

Mandela to step down after two years?

LONDON, May 15: Nelson Mandela, South Africa's newly-installed president, plans to step down after just two years in office after overseeing the introduction of a new constitution, the Sunday Times newspaper said here, reports AFP.

Mandela has "privately hinted he will step down once a final constitution has been written and he has overseen the country's first steps towards reconciliation," the paper said, citing ANC insiders.

According to the paper "his determination to give up power well ahead of the next general election has sparked a power struggle within the African National Congress," which won a landslide victory in last month's historic all-race poll.

Mandela, 75, was sworn in as president last Tuesday before an array of world leaders, the pinnacle of a political career which saw move from rural poverty to lawyer activist, guerrilla commander and languished for 27 years in jail.

## S Arabia deploys riot police around Iranian Hajj camp

TEHRAN, May 15: Saudi riot police took up positions around the Iranian pilgrims camp at Makkah Saturday where a political rally is due to be held despite a Saudi ban, the official agency Isna said, reports AFP.

Three days ahead of Tuesday's planned anti-US and anti-Israeli demonstrations, police were deployed on both sides of the entrance to the camp, while about 10 police cars and armoured vehicles were stationed in the streets opposite, the agency said.

Teheran and Riyadh are also in dispute over the numbers of Iranian pilgrims allowed in Makkah this year. Iran says Saudi Arabia has halved its quota of pilgrims to 60,000.

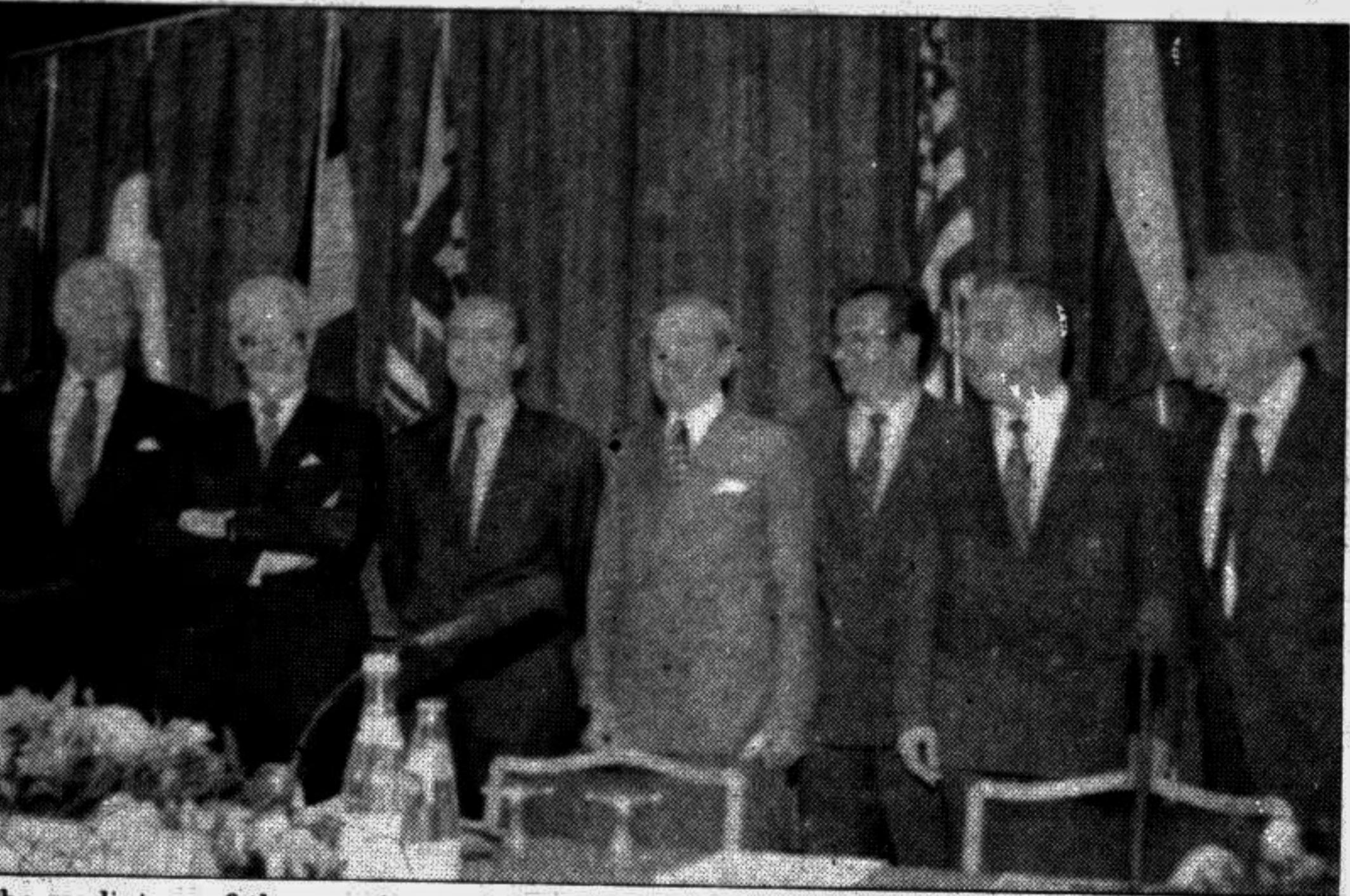
Saudi authorities warned last week that it would not allow Iranian pilgrims to carry out their demonstrations.

The warning came after the head of the Iranian pilgrims delegation, Mohammad Mohammad Rez Shahri, said taking part in the demonstration was an Islamic duty.

Similar demonstrations have triggered clashes with Saudi police in the past, the most violent being in 1987, when 400 pilgrims, including 275 Iranians, were killed. Diplomatic ties between the two countries were broken off for three years afterwards.

Teheran and Riyadh are also in dispute over the numbers of Iranian pilgrims allowed in Makkah this year. Iran says Saudi Arabia has halved its quota of pilgrims to 60,000.

But Riyadh countered that it was applying a quota system agreed with other Islamic countries allowing one pilgrim for every thousands people.



The mediators of the meeting on Bosnia pose for photo after their successful mediation in Geneva on Saturday. From L-R: EU Commissioner Han van den Broek, British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, German Foreign Minister Klaus, Russian counterpart Andrei Kozyrev and Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias. The Bosnian Muslim government and Bosnian Croats yesterday agreed to set up a federation Bosnia-Herzegovina. — AFP photo

## India extends ban on LTTE

NEW DELHI, May 15: India has extended by two years a ban on Sri Lanka's powerful Tamil Tigers, which have been charged with killing former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, newspapers reported today.

The Home Ministry said in a notification issued late Saturday that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) would remain outlawed for "threatening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India."

The LTTE's objective for a separate homeland for all Tamils threatens the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India and thus falls within the ambit of an unlawful activity," the notification said.

India first outlawed the LTTE, which is fighting for an independent Tamil homeland

ammunition into Tamil Nadu, a coastal state of some 55 million Tamils.

The LTTE, one of the best armed and most ruthless of guerrilla groups, once used Tamil Nadu, which is separated from Sri Lanka by a narrow strip of sea, as a sanctuary for its separatist campaign.

The LTTE's ties with New Delhi were soured when India sent troops to Sri Lanka under a peace pact signed with Colombo in July 1987 in an attempt to end Tamil separation.

The LTTE took on the Indian troops in October that year, and ended up killing nearly 1,200 soldiers before the Indians quit the island in March 1990, leaving the Tigers in control of large areas in Sri Lanka's northeast.

The Indian government, the statement added, also had information that the LTTE was trying to infiltrate its cadres, and sophisticated arms and

## Premadasa's death: Daughter demands fresh probe

COLOMBO, May 15: The daughter of assassinated president Ranasinghe Premadasa has demanded a fresh probe into his death because of doubts over claims that Tamil Tigers were responsible, a Sri Lankan ruling party official said Sunday, reports AFP.

Dulanjalee Jayakody asked her father's successor Dingiri Banda Wijetunga for an "independent investigation" into last year May 1 bomb attack which killed Premadasa, said the ruling party's General Secretary Gamini Wijesekara.

The government has blamed the rebels of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for what it called a "suicide" bomb attack which also left 24 others dead. Police inquiries, however, have remained inconclusive.

Wijesekara said he paid a courtesy call on Premadasa's widow, Hema, last week when the request for a fresh probe was made.

The ruling United National party (UNP), after its defeat in a recent local election, has been wooing the Premadasa family in an attempt to resurrect the former leader's populist policies to win back votes.

"They realise they cannot win without the Premadasa image. None other than members of the family can portray the Premadasa image ... we are the trustees of the Premadasa policies," said Sajith Premadasa in a recent interview.

Koirala rules out split in Nepali Congress

KATHMANDU, May 15: Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said that the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) will not split although there are two opposing forces competing in the party, reports Xinhua.

Speaking at a mass meeting held on Saturday at Tanahu in western Nepal, the Prime Minister said that there are two opposing forces competing in the Nepali Congress which is reeling by troubles now.

Five pro-Rabbani fighters were wounded on Saturday by a mortar shell landing in southern Kabul, where more than 2,500 people have been killed in four-and-a-half months of the current fighting that erupted on January 1.

Meanwhile, fighting continued in the provinces 200 kilometers north of Kabul around Baghlan and Pul-Khumri centres which are under siege by Rabbani's military commander ex-defence minister Ahmed Shah Masood, said Dostum's troops.

Meanwhile, fighting continued in the provinces 200 kilometers north of Kabul around Baghlan and Pul-Khumri centres which are under siege by Rabbani's military commander ex-defence minister Ahmed Shah Masood, said Dostum's troops.

Forty-six people were wounded in bombing, artillery and machine-gun fire on Friday night between forces loyal to Rabbani and his opponents led by Hekmatyar and Dostum.

Nine people were wounded in rocket and artillery attacks

on Saturday blamed on anti-Rabbani forces, doctors said.

Five pro-Rabbani fighters were wounded on Saturday by a mortar shell landing in southern Kabul, where more than 2,500 people have been killed in four-and-a-half months of the current fighting that erupted on January 1.

An artillery shell hit a large government building housing judicial and some other offices of Kabul province, wounding a visiting army captain and a guard. Two members of a family were wounded by a rocket that landed in the north of Kabul.

Of the 46 casualties on Friday, four were wounded when planes controlled by Dostum bombed.

These forces were those in favour of political stability in the country and in the party, and those who are against it, Koirala said, adding there is pressure on the party from the forces of the instability.

However, efforts are now underway in the Nepali Congress to save the party from those elements who are out to create instability, he noted.

There is no need to harbour fears about a possible split in the party, Koirala stressed. The party will not split.

## Off the Record

### Instant fine for selling cigarettes to under 18s

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will slap instant fines on those who sell cigarettes to under-18s and light up in prohibited places from Monday under a law to curb a growing population of smokers, officials said.

A television ban on direct tobacco advertisements depicting cigarettes and smokers will also be extended to newspapers and other publications under the control of tobacco product regulations, the officials said.

"The regulations are clear and their objective is to promote public health," Health Minister Lee Kim Sai told reporters on Sunday.

Officials said some 2.4 million adults and about 800,000 teenagers among the country's 19 million population were spending about 1.8 billion ringgit on cigarettes a year.

### First royal appearance in Saint Petersburg in a century

LONDON: Prince Charles is to start a historic three-day visit to the old imperial Russian capital Saint Petersburg Monday, the first royal British appearance there in a century, reports AFP.

He is going for practical reasons — the heir to the British throne is leading a delegation of his business leaders' forum, launched 10 years ago to support private enterprise, which is providing assistance to the city.

But the visit also has great symbolic importance, as Prince Charles will visit the tombs of the Romanov imperial family, who were related by blood to the British royal family.

In a message before his departure, Prince Charles said the "political and social map of Europe and the former Soviet Union has changed dramatically and that transformation is continuing at a pace few could have foreseen."

"All of us have an immense interest in making sure that new-found freedom and market economies are able to grow on a sound and sustainable basis," he said.

### Fay's caning to be subject of books, movie

SINGAPORE: American teenager Michael Fay's controversial caning — expected to be the subject of books and possibly made-for-television movies in the United States — is featured in a book and play now in the works here, Singapore's Sunday Times reported, says Reuter.

It said Straits Times journalist Asad Latif, who wrote several commentaries on the case, is writing the yet untitled book of 100 to 120 pages, he is now negotiating with a publisher.

Fay received four strokes of the cane on May 5 as part of sentence for vandalism. The caning drew protests from several US commentators and President Bill Clinton.

Latif said so much information came in on the case he was unable to incorporate it all in his reports. The book flashes out the whole case," the Sunday Times quoted him as saying.

"It is not a behind-the-scenes book. It's more of a between-the-lines book."

## Anti-Tibetan riot shatters peace

DHARAMSALA, India, May 15: A two-day orgy of anti-Tibetan violence has shattered the tranquility of this northern Indian town, where the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, has lived in exile for nearly 35 years, reports AFP.

Tibetan homes, shops, schools and monasteries still bear the scars of last month's rampage by scores of Indian youths enraged by the death of a local boy in a knife fight with a Tibetan.

Glass-fitters have begun the painstaking task of replacing the thousands of window panes smashed by the angry mobs, but restoring confidence between Tibetans and their Indian neighbours is likely to take even longer.

The ruling United National party (UNP), after its defeat in a recent local election, has been wooing the Premadasa family in an attempt to resurrect the former leader's populist policies to win back votes.

"They realise they cannot win without the Premadasa image. None other than members of the family can portray the Premadasa image ... we are the trustees of the Premadasa policies," said Sajith Premadasa in a recent interview.

Koirala rules out split in Nepali Congress

KATHMANDU, May 15: Nepali Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala said that the ruling Nepali Congress (NC) will not split although there are two opposing forces competing in the party, reports Xinhua.

Speaking at a mass meeting held on Saturday at Tanahu in western Nepal, the Prime Minister said that there are two opposing forces competing in the Nepali Congress which is reeling by troubles now.

Five pro-Rabbani fighters were wounded on Saturday by a mortar shell landing in southern Kabul, where more than 2,500 people have been killed in four-and-a-half months of the current fighting that erupted on January 1.

An artillery shell hit a large government building housing judicial and some other offices of Kabul province, wounding a visiting army captain and a guard. Two members of a family were wounded by a rocket that landed in the north of Kabul.

Of the 46 casualties on Friday, four were wounded when planes controlled by Dostum bombed.

These forces were those in favour of political stability in the country and in the party, and those who are against it, Koirala said, adding there is pressure on the party from the forces of the instability.

However, efforts are now underway in the Nepali Congress to save the party from those elements who are out to create instability, he noted.

There is no need to harbour fears about a possible split in the party, Koirala stressed. The party will not split.

MOSCOW, May 15: Emergency workers today put out a fire raging through a major ammunition depot in Russia's far east, Interfax news agency said, reports Reuter.

The depot blew up on Saturday with such force that earth tremors could be felt in the city of Vladivostok, 100 km (60 miles) away.

Tibetans here charged that local police watched the mayhem, in which a dozen Tibetans were injured.

Dawa Tsering, 40, chief welfare officer for the Tibetan community here, said many Tibetans had been traumatised.

I don't think this will happen again, but there is still some fear among the people, he said. Many want to leave, and if the Dalai Lama shifts, then everybody or at least 99 per cent of the Tibetans here will also go.

The Dalai Lama established his headquarter in Dharamsala, nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas in Himachal Pradesh state, in 1960, a year after fleeing Tibet following an abortive anti-Chinese uprising.

Between 6,000 and 8,000 Tibetans live in Dharamsala and it houses the headquarters of the Tibetan government in exile as well as hospitals, monasteries, a library and Tibetan handicrafts and medicine factories.

Tibetan government-in-exile officials here told AFP that the Dalai Lama has decided to stay put for the moment but has sought "concrete assurances" from the state authorities that Tibetans would not be victimised again.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh urged the Dalai Lama during two meetings last week to remain in Dharamsala and pledged to improve security.

Witnesses said Kishan Kapoor, a member of the state assembly from the Hindu-revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party who has demanded that Tibetans leave Himachal Pradesh, delivered an inflammatory speech at the funeral which sent mourners on the rampage again.

Tibetans here charged that local police watched the mayhem, in which a dozen Tibetans were injured.

Liberian PM ends work stoppage

BEIRUT, May 15: Prime Minister Rafik Hariri called a cabinet meeting for Monday, indicating he is ending a week-long work stoppage that plunged Lebanon into its worst political crisis in nearly two years, reports Reuter.

Hariri's office announced the cabinet meeting late on Saturday after he returned from talks in Damascus with Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad on ending his dispute with President Elias Hrawi and parliament Speaker Nabil Hariri.

Political sources in Beirut said earlier the three men had worked out a compromise solution but Hariri was still looking for a way to return to work without losing face.

His announcement of a special cabinet meeting for Monday was an indirect way of saying he was going back to work, the sources said.

## Rwandans paralysed by fear

KIGALI, May 15: They are

prisoners in their own capital,

paralysed by fear and ravaged

by hunger, sheltering from the

gunfire in hotels and churches and

the Kigali sports stadium.

reports AFP.

Bernard Kouchner, a former

French Humanitarian Affairs

Minister, said the situation in

the Central African state had

reached desperate levels and

only forceful foreign interven-

tion could save survivors of a

five-week orgy of killings.

Macao governor and local procuratorial organs have agreed to practise the decree.

Move to secure free passage fails

NAIROBI, May 15: A former

French minister said he had

failed to broker free passage

for civilians trapped in

Rwanda's blood-soaked capital