

# BRIEFLY

**Hosni Mubarak in Beijing:** Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak arrived in Beijing yesterday on a three-day state visit at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin. AFP reports from Beijing.

Cairo and Beijing have maintained close ties since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1956, and this trip marks Mubarak's sixth visit to China.

The President's entourage includes Information Minister Safout El Sharif and Foreign Minister Amr Moussa, and several economic agreements are scheduled to be signed during the visit.

**100 immigrants held in Italy:** One hundred illegal immigrants from India who thought they had arrived in northern Germany were arrested on Wednesday after coming ashore in southern Italy. Reuter reports from Bianco, Italy.

"They were dripping wet and asked us if we were German," a police spokesman said.

Police said the Indians, who boarded a ship in Russia, had paid 3,000 dollar each to be taken to Germany, but had been duped and were dropped off on the toe of Italy.

**12 drown in Indonesian ferry capsizes:** Twelve people were drowned and 28 were missing after an Indonesian passenger ferry went down during a rainstorm near the resort island of Bali, the official Antara news agency said yesterday. Reuter reports from Jakarta.

The agency said some of the 38 survivors from the Kalitimas ferry, which was also carrying six lorries, were in poor condition after being picked up by passing fishing boats in the Bali strait on Tuesday night. First reports had said 58 were rescued.

The ferry was on a regular route between Ketapang, in east Java, to Gilimanuk, on Bali. Ferries are the cheapest form of transport between Indonesia's estimated 14,000 islands.

**6 Indians killed by lightning:** Six young members of an Indian family were killed by lightning on their way to a relative's house at a village in eastern Bihar state, the Press Trust of India said on Wednesday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

The agency said the victims, all aged between 10 and 24, were struck and died last Saturday. It gave no further details.

**NATO war games to start in May:** Armed forces from 11 countries will take part in NATO air, land and sea exercises in the central and western Mediterranean from May 4 to 19, the alliance's southern command said on Wednesday. Reuter reports from Naples, Italy.

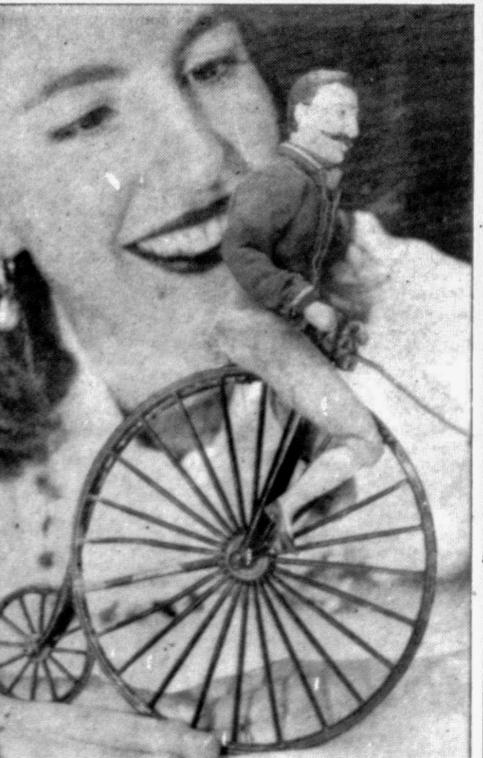
It said the two-week exercise, named "dynamic impact 94," would involve naval and air operations throughout the region and land and amphibious exercises in Italy.

Forces involved will come from Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and the United States, a statement said.

**Policeman killed in IRA attack:** One police officer was killed and two others were seriously wounded late on Wednesday in a suspected IRA attack on a police patrol in northern Ireland, a police spokesman said. Reuter reports from Belfast.

"One male police officer was killed and two others are very seriously injured," said the spokesman for the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the police force in the British-ruled province.

The police spokesman said the explosion was being treated as an attack by the Irish Republican Army, which regularly targets security forces in its guerrilla battle to overturn British rule in northern Ireland.



The only known surviving solid lead toy figure made in the early part of the eighteenth century, to come on to the auction market, is seen on Wednesday at a unique sale of toys from around the world. The model based on the French tight-rope walker "Blondin" is expected to go under the hammer at Christie's for well over 5000 pounds. — AFP photo

## Rabin to dismantle Golan settlements for peace

JERUSALEM, Apr 21: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Thursday he would be willing to dismantle Jewish settlements in the Golan Heights for the sake of peace with Syria, reports AP.

Speaking before the leaders of Israel's collective farm movement, Rabin said that the value of peace outweighed the value of the Golan settlements.

His remarks come a week before a trip to the region by US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, expected to commute between Damascus and Jerusalem in hopes of finding a way to unlock talks deadlocked over the Golan issue.

"If we need to dismantle settlements for peace, I have supported it in the past, and I will continue to do so," Rabin said in his speech.

Rabin has previously said that peace with Syria would require painful sacrifices, including a withdrawal. Last year he mentioned dismantling some of the settlements, touching off a series of demonstrations by the settlement movement.

"For me peace is a more important value for the future of Israel's security than one group of settlements or another," the prime minister said.

Israeli experts on Syria said the speech was important because the prime minister seemed to be preparing the public for progress in the talks with Syria that would require giving up territory.

# Peres says PLO-Israel close to implement autonomy accord

BUCHAREST, Romania, Apr 21: Israel and the PLO were close to wrapping up six months of torturous talks on implementing their accord on Palestinian self-rule, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said after meeting with Yasser Arafat on Thursday, reports AP.

Their meeting follows an agreement reached Wednesday in Cairo on transferring power to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

"We are closer than ever before" to settling the thorny dispute, chief PLO negotiator Nabil Shaath said Thursday in Cairo. His counterpart, chief Israeli negotiator Maj Gen Amnon Shahak, called the latest round of talks "very fruitful."

"I do hope next week we will be able to sum it up and write it down," he said. "I cannot pinpoint a date for the agreement to be signed, but the day is not very far."

The agreement resolves many disputes over how Palestinians will run day-to-day affairs in Gaza and the West Bank, town once Israel's army withdraws. But other differences must be resolved before Israel begins pulling out, as called for by the September 13 Israeli-PLO accord.

The main goal is to arrange the final stage of the negotiations in terms of the order of events and the timetable.

Peres told reporters after meeting the PLO chief for two hours.

He said he felt "we have arrived at the finish" of the talks to implement the accord. Peres would not predict a date for final agreement, but said if the Bucharest contacts were fruitful he might join the permanent negotiating teams in Cairo next week.

Peres and Arafat were to meet again Thursday, he said. Both are attending an economic forum in the Romanian capital.

Peres said he stressed that Israel was not trying to stall the process. "I found him (Arafat) worried about very many things and had to explain

that his worries are unfounded," he said.

Arafat did not appear in public after the talks, which Israeli sources said were held after midnight at a lakefront villa in northern Bucharest once used by executed dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

Arafat said Wednesday he was hopeful agreement could be reached. "However long it takes and however many delays occur, the hour of peace will come," he said after meeting with President Ion Iliescu.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation leader was quoted Tuesday in the Tunisian newspaper Al-Rai Al-Amm as predicting an accord will be reached this week.

Israeli sources said Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Arafat would sign any final agreement in Cairo.

In Cairo, negotiators wrapped up an agreement on transferring civilian control to Palestinians. But no progress was reported on legal jurisdiction over lawbreakers and the PLO demand that thousands of Palestinian prisoners be freed.

Peres, in an interview with Israeli radio, said there were also disagreements over "air space, sea space" and registration of residents of Gaza and Jericho.

"There are difficulties. I believe it is possible to overcome them and that we must overcome them," he said.

The issues were to be discussed by Arafat and Peres at their meeting Thursday.

Negotiations have dragged on since October as the two sides tried to agree on the myriad details left vague in the accord signed in Washington.

Two deadline foreseen in the Israel-PLO accord have been missed — December 13 for the start of Israeli withdrawal and April 13 for its completion.



Berbers demonstrate on Wednesday in Algiers to commemorate the "Berber Spring", which called for the recognition Tamazight, their national language, in 1980. The rally also protested religious fundamentalist terror, and official corruption in Algeria. — AFP photo

## Benazir blames West for rise of fundamentalism

BONN, Apr 21: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto said on Wednesday the West's recent focus on developing an eastern Europe emerging from decades of communism had aided the rise of fundamentalism in the Islamic world, reports Reuter.

"It is no coincidence that with the shift in western help towards (eastern Europe) fundamentalism is flaring up again in the young democracies of the Islamic world," Bhutto told the German parliament's economics committee.

On behalf of own country, she asked Germany to direct more investment and aid towards it.

Meanwhile, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, who met Bhutto and Pakistani Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ahmed Ali on Wednesday, emphasised his country's interest in halting the spread of nuclear arms.

"In this connection, he

called anew on both Pakistan and India to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, a German Foreign Ministry statement said.

Bhutto, who has not commented on Pakistan's controversial nuclear capability during her visit to Germany, said on Saturday her government was seeking new tanks, submarines and jets and would never roll back that "nuclear capability".

Foreign countries, especially the United States, are concerned that an arms race on the subcontinent could lead to a fourth war between Pakistan and India since they split at independence from Britain in 1947.

Two of the three wars were over Kashmir, a mostly Muslim region ruled two-thirds by India and rest by Pakistan.

Bhutto spoke with Kinkel of the "urgency" of finding a solution to the "Kashmir conflict", and expressed Islamabad's in-

terest in contributing to a peaceful solution.

The third day of Bhutto's four-day visit focused on trying to drum up investment for Pakistan, whose security for foreign investors was undermined by a recent 1.3 billion financing package from the International Monetary Fund, she said.

Bhutto, who met Chancellor Helmut Kohl on Tuesday, told the German Federation of Chambers of Commerce (DIHT) that her country's privatisation and infrastructure programmes provided big opportunities for foreign investors.

"We have charted a highly ambitious energy sector development plan in which some 10 billion are likely to be invested over the next five years," she said. She said the privatisation drive aimed to pass on some of the most profitable public utilities such as gas, power generation and telephone companies to the private sector.

## Indonesia puts AIDS on national agenda

JAKARTA, Apr 21: Indonesia has taken steps to prevent the Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) by putting it on the national agenda through more intensive information campaign, reports Xinhua.

Upon a recent instruction from President Suharto that good inter-ministerial coordination could fight the spread of the disease, Coordinating Minister on Social Welfare Azwar Anas said Wednesday that the campaign will be implemented jointly by the ministers of health, social services, religious affairs and population.

## China considers land concession to India

CALCUTTA, Apr 21: China, seeking closer ties with India, is considering a major land concession to New Delhi as a key step to settle a border dispute between the Asian neighbours, China's ambassador in India said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Cheng Ruishe told a news conference at Calcutta that his country, claiming huge parts of several Indian border states, was prepared to concede the Himalayan Sikkim region to India.

"We are actively considering to recognise the annexation of Sikkim to India, though officially it has not been done yet," Cheng said.

# Off the Record

## Charles mopes for missing Pooch

LONDON: Prince Charles is appealing for help to find his dog, British newspapers reported on Thursday, says Reuter.



The controversial heir to the British throne lost his Jack Russell terrier on Sunday when walking in the royal family's Balmoral estate in Scotland.

Three days searching by estate workers failed to find the brown and white dog, named Pooch after a character in one of the prince's favourite childhood stories, so Charles placed an advert in the local newspaper.

A Buckingham palace spokesman said: "The Prince is very disappointed he has lost the dog. He is very attached to it."

## Hotline ends up at hottest line

RICHMOND: Claude Seymour wanted a hotline to lawmakers. Instead he got "the hottest line in America," reports AP.

The mix-up sent Seymour to a telephone sex line instead of a toll-free number set up by the Virginia General Assembly to log citizen comments.

"Hi sexy. You've just dialled the hottest phone line in America," the voice on the phone-sex line says.

"I thought it is somebody's idea of a joke," State officials had disconnected their number using an 800 area code after the Legislature's two-month session ended in March. Callers heard a recording referring them to an information number at the Capitol.

Instead of an 800 area code, the new Capitol line requires Richmond's 804 area code, said Aubrey Stewart, telecommunications coordinator for the house. The recording did not specify an area code.

Lawmakers reconvened Wednesday for a one-day veto session. Seymour said he called the old number to talk about his opposition to a bill requiring parental notification for minors' abortions.

"I got this recording that says call this other, seven-digit number," Seymour said.

Seymour added an 800 area code to that number and got the phone sex line.

As soon as Capitol officials heard about the mix-up they restored the old number to service, Stewart said.

## Abortion Russians' main birth control method

MOSCOW: There are twice as many abortions in Russia as there are babies born each year, with the total number of abortions reaching 3.5 million, a news agency reported Thursday, says AP.

Abortion remains the main birth control method for most Russians, and can still be obtained cheaply or free at state clinics. During Soviet times, condoms and other contraceptives were either of low-quality or difficult to find.

Despite the increasing availability of birth control, however, the ITAR-Tass news agency cited abortion figures in a new government report that it said "may shock medical professionals all over the world."

## Iran accuses CIA, Israel of drug trafficking

TEHRAN, Apr 21: Iran's official news agency IRNA reported today that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the United States and the Israeli government have been involved in drug trafficking through Iran and Turkey, reports Xinhua.

Chairman of Iran's security commission Gholam Hossein Bolandian offered some documents to the Iran-Turkey security commission here Tuesday night to show connection between international drug rings and the CIA for trafficking drugs through Iran and Turkey.

He said that the US and the Zionist regime support terrorist groups and international drug traffickers, but he did not provide any details.

The meeting of the Iran-Turkey security commission discussed security issues affecting the two countries, IRNA said. The Turkish side of the commission is headed by Gogistan Oughlu from the Turkish Interior Ministry.

## Hitler's birthday marked by anti racist march

BERLIN, Apr 21: Hundreds of German leftists clashed with police at the end of an anti-racist protest march through Berlin on Wednesday, the 105th anniversary of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler's birthday, reports Reuter.

Chanting slogans against Fascism and throwing bricks and bottles against police vehicles, the leftists battled with riot police for nearly an hour at a central shopping plaza in the west of the German capital.

About 10 demonstrators were detained and several were injured in at times violent, if brief, skirmishes with the police who occasionally charged the crowd in order to arrest stone-throwers.



Overall view of thousands of Zulus marching on Kwazulu, the capital of Ulundi on Wednesday after a protest march turned into an election rally following the Inkhata Freedom Party's decision to contest in the April 27 first multiracial elections after reaching an agreement with the ANC Tuesday. — AFP photo

# Pakistan fears India may unleash N-arms race in South Asia

ISLAMABAD, Apr 21: Pakistan said on Wednesday it feared its arch-foe India could unleash a nuclear arms race in South Asia, reports Reuter.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters major powers must follow "fair and even-handed policies" towards Pakistan and India to convince New Delhi to adopt "a more responsible position on non-proliferation and South Asian security." He said Pakistan was deeply concerned at an April 13 statement by Indian Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao to army commanders last week that India could not give up its nuclear option because of Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability.

"When viewed in conjunction with India's reported in-

tervention to deploy ballistic missiles, this statement arouses the legitimate fear that India is about to take steps which will unleash a nuclear arms race in South Asia," the spokesman said.

He said India could reassure itself about Pakistan's nuclear programme by accepting one of Islamabad's several proposals for reciprocal or regional non-proliferation.

India also had not that from China that had long offered it credible security assurances in the nuclear field, he said.

"It is, in fact, no secret that India wants to be recognised as a nuclear weapon state to realise its image of itself as a great power," the spokesman said.

## Perry says DPRK capable of making N-bombs

SEOUL, Apr 21: North Korea may be ready within weeks to remove enough plutonium from its nuclear reactor to build four or five nuclear bombs, but "there is no imminent danger" of war, Defence Secretary William Perry said Thursday, reports AP.

Perry emphasised that the United States and South Korea do not expect the nuclear dispute to escalate into a direct military confrontation, but he also told reporters the problem soon would reach a new and critical turning point.

Speaking at a news conference before flying to Tokyo for consultations with Japanese officials, Perry said "within weeks it will be necessary" for North Korean nuclear technicians to remove the fuel rods from a 25 megawatt reactor.

The fuel rods have been used so long they will need to be replaced with new ones, although it has never been clear exactly when the refueling could be done.

The spent fuel would contain enough plutonium to build four or five nuclear bombs, Perry said, while noting that North Korean leader Kim Il Sung recently denied he intended to build any nuclear weapons. The fuel rods would have to cool down for weeks or months before they could be processed to remove the plutonium.

Perry said that because a defueling of the reactor would give North Korea a new opportunity to expand its supply of plutonium, "it is critical" that North Korea permit the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor the defueling.

discriminatory restraints imposed against Pakistan and "the readiness of major powers to overlook the threat of Indian nuclear proliferation and to excuse India's massive repression and violations of Human Rights in the disputed region of Kashmir."

The United States cut off all military and new economic aid to Pakistan in 1990 on suspicion that it was building nuclear arms, a charge Islamabad has denied.

Pakistan says it has acquired a nuclear capability but a political decision has been taken to use it only for peaceful purposes.

India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 but says it is not making the bomb.