

US fears Chinese veto on sanctions against DPRK

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 22: Fearing a Chinese veto, the United States stopped short of pushing for economic sanctions against North Korea on Monday and instead began a drive in the Security Council for another appeal to Pyongyang to cooperate, reports AP.

US Ambassador Madeleine Albright told reporters the United States had drafted a resolution calling on North Korea to allow the inspections.

"This is not... a sanctions resolution. This is one which really calls on them to return to an inspections' regime," Albright said.

The threat of sanctions could be made in a second resolution the United States could introduce if the first fails to persuade the North Koreans to cooperate, diplomats said.

The Chinese, close allies of the North Koreans, are likely to support or at least abstain in a vote on a resolution that stops short of sanctions, but they did not state their position in Monday's meeting. Clearly, the United States was not pushing immediately for sanctions because of the fear

China would veto them now. Albright spoke after discussing North Korea's refusal to allow full international nuclear inspections with the other four permanent members of the Security Council: China, Russia, France and Britain. Adoption of the resolution is expected next week.

Hans Blix, the director of the U.N. agency that tried to inspect North Korea's nuclear facilities is expected to brief the Security Council on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration Monday put new military and economic pressure on North Korea to open its suspect nuclear sites for international inspection.

But the moves, including an announcement by President Clinton that Patriot missiles would be sent to South Korea, were designed to allow more time for a diplomatic solution.

Senior officials told the Associated Press the administration wanted to show China, Japan and South Korea that it was doing everything possible to settle the dispute without a confrontation.

US move to smooth relations with India, Pakistan

WASHINGTON, Mar 22: Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott will go to New Delhi next month to affirm US interest in maintaining strong relations with India, the State Department said Monday, reports AP.

The visit to New Delhi comes at an uncomfortable period in US-India relations, with a year-long delay in nomination of a US ambassador.

Talbott will also visit Pakistan where he will push a new initiative designed to put a cap on Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons ingredients, officials said.

The idea is to persuade Pakistan to accept restraints that could lead to the lifting of Congressional restrictions on US aid.

It will be Talbott's first overseas trip in his new post.

State Department spokesman Mike McCurry said the April 5-13 journey will also take Talbott to Warsaw, Poland; Bratislava in the Slovak

Republic, and Brussels, Belgium. In India and Pakistan, Secretary of State Warren Christopher has instructed Talbott to "focus on all aspects of those bilateral relations with a special emphasis, of course, on non-proliferation issues," McCurry said.

In Warsaw, Talbott will discuss the Partnership for Peace plan for expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

His visit to Bratislava is intended to pursue close relations with the new Slovak government, McCurry said. In Brussels, Talbott will address the opening session of the joint European-Newly Independent States chiefs of mission conference and meet with NATO and European Union officials.

Asked when the President Clinton might nominate an ambassador to India, McCurry said, "We are... here not in a position to tell you much about ambassadorial appointments because they're made by the

president of the United States." Christopher has urged the White House to handle the matter "with a certain amount of urgency," McCurry said.

New reports last week said Clinton likely would nominate Frank G. Wisner, Undersecretary of Defence for policy who has been ambassador to Egypt and the Philippines. McCurry, without mentioning Wisner by name, indicated there was enthusiasm in the department for the choice.

This followed Rep Stephen Solarz' withdrawal from consideration after he was investigated for ties to a Hong Kong businessman who had a criminal record. Solarz said he didn't want to burden Clinton with any objections that might be raised to his nomination, even though he was cleared of wrongdoing in a Justice Department investigation.

McCurry said the United States considers its relationship with India critical, adding, "I think it is fair to say

that given some of the currents that we've heard expressed in the region itself, that the secretary would take the step of dispatching the deputy secretary on his first trip to underscore the importance we attach to that relationship."

McCurry said the United States is continuing a "balanced approach" to relations in South Asia.

"We continue to believe that the problem of Kashmir must be settled by India and Pakistan together, working together as envisioned in the Simla Accord, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people," he said when asked about Kashmir.

US ties with Pakistan are also shaky due to the US decision to end aid to Islamabad because of its nuclear arms programme. The administration wants to complete a sale of jet planes to Pakistan, which could be on Talbott's agenda.

Somalian talks fail

NAIROBI, Mar 22: For the fourth time in three days, Somalia's faction leaders Tuesday postponed announcing plans to stop fighting and set up a new government in the lawless, war-torn country, reports AP.

Somalia's principal warlords, Ali Mahdi Mohammed and Gen Mohamed Farrah Aided, and the leaders of 13 other factions were expected to declare a cease-fire and say who will rule the Horn of Africa nation.

But UN officials said an hour before the planned announcement that the group was still locked in disagreement and that there would be a 24-hour delay. They already had postponed the announcement twice Sunday and once Monday.

The faction leaders have been meeting in Nairobi for more than a week with funding from the United Nations peacekeeping operation in Somalia.

UN spokesman George Bennett said Monday that if the Somalis failed to reach agreement as promised Tuesday, "I don't think the UN is going to fund their stay for any longer in Nairobi. When the announcement was postponed from Tuesday to Wednesday, he said there were no major points still under negotiation.

"Last night there were three things remaining," Bennett said. "I don't think it should be very difficult for them to be able to agree on them."

UN officials have declined to reveal details of the talks.

Aided and Ali Mahdi are the main figures trying to take control of Somalia. The United Nations also brokered a cease-fire in March 1992 after fighting between the two forces had destroyed three-quarters of the capital, Mogadishu, and killed up to 30,000 people.

The international community has feared that the country will revert to chaos after most Western forces withdraw from Somalia in the coming days. Aided and Ali Mahdi previously have announced separate plans to set up a transitional government after foreign troops leave.

Italian troops are leaving Mogadishu by ship this week, and the Americans will complete their withdrawal on Friday. Germany, France, Belgium and a number of other nations have already pulled out.

Nationwide alert in India

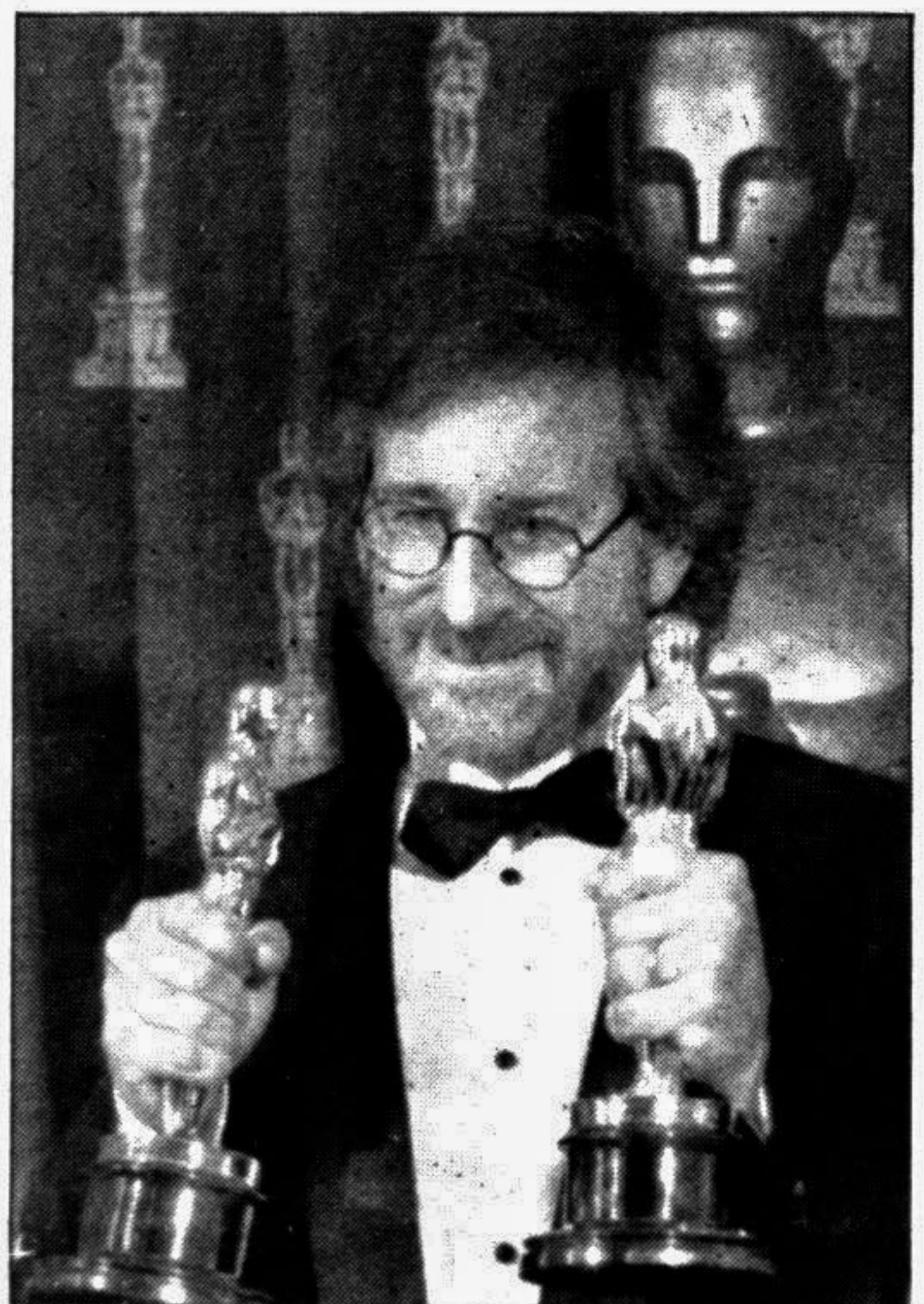
NEW DELHI, Mar 22: India today announced a nationwide alert and a 10,000-dollar reward for information about the key suspect in a series of train bombings that killed one person and injured 23 others, reports AP.

The federal detective agency offered the reward here for the arrest of Abdul Karim, the alleged mastermind behind the December 6 blasts, which coincided with the first anniversary of the razing of the Babri Mosque by Hindu fanatics.

The 1992 desecration sparked a wave of Hindu-Muslim clashes that claimed some 2,000 lives and severely dented India's secular credentials.

Railway officials linked the explosions on the five trains but were unable to confirm if they were staged by Muslims to avenge the demolition of the 16th-century mosque.

The Central Bureau of Investigation said Karim was a resident of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, where the Babri Mosque is located. He is described as being in his fifties and having a severed left hand.



US director Stephen Spielberg poses with two of the Oscars he won at the 66th Annual Academy Awards March 21. Spielberg won for best director and best picture for "Schindler's List", which, combined with "Jurassic Park", won a total of 10 Oscars. —AFP photo

List of Oscar winners

LOS ANGELES, Mar 22 (Reuters): The following winners were announced Monday at the 66th Annual Academy Awards:

Best picture: "Schindler's List"

Best actor: Tom Hanks — "Philadelphia"

Best director: Steven Spielberg — "Schindler's List"

Best supporting actor: Tommy Lee Jones — "The Fugitive"

Best supporting actress: Anna Paquin — "The Piano"

Best art direction: Allan Starski, art direction, Ewa Braun, set direction — "Schindler's List"

Best visual effects: Dennis Muren, Stan Winston, Phil Tippett, Michael Lantieri — "Jurassic Park"

Best makeup: Greg Cannom, Ve Neill, Yolanda Toussieng — "Mrs Doubtfire"

Best sound effects editing: Gary Rydstrom, Richard Hyman — "Jurassic Park"

Best animated short film: "The Wrong Trousers" — Nicholas Park, producer

Best live action short film: "Black Rider" — Pepe Danquart, producer

Best sound: Gary Summers, Gary Rydstrom, Shawn Murphy, Ron Judkins — "Jurassic Park"

Best costume design: Gabriella Pescucci — "The Age of Innocence"

Best documentary short

subject: "Defending Our Lives" — Margaret Lazarus and Renner Wunderlich, producers

Best documentary feature: "I am a Promise: The Children of Stanton Elementary School" — Susan Raymond and Alan Raymond, producers

Best original score: John Williams — "Schindler's List"

Best cinematography: Janusz Kaminski — "Schindler's List"

Best foreign language film: "Belle Epoque" (Spain)

Best film editing: Michel Khan — "Schindler's List"

Best original song: "Streets of Philadelphia" from "Philadelphia" — Bruce Springsteen

Best original screenplay: Jane Campion, "The Piano"

Best screenplay adaptation: Steven Zaillian, "Schindler's List"

Blast in Africa's NP office

JOHANNESBURG, Mar 22: An explosion severely damaged an office of South Africa's ruling National Party (NP) in a right-wing area of the western Transvaal on Monday night, police said today, reports

It was the second explosion in two days in Ventersdorp, 125 km (about 80 miles) west of Johannesburg. A petrol station was damaged in a blast on Sunday night.



Actress Anna Paquin of New Zealand poses with the 1993 Oscar she won for best supporting actress during the 66th annual Academy Awards Monday. Paquin, 11, won for her performance in the movie 'The Piano'. —AFP photo

Nepal-Bhutan talks resume on Mar 28

KATHMANDU, Mar 22: Nepalese Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala today told Parliament that ministerial-level talks between Nepal and Bhutan on the repatriation of Bhutanese refugees would resume later this week, reports AP.

Koirala expressed confidence that the talks — to be held between March 28 and 30 in Kathmandu — would make concrete achievements, a report said.

Since 1990 more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees of Nepalese descent have fled Bhutan for Nepal, alleging persecution by the authorities after harsh cultural restrictions were imposed on them.

They are being sheltered in camps in southeastern Nepal by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other non-governmental organisations.

The first high-level talks on the issue were held last year, resulting in the creation of a joint ministerial committee to identify the status of those in the camps who claim to have come from Bhutan. The committee last met in October.

Replying to a question in the House of Representatives Monday Koirala said: Repatriation of refugees to their homeland is not a unilateral issue.

BRIEFLY

Ben Ali gets 100pc of votes:

Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali received nearly 100 per cent of the vote ensuring the sole candidate for the country's top post was re-elected in Sunday's election, results showed Monday, AFP reports from Tunis.

But the introduction of a measure of proportional representation meant four out of six opposition parties entered parliament for the first time, sharing a total of 19 seats in the 163-member house.

UN to renew mission in Georgia:

The United Nations recommended Monday that a 20-member UN observer mission in civil war-torn Georgia should be renewed until the end of June, but said conditions were still not ripe for deploying a full-scale peacekeeping force, Reuters reports from United Nations.

The UN observer mission in Georgia (Unomig), whose mandate expires March 31, was set up last August to help with peace efforts between the Georgian government and Abkhazian separatists who declared independence in July 1992.

Perry visits Ukrainian N-sites:

US Defence Secretary William Perry was making a whirlwind visit yesterday to one of the most closely guarded sites in the former Soviet Union to see Ukraine dismantle 10-warhead SS-24 nuclear missiles, Reuters reports from Kiev.

Perry was due to fly to the Pervomaisk missile base, 300 km (180 miles) south of Kiev, where a battery of one of the world's most dangerous weapons is stationed in underground silos and was aimed at the United States in the Cold War.

Emmy winning actor Carey dies:

MacDonald Carey, an Emmy-winning actor who appeared in more than 50 films and starred in television soaps, died Monday, aged 81, AFP reports from Santa Monica.

Carey, who had undergone lung cancer surgery in September 1991 died of cancer, his publicist said.

Carey switched from Hollywood to the soaps, and in 1965 launched a longlasting career as Doctor Tom Hooton in "Days of Our Lives." The role won him Emmy for best actor in a daytime drama in 1974 and 1975. He appeared in his last "Days" episodes at the start of this year, a spokeswoman for the series said.

Sihanouk leaves hospital:

King Norodom Sihanouk has been released from the Beijing Hospital where he was being treated for cancer and is "resting" at his residence in Beijing, a Cambodian source said, AFP reports from Beijing.

The 71-year-old Cambodian monarch, who underwent surgery on October 7 to remove a tumour in the prostate area, left the hospital "recently" after he "endured the treatment very well."

Actor Dack Rambo dead:

Dack Rambo, who had roles on television's "Dallas," and "Another World" until he quit acting after disclosing he'd tested positive for the AIDS virus, has died. He was 53, AFP reports from Delano.

Rambo died Monday shortly after arriving at Delano Regional Medical Centre, said hospital spokeswoman Irma Sanchez. She refused to give further details or provide his cause of death.

Settlers attacked Hebron Mosque from two directions

JERUSALEM, Mar 22: Two Palestinian survivors of the Hebron mosque massacre told an Israeli inquiry Tuesday they heard shooting from two directions, challenging government claims that the gunman acted alone, reports AP.

Yasser Mahmud Youssef al-Jamal, the first Palestinian to appear before the five-judge panel, said he heard Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein enter the mosque through a door behind him and shout in Hebrew before opening fire.

"It's all over for you," he quoted the gunman as shouting, based on the translation of other survivors. Thirty Muslim worshippers were killed in the February 25 massacre at the Tomb of the Patriarchs, and scores more were wounded.

Al-Jamal, whose 8-year-old

brother was wounded in the head, said he didn't see a second shooter, but added, "I heard shooting from both directions."

Asked which direction the other shots came from, he said he didn't know because of the acoustics in the prayer hall. But when pressed by skeptical judges, he said he was certain it wasn't an echo or a ricochet.

Mohammed Musbah al-Jabari, 29, also told the court he heard shooting from two directions and that there was an explosion, apparently from a grenade. That contradicted army testimony that only evidence of bullets was found.

Al-Jabari said Shrapnel and what looked like a pin from a grenade fell on worshippers. He also said pieces of a chandelier rained down on them.

Under questioning from the judges, he said he was sure there was shooting from more than one direction because at one point he was looking at Goldstein take out an empty magazine and throw it on the floor.

"Before he put in another clip there was shooting, the sound of shooting in the hall," he said, adding there were two and possibly three sources of fire.

Meir Shamgar, the Supreme Court chief justice who heads the panel, and other judges, noted that both al-Jamal's and al-Jabari's earlier statements to police had made no mention of a second source of gunfire.

"I could understand a marginal detail not being written in the police state-

ment," Judge Eliezer Goldberg said. "But is it possible that a detail like somebody else opening fire be something he forgot and didn't write?"

Speaking through a translator, Al-Jamal responded that he had not forgotten but had not been asked the question by the police interrogator.

Al-Jamal's testimony contradicted Israeli government claims that the massacre was the work of Goldstein alone. The gunman was beaten to death by worshippers after the killings.

PLO officials have questioned whether one man could kill so many people in such a short time.

Israeli guards at the mosque lent some support to the theory of an accomplice in earlier testimony.

34 men occupy Italian Embassy for several hrs

MANAGUA, Mar 22: A group of former Nicaraguan soldiers temporarily occupied the Italian embassy here Monday, demanding delivery of aid promised last year, reports Reuters.

The 34 unarmed men forced their way into the front of the embassy, but left several hours later when Italian ambassador Gian Guido Lanzoni agreed to meet their demands, according to a Nicaraguan government spokesman and news reports.

The men identified themselves as members of the Movement for Dignity and Sovereignty, ex-Sandinistas who last October took over the headquarters of National Opposition Union, a rightist political coalition, and held Nicaraguan Vice President Virgilio Godoy and 30 other people hostage.

As part of a deal to end that crisis, the Italian government promised monetary aid to the group, but failed to deliver, a Nicaraguan government spokesman said.

Strike paralyses South Lebanon

NABATIYEH (Lebanon), Mar 22: A strike paralysed South Lebanon on Tuesday, a day after two schoolchildren and a third civilian were killed in an Israeli bombardment, reports AP.

Twenty-one schoolchildren were wounded in Monday's assault, which Israel staged to avenge the deaths of two Israeli soldiers and four allied militiamen killed in a guerrilla attack.

It was the heaviest Israeli bombardment against urban centres in south Lebanon since a week-long blitz last July killed 147 people and wounded 500.

Hostilities erupted after roadside bomb blasts hit Israeli and allied South Lebanon Army patrols at midday Monday. They continued until dawn Tuesday. Iranian-backed guerrillas of Hezbollah, or Party of God, claimed responsibility for the roadside attack.

Israeli helicopter gunships, under parachute flares, flew

repeated strafing runs against suspected Hezbollah bases, security sources said.

The guerrillas struck back with dusk-to-dawn salvos of Katyusha rockets on an enclave Israel occupies in south Lebanon as a security zone. At least 30 Katyushas exploded, but no casualties were reported from the rocket fire or the helicopter attacks, the sources said.

Schools, shops, banks, businesses and entertainment centres were shuttered in the port cities of Tyre and Sidon and the inland market town of Nabatiyeh as the slain civilians were mourned.

Zeinab Salman, 12, died instantly when hit by shrapnel after an Israeli shell exploded near a bus taking children home from school in Nabatiyeh. Qassem Wahben, 12, who was among 22 schoolchildren wounded in the bus, died overnight in a hospital, security sources said.

Nicaraguan army chief under house arrest

MANAGUA, Mar 22: Nicaraguan army chief Huberto Ortega was placed under house arrest Monday by a military prosecutor for a suspected link to the 1990 shooting death of a civilian teenager, a defence lawyer said, reports Reuters.

Ortega, the brother of former President Daniel Ortega, was ordered to stay in his home after he testified in a case in which his bodyguards were accused of killing 16-year-old Jean Paul Genie on a Managua highway.

Ortega's lawyer, Mariano Barahona, said in an interview on official Radio Nicaragua that the longtime head of Nicaragua's army can only leave his home with permission from the prosecutor, Lieutenant Lester Gallo, for at least the next 10 days. At the end of that time the order will be reviewed.

Ortega said in a court proceeding Monday that he knew nothing about the incident in which he is now apparently a suspect.

Off the Record

Iron Lady becomes dizzy

SANTIAGO: Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher cut short a speech to Chilean businessmen on Monday because of a dizzy spell, reports Reuters.

Thatcher, who arrived in Chile at the invitation of Chilean businessmen, was 20 minutes into her speech when she became dizzy.

Thatcher, known as the Iron Lady, leaned over at the podium and steadied herself before being helped into a seat.

"One can't tempt fate," Thatcher told the gathering before she was escorted out of the room by her husband, Dennis, and two nurses and taken to the hotel infirmary.

Businessman Hernan Briones, who organised her Chile visit, attributed the dizziness to a tight schedule and lack of food.

"She started feeling badly on Sunday night and has not eaten anything since," Briones told reporters.

During the luncheon meeting, Thatcher drank only mineral water, he said.

Women drinking too much irritate 76 pc of men

PARIS: Women who drink too much irritate 76 per cent of men, and those who wear too much make-up and perfume get up the noses of 65 per cent of the opposite sex, a survey said Monday, reports AP.

The survey — carried out by pollsters Ipsos and published in the latest issue of Vogue Hommes magazine — also found that 42 per cent of men hated their partners saying nothing during lovemaking. But 41 per cent hated it when their partner made comments during sex.

Forty-nine per cent of the respondents rejected the statement that they could do nothing without their wives, while 50 per cent of the sample said they found it irritating when other men spoke of their female conquests.

The survey was carried out in January among a representative sample of 665 men between the ages of 15 and 50.

For falling in love

NEW DELHI: A teenage couple who were planning to elope were hacked to death in a village in northern India by four of the girl's uncles who opposed the inter-caste marriage, a newspaper reported Tuesday, reports AP.

Several dozen villagers watched the murders and encouraged the girl's uncles to kill the couple for giving their respective castes a bad name, the Tribune said.

It said the murders occurred Monday evening in the village of Nayagaon in the northern Indian state of Haryana.

The boy, Manoj, 19, who was from the Ahir, or Hindu farming caste, and girl, Asha, 17, a member of the Saini community of vegetable sellers, fell in love several months ago and planned to get married, the newspaper said.

But her uncles opposed the marriage to a boy from a different caste and banned Asha from seeing Manoj, the Tribune said.

When they refused to drop their plan to marry, the uncles lured Manoj to Asha's house in Nayagaon and dragged the couple into a courtyard, where they were battered to death with an axe, it said.

Scores of villagers gathered and goaded the uncles to kill the couple, the Tribune said. Witnesses told the newspaper that none of the villagers tried to save their lives.

Police have arrested one of the uncles and are searching for the others.