

Palestinian policemen leave Egypt for Gaza

CAIRO, May 7: Hundreds of Palestinian police left a Egyptian camp for duty in Gaza Saturday, leading a wave of Arabs that will replace Israelis as law enforcers in the newly declared autonomous zone, reports AP.

Many of the 330 men in the convoy waved Palestinian flags and pictures of PLO chief Yasser Arafat.

About 7,000 Palestinian police are expected to enter the Gaza Strip in the next two weeks, fulfilling a peace accord signed Wednesday by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

The pact grants Palestinians limited self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

"I will kiss my land as soon as I reach there," Col Mohammed Selim Abdel-Aziz said. "I never believed we could enter Palestine except on tanks."

Maj Gen Nasser Youssef, commander of Palestinian security forces in Gaza, said the PLO plans to disarm Gazans, but declined to elaborate.

As the convoy moved out, commanders quieted some who began shouting anti-Israeli slogans. The agreement calls on Palestinians to act as police and not as liberating troops.

The group was a mixture of inactive officers and young men who had trained since a preliminary peace agreement was signed in September.

The force will be lightly armed, with only 120 machine guns and 45 armoured cars. The 7,000 will come from outside the West Bank and Gaza.



A Bosnian Muslim combatant, his AK-47 Kalachnikov assault weapon fitted to fire rifle grenades, watches the Serb line 150 meters away near Brka, north of Tuzla, in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina on Friday. —AFP photo

2 top Kashmiri leaders re-arrested

JAMMU, India, May 7: Two Kashmiri leaders prominent in the battle against Indian rule of the Himalayan region were re-arrested, shortly after the Supreme Court ordered their release, officials said, reports Reuter.

Sayed Ali Shah Geelani and Abdul Gani Lone were originally arrested last November under laws allowing detention without trials, for leading demonstrations against an army siege of Kashmir's holiest Muslim shrine.

Geelani and Lone challenged their detention and on Friday the Supreme Court ordered them freed. The Indian government, clearly expecting the decision, promptly served fresh detention orders on the two leaders in Jammu jail, the officials said.

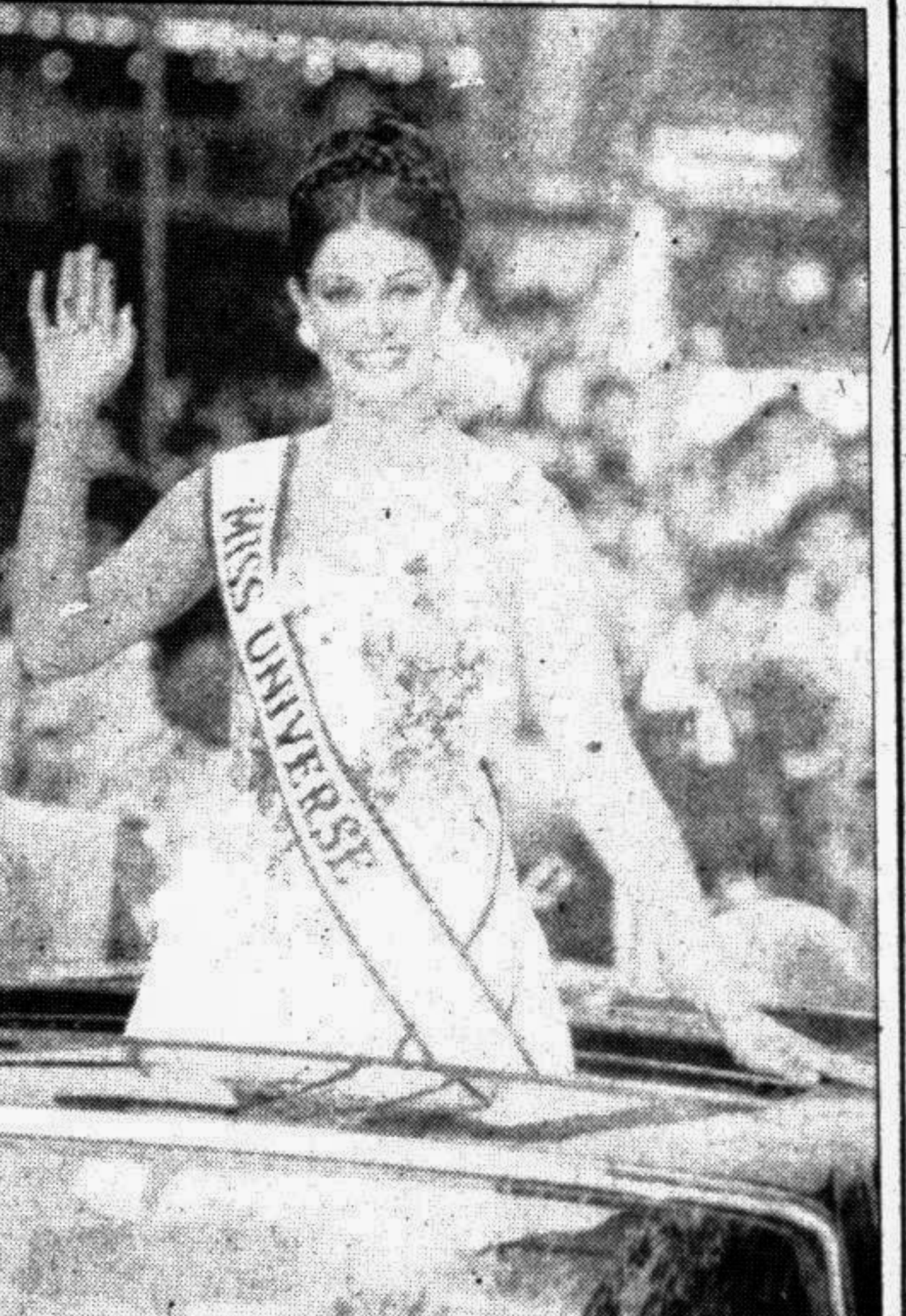
Off the Record

'Black hair is beautiful'

BEIJING: China, challenging European standards of blonde beauty, said yesterday it would host a pan-Asian hairdressing contest with the theme of "black hair is beautiful", reports Reuter.

Event chairman Zhao Zenguo said more than 200 stylists from 14 Asian countries would curl, tease and moussé their way toward glory in the 18th Asian hairdressing and makeup contest in Beijing next month.

"The theme of the contest is 'black hair is beautiful'," Zhao told Xinhua news agency, adding that it aims to "enhance the skills of hairdressing and use of cosmetics across Asia."



1993 Miss Universe Dayanara Torres waves from a limousine as she leads the street parade of 77 pageant contestants in Manila on Friday. The 18-year old Puerto Rican will crown the new Miss Universe on May 21. — AFP photo

BRIEFLY

Ban on rally in Belfast: Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wings, is threatening to mount a legal challenge to a police ban on a Republican rally in the centre of Belfast on Sunday. Reuter reports from Belfast.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary, who police the British-ruled province, announced on Friday that no demonstration would be permitted outside Belfast's City Hall.

"This decision has been taken in the belief that serious public disorder would otherwise ensue," the RUC said.

Carter in Panama: Former US President Jimmy Carter arrived as an international observer for Sunday's presidential elections, five years after he denounced a 1989 vote as a fraud. AP reports from Panama City.

"Five years ago, we left Panama distressed that an opportunity for peaceful, democratic change was aborted," Carter told reporters after he arrived Friday.

Carter is among 30 representatives of the Council of Freely-Elected Head Governments. They will be among 1,200 international and national observers overseeing the balloting.

Clinton meets Mahathir: President Clinton met Friday with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad for what the White House described as "cordial, wide-ranging" talks. Reuter reports from Washington.

The Malaysian leader had refused to participate last year in a US sponsored conference of Pacific rim nations in Seattle aimed at discussing trade.

The President and the Prime Minister discussed the state of US relations with Asia and the future development of Asia. White House Press Secretary Dee Myers said in statement. "The two leaders had a very cordial, wide-ranging discussion concerning bilateral and regional issues," she said.

3 more N Koreans defect to South

SEOUL, May 7: Three North Koreans, including one who worked at a uranium refining plant, have defected to rival South Korea, the Agency for National Security Planning said Saturday, reports AP.

The main government spy agency said one, identified as Kim Dae-ho, 35, worked as head of a waste-water disposal team at a North Korean uranium refinery.

Kim was the first North Korean defector to South Korea from the communist state's nuclear facilities.

Kim, along with the two other defectors, will hold a news conference on Monday

Serb tanks violate protection zone

SARAJEVO, May 7: A UN credibility crisis deepened Saturday as peacekeepers scrambled to find Bosnian Serb tanks violating a protection zone around Sarajevo, including one that disappeared despite a UN escort, reports AP.

UN officials conceded that there may be four tanks wandering about around Sarajevo in direct violation of a NATO ultimatum last February banning heavy weapons from within 20 kilometer (12.4 miles) of the city.

The confusion followed an agreement earlier in the week by the top UN official in Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, to allow Bosnian Serbs to transport up to seven tanks across the Sarajevo exclusion zone under UN escort.

That drew the wrath of the Muslim-led Bosnian government, which demanded his resignation. In Washington,

White House and State Department officials said they wanted Akashi to "do a better job."

It is unclear why the Serbs wanted to move the tanks, but the government fears they will be used for attacks on another front.

Akashi cancelled the deal Friday after four or five tanks were allowed through the one. Most apparently were moved from Serb headquarters at Pale, east of Sarajevo, to Serb-held Tranovo south of the exclusion zone.

Despite his order, UN officials reported two more tanks on transporters were moving through the zone late Friday.

One was tracked by UN military observers, but Chaperon said a Bosnian Serb vehicle between them and the tank carrier kept slowing until they "lost the contact" with the tank.

"That tank can be a threat of course," Chaperon said.

Akashi defended the accord, saying it helped with Serb agreement to let more peacekeepers into the Gorazde 'safe area' southeast of Sarajevo and to allow more UN observers at potential flashpoints elsewhere.

But it upset western officials, especially NATO members who fear that the alliance's credibility is at stake. UN officials must approve any strikes, and Akashi has resisted pressure to call them for fear of escalating fighting and recking negotiations.

NATO's threat to bomb any heavy weapons not pulled back from Sarajevo is largely responsible for a local cease-fire that has mostly held since mid-February.

As UN credibility has waned among both Serbs and Muslims, however, ceasefire violations have increased. Earlier in the week, the UN aid airlift to Sarajevo was suspended after two planes were hit by gunfire while approaching the airport. Flights resumed Friday.

In a separate development, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati was due in Sarajevo on Saturday to meet with President Alija Izetbegovic and open an Iranian Embassy.

And in Vienna, Austria, Bosnian Croat and Muslim-led government leaders were due to confer on details of a US brokered federation accord that ended their hostilities in March.

The two sides reportedly planned to discuss boundaries of cantons that will make up the federation in central and southwestern Bosnian-Herzegovina.

120 foreigners urge India to expedite their trials

NEW DELHI, May 7: A group of 120 foreigners awaiting trial for years on charges of buying and selling drugs have petitioned the government to expedite their trial or send them home, their lawyer said Saturday, reports AP.

The undertrials in New Delhi's Tihar jail — India's maximum security prison — cannot be let out on bond and can be tried only by special courts, which are inadequate, said lawyer Nitya Ramakrishnan.

If convicted, the foreigners face a minimum jail term of 10 years and a maximum prison term of 20 years.

The petition to the president, ambassadors of 30 countries and the newly formed human rights commission raises new questions about an individual's rights. Ms Ramakrishnan said.

The plant, located only 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of this British colony, is a joint venture between China's Guangdong provincial government and the Hong Kong Nuclear Investment Co, a subsidiary of Hong Kong's China Light and Power Co.

Electricite de France designed the Daya Bay plant and Framatome, another French company, supplied its two reactors.

The plant will generate 1,800 megawatts of electricity, with about 70 per cent going to Hong Kong.

China's largest N-plant fully operational

HONG KONG, May 7: China's largest nuclear power plant has become fully operational, the Hong Kong partner in the 4 billion US dollars project reported Saturday, says AP.

The Hong Kong Nuclear Investment Co said the second of the Daya Bay plant's 900 megawatt reactor came on line on Friday, marking the completion of the seven-year project.

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Bobbitt held for battering fiancée

LAS VEGAS: John Bobbitt, whose penis was severed by his estranged wife, spent 13 hours in jail after being charged with battering his fiancée, then apologised and called their argument "a huge misunderstanding," reports AP.

Bobbitt pleaded innocent Friday to a misdemeanor charge of domestic battery. He was released on 7,100 dollar bail pending a June 3 hearing.

He ignored reporters' questions as he left the downtown jail along with his bail bondsman and an unidentified man.

According to a police report, Bobbitt, 26, and Kristina Elliott had an argument, then Bobbitt 'grabbed her right forearm, causing a bruise then shoved her into a wall, causing a bruise.'

He appeared to be under the influence of alcohol or another substance when he was arrested around 3 am, the report said.

"I believe this is just a huge misunderstanding," he said in a statement released by Aaron Gordon, a spokesman for Bobbitt and his 21-year-old fiancée.

Elliott didn't require medical treatment, Gordon said. He released separate statements from Bobbitt and Elliott in which they reaffirmed their love for each other.

Girl lost in woods for 2 days

NEW YORK: A 14-year-old girl survived two days and nights lost in the woods by rationing her field trip lunch, and tried to attract rescuers by using her camera flash, authorities said, reports AP.

Suri Feldman was spotted Friday morning in the woods about three miles (5 kms) from where she had wandered away from her schoolmates. She disappeared Wednesday during a school picnic.

"She didn't answer us when we called to her. When I asked her why, she said it was because she was praying," said Southbridge police Sgt. Norman Brodeur.

Authorities said Suri probably wandered about 15 miles (25 kms) during the two days. On Thursday night, she used flashbulbs from her camera to try to attract a search helicopter.

Because the singer had an extra-marital affair...

NASHVILLE, Tenn: Michael English returned four gospel music awards, including the industry's highest honour, as a top gospel official confirmed the singer had an extra-marital affair, reports AP.

Gospel Music Association President Bruce Koblish said Friday that English told him he was involved with another gospel singer, MaryBeth Jordan. Both English and Jordan are married.

"The truth is not something we're happy about," Koblish said. "Still, it's important to confirm what's out there... to get the parties along with healing their lives."

English gave back four Dove Awards that he won last week — including one for artist of the year — to the Gospel Music Association.

Koblish said GMA would consider returning the awards to English next week since the Dove Awards have no morals or character clause.

English and Jordan had been touring together on the Mercy Tour to raise money to build a home for unwed mothers. Jordan's band, First Call, has replaced her, but hasn't said why.



President Bill Clinton (R) meets with Malaysian Premier Mahathir Mohamad (L) in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington on Friday. — AFP photo

Iran-SA diplomatic ties soon

Iran and South Africa have decided, to restore diplomatic relations, following a 15-year break, the Foreign Ministry said on Friday, reports AP.

The ministry, quoted by the official news agency Irna said ties would be reestablished on Tuesday, following the triumph of the African National Congress in South Africa's first all-race elections.

Tehran broke off relations with Pretoria after 1979 Islamic revolution which toppled the Shah.

US urges Greece to end disputes

President Clinton on Friday renewed his call for quick settlement of Greece's disputes with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and with Turkey over Cyprus, reports AP from Washington.

Clinton raised the two issues in a telephone call to Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu, renewing conversations begun during their April 22 talks in Washington.

The White House said that in a continuation of the discussion on Macedonia, Clinton "underscored the importance of the United Nations negotiating process led by (former US Secretary of State) Cyrus Vance and supported by US Special Envoy Matthew Nimetz."

The president and prime minister agreed that the issue ought to be resolved promptly," said White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers. She offered no further details.

31 Kurds killed in fighting

Security forces have killed 31 separatist Kurdish guerrillas in recent fighting in southeastern Turkey, authorities said Saturday, AP reports from Diyarbakir.

The regional governor's office said the clashes took place recently in Bingol, Hakkari, Siirt, Tunceli, Diyarbakir and Adiyaman. One Turkish soldier died in the fighting.

The guerrillas belong to the Kurdistan Workers Party, which has been waging a violent campaign for autonomy in the southeastern provinces since 1984. More than 12,000 people have died so far.

Fresh fighting erupts in Kigali

KABUYE, Rwanda, May 7: After a relatively quiet night, heavy mortar and small-arms fire erupted again Saturday morning in the capital of Kigali, a UN spokesman said, reports AP.

A second UN source in Kigali, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Tutsi rebels fighting the Hutu-dominated government had made substantial gains during the past four days of intense fighting.

On Friday, a rebel leader dismissed international efforts to stop the fighting in Rwanda, saying his forces would continue to press their attack until they controlled the capital and other government-held areas.

"What should we do, sit down with the very people, the criminals, who have been doing all of the killing?" said Maj Gen Paul Kagame, chairman of the rebel high command.

In an interview at rebel headquarters in Kabuye, five miles (8 kms) north of Kigali, Kagame said his forces had captured half of the central African country. He said they would ignore calls for an international peacekeeping force until rebels controlled Kigali and other government-held areas.

"So many people have been killed that bringing a force (of intervention) saves few people now," he said.



Rwandan refugees, most of them Hutus, carry empty buckets on their way to get water in a polluted lake near the Benako refugee camp in Tanzania on May 6. — AFP photo

Kennedy's son seeks nomination for Congress

PROVIDENCE, R.I., May 7: State Rep. Patrick Kennedy kicked off his bid Friday to join his father and cousin in Congress, reports AP.

The son of Sen. Edward Kennedy, a Democrat from Massachusetts, is seeking the Democratic nomination for the first District, a largely urban area in the eastern part of the state. He is unopposed.

Kennedy, 26, moved to Rhode Island in 1987 to attend Providence College. As a 21-year-old student, he ousted an incumbent in the state's most expensive legislative primary ever. He sailed to reelection in 1990 and 1992.

'Cruise missiles to be serious proliferation issue in 10 yrs'

LONDON, May 7: Nine nations have cruise missiles, four others are developing them, and 11 countries including North Korea have programmes that could lead to cruise missile production, Jane's Defence Weekly reported Thursday, says AP.

The cruise missile will become a serious proliferation issue over the next 10 years," said author Duncan Annox, editor of Jane's Strategic Weapon Systems.

The first cruise missile appeared in World War II — Germany's V-1 'buzz bombs' that rained down on southeast England almost 50 years ago. In the Gulf War, Tomahawk cruise missiles — launched from US ships and flying below radar range at about 550 mph (880 kph) — were seen turning corners to reach targets in Baghdad.

Cruise missiles are 10 times more accurate than longer-range ballistic missiles because they are guided right to their targets. A ballistic missile spends the last quarter of its flight in free-fall, guided only by gravity.

Cruise missiles are also much smaller and more versatile than ballistic missiles. They can be launched from vehicles, silos, small ships, submarines and aircraft. And they are much cheaper. Lennox said.

"At the moment, ballistic missiles remain the primary threat... because they are widespread, and you need them to launch chemical and nuclear weapons."

Unlike nuclear weapons, "cruise missiles require few, if any, strategic materials," Beaver said. This makes it hard for world bodies like the United Nations to monitor international traffic and possible missile production.

Lennox said these nine nations have cruise missiles in service: the United States, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Angola, Bulgaria, Serbia and Syria.

Iran, Iraq, China and India have well-advanced programmes to develop cruise missiles, and Argentina, Brazil, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, North Korea, Sweden, Taiwan and Britain could develop cruise missiles from existing military programmes, he said.

The United States and Russia are also working on new cruise missile projects.

"A few countries have the technology to build them but almost every country has the funds to acquire them," Beaver said.

"You can buy a Chinese Silkorm missile pre-packed in a ready-to-use container, and all you need is another container with the launch equipment and two experts, and you can attack any target within 200 miles (320 kilometers)," he said.

Lennox said any cruise missile maker that wants to improve a system's accuracy to less than 100 meters (yards) needs only to visit an electronics superstore in Japan, where a satellite navigation receiver costs about 5,000 dollars. There is no restriction on the sale of these systems in the West.

Small turbojet engines, which could power a cruise missile, are widely available, he said.

"The net result is that in the late 1990s the cruise missile will have a similar warhead size, delivered over a similar range more accurately, and at about 10 per cent to 25 per cent of the total cost of an equivalent ballistic missile," Lennox said.

500 died in White House storming, claims Rutskoi

MOSCOW, May 7: President Boris Yeltsin's arch rival, Alexander Rutskoi, said Friday that about 500 people died and not 149 as government officials claim in the storming of the Russian White House last October, reports AP.

Rutskoi also confirmed in an interview to the Itar-Tass news agency that he plans to run in the next presidential elections scheduled to be held in 1996.

The former vice-president, who spent 13 days barricaded inside the White House after Yeltsin dissolved the former Soviet-era parliament, defended his role in the failed coup.