

Row over N-inspection

ROK to seek help from China, Russia to convince N Korea

SEOUL, Apr 2: South Korean President Kim Young-sam said Saturday that Seoul will enlist China and Russia, the two countries with closest ties to North Korea, in coaxing Pyongyang into allowing nuclear inspections, reports AP.

Kim also told ruling party leaders that "the ball is now in North Korea's court" with regard to the UN Security Council statement calling on Pyongyang to allow international inspections, which passed unanimously on Friday.

"With the Koreans, US and Japan at the center, negotiations with China and Russia will be effective," presidential officials quoted Kim as saying.

Kim returned Wednesday from a summit conference in Beijing with Chinese president Jiang Zemin. Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo is to leave for Moscow for talks with Russian officials after returning from Washington and Tokyo.

China is Communist North Korea's last remaining ally and the former Soviet Union had been Pyongyang's closest ally.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Panov said last week that Moscow would still honour a decades-old defence treaty between North Korea and the former Soviet Union.

Kim said also that during their talks in Beijing, Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng said that China would like to take a constructive part in easing nuclear tensions.

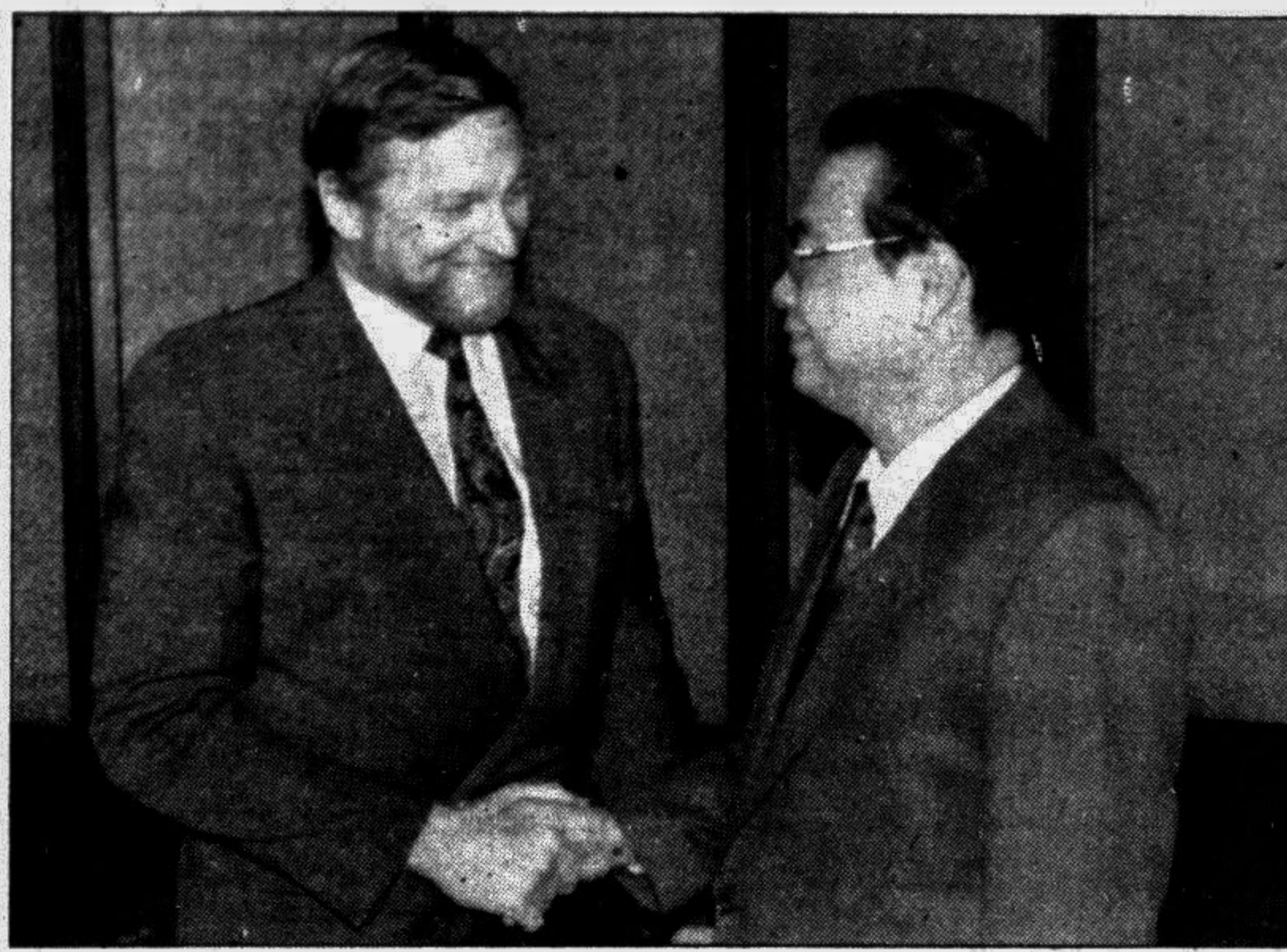
North Korea denies making atomic weapons, but its year-long refusal to allow inspections has heightened suspicions. It's March refusal to allow International Atomic Energy Agency officials to inspect a key site led to the Security Council statement.

The statement, which gives the hard-line Stalinist nation about a month was a compromise between a US-backed resolution that contained veiled threats and a Chinese call for a softer approach.

Friday, Kim said that China would feel obligated to work for full inspections since the statement was passed with Beijing's support.

Also Saturday, Seoul's Ministry of Defence said it would extend indefinitely low-alert status for its 655,000 troops because of the nuclear tensions on the peninsula.

The South Korean forces entered its low alert status in November when tensions began mounting, ministry officials said. The status was scheduled to last until the end of March, they said.



Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng (R) shakes hands with Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans (L) at the Zhongnanhai Leadership compound in Beijing on Saturday. — AFP photo

Australia concerned at detention of Chinese dissident

BEIJING, Apr 2: Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans told Chinese premier Li Peng today of his concern over the latest detention of leading dissident Wei Jingsheng, but said his exchanges were not encouraging, reports AFP.

Evans told journalists after a meeting today with Li that he had raised the subject of Wei's detention, but added: "I can't say that the result of that particular exchange was very encouraging."

It was the second time in a month that Wei — who was attempting to return to Beijing from the nearby city of Tianjin — had been arrested.

Evans had told Li "this added a whole new degree of difficulty in resolving the MFN (Most-Favoured-Nation) issue with the United States and was a continuing matter of concern, a new matter for a good deal of the rest of the international community, including of course ourselves."

The Australian Foreign Minister said Li did not seem to be aware of the latest developments and responded with a lecture on "the virtues of sticking to bilateral relations and larger question of international relations rather than internal affairs."

The premier's reaction was not forthcoming on the subject of Wei Jingsheng. It's not a subject that the Chinese government authorities care to talk about or care to talk about in polite terms anyway.

The reason for Wei's detention Friday and his present whereabouts remain unclear.

The 43-year-old activist, who was among more than 15 dissidents picked up in a police sweep in early March.

BRIEFLY

Algeria blamed for killings: The banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) has accused Algerian authorities of killing more than 200 civilians during anti-terrorist sweeps over the past few days, according to a statement received Friday, AFP reports from Paris.

The head of the FIS abroad, Rabah Kebir, who normally lives in Germany, called on international human rights organisations to condemn what he said was a wave of killings.

Cuba to cancel May Day parade: Cuba will cancel its May Day parade this year for the first time since Fidel Castro took power in 1959 because of its economic crisis, news reports said Friday. AP reports from Mexico City.

The government cannot afford to pay for the Labour Day festivities, a spokesman for the Cuban Workers' Central, a powerful labour federation, told the Mexican news agency Notimex in Havana.



A man acting as Jesus of Nazareth reenacts the crucifixion on Friday in the city of Pese, 160 miles outside of Panama City. Thousands of Panamanians take part in different religious rituals that last until Easter Sunday, today. — AFP photo

Ukraine criticises IAEA: Nur Ingmatalin, vice chairman of the Ukrainian atomic energy utilisation committee, yesterday criticised the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for lacking in "objectivity" in appraising the security of the Chernobyl nuclear power station, Xinhua reports from Kiev.

In an interview with the Ukrainian press agency, Ingmatalin said the security of the Chernobyl nuclear power station is not inferior to any other nuclear power stations in Russia. He said the problems are psychological and sociological rather than technical.

Vietnamese PM in Phnom Penh: Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet arrived in Phnom Penh yesterday for a 24-hour visit during which he is expected to discuss lingering problems over border demarcation and Vietnamese settlers, a Cambodian official said, Reuters reports from Phnom Penh.

Among the Cambodian leaders welcoming Vo at Phnom Penh's airport were co-prime ministers Prince Norodom Ranariddh and Hun Sen as well as Foreign Minister Prince Norodom Sirivudh.



Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party, gestures during his speech at the 5th congress of his party in Moscow yesterday. He urged the delegates to strengthen the party powers to boost his chances of winning the Russian presidency. — AFP photo

33 rebels to die in Algeria

ALGIERS, Apr 2: A secret terrorism court has sentenced 33 suspected Muslim radicals to death this week, the first death sentences passed in nearly three months, judicial sources said Friday, reports AP.

A terrorism court in Algiers, one of three set up to expedite trials of suspected Islamic terrorists, sentenced 31 of the 33 to death in absentia. None of the defendants was identified.

The new sentences brings to 481 the number of people condemned to death since the courts started operating in February 1993.

Extremists in Hebron threaten to kill Norwegian observers

JERUSALEM, Apr 2: The first Norwegian observers, packing pistols but little authority, will arrive within a week in the tense West Bank town of Hebron, where an extremist Muslim group threatened Friday to kill them, reports AP.

A statement distributed by the Islamic Jihad in Palestine, a small group that opposes the peace process, warned Norway not to send its observers "because our priority will be to kill them."

The PLO and Israel agreed to deploy 160 observers from Norway, Denmark and Italy in Hebron as part of a deal to restart peace talks. They will

Most ruling party MPs support Koirala

KATHMANDU, Apr 2: Most MPs of the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) parliamentary party have voiced their full support to Prime Minister Gijra Prasad Koirala who was demanded to resign by 36 dissident party MPs in the lower house, reports Xinhua.

In a memorandum presented to party President Krishna Prasad Bhattarai during the Central Working Committee (CWC) meeting on Friday, 90 members of the NC parliamentary party, including 71 lower house MPs, reiterated their "complete confidence and faith" in the leadership of the Prime Minister for the sake of party unity and the stability of democracy, official newspaper 'the Rising Nepal' reported here today.

This is the first time for so many NC MPs to officially express their support to the Prime Minister in a memorandum handed to the NC president.

44 Easter holiday travellers killed in Peru

HUANCAYO, Apr 2: About 44 Easter holiday travellers were killed and 33 injured when a bus careened off a road in Peru's central Andes and plunged 400 yards (meters) down an abyss, police said Friday, reports Reuters.

The accident occurred Thursday night above Izcuchaca, a town 53 miles (85 kms) south of this provincial capital and 140 miles (230 kms) east of Lima, police said.

Rescue teams worked Friday to recover the bodies of the victims, including adults and children, police said.

Witnesses said the bus went off the edge of the road after passing a trailer truck, tumbled down the side of the mountain and came to a halt a few yards (meters) from the Mantro river.

UN employee escapes from Somali captors

MOGADISHU, Apr 2: A Nigerian UN employee who was abducted by gunmen earlier this week returned to the UN compound here early today after escaping from his captors, UN spokesman Eugene Forson said, reports AFP.

The fate of an American, Alfred Peters, who was kidnapped here Thursday by armed Somalis was still unknown.

Olajide Ogunsanya, a civilian working for the UN Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM), was abducted late Thursday by several Somali gunmen as he walked to his residence from a private function in the southern wing of the UN compound.

Forson said the Nigerian escaped late Friday through a window of a house in which he was being held. Ogunsanya was given a lift by a Somali couple

Spate of attacks against foreigners in Guatemala

GUATEMALA CITY, Apr 2: Foreigners in Guatemala are keeping a low profile following a spate of attacks against tourists accused of stealing children and selling their organs for transplants, reports Reuters.

"Now I don't even look at kids," said an American businessman waiting for a flight to Miami in Guatemala City's international airport Friday.

He said he had been accosted last week in the capital by students brandishing a bloody pig's liver and asking him, "Gringo, how much will you pay for this organ?"

The businessman, who asked not to be identified, said he has stopped taking photos of Guatemalan children because of the hostile reaction that provoked.

An American woman was in a coma Friday after having been savagely beaten Wednesday by a mob of peasants in northern Guatemala who caught her trying to photograph a local child.

June Weinstock, 51, a magazine editor at an environmentalist group in Fairbanks, Alaska, suffered severe head injuries and fractured arms after the attack in San Cristobal Verapaz, 120 miles (190 km) northeast of Guatemala City.

Doctors at Guatemala City's Herrera Llerandi hospital said it was too early to tell whether she had suffered permanent brain damage.

Another American who had tried to interpret for Weinstock in San Cristobal Verapaz was also attacked by the mob but sustained only minor injuries.

The US embassy Thursday warned US citizens in Guatemala, not to travel alone, to avoid crowds and to take "utmost" caution. The embassy also recalled more than 200 US peace corps volunteers to the capital from rural areas.

Child-snatching hysteria has hit Guatemala since Melissa Larson of New Mexico was arrested and nearly lynched last month after villages in Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa in southern Guatemala accused her of stealing a child. Larson spent two weeks in prison before being released for lack of evidence.

Some hardy tourists are proceeding with their travel plans but many foreigners, shocked by attack on Weinstock, are avoiding remote areas.

2 killed, 15 hurt in Turkish explosion

ISTANBUL, Apr 2: An explosion at Istanbul's historic covered bazaar Saturday killed at least two people and wounded 15 others, including foreigners, reports AP.

A Tunisian woman identified as Munira Najan, 40, died in the blast and her son, Mehdi Najan, 17, was among the injured, said an official at Capa Hospital.

A Spanish national identified as Javier Castro died at Cerrahpasa Hospital shortly after he was rushed there, hospital officials said. They said an earlier report that a Belgian had been killed was erroneous.

Hospital sources identified other wounded foreigners as Spanish nationals Manuel Guzman, Soran Guzman and

Maria Tereza; Moinac Chatan and Michael Roper of France; and Mohammed el Awmi, of Lebanon.

Hungarian tourists also were believed to be among the injured, but their wounds were not serious, according to a hospital official who would not be identified by name.

Their rest of the victims hospitalized with undetermined injuries were Turkish nationals, the officials said.

The 10:50 am blast was believed to have been caused by a time bomb placed in a portable shoe-shining box near jewelry stores close to an exit at the 500-year-old bazaar.

Police said a second bomb also may have exploded at the same time, but that was being investigated.

E-mail threat to Clinton

CINCINNATI, Ohio, Apr 2: President Clinton was sent a threat by electronic mail, the second such incident reported this year, the US secret service said Friday, reports Reuters.

"We investigate all of these threats. Number one its against the law, and number two we want to make sure there's no danger to the president," agent Dick Rathmell of the agency's Cincinnati office said.

The Cincinnati enquirer, which disclosed the incident in Friday's editions, said the contents of the February 21 threat was not known.

Earlier this year a university of Illinois student was charged with threatening the life of the president after he allegedly sent a note to Clinton's E-mail address at the White House saying he was going to be killed.



Chao Yu-jen, a 26-year-old serviceman (R), and his school teacher bride Wu Chao-yi, 26, sing a love song during the Taipei mass wedding ceremony on Saturday. The young bride and groom joined 144 other couples in the western style ceremony. The brides receive their wedding dress free and if they are an employee of the city government they receive 25,000 NT dollars (970 US dollar). — AFP photo

Off the Record

Britons most distrustful?

LONDON: Britons are among the world's most dissatisfied, distrustful and pessimistic people, a poll conducted in Britain, Germany, Japan and the United States reported on Saturday, says Reuters.

Results of the poll of more than 5,500 people interviewed about their view of the world between March 5 and 11, were published simultaneously in Britain's Guardian newspaper, Germany's Der Spiegel, Japan's Shimbun and the New York Times.

It found that 85 per cent of Britons were dissatisfied with the general situation of the world compared with 82 per cent of Germans, 67 per cent of Americans and 66 per cent of Japanese, the Guardian said.

Only 13 per cent of British people were optimistic that things would improve in the next five years, against 16 per cent of Japanese, 18 per cent of Germans and 19 per cent of Americans.

Britons were also the least likely to trust people in other leading countries, 50 per cent distrusting Germans, 55 per cent distrusting the Japanese and 67 per cent distrusting the Chinese.

The paper said the poll painted a depressing picture, showing that most people in each country believe the world has become a more dangerous place since the end of the cold war.

Naked man wanted!

LEBANON: A man who pumped a buck's worth of gas in the nude is wanted by police who say they identified him from a videotape, reports AP.

The security videotape showed the naked man pay a gas station attendant 1 dollar, said patrolman Mark Tibbs. It also showed the attendant do a double-take early Sunday when he saw the man pumping gas in the town 35 miles (55 kms) from Indianapolis.

Authorities issued an arrest warrant Thursday on indecent exposure charges for Erik Jacobsen, 45, of West Lafayette.

Gay couple in TV ad

PHILADELPHIA: The TV advertisement, just like lots of others, shows a couple shopping for a new dining room table. What's different about this ad is that both the shoppers are men, reports AP.

The spot, for the Sweden-based furniture chain IKEA, is believed to be the first on US television to target gay shoppers. It first aired Wednesday evening in New York, Houston, Philadelphia and Washington.

"We don't think it's taking a chance to use a gay couple in 1994," IKEA marketing director Peter Connolly said.

The spot shows two men shopping for the table at IKEA, then sitting at their new table at home. They do not say they are gay or discuss their lifestyle but mention having a long-term relationship.

"You know, we went to IKEA because we thought it was time for a serious dining room table," one of the men says.

"We have slightly different tastes," the other says, adding that they met at his sister's wedding.

The ad is probably the first on television targeting the gay audience, said Larry Gross, a communications professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

Previous ads depicting gays have been confined to newspapers, magazines and billboards, he said.

'E-mail means emergency mail'

NEWARK, N.J.: There have been romances by e-mail, support groups by e-mail and fund-raising by e-mail. Now, Jack Miller has received lifesaving medical help using his electronic computer mail, reports AP.

The computing analyst — stricken in his work cubicle with increasingly severe chest pains and losing consciousness — punched a few keys on his terminal and sent an SOS to co-workers at Witco Corp.

They came running and administered CPR while waiting for paramedics to arrive.

"For me, e-mail means emergency mail," Miller, 56, told the Daily News of New York from his Paramus home, where he is recuperating. "I was going and nobody would have noticed."

2nd set of triplets in 5 months!

NICOSIA, Cyprus: A doctor in the southern Iranian province of Khuzestan this week delivered her second set of triplets in just over five months, according to an Iranian newspaper, reports AP.

Lela Nayabzadeh gave birth to a boy and two girls by caesarean section last Monday in the city of Behbahan under the care of Dr. Anjana Pankaj, an Indian gynecologist, the Tehran Times said.

Pankaj, of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh, had already delivered two girls and a boy last November 23, also by caesarean, the newspaper said.

All six infants and the two mothers were healthy, the Times said in an article to be published Sunday. An advance copy was made available Saturday to the Associated Press.

Buthelezi ready to hold summit

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 2: Conservative black South African leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi has signalled his willingness to hold a peace summit despite the clamping of emergency regulations on his power base in Natal province, reports Reuters.

Buthelezi, leader of the Inkatha Freedom Party and Chief Minister of the Kwazulu black homeland within Natal, said on Friday he expected the summit would be held next week.

Buthelezi and the king have vowed to resist the elections because they will deliver their demand for an autonomous Zulu state in Natal.