

BRIEFLY

Bush mourns Ozal's death: Former President George Bush and the US doctors who treated the late Turkish President Turgut Ozal mourned his death in a ceremony on Thursday at the hospital where he underwent surgery. Reuter reports from Houston.

"It was a wonderful relationship," Bush told about 200 people who attended the ceremony at Methodist hospital. "Personal diplomacy did mean something between us. I will miss him very much."

Ozal, whose pro-western policies helped modernise Turkey and gave Bush's US-led coalition a strategic ally during the Gulf War, died on April 17 of heart problems. He was 66.

Ozal had been in frail health in recent years after undergoing several operations at the world-renowned hospital.

Bilderberg meeting begins: Over 100 heads of states, political leaders and prominent businessmen from North America and Western Europe gathered here yesterday behind closed doors. Xinhua reports from Athens.

According to news release, high up in the meeting's agenda includes the issues of "what kind of Europe will the US have to deal with?" "Cost of indifference toward the former Soviet Union", "US Foreign Policy", "US domestic policy concerns", the outlook for Japan's economy and "prospects for global trade."

Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands, Greek Premier Constantine Mitsotakis, Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt attended the meeting.

The meeting takes its name from the Bilderberg hotel in Oosterbeek of Holland where the first meeting took place in May 1954.

UN blasts killings of peacekeepers: The UN Security Council Thursday condemned the killings of two UN peacekeepers and demanded an immediate halt to attacks on UN personnel. AFP reports from United Nations.

The Security Council issued its statement in New York shortly after a Croatian was killed in an artillery shelling in southern Croatia. A Ukrainian was killed in Sarajevo on April 16 after he was struck by artillery fragments.

Their deaths bring to 39 the number of UN peacekeepers who have been killed as part of the UN Protection Force. On April 19, a Bulgarian soldier was killed in Cambodia by Khmer Rouge.

Eritreans start voting: Eritreans began voting today in a referendum on independence from Ethiopia, the prize of Africa's longest secessionist war, reports Reuter from Asmara, Ethiopia.

Isayas Afewerki, leader of Eritrea's provisional government and De Facto President, was one of the first to vote at a polling station in the capital Asmara.

Watched by a small group of supporters, he was applauded as he placed a blue "Yes" piece of paper into the ballot box.

Under the UN-monitored vote 1.2 million registered voters will cast blue slips for "yes" and "red" for no during the next three days.

7 charred bodies found in Bosnia: British troops have found seven charred bodies in a deserted and devastated Muslim village in central Bosnia where fierce fighting has raged between Croats and Muslims, a military spokesman said on Thursday. Reuter reports from Bosnia.

Major Martin Waters, spokesman for British troops attached to the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in the town Vitez, said the bodies appeared to be member of a family and were found in a house.

39 Palestinians shot at in Gaza: Israeli soldiers shot and wounded at least 39 Palestinians on Thursday in a second day of clashes with demonstrators in the occupied Gaza Strip, hospitals said. Reuter reports from Gaza.

Palestinians said soldiers opened fire on demonstrators who hurled stones and erected burning-tyre barricades in Gaza city, Shati and the Nusseirat refugee camps.

The army said it knew of 16 wounded of whom four were still in hospital.

On Wednesday, Palestinians said soldiers shot dead two Gazans and wounded 69 in the fiercest clashes in the Strip since Israel sealed off the occupied territories three weeks ago.

Tigers ambush army vehicle, kill two

COLOMBO, Apr 23: Tamil guerrillas ambushed an army vehicle in northwestern Sri Lanka, killing two soldiers and wounding two more, the military said today, reports AFP.

Snipers from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) fired at the army tractor in the coastal region of Mannar

Famine claims 40 in Bihar

NEW DELHI, Apr 23: Nearly 40 people have died in a severe famine sweeping Eastern India, ruling party officials said Thursday, as Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao announced federal relief for drought-hit areas, reports AFP.

Between 35 and 40 villagers have died of starvation in the state of Bihar, a three-member Congress (I) team said here after visiting the region, and accused local authorities of not doing enough to tackle growing hunger.

The situation in Bihar's Palamu and Garhwa districts, with a population of 2.5 million, was "very grim, distressing and alarming," the delegation said in a report submitted to the Prime Minister.

Chavan's statement false: Pindi

ISLAMABAD, Apr 23: Pakistan yesterday accused the Indian Home Minister S B Chavan of making "incorrect and mischievous" charges that "a conspiracy appears to have been hatched by Pakistan" in conjunction with some Indian nationals for the March 12 bomb blasts, reports PFI.

Refuting Chavan's statement in Parliament on April 21, a foreign office spokesman said the contradictory statements by Indian Ministers on the subject indicated that some members of the government had "opted to persist in voicing preposterous allegations in order to malign Pakistan."

We are heading for independent Kashmir, says JKLF leader

SRINAGAR (India), April 23: Four years after Kashmiri Muslims picked up the gun to press demands to secede from India their goal remains as elusive as ever.

But the Muslim militants leading the secessionist campaign vehemently reject any suggestion that they may be running out of steam.

"We are in a commanding position," insists Javed Mir, Acting President of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), one of the largest and most moderate groups in the faction-ridden Kashmiri Muslim secessionist movement.

"We are heading for a

'Western diplomacy a failure'

US State Department experts for use of force against Serbs

NEW YORK, Apr 23: The US State Department's top experts on the Balkans sent Secretary of State Warren Christopher a letter calling western diplomacy a failure and recommending military action against the Serbs, the New York Times reported in Friday editions, reports Reuter.

The career diplomats based in Washington told Christopher the United States had a moral obligation to save the Muslims from "genocide" at the hands of Serbian nationalist forces in Bosnia, the paper reported.

The letter, signed by 12 State Department specialists, said: "We are only attempting to end the genocide through political and economic pressures such as sanctions and intense diplomatic engage-

ment in effect the result of this course has been western capitulation to Serbian aggression."

The New York Times also reported that Madeline Albright, US representative to the United Nations, had sent President Clinton a memorandum urging air strikes to protest the predominantly Muslim towns and cities under siege in Bosnia.

Albright said the United States should act on its own under United Nations authority.

One State Department official, who was not among the 12 who signed the petition, said "it means the frustration level is high enough for them to undertake the somewhat risky task of going around the normal hierarchy and stating their dissent," the paper reported.

The drafter of the petition reportedly was Marshall Harris, the Bosnia desk officer. Other signers included desk officers for Serbia and Montenegro, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Croatia and Slovenia.

AFP adds: Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic on Thursday dismissed the Vance-Owen Peace plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina as irrelevant given the Serbs' military supremacy.

Karadzic's Yugoslav ally, President Dobrica Cosic, meanwhile said the rump Yugoslavia favored conditional acceptance of the plan.

Speaking to the Bosnian Serb News Agency SRNA, Karadzic said he would meet Lord Owen here Friday, despite an earlier refusal to speak to the EC negotiator.

But he added that the peace plan drawn up by Owen and Former UN special envoy Cyrus Vance "is obviously insignificant... what counts is the situation on the ground" where Bosnian-Serb forces have seized control of more than 70 per cent of Bosnian-Herzegovina.

For his part, Cosic said "Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) will do absolutely everything in its power and within the limits of its national interest... to get the Vance-Owen plan accepted (by the Bosnian-Serbs) on condition of essential modifications."

The coming days maybe "fateful" for the Balkans if all the warring parties "reject political reason and the spirit of tolerance," Cosic said.



Islamic militants hold up the Koran during the trial of 49 extremists by an Egyptian military court in Cairo Thursday. Eight men were sentenced to death for attacks on foreign tourists, and the defendants reacted to the sentences with the cries of "Allah Akhbar."

— AFP/UNB photo

Mandela urges youths to join ANC army

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 21: In a bid for support from militant youths, Nelson Mandela visited the site of a township massacre Thursday and urged thousands of young blacks to become soldiers in the ANC's army, reports AP.

"If you want to be part of an army of liberation, come to join Umkhonto we Sizwe," Mandela told a roaring crowd, referring to the ANC military wing also known as spear of the Nation. At the same time, Mandela urged youths not to become vigilantes, saying the only way to fight the white-led government was as part of a disciplined and trained military unit.

"We are not going to give guns to individuals. We are going to give guns to an army," Mandela told a packed soccer stadium in the black township of Sebokeng, south of Johannesburg.

The speech reflected Mandela's attempt to assuage the anger of the ANC's militant youth since the slaying April 10 of Chris Hani, who was head of the Communist Party and one of the African National Congress' most popular and radical leaders.

Hani directed the military wing's armed struggle against the government for several years and was a hero to many young blacks who consider Mandela and other ANC elders too moderate and yielding to President F W de Klerk's white-led government.

While Spear of the Nation announced the suspension of armed activities against the government in 1991, it continues to recruit and train soldiers. The ANC says they should become part of a new national defense force after the end of white-minority rule.

Mandela was in Sebokeng to visit survivors of a massacre Sunday that killed 19 people. The ANC says some witnesses claim police did not answer their calls for help and that police vehicles were seen escorting the killers into the township.

Police denied the allegations. No arrests have been made. "We are angry and upset that 19 lives have been lost and no one has been able to give us any answers," Mandela said.

Also Wednesday, police released one of four whites who had been held for questioning in Hani's murder. Journalist Arthur Kemp was freed after two days of questioning.

A right-wing extremist has been charged in the slaying, which prompted the ANC to announce several weeks of strikes and protests to pressure the government to set an election date.

De Klerk has condemned the protests, saying they will add to the volatile situation across the country. In a speech to Parliament on Wednesday night, he reiterated his vow to hold multiracial elections

Peres expects accord on Palestinian self-rule in talks

JERUSALEM, Apr 23: Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in an interview published today he expects broad agreement on Palestinian self-rule when Middle East peace talks resume next week, reports Reuter.

Asked by the Jerusalem Post what would be realistic to attain in this round, Peres said: "to conclude an agreement on the autonomy." Asked if he thought the basic outlines of autonomy would be agreed, he said: "Yes".

Palestinian leaders, under heavy pressure from Arab states and Washington, agreed on Wednesday to return to the talks which had been frozen since Israel's December 17 expulsion of 415 Palestinians to South Lebanon.

U S officials, diplomats and Palestinians said last week that Israel would be offering unspecified new proposals for limited self-rule once the 18-month-old US-brokered talks resumed in Washington. The talks are due to open on Tuesday.

"Expectations are not high," Nabil Kasasbi, deputy head of the Palestinians team, said on Thursday. But he added "we hope that our expectations will prove wrong."

Floods destroy 7,000 houses in Sudan

KHARTOUM, Apr 23: More than 7,000 houses were destroyed by torrential rains and floods in eastern Sudan and more than 75,000 people were affected, the Sudanese News Agency reported yesterday, says Xinhua.

Suna said that 7,392 houses were swept away in the Red Sea port of Port Sudan and nearby areas.

Joke turns apartment into a flaming wreck

NUREMBERG (Germany): A practical joke played on a pair of newlyweds turned their apartment into a flaming wreck, put them in a state of shock and obliged them to begin married life by moving in with their in-laws, reports AFP.

The couple returned from honeymoon to find that the wedding guests had stuffed their bathroom with pieces of paper and tissue, with the pile crammed right up to the ceiling, Nuremberg police said yesterday.

The bridegroom turned on the light, and the heat from the bulb set fire to the paper. The resulting blaze engulfed their home, causing damage of 70,000 marks (4,000 dollars).

Long toilet queue takes his life

ACCRA: The inability to wait in a toilet queue ended the life of a 23-year-old Ghanaian, witnesses said Thursday, reports AFP.

The Ophilus Kwane Kagpo and two others went to a public convenience in an Accra suburb on Wednesday but instead of joining the long queue to visit the toilet, they decided to use the manhole behind the main toilet.

They removed the slabs and squatted at the edge of the manhole to relieve themselves.

But because of heavy rains the previous day, the slabs had become slippery and Kagpo slipped to his death.

Stop baby's crying or face \$7,600 fine

LONDON: A young mother in Cannock, northern England, has been warned by the city to stop her teething baby's crying or face a 5,000 pound (7,600 dollar) fine, reports AFP.

The city council, after receiving numerous complaints that Jackie Whitehouse's eight-month-old daughter Zoe was waking her neighbours early in the morning, told the woman she would have to silence the child.

"I'm disgusted with my neighbours for reporting me like this and with the council," said Whitehouse, 24, who has no other child. "I try to do my best to soothe Zoe, but any mum will tell you it's the hardest job in the world."

Neighbours complain that Zoe has been waking them with her crying at 5 am for several months.

A city council spokesman, asked about the warning, said the council was performing its "duty" in investigating "nuisance" complaints.

Wife blackmailed Collor to keep marriage together

SAO PAULO: The wife of former Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello threatened to expose his alleged use of cocaine suppositories to preserve their marriage, Collor's brother said Thursday, reports AFP.

Rosane Malta blackmailed her husband to keep their marriage together after he discovered she was having an affair with a government official, according to an excerpt published Thursday from an upcoming book by Pedro Collor, the disgraced President's brother.

The book, "Coming Clean — The Story of a Fraud", recounts the private and public soap opera-like story that ended when Collor was forced from office in October on corruption charges, after two and a half years as president.

According to Pedro Collor, the former president's wife threatened to reveal his alleged drug use and also employed 12 armed guards "in case Collor de Mello did not back off and decided to take sterner measures against his wife".

He used his dog to kill wife

CLEVELAND: A man was indicted on a murder charge for allegedly ordering his pit bull to attack his common-law wife, in a case investigated by a homicide detective and an animal expert, reports AP.

Authorities say Jeffrey Mann, 36, ordered the 70-pound (32 kilograms) dog, named Mack, to repeatedly attack Angela Kaplan after the couple argued September 2.

Although Mann said the attack was unprovoked, police detective Michaelaese Taliano said she was suspicious. Of the more than 100 wounds the 28-year-old woman suffered, none were to her neck or throat, which are usually a dog's favorite targets, she said.

"We believe the dog was instigated and reinstigated and reinstigated to attack," said animal behaviorist Karen Arnoff, who put the animal through a series of tests.

ROK students stage anti-US protests

SEOUL, Apr 23: About 800 students staged anti-US protests Friday demanding an end to joint military exercises by US and South Korean troops, a press report said, reports AP.

Yonhap, South Korea's national news agency, said police blocked protesters from marching into the US cultural center in the southern city of Kwangju.

South Korea's radical students contend the annual "Team Spirit" exercises have increased tension on the Korean peninsula. About 36,000 US soldiers are stationed in South Korea under a mutual defense pact.

The protesters also urged a death penalty for an American soldier convicted of killing a South Korean woman, Yonhap said.

Pvt Kenneth L Markle III was sentenced to life in prison last week on charges of killing Yun Kum-I, a 26-year-old bar hostess, outside his camp in Tongducheon, 30 miles north of Seoul, last October.

In Seoul, about 500 workers marched peacefully in the streets, urging the government to release all workers jailed for violent labor disputes.

Benazir has reaped a sweet revenge on Ishaq, Sharif

ISLAMABAD, Apr 23: After three years of sharp opposition and numerous snubs, former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's political star appears to be rising anew, reports AP.

Bhutto now has five of her supporters in the new cabinet, including her husband Asif Zardari, released from prison just months ago.

Apparently without trying, Bhutto has reaped a sweet revenge on two men who most fiercely opposed her. Pakistan President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, 78, dismissed her in 1990 for corruption, nepotism and incompetence.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif repeatedly denounced her until Ishaq Khan sacked him Sunday under the same circumstances.

Of the new government's 17 ministers, members of Bhutto's left-of-centre Pakistan People's Party (PPP) were selected to fill five posts, only narrowly surpassed by eight appointments from Sharif's conservative Pakistan Muslim League (PML). The remainder went to minority parties, regional representatives or independent politicians.

The fundamentalist Jammat-e-Islami party, Pakistan's leading religious political organisation is so far notably absent from the line-up.

The new government, with its PPP ministers, now sports a more liberal and progressive image, opportune for neighbouring Pakistan which has been accused of propagating Islamic fundamentalism and threatened by Washington of inclusion on a damning list of terrorist countries with Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Cuba and North Korea.

The government's true face will not be apparent until more ministerial portfolios have been distributed.



Only three have so far been assigned. Bhutto's right-hand man Farooq Ahmed Leghari has been named Finance Minister. Maulana Kausar Niazi, a former minister in the government of Bhutto's father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, has been named Information Minister.

Hamid Nasir Chattha, who led rebellion within the PML against Sharif, is the new Minister of Planning.

Bhutto is said to have pushed husband Zardari into a leading government role, forcing the President to bring into his government a man he has pursued for murder, fraud, terrorism, extortion and kidnapping.

Zardari, an avid polo player who drives a Mercedes-Benz coupe, is known for his flamboyance. Earlier this year he was released on bail after two years in prison. At the same time Bhutto began her reemergence into Pakistan politics.

Most of the charges against Zardari, a businessman from the southern Sindh district, have been dropped. He never stopped declaring his innocence, claiming himself a victim of political adversaries and their machinations.



Javed Mir, acting chief of JKLF

democratic and independent Kashmir," the bearded, 29-year-old former guerrilla fighter told AFP in an interview here.

"We are not going to retreat now," echoed Sajed Mir, the 26-year-old chief commander of another group, the movement of the militants, which has recently staged a number of deadly attacks against Indian troops.

"The masses are like a mountain," said Sajed Mir, no relation to the JKLF chief. "They cannot be moved and are encouraging us to fight irrespective of the brutality of the Indian forces."

Sajed Mir, whose Islamic fundamentalist group supports merging predominantly Muslim Kashmir with Pakistan, said his organisation was now capable of carrying out strikes against Indian interests outside of Kashmir.

Indian officials dismiss the assertions of the militant leaders and claim Kashmiris are growing weary of the bloodletting in the once-tranquil state.

The public is disenchanted. The public is disillusioned," said Balvinder Singh Bedi, the Director-General of the Jammu and Kashmir police and the man coordinating the fight against the militants.

"The public is coming to realize that this militancy is disastrous for them," said Singh, who took up his present post in January 1991 after his predecessor was injured in a bomb blast in his office.

He cited rivalry between the militant groups, excesses by their members and the growing dominance of the movement by Islamic fundamentalists as some of the reasons behind the drop in public support.

Several thousand people have died since the militancy began and thousands more have fled the state. The once-thriving tourist industry has collapsed.

"We can't say the situation is fully under control but it's not as difficult as it once was," said Singh, a burly Sikh police officer.

Israel to allow 30 deportees to back home

JERUSALEM, Apr 23: Israel will allow 30 Palestinians deported years ago to return home next week following the resumption of the Middle East peace talks on Tuesday, a Palestinian spokeswoman said, reports AFP.

Hannan Ashrawi, who warned of a Palestinian boycott if their demands are not met during the negotiations in Washington, said the men were among the hundreds thrown out between the 1967 Arab Israeli war and the start of the intifada or uprising in December 1987.

Singh's claims of public disenchantment are certainly exaggerated, but the tremendous costs in terms of lives and property and the bleak prospects for the future are beginning to tell on the general population.

The desire of Kashmiri Muslims to leave India appears to be unshaken, but the euphoria of the early days of the militancy has worn off and he strain of living under virtual occupation by Indian forces has taken a heavy toll.