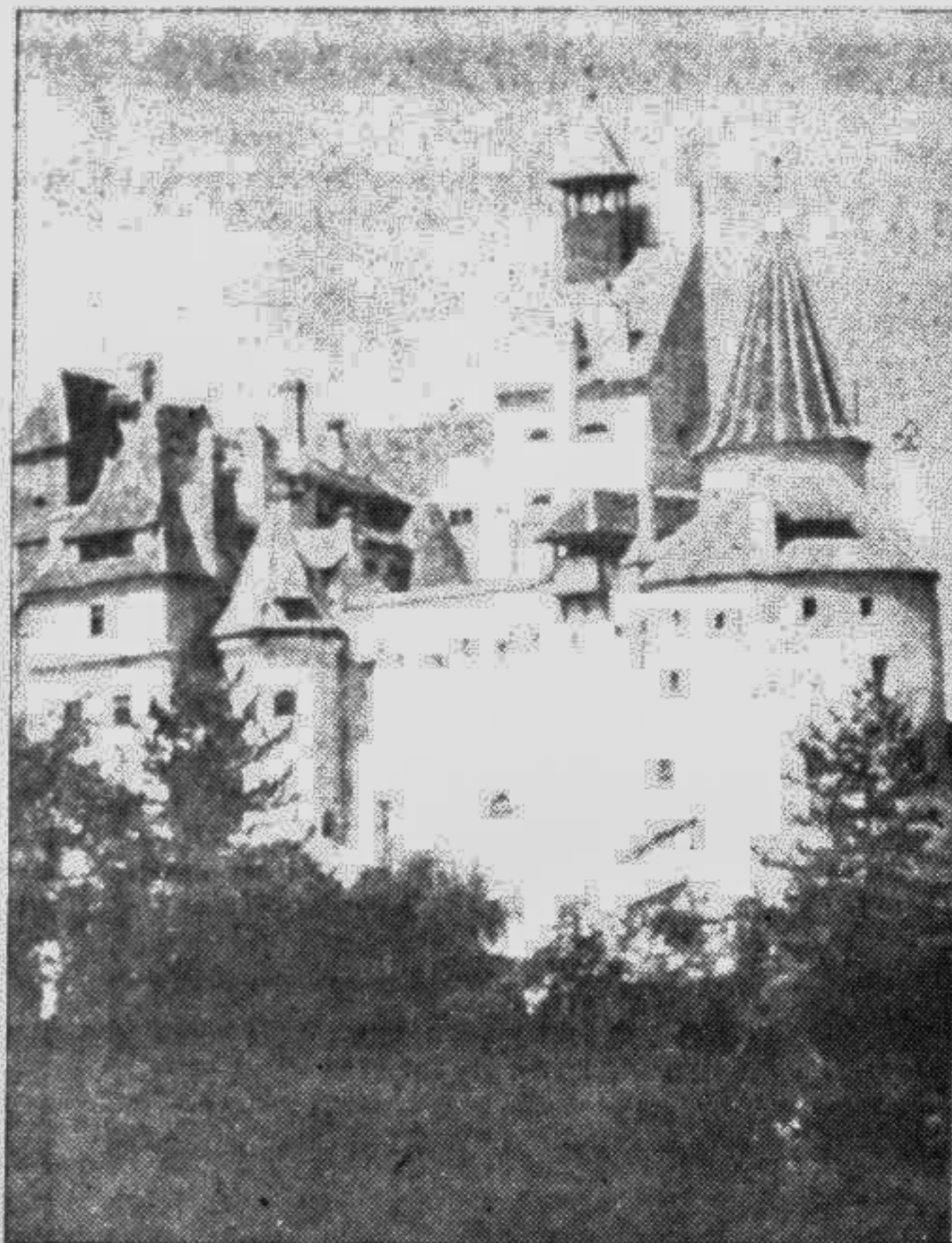


BRIEFLY



File photo dated May 1994 shows Bran Castle, built in 1377 above the Rucar-Bran Pass, one of several traditional residences of the 17th century Romanian Prince Vlad Tepes, known variously as the legendary Dracula and Vlad the Impaler — for his preferred technique of terminating his enemies. The castle, an important tourist attraction, is in danger of collapse since an earthquake split the rock on which it is built.

— AFP photo

William Perry in Kigali:

US Defence Secretary William Perry arrived in Kigali Sunday morning and went straight into talks with Rwanda's strongman, Vice President and Defence Minister, Paul Kagame, at Kigali airport's VIP lounge, AFP reports from Kigali.

Perry was welcomed by US Ambassador David Rwason and the commander of the UN force here, General Romeo Dallaire.

Earlier, 54 US troops, including air force personnel and a security team, arrived here to help prepare the airport for the reception of humanitarian relief aid.

Bahrain deports 1,000 foreigners:

Bahrain deported more than 1,000 foreigners in three months for violating immigration and residence laws, local newspapers reported today. Reuters reports from Manama.

They said interior ministry figures showed 1,051 foreigners were deported in April, May and June.

About one-third of Bahrain's 500,000 population are foreigners, mainly unskilled Asian workers.

Fire kills 15 girls in China:

Fifteen young girls died when fire ripped through a children's centre in China's northeastern oil city of Daqing on Thursday, a Hong Kong newspaper said yesterday. AFP reports from Hong Kong.

Quoting sources in Heilongjiang Province, where Daqing is located, Sing Tao Daily News said the victims ranged in age from six to 12.

US, Kuwait to hold war games:

Kuwait and US forces will conduct joint military maneuvers starting for Tuesday to commemorate the August 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Xinhua reports from Kuwait City.

According to a statement issued yesterday by Kuwaiti army's public relations office, the maneuvers, called intrinsic action 94-2, will include live ammunition exercises and last until August 14.

BBC reporter killed near Kabul:

An Afghan reporter for the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was on Saturday found shot dead near the Afghan capital Kabul where rival factions fighting for supremacy blamed each other for the killing, Reuters reports from Islamabad.

Mir Wais Jalil, 25, was killed on Friday night by gunmen who captured him when he was returning from interviewing Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar at his Charasyab base south of Kabul.

Nobel Prize winner Hodgkin dies:

Distinguished British scientist Dorothy Hodgkin, who won the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1964 for her work on penicillin and insulin, died last week after suffering a stroke, her family said yesterday. Reuters reports from London.

Hodgkin, who was 84, died at her home in the central English county of Warwickshire on Friday afternoon, her son Luke said.

Professor Hodgkin made it to the top of the science world in the days when women researchers were still rare. As an academic at Oxford University, she taught chemistry to future Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who later took up law instead.

Swiss principal killed in Karachi:

Unidentified gunmen on Sunday shot dead the Swiss principal of a foreign-funded electronics institute here, police sources said, AFP reports from Karachi.

Fritz Gasser, 60, was on his way to his office in the university area when gunmen riding in another vehicle waylaid his car outside the city's posh defence society district.

The assassins fled after pumping Gasser with bullets, police said. A Pakistani colleague accompanying him survived the attack, they added.

Attempt on Colombian minister:

Leftist guerrillas opened fire on Colombia's transportation minister, injuring a bodyguard but leaving the official unscathed, police said, AP reports from Bogota.

The shooting happened on Saturday as Jorge Bendeck Olivella's motorcade was driving with a police escort through Villanueva, a town 680 kilometres (425 miles) north of the capital Bogota, police said. The minister's bodyguards returned fire, police said, but the attackers apparently escaped.

Al Gore to visit Israel, Gaza:

United States Vice-President Al Gore will visit Israel and the Palestinian self-rule areas in September, PLO officials and US diplomats said Sunday, Reuters reports from Gaza.

US diplomats in Jerusalem visited Gaza on Saturday to arrange the visit, due on September 4, with the Palestinian authority.

Quake hits southwestern Iran:

An earthquake measuring 5.3 on the Richter scale hit regions in southwestern Iran today, Tehran radio reported, AFP reports from Tehran.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or damage from the temblor which struck Andimeshk and Badreh regions near the town of Ilam.

3 extremists held in Germany:

Three leftists were arrested on Saturday after a tussle with police at a rally by right-wing extremists opposed to the construction of a mosque in a Bavarian town, AP reports from Wuerzburg.

The rally in Karlstadt was held by about 50 members of the German National Party, whose leader has been jailed for denying the Nazis systematically killed Jews during World War II.

Milosevic tells Bosnian Serbs

Accept int'l peace plan or face greater war

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, July 31: Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic urged Bosnian Serb leaders on Sunday to accept an international peace plan or face greater war, reports AP.

Milosevic, the nationalist leader widely seen as the prime instigator of war in the Balkans and the region's power broker, stopped short of direct confrontation with his former proteges in Bosnia but made clear his patience is exhausted.

In a statement published by the Belgrade-based Tanjug news agency and printed in the Politika newspaper, Milosevic made his most direct appeal yet to the Bosnian Serbs of make peace now or risk a wider war that could jeopardise Serb gains.

"No one has the right... to reject peace," Milosevic said. "Undoubtedly, compromise is essential."

His comments came after foreign ministers from the United States, Russia, France, Britain and Germany on Saturday called for tighter enforcement of existing sanctions against Serb-dominated Yugoslavia, the sponsor of Bosnia's Serbs.

The five countries authored the peace plan that would reduce Serb holdings in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 70 per cent to 49 per cent and leave the rest of the war-torn state to a Muslim-Croat federation.

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozirev, who has expressed disappointment with Bosnian Serb refusal of that plan, was due in Belgrade on Sunday to brief Milosevic on the Geneva talks.

The UN Security Council is expected to act on the Geneva decisions in about a week — days Milosevic will use to press the Bosnian Serbs to make

peace. Milosevic's main concern now seems to be lifting the UN sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia two years ago for his policies, he can only hope for that to happen if peace takes hold in neighbouring Bosnia.

The sanctions after Serbia and tiny Montenegro, whose president Momir Bulatovic also appealed to Bosnia's Serbs to end a 27-month war that has left an estimated 200,000 people dead or missing.

Many people in Serbia and Montenegro want the Bosnian war to end, fearing that tightened sanctions could end their

ability to travel abroad and sever communications with the outside world.

Milosevic recently has painted himself as peace-loving and he defended the international peace plan in his interview.

"The half-half proposal is... a response to the urgent need that bloodshed and horrors of war must stop at any cost," Milosevic said.

"This means to accept the proposal of the international community and enable the continuation of the peace process," he said.

He said Serbs are tired of

giving material support to their ethnic allies in Bosnia and now expect them to repay the material support from Belgrade.

"A demand for even greater sacrifices on the part of the citizens of federal Yugoslavia and the entire Serb people cannot be defended by a single moral argument," Milosevic said.

"On the contrary, creation of conditions for the lifting of the sanctions at this moment is the least that the citizens of... Yugoslavia have the right to expect from the people and leadership" of Bosnian Serbs.



Deputy Chief of Air Operations for NATO Southern Command, US General Joseph Ashy (L), salutes the UNPROFOR Commander, French General Bertrand de LaPresle (R) and the British General, Sir Michael Rose after their meeting at Pleso Air Base in Zagreb on Saturday. They met to discuss the situation following the Bosnian Serbs' failure to agree to the most recent peace plan.

— AFP photo

Christopher returns to ME Aug 8

CAIRO, July 31: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher will return to the Middle East on August 8 to resume his mediation between Israel and Syria, the Egyptian government newspaper Al-Ahram said today. It quoted Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak for the date, reports Reuters.

Mubarak was speaking to Egyptian newspaper editors on Saturday evening on his way back from Jeddah, where he discussed the Middle East peace process with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia.

Mubarak saw Syrian President Hafez al-Assad in Damascus last week and was due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the Egyptian border town of Taba later today.

Last plane leaves Haiti

PORT-AU-PRINCE, July 31: The world shut down air service to Haiti on Saturday with the departure of the final scheduled jetliner, leaving the army-ruled nation more isolated than ever, reports AP.

"It is a super-comedy what the international community is doing," said the Rev Rene Soler, a Canadian priest who was boarding an Air France Boeing 737 to the neighbouring Dominican Republic.

The plane, with a capacity 141 passengers, took off two hours late after a delay in Santo Domingo, the Dominican capital. At least 50 stand-by passengers were left behind in the sweltering Port-au-Prince terminal, Air France said.

The now-total commercial air ban, begun June 24 when American carriers stopped service to Haiti, is the latest international sanction imposed to pressure military coup leaders to cede power.

SC decision on dissolution of Nepali parliament today

KATHMANDU, July 31: Nepal's Supreme Court will meet tomorrow to decide if the dissolution of parliament earlier this month was legal, a decision vital for the political survival of interim Premier Girija Prasad Koirala, lawyers here said.

The Supreme Court will examine a writ petition filed by two former MPs, one from the opposition, the other from Koirala's Nepali Congress (NC) party, challenging the legality of King Birendra's dissolution of parliament on July 11.

Another group of lawyers has also registered a writ petition at the Supreme Court seeking to render the Koirala government's 1994-95 budget invalid, a court source told

AFP. The budget was to go to the vote before MPs when parliament was dissolved.

Nepal has been in political turmoil since the King's decision to disband the legislature at Koirala's request after government programmes were overwhelmingly defeated in parliament.

Koirala resigned as premier, but was reinstated as interim Prime Minister for the period leading up to new elections in November.

He is expected to try and fight the petitions on the grounds that an elected prime minister has every right to advise the King to dissolve parliament and call new polls.

The heads of the country's political parties — including

the NC general secretary Ganesh Man Singh — complain that the move was illegal and invalid.

The six factions of the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) have lashed the decision of the King, who they accuse of trying to revive the country's party-less political system that existed prior to 1990.

At a public rally on Saturday, the six NCP factions virulently attacked Koirala, accusing him of corruption and selling out Nepal's interests to India.

The leader of the United People's Front Faction, Lila Mani Pokharel, told the rally of some 10,000 people that Koirala's main strength was his backing from India.



People step up the ladder to board the last flight of Air France leaving Haiti on Saturday.

— AFP photo

Fires rage in northwest Washington

LEAVENWORTH, July 31: Some 1,500 residents of four canyons in northwest Washington state were asked by authorities to evacuate Saturday night as a wildfire jumped a highway and raced eastward, reports AP.

Blazes were burning to the west, south and east of Leavenworth, a Bavarian-theme tourist town.

"We're pretty much surrounded," said Kelly O'Brien, operations chief for the Leavenworth Fire Department.

Another 6,000 people in neighbouring towns were told to be ready to evacuate, and the 22,000 residents of Wenatchee were warned of burning embers and other fire hazards. The fire earlier forced workers

to shut down the water plant.

About 25 miles (40 kilometres) northeast, a fire that had burned across 86,000 acres of grass and pine trees was moving away from the lake resort town of Chelan, but a number of houses in the area remained evacuated.

Fires started mostly by lightning also burned out of control in Utah and Montana, where a tanker plane crashed and killed its two crew members, and in other western states.

Conditions in Oregon had improved enough that more than 200 state firefighters were being sent to help Washington state crews.

The fire near Leavenworth broke out Friday and had de-

stroyed 14 structures, mostly houses, by Saturday, the Chelan County sheriff's office said. The homes had been evacuated and no one was injured.

Rob Harris lost his home plus a rental house.

"We were getting ready to evacuate, but the thing was coming down the canyon so fast there was hardly any warning," he said. There was hardly any time to think, but I got out my most valuable tools and my snowmobiles."

The Leavenworth water treatment plant, which serves about 3,000 residents, was shut down of Friday because plant employees were evacuated as the fire approached. The plant was spared but residents

were told to continue boiling drinking water.

Near Chelan, about 100 miles (160 kilometres) east of Seattle, residents of two housing developments were kept away from home a second day on Saturday, but residents of another area were allowed to return.

In western Montana, crews fighting two major range and forest fires made some gains on Saturday, but high winds threatened to fan the flames.

Firefighters also were battling blazes in Nevada, Idaho, Utah, Wyoming and a major fire in Klamath National Forest in northern most California that 2,000 people have been battling for two weeks.

Russia to dismantle N-reactor in Estonia

MOSCOW, July 31: Russia has pledged to dismantle a Soviet-era nuclear reactor at a naval base in Estonia under an agreement that resolves one of the most contentious issues between Moscow and the Baltic state, reports AP.

The Saturday night announcement was the second important agreement reached by the neighbouring countries since Russian President Boris Yeltsin met his Estonian counterpart Lennart Meri last Tuesday. Following the talks, Russia said it would meet Estonia demand and withdraw its remaining 1,600 troops from Estonia by Aug. 31.

Under the latest accord, up to 210 Russian specialists will remove fuel rods and decommission the nuclear reactor at the Russian naval base in Paldiski. It is a relatively small reactor that was used to train

sailors preparing to go on submarine missions.

"This is a unique agreement," said Raul Mälik, the deputy chancellor in the Estonian Foreign Ministry and the head of his country's delegation at the talks held in Moscow.

He said he believed it was unprecedented for one country to dismantle a nuclear reactor, built for military purposes, on the territory of a second nation.

After the reactor is decommissioned, the base will be turned over to the Estonians on Sept. 30, 1995.

Mälik said the accord showed Estonia and Russia were learning to settle differences that had soured relations since Estonia won independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991.

Off the Record

Yale's flag mast to be replaced after 300 yrs

MADRAS: The wooden pole on which Ellu Yale hoisted the British Union Jack 300 years ago has rotted in the moist sea breeze of this southern metropolis and will be replaced by a metal mast, reports AP.

The 156-foot teak wood flag mast was part of a ship that ran aground in 1639 on the shores of Madras when British traders sailed to India to found the East India Company.

Yale, who was the governor of the then Madras Presidency — and after whom a university has been named in New Haven, Connecticut — hoisted the Union Jack in 1687 to establish British rule in place of Company rule.

The three-tiered pole originally was in front of Yale's mansion, and was later shifted to the Fort St George, which still houses government offices.

India's national flag has been flying on the pole since 1947 when the country won independence. The Madras Presidency was carved up and renamed as Tamil Nadu.

Even though the flag pole was anchored with 24 guy wires, it became weak. On Friday, workers lowered it down and carted it away to a warehouse.

Di's medical file stolen

LONDON: The Princess of Wales' confidential medical file has been stolen from her personal doctor's surgery, press reports said Sunday, says AFP.

The file, dealing notably with her struggle to overcome the eating disorder bulimia, was stolen nine days ago from the London Surgery of GP Roderick Lane, the tabloid Mail on Sunday and News of the World reported.

The file had been fed into a portable computer which the thief broke into the building to steal.

The newspapers, which stressed that Princess Diana had regularly consulted Lane over her bulimic tendencies, said Scotland Yard had launched a major inquiry amid fears that the princess' medical history would end up on the Nation's front pages.

The News of the World said Princess Diana may also have spoken at length to the doctor about her relations with her estranged husband the Prince of Wales.

Scotland Yard confirmed that a theft had taken place at the doctor's address, while Buckingham Palace cited the confidentiality surrounding all royal family health matters.

Public vow of chastity

WASHINGTON: A total of 211,163 young Americans of both sexes took a public vow of chastity before marriage on Friday by planting signed cards proclaiming their sexual abstinence on the lawn of the mall in Washington, reports AFP.

President Bill Clinton received a delegation of young people at the White House who had responded to "the true love waits" movement launched by Baptist congregations in the southern states.

The movement is now supported by 26 Christian organisations and denominations.

Three quarters of all young people in the United States have sexual intercourse before leaving secondary education and 40 per cent are sexually active when they enter ninth grade, at age 14 to 15, according to a study published in 1990 by Centres for Disease Control.

JKLF leader Yasin Malik evicted from Hazrat Bal

SRINAGAR, July 31: India's paramilitary soldiers on Sunday evicted a top guerrilla commander from the Hazrat Bal mosque where he had started an indefinite fast, a spokesman for his group said.

Yasin Malik, the leader of pro-independence Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front, was shifted to a medical institute for checkup as he is a heart patient, the spokesman said.

Malik is demanding the removal of "offensive" sand bunkers set up by the Indian soldiers outside the holy shrine last October.

The Indian paramilitary forces entered the shrine and removed Malik and his supporters, the Front spokesman, Mohammad Shafi Misger, told The Associated Press.

Malik started his fast inside the mosque on Saturday evening soon after his release from a 40-hour detention. He

was arrested by Indian security forces for holding an illegal demonstration outside the mosque on Thursday.

The mosque was the scene of a 32-day standoff between Muslim separatists and Indian security forces in October last year.

It ended without a shot being fired when the militants occupying it surrendered to Indian forces.

Indian soldiers have refused to remove the bunkers in the vicinity of the shrine since then.

Malik was the first important guerrilla leader to be freed on bail by India's Supreme Court in May so that he could get treatment for a heart ailment.

He was arrested in August 1990 by Indian authorities and charged with committing terrorist acts in Kashmir.

Fresh French N-testing will be a 'disaster': NZ

WELLINGTON, July 31: New Zealand's government voiced concern today over the possibility of renewed French nuclear testing in the South Pacific, reports Reuters.

Prime Minister Jim Bolger said any such move would fly in the face of moves towards a permanent nuclear test ban treaty, while disarmament Minister Doug Graham said renewed French testing would be a "total disaster".

They were reacting to reported disagreement over the nuclear issue between socialist President Francois Mitterrand and his conservative government.

Mitterrand opposes ending

the test moratorium that France has observed since April 1992 but has less than a year to serve before stepping down from the presidency after next May's elections.

The French government is under pressure from the military which sees further testing as vital if Paris wishes to preserve its own nuclear deterrent.

Bolger, who met Mitterrand in Paris last month, told radio New Zealand: "He assured me, and I accepted his assurance without reservation, that while he is president no nuclear testing will be re-established by France in the Pacific."