

BRIEFLY

Iraq blasts Iran: Iraq charged Iran with violating their 1988 Ceasefire Agreement for the fourth time since the beginning of May in a letter released at the United Nations Wednesday. AFP reports from New York.

Iraqi Ambassador Abdul Amir al-Anbari wrote to UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar that Iran fired artillery and mortar on Iraqi troops deployed along the southern border April 25 and 26.

He said this latest violation proved that the Iranian Government continued to threaten Iraq's security and violate the country's sovereignty.

Nepal yet to tap water resources: Nepal could become one of the richest and most developed countries in the world by exploiting its water resources, Nepal Congress Leader Genesh Man Singh told in an election rally in Kathmandu Wednesday. AFP reports.

"Nepal will be one of the richest and most developed countries in the world within fifty years from now", Singh told a rally of 60,000 people.

Singh said "though Nepal ranks second in poverty after Ethiopia, things could be changed for the better if the people help the Nepal Congress win in the forthcoming election."

He told the crowd that the Nepal Congress would launch an "Economic Revolution" in the country and make it wealthy by developing its "abundant water resources" if it won the May 12 polls.

Early warning radar system: The latest and most sophisticated US early Warning Radar System is to be operated part time — a victim of the end of the cold war, reports Reuter from Bangor Maine.

Military officials announced that the air force's vaunted Backscatter Radar System touted as having 10 times the range of conventional radar when it was set up only last year, will be monitored for only 40 hours a week.

Which 40 hours is a military secret.

If I'm a strategic planner I don't want to tell you, the Soviets or anyone else when I'm going to operate the radar," Colonel Harris Madson, the Facility's Commander told reporters on Tuesday.

14 killed in Srinagar: At least 14 people were killed and 24 others injured when security forces opened fire on a crowd mourning a militant killed in India's Jammu and Kashmir state, witnesses said, Reuter reports from Srinagar.

The witnesses said an old lady and a young girl were among the 14 shot dead at a children's park where the mourners had gathered after a procession through the streets of the State's Summer Capital, Srinagar.

Police said the security forces retaliated only after militants among the mourners opened fire.

Bush optimistic over ME peace: President George Bush said in Washington Wednesday he was moderately optimistic about prospects for peace in the Middle East and stressed the need for quiet diplomacy, reports AFP.

Speaking to reporters about Secretary of State James Baker's upcoming tour of the region, his fourth since the end of the Gulf War Bush said, "I'm moderately optimistic."

Baker is scheduled to leave late Friday for Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Israel to help arrange a regional peace conference co-sponsored by the United States and the Soviet Union, the State Department announced Wednesday.

Egypt to extend emergency: Egypt's parliament on Wednesday agreed to extend an emergency law brought in after the 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat, Reuter reports from Cairo.

A clear majority of the 458-member parliament voted for the three-year extension of a show of hands, around 30 members voted against the law, to be extended from the end of the month, gives security forces broad powers of arrest and detention and has been bitterly attacked by Egypt's opposition press.

Prime Minister Atef Sedki said in a statement to parliament, controlled overwhelmingly by the ruling National Democratic Party, that the law would not be used against a person because of his opinions.

UN meet on damages in Kuwait: The five Permanent Member Security Council met Wednesday to discuss an Iraqi-led fund to pay for damages caused by its Kuwaiti invasion, reports AFP from New York.

The United States, the Soviet Union, France, Britain and China met to discuss setting up the fund — laid out in Resolution 687 and accepted by Iraq — that sets aside Iraqi revenues to cover damages caused by the war.

Iraq will contribute a percentage of its revenues from oil exports that will be used to pay damages. The United States says some 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the fund should be used to finance the fund, but some other countries say even that would be insufficient.

Pindi alleges loss of lives in Indian firing: Pakistan said Wednesday Indian cross-border artillery shelling in Kashmir for the sixth day running has caused loss of life and created tensions on both sides of the frontier, AFP reports from Islamabad.

During one such "unprovoked" firing on a civilian bus, two people were killed and three injured, the Defence Ministry said, adding that Pakistani troops had been ordered to take "appropriate measures."

Residents of areas close to the dividing line of control in Kashmir said at least seven people had died and ten were injured in shelling by Indian troops.

Sources in Muzaffarabad, Capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir, said four wounded people had been admitted to a military hospital there.

Hiring of an ex-convict to frame case against Zardari alleged

Ishaq's term over: Benazir

ISLAMABAD, May 9: Pakistani opposition leader Benazir Bhutto said on Wednesday that President Ghulam Ishaq Khan had legally exhausted his term of office and should resign, reports Reuter.

"We don't accept him as President, she told a news conference in Islamabad, she also accused the six-month-old government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who succeeded her of leading Pakistan to an economic disaster.

Ishaq Khan was elected President for a five-year term by a parliamentary electoral college in December, 1988, to succeed military ruler Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq who was killed in a plane crash.

But Bhutto said Ishaq Khan should have only completed Zia's five-year tenure which ended in March 20 last year.

Zia who seized power in a 1977 military coup, took office as an elected president in 1985 for five years after a controversial referendum on his Islamic policies.

Bhutto said her Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was planning to raise the issue of Ishaq



Zardari

Khan's tenure before he dismissed her 20-month-old government in August last year on disputed charges of abuse of power.

Bhutto accused the President of displaying partiality by ordering corruption trials against her and several of her colleagues through so-called references and said he should face similar trials.

If references can be made against the former Prime Minister, there can be references against the sitting President and his relatives, she said the law must be even-handed.

Bhutto said the Sharif government was leading Pakistan to ruin in the name of liberal economic policies and that it had failed to play a proper role during the Gulf War.

AFP adds: Former Premier Benazir Bhutto said Wednesday an ex-convict who served a prison sentence in Britain was hired to frame her husband in a kidnapping case.

Speaking at a press conference at the parliament building, she said the main complaint in a kidnapping case against Asif Ali Zardari was convicted of fraud by a British court in the 1970s.

Zardari is being tried by a special court in Karachi on charges that he abetted the kidnapping for ransom of a London based Pakistani businessman Murtaza Hussain Bokhari in 1989.

The case for which Ms Bhutto's husband could face

the death penalty, was registered on a complaint by Bokhari.

Ms Bhutto said she had got a sensational disclosure "during her recent visit to London that Bokhari was a convict and not a businessman". He is a man who has served a sentence in prison for fraud and now he has been hired in another fraud, she said.

We will be producing his background before the court, Ms Bhutto said, "we will be confronting him."

Zardari, 37 is on trial in about a dozen cases involving charges of murder, kidnapping and fraud, he was arrested before the October 1990 elections in which he won a seat in the national assembly.

His wife is also on trial on eight courts of abuse of power during her 20 month rule that ended with her dismissal by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan in August 1990. She faces disqualification from politics.

At her press conference, Ms Bhutto attacked Ishaq Khan, accusing him of instituting false cases against political opponents in a one-sided

No progress in talks over Kurdish autonomy
Saddam will be overthrown
by his own men: Hurd

LONDON, May 9: British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said on Wednesday that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was more likely to be overthrown by those around him in Baghdad than by Kurdish or Shi'ite rebels, reports Reuter.

We have never thought a change in government in Baghdad would be brought about either by the Kurds or by Shi'ites in the south, Hurd told parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee.

I think the change will be brought about when it comes by people at the centre in Baghdad.

In the weeks after the Gulf war ended in February, Saddam's forces put down twin rebellions by Kurdish guerrillas in the north and Shi'ite Muslims in the south.

Some Kurds complained that the United States and

Britain had encouraged them to rebel but failed to help them when Saddam's forces counter-attacked and routed their fighters. Millions of Kurds fled their homes to escape Saddam's reprisals.

In his testimony on Wednesday, Hurd reiterated Britain's position that Iraq could not hope to return to its place in the international community while Saddam remained in power.

We have to create in the minds of the Iraqis, particularly those in Baghdad, the knowledge that the main obstacle to the future of their country is the present leadership of their country, the Foreign Secretary said.

A Baghdad report says: President Saddam Hussein met on Wednesday with rebel leaders who are seeking greater autonomy for the Kurds of northern Iraq in ne-

gotiations with his government that both sides say have been positive.

Iraqi officials said earlier the President was unlikely to meet the Kurdish rebel chiefs until a deal had been reached.

But there was no indication of a breakthrough in Saddam's talks with a four-men delegation headed by Massoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party, Barzani, surrounded by Iraqi Security Guards, returned to Al-Rashid Hotel at about 5 p.m. (1400 GMT) but refused reporters' requests to comment on the meeting with Saddam.

The official Iraqi News Agency (INA) gave no details on what was discussed.

The meeting was the first between Saddam and Kurdish rebel chiefs since April 24, when Jalal Talabani of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan announced an agreement in

principle had been reached with Baghdad for greater autonomy for the Kurds.

In a second round of negotiations which began in Baghdad on Monday, the Kurds and the government were trying to hammer out an accord that would help heal a decade-old rift and convince hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees to return home.

The talks are going on in a positive spirit," Sami Rahman, a member of the delegation, told Reuters earlier on Wednesday.

He indicated they had not yet tackled key Kurdish demands for international guarantees for any accord and for Kurdish control of oil produced in the area around the northern city of Kirkuk. An important oil pipeline runs through the city.

There are many topics under discussion. These topics might not have been discussed yet," Rahman said.

Nepal to go 'dry' for three days

KATHMANDU, May 9: Nepal is to go "dry" for the first time in her history during the forthcoming general elections in the country, reports PTI.

Liquor, which is consumed by the Nepalese like drinking water, will not be available for three days from tomorrow (Friday), as the government has banned sale and distribution of alcohol over the country for the May 12 elections.

This has led to scramble for last-minute purchase of various types of liquor, specially beer, which is popular with the Nepalese, from various shops for conservation during the three "dry" days.

The Minister for Home Affairs and Communications, Yong Prasad Upadhyaya told PTI here today that action would be taken against those found loitering in an inebriated condition.

With this end in view, Upadhyaya said, the administrative and police officials of both India and Nepal decided to enforce total prohibition on both sides of the border during the elections so that liquor could not be smuggled into Nepal.

50 killed in Kashmir violence

NEW DELHI, May 9: At least 50 people died in violence Wednesday as an anti-government strike sponsored by Muslim militants gripped Kashmir valley for a second straight day, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

The victims were mostly militants shot in gunfire exchanges with security forces, state government spokesman was quoted by PTI as saying in Srinagar, summer capital of Kashmir and urban hub of the bloody militancy.

Nine people died when militants and security forces exchanged gunfire in Srinagar's Khanay locality, the spokesman said.

An unspecified number were injured in the incident, of whom five later died, hospital sources told PTI.



KATHMANDU: The Prime Minister and President of the Nepali Congress, the largest democratic party in Nepal, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai addressing a public meeting here May 8. He appealed to the people to vote for his party which he promised would eliminate poverty and launch an economic revolution in the country. — AFP/UNB photo

200 commandos involved in clashes on Armenian-Azerbaijani border

MOSCOW, May 9: Even reserved officials call the events in Armenia and Azerbaijan an undeclared war. According to the Ministry of the Interior, some 200 commandos on each side have been involved in armed clashes on the Armenian-Azerbaijani border killing dozens of people, reports IAN.

Outwardly, the conflict looks like a territorial dispute. The world experience shows that such conflicts are particularly poisonous. Besides, there are aggravating circumstances which make the clashes violent and emotional.

Azerbaijanians and Armenians belong to different confessions. The influence of church hierarchs and religious communities is strong enough in both republics, and common religion would have helped find a way to negotiations.

There are political and ideological contradictions as well. The rate of democratic changes in the republics is different, which adds to the tension.

Last but not least, the republics have a different attitude to the centre. Whereas

the desire of the three Baltic republics to secede from the USSR unites them in spite of their differences, Azerbaijan and Armenia differ on the subject. Armenia has voiced its desire to secede from the union and its president has not signed the joint statement of the ten Azerbaijani leaders have a different attitude to sovereignty. They stand for independence within the framework of a large union state.

This difference gives rise to suspicion of the centre. It has been suggested that since Mutalibov has signed a statement confirming his intention to stay in the union, Moscow favours Baku more than

Yerevan. But Kremlin is not that shortsighted to share this logic. Circumstances may change and the rates of democratic changes and ethnic processes are not present forever.

Preparing to sign the union treaty and build a renovated union, Moscow solves strategic tasks which will influence the policy in the 21st century. Many analysts believe that Moscow's arguments with the Baltic republics, Georgia, Moldova and Armenia about the scale of their sovereignty are temporary and have been by the economic crisis. The creation of a powerful economic space that the Kremlin dreamers are talking about

will be a strong magnet for all parts of the talking about will be a strong magnet for all parts of the former Russian empire regardless of whether they are going to be part of a single state or not.

Proceeding from this political and economic concept, Moscow is trying hard to keep the keys to the future rather than discredit itself by its. Likes and dislikes in relations with the republics all Gorbachev's gestures of the past few days have been well balanced. They show that he is trying his best not to take sides.

Lately the missions of Azerbaijan and Armenia in Moscow have been furnishing ample information about the events. The emotional and political involvement of republican ambassadors in Moscow is easy to explain. In fact, they are competing for public opinion. Their goal is transparent.

They play on emotions and offer their own interpretation of the facts to find favours with the political forces concentrated in the capital. They also hope for response from abroad.

CIA chief resigns

WASHINGTON, May 9: President George Bush announced the resignation of William Webster as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), reports AFP.

At a hastily arranged press conference, Bush thanked Webster for a "superb job" as leader of the nation's spy

agency. Webster, a former federal judge, headed the Federal Bureau of Investigation before being named Director of the CIA, a post formerly held by Bush.

No specific date was mentioned for Webster's retirement, although Bush said the move came as a surprise.

Off the Record



MIAMI: US Customs Assistant special agent Keth Prager holds the painting 'Aurora' by Elemish master Peter Paul Rudens which was recovered May 7 in Miami Beach Agents arrested four men who tried to sell the painting. — AFP/UNB photo.

Birth weight booster

BEIJING: Oxygen supplements to pregnant women may boost birth weights in high-altitude areas, a newspaper here reported Wednesday, says AFP.

Women given oxygen supplements gave birth to babies 108 grams (3.9 ounces) heavier than women in a control group, according to a study conducted in China's mountainous northwest province of Qinghai, the China Daily said.

The therapy involved administering oxygen supplements for one hour a day to women in the 32nd to 38th weeks of pregnancy, when unborn babies grow the fastest.

Women who received the oxygen therapy and nutrient supplements gave birth to babies 128 grams (4.6 ounces) heavier and 2.51 centimeters (one inch) longer than the control group.

The study was carried out by Li Yanzhu, a physician at the number one people's hospital in Qinghai's capital Xining, the newspaper said.

Glass-domed cities

SYDNEY: Australians will have to wear spacesuits and live in glass-domed cities in the next century unless science can stop the thinning of the sun-filtering ozone layer, a skin cancer expert said Thursday, reports Reuter.

Australians, who have the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world, could not be able to go outdoors by the year 2060 without complete body protection, Professor Bill McCarthy told a surgeons' conference.

McCarthy, head of the Sydney Melanoma unit, said ultraviolet radiation, now blocked out by the ozone layer would cause cancer on contact with unprotected skin.

"If we can't prevent the deterioration, then ultraviolet will hit earth," he said in a media release.

McCarthy, a world authority on ultraviolet radiation, said recent studies found little had been achieved by moves to conserve the ozone layer.

He said active regeneration of the ozone layer might have to be considered, along with building physical barriers such as city domes.

And now micro-mini skirts in Philippines

MANILA: Micro-mini skirts, heavy make-up and too much jewellery are distracting the civil servants of the Philippines and should be barred from government offices, a watchdog for the orthodox said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

"A government job is serious work that requires no distractions," said civil service commissioner Chairman Patricia Sto Tomas.

The micro-mini is "not only distracting to the customers but even the person might spend a good part of the day pulling her skirt down so as not to expose a part of the body which should not be shown", she said in a radio interview.

Walking shorts, jeans, jogging pants, slippers and clogs are also unfit for display in government offices, as are excessive accessories or jewellery, she said.

US freedom protected by military: Schwarzkopf

WASHINGTON, May 9: The Gulf war's winning commander General Norman Schwarzkopf Wednesday asked Congress to "sacrifice and search to win the peace" just as Allied troops "were willing to sacrifice to win the war", reports AFP.

Speaking before a joint session of Congress, the Commander in Chief of US forces in the Gulf also stressed "the liberties and freedom we enjoy in this country do not come without a price. They are paid of and protected by the military."

The general also took the opportunity to echo one of the favourite themes of Defence Secretary Dick Cheney by calling on Congress in their debates on the military budget to preserve the high quality of the armed forces, comprised entirely of volunteers.

"The quality of our armed forces won the war," Gen. Schwarzkopf told the assembly.

"I thank Congress for giving us the finest military equipment in the world," the

General said. "I stand here because I was granted the immense privilege of commanding the Allied troops."

The Commander in Chief's speech was interrupted by several standing ovations.

The General also paid homage to the Allied troops which fought alongside US soldiers.

"When it was shed with ours, blood did not separate by national origin," Gen. Schwarzkopf said.

Visibly moved, the General also paid tribute to the families of those who served in the Gulf.

"It's your love that gave us strength in our darkest hour," he said, looking toward his wife Brenda in the audience.

Gen. Schwarzkopf, 56, who plans to retire within a few months, finally expressed gratitude to all "soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and coast guard" who served in the conflict, adding "to everyone, thank you, and thank you to the great people of the United States of America."