

# BRIEFLY



Two children from African National Congress officials wait for the slow count of elections results at an awaited victory party at a large hotel in Johannesburg May 1. The ANC is widely expected to gain a landslide victory in the first all-race elections in the country.

**Benazir to visit Nepal this month:** Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is to visit Nepal late this month, official said yesterday. AFP reports from Islamabad.

The exact dates for the visit during the last week of May were being finalised, they said.

A four-member Nepalese delegation headed by Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Maheshwar Prasad Singh arrived here Sunday for a four-day goodwill tour.

The two countries are members of the seven-nation South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) which also includes India, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

**Arafat in Stuttgart:** PLO leader Yasser Arafat arrived Monday for a day-long visit to Daimler-Benz, Germany's largest conglomerate, which says it is exploring ways to make an economic contribution to peace, in the Middle East, AP reports from Stuttgart.

Arafat's trip came two days before he is due to sign a Palestinian self-rule accord in Cairo with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

In Stuttgart, Arafat was to hold meetings with Daimler Chairman Edzard Reuter and see Daimler products from Mercedes-Benz vehicles to helicopters and rail equipment.

**UK plans to buy US missiles:** Britain plans to buy some 50 US Tomahawk cruise missiles for its submarines to boost its strategic role outside Europe, The Sunday Times newspaper said, Reuter reports from London.

It said the low-flying missiles, which would carry conventional high-explosive warheads, would be placed on Britain's 12 Trafalgar class nuclear attack submarines.

Although US President Clinton is opposed to any proliferation of weapons such as Cruise, unofficial soundings suggest the deal may get American approval, the paper said.

**7 militants shot dead in Egypt:** Police shot dead seven Islamic militants in a sweeping dawn raid on fundamentalist hideouts in Sohaq province in southern Egypt Saturday, AFP reports from Cairo.

Sources close to the security forces said the seven militants died in a gunbattle when police raided an apartment they were using as a refuge in Tahta.

All seven had fled from Asyut province further north, the main stronghold of outlawed Jamaa Islamiyya (Islamic group), which has been waging a two-year violent campaign to overthrow the secular government of President Hosni Mubarak.

**2 journalists killed in Bosnia:** Two American journalists were killed and a third was slightly injured on Sunday when their car ran over mine near Mostar, in southern Bosnia Herzegovina, a UN protection force spokesman said, AFP reports from Sarajevo.

The injured man was evacuated to the medical facility at the nearby Spanish UN battalion base, spokesman Dacre Holloway said.

The names would not be made immediately available, he said.

## Christopher brings new proposals to Tel-Aviv Syria rejects phased Israeli withdrawal from Golan

DAMASCUS, May 2: Syria late Sunday rejected a proposal for a phased Israeli withdrawal from the disputed Golan Heights, reports AFP.

"Syria does not accept a peace in stages with Israel and is committed to a total withdrawal from Arab occupied land, which is a condition for peace in the region," Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara told the state-run SANA news agency.

Reuter from Jerusalem adds: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, playing the mediator, brings new Syrian proposals to Israel today as peace diplomacy between the two enemies enters what the United States calls a substantive new phase.

"I think from my standpoint we have entered a new, more substantive phase in the negotiations," he told re-

porters, before leaving Damascus for Jerusalem.

"But it is clear that there is a good deal of work to be done," Christopher added.

Christopher meets Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin today to unveil the new ideas and proposals that Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad presented to the Americans during talks in Damascus at the weekend.

Christopher began his diplomatic shuttle after he received Israel's new proposals last Friday and carried them to Syria, aiming to break the Israeli-Syrian impasse over the Golan Heights and future ties that has stymied bilateral peace talks.

He said the Assad meetings had not produced a date certain for resuming direct Syria-Israel negotiations between the two adversaries that had

been taking place in Washington. But US officials did not seem overly concerned about that, especially since they viewed Christopher's shuttle diplomacy as engaging the parties in serious debate.

"I think it is fair to say that you have negotiations going on," one senior official told reporters.

An Israeli-Syrian agreement is widely seen as key to a comprehensive Middle East peace settlement.

Christopher refused to provide any details on the Syrian proposals, saying to do so would "reduce my value as a negotiator or intermediary" between Israel and Syria.

He referred to "this sensitive state" in the discussions. But he promised the United States "is going to play the most effective and determined

role we can to aid the parties", build on the momentum of the Israeli-PLO accord that is to be signed on Wednesday in Cairo and reach a peace agreement.

No details of the Israeli proposal have been officially disclosed but Israeli media said the package included a three-stage withdrawal over eight year from the Golan.

Syria, meanwhile, renewed its insistence that Israeli withdrawal fully from the Golan Heights — seized in the 1967 Arab-Israel war and centre piece of Christopher's diplomatic shuttle between Jerusalem and Damascus — in return for peace.

Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara told Reuters Syria would accept only a full withdrawal — not staged withdrawal — from the Golan as a condition for peace.

## Off the Record

### Arafat is still a bachelor: Suha

CAIRO: Yasser Arafat's wife Suha admitted in an interview published on Sunday that they had brief quarrels and separate rooms, reports Reuter.

"He's still a bachelor," Suha said of the Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman who she married in secret about two years ago.

Asked what she meant by this, she said: "Arafat knows I can't change his way of life. He has lots of things to do because of his responsibilities and he has his own room and I have my own room too."

She added in the interview with the Egyptian government newspaper Al-Akhbar: Of course we quarrel, then we make it up straight away.

Suha said reports that she was pregnant were a malicious rumour. "Since I became well known, there have been many untrue stories about me in the newspapers. It's part of the game but it's embarrassing," she said.

She said Arafat never volunteered presents, even on her birthday or other occasions. But when she complained of this, he would give her "symbolic presents representing the Palestinian revolution."

She described her husband as gentle with women. "When I'm sad or tense, he asks me the reason and shares my troubles," she added.

Asked whom she thought was the model first lady, she replied, "Hillary Clinton."



### Father beheads daughter to appease goddess

RAJKOT, India: A middle-aged Indian beheaded his young daughter last week to appease a Hindu deity in the western Indian state of Gujarat, United News of India (UNI) said Monday quoting police officials, reports Reuter.

UNI said Hemu Vasrambhai confessed to the killing of his teenage daughter last Wednesday after he had a dream in which a goddess asked him to make a human sacrifice.

He said he took his daughter Ranjan to the local temple on the outskirts of Sapakada village in Surendranaga district and beheaded her with a chopper.

He was arrested on murder charges after the victim's uncle reported the matter to the police who recovered the chopper and blood-stained clothes of Vasrambhai.

### Mysterious fire

KATHMANDU: Mysterious fires have played havoc in southeastern villages of Nepal, terrifying residents and forcing them to leave their homes, national news agency RSS said Sunday, reports AFP.

"Nobody knows who or what causes them, but the fires continue to erupt on house-tops at Manaparliour in Bardiya district these days," RSS said.

Bardiya district lies 475 kilometres (296 miles) from Kathmandu.

Some villagers believe that a goblin is at work, setting their house-tops on fire, it said.

"They see columns of fire raging towards the sky from their rooftops... and are afraid to stay indoors, it said.

Sacrificial goats were offered to appease the devil as advised by the Jhakris (witch doctors), but the fires continue.

Ten houses have been reduced to ashes by the Mysterious fires so far, it said.

### 'Divorce isn't a bad thing'

PARIS: Starry-eyed honeymooners from around the world may flock here for romance, but France is losing its own taste for marriage. Now unhappy spouses have a new magazine to show them how to untie the knot with sang-froid, reports AP.

"Sexuality: Are You Ready For Adventure?", "Alimony: Act Against Deadbeats," and "A Free Partnership — Marriage or Not" are some of the articles inside the slick covers of divorce, along with pictures of attractive models.

"Divorce isn't a bad thing," said the magazine's director, Jean-Michel Pascal. "It's the failure of love translated into a solution."

New statistics show one in three married couples in France is opting for divorce, up from one in 10 in the 1980s. The new rate matches US figures, which are among the world's highest.

### Rwandan forces accused of killing 300 men

NAIROBI, May 2: Rwandan rebels accused government security forces of slaughtering about 300 people in a stadium in the southern town of Cyangugu, near the Zairean border, rebel radio said on Sunday, reports AFP.

"The latest horrifying incident took place in Cyangugu where about 300 people were killed," the radio of the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front said Saturday in a broadcast monitored by the BBC.

"These were among the 5,000 people who had taken refuge in the stadium," radio Muhabura said.

"The murderer's threw several hand grenades at the refugees and used machine-guns...to kill the innocent people," it said.

The radio said the Red Cross was trying to help the survivors to escape to Bukavu, about 10 kilometres (six miles) to the west in Zaire.

### Hata leaves for Europe on first trip as PM

TOKYO, May 2: Japanese Prime Minister Tsutomu Hata left for Europe Monday on his first trip abroad as head of Japan's new minority government, reports AP.

Hata, who became prime minister a week ago, is to visit Italy, France, Germany and Belgium on the May 2-7 trip. Foreign Ministry officials said.

They said the trip is intended to increase political dialogue with Europe, since Japan traditionally has put greater emphasis on relations with the United States.

### Rafsanjani calls for cooperation among Balkans

TEHRAN, May 2: Iranian President Hashemi Rafsanjani here today called for further solidarity and cooperation among Balkan states to counter aggressors and maintain peace and stability in the region, reports Xinhua.

peace and friendship in the Balkan region would be to the benefit of all regional countries, Rafsanjani said in a meeting with visiting Croatian Prime Minister Nikica Valentic.

Termining as "Positive" areas of cooperation between Iran and Croatia, Rafsanjani expressed hope that talks between Iranian and Croatian officials would pave the way for further promotion of bilateral political, economic and trade relations.



An elderly man (R) shouts anti-Serb slogans during a May Day demonstration in Sarajevo May 2. Less than a 1,000 people attended the rally. — AFP photo

### US denies direct involvement in Rwanda's civil war

WASHINGTON, May 2: Rejecting direct US involvement in Rwanda's civil war, the Clinton administration is reviewing a range of options to help ease the bloodletting, reports AP.

One idea under consideration is to organise and help pay for African nations to send peacekeeping forces to Rwanda to restore law and order, officials said Sunday.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, stressed that the administration's

thinking is in its earliest stages and that no final decisions have been made.

Western officials have not even ascertained whether the African nations would be willing to do so, how much the mission would cost and whether it would work.

One thing was clear: The US was not actively considering direct American action to stop the civil war, one of the officials said.

A camp in Tanzania bulged Sunday with 2,50,000 refugees

seeking sanctuary from the weeks of bloodshed.

United Nations officials were stunned by the number of people who left Rwanda, Tanzania's northwestern neighbour, in just 24 hours Thursday and Friday to flee the ethnic slaughter. Thousands of refugees were still trudging in the rain Sunday, walking the 10 miles (16 kms) from the frontier to the camp.

South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu called on the United Nations on Sunday to send more peacekeeping troops to Rwanda.

The United Nations should have increased its forces in the central African nation instead of deciding to withdraw its 1,700 troops when the recent chaos began, the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize winner said on US television.

"I would want to call on the United Nations to try to be as firm in its actions in Rwanda as it is trying to be in Bosnia," Tutu said. "We ought actually to go in there and not just stand on the sidelines allowing this incredible carnage to be taking place in a beautiful country."

In a letter to Clinton on Sunday, Rwanda's exiled King Kigeli volunteered to help by serving the United Nations as an "elder" for refugees.

"I believe that with my leadership, I will enable a peace process to proceed at a faster pace," he said. Kigeli, was deposed in 1960 and now lives in the Maryland suburbs outside Washington, also asked for a brief meeting with the president.

### Albright criticises UN officials' role in Bosnia

NEW YORK, May 2: The US ambassador to the United Nations has criticised top UN officials in Bosnia for failing to support a more aggressive policy toward the Bosnian Serbs that the Security Council has approved. The New York Times reported, says AP.

In a letter to UN chief Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the US envoy, Madeline K Albright, noted military air strikes against the Serbs besieging the Muslim enclave of Gorazde had been authorised by the Security Council.

But she said the strikes did not have the support of some top UN officials in Bosnia, the Times reported in its Monday edition.

Lt Gen Sir Michael Rose, the UN commander in Bosnia, has said Muslims in Gorazde

inflated casualty figures in last month's three-week Serb assault in a bid to prompt NATO air strikes.

Rose and other UN officials have indicated opposition to air strikes. Rose has said he has neither the troops nor the mandate to fight a war in Bosnia, even if air strikes are carried out.

Albright said she protested "in the strongest possible terms, the comments of United Nations officials who report, through Special Representative Yasushi Akashi, directly to you. It is not unreasonable for the United States to expect United Nations officials operating under your authority to support publicly and implement as best they can the mandates of the Security Council."

### S Korea accuses North of armistice violations

SEOUL, May 2: South Korea said Monday that North Korea has withdrawn a top military armistice official and temporarily provided its guards at a neutral border village with illegal arms, reports AP.

President Kim Young-sam called the North Korean moves a violation of the two sides' armistice agreement, and said South Korea was responding with a watertight vigil.

Tensions along the 248-kilometre (155-mile) Korean border are already high because of the long-running dispute over the Communist North's suspected nuclear weapons programme.

South Korean officials said the North's actions were apparently meant to underscore its calls to face the armistice, in place since the 1950-53

Korean War, with a peace treaty.

Kim told Cabinet officials with security-related posts that North Korea has recently withdrawn its senior colonel-grade secretary to the Korean Military Armistice Commission (MAC), Kim Ryon Gi. The commission oversees the 1953 cease fire.

The president also said the North had sent specially armed guards to the truce village of Panmunjom. Kim did not elaborate, but South Korean military officials said the North Korean guards at the neutral village were briefly armed with rifles on April 29.

Panmunjom is a jointly controlled neutral area where security guards of both sides are to be armed only with small arms such as pistols.

### Libyan pilgrims start for Mecca on camel

CAIRO, May 2: A camel caravan of Libyan pilgrims, protesting at a UN ban on flights to and from their country, has started a long journey to Mecca, reports Reuter.

The Libyan relations bureau (embassy) in Cairo said the pilgrims, about 110 people taking turns to ride about 60 camels, would cross the border with Egypt within the next few days.

The pilgrims will take ship in Suez and sail to Jeddah, the port for the holy Muslim city of Mecca, Libyan sources added.

But it was not clear whether they would reach Mecca in time for the pilgrimage, which starts on May 20. It is more than 750 km (460 miles) from the Libyan border to Suez and a two-day journey by ship from Suez to Jeddah.

### Fighting continues in Karachi

KARACHI, May 2: Tension remained high in this southern Pakistani port city today as fighting continued between the police and supporters of the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) and the death toll rose to 13, reports AFP.

Six more people were rushed to hospital with gunshot wounds, bringing the number of injured to more than 60, in four days since police opened fire Friday on a MQM gathering, killing two supporters.

One woman was shot dead overnight Sunday amid continuing violence in the central and eastern parts of the city.

Three vehicles, including two ambulances, were set ablaze, fire brigade sources said. At least 38 vehicles, including two public transport buses, have been burned so far. Masked gunmen have also been roaming the streets firing in the air and creating panic.

residents in the troubled areas said.

The MQM represents Urdu-speaking migrants who left India after the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. The party has charged that the government was victimising its supporters.

Streets in the disturbed localities remained deserted, but some business activity was witnessed in the commercial southern section of the city, which houses multinational companies, international banks and the stock exchange.

However, schools remained closed and there was reduced attendance at offices, although a curfew had not yet been imposed in any part of the city.

The army has still not been called on to deploy in the city, despite its general presence in the southern province of Sindh, of which Karachi is capital, since June 1992. Its mission has been to contain ethnic

violence and reduce the crime rate.

A high-ranking administration official told AFP it appeared that the miscreants are out of control of the MQM leadership.

The official, who did not want to be named, said he had been in touch with the MQM leadership and asked them to end the violence, and negotiate peacefully with the government.

The official said the police had not used excessive force in trying to quell the violence, despite MQM claims that police were firing at anything that moved.

The government is willing to discuss the problems, the official said.

Sporadic outbreaks of violence have also hit Hyderabad, another MQM stronghold in Sindh, with about a dozen people injured.



Britain's Princess Diana relaxes in the sun on the beach of Marbella, in southern Spain, on Sunday, where she is currently on holiday. — AFP photo

### Iran to repatriate 3 lakh Afghan refugees

TEHRAN, May 2: Some 300,000 Afghan refugees in Iran will be repatriated this year under a programme worked out by a commission consisting of representatives of Iran, Afghanistan and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), reports Xinhua.

According to Iran's official news agency IRNA yesterday director general in charge of foreign nationals and immigration affairs at the interior Ministry Ahmad Hussein announced the decision here Saturday.

He said that the repatriation of Afghan refugees will start on June 22, adding that the outcome of a plan concerning the repatriation of 8,50,000 Afghan refugees last year and their integration into Afghan society was satisfactory.