

BRIEFLY

ANC condemns political violence:

The African National Congress ANC Friday strongly condemned the latest political violence in South Africa in which at least 19 people were killed in the past 24 hours, reports Xinhua from Harare.

In a statement issued in Johannesburg, the ANC warned that anger at this disregard for black lives was reaching boiling point.

The ANC statement noted that the dead fell into two categories—those killed at random and those from various political organizations, who were specifically targeted for assassination.

"The random attacks are intended to create fear and insecurity in everyone," said the statement.

The ANC noted that the death toll mounted at moments of great political importance, as now with the run-up period to the March 17 reform referendum.

11 killed in Swedish tram mishap:

At least eleven people were killed and about 20 others injured when a runaway tram careened down a hill in the Swedish port city of Gothenburg on Thursday, smashing cars and ploughing into bystanders, reports Reuter from Stockholm.

Transport officials said they had no immediate explanation for the accident, in which the tram trundled out of control, picked up speed downhill then pitched into a queue of people during the morning rush-hour in Sweden's second city.

Police spokesman Sixten Lindman told Reuters eleven people had died and about 20 other were injured, two or three of them seriously, in the country's worst tram accident.

Four of those killed were in a car hit and set ablaze by the two-carriage tram.

The others were waiting at a tram stop when the Maverick tram hurtled across the square towards them.

Mugabe new chief of Frontline states:

Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe was Thursday unanimously elected chairman of the Frontline States Grouping, according to the Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency (ZIANA), reports Xinhua from Harare.

President Mugabe, who is now chairing this year's first summit meeting of the seven frontline states in the Zambian capital of Lusaka, takes over the post which fell vacant in October last year when the then Chairman Kenneth Kaunda, lost the Zambian Presidency to Frederick Chiluba. The seven frontline states are Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The one day Lusaka summit meeting is expected to review the latest political developments in South Africa, the March 17 whites-only referendum in particular, the peace process in Mozambique and Angola as well as the current drought ravaging the whole southern African region.

N Korean ship leaves Iranian port:

A North Korean cargo ship suspected of carrying Scud-C missiles that eluded a US Navy search has left the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, the Pentagon spokesman said on Thursday, reports AP from Washington.

"It appears to have off-loaded its cargo and left on Wednesday, spokesman Pet Williams told reporters.

Williams said it still isn't known for certain whether the freighter, the Dae Hong Ho, had carried medium-range missiles.

Asked if the administration could detect whether an attempt was made to conceal the cargo as it was being delivered, Williams declined to answer.

Turkish planes bomb Kurdish bases:

Turkish aircraft on Thursday carried out their fourth attack this month on guerrilla bases used by rebel Turkish Kurds in neighbouring Iraq, a military official said, reports AP from Turkey.

The planes bombed a Kurdish Labour Party camp near Hakhrurk in northern Iraq, 10 kilometers (six miles) from the Turkish border, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Turkish planes also attacked Hakhrurk on March 1.

The government says that the rebels use northern Iraq bases to stage hit-and-run attacks into Turkey.

International aid workers and Iraqi Kurdish leaders have said that in the recent raids, Turkish planes have hit some Iraqi civilian settlements, killing Iraqi Kurds. Turkey has denied doing so.

Malaysian opposition for sanctions against Myanmar

KUALA LUMPUR, Mar 13: Malaysia's parliamentary opposition leader today urged the government to support global economic sanctions against Myanmar if it continued to abuse its Rohingya Muslim minority, reports AFP.

As pressure grew on Myanmar over the exodus of the Rohingyas into neighbouring Bangladesh, Lim Kit Siang, Secretary-General of the ethnic Chinese-based Democratic Action Party (DAP), said Malaysia should publicly declare its preparedness to support sanctions against Yangon.

"It is a great shame if the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), whose members are Myanmar's closest neighbours, is unprepared to take diplomatic initiatives to help end the sufferings and ordeal of the Rohingyas Muslims," Lim said in a statement.

Lim said Malaysia must be in the forefront of diplomatic initiatives in ASEAN to get the Myanmar military junta to respect the human rights, dignity and lives of the Muslim minority who had been Myanmar nationals for centuries.

"Malaysia should propose the convening of an emergency ASEAN foreign ministers' conference to discuss and work out a united international strategy on the issue," Lim stressed.

The United Nations estimates that up to 150,000 Rohingyas have fled into southeastern Bangladesh in recent months, claiming atrocities by Yangon's military.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad on Saturday took the lead by expressing his government's stand against any persecution of the Rohingyas.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, Thursday joined Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand in appealing to Myanmar to resolve the problem, leaving only Brunei and the Philippines in ASEAN who have yet to make public their stand on the issue.

In Malaysia, the powerful youth wing of the ruling party late Wednesday said it would prod the government to convince the United Nations to impose economic sanctions on Myanmar if Yangon continued alleged atrocities against the Rohingyas.

"We should seek to impose UN sanctions on Yangon if it continues to intentionally delay resolving the plight of the Rohingyas," Nazri Aziz, Chairman of the International Bureau of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) youth wing, said.

UMNO, headed by Mahathir, represents Malaysia's Malay Muslim majority.



WASHINGTON: Jordan's King Hussein (L) meets in the Oval Office of the White House with President Bush on Thursday. President Bush welcomed King Hussein, saying he is "looking to the future" following tense relations with Jordan over the question of Iraq, calling Hussein "my friend." — AFP/UNB photo

Myanmar junta dissolves 9 more parties

YANGON, Mar 13: Myanmar military government has dissolved nine more political parties, the state-owned Working People's Daily reported Thursday, reports AP.

The parties were deregistered Wednesday by the State Law and Order Restoration Council "for lack of party membership and branch offices, and also for failure to strictly observe rules and regulations by the party officials," the newspaper said.

Two other parties were dissolved a week ago.

Among the 20 parties still legally registered are the National League for Democracy, co-founded by detained Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, and the National Unity Party, known as the Burma Socialist Program Party when Myanmar was a one-party state under former Prime Minister Ne Win.

NPT discriminatory, says Rao

PORT LOUIS, Mar 13: The Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, yesterday said India did not propose to sign the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as it was 'discriminatory,' reports PTI.

"Our position on the NPT is well known. It is discriminatory, we have not signed it. And we do not propose to sign it," Rao said speaking at a press conference here.

To a query on the economic reforms initiated by his government, Rao said he was 'quite satisfied' about their outcome as the overall economic situation had vastly improved. The country needed to

do lot more to integrate its economy with the world economy, he said.

Stating that there was no alternative before his government but to initiate the reforms, he said this was because 'disaster stared at our face when we assumed office.'

Since the reforms were undertaken, the international confidence in India's economic situation has improved he said.

He said the liberalisation of Indian economy was going on for the last 40 years from time to time. "It started in Indira Gandhi's time, carried forward by Rajiv Gandhi and this time

it is in large extent in the same direction."

He said the reforms had led to considerable improvement of the financial situation and also in the balance of payments position.

The foreign investment, which had been scanty, was now becoming available more and more and he was quite satisfied that this trend will continue, he said.

When asked whether he favoured the idea of formation of a national government in view of his government being a minority, one, the Prime Minister said he saw no need for a national government as

the approach of consensus was working well.

Rao, who is here as the chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations where Mauritius turned a republic, has invited the Prime Minister of the island state, Anerood Jugnath, to visit India.

Rao said Jugnath has accepted the invitation, but the dates of the visit have to be finalised.

The Prime Minister visualised greater cooperation between the two countries in the near future. He said India supported Mauritius stand on Diego Garcia.

Jam Sadiq's death heralds change in Benazir's fortune

ISLAMABAD, Mar 13: Pakistan opposition leader Benazir Bhutto appears to be making political gains since the recent death of her federally-backed arch foe Jam Sadiq Ali who had besieged her party in Sindh, AFP reports.

The relief in her home province has come at a time when Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is already wrestling with dissent in his coalition, the Islamic Democratic Alliance (IJI), analysts said.

Simmering differences with fundamentalist Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), an important component of IJI, reached a peak this week with JI chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, calling for a "burial" of the alliance.

Ahmed has been a vocal critic of Sharif's government on most issues including Afghanistan, Kashmir, the US-opposed nuclear programme and the slow pace of Islamization in Pakistan.

The pressures increased as another influential ally, former caretaker prime minister

Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, made a dramatic rapprochement with Bhutto as politics took a new turn in the southern region.

Sindh Chief Minister Ali

party in her home province.

Bhutto and Jatoi joined hands in Sindh linking up their respective Peoples Democratic Alliance (PDA) and



She died on March 5 after a long illness. He had enforced 18 months of strong-arm rule during which Bhutto, ousted from power in 1990, alleged large-scale victimization of her

National Peoples Party (NPP) in an apparent bid for power in the province with an eye on possibilities at the national level.

Dowry death toll surpasses Sikh killings in India

NEW DELHI, Mar 13: Illegal demands for dowry in India have claimed more lives in the past four years than the Sikh separatist revolt in Punjab, reports Reuter.

Figures released in parliament on Wednesday showed 15,891 young brides were killed or committed suicide between 1988 and 1991 because their in-laws accused them of not bringing in enough dowry in cash, jewellery and consumer goods.

Police reports show about 14,500 people were killed in the same period in India's most violent political insurgency in the Punjab where Sikh militants are battling for a separate homeland to be called Khalistan, land of the pure.

Dowry demands were outlawed in India in 1961.

A tiny, but probably growing minority, of better-educated urban Indians are now bucking the system.

Newspaper features suggest more couples are marrying for love, and more brides are braving the stigma of divorce.

Tareq Aziz fails to satisfy Security Council

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 13: The Security Council on Thursday demanded that Iraq comply immediately with Gulf War cease-fire resolutions, saying it was not satisfied with two days of promises from its Deputy Prime Minister, Reuter says.

The first test may come as early as next week when a UN inspection team may go to Baghdad, to see if Iraq will allow the destruction of equipment to make Scud missiles.

A brief statement read out after two days of meetings to hear explanations by Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz said: "In the view of the Security Council, the government of Iraq has not yet complied fully and unconditionally with those obligations,

must do so and must immediately take appropriate actions in this regard.

"It hopes that the goodwill expressed by the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq will be matched by deeds."

Aziz, who said he came to New York on a "goodwill mission," spent two days listening to denunciations and then answering questions by Council member.

He said all banned weapons had been destroyed and that Iraq was ready to make a full disclosure of all arms programmes and facilities covered by council resolutions and to enter into immediate technical talks with UN officials.

should destroy only equipment used to produce forbidden weapons, not materials that could be used for civilian purposes and to rebuild Iraqi industry.

The latest confrontation with UN inspectors over the Scud missiles occurred two weeks ago when Baghdad refused to scrap equipment, saying it had non-military uses.

Also high on the list for destruction is a huge dormant nuclear weapons production complex Al-Atheer, which US Ambassador Thomas Pickering said should be demolished.

where we stand on this." Asked if the thought any parts of the complex could be used for civilian purposes, he said, "the cafeteria."

Aziz came to the United Nations with a large delegation to answer charges that Iraq was repeatedly trying to outwit UN teams in charge of finding and destroying its nuclear, chemical, biological and ballistic weapons and facilities.

Reacting to Aziz's statements, Pickering said, "I am left with the final and unfortunate conclusion that ... we are once again in a cat-and-mouse game."

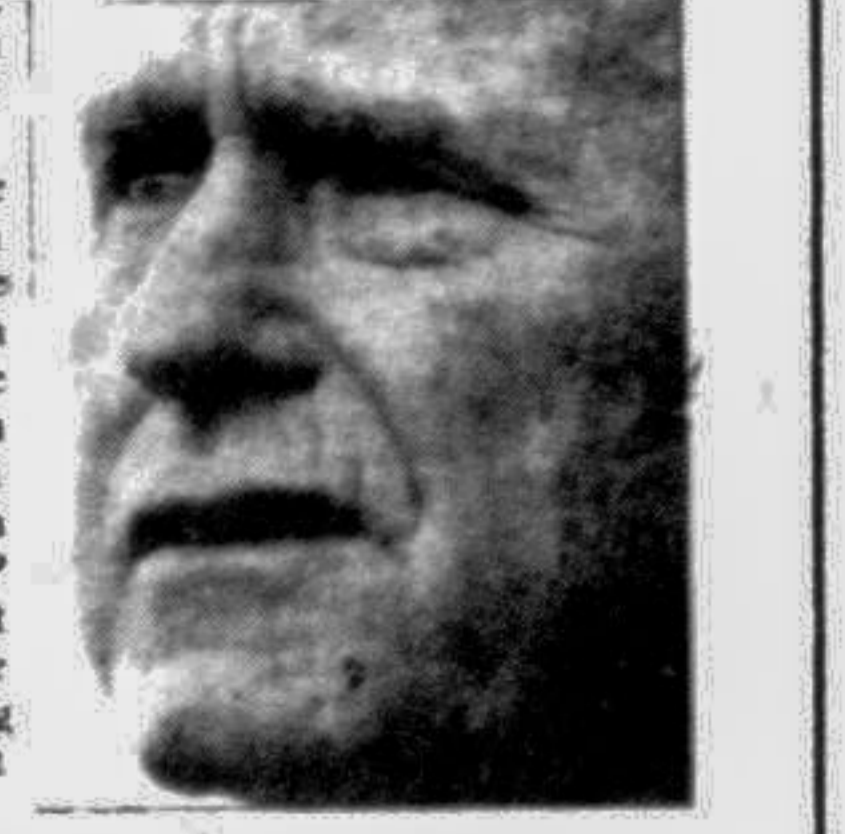
Off the Record

Bush gets 50,000 letters a week

WASHINGTON: President George Bush gets about 50,000 letters in the mail every week, his Chief of Staff Samuel Skinner said on Thursday, Reuter reports.

Skinner said he, too, gets quite a bit of mail from Americans who often have advice for the White House.

"I am impressed by the depth of the information that is provided, with the quality of the advice in most cases, although some advice is, 'Why don't you quit' or, 'you're not doing a very good job,' or 'Why in the world did he pick you?'" Skinner said most letters have constructive comments on "what's going on in this country and what we need to do at this very crucial time" on the economy and other matters.



Beatty weds Bening

LOS ANGELES: Hollywood playboy Warren Beatty has married his 'Bugsy' co-star Annette Bening, the mother of his 2-month-old daughter, in a private ceremony, the couple's publicist said Thursday, AP says.

"I can confirm they were married not too long ago, but no further details will be forthcoming," Nancy Seltzer said. "They sound very happy."

The couple didn't want the date of the wedding, the location or any details revealed. "They want to keep it private," Seltzer said.

It's the first marriage for the Oscar-nominated actor-director, who turns 55 on March 30, the day of the Academy Awards presentations. 'Bugsy' got 10 nominations, including best picture, to lead all contenders.

Bening, 33, married once before and divorced. Beatty and Bening became romantically involved during filming of the mob movie. Their child, Kathryn Bening Beatty, was born in January.

During his years as Hollywood's premiere bachelor, Beatty was linked romantically with Diane Keaton, Julie Christie, Madonna and others.

In last November's issue of Vanity Fair magazine, Beatty praised monogamy and discussed the sanctity of marriage.

"That phrase, 'until death do us part' — I always said if you're going to stand up and make this sort of promise, then you really ought to keep it," Beatty said.

Needle causes chest pains

DENVER: A woman who went to an emergency room complaining of chest pains required open-heart surgery when the cause was discovered: a sewing needle, AP reports.

Dr James J. Bachman, who works at Prisco Medical Centre, reported the case in a letter to the editor published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

The unidentified woman fell on the needle she was carrying when she slipped over her car.

"My initial reaction was the same as hers: I couldn't believe it," Bachman said. "I thought, how could you not know there was a needle in your heart?"

The woman went to the hospital with chest pain, nausea, vomiting and sweating, symptoms of her immune system trying to expel the object.

An X-ray revealed the needle embedded to near her left breast, leaving a small mark the woman noticed but dismissed, Bachman said.

Medical literature records 150 similar cases. Bachman said surgery was needed to extract the needle because getting a grip and pulling was impossible. "The pumping action of the heart kind of sucks that needle in," he said.

Fishermen doleful for dead dolphins

JAKARTA: Sorrowing Indonesian fishermen have buried 400 dolphins they accidentally trapped off Java, the official news agency Antara said Friday, Reuter reports.

"We deeply regret it. It's a taboo for fishermen to kill or catch dolphins, Antara quoted one fisherman as saying.

Indonesian fishermen believe dolphins help to push ashore boats that run into trouble at sea.

The dolphins were buried on Banten beach in west Java last week after the fishermen found them dead in their nets. The animals were probably dragged by strong currents into shallow waters where the nets had been laid, fishery officials said.

China warns UN not to become super state

BONN, Mar 13: China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen has said Beijing will not contribute soldiers to UN peace-keeping forces and warned the United Nations not to become too powerful, according to a German newspaper, reports Reuter.

"The United Nations should not behave like a super state," Qian said in an interview today edition of the Handelsblat newspaper.

Qian was quoted as telling the newspaper China was willing to send civilians to take part in UN peace-keeping operations, but ruled out the idea of Chinese forces taking part in UN operations in areas of

world tension. Qian's three-day visit to Germany ended yesterday in a wide-ranging interview, the Minister also commented on the Minister's decision to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

"But the treaty itself is not aim. That's the destruction and banning all nuclear weapons," Qian was quoted as saying.

Asked if China viewed itself as becoming the second superpower after the United States in the near future, Qian said Beijing was striving in this direction.

But he said history showed that any country that wanted to play such a role had to take a greater responsibility in the world, and that destroyed its economic strength.

Anti-Milosevic demonstration continues

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Mar 13: Thousands of students and high-school pupils demanded for a third day Thursday that Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and his Socialist government resign, reports AP.

As dusk fell on Celgrade's main Terazije square, 1,500 to 2,000 demonstrators milled around at a vigil that peaked with some 10,000 protesters Wednesday night.

Meanwhile, at a military depot Valjevo, a town 60 miles (100 km) southwest of Belgrade, an explosion killed an officer and two soldiers.

Libya denies arming Polisario guerillas

CAIRO, Mar 13: A Libyan foreign ministry source yesterday denied arming guerillas of the Polisario Liberation Front in Western Sahara in its fight against Moroccan troops, the Egyptian Middle East News Agency (MENA) said in a dispatch from Tripoli, reports Xinhua.

The source made the point to refute a report published by a British newspaper recently alleging that Libya has financed a fresh arms package to the Polisario front which was formerly backed by Algeria.

Describing the report as groundless, he said this was a king of cheap fabrication to sow dissension among Arab ranks.

Morocco annexed most of Western Sahara after Spain gave up its colony on the North West African coast in 1976, saying the region had been Morocco's territory from time immemorial.

Polisario seeks independence in the region, and fighting has continued since then, resulting in the killing of thousands of people.

The United Nations tried to mediate and according to an original timetable a referen-

8,000 Nepali troops to join UN forces

KATHMANDU, Mar 13: Nepal will send 8000 troops to join a UN-sponsored peace-keeping contingent in Yugoslavia next month, a Defence Ministry official said today, reports Reuter.

He said 16 royal Nepali army officers left for Yugoslavia on Thursday to prepare for their arrival.

He said the soldiers will leave in batches, the last being expected to reach Yugoslavia by the end of April.

Nepali soldiers are currently serving in UN forces in Lebanon, Kuwait and Afghanistan.

dum would be held in West Sahara in January to decide whether it would become an independence state or a province of Morocco.

In December, however, former UN Secretary-General Javier Perez De Cuellar reported no prospect for the referendum soon due to disputes between Morocco and Polisario over voter eligibility.

Disputes over voting criteria are the main problem, with Morocco claiming that many thousands of pro-Moroccan settlers should be allowed to register, and Polisario saying they are Moroccans not Saharans.

Both Morocco and Polisario accepted a 1974 Spanish census as a basis for the electoral rolls, when 74,000 eligible voters were counted.

Major refuses to take part in debate with opposition

LONDON, Mar 13: Britain's Conservative Prime Minister John Major on Thursday refused to take part in a three-way televised debate with opposition leaders, one day after calling a general election here for April 9, reports AFP.

Handling his final Prime Minister's question time in parliament before the election Major told Labour's Ken Livingstone, "every party politician who expects to lose tries that trick and every politician who expects to win says no."

Labour Party leader Neil Kinnock said Major had given a "pathetic excuse" for not taking part in the television debate.

He and Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown had "nothing to fear from British people — let's have a debate, let's fix the date, let's get on with it", he urged.