

BRIEFLY

Iraq slates British stand: The Iraqi government sent a message to the United Nations Monday denouncing the British Government's vow to maintain UN economic sanctions against Iraq as long as President Saddam Hussein remained in power, the Iraqi News Agency reported. AFP says from Nicosia.

In a memorandum to the President of the UN Security Council, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ahmad Hussein al-Khodeira said the British stand "recalled Great Britain's colonialist policy, from which Iraq long suffered, that seeks hegemony and interference in the internal affairs of the people."

Cessna crashes, 6 killed: A Cessna 206 sight-seeing aeroplane crashed near the Grand Canyon on Monday, killing six Swiss and German tourists and the pilot. A helicopter located the burning wreckage 12 miles (19 km) south of Grand Canyon village on the natural wonder's south rim, according to a Coconino County Sheriff's office spokesman, Reuter reports from Phoenix.

The burning plane, operated by Air Grand Canyon, started a fire in a heavily-wooded pine forest where it went down, eight miles (13km) from Tusayan airport, Sheriff deputies said.

Nine Colombian troops killed: Nine soldiers were killed Monday at police headquarters in northern Colombia when bombs seized from guerrillas exploded, army officials said, AFP reports from Bogota.

Military officers were investigating a load of explosives left by guerrillas in San Pablo after they attempted to take over the city May 7. The clash resulted in the deaths of 20 rebels and three police officers.

Monday's victims were killed when a container filled with dynamite exploded during inspection, detonating several other explosives and nearly destroying the headquarters.

Iraq denies exchange of fire with UK troops: Iraq denied that it had been involved in an exchange of fire with British Marines in northern Iraq, Reuter reports from Baghdad.

"No exchange of fire took place between Iraqi soldiers and a British patrol at all," an Information Ministry spokesman said. No Iraqi troops had been wounded, he added, but declined to elaborate.

The British Defence Ministry said earlier that the Royal Marines patrol at Ayn Shaykh had exchanged fire with unidentified opponents who shot at them several times. The Ministry in London said there were no Marine casualties.

Nawaz Sharif seeks help on Kashmir: Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Monday urged the world community to help resolve the Kashmir problem on the same principle that motivated the liberation of Kuwait, National Television reported in Islamabad, reports AFP.

Sharif called for United Nations Resolutions on Kashmir to be implemented firmly, as was the UN Resolution against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

The report said the Prime Minister was addressing a meeting of the ruling party of Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir State.

Five die in Japanese train collision: At least five passengers died and more than 50 were injured when two trains collided head-on in Central Japan Tuesday police said, reports Reuter from Tokyo.

NHK public television said a failure of radio links between the two trains may have caused the collision on the single-track line in Shiga Prefecture.

The two trains were carrying more than 300 passengers.

US ready for ME arms control plan: The United States has prepared a Middle East arms control plan that would ban Israel from producing nuclear weapons material and make Arab nations to give up their chemical weapons, according to the New York Times, Reuter reports from New York.

In its today's edition, the newspaper says the plan also would require all Middle East countries to give up ballistic missiles with a range of more than 90 miles (145 km).

Asked to respond to the report, a White House spokesman told Reuter that President George Bush has previously stated that his administration would be looking at ways to stem the flow of arms to the Middle East.

There is nothing ready to be announced, the spokesman said.

Benazir charged with misuse of secret funds
Nawaz Sharif to order fresh probe into Zia's plane crash

MULTAN, Pakistan, May 14: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is to appoint a fresh commission to probe the unexplained plane crash that killed Pakistan's former military ruler Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq three years ago, his son said Monday, reports AFP.

Anwar-ul-Haq, Social Welfare Minister in the Punjab Province government, told reporters here that Sharif had assured him the commission would be formed soon and made up of retired Supreme Court Judges.

Besides, General Zia, who ruled the country for 11 years, the August 17, 1988 downing of the C-130 aircraft near the eastern city of Bahawalpur also killed US Ambassador, Arnold Raphel, his military attaché and about a dozen senior Pakistani Army officers.

An initial inquiry described the military plane crash "an act of sophisticated sabotage" but did not identify the saboteurs.

The late military ruler's family, accusing ex-Premier Benazir Bhutto's government of a cover-up, also alleged that her party militants could be behind the incident.

Ms Bhutto came to power in December 1988 in the first party-based elections after 11 years following Gen Zia's death. She was removed 20 months later on August 6, 1990 on charges of corruption by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan.

Her Pakistan People's Party has denied any involvement in the plane crash but Gen. Zia's sons have been demanding a reopening of the investigation.

"We will appear before the commission to disclose some very important secrets sur-

rounding the plane crash," Anwar-ul-Haq said.

Asked if he suspected a foreign hand in the case, he said, "we want to unveil the local hand" behind the mishap so that future leaders could not suffer a similar fate.

Reuter from Lahore adds: A Pakistani court charged on Monday former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto with misuse of secret funds, lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan said.

Bhutto denied the charges, he said.

"I shall never give details of the disbursement of the fund even under the pressure and threat of disqualification as such disclosure would not be in the national interest," he quoted her as saying.

Bhutto, dismissed by President Ghulam Ishaq Khan last August, faces eight charges of abusing her position in her 20

months as Prime Minister.

If convicted by the special courts set up by Khan in Lahore and Karachi, Bhutto could be banned from holding public office for up to seven years.

Her husband Asif Ali Zardari, a deputy in the lower house of parliament, is in jail facing about a dozen charges.

Bhutto, now Leader of the Opposition, was charged with drawing and misusing 95.5 million rupees (four million dollars) from the Secret Services Fund for horse-trading and manipulating elections in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Bhutto told the court she would rather die than divulge details of how the fund was spent.

She accused the Pakistani President of pursuing a personal vendetta against her.

CP leader upsets Bhattarai, says 'it's a vote for democracy'

KATHMANDU, May 14: A Communist activist upset the interim prime minister on Tuesday by narrowly winning the leader's own district in this Himalayan kingdom's first multi-party elections in 32 years, reports AP.

"It is a vote for democracy. It is a vote for independence. It is a vote for the alleviation of poverty," said Madan Bhandari, a 39-year-old leftist activist who lived underground for 12 years until last year's revolution.

Bhandari beat 66-year-old Krishna Prasad Bhattarai of the Nepali Congress by a vote of 27,372 to 26,621 to win the constituency in Kathmandu, according to final results.

Bhattarai was named interim prime minister in 1990 after a violent, four-month democracy campaign ended 200 years of absolute monarchy.

The same political upheaval allowed Bhandari to come out of hiding. He had been wanted since 1978 for inciting peasants to rob a government agricultural cooperative.

Reuter adds: Nepali Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai was among the losers as early results showed his Nepali Congress Party losing four of the five seats in the Capital Kathmandu to the United Marxist-Leninist (UML) Party.

One of the UML victories in Kathmandu had yet to be officially declared. Of the 25 of

Nepal's 205 constituencies where results had been announced, the Nepali Congress had won 10 and the UML 12. The other three had gone to smaller parties.

Two parties made up of politicians who served under the King before mass protest forced him to surrender absolute power last year had failed to win any seats, and the leader of one, Surya Bahadur Thapa, was trailing badly in early counting.

Thousands of UML supporters danced outside Kathmandu's town hall in the early morning as official loudspeaker announcements confirmed that they had brought communism to the doorstep of the Himalayan kingdom's palace.

The defeat of Bhattarai was a major blow to the morale of the Nepali Congress, which

won a landslide victory in Nepal's only previous free election in 1959.

Bhattarai was among party leaders jailed 21 months later when the present King's father, King Mahendra, staged a palace coup.

Bhattarai's gentle manner and austere lifestyle made him a popular choice as interim Prime Minister of the Nepali Congress-Communist Coalition Government which prepared for Sunday's polls.

Officials contacted by telephone in Pokhara, some 175 km (100 miles) west of Kathmandu, said two Nepali Congress activists were wounded in a clash in a village in the district during Sunday's polling.

Officials in Kathmandu had already announced 25 other casualties, none of them seri-

ous, in the polling which international observers said seemed generally free and fair.

Journalists said an effective curfew had been declared after clashes in another district, Tanjujunga, between the capital and Pokhara.

Communists and Nepali Congress workers fought in the district, which was thought to be a Congress stronghold but where Congress looked set to win only one of the three seats, they said.

The Nepali Congress's sole victor in Kathmandu, lawyer Daman Dhungana, told reporters sadly: "We were banned for 30 years... among all the political parties, there was no competition, so we thought we were the only ones."

The election was the first test of the battle between Marxism and tradition in Nepal, where the King is still revered by many as an incarnation of the Hindu God Lord Vishnu.

The vast majority of Nepalis eke a living from subsistence farming on overpopulated plains or in terraced hill villages carved from Himalayan slopes.

Foreign aid has flooded into Nepal, strategically wedged between India and China, but 60 per cent of the people remain too poor to eat properly.

Nepal's poll results

KATHMANDU, May 14: The Nepali Congress won 22 seats in Sunday's parliamentary elections, ahead of the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist-Leninist (NCP-UML) which took 13 seats, according to results announced at 10 am (0420 GMT) by the Electoral Commission, reports AP.

The Nepali Congress suffered a major debacle in Kathmandu where Prime Minister Krishna Prasad Bhattarai resigned Tuesday after losing

to NCP-UML General Secretary Madan Bhandari in the capital's number one constituency.

The NCP-UML won four out of the capital's five constituencies in Nepal's first free elections in more than three decades.

The communists defeated two other Congress figures here — Mangla Devi Singh and Prakash Man Singh, wife and son of party leader Ganesh Man Singh.

Kennedy Smith denies rape

PALM BEACH (Florida), May 14: A defense lawyer said Monday there was a witness to the alleged rape William Kennedy Smith is charged with, and that the witness didn't see any such assault that night at the Kennedy estate, reports AP.

Attorney Mark Schnapp's statement, in a letter to State Attorney David Bludworth, appeared to be the first time Smith's lawyers have said someone witnessed the alleged rape.

Schnapp made the statement in one of two letters defense lawyers wrote to Bludworth protesting plans by Palm Beach police to release more than 1,000 pages of documents from their investigation of the March 30 incident.

The town Attorney gave Schnapp until noon Tuesday to ask for a court order to halt the release of any documents. The police said the file they plan to release supports a nine-page affidavit they made public Thursday.

The affidavit graphically detailed an account by a 29-year-old woman from Jupiter, Florida, who says Smith raped her at the Kennedy estate after she drove him home from a

nightclub. She described how a "ferocious" Smith tackled her, pinned her down and kept her from breaking free. She also told police she could not understand why no one in the house heard her screams.

Schnapp replied: "Notably absent from the affidavit was any mention of the sworn testimony of the eyewitness, to the alleged rape who saw nothing untoward or the sworn testimony of the numerous people in the houses who did not hear any of the screaming or yelling that the (affidavit) claims to have occurred."

The letters did not identify the alleged witness, and neither Schnapp nor one of Smith's Washington-based attorneys, Randall Turk, would disclose the person's identity Monday.

A source close to the Kennedys said on condition of anonymity that the person is neither Sen. Edward Kennedy nor his son, Rhode Island state Rep. Patrick Kennedy, who both were at the estate when the alleged attack occurred.

Smith has been charged with one count each of sexual battery, tantamount to rape, and battery.

Schnapp said that if police release the documents they plan to, such as witness statements and incident reports, Smith's right to a fair trial would be jeopardized.

Turk said: "We're just putting them on notice that if they are going to release anything, it should include everything, not just documents that support the affidavit."

Ozal cancels US tour

ALBANY (New York), May 14: Turkish President Turgut Ozal has canceled a trip to United States, averting a threatened protest of his planned commencement address at the State University of New York at Albany, campus officials said Monday, reports AP.

Ozal was slated to deliver the keynote address and receive an honorary degree at the university's graduation on May 26.

Off the Record

Guest list, a hot topic of White House dinner

WASHINGTON: Last week's hot topic was the guest list for Tuesday night's White House dinner. Washington's royal watchers are mulling about Queen Elizabeth II's intentions toward America's military man of the moment, reports AP.

Will she or won't she confer an honorary knighthood on Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf?

The monarch, as is her custom, is keeping mum. "There's been a great deal of speculation but we never comment on honors before a particular day," said a Buckingham Palace spokesman, when pressed. Palace spokesmen, as is their custom, are not quoted by name.

If Schwarzkopf gets an honorary knighthood, he'll be following in the footsteps of former US President Ronald Reagan and ex-Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. But he won't be called "Sir" because he's not British, an embassy spokesman said.

Before she meets the Desert Storm commander in Florida, the queen and her husband, Prince Philip, have a tight schedule of business and partying in Washington.



CANNES, France: American pop singer Madonna is escorted by movie director Alek Keshinian to attend the screening of their film "In Bed with Madonna" at the Cannes Film Festival May 13. —AFP/UNB Photo.

5000 Bibles to be sold in Cuba

HAVANA: Five thousand Bibles are to go on public sale in Cuban bookshops in a further sign of increasing tolerance by Cuba's Communist authorities towards religious teaching and worship, reports Reuter.

The Cuban News Agency Prensa Latina said on Monday the Bibles were handed over by Cuba's Ecumenical Council to the National Book Institute, a State organisation responsible for the distribution of books on the island.

Printed in Spanish, the Bibles were a donation from the United Bible Societies, Prensa Latina said.

Bibles and religious literature had not been openly sold in Cuba's State Bookshops for three decades, a result of the hostility that characterised church-state relations following the 1959 revolution which ended a right-wing dictatorship and eventually introduced communism to the island.

Pet owners have lower blood pressure

SYDNEY: Australians are less likely to be struck down by heart disease if they own a dog or cat, medical researchers say.

The results of a four-year survey by Melbourne's Baker Medical Research Unit show that pet owners have lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels than other people.

The research involved 7,405 people, including nearly 900 pet owners.

"We started off as cynics, expecting a negative result, but we have been really surprised by the findings," physiologist Warwick Anderson told Reuters on Tuesday.

Anderson outlined the results of the survey to the pan-pacific veterinary association conference being held in Sydney.

He and two other medical researchers found that exercise patterns, diet and family history of heart disease were similar in both pet and non-pet owners.

Australia to raise humanitarian immigration quota

CANBERRA, May 14: Australia will slash its immigration quota next year by 15,000 in the face of economic recession and high unemployment, according to official sources.

The quota will drop 12 per cent to 111,000 new settlers, down from the 126,000 allowed during 1990-91 — a figure which will not be reached because fewer migrants want to come to a country in recession.

The Cabinet set targets Sunday night for migration levels over the next three years, which will gradually increase the number of migrants allowed into Australia in 1993-94 to 128,000.

In a series of sweeping changes to immigration policy, the Government has forecast a significant drop in the number of refugees from areas such as South-East Asia.

However, the quota for the humanitarian category will actually increase by 1000 — to 12,000 next year — because the Government has created a

Pre-poll violence toll 47 so far: Victor learns his lines
Subramanian calls Hegde a crook

NEW DELHI, May 14: Six more people have died in pre-election violence in India, reports Reuter.

Indian news agencies reported six people had been killed since Saturday in campaign violence, bringing the toll to 47 in what analysts say could be India's bloodiest polls since it won independence in 1947.

The body of an independent candidate for Punjab's State Assembly election was found in Jalandhar district, the Press Trust of India news agency said.

Kamaljit Singh, who had been missing for a week, was the fifth candidate killed in the state since polling dates were announced last month.

Three supporters of an independent candidate were killed and five injured when

their jeep was fired on in Rampur district in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh at the weekend, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency said.

A Bangalore report adds: The leadership of the state units of the Janata Dal (JD) and the Samajwadi Janata Party (SJP) have succeeded in adjustments, but no sooner had their talks ended recently that Dr Subramanian Swamy declared at a press conference that "Ramakrishna Hegde is the biggest crook in Indian politics and I am glad that I have exposed him."

The alliance between the two parties is meant to ensure a one-to-one fight with the Congress (I). Mr Hegde of the Janata Dal and Mr Deve Gowda of the SJP have apparently sunk their longstanding rivalry

to this end.

But Dr Swamy insisted at his press conference that there would only be adjustments in the sharing of seats between the two parties. There would be no joint campaign, nor was it part of the agreement to refrain from raising the charges of corruption against Mr Hegde.

The state-level leaders of both parties were closeted together since morning yesterday and an agreement on seats was thrashed out. The SJP will now field its candidates in the six constituencies of Mysore, Hassan, Tumkur, Chitradurga, Gulbarga and Mangalore.

Another report from Calcutta says: It took a David Lean and a Satyajit Ray to extract the best from Mr Victor Banerjee, but the actor is now hoping to turn in a virtuoso

performance of his own as he makes his debut at the hustings from Calcutta North-West.

Mr Banerjee has chosen a seat which has consistently voted for the Congress (except in the Janata wave of 1977 when it returned a Bharatiya Lok Dal candidate, Mr Bijoy Singh Nahar), and for a party which has virtually been non-existent in West Bengal.

Till he publicly plumped for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), most Congress (I) men had considered the actor to be one of their own. Mr Banerjee says he "rejected" the Congress (I) because in it had to behave like a puppet.

But at a recent press conference here, he was unconvincing as he attempted to explain the BJP's perspective, seeming more like a programmed robot than a true-blue believer. He says he joined the BJP to restore Bengal's lost pride of place in the country. "Today Bengal thinks what Delhi thought day before yesterday. It's high time Bengal begins thinking what the rest of the country will think tomorrow."

Mr Banerjee's own constituency has been cool towards the BJP and its earlier incarnation, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS); the BJP came third in the constituency in the last two elections with a meagre 2.9 per cent of the vote in 1984 and a slightly better 7.3 per cent in 1989.

So staunchly pro-Congress is Calcutta North-West that Mr Asoke Kumar Sen, who won the seat as a Congress candidate from 1957-77 and again in 1980 and 1984, lost when he contested on Janata Dal ticket in 1989. The winner, a little-known Congress (I) man, Mr. Debi Pal, is in the fray to defend his seat.



CALCUTTA: Former West Bengal PWD Minister Jatin Chakraborty campaigns from a cycle rickshaw in the Lake Gardens area of South Calcutta. Chakraborty is 80 and was recently expelled from the RSP. Dhakuria is the Assembly seat he won in the last election. He is defending it in a lonely crusade this time.