

# BRIEFLY

**Mrs Onassis recovering:** Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, who is suffering from cancer, is recovering from ulcer surgery at a New York hospital, her long-time spokeswoman said Saturday. Reuter reports from New York.

"Mrs Onassis went into the hospital as part of her treatment and while there doctors discovered she had an ulcer, which is what the operation is all about," said Nancy Tuckerman, spokeswoman for the widow of the slain president John Kennedy.

Tuckerman said Onassis, 64, was "doing very well and will be going home pretty soon."

**Police detain 300 in Egypt:** Egyptian police have detained more than 300 people over the past two days in security sweeps in western Cairo and the southern province of Assut, the government newspaper Al-Ahram said on Sunday. Reuter reports from Cairo.

The operation in Cairo, similar to those the police frequently carry out in shanty towns around the city, brought in 268 people, it said.

**Explosion kills 21 in Colombia:** An explosion killed at least 21 people and injured 17 others in a bus, a car and a tanker truck collided on a highway near the town of Fusagasuga on Saturday. AFP reports from Bogota.

The impact of the crash caused the tanker to explode, enveloping the vehicles in flames.

Authorities sifting through the wreckage found the charred remains of 21 people, and were unable to identify them immediately, said highway policeman Harvey Bermudez.

**Bus mishap claims 15 in Nepal:** At least 15 people were killed and 21 others injured badly enough to require hospitalisation when a bus left the road and fell some 200 metres (650 feet) down a hillside, police said yesterday. AFP reports from Kathmandu.

The bus was heading towards Butwal town from Sandhikharka when the accident occurred Saturday afternoon in a Rghakhanchi district, about 350 kilometres (220 miles) west of here, police said.

Ten people died at the scene and five died on way to Butwal for treatment.

**Five die in Angolan fighting:** Five people died and scores were wounded in weekend shelling in the central Angolan town of Cuito where UNITA rebels have stepped up a 15-month siege, state radio reported yesterday. Reuter reports from Luanda.

"Five people died and scores of people were injured in Cuito," the radio said, adding that the UN World Food Programme delivered food to the town by air despite Saturday's shelling.

## Israel supplies details of Hamas activities to Jordan

JERUSALEM, Apr 17: Israel has supplied Jordan with details of the activities of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas in Amman and the occupied territories, the Maariv newspaper said today, reports AFP.

A senior Foreign Affairs Ministry official told AFP that there had been an exchange of information on "security questions" between the two countries in the last 48 hours. But he refused to give any details.

The reports came after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin last week accused Amman of sheltering Hamas following the killing of 12 Israelis in two bombings.

Hamas, which opposes the PLO peace deal with Israel, claimed responsibility for the bombings from its Amman office.

According to the Maariv Daily, Jordan was now considering a clampdown on Hamas leaders in Amman.

But King Hussein denied on Saturday that Jordan encouraged terrorists and said Hamas had no official status in Amman. He said Israel bore responsibility for the violence.

The Jordanian government issued a statement saying it would not allow its territory to be used as "a base or conduit for violence or for its plans."

Hamas representative Mohammad Nazal and spokesman Ibrahim Ghoche, both Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship, live in Amman and operate the office.

The army arrested about 30 Palestinians, many suspected of links with Hamas, on the West Bank over the weekend, Palestinian sources said.

Meanwhile another report says: The government announced today that a 10-day ban on Palestinians entering Israel from the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip would remain in force until further notice.

## Kabul residents take advantage of lull in war

KABUL, Apr 17: Thousands of Kabul civilians took advantage of a lull in the four-month-long Afghan factional fighting today to cross the front lines to buy cheap food and fuel available on the city outskirts, reports AFP.

A 100-kilogramme (220 pound) bag of wheat flour — for cooking the Afghan staple bread — sold for 20,000 afghanis (10 dollars), cheaper in the south Kabul bazaars controlled by the Mujahideen of Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar than in the city centre.

Due to his rivalry with President Burhanuddin Rabbani, whose military forces control central Kabul, Hekmatyar has imposed a blockade on the free transport of food supplies into the capital, but he has allowed civilians to cross the front lines to purchase their needs at cheaper prices from his own bazaars.

But the people complained they had to pay bribes at many of Hekmatyar's Hezb-I-Islami faction checkpoints along the way between the south Kabul bazaars in Cheliston district and the first pro-Rabbani frontline checkpoint.

"If I had known that I must pay so much money I would never have come," said one man with a bag of wheat flour slung over his bicycle frame.

"They took my identity card just because I had no money to pay a bribe. They ordered me back tomorrow with the money if I wanted my card back," said another resident who had bought cooking oil.

Guards at the last Hezb-I-Islami checkpoint on the way from Cheliston told AFP that allegations of bribe-taking were "lies", and insisted instead that they had opened the road for the free traffic of food "in order to help the people solve their problems."

A continuous stream of pedestrians, bicyclists and cart-pushers ferrying bags of wheat flour.

## Security tightened in Johannesburg

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 17: Police in South Africa's commercial capital stepped up security today at the start of what threatens to be a week of political violence between supporters and opponents of the April 26-28 elections, reports Reuter.

"There is a possibility violence and tension will rise," police spokesman Colonel Dave Bruce told Reuters. "We are taking measures."

The Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party, which is boycotting the poll, scheduled a news conference for today to announce whether it would go ahead with a protest march in Johannesburg on Monday in defiance of an official ban.

A march in Johannesburg by rejectionist Zulus on March 28 triggered clashes in which 53 people died.

# Pakistan will never roll back its N-capability: Benazir

ISLAMABAD, Apr 17: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said on Saturday her government was seeking new tanks, submarines and jets to strengthen Pakistan's defences, reports Reuter.

She also told a conference of army commanders at Rawalpindi, near Islamabad, that Pakistan would never roll back its controversial "nuclear capability."

The official APP news agency quoted Bhutto as saying government agencies were exploring the market for new tanks and "we also intend to induct new submarines."

The report gave no indication where Pakistan, which feels threatened by its arch-foe and neighbour India, might buy the new weapons. It quoted the prime minister as saying she intended to visit Russia in September.



Benazir Bhutto

Bhutto said her six-month-old government would leave no stone unturned to make Pakistan's defences "impregnable."

Priority would be given to domestic production and the government would either get additional F-16 fighter planes from the United States under a 1989 contract or make alternative arrangements, she said.

The United States cut off all military and new economic aid to Islamabad in 1990 on suspicions it was making nuclear weapons.

Pakistan admits having a nuclear capability but says a political decision has been made to use it only for peaceful purposes.

"The nuclear capability will never be rolled back", Bhutto said a week after Pakistan and the United States said they had agreed to hold more talks to find a mutually acceptable formula to cap Islamabad's nuclear programme.

US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott held talks in India and Pakistan this month in a bid to limit what Washington sees as the possibility of a nuclear war between the two neighbours over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Pakistan says it is ready to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty if India signs it at the same time. India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 but denies making bombs.

## Watanabe to run for Japanese PM

TOKYO, Apr 17: Former Japanese Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe said today he would quit the main opposition Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and form a new party in a bid to run for Prime Minister, reports AFP.

Watanabe, leader of the LDP's third largest faction, told reporters, "We need to form a cabinet aimed at saving this country. I can't do it only with the support of the LDP. I will leave the party as a matter of course."

Watanabe said he would drop his party membership by Monday without holding planned talks with LDP chief Yohei Kono over his defection.

On Friday, Watanabe said he was prepared to leave the party because Kono had announced his bid for the premiership as the sole candidate from the LDP.

Japan Broadcasting Corp (NHK) said about 20 parliament members of the LDP were likely to follow the 70-year-old former minister into the new alliance.

Analysts said Watanabe, who has close ties with the coalition's conservative block, was trying to join the coalition framework as part of his campaign to replace Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa, who resigned April 8 over money scandals.



Japanese Foreign Minister Tsutomu Hata is surrounded by the press upon his return April 17 from a GATT meeting held in Morocco, at the Tokyo International Airport. The ruling coalition parties are expected to select him as successor to Prime Minister Morihiro Hosokawa. — AFP photo

## Li starts central Asia tour today to extend sphere of influence

BEIJING, Apr 17: Prime Minister Li Peng begins a tour of central Asian countries Monday aimed at making out China's sphere of influence in a strategic area whose instability is of concern to Beijing, analysts said, reports AFP.

After spending 10 days touring Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, all formerly part of the Soviet Union, Li will spend two days in Mongolia.

It will also be something of a milestone for Li as it will be his first foreign trip since he suffered from heart problems which removed him from the political scene for about six months last year beginning in April.

"Li Peng was due to make this trip last April and the fact that he has chosen central Asia to begin travelling again is highly symbolic," an east European diplomat here said.

China is keen to secure its relations in the region for two main reasons — to extend its sphere of influence and to ensure that the political instability in those countries does not spill over into neighbouring Xinjiang, China's predominantly Muslim province in the West.

"China, which wants to set itself up as the major power in Asia... must absolutely counter Russian influence in these states," the diplomat said.

Economically booming Beijing has the means to boost its influence whereas stagnant Russia does not.

By boosting trade ties China can help develop the economies of these states, which will also help maintain their stability, the analysts agreed.

"The Muslim independence movements in Xinjiang are very active and are receiving financial and logistical support from the brothers in the neighbouring states," a western military expert said.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen has often voiced "considerable concern" over the troubles in the central Asian republics which erupted after the collapse of the former Soviet Union in 1991.

In October China and Kazakhstan, which share a more than 1,000 kilometre (600 miles) frontier, signed a treaty of friendship, but were unable to work out an agreement on demilitarising their respective frontiers, along which China maintains major military forces mostly to keep out Muslim guerrillas.

Neither was Beijing able to sort out the frontier problems with its other immediate neighbour Kyrgyzstan, and the chronic problems in Uzbekistan, which is a mere 150 kilometres from Xinjiang worries China.

In Mongolia, Li's main aim will be the sign a new friendship and cooperation treaty to replace the one signed in 1960.

## BJP asks Rao to reject US invitation

NEW DELHI, Apr 17: India's main opposition party has asked Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao to reject an invitation to visit the United States, saying Washington was not responsible to New Delhi's security concerns, reports AFP.

"The Clinton administration is not favourable to India", Sunday's newspapers quoted Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Lal Krishna Advani as saying on Saturday in the western city of Baroda.

"So it is in the nation's interest that such a visit is not undertaken by the prime minister", he said.

Advani did not elaborate. But his colleague, Murlidhar Manohar Joshi, a former BJP president, told reporters in Calcutta on Saturday that Rao should not go to Washington to protest the US arming of Pakistan.

Rao should get an assurance from the United States that it will not supply F-16 fighter planes to Pakistan or force India to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if he wants to travel to the US, Joshi added.

US deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbott extended an invitation to Rao during his trip to New Delhi earlier this month. Indian officials say the prime minister may visit Washington next month.

Talbott's discussions here were dominated by a US proposal to deliver 38 F-16s to Pakistan and the nuclear non-proliferation issue. India, which exploded a nuclear device in 1974, has refused to sign the NPT, saying it discriminates between countries which have nuclear capabilities and those that do not.

## Israel, PLO resume talks

CAIRO, Apr 17: Israel and the Palestinians resumed talks here today, with chief PLO negotiator Nabil Shaath saying he hoped it would be the last round to launch self-rule in Gaza and Jericho, reports AFP.

"We will do our best to make this round the last," Shaath said as the two sides began five days of talks. "We will try to finish some of the security aspects, water and jurisdiction."

The chief Israeli negotiator, General Amnon Shahak, avoided raising hopes of an imminent deal on an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho, saying: "We will see at the end of the week."

Last week Israel and the PLO agreed on deploying a Palestinian police force.

Under the declaration of principles signed last September in Washington, Israel was to have completed a four-month withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and in Jericho by April 13.

# Walesa threatens to dissolve parliament

WARSAW, Apr 17: Polish President Lech Walesa threatened on Saturday to call early parliamentary elections if the ruling left-wing coalition tried to limit his powers, reports Reuter.

"If the coalition tries to limit or change constitutional powers of the president I will dissolve the parliament," PAP news agency quoted Walesa as saying after his return from an informal summit of central European presidents in east Bohemia.

"My decision is final — if there is a change, if anyone dares to do that... the parliament will be dissolved," Walesa said.

Constitutional experts, quoted by the Polish television and PAP said it was unlikely Walesa could carry out his threat.

"Under the current law the president does not have a constitutional right to dissolve the parliament if it has formed the government and passed the budget," Stanislaw Gebethner told PAP.

Walesa was responding to a proposal by a group of coalition deputies who on Friday presented a draft constitutional amendment which would give the parliament the final say in accepting ministerial appointments if they were rejected by the president.

Last month Walesa blocked the nomination of the coalition's senior partner, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) Candidate for Finance Minister, Geneva-based economist Dariusz Rosati.

The SLD refused to replace Rosati with a new candidate and the resulting stalemate loosened SLD's grip on policy-making.

## Off the Record

### Woman makes up story to draw attention

VALLEY STREAM, NY: A woman who claimed she was held up at an automatic teller machine by a laughing robber who put a gun to her 2-year-old daughter's head was charged Friday with filing a false police report, says AP.

Mary Rose Posner, 28, made up the story because "she wanted attention," said Detective Lt. Ronald Mueller, an Elmont Police Department spokesman.

Police said Osner told them she was at a Chemical Bank branch cash machine in the New York City suburb of Valley Stream on Wednesday morning when a robber held a gun to her daughter's head and demanded money.

She said she gave 200 dollars to the robber, who jumped into a waiting car and sped away with three others.

Investigators, with cooperation from Chemical Bank, checked transaction before and after the alleged holdup. One man who used the machine four minutes before Posner said he did not immediately leave the area and would have seen the robber's car.

Police said Posner also said she was too scared to return to an ATM but used the same one again Wednesday afternoon.

### Dudley Moore weds longtime girlfriend

LOS ANGELES: British actor and comedian Dudley Moore married his longtime girlfriend Nicole Rothschild Saturday, less than a month after he was arrested for allegedly beating her, reports Reuter.

Moore appeared with his new bride on the balcony of his two-story oceanside home and announced crews and well-wishers: "we did it."

### 'Pedal for the planet expedition'

LONDON: Two Britons plan to pedal round the world on land and sea with mountain bikes and a specially designed two-man pedal boat, reports Reuter.

Steve Smith, 27, and Jason Lewis, 26, will use the boat to cross the English Channel, the Atlantic, the Pacific and the Sea of Japan but first they will be going through capsize trials on an English canal.

"We will then spend three or four days living on the boat at sea just to get some idea of what it is going to be like and to make sure we have covered all the angles", Lewis told reporters Sunday.

The pair expect the 25,000 mile (40,000 km) odyssey, dubbed the "pedal for the planet expedition", will take them 27 months.

## Talks on water resources begin in Muscat

MUSCAT, Apr 17: Officials from Israel, Arab states and other countries and organisations opened talks on water resources here today with a call by Oman for an agreement to ensure stable supplies, reports AFP.

Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Yusuf Ibn Alawi Abdullah said water was one of the most important issues being negotiated in the region, as he opened the session at Muscat's Intercontinental Hotel.

Social and economic development plans required an agreement among all the countries of the Middle East to manage water resources and develop secure and stable supplies, he told the participants.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin was heading the Israeli delegation at the talks, due to last four days. It is the first ever visit to a Gulf Arab state by Israeli officials.

The water committee is one of five set up within the framework of the Middle East peace negotiations.

The talks on water resources are the first to take place in a Gulf country. It is the fifth session since the multilateral meetings began, following the 1991 Madrid peace conference.

"We had not expected such hospitality and warmth here," said a member of the Israeli delegation of more than 15 officials, accompanied by 20 journalists. "We are really impressed."

Beilin met the head of the Omani delegation on Saturday to discuss the agenda of the meeting.

Conference sources said the Israeli delegation had threatened to boycott the meeting following a Palestinian delegate's statement that the PLO and Israel had agreed to set up a national Palestinian committee to manage Palestinian water resources.

## De Klerk urges Buthelezi to discipline his supporters

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 17: South African President F W de Klerk strongly urged defiant Inkatha Freedom Party leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi on Saturday to discipline his supporters and return to the negotiating table to avoid conflict, reports Reuter.

De Klerk told a campaign rally Inkatha had joined the rival African National Congress in intimidating supporters of his ruling National Party in the troubled KwaZulu-Natal region.

"I am getting reports that the National Party in parts of KwaZulu-Natal is now being intimidated not only by the ANC but also by Inkatha," de Klerk told about 3,500 people in an exhibition hall in Johannesburg.

"I call on the chief minister to discipline his people," de Klerk also urged the mainly-Zulu Inkatha against proceeding with a proposed march in Johannesburg on Monday saying it could only end in conflict.

"I will call on the Chief Minister Buthelezi to intervene because people who participate in that march will come into conflict with the law as a result of what happened so shortly ago. Conflict is avoidable," de Klerk said.

He was apparently referring to a march in the city by pro-royalist Zulus, many of them Inkatha supporters, last month which led to more than 50 deaths.

De Klerk urged Buthelezi, who is boycotting the country's first all-race elections on April 26-28, to return to the negotiating table.

He said there was still time to find a solution to the Inkatha leader's demands for greater regional autonomy for KwaZulu-Natal and a special role for his nephew, Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini.

"I say let us get together on Monday and let us discuss that," de Klerk said. "We can before the election find a solution to the problem."

Factional fighting between supporters of Inkatha and the ANC has claimed some 10,000 lives over the past decade. Violence has risen markedly in the run-up to the poll, killing well over 200 people over the past two weeks.

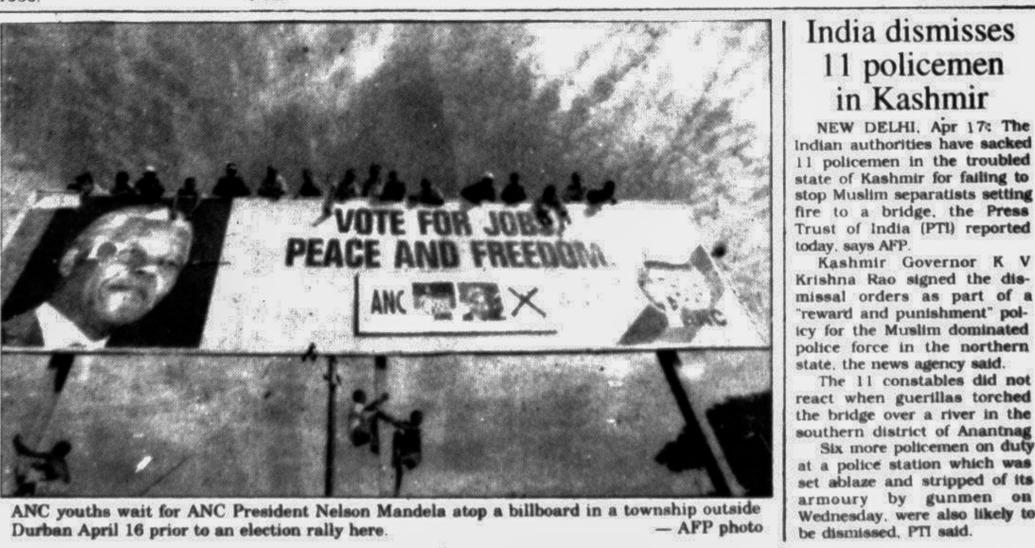
## India dismisses 11 policemen in Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Apr 17: The Indian authorities have sacked 11 policemen in the troubled state of Kashmir for failing to stop Muslim separatists setting fire to a bridge, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported today, says AFP.

Kashmir Governor K V Krishna Rao signed the dismissal orders as part of a "reward and punishment" policy for the Muslim dominated police force in the northern state, the news agency said.

The 11 constables did not react when guerrillas torched the bridge over a river in the southern district of Anantnag.

Six more policemen on duty at a police station which was set ablaze and stripped of its armoury by gunmen on Wednesday, were also likely to be dismissed, PTI said.



ANC youths wait for ANC President Nelson Mandela atop a billboard in a township outside Durban April 16 prior to an election rally here. — AFP photo