a three-year period of autonomy for Kosovo — where ethnic Albanians make up some 90 percent of the population — followed by talks between the two sides on the province's

future.

Most of Kosovo's Albanians demand independence, a goal that the allies have opposed for fear of stirring up the Balkans' volatile ethnic mix.

Kosovo's moderate Albanian leader, Ibrahim Rugova, announced through a spokesman that he would attend the talks.

Serbia's state-run television allowed hours of air time Tuesday evening to a moderate who supports participation in the talks, indicating leaders could be preparing the public for a "yes" by parliament.

However, even the moderate, Deputy Premier Vuk Draskovic, said Serbia will never agree to allowing Kosovo to become either independent or a third republic within Yugoslavia, along with Serbia and Montenegro.

Envoys Christopher Hill of the United States and Wolfgang Petritsch of the European Union were pressing Serb leaders Wednesday for a positive response to the talks.

A commander in the Kosovo Liberation Army said Wednesday his side was joining talks with little faith they would resolve the conflict.

Independence "will come with war and not talks," said commander Remi, who like most top-ranking KLA officials identified himself only by one name, speaking in northern Kosovo. "The Serb side knows only force."

Iraqi merchants benefitting from embargo

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP) — Stone mansions with courtyards and orange trees dot Baghdad's neighborhoods, evidence of a class that has grown rich since Saddam Hussein's regime.

In the countryside, new farmers drive Mercedes sedges from Jordan in defiance of economic sanctions that have made most Iraqis so poor that they have become a struggle.

The U.N. embargo imposed Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, isolated Iraq and crushed the class. But it has also created a market for merchants who import goods across the porous border.

In some cases, the merchants are simple war profiteers. But in others, Saddam's regime has encouraged them from key families and cemented their backing, analysts say.

The patronage is in areas, where the government land, seed, fertilizers and machinery to tribal leaders, who patrol the countryside for the regime. The farmers also get ment price supports.

"The regime is trying to get those who are not openly against it and get them under their Moraiwid Tell, a professor at a university of Jordan. "The family can't do anything about the regime, so they live with it."

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