

# BRIEFLY

## China assumes UNSC presidency:

China's UN ambassador, Li Zhaoxing, on Wednesday assumes the presidency of the 15-seat Security Council for the month of March. Reuter reports from United Nations.

The council presidency rotates monthly according to the English alphabet. Li takes over from Ambassador Elgwala Joseph Legwala of Botswana.

## 21 hurt as Cong, TDP workers clash:

Twentyone persons were injured when rival groups of Congress-I and Telugu Desam (TDP) workers hurled crude bombs against each other at Ammireddynagar village in Kurnool district on Tuesday. PTI reports from Hyderabad.

According to a report reaching the police headquarters in Hyderabad, the rival groups fought pitched battle on the streets following a dispute over a water tank. Fourteen of the injured belonged to TDP and the remaining were Congress-I workers, police said.

## WHO team to visit India:

The head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) will visit India next month to monitor anti-plague measures taken after the disease killed 55 people last year, a WHO spokesman said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from New Delhi.

WHO Director General Horoshi Nakajima, accompanied by foreign health officials, will check if India was following standard procedures for preventing another outbreak of the disease.

## Jailed Hamas activists on strike:

Supporters of the Islamic resistance movement Hamas jailed by Yasser Arafat's self-rule authority in the Gaza Strip have gone on a hunger strike demanding immediate release, a Hamas source said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from Gaza Strip.

The source, who spoke on condition he not be named, said 20 Hamas prisoners have been refusing all food and drinking only water since Monday.

## Blast outside US embassy in Lima:

Suspected rebels hurled a bomb outside the US embassy in Lima late on Tuesday, shattering some windows, and tossed two other bombs at police stations, injuring seven passersby, police said. AFP reports from Lima.

There were no injuries reported in the blast at the US embassy, which also damaged some nearby street fronts. The bomb was hurled from a passing car, police said.

## Huge arms seized in France:

Anti-terrorist agents have seized an arsenal including a rocket launcher, submachine guns, gunpowder and 10,000 bullets linked to Algerian Muslim militants, authorities said on Tuesday. AP reports from Paris.

The cache, found on Monday in the locker of a parking garage in Choisy-le-Roi east of Paris, had numerous handguns, four submachine guns, 10kg (22 pounds) of gunpowder and bomb-making materials including fuses and timers.

## China bans night services at airports:

China has banned night services at several airports, alarmed at the explosive growth of highrises that endanger aircraft, it was reported yesterday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China found that nearly three-fourths of China's 114 airports were found to have "potentially risky" flight paths because of surrounding highrises, the semi-official China news services said.

## 6 more executed in China:

Six people were executed in Beijing and 12 others were sentenced to death on Wednesday as China began a three month anti-crime campaign. AP reports from Beijing.

The six who were executed were guilty of murder, armed robbery, rape and other crimes, the Beijing Evening News reported. It said the other 12 who were sentenced after an initial trial committed serious crimes, but gave no details about the crimes or any appeals.

## Road mishap claims 11 in Harare:

Eleven soldiers died when their truck crashed into a tree after a fire burst, the army said Wednesday. AP reports from Harare.

Another 13 soldiers, including the driver, sustained back injuries, fractures and other injuries in the crash near Chivhu, 140 kilometres (90 miles) south of Harare, the army said in a statement.

## Police raid Winnie's home:

South African police probing allegations of fraud and corruption raided the Johannesburg home of President Nelson Mandela's estranged wife Winnie yesterday, a police spokesman said. Reuter reports from Johannesburg.

"The house ... and various other locations in Johannesburg were searched," Captain Dave Harrington told Reuters.

## Karen rebels attack army post:

At least two people were killed and more than 10 injured when Karen guerillas attacked a Myanmar army staging post on a road in southeastern Myanmar, Myanmar traders said yesterday.

The attack was believed to be one of the largest since the guerillas lost their last major base on the Thai Myanmar border on February 21.

## 16 Kurds killed in Turkey:

Turkish troops killed 16 Kurdish guerillas in continuing fighting in southeastern Turkey on Tuesday the regional governor's office said. AP reports from Diyarbakir, Turkey.

The rebels were killed in separate clashes in the southeastern provinces of Bitlis, Bingol and Tunceli.

## Meningitis claims 233 in Niger:

An epidemic of meningitis has killed at least 233 people in the West African country of Niger. National radio reported on Tuesday. AP reports from Niamey, Niger.

Health officials have recorded 2,000 cases of the disease since the end of December, the radio said.

## S Africa, Mozambique sign accord:

South Africa and Mozambique signed an agreement Tuesday to combat a wave of cross-border crime including drug trafficking, gun smuggling, and car and cattle theft. AP reports from Cap Town.

The accord is part of a crackdown on violence in South Africa and comes a day after President Nelson Mandela sent troops and more police into areas troubled by strikes, rioting and political killings.

## Ghana's president to visit US:

Ghana's President Jerry Rawlings will make a two-day visit to Washington at the invitation of President Clinton. AP reports from Accra.

Rawlings on his first visit to the United States, will have a meeting and working lunch with Clinton on March 9, said an official statement issued late Tuesday.

## ROK President for unification of Korea

SEOUL, Mar 1: President Kim Young-Sam on Wednesday said South and North Korea should be reconciled and work for unification of the divided peninsula, reports Reuter.

"It is a national shame for our country to remain divided after a half century," Kim said in a speech to commemorate the 76th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement in 1919, when Korean revolted against Japanese colonial rule.

Gen John Shalikashvili, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Iranians have deployed anti-aircraft missiles on islands in the Strait of Hormuz, through which pass ships carrying much of the world's oil supply.

President Clinton said the US-made Hawk missiles are "rather old" and have been in the Iranians' armoury for some time. The Shah of Iran, whose monarchy fell to the current Islamic government in 1979, was a close ally and major arms customer of the United States.

"We are on top of the situation, and we think there is no undue cause for concern at this moment," Clinton said. "It is a situation that we're monitoring very closely."

Shalikashvili said US reconnaissance had spotted the Iranians "putting missiles onto launchers, which they haven't done before."

He said they also have artillery in forward positions.

"All of that could lead me to lots of conclusions," said the general. "One of them is that they want to have the capability to interdict the traffic in the Strait of Hormuz."

Undersecretary of State Lynn Davis said she has insufficient details to "get behind the objectives of the Iranians."

She said, however, that whatever it is "poses a potential threat to stability; not only to their neighbours but also over time to the flow of trade in that part of the world."

As undersecretary of state for international security affairs, Davis is deeply involved in US efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear technology that could be used for a weapons programme.

The United States has tried without success to persuade the Russians to call off a deal under which they are building a light-water nuclear power plant in Iran. The Russians contend the reactor is a type from which it is very difficult to extract material for nuclear weapons.

Shalikashvili said that while Iraq remains the major threat in the region, "as you look towards the end of the century, the beginning of the next century, we have to be very mindful that Iran can become that major threat."

"I am very worried when a government like Iran would get a capability of weapons of mass destruction," he said. "I think we would face a very, very serious challenge, and all our friends in that area would face a very serious challenge. I am very worried about Iran."

In 1987, at the height of the Iran-Iraq War, Iran deployed Chinese made Silk-worm anti-ship missiles along the 90-mile Strait of Hormuz, prompting the Ronald Reagan administration to provide naval escorts for Kuwaiti oil tankers.

After an Iranian mine almost sank the missile frigate USS Samuel B Roberts in April 1988, the United States retaliated with attacks on Iranian targets. Three oil platforms were wrecked and several vessels, including an armed patrol boat and two large gunboats, were sunk or disabled.

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