

BRIEFLY

Newspaper editor murdered in India:

The editor of a Tamil weekly, Red Blood was hacked to death by unidentified men in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Wednesday, AFP from New Delhi.

The 45-year-old editor, identified only as Bhaktavatsalam, was attacked with swords on a street in the state capital Madras late Monday, PTI said.

No further details were available.

3 killed in US chopper crash:

A helicopter used to ferry President Bill Clinton and other VIPs crashed near Washington on Wednesday, killing three of its four crew members, authorities said, AFP reports from Maryland.

The copter, part of the presidential fleet, was conducting an inspection flight after maintenance work when it crashed in a forest across the Potomac river from the US marine base in Quantico, Virginia.

The fate of the fourth crew member, who were all marines, was not immediately known.

Brazilian minister resigns:

Finance Minister Eliseu Resende, the third man to hold the office since former President Fernando Collor de Mello was impeached, has offered his resignation under a cloud of scandal, AP reports from Brasilia.

President Itamar Franco was to decide Thursday if he would accept the resignation, which was offered Wednesday, the palace said.

Resende said in his resignation letter that he could not stay in the post when he was under suspicion.

Rumour of Resende's dismissal had been circulating since he was accused of helping pave the way for government loans of \$18 million to Ecuador and \$136 million to Peru for projects to be executed by the Brazilian construction firm Norberto Odebrecht.

Two ex-E German secret police held:

Two former East German secret police have been arrested for alleged plans to murder a border guard who fled the former communist state, a justice official said Wednesday, AP reports from Berlin.

Gerhard Neiber, 64, a former vice minister for state security, or Stasi as the ministry was known, and a co-worker identified only as Siegfried W, were arrested on Tuesday, Berlin justice spokeswoman Uta Foelster said.

Both men were being held in Berlin's Moabit prison in connection with a plot to murder a former East German border guard who fled to West Germany in 1975, Foelster said.

Japanese diplomat commits suicide:

A 33-year-old Japanese diplomat has committed suicide by throwing himself from the eighth storey of the Foreign Ministry building here, officials said today, reports AFP from Tokyo.

Hirohaki Ishikawa, the Deputy Director of the ministry's computer section, jumped out of an eighth floor window Tuesday, said a Japanese official.

He was immediately taken to hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival, the official said.

The reasons for Ishikawa's suicide were not known. He had worked as a career diplomat for some 10 years, the official said, adding he had previously been posted to Los Angeles with the rank of vice-consul for further studies on the ministry's behalf.

Canada to lift sanctions against South Africa

CAPE TOWN, May 20: Canada will lift economic sanctions against South Africa when a date for multi-racial elections is announced, External Affairs Ministers Barbara McCauley said Thursday, reports AP.

Speaking after a meeting with President F.W. de Klerk at his official residence, Mrs. McCauley said she informed the South African government about the possible lifting of sanctions. Mrs. McCauley said she had told African National Congress President Nelson Mandela the same thing at a meeting Wednesday.

Multi-party talks on ending white minority rule could agree on an election date by the end of June. Many nations imposed economic sanctions on South Africa to protest apartheid.

"We would be in a position to lift the sanctions once an election date is announced," said Mrs. McCauley, who is also head of the Commonwealth Committee of Foreign Ministers on southern Africa.

"We would hope that both (de Klerk) and Mandela will call for the lifting of financial sanctions at the same time so that we can move forward towards full integration (of South Africa) into the international community as soon as possible" she said.

Qian-Peres talks in Beijing

China vows not to sell missiles to Iran, Syria

BEIJING, May 20: Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen has promised his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Peres, that China will not sell missiles to Iran and Syria, the Israeli Embassy said Thursday, reports AP.

Embassy spokesman Eyal Propper said Qian was responding to comments by Peres that missile sales in the region represented a threat to Israel.

Propper said Qian did not acknowledge any past sales by China but promised there would be no future sales to Iran and Syria.

"He said China does not want to make any obstacles in the peace process," Propper said.

China sold Sdkworm missiles to Iran during the 1980s, according to Western military observers. The US government said in 1991 that China was planning to sell missiles to Syria, but no evidence has emerged that they were ever delivered.

A Western outcry over Chinese missile sales to Arab countries eventually caused Beijing to join the Missile Technology Control Regime last year. Recently, Washington accused China of violating the agreement by selling missiles to Pakistan, a charge China denied.

Peres, who arrived late Wednesday from India, spent about three hours Thursday in talks with Qian, including lunch, Propper said.

He said Peres briefed Qian on the latest Middle East peace talks in Washington. Qian, which takes part in the bilateral talks as one of the

observers. The US government said in 1991 that China was planning to sell missiles to Syria, but no evidence has emerged that they were ever delivered.

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Nobel laureates seek strong US stand

Clinton asks Myanmar junta to release Suu Kyi

WASHINGTON, May 20: President Bill Clinton called on the Myanmar junta on Wednesday to free pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and respect the 1990 election results, reports AFP.

"I strongly urge the Myanmar government to release pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and political prisoners, to respect the May 1990 elections and to commit itself to genuine democratic reforms," said Clinton after meeting with group of Nobel Peace Prize laureates to discuss human rights abuses in Myanmar.

"The Myanmar people should know that America stands with them and with others in the international community in the struggle for freedom in Myanmar," added the President.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the founder of the National League for Democracy (NLD), has been held under strict house arrest since July 1989.

Her party swept the general elections but the junta refused to transfer power and began a clampdown on the NLD, arresting its senior leaders.



Aung San Suu Kyi

The group who met with Clinton included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Betty Williams and Kara Newell, Executive Director of the American Friends Service Committee.

Earlier in the year they were among a group of eight Nobel prize winners who went to Thailand to draw world attention to the human rights situation in Myanmar.

On Wednesday they urged Clinton to take a strong stand on Myanmar and to push for an international arms embargo against Yangon.

Williams, who won 1976 Nobel prize for her work in Northern Ireland, claimed that the Myanmar regime was as guilty of ethnic cleansing as the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But "the ethnic cleansing there is probably more insidious" because it is not the focus of international attention, said Williams.

Williams said that since the 1990 elections, thousands of refugees have flooded across the border into Thailand complaining of persecution.

She said refugees had told the Nobel delegation about atrocities such as women being

used as human minesweepers, torture and persistent rape.

Tutu said developments in his own country showed how international pressure could sway the Yangon government which refused a group of Nobel laureates to even enter Myanmar to plead her case earlier this year.

"The regime there is very sensitive to what the world says," Tutu added.

"The very fact that they shut us out meant they were not ignoring us."

He said an arms embargo would have an effect on the regime because Myanmar was not able to produce its own weapons.

Asked if the laureates would try again to visit Myanmar, Tutu said the purpose of their mission was not a visit to Yangon in itself but to achieve change there.

"Our objective is that democracy should prevail... If we go to Myanmar it should be to celebrate."

Rebels shell Abkhazian capital: 3 die

LONDON, May 20: At least three people were killed and 16 wounded on Wednesday when Abkhaz rebels shelled Sukhumi, the capital of the breakaway Abkhaz region of north-western Georgia, ITAR-TASS news agency said in a report monitored by the BBC, reports AFP.

The report quoted the Georgian defence ministry as saying that about 450 shells fell on the city centre and residential areas between noon and 10:30 pm causing widespread damage.

The centre of the capital and certain residential areas are in the hands of Georgian government troops.

IISS report Tehran wants to become dominant power in ME

LONDON, May 20: Iran is making a concerted rearmament drive in a bid to assert itself as the dominant force in the Middle East and to thwart the rising influence there of the United States, a London research unit reported Wednesday, says AFP.

The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) said in its annual strategic survey of the world that in the last several months "Iran has awakened international concern about its military and foreign ambitions".

Western powers, the study found, are especially worried about a resurgent Iran because

they can no longer bank on Iraq as a countervailing force.

The IISS found that Iran was pursuing three objectives:

-to become the dominant power in the Middle East and to play a pivotal role in any regional security apparatus,

-to normalize relations with its Gulf Arab neighbours,

-to neutralize the regional influence of western powers, notably the United States, that are now linked to several Gulf states through military cooperation accords signed in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War.

With these goals in mind, according to the study, Iran is anxious to revamp its military capacity.

Blasts rock Belfast: 4 injured

BELFAST, May 20: Two bomb blasts shook the centre of Belfast Thursday, injuring three children and their mother, police and media reported, reports AP.

The first bomb went off outside the headquarters of the Ulster Unionist Party about an hour before officials were scheduled to start counting votes cast in Wednesday's local council elections across Northern Ireland.

The second explosion was near the Europa Hotel. Guests were quickly evacuated.

Three children and their mother were hurt, the British Broadcasting Corp said. Police confirmed injuries but could provide no details.

South Korea offers talks with North

SEOUL, May 20: South Korea said today it had proposed talks about talks with the Communist North next week in a bid to persuade the isolated state to open its nuclear facilities to international inspectors, reports Reuter.

"We have sent a message to the North today offering to hold meetings next Thursday to discuss plans for a high-level meeting with them," said an official at the South-North dialogue office, which supervises inter-Korean contacts.

He said the South proposed the talks be held at the border village of Panmunjom.

It is the first sign of better inter-Korean cooperation since March when Pyongyang announced it would withdraw on

June 12 from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) rather than allow outside inspections of atomic facilities at Yongbyon North of the capital.

North Korea's abrupt withdrawal from the NPT fuelled the world's fears that the Stalinist state had developed a nuclear arsenal, a charge it denies.

The South Korean official said the North was expected to accept Seoul's offer as Pyongyang had earlier offered to renew dialogue, although differences remain over a format for the talks.

"We are positive the North will accept our offer of meet next week," the official said.

Han Wan-Sang, Deputy Prime Minister and National

Unification Minister, chaired a meeting of senior officials on Thursday at which the talks were proposed and plans completed.

If the nuclear issue is solved, then we will offer to go ahead with economic exchanges and to allow South Korean companies to do business with the North," Han said.

Seoul suspects the North is developing atomic weapons at the plants in Yongbyon and has demanded Pyongyang submit to short-notice inspections of the sites, a call backed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The United Nations Security Council, acting on a report from the IAEA, last week passed a resolution de-

mandating access to the Yongbyon facilities and threatening unspecified further action if its request was rejected.

South and North Korean managed to bridge the cold war in late 1991 by agreeing to a treaty of reconciliation and non-aggression.

But relations deteriorated rapidly and business and official contacts with the North came to a halt when the North refused demands from the South that outsiders be allowed to inspect two nuclear sites.

High-level talks between the two Koreas still technically at war 40 years after an uneasy armistice halted Korean war hostilities, broke off in September last year.

ANC concerned at series of death threats

JOHANNESBURG, May 20: The African National Congress (ANC) Wednesday voiced its concern over a series of death threats made to its top officials following the April 10 assassination of top ANC official Chris Hani by a neo-Nazi, reports AP.

The house of Sidney Mafumadi, a high-ranking ANC official, was petrol-bombed on Monday, the organisation said. Mafumadi was the recipient of a death threat hoax last month when a media alert announcing his assassination was sent out on a pager system used by journalists.

In a statement issued here, the ANC said it was deeply concerned about the increasing level of violent threats issued against leaders of the "tripartite alliance".



Heide Simonis of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) was sworn in as new Prime Minister of the German state Schleswig-Holstein Wednesday. Simonis is the first female Prime Minister in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. —AFP/UNB photo

Sihanouk will remain neutral

BEIJING, May 20: Prince Norodom Sihanouk is to return from China to Cambodia for next week's UN-organised elections but will refrain from voting in order to demonstrate his neutrality, he said today, reports AFP.

"From May 23 to 28, I will be close to the well-loved and respected Cambodian people as they carry out their duty as voters", Sihanouk said in a statement released to the press.

"My staff, my secretariat, my wife and myself will not vote because we must demonstrate our strict neutrality towards the political factions and parties," said the Chairman of Cambodia's Supreme National Council which groups country's four main factions.

Off the Record



Two Taiwan models present Indian styled jewelry designed by French jeweller Cartier with a total value of six million Taiwan dollars (\$230,769) in Taipei Tuesday. —AFP/UNB photo

New dog-catching method

KUALA LUMPUR: The Municipal Council in a Malaysian town is about to trade in its current dog-catching technology for something cheaper. Its dog roundup unit is getting rid of its shotguns and taking up blowpipes, reports AP.

But members of the blowpipe squad will have to practice first.

The Council has engaged an aboriginal expert to train its staff in the use of blowpipes.

The New Straits Times reported Wednesday that stray dogs had become a big nuisance in public places and suburbs of the town of Kuantan, 120 miles (192 kilometers) northeast of here.

The daily quoted the Council's public relations officer, Zulkefly Abdul Malik as saying that instead of using poison darts that the aborigines use in their blowpipes, the council would use modern tranquilizers.

Once the dogs are rounded up, they will be handed to the Veterinary Services Department "for further action," he was quoted as saying.

The Department usually puts strays to sleep with lethal injections.

Recently, three waiters in a restaurant sued the Town Council here for injuries sustained by stray pellets from a gun-toting dog catcher discharging his duties against stray canines.

This is unlikely to happen when blowpipes are used with single, stun-darts.

Lavish weddings push them to seek foreign wives

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates President, lamenting extravagant living, has urged his citizens to cut back on lavish weddings and hire less house servants, reports Reuter.

"High dowries and overspending on weddings... do not agree with our Islamic traditions," Sheikh Zaid Bin Sultan Al-Nahayan told members of a marriage fund on Wednesday.

Big dowry demands and expensive wedding parties have pushed UAE men to seek foreign wives in a country where foreigners make up nearly 70 per cent of the 1.9 million population.

The official Emirates news agency said the Sheikh addressed members of the fund, set up to help couples meet marriage costs.

Sheikh Zaid said UAE people had always lived without having "this number of maids, nannies, cooks and drivers," it added.

800 fundamentalists arrested in Egypt

CAIRO, May 20: Egypt, battling Muslim fundamentalists, has arrested more than 800 members of a group running school and university secret cells in a campaign to topple the government, reports Reuter.

Security sources said police had detained 822 members of a group called the vanguards of the new holy struggle and charged them with forming an illegal organisation.

They said religious tapes and books designed to win the hearts and minds of students were seized during 10 days of swoops in several parts of the country.

Police Major-General Ahmed Al-Adli told a news conference police had confiscated

some 2,000 cassettes, 1,600 books and 11 videotapes that called for the overthrow of the government, discrimination against Egypt's Christian minority, and violence to establish a purist Islamic state.

He said some of the tapes contained sermons by Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman, a blind Muslim preacher in the United States whose followers have been linked to February's bombing of the New York's World Trade Centre. The blast killed six people and wounded more than 1,000.

Security sources said the arrests took place in Cairo's northern suburbs, the Nile Delta provinces of Shariqtiya and Qalyoubiyya and the city of Alexandria.

These are well away from the known centres of Muslim militant violence in Cairo's Imbaba suburb and the assist area of upper Egypt, where gunmen shot dead the mayor of a Christian village on Wednesday.

The sources added that those detained, mainly students and staff in schools, colleges and universities, had not been charged with any crimes of violence.

They were alleged to have organised a pyramid cell structure and recruited actively among students and workers.

A year-long surge of violence by militants fighting to overthrow Egypt's political system and establish a purist Islamic state has died down since ruthless police raids in March killed 42 people.

Cambodians hoard food, buy guns fearing violence during polls

PHNOM PEHN, May 20: Fearing an explosion of violence, Cambodians are hoarding food, buying guns and shuttering businesses with just days to go before the country's first multiparty elections in two decades, reports AP.

The tension can be sensed at the capital's usually bustling central market, where most of the gold, jewellery and watch stalls are closed. Only a sprinkling of shoppers can be seen, stocking up on rice and canned goods.

Ny Kimleang, 55, is one of the few jewellery merchants still open for business. For security reasons, she only has a few gold necklaces, bracelets and earrings, on display.

Almost nobody is buying. The people are thinking

about food," Ny says. "They're not thinking about gold."

Many Cambodians are stocking up on rice and canned food, fearing the market will close if there are attacks on the capital during the six-day UN supervised elections that begin Sunday.

Nové Wan, a 61-year-old mother of eight, has stocked up on rice and is prepared to board up her house and stay inside.

"I won't go anywhere except out to vote," Nové says. Adds her neighbour Preap Rors, 52, "I am worried about the situation but I must vote because I want a new government."

Cambodia's four factions agreed to the elections in a UN sponsored accord signed in

1991 to end 13 years of war. But one of them, the Khmer Rouge, is boycotting the poll and has been blamed for attacks that have killed and wounded dozens of UN personnel in the past two months.

It is widely feared the guerrilla group, which killed hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of Cambodians in the 1970s in an attempt to turn the nation into an agrarian commune, will attack polling sites.

Sa Vet, 40, who owns a tiny food stall at the market, says he sold more than 2,000 cans of sardines this week. He usually sells fewer than 100.

The market's money changers are almost out of large denomination banknotes. They say people have been franti-

cally buying 500-riel (10-cent) notes, the largest on the market because they would be easier to carry if they have to flee their homes.

A number of university students and other people with families outside the capital have left for the provinces.

Those with more money, mostly Cambodian-American entrepreneurs and political candidates, have sent their families abroad in the past few days. Flights out of the country are fully booked.

"It's going to be violent. I'm sure it will be," says Kim Kethavy, leader of the Republic Democracy Khmer Party. He sent his wife back to their home in Long Beach, Calif., for the election.

Many of those staying are

buying guns and ammunition.

Gun sellers in Phnom Penh's covert arms bazaar say that in recent weeks a number of wealthy businessmen and factory owners have bought AK-47s automatic rifles which run about \$70 for self-defence.

Bullets — \$10 for a case of 700 — also have been moving quickly.

One dealer says even foreign UN personnel have been buying weapons this past month. She said four or five of them had bought several hundred guns, mostly Chinese-made AK-47s, which sell for \$100 each.

UN military spokesman Lt. Col. Richard Palk said he knew nothing about such pur-