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## Two die in great cola prize fiasco

By PHILIP FINN

A GIRL of five and a teacher have died in violence sweeping the Philippines after Pepsi-Cola bungled a sales campaign to make one of their customers a millionaire.

Pepsi promised to pay one million pesos — nearly £30,000 — tax free to the customer who bought a bottle with 349 on the underside of the cap.

The slogan "Today, you could be a millionaire!" was advertised everywhere until executives realised 800,000 winning bottle tops had been printed.

The cost of honouring the pledge was put at £24 billion, so the firm offered £15 instead to anyone with a 349 cap.

Barbed-wire barricades were erected around Pepsi plants and offices as mobs of "winners" charged the premises.

But when more than 486,170 angry customers arrived in Manila by boat, bus and plane from outer islands the firm halted all payments.

Victoria Angelo, a "winner" who lives in one of Manila's

worst slums, had told her husband and children: "We're millionaires!"

She said: "I tell my children, you can finish school and go to college. I tell myself we can buy a real house. Can you imagine? It was a dream come true."

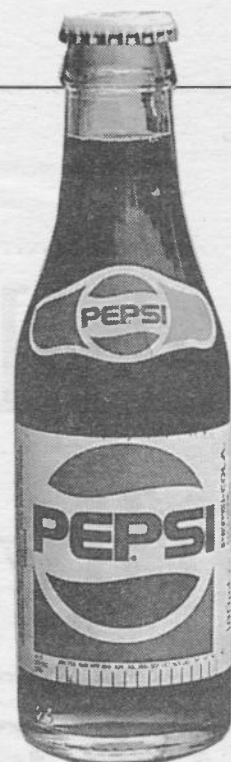
Several pensioners are also believed to have died in anti-Pepsi riots.

Thirty-two delivery trucks have been stoned, torched or overturned. Armed men have thrown Molotov cocktails and home-made bombs at Pepsi plants and offices.

The child and the teacher died when a grenade tossed at a company truck bounced off into a nearby crowd, wounding six. Armed bodyguards are protecting Pepsi executives after death threats.

Officials in the United States face years of litigation. More than 689 civil suits, involving 22,000 claimants, have been filed.

The company also faces 5,200 criminal complaints for fraud and deception. Pepsi-Cola



BOTTLING OUT: Pepsi is refusing to pay all winners

International has paid an extra £7 million in prizes as "goodwill" and a maximum government fine of £4,500.

A spokesman for the company in New York, said: "We will not be held hostage to extortion and terrorism. We have done everything we think is reasonable to amicably conclude this issue."

# 300,000 flee as terror bases are blitzed by Israel

From ROBIN ADAMS  
in Northern Israel

ISRAEL last night vowed to create a new Middle East exodus in a bid to smash fanatical Moslem terrorists.

It unleashed the full might of its forces on southern Lebanon in a deliberate policy to turn the Hezbollah stronghold into a wasteland.

More than 300,000 Lebanese have already fled to Beirut after scores of villages were given just hours notice of the bombardment.

Thousands of cars, their roofs piled high with mattresses and belongings, jammed the road north as smoke rose above their homes.

### Mastermind

At least 14 people died yesterday, taking the toll for the three-day blitz to 53. And almost 300 were said to have been injured in the onslaught.

Despite the bombardment Hezbollah continued to launch Katyusha rockets across the border. They kept 150,000 Israeli civilians pinned down in concrete bunkers.

The Israeli attacks risk putting their troops in line for direct confrontation with 35,000 Syrian soldiers in the Lebanon.

In Damascus, the government controlled Al-Baath paper warned the action was placing the Middle East "on the doorstep of war".

But Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin — mastermind of the Six Day War in 1967 — said the Lebanese refugees were legitimate weapons in the battle to crush Hezbollah.

He told MPs he planned to flood



WOUNDED: A medic treats a Lebanese victim yesterday Picture: BBC

Beirut with evacuees to pressure the government into controlling the Iranian-backed guerrillas.

He added: "If there is no quiet here, there won't be quiet for the residents of south Lebanon north of the security zone."

Nabatiyeh was a virtual ghost town after its 15,000 inhabitants fled just in advance of an Israeli bombardment of 20 shells a minute.

Meanwhile President Clinton stepped up a diplomatic campaign to contain the conflict and keep peace talks alive.

"I think the Syrians have shown

commendable restraint so far," he said. "I don't think we should let Hezbollah and all these groups that don't want anything to happen in the Middle East derail the peace process."

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher cut short a visit to Asia, returning to Washington to discuss a Middle East trip he had planned next week to revive talks.

He spoke by telephone with Rabin, Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Sharaa, and Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, after a crisis meeting of the Lebanese cabinet.

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doch was thought to be in considerable financial trouble, and his coup in acquiring STAR came as a mild shock to many observers who had counted him out as a dealmaker. From a base consisting of two newspapers in Adelaide, Murdoch had built a media conglomerate that included the 20th Century Fox movie studio, America's Fox TV network and three of the largest-circulation dailies in London. A recession and cash-flow problems in 1990 caused Murdoch to pile up debts as high as \$8 billion and forced him into a fire sale of such assets as the magazines *Seventeen*, *New York* and *Premiere* and the newspaper the Chicago *Sun-Times*. Many analysts considered News Corp. to be only one or two steps away from insolvency.

Murdoch managed to dodge bankruptcy by repackaging News Corp.'s debt. Now, with the company's stock up more than threefold since 1991, bankers are once again queuing up to lend him money. Last month News Corp. paid \$408 million for a 15% stake in one of Australia's biggest commercial TV networks. In June Murdoch sought to enter the Asian TV market by paying \$240 million for a 22% share in Sir Run Run Shaw's Television Broadcast Ltd., the owner of two over-the-air stations in Hong Kong. The deal was unplugged by the Chinese government, which is scheduled to assume sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997 and has opposed foreign purchases of the colony's media. Murdoch also re-acquired the New York *Post* in July for \$25 million. Says Louis Niederer, an analyst at Bain Securities: "With the STAR TV deal, Murdoch is re-establishing his global strategy."

The STAR buyout was negotiated by Murdoch and Richard Li, 26, son of Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-shing. Murdoch approached the family several months ago with an offer of \$425 million, but the talks lapsed when the price was rejected as too low. Murdoch renewed his overtures just as Pearson PLC began to make a serious bid. The discussions reached a crucial stage a few weeks ago when young Li flew to Corsica to meet Murdoch. While cruising in the Mediterranean aboard Murdoch's yacht, the two spent six hours haggling over the deal. After they agreed on a price of \$525 million, Li flew back to Hong Kong. Early the next morning, as he and his team were scanning the stock reports to see how their new shares of News Corp. were doing, Li received an urgent call. "It was K.S.," Li recalls, referring to his father. "He said, 'This looks like a good deal. Let's take it.'" Humbly, but with bemusement, the son replied, "Yeah, we will."

The result: the Li family made six times its original investment, and Rupert Murdoch locked himself into the rising fortunes of the Asian middle class, which is now, by anyone's measure, the most upwardly mobile group in the world. —*With reporting by Sandra Burton/Hong Kong*

## MARKETING

# NUMBERS FEVER

### A \$32 billion bungle by Pepsi has furious Filipinos all fizzed up

FOR MONTHS GINA CRUZ, A MANILA grandmother, played Pepsi Cola's "Numbers Fever" promotion lottery, buying several bottles a day and saving the caps, in the hope that one of the numbers imprinted inside them would win her a 1 million peso (\$40,000) prize. When the magic number, 349, was announced in May 1992, Cruz was overjoyed to find she had not one, but two caps bearing the winning digits. She promptly fainted. "My blood pressure shot up," she explained later, "probably from drinking too much Pepsi." Then she learned that her son also had a 349 cap—and she nearly collapsed again.

Cruz's indignation after discovering the next day that she was not, after all, a double millionaire, is shared by thousands of contestants who feel equally cheated. Instead of marking out 18 winning numbers, on which Pepsi had planned, a computer had wrongly generated 800,000. The company explained that it simply did not have the \$32 billion it would take to pay all claimants. The real winners, it said, would be identified by a security code that had been placed on caps; the losers were offered apologies.

When Pepsi's explanation was not accepted, a promotion that initially boosted the company's market share 5% turned into a nightmare. The winners felt like losers of a second, surprise lottery: the security code had been publicized as an authentication tool, not as a necessary second winning number. Feeling hoodwinked, the players have banded together in protest groups, fanning anti-Pepsi flames at frequent demonstrations and marches. More than 22,000 people holding the 349 number have filed 689 civil suits seeking damages, as well as 5,200 criminal complaints alleging fraud and deception. Some Pepsi employees have received

death threats and now change their daily routines to avoid being attacked. Explosives have been thrown at Pepsi plants and offices, and 37 of the company's delivery trucks have been stoned, overturned or set on fire. In the worst incident, a schoolteacher and a five-year-old girl were killed last February when a grenade pitched at a Pepsi truck bounced off and exploded in front of a store.

Many argue that because Pepsi dangled the promise of quick riches in a poor country, it is responsible for the violence. There is sympathy, for instance, for the family who sold everything to finance a trip to Manila to collect the prize they believed they had won. "It's such a letdown," says Dionisia Ayon. "Pepsi doesn't have the right to play with people's emotions." A particularly embittered 349er, slum dweller Ariel Salamante, claims to be seriously considering enlisting in the Communist New People's Army, to join its "armed struggle against multinational leeches like Pepsi."

Early in the contretemps, after an irate throng rioted and stoned Pepsi's plant in



Taking it to the streets: 349 protesters in Manila

Manila, the company offered a 500-peso (\$20) "goodwill" prize to all holders of sham 349 caps and paid out \$10 million in the process, five times the original promotion budget. The company says half a million customers have accepted the consolation money, yet sales remain "soft." Pepsi executives describe the protesters as unreasonable opportunists egged on by con-artist ringleaders. "Our intent was never malicious," says PepsiCo International spokesman Kenneth Ross. "I don't think [they] can make the same claim."

While a pro-Pepsi ruling by the Justice Department has undermined the basis for criminal cases, the affair is far from over. A Senate Trade Committee report this month faults the company for "gross negligence" and "misleading or deceptive advertising." Gina Cruz concurs. "I'm back at square one," she says. "I've never felt so short-changed in my life." —*By Tamala M. Edwards. With reporting by Nelly Sindayen/Manila*