

# Belgium to seize Mobutu's assets

BRUSSELS, Feb 27: Belgium said Friday it is preparing to seize assets of Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko in this country and called on other nations to follow suit, reports AP.

The move, which has been under discussion by Belgium, France and the United States, was the latest to increase pressure on Mobutu to yield power to his rival, Prime Minister Etienne Tshisekedi.

The Belgian announcement came despite an end to the siege by troops around Zaire's parliament, where they held hundreds of interim legislators for three days.

"We are preparing this," Foreign Minister Willy Claes said of a move to seize mansions and other possessions of Mobutu in Belgium.

"And we ought to be able to do it at an international level."

The United States, France and Belgium have steadily stepped up diplomatic pressure on Mobutu to yield power to Tshisekedi ever since riots by troops left hundreds dead in Kinshasa last month.

The three nations were Mobutu allies during the Cold War when they viewed him as a bulwark against communism.

Claes said Washington would have little trouble in doing so, but Belgium would have to draft a law to seize assets from heads of state.

Mobutu's properties in Belgium include two castles — one of them in a chic Brussels suburb. He also has properties in France, Switzerland and throughout Africa.

Mobutu's financial empire has been estimated in the hundreds of millions of dollars.

# Russia dumps N-waste in sea of Japan

LONDON, Feb 27: The Russian navy secretly dumped nuclear waste, including used reactors from submarines, in the sea of Japan, Britain's Channel 4 Television news said on Friday, reports Reuter.

It said Russian President Boris Yeltsin received details of the dumping, which violated international maritime agreements, in a report this month, but it has not been openly published.

"The Japanese government said it was told in December last year but there are doubts about how much information they were actually given. It is feared that the dumping may still be going on and President Yeltsin may be powerless to stop it," Channel 4 said.

The report listed 10 dumping sites in the sea of Japan, the sea of Okhotsk and at the tip of the Kamchatka peninsula in the Pacific region.

Disposing of nuclear reactors from submarines is a major problem but fears of contamination have stopped western nations from dumping, which is barred under the London Dumping Convention. Russia is a signatory to the agreement.

Channel 4 said Dr Alexei Yablokov, Environmental Adviser to Yeltsin who is investigating the issue, discovered that the Russian fleet had been dumping as recently as last year.

"Nobody in this government was informed about this. It was an old practice," he told Channel 4, adding that his task was to expose the problem.

Western experts said there are fears of contamination that would rule out fishing in vast areas of the sea.

Yablokov said data had been falsified but now Russia wanted to follow all the international rules. He called for multi-national cooperation and said the United States and Russia should work together to solve the problem.

Yeltsin is expected to reply to the report within the next two weeks. "But until more storage facilities are built it seems the navy must and will continue to dump its nuclear waste at sea," Channel 4 said.

# HK team to urge China to talk with Britain

HONG KONG, Feb 27: A group of conservative legislators will visit Beijing Monday and urge Chinese officials to resume negotiations with Britain over Hong Kong's future, the groups spokesman said Saturday, reports AP.

Allen Lee, convener of the Cooperative Resources Centre, said the ball was now in China's court following Hong Kong's decision this week to delay publishing Gov Chris Patten's democratic reforms so Britain can continue contacts with China.

"I believe the Hong Kong government has shown its sincerity," Lee told government-owned Radio Hong Kong. "Now it is (up to) the Chinese government to make a decision."

Lee said his eight-member group would meet Premier Li Peng and ask him to give the green light to resuming the negotiations.

# Off the Record

## He talks as if he feels unloved

WASHINGTON: President Clinton talked Friday as if he feels unloved, reports AP.

During a speech at American University he spun a yarn that tied together the day's snowy weather, a college date long ago and an icy auto skid that he suggested some people might wish he hadn't survived.

The President recalled driving through Washington while attending Georgetown University so he and a friend could pick up two "fine women from American University" for dinner and a movie.

"As we were driving, home it was very slick, just like it is today, and ... my car went into a huge spin and it missed this massive pole ... by about two inches," Clinton said. "I couldn't help thinking after my speech (about deficits and taxes) last week how many more people would have been happy in America if I'd been a little closer to that pole 25 years ago."



## He showed his gratitude by killing them

SOMERVILLE: A 22-year-old man who scrawled "mom" and "mom and Dad" on shotgun shells before killing his parents has been sentenced to 60 years in prison by a judge who said he was unrepentant, reports AP.

Judge Michael Imbriani on Thursday told Matthew Heikkila that the slain couple Richard and Dawn Heikkila "showed you with an abundance of love."

"They wanted you to cease acting like a spoiled child, to stop mooching off of their hard-earned money and to start standing on your own two feet as an adult," Imbriani said. "You showed your appreciation by murdering them."

Imbriani asked Heikkila why he has not apologized in court for murdering his parents, who had adopted him.

"I apologize to them every night, said Heikkila, who didn't testify or issue a statement during his trial. Spared the death penalty by a Somerset County jury last month Heikkila could have been sentenced to as much as 70 years.

On January 29, 1991, Heikkila shot his parents as they came home from work. Investigators found spent shotgun shells, one inscribed "Mom" and the other "Mom and Dad." His father was a medical researcher widely known for his studies on Parkinson's disease and his mother a real estate agent.

## Fine for not checking 'Sex' properly

TOKYO: Tokyo Customs officials said Friday they have fined a printing company 100,000 yen (\$55 dollar) for making a false report when it imported photographic plates for American rock star Madonna's book "Sex" last year, reports AP.

Officials had questioned the company about how it brought the plates into Japan without having them checked by inspectors. The Customs Office has ruled that portions of the book are obscene and has seized copies brought in by travelers at airports.

Customs officials said Tokyo-based Toppan Printing Co. claimed the plates were for the written text of a book when it imported the plates in October.

The printing company said in a statement that the failure to properly declare the plates as photographs was an unintended error.

The Japanese version of "Sex" published by the Kyoto-based Dohosha Co., went on sale in December with several photographs retouched to obscure male genitalia.

The National Police Agency last week served a warning to Dohosha that some remaining photos in the Japanese edition of the book showing public hair were obscene. The police action was seen as lenient in a country with unwritten obscenity standards that generally ban photographs or paintings showing genitals or public hair.

## It's not a religious right issue only

WASHINGTON: Religious right groups are sending a fresh wave of fund-raising letters, taking aim at President Clinton's attempts to lift the military's ban on homosexuals, reports AP.

"Are we about to become a hedonistic nation of unrestrained homosexuality, abortion, immorality and lawlessness?" asks a letter from Jerry Falwell the one-time head of the Moral Majority.

The mailbox fund-raising effort involves some of the religious right's best known activists, including Pat Robertson and Falwell, but also lesser-known organisations, such as the California-based Traditional Values Coalition and Florida-based Coral Ridge Ministries.

Other conservative groups also are flooding the mails to raise money to fight Clinton's policy, including a group led by former Regan White House aide Oliver North, the Marine Colonel at the centre of the Iran-Contra scandal.

"It's great to have an enemy," said conservative consultant Craig Shirley. Among his clients is the American Conservative Union, another group trying to turn Clinton's position on gays in the military into a fund-raising boon.

"The returns have been just going through the roof," Shirley said. "It's not just a religious right issue. It's more of a cultural issue, a moral issue and a liberal issue and therefore has broader appeal among conservatives than just religious conservatives."

The use of direct mail to raise money is by no means confined to the opposition to Clinton's efforts.

## Goat jailed for stealing

NAIROBI: A goat was jailed for two days in a remote Kenyan town for stealing 105 shillings dollar belonging to a fruit seller, the Daily Nation newspaper reported, says Reuter.

The goat dipped its head in a bag that contained the unidentified woman's money and fled with cash when it was scared away, the paper said yesterday.

The trader grabbed the goat and turned it over to police at Kilgoris 300 km (200 miles) west of Nairobi. The goat's owner refunded the money and the animal was freed.

# BRIEFLY

**Ghali for release of Haitians:** UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali Friday called for the release of Haitians arrested following the mass held for victims of last week's ferry accident, a UN spokesman said, reports AFP from United Nations.

Several people were arrested Thursday after a scuffle erupted when some of the mourners were heard chanting for the return of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

Bishop Willy Romelus, a political activist, was also beaten in the incident at the Pro-Au-Prince cathedral.

Boutros-Ghali "Sincerely hopes that in the interest of the Haitian people and the democratic process" that authorities would immediately release those arrested Thursday, said UN spokesman Joe Still.

**Clinton supports Kim:** US President Bill Clinton on Saturday affirmed Washington's security commitment to Seoul in a letter to newly inaugurated South Korean President Kim Young-sam, officials said, reports AP from Seoul.

After receiving the letter through visiting US Congressman Gary Ackerman, D-NY Kim expressed hope for an early summit with Clinton, chief presidential spokesman Lee Kyung-jae said.

Ackerman promised to convey Kim's desire to Clinton, Lee said. Seoul officials have said the Clinton-Kim meeting might take place before or after Clinton's trip to Japan for the summit of seven industrial powers in July.

Ackerman, who chairs the Asia-Pacific Affairs subcommittee of the House Foreign Relations Committee, attended Kim's inauguration ceremony on Thursday.

**Mrs Collor to be tried:** Rosane Collor, Brazil's former First Lady, will be tried for misuse of funds belonging to a state relief agency, the Brazilian legion of assistance, authorities said here Friday, reports AFP from Maccio.

The wife of deposed President Fernando Collor De Mello, Rosane Collor headed the agency between March 1990 and December 1991.

Federal Judge Sebastiao Vasquez announced she would be tried on charges of leading a band that "diverted resources on the order of 130 million dollars from the Brazilian Legion of Assistance to a relief organization headed by her mother, Rostita Malta."

**Swede, Turk killed in Cairo:** An explosion ripped through a crowded coffee whop in central Cairo on Friday, killing a Swede and a Turk and wounding 20 people including eight foreigners, police and hospital sources said, reports Reuter from Cairo.

Riot police armed with batons sealed off the area as military experts tried to determine the cause of the blast. Police speculated that cooking gas cylinder was to blame, but said they were not sure.

The explosion followed a series of attacks on tourist targets in Egypt by Muslim militants fighting to turn the country into a purist Islamic state.

The blast ripped through the coffee shop at a peak time, about four hours after Muslims ended their daytime fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

**Clinton to meet world leaders:** US President Bill Clinton will meet several world leaders in March and early April, including the heads of France, Israel, Germany and Egypt, to build "working relationship with them," the White House said on Friday, reports Reuter from Washington.

Clinton will meet at the White House with French President Francois Mitterrand on March 9, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, on March 15, and exiled Haitian President Jean Bertrand Aristide on March 16.

He will also confer with Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds on March 17, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl on March 26 and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on April 6.

**FIEJ award for UNESCO DG:** The International Federation of Newspaper Publishers (FIEJ) announced on Friday an award for the Director-General of UNESCO, the world cultural body which was long at daggers-drawn with western media, reports Reuter from Paris.

A statement said the federation, which represents more than 15,000 newspapers, had awarded its 45th anniversary prize to Frederico Mayor "for his outstanding contribution to the cause of freedom of expression."

"We believe Mayor merits such a prize for his courage and perseverance in totally reforming UNESCO's media policy," the statement said.

**Move to lift UN sanctions on South Africa gradually**

GENEVA, Feb 27: The UN human rights commission, bowing to the winds of change, appeared on Friday to cautiously endorse the gradual lifting of economic sanction against South Africa as it made progress towards majority rule, reports Reuter.

The move, wrapped in diplomatic language which made no mention of the word "sanctions," came in a resolution on violations of human rights in southern Africa.

The resolution called on the world to "support the fragile and critical process of transition underway in South Africa

# Suharto certain to be re-elected

JAKARTA, Feb 27: The Indonesian People's Consultative Assembly begins an 11-day session Monday and is expected to re-elect long-ruling President Suharto and choose a vice president who may become his successor, reports AP.

The 1,000-member assembly, dominated by President Suharto's ruling Golkar party, is almost certain to re-elect Suharto, the sole candidate, for a record sixth five-year term on March 10.

But the post of vice president, though largely ceremonial, has been a subject of intense speculation in recent weeks because whoever gets it is likely to be Suharto's successor.

And of the five factions in the House of Representative, only Golkar has yet to formally back former commander of the armed forces Gen. Try Sutrisno as its candidate.

Sutrisno, 57, is supported by the four other assembly blocs — the Armed Forces, the Muslim United Development Party, the Christian-nationalist Indonesian Democratic Party and the regional representatives.

The choice of Sutrisno by all the five factions would put Suharto in an embarrassing position, especially with the armed forces, if he decided to back another candidate.

However, there is no guarantee that Sutrisno will emerge in 1998 as the country's third president.



TOKYO: German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (R) reviews honour guards with Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa (L) during a welcoming ceremony at the Akaska guest house on Saturday. —AFP UNB photo

# Riot likely to delay transfer of US troops to UN command in Somalia

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 27: An escalation of fighting in Somalia raised fears Friday that US troops will have to stay in the country longer delaying a transition to a UN organized force that had been targeted for May 1, reports AP.

A draft of a report UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is considering suggested May 1 for the transfer of command. The draft report, obtained by the Associated Press, was subject to change before it is presented to the Security Council for endorsement.

Fears that the transition would be threatened stemmed from two days of rioting that broke out in Mogadishu, Somalia's capital. On Friday morning, Nigerian soldiers traded fire with a sniper, but signs of calm were returning.

US officials, who have complained of UN footdragging, insisted Friday that the unrest in Mogadishu and clan fighting in Kismayu, 300 miles (500 kms) to the south, would not put off their withdrawal.

Four hundred more US troops left Friday, dipping US troop strength to below 17,000 in

Operation Restore Hope, which since December 9 has sought to end clan warfare and ensure relief shipments to starving Somalis. A total 30,000 troops from 23 nations are involved.

But Ambassador Jean-Bernard Merimee of France, asked if the fighting will delay the transfer, said, "I'm afraid it will."

Boutros-Ghali's spokesman, Joe Sills, said, "Obviously these events will have an effect and will have to be considered."

Boutros-Ghali said late Thursday the unrest would not

complicate the transfer, although UN forces do not like to move into an area unless it is stable because they lack the mandate to intervene militarily to restore order.

"I believe that the situation has been very much exaggerated ... and that the UN will be able to do our transition according to the schedule which has been established," he told The Associated Press.

His report to the Security Council suggests that the new UN force number 28,000 people, including 8,000 logistics specialists.

# Iraq ready to accept UN terms

BAGHDAD, Feb 27: Iraq said on Friday it was prepared to accept UN conditions for long-term monitoring of its weapons programmes prohibited under Gulf War ceasefire terms, reports Reuter.

"We are ready for the long term monitoring. We are committed to implement (it) with the aim of not going back to the prohibited activity," the Chairman of Iraq's military industrialisation commission, Distinguished-General Amer Rasheed, told Reuters in an interview.

# Y'slav peace talks may resume tomorrow

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 27: Yugoslav peace talks will resume next week as Bosnian Serb, Muslim and Croat leaders try to forge an agreement on the fractured Bosnian state and end the bloodshed, UN officials said Friday, reports AP.

Talks were expected to resume Monday, with international mediators Cyrus Vance and Lord Daid Owen pushing for an accord while Serb and Muslim leaders are in New York. But the duration and format was not immediately known Friday.

# IRA apologises for shooting a woman

BELFAST, Feb 27: The outlawed paramilitary Irish Republican Army (IRA) late Friday claimed responsibility for earlier shooting a 66-year-old woman at her home in Armagh city, country Armagh, mistaking her for a police detective, reports AFP.

The woman was hit in the arm and chest.

Later the IRA said it hit the wrong victim and "apologised" for shooting the woman, adding that their intended target was a police detective.

# IRA apologises for shooting a woman

They have a few days to snatch something out of them in the time available," Fred Eckhard, spokesman for Vance and Owen, said earlier in the week. "Whether that magic moment will happen next week with everything in line remains to be seen."

The last talks in New York broke off February 11, without an agreement.

Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serb leader, is expected to arrive in New York Friday night and could meet Sunday with Vance and Owen, Eckhard said Friday.

# Move to lift UN sanctions on South Africa gradually

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The resolution called on the world to "support the fragile and critical process of transition underway in South Africa

# Suspicion compelled US, Soviet Union to build huge N-arms

PRINCETON, NJ, Feb 27: The United States and Soviet Union built huge nuclear arsenals because each suspected the other of preparing for a doomsday attack, some of the men who made the decisions acknowledged Friday, reports AP.

Former top officials of both countries discussed a newly declassified 1983 CIA assessment that portrayed the Soviet Union as "very serious about pursuing defence and about developing the capability to fight and survive a nuclear war."

They gathered at a Princeton University conference on the end of the Cold War.

Former Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Besmertnykh said that at the time the CIA was making that assessment, the KGB was telling Soviet leaders "almost the same story about United States intentions. Besmertnykh, who became foreign minister in 1991, was a member of the Soviet defense council in 1983.

He said Soviet officials believed Ronald Reagan was pursuing an enormous military buildup that "indicated the United States was serious about overwhelming the Soviet Union."

Other participants in the discussion included former Secretary of State George P. Shultz, former Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, and Paul Nitze, who was an arms negotiator during the Reagan years.

Lawrence Gershwin, author of the 1983 CIA estimate, said that construction of a huge radar installation at Krasnoyarsk "in blatant violation of the ABM treaty," was seen as evidence of Soviet intention to develop "a war-fighting programme."

Besmertnykh said the CIA view of the radar was "an exaggerated appraisal." He said the installation was an attempt to close a gap in the Soviet air defense system.

"Of course, the radar violated the treaty," he conceded.

When foreign ministry officials pointed out the

violation to their defense counterparts, he said the response was, "When the Americans start crying out, you'll find an answer."

The Major US defense effort of the period was the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), the space-based missile defense system proposed by Reagan.

Shultz said the system was "very much driven by Ronald Reagan. It was personal."

He described a briefing Reagan received at the air defense command center in Colorado.

"There are all sorts of consoles keeping track of everything in all sorts of places," he said. "It's very impressive. He went there as a presidential candidate, having also been briefed on the heavy Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles."

A Reagan aide asked the general in charge what would happen if a Soviet nuclear warhead hit somewhere nearby.

"The general said, 'It would blow us away,' said

Shultz. "Reagan said, 'Well, what can we do about it? The general said, 'Nothing.' The future president concluded that was a hell of a state of affairs."

Shultz said that was Reagan's motivation to pursue SDI rather than any calculated plan to force the Soviets to spend themselves into bankruptcy.

Besmertnykh said that when Reagan first proposed SDI as a shield that could block all incoming missiles Soviet planners decided "this was a fantasy" not worth worrying about.

But later, more limited versions caused great concern. He said the CIA was correct in saying the Soviets were working hard to upgrade their land-based intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force.

"The ICBM was always the heart of the Russian force," he said. "We thought the only way we could respond to the threat of SDI was to develop the ICBM as much as possible."

# Israeli copters hit Hezbollah target

SIDON, Lebanon, Feb 27: Two Israeli helicopters on Friday made two retaliatory attacks on positions of the pro-Iranian Hezbollah Shiite militia in south Lebanon but caused no casualties, Lebanese police said, reports AP.

The raids were in retaliation for a mortar attack that wounded three members of Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) earlier in the day.

Police said the choppers fired five wire-guided missiles at two houses used by the fundamentalist guerrillas in the village of Jarjuh to the east of Israel's self-declared "security zone" in south Lebanon.