

# BRIEFLY

**Iraq to distribute food for Kurds :** Minister of Trade Mohammad Mehdi Saleh said Wednesday that Iraq has started distributing food to residents of the northern Kurdish provinces, AP reports from Baghdad.

He also said that food stocks he claimed were looted and burned by rebels in Basra and other southern areas were being replaced.

"Four days ago the Ministry of Trade started distributing one tin of powdered baby milk for each baby daily, as well as 1,000 loaves of bread daily (in each village) to the residents of the northern provinces who are returning," Saleh told the government-owned newspaper Al-Jomhouriyah.

He said the government has begun an intensive food distribution campaign to feed the residents of the northern and southern areas that have been torn by rebellion.

**Iran for relief to refugees :** Iran has called upon the International Community to provide relief assistance to Iraqi refugees in Iran, Xinhua reports from United Nations.

In a letter to the UN Secretary-General circulated in United Nations Wednesday, Iranian Ambassador Kamal Kharrazi said that the refugee problem is so tremendous that his country alone will not be able to cope with the refugee influx and to provide a decent emergency living condition for the refugees.

Therefore, he continued, the International Community should take its responsibilities to the defenceless and innocent refugees.

**Istanbul bus fire kills 36 :** About 36 people were killed in a bus fire in Istanbul set by a Turkish suspect Wednesday, reports Xinhua.

Eyewitness said that the suspect, identified as Kadir Cal, rushed to the bus with a plastic barrel full of liquid combustibles when the bus started to move.

The suspect, 33, sprinkled the liquid combustibles to the floor and lit fire.

The trapped people were unable to get out of the double-decker bus carrying Greek tourists as its doors were firmly shut, said the eyewitnesses.

**Multi-party reforms in Togo :** Togo's government has approved multi-party reforms after fresh political protest exploded on to the streets of the capital Lome, Reuter reports.

State radio said late on Wednesday that a cabinet meeting chaired by President Gnassingbe Eyadema agreed that political parties should be legalised and that an amnesty should be granted for political crimes.

Several people were injured as students and youths fought pitched battles with heavily-armed riot police for the second day running on Wednesday, seizing control of three working class districts and throwing up roadblocks of burning tyres.

**Strike erupts in Byelorussia :** A strike by an estimated 200,000 workers hit the usually quiet republic of Byelorussia, and organizers said the protest would continue Thursday because the government refused to negotiate, AP reports from Minsk.

Strike leaders assailed the Communist Party and Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev in an unprecedented broadcast on the republic's television station Wednesday night.

"We don't want to have anything in common with Gorbachev and his untalented union government, which squeezes our republic dry on a regular basis," strike committee member Georgi Mukhin said.

The strikers ignored an appeal by Gorbachev on Tuesday for a halt to all work stoppages and street demonstrations. More than 50,000 demonstrators jammed Minsk's central Lenin square Wednesday afternoon.

**Bush, Major talk Kurdish woes :** President George Bush and British Prime Minister John Major discussed by telephone the plight of Kurdish refugees in Iraq, but did not agree on whether to set up a special enclave for the refugees there, Bush's spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said in Washington, reports Reuter.

Britain has proposed a safe enclave for the minority Kurds inside Iraq, to be established under United Nations supervision. The 12-nation European Community has endorsed the proposal.

But the United States has so far stopped short of full support for the idea, apparently out of fear that it could lead to a longer US military involvement in Iraq or the partitioning of that country.

**8 Filipino police killed :** Communist Guerrillas killed eight policemen and captured five during a clash in a remote Philippine village, the military said on Wednesday in Manila, reports Reuter.

The police were attacked by new people's army guerrillas on Tuesday in Licap in Mindoro Oriental Province, 210 km (130 miles) south of Manila.

Deputy Operations Chief Brigadier-General Regino Lacson told reporters a number of rebels were wounded in the gun battle but they managed to flee, taking with them five policemen.

He said troops were combing the area.

## Aziz in Amman

NICOSIA, Apr 11: Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz arrived in Amman on Wednesday with a message from President Saddam Hussein to King Hussein, the Iraqi News Agency reported, Reuter says.

The agency, monitored in Nicosia, said the message dealt with the "close relations between the two brotherly states, Arab developments and questions related to the future and security of the Arab Nation."

It gave no other details. Jordan backed Iraq in its war with the US-led coalition, calling for an Arab solution to the Iraq-Kuwait conflict.

## Noriega's trial on July 22

MIAMI, Apr 11: The drug trafficking trial of toppled Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega has been pushed back a month to July 22 at the request of both the defence and the prosecution, reports Reuter.

Judicial officials said on Wednesday that US District Judge William Hoewler approved the delay at a brief hearing on Tuesday that was not announced to reporters.

The defence and the prosecution requested extra time for trial preparation involving classified documents. The trial, which has been postponed at least three times and could last six months, had been set for June 24.

Defence Attorney have said they will seek classified or sensitive US government documents.

# First manned spaceflight : Gagarin's smile



MOSCOW — Yuri Gagarin with daughters Lena (left) and Galya

MOSCOW, Apr 11: The first manned spaceflight was accomplished on April 12, 1961. A few hours after the TASS report, Yuri Gagarin became famous all over the world, says IAN.

The 108 minutes in space brought years of fame—a taste

which was not no the programme of cosmonauts' training. All people—from impatient boys to members of royal families—were happy to shake hands and talk with Gagarin. Banquets were given and new-born babies were named in his

honour. Yuri could have lived on this fame all his life, but he could not give up flying and working. He dreamed of making several more spaceflights and got prepared for them. As time goes by, the heroic

deed of the man who blazed a trail to the stars becomes more and more significant. Today spaceflights have become a common occurrence, but the name of the Earth's first cosmonaut is still in people's memory, just like his youthful smile.

— IAN photo

# Iraq seeks political compromise with Kurds

MARIVAN, Iran Apr 11: French Secretary of State for Humanitarian Action Bernard Kouchner went into Iraq Wednesday to confer with a Kurdish guerrilla leader, Jalal Talabani, who told him Iraq wants to negotiate a political compromise with the Kurds, reports AFP.

Dr. Kouchner, who left for Paris soon after the meeting, was the first cabinet member from a western country to visit Iran since Kurdish refugees fleeing slaughter from Iraqi troops started pouring into the country.

The meeting, which lasted more than half an hour, took place in Penwin, Iraq, across the border from this Iranian town.

Talabani, who leads the Kurdistan Patriotic Union, one of the largest Kurdish guerrilla groups, asserted that Iraq was seeking to start negotiations with groups such as his.

"Iraqi officials are trying to get in touch with Kurdish leaders to reach a political agreement with Iraq," Talabani told Dr Kouchner in the presence of journalists.

Talabani said Iraq's army

was suffering from low morale and was occupying only the center of cities in Iraqi Kurdistan.

He said Kurds should not leave Kurdistan. "We don't want to depopulate Kurdistan and leave it to Saddam Hussein," he said. "Those of us who don't risk being killed or tortured should go back," Dr.

Kouchner agreed.

He said that if they choose to remain in the refugee camps and settlements along the borders of Iraq, the Kurds will end up like the Palestinians.

On Sunday, Dr. Kouchner entered Iraq a first time to visit two refugee settlement areas near Haj Omran, a site he

got to know well in 1974, when he was here for 'Medecins Sans Frontieres' (Doctors without Borders), the humanitarian organisation he founded.

In Paris, MSF announced that 1,500 doctors and nurses had volunteered to go to Kurdistan. It said two planes with 26 doctors and nurses and 46 tons of equipment arrived Wednesday in Van, Turkey.

Referring to the international relief effort, he said, "We are now easing the suffering of the victims of the executioner, but we must stop his arm."

He accused Hussein of "wanting to massacre the Kurdish people and the other Iraqis" and praised the "magnificent burst of humanity" that followed.

Dr. Kouchner repeatedly praised Iran for its welcome to the hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees. He met with the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, and conferred often with the Governor of the Border Province, Ali Saadat, over the modalities of French aid.

the swing factor.

The maximum possible IOU can be 100, when there is only one opposition party, and this index was high in both 1977 and 1989. Bhalla argues that the concept of the IOU makes sense only if there is one dominant political party, but brakes down if there are more than one dominant parties. Today, he says, there are different dominant parties in different states: the BJP in Rajasthan, Janata Dal in Bihar and Congress (I) in Tamil Nadu.

"So it's highly unlikely will be very accurate," Bhalla says.

Then again, there is the problem of voters concealing their true intentions for a variety of intentions. To combat this, Bhalla has pioneered the concept of the "lying index," (arrived at through a mathematical formula). "The lying index was as high as 20 per cent in our opinion poll for the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, and if I hadn't adjusted the raw data for this, I would have ended up predicting over 350 seats for the Congress(I)," says Bhalla, currently in India on vacation.

His forecast, which appeared in Sunday even before Roy's poll findings were published by India Today, gave the Congress -I 215 seats. However, after conducting another poll in a few constituencies even closer to polling day, he revised this to 201 seats, pointing to a further swing in voter sentiment away from the then ruling party. Three months later, Bhalla followed this up with another accurate forecast for the Assembly polls in seven states (he was the only one to do so).

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# Chatichai in Bangkok, Army says he will get protection

BANGKOK, Apr 11: Thailand's deposed Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan arrived here today from London to receive a royal decoration granted by King Bhumibol Adulyadej, officials said, reports AFP.



Mr. Chatichai, 71, whose elected government was toppled by the military in a bloodless coup on February 23, arrived at Bangkok's Don Muang international airport aboard a Thai Airways international flight, they said.

He later travelled straight to his residence in central Bangkok.

The former Prime Minister had flown to London on March 12 after his release from military custody. He was arrested during the coup while he was about to leave for an audience with the King in the northern capital of Chiang Mai.

The military leadership ordered his assets frozen within the framework of a broad investigation into alleged corruption by officials of the deposed government.

In a royal ceremony to take place Friday, Mr. Chatichai will be awarded with the country's highest royal decoration, the Rattanasaphon Order. The ceremony is to be presided over by Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, daughter of the King.

Powerful Army Chief General Suchinda Kraprayoon, who is also Deputy Chairman of the National Peace-Keeping Assembly that seized power in the coup, reaffirmed here Wednesday that the military would provide safety for Mr. Chatichai during his stay in Thailand.

Gen. Suchinda said the ex-Premier was free to travel

anywhere he wanted. Mr. Chatichai is expected to go back to London next week.

## French woman tries to commit suicide with AIDS blood

BOSTON, Apr 11: Doctors in France have reported the case of a woman who tried to commit suicide by injecting herself with the blood of an AIDS victim, reports Reuter.

The attempt is apparently going to be successful. Three months after the injection, the first signs of the virus appeared. AIDS is nearly always fatal.

Dieric Durand and his colleagues at the Laennec Hospital in Paris reported the case in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine because doctors tried to prevent the infection from developing by giving her repeated treatments with AZT.

# Off the Record

## Have it free under Corazon's eyes!

MANILA: Want a free circumcision and a chance to see President Corazon Aquino? Go to the Philippine Presidential Palace, reports Reuter.

About a dozen boys got both on Wednesday when the palace launched free dental and circumcision services for needy families living in the neighbourhood.

It was the latest palace charity project. In January, Aquino installed a bank of telephones at the palace and allowed free overseas calls for the worried relatives of thousands of Filipino workers caught by the Gulf war.

In February, the President's Executive Secretary Oscar Orbes organised sales of cheap fish at the palace to try to bring down fish prices he said were being increased by greedy middlemen.

The boys awaiting circumcision looked embarrassed as Aquino chatted to them before they went through the rite of passage into manhood.

Let's continue with the good work, Aquino told doctors and nurses at the launching ceremony.

## Furor again over 'City of Joy'

CALCUTTA: Leftist groups have stopped much-harassed 'City of Joy' film-maker Roland Joffe filming on Calcutta's streets again and he was ordered to defend his script against charges it sexually exploits, reports Reuter.

Joffe watched on Tuesday night as slogan-shouting members of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) and a communist trade union demanded he pack up his equipment and leave.

"We want to shut the film down," said DYFI's Kaosali Jaji. "They are shooting the ugly buildings, the poor people with ragged clothes, all the bad things."

Tuesday's filming was taking place at a guest house popular with foreign tourists.

The movie's star, Patrick Swayze, co-star of last year's top-grossing film 'Ghost', who was supposed to do the scene, did not show up.

"Filming the 'City of Joy' has felt more like Rudyard Kipling's enduring description of Calcutta as the 'City of Dreadful Nights', one crew member said.

Co-producer Lain Smith said a halt in shooting costs 100,000 Dollars a day. This is not the first time production has stopped because of unappreciative crowds.

Two crew members were freed on bail after being charged in connection with a man's death during one demonstration several weeks ago. Doctors later said the man had been previously ill and did not have any external injuries.

## Monkeys get reprieve from certain death

WASHINGTON: A pair of sick monkeys won a reprieve from certain death late on Wednesday when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia issued an order preventing scientists from performing a mercy killing until legal papers are filed by Thursday afternoon, reports Reuter.

A court official said Scalia gave the National Institutes of Health (NIH) until that time to file a brief in response to demands from animal rights organisations that the monkeys, originally slated to be cut open for brain research, should be kept alive.

NIH has announced plans to kill the pair, members of a celebrated set of monkey that have become a rallying cry for the animal rights movement.

In an effort to block the killings, animal rights activists have gone to court in Louisiana and in Washington seeking an emergency stay of the mercy killings.

An NIH official said the two monkeys were believed to be in constant pain from previous medical experiments.

The monkeys were members of the 'Silver Spring Six', a band of Philippine crab-eating macaques that were research subjects in a laboratory supported by the NIH. They were taken from the laboratory in 1981 after complaints that they were being cruelly treated.

# Indian pollsters get ready to defend their reputation

NEW DELHI, Apr 11: With a general election just two months away, pollsters Pranoy Roy and G. Balachandran are again getting ready for the forecasting game, amidst doubts that the current election will not be a cakewalk for them. India's other psephologist, Surjit Bhalla, who, like Roy, had successfully forecast the results of the last Parliamentary polls, is not in the fray this time, having in the meantime accepted an overseas assignment, reports PTI.

In 1989, their task had been much easier. There was one dominant party (the Congress-I) and a high degree of opposition unity. This time round, neither of these conditions is likely to hold. What the poll pundits will be called upon to forecast is whether it is Rajiv Gandhi's TINA (There is No Alternative) factor, or V.P Singh's SITA (Singh is The Alternative) factor, or L.K Advani's RITA (Ram is The Alternative) factor that will eventually prevail on the hearts and minds of voters.

Both Roy and Balachandran are looking forward to the forthcoming elections with nervous anticipation. Roy will be expected to repeat his success of 1989, when his forecast for India Today had hit the bullseye: he came up with a tally of 195 seats for the Congress-I, and reduced this to 183 after an exit poll, compared to the party's actual tally of 192 seats. Roy had said

that if there was one thing worse than getting a pull forecast wrong it was getting it dead right, because it meant one couldn't hope to do better.

If Roy will be hard to put to it to live up to his earlier success, Balachandran will be keen to live down his 1989 failure. His forecast, published in The Hindu, had given the Congress-I a slim majority. "That was a mistake in the sense that I was not involved in conducting the opinion poll, but merely made a forecast on the basis of data gathered by someone else — and there was probably something wrong in the sample selection," says Balachandran.

He thinks the task this time

will be complicated by the absence of a "wave" and a single dominating issue, and the lack of one-to-one contests. "In 1989, the major question voters were asked was what they thought of the Bofors issue. Today, they'll be asked for their thinking on several issues like stability, Mandal, Mandir and prices," he says. "Some voters may be with one party on stability, with another on Mandal, and with a third on Mandir. This could mean a much higher proportion of undecided voters until very late."

That will pose problems, because the "don't knows" may go to a particular party at the eleventh hour and influence the result. Pollsters make seat projections using variables such as the "swing" and "split" in the vote, and Bhalla thinks it is in estimating the split factor that the pundits may stumble this time. British and American psephologists coined a formula several years ago, according to which in a two-party system the only factor which causes victory margins to change is the "swing" for or against either of the two parties. In Indian conditions, Roy defined swing as the change in the Congress's share of the popular vote between one election and the next. And to allow for the splitting of the non-Congress vote in India's multi-party system, he devised the Index of Opposition Unity (IOU), to isolate the split from

## WHO GOT HOW MUCH IN '89

PARTIES	NOMINEES	SEATS OWN	SUCCESS RATIO(%)
Cong. (I)	505	194	38.41
J.D.	245	142	57.95
B.J.P.	226	86	38.05
C.P.M.	63	32	50.79
C.P.I.	51	11	21.56
AIADMK	11	11	100
T.D.P.	34	2	5.9
IC(S)	14	1	7.2
Others	1424	33	2.3
Ind.	3518	12	0.34