

# BRIEFLY

## Mandela to visit Gulf states:

President Nelson Mandela is to visit Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in a five-day tour starting Saturday, reports AP from Johannesburg.

Making his first state visit to the Gulf States, Mandela is to meet with leading politicians and royal family members.

The trip is aimed at strengthening relations and obtaining financial support for South Africa's economic development programme.

## Nepalese PM to visit India Apr 10:

Nepalese Prime Minister Manmohan Adhikari will leave on April 10 for a five-day official visit to India at the invitation of his Indian counterpart, P.V. Narasimha Rao, state-run radio announced on Tuesday. AFP reports from Kathmandu.

During his sojourn to New Delhi, he will also meet Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma and other Indian leaders, a Foreign Ministry official said.

## Simon Bolivar Prize for Clinton:

The 1995 Simon Bolivar Excellence Prize will be awarded to U.S. President Bill Clinton, the official Venezuelan news agency Venpress reported yesterday. Xinhua says from Caracas.

The coordinating council of the Americans and the Venezuelan Bolivian Youth Foundation will bestow the honour on President Clinton for "his untiring efforts and invaluable labour for the integration of the Americas," according to Venpress.

## China shuts down mine:

A huge mine blast that killed 32 people and seriously injured 12 in southwest China has prompted provincial authorities to shut down the mine, an official report said on Tuesday. AP says from Beijing.

The March 13 blast in Fuyuan county, Yunnan province, caused 854,400 yuan (dollar 101,714) in financial losses, the Worker's Daily reported.

The report did not give details of the blast, except to say that it was a gas explosion.

## Quakes hit Wellington:

New Zealand's capital was jolted on Tuesday by the latest in a series of small earthquakes, but no damage was reported, Reuter says from Wellington.

A tremor lasting about 10 seconds shook central Wellington, seismologists said the tremor measured 4.8 on the open-ended Richter scale and was centred offshore, some 70 km (45 miles) to the north.

## Flash flood in Indonesia:

Heavy rains in the western half of Indonesia's densely populated Java Island have inundated thousands of houses, the official Antara news agency said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from Jakarta.

It said several villages were swamped by a flash flood triggered by a river bursting its banks after incessant rains on Sunday night. There were no reports of casualties or damage to crops.

## Christopher's adviser named:

Maj. Gen. John Sewall, a specialist on European security issues, was named a special adviser on Monday to Secretary of State Warren Christopher on military issues in the Bosnia area, AP reports from Washington.

He has been serving as vice director of the Institute for National Strategic Studies of the National Defence University. He will make his first trip to the area this month.

## Guerillas blast SLA post:

Guerillas blasted a post of the Israeli backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia in South Lebanon on Monday, wounding two militiamen, SLA sources said. Reuter reports from Marjayoun, Lebanon.

They said several mortar bombs fired by guerillas slammed into the fortified SLA post at Sojourn on the edge of Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon.

## 19 rebels held in Egypt:

A total of 19 militants of Egypt's main armed Muslim group who were planning to launch attacks in Cairo have been arrested, police said Monday. AFP reports from Cairo.

Eight automatic weapons, four bombs, explosives and pamphlets of the banned group Jamaa Islamiyya were seized at their homes, they added.

## Five shot dead in Texas:

A gunman shot and killed five people at a Texas oil refinery inspection company on Monday before turning the gun on himself, police said. AFP reports from Corpus Christi.

The man, who police believe was a former employee at the Walter Roesler Company in Corpus Christi, Texas entered the building armed with two automatic weapons and opened fire, according to police Captain Perfecto Rodriguez.

## Volcano erupts in Cape Verde:

A volcano erupted in the Cape Verde islands off Africa's west coast, spewing fire and smoke and sending thousands of villagers fleeing a thick blanket of lava, AP reports from Lisbon.

The volcano on the island of Fogo began spewing flames and lava at about 1 a.m. Monday, former Prime Minister Pedro Pires told TSF radio in Lisbon. The 10-island nation, a former Portuguese colony, is 400 kilometers (240 miles) west of Senegal in the Atlantic.

## 8 die in Indian tower collapse:

Eight labourers were killed when an electric tower collapsed near Koran town at Misirpur village under Kaon police station about 65 km from Allahabad, PTI reports from Allahabad.

The tower was being replaced by a new one. About 100 labourers were engaged in the work and 25 were on the top of the tower when it collapsed.

## China executes 5 more robbers:

Shanghai executed five men for robbing and killing taxi drivers and sentenced seven for similar crimes, Liberation Daily said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from Shanghai.

The City's Middle People's Court sentenced the five on Monday, and they were executed soon afterwards, it said. The seven others, peasants from outside Shanghai, were sentenced to between 15 years in jail and death for repeated robberies of taxis and the murder of a driver, it said.

## Taiwan rebuffs Vietnam's protest:

Taiwan said Monday it rebuffed a Vietnamese protest about its conduct in the Spratly Islands and reasserted its claim to sovereignty over the disputed archipelago. However, while talking tough to the Vietnamese, Taiwan simultaneously sought to calm tensions by calling off a marine police mission to the Spratlys, reports AP from Taipei.

## Kuwait to help ensure peace in Bahrain

KUWAIT CITY, Apr 4: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah on Monday expressed backing for the Gulf state of Bahrain which has been shaken by violence since December, the official agency KUNA reported, says AFP.

Kuwait is prepared to give moral and economic support to ensure stability and peace in Bahrain, Sheikh Sabah said after a visit to Bahrain.

He said he hoped the situation will stabilise in Bahrain and sedition does not spread.

# Cong will tone down anti-terrorist laws to woo Muslim voters

NEW DELHI, Apr 4: The Indian government, seeking to win back alienated Muslim voters ahead of general elections, has decided to tone down tough anti-terrorist laws after opposition groups said they were being used to target political opponents, reports Reuter.

India's Home Minister Shankar Rao Chavan, witting under a chorus of protests from human rights groups and political rivals, said late on Sunday the government was considering replacing the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), with one that was less liable to be misused.

Chavan told a group of Muslim intellectuals that the government was working to plug loopholes in the existing law that gave sweeping powers to police to arrest people suspected of terrorism and hold them without trial.

"A via media (an alternative) should be found and so a law which can act as a deterrent against persons indulging in anti-national activities and at the same time provide for checking its misuse, is needed," Chavan was quoted by a Muslim leader as saying.

Civil rights groups have lambasted TADA as a blot on democracy. Opposition parties and minority Muslim groups say the law has been misused to harass members of their community.

Maintenance of law and order is state matter under the Federal Constitution and some state governments have been accused of arresting political opponents under TADA.

Chavan told the Muslim intellectuals he had already admitted in parliament that the law was being misused in some states.

Sharad Pawar, the former chief minister of the western state of Maharashtra, attributed his Congress Party's recent defeat in state elections to the large-scale alienation of Muslims due to rampant misuse of TADA.

Congress has lost most of the state polls since last year, and deputies and party dissidents accuse Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao of neglecting the minorities and eroding the party's traditional voter base.

Muslims represent 12 per cent of India's 910 million people. India introduced TADA to check a surge of violence across the country, mainly in northern Jammu and Kashmir state, where a five-year-old Muslim revolt has left 17,000 dead.

More than 1,700 of the 6,400-odd prisoners in jail under the law were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir, according to recent government figures.

Nearly 1,500 people, mostly Muslims, have been jailed in the western state of Maharashtra after a series of bombings in Bombay in March, 1993 that left 260 dead. India believes Pakistani intelligence agents engineered the blasts with the help of Bombay's Muslim underworld.

The chairman of the state-sponsored National Human Rights Commission, Ranganath Misra, recently wrote to all parliament deputies asking them not to vote for an extension of TADA, which will lapse if not renewed in May.

"The law and order machinery should not be permitted to operate any longer under the cover of such a black law," Misra was quoted by an official as saying in the letter.

# UN to cut off all support if Rabbani refuses to quit

ISLAMABAD, Apr 4: The United Nations is threatening to further isolate the nominal government of Afghanistan's President Burhanuddin Rabbani and cut off all support if he refuses to hand over power under a UN-sponsored peace plan, reports AP.

"If he doesn't transfer power, the members of the United Nations will not recognise him," Mahmood Mestiri, the UN special envoy, told The Associated Press in an interview on Monday in neighbouring Pakistan.

"He should know that he does not just have to have relations with his neighbours, he has to have relations with the whole world," Mestiri added. This is the toughest talk yet

from the United Nations, which has grown frustrated after struggling for months to broker a peace agreement between Afghanistan's warring Islamic factions.

Rabbani's term expired in December, and he ignored UN deadlines for him to transfer power in both February and March, finding fault with UN plan that called for a multi-party governing council open to all 10 of the feuding factions.

Rabbani is trying to convince many countries, particularly Western nations, to re-open their embassies in Kabul. If the United Nations were to withdraw its recognition of his government it would leave him extremely isolated and would

discourage other countries from getting more involved in Afghanistan.

Sulefman Shah, a spokesman for Rabbani's government in neighbouring Pakistan, said on Tuesday that the president was ready to step down, but "we want a practical, workable mechanism."

Rabbani has demanded the participation of Afghanistan's newest fighting force, the Taliban militia.

The Taliban refused, accusing the leaders of more established factions of destroying the capital and killing at least 20,000 people in a ruthless bid for power.

However, the Taliban fighters in March rained hundreds of rockets on the capital in an

attempt to dislodge Rabbani's army.

Hundreds of people were wounded or killed before Rabbani's troops drove the Taliban out of their strongholds south of the city.

As a result Rabbani now controls the entire city, which has brought calm to Kabul, though it hasn't ended the war.

Now Mestiri has a new peace plan, but it too seems fraught with trouble.

This time the proposed multiparty council will be made up of about 80 members: Two representatives of each of the 30 provinces and about 20 so-called independent personalities to be named by the United Nations.



US President Bill Clinton (L) hugs Arthur Agee, the star of the movie "Hoop Dreams" at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas following a library dedication ceremony on Monday. Clinton, who is in his hometown of Little Rock, Arkansas for several days of rest, flew to Jonesboro for several hours. — AFP/UNB photo

## Rebels rob 4 banks in Filipino town, kill 100

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Apr 4: About 200 heavily armed men swooped down on a southern Philippine town and killed at least 100 people in a daring daylight attack Tuesday, the military and a radio station reported, says AP.

Arriving in boats and a bus, the gunmen robbed four of the town's seven banks, radio reports said.

They also ransacked at least one department store and set many buildings on fire to confuse police and soldiers, said Maj. Fredesvindo Covarubias, spokesman of the military's Southern Command.

He said that in addition to 100 people killed, another 30 were wounded as the attack turned the town of Ipil into a virtual battlefield. The military sent troops by helicopter to the town of 50,000 people, about 760 kilometres (480 miles) south of Manila, he added.

Radio reports said that in late afternoon, thick smoke from burning buildings was blanketing the town.

Among those killed were the town police chief, the commander of the 10th Infantry Battalion stationed in Ipil and a local bank manager, Covarubias said.

He said the gunmen belonged to a breakaway Muslim rebel faction that has turned to banditry.

Some already were in position when the signal was given for them to raid the banks simultaneously at around 12:45

pm (0445 GMT), the spokesman said.

Col. Roberto Santiago, commander of the army's 102nd Brigade, stationed in Ipil, said he immediately sent armored personnel carriers after the bandits, who had holed up inside the compound of the public works office.

After about a 30-minute heavy exchange of gunfire, the bandits fled toward a nearby forest, he said.

Covarubias said some of the bank money was recovered after the gunfight.

Jocelyn, a witness who was interviewed by radio station DXRZ in Zamboanga, said the armed men wore red headbands and military uniforms, but some were in short pants and civilian attire. She was not further identified.

## Ukrainian govt dismissed

KIEV, Apr 4: Ukraine's parliament dismissed the former Soviet republic's government today, saying it had failed to implement plans to reform the economy, reports Reuter.

Deputies, by a vote of 292 to 15, approved a no-confidence motion in the government headed by acting Prime Minister Yevhen Marchuk. Parliament chairman Alexander Moroz said that under the constitution, the vote automatically meant the dismissal of the government.

# 150 Hutus massacred in Burundi

BUJUMBURA, Burundi, Apr 4: At least 150 Hutus, mostly women and children have been massacred in a single village in northeastern Burundi by attackers who shot or bludgeoned them to death, the US ambassador says, reports AP.

The killings took place between Wednesday and Friday in the village of Gasorwe. Ambassador Robert Krueger said Monday. The death toll for the whole region could be as high as 450 in killings over the past two weeks.

The killings didn't appear

to be related to an exodus of Rwandan refugees last week from nearby camps. Both countries suffer from similar tensions between Hutus and Tutsis, but diplomats don't expect violence on the scale of Rwanda's ethnic massacres last year to erupt in Burundi.

Since independence in 1962, Burundi's Hutus and Tutsis have slaughtered each other in their fight for control of the country. More than 100,000 people have been killed since a failed October 1993 coup attempt by mem-

bers of the Tutsi-dominated army.

However, neither side is powerful enough to launch a large-scale massacre like the one blamed on Rwanda's military last year that killed some 500,000 people, mostly Tutsis, and sent thousands of refugees into Burundi.

Krueger said he learned about the latest massacres Friday and visited the area Saturday, touring hospitals and talking with parents of children who had been beaten to death. "I have no explanation for

why people would beat children's heads with clubs," he said. "How can you explain something like that? But that is what I saw, children who had their heads beaten in."

Even in a country that endures recurring explosions of ethnic violence — including fighting in the capital last year between Tutsi soldiers and Hutu civilians — the massacre reported by Krueger was unusually large.

The ambassador, who has publicised previous ethnic killings, was clearly horrified by what he saw.

## Armed peasants take over town in Mexico

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LAS CASAS, Mexico, Apr 4: A group of armed peasants took over a town in southern Mexico on Monday after a gunbattle that killed one person in one of many simmering land disputes in the troubled state of Chiapas, police said, reports Reuter.

The peasants seized the town hall of Las Margaritas and demanded the resignation of Mayor Romeo Suarez Culebro and the naming of a council to run the town 54 miles (90 km) southeast of San Cristobal, the official Notimex news agency said.

The battle erupted when one peasant group tried to throw a rival group off land it occupied following the outbreak of a peasant rebellion on New Year's day 1994.



As temperature begins to rise, and the new shoots of spring begin to show around the capital, the clock of Big Ben stands majestically over the early tulips that grace Parliament square on Monday heralding the start of the tourist season. — AFP/UNB photo

# Off the Record



A model displays a blue evening gown with a lace top during the Carolina Herrera fall '95 fashion show in New York on Monday. — AFP/UNB photo

## President's son held for assaulting girl friend

LUSAKA: The Zambia police has arrested Castro Chiluba, son of President Frederick Chiluba, for assaulting a female friend at a Lusaka night club, reports Xinhua.

Police spokesman Francis Musonda said on Monday that Castro was arrested and charged with assault and threatening violence on the lady immediately after the incident.

Castro, who is held in Kabwata police station in Lusaka, will appear in court Tuesday, Musonda added.

It is reported Castro became incensed after some misunderstanding with the lady who was in the company.

It is the second time Castro is arrested and charged for an assault-related offence since January this year.

## Desert soaked with liquor

ABU DHABI: The desert sands were soaked with liquor after the Gulf emirate of Sharjah destroyed thousands of bottles of alcohol in a crackdown, police said Tuesday, reports AFP.

Police used bulldozers to crush more than 6,000 whisky and beer bottles before burying them in the desert.

The bottles were seized from shops and cars over the past few months in Sharjah, which bans alcohol. Abu Dhabi, Dubai and other members of the United Arab Emirates allow alcohol for non-Muslims at authorised shops and hotels.

## 'Army of bachelors' is very worrisome

BEIJING: There are 28 single men between the ages of 25 and 49 for each single woman of like age in rural China, a China-funded Hong Kong newspaper said Tuesday, reports Reuter.

Males of all ages outnumber females by 30 million in the countryside, Wen Wei Po said.

The newspaper said it was quoting 1994 China-wide census figures and 1993 random surveys in some provinces and cities.

The ratio of newborn boys to girls in rural areas in 114 to 100, or 3.6 million more boys than girls born every year, the newspaper said.

Demographers say the problem stems from China's strict birth-control policies which limit most families to one child.

Because families traditionally want a son to carry on the family name, many people are taking advantage of modern scanning techniques to identify and abort female foetuses so they can try again to have a boy.

China will have 50 million more males than female by 2000 if the trend continues, the newspaper said, adding that China's "army of bachelors" is very worrisome.

## China's growing nuclear muscle worries India

NEW DELHI, Apr 4: India is apprehensive about a military buildup and growing nuclear muscle in China, its neighbour across the Himalayas that also is establishing a naval presence near Indian shores, says a Defence Ministry report, reports AP.

Even though Sino-Indian relations are improving, "the security environment in Asia" still has potential for turbulence, the 82-page annual report said.

"For this, it is essential that India maintains a sufficiently strong defence capability."

India is closely watching Chinese activity in neighbouring Myanmar, where Beijing is helping to modernise two deep water ports and construct a naval base, according to Jane's Defence Weekly, published in London.

The Indian report said Myanmar was being used as a sanctuary and training area for tribal insurgents fighting separatist wars in India's remote Northeast.

Concerns about China heightened last year after a Chinese trawler equipped with sophisticated tracking and surveying equipment was detained by the Indian coast guard as a suspected spy vessel. It was released under diplomatic pressure from Beijing.

China reportedly also has installed an intelligence listening post in the great Coco Islands, 30 nautical miles from India's Andaman islands chain.

India and China fought a war in 1962 over territorial claims that remain unresolved.

## Indian court orders release of 9 Americans

NEW DELHI, Apr 4: A court in a southeastern state on Tuesday ordered the release of nine Americans and a Singaporean held in jail after a religious rally they organised turned violent, a news agency reported, says AP.

The evangelists of the Houston based Gospel to the Unreached Millions have not been charged so far. The United News of India news agency said the foreigners were kept in jail because they had earlier refused to meet the conditions for bail.