

BRIEFLY

Mussolini's daughter dies: Italian dictator Benito Mussolini's eldest daughter, Edda Ciano, died Saturday at age 85 in a Rome clinic following a long illness, her doctor Enrico Pianigoni announced yesterday. AFP reports from Rome.

Reputedly Mussolini's favourite daughter, Ciano was born in Forlì, near Bologna, northeastern Italy, and married Count Galeazzo Ciano, a diplomat who became foreign minister in his father-in-law's government in 1936.

10 killed in UP polls violence: At least 10 people have been killed and more than 100 injured in violence during local council election in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, newspapers reported Saturday. AFP reports from New Delhi.

The Times of India said eight people had died Friday in poll-related clashes in India's most populous state. Another newspaper, the Indian Express, put the death toll at 11.

Russian army HQ attacked: Unknown assailants opened automatic gunfire at the Russian army headquarters in the Georgian capital and blew up a guard post in front of the Russian ambassador's residence Sunday, police said. AP reports from Tbilisi.

There were no injuries or serious damage in the early morning shooting on the headquarters of Russia's Transcaucasian Group of Forces, according to the Georgian Interior Ministry.

4 die in Gaza car bomb attack: Four Israelis were killed and more than 30 wounded yesterday in a car bomb attack on a bus in the south of the self-rule Gaza Strip, military officials said. AFP reports from Gaza City.

Four of the wounded were in serious condition after the attack near the settlement of Kfar Darom, they added.

11 miners killed in S Africa: Eleven miners were killed early yesterday and more than 40 injured in clashes between Sotho and Xhosa miners at Vaal Reefs Gold Mine in northern Orange Free State province, the Public Sabc radio station reported. AFP says from Johannesburg.

The radio said fighting broke out early Sunday morning and continued intermittently through the morning.

Hashish seized in UAE, 3 held: United Arab Emirates (UAE) coast guards have seized more than one tonne of hashish and arrested three Iranian drug smugglers, the Interior Ministry said Sunday. AFP reports from Abu Dhabi.

Around 527 kilogrammes (1,160 pounds) of the drugs were seized off the northern port of Rujairah in the Gulf of Oman, the ministry said in a statement to local newspapers.

Road mishap claims 6 in Taiwan: Six people were killed and 17 injured when a tour bus veered off a mountain road in the northern county of Hsinchu late Saturday, police said. AFP reports from Taipei.

Pien Tai Min, the driver, said he stopped the bus near the cliff side to let a truck pass in the other direction but the road crumbled and the bus plunged into the 650-metre deep valley, according to police. The driver was only slightly hurt.

Shark kills Japanese fisherman: A 20-foot (six metre) long shark attacked and killed a fisherman yesterday in the sea off Aichi prefecture, central Japan, a news report said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

Another fisherman said the shark bite the abdomen and right arm of Shintaro Hara, 47, while diving for fish. Kyodo News Service reported. Hara died in hospital.

Sleeping sickness take 171 lives: An outbreak of sleeping sickness in Arua district, northwestern Uganda, has in the past two years, killed 171 people, reported the local daily The New Vision yesterday. Xinhua reports from Kampala.

By this week, up to 100 people have been admitted in critical stages into the hospitals of Yumbe and Boyo, in northwestern Uganda.

100 feared drowned in Ghana: About 100 people are feared drowned after a boat in which they were travelling capsized on Ghana's Volta Lake, the Ghana Times reported on Saturday. Reuter says from Accra.

It quoted district administrator Laud Sarfo as saying divers had retrieved 77 bodies by Friday night after the accident on Wednesday in the Afram Plains area of eastern Ghana.

Fans pay homage to Cobain: Fans paid homage to Kurt Cobain on Saturday, strewing flowers in makeshift arrangements and burning candles in a park next to the house where the grunge rock star killed himself a year ago. AP reports from Seattle.

"It's just wonderful to be able to be here and pay my respects on his death day," said Paul Kruger, 14, of Cape Town, South Africa. "We are on holiday in America and I begged my father to bring me here. His music meant so much to me." Kruger was part of a small group of fans that gathered at Viretta Park to honour Cobain, who was lead singer of the grunge rock group Nirvana.

Zulus pull out of talks: The Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party decided Saturday to suspend participation in an elected chamber writing a new constitution, reports AP from South Africa.

The decision signalled Inkatha leader Mangosuthu Buthe's anger with the government while allowing him to stay in President Nelson Mandela's Cabinet and keep his deputies in Parliament.

Rainstorm kills 3 in Argentina: A storm that unleashed a deluge of rain killed three people and forced the evacuation of 4,000 people from a Buenos Aires province town, civil defence forces said on Saturday. Reuter reports from Buenos Aires.

Heavy rain continued to lash the province and television footage showed residents still stranded in Pergamino on rooftops and terraces asking news crews for food.

136 Haitian refugees back home: The US coast guard said it returned 136 refugees to Haiti on Saturday from a group that had braved rough seas in an overcrowded sailboat earlier this week to reach the United States. AFP reports from Washington.

The US coast guard Cutter Confidence returned the group of 126 Haitians and 12 Dominicans to Port-au-Prince around noon (1600 GMT) on Saturday, petty officer Marc Luistro told AFP.

Ruling coalition sweeps polls in Iceland

REYKJAVIK, Apr 9: The ruling Centre-right coalition in Iceland barely managed to retain the majority of seats in general elections here today winning 32 of the 63 seats in parliament, according to final results, reports AFP.

The conservative Independence Party of Prime Minister David Oddsson led all other parties in winning 37.1 per cent of the vote although it lost one of its 26 seats.

Its junior partners, the Social Democrats fell back to 11.4 per cent from 15.5 per cent and lost three of their 10 seats.

The Agrarian Progress Party confirmed its role as Iceland's second political force.

Local polls biggest political challenge for Murayama

TOKYO, Apr 9: Voting began today in local elections seen as the biggest political challenge for Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, who came to power last June, reports AFP.

Voters will elect governors in Tokyo and 12 other cities as well as more than 2,600 assembly men in 43 of Japan's 47 prefectures, officials said.

Analysts said the outcome of the elections would be an indication of voting trends in elections for the upper house of parliament slated for July when half of the 252 upper house legislators will be up for grabs.

Benazir calls for int'l talks to halt N-arms race in S Asia

PRINCETON, New Jersey, Apr 9: Asserting that India's weapons programme "threatens to start a proliferation race," Pakistan's Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto urged international talks to end the spread of weapons of mass destruction in South Asia, reports AP.

In a speech on Saturday at Princeton University, Benazir said the talks should address what she called the "increasing imbalance in conventional weapons between Pakistan and India."

Portraying Pakistan as a democratic Islamic country

committed to constitutional rule and a free market, Benazir said, "Pakistan is a force for moderation and stability in the Islamic world."

Benazir was delivering her first public address since arriving in the United States on Wednesday.

During her 10-day visit, Benazir is seeking US investment in Pakistan and the lifting of sanctions imposed in 1990 after the United States concluded Pakistan was operating a covert nuclear weapons programme.

After Benazir met on Thursday with Senate Majority

Leader Bob Dole, he said he was "impressed with her arguments."

President Clinton who is scheduled to meet Benazir on Tuesday in Washington, indicated the United States is ready to review the policy set out in a law authored by Sen. Larry Pressler in 1990 imposing sanctions against Pakistan.

Benazir spoke to about 400 people for about 20 minutes and then answered four questions that had been submitted by audience members. Her speech was simulcast to other locations on the campus.

Benazir urged the United

States to propose multilateral talks on South Asia that would include the five permanent members of the UN Security Council as well as Germany and Japan.

The forum must address the resolution of regional conflicts, including those in the Indian state of Jammu-Kashmir, she said. The Indian army is "bogged down" in Kashmir after a five-year campaign against Muslim rebels, Benazir said.

"India has adopted an infeasible and belligerent posture on Kashmir because it believes that the major powers are unwilling to censure its human rights violations", Benazir said.

"But such silence also consigns South Asia to continued tensions, a renewed arms buildup and the danger of a nuclear and missile race."

She said Pakistan has made a "significant" contribution to non-proliferation, is now negotiating for a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and has proposed creating a nuclear weapons-free zone in South Asia.

"Unfortunately, Indian ambitions have cast a long shadow," Benazir said. India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 and is about to produce the Prithvi, a short-range, nuclear-capable mobile missile, she said.

"Once it is produced, we must presume that it is has been deployed and we shall have to respond accordingly," Benazir said.

Maintaining that, "Pakistan has not made a nuclear device, nor tested one," Benazir said the Pressler Amendment should be lifted.



Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto arrives for a luncheon with UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali on Saturday in New York. Benazir is on a 10-day visit to United States. —AFP/UNB photo

US threatens to drop plans for N-cooperation with Russia

NEW YORK, Apr 9: The United States will drop plans for nuclear cooperation that Russia badly wants unless Moscow cancels a project to build nuclear reactors in Iran, the New York Times reported in its Sunday edition, says Reuter.

The newspaper said senior US officials have told Russia that if it carries out a contract to build the Iranian reactors, the United States will not renew a 22-year-old nuclear cooperation agreement or sign a broad new accord vastly increasing such cooperation.

The threat to scrap the nuclear cooperation agreements comes as frictions between Washington and Moscow have grown over Russia's military

offensive in Chechnya and its strong opposition to US plans to expand NATO, the newspaper said.

It said the broad new nuclear accord would help Russia's cash-starved Atomic Energy Ministry by advising it on new reactor designs, opening US markets to its nuclear products and allowing American companies to form joint ventures to help finance new Russian reactors.

US diplomats estimate the broad new agreement sought by Russia could translate into more than 100 million dollars in business for its Atomic Energy Ministry, the newspaper reported.

"While we haven't presented them with an ultima-

tum, we let them know that it will be hard to follow through on this nuclear cooperation if they don't reach the right conclusion on the Iran project," the Times quoted a senior US government official as saying.

"We're trying to show this will not be cost free to them," the official added.

Washington fears the Russian contract to build the reactors will speed up Iran's effort to develop a nuclear bomb by providing the country with nuclear expertise, sophisticated technologies and fissionable material.

Russian officials said on Monday they planned to go ahead with the 1 billion dollars sale of light water reactors to Iran.

Lankan peace talks may resume today

COLOMBO, Apr 9: Peace talks between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil separatist guerrillas are likely to resume today despite the killing of two soldiers by suspected rebels, officials said today.

A senior military official told Reuters the killings would not affect a three month truce between the government and rebels fighting for a separate homeland in the north and east.

The truce between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels and government troops has held since it began on January 8 without major clashes.

The Tigers have denied involvement in Saturday's incident in which

Myanmar wants to improve HR, democracy: Thai FM

BANGKOK, Apr 9: Thailand's Foreign Minister Krase Chanavongse said on his return from a two-day trip to Yangon he was satisfied with Myanmar's efforts to improve human rights and democracy, Thai newspapers reported on Sunday, reports Reuter.

He told reporters Myanmar's ruling military body was sincere in its efforts to foster national reconciliation.

"Myanmar knows about the outside world's criticism, however, each country has its own way of developing democracy and human rights," Krase was quoted as saying.

His trip followed several months of cooler relations that began when a Myanmar army offensive against minority Karen guerrillas forced thou-

sands of refugees into Thailand.

The two neighbours have since then exchanged accusations over a series of incidents along their border.

Krase had talks with his Myanmar counterpart, Ohn Gyaw, and the military government's powerful intelligence chief, Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt.

"After talking with Ohn Gyaw and Lieutenant-General Khin Nyunt I am pleased and satisfied with their efforts to develop democracy and human rights," Krase said.

"The Myanmar government is not only attempting to restore national unity, it has developed the country in many areas, including border areas," he said.

Seven killed in Karachi riot

KARACHI, Apr 9: Seven people were killed, including two police officers, when an anti-government demonstration turned into a riot, police said today, reports AP.

Hundreds of people set buses on fire, ransacked shops and fired guns into the air in Karachi's troubled eastern district of Korangi.

Paramilitary troops in armoured personnel carriers rumbled into Korangi early on Sunday morning to quell the violence, eyewitnesses said.

The demonstration was sparked by the shooting death on Saturday of Tasaduq Ali, an activist of the Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM), a militant organisation that represents Indian Muslims who came to Pakistan when the subcontinent was divided in 1947.

The MQM says Ali was arrested at a bus stop in Korangi district and shot by police.

"It was cold-blooded murder," said Shoaib Bokhari, a spokesman for the group.

Police say Ali was killed in a shootout with them.

Bokhari said the MQM is being hounded by police because of demonstrations they are staging in the United States.

SCHOOLS SUMMIT



US President Bill Clinton addresses the National Safe Schools Summit on solutions to youth violence on Saturday in Los Angeles. Over 800 hundred teachers, students and civic representatives participated in the summit. The summit was sponsored by the National Education Association. —AFP/UNB photo

JKLF seeks US help to make Kashmir free

ISLAMABAD, Apr 9: A militant group fighting Indian rule in Kashmir said on Saturday it had appealed to the United States to persuade India and Pakistan to make the disputed region independent as a "short cut" solution, reports Reuter.

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) said in a statement its chairman Amanullah Khan had sent the appeal to US President Bill Clinton in a move coinciding with Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's visit to the United States.

It quoted Amanullah's appeal as saying India, which rules two thirds of the Himalayan region, had forced Kashmiris into an armed struggle by retracting from pledges to given them their right to self-determination.

He said Pakistan, which controls the remaining third of the territory, had agreed to only a circumscribed right of self-determination to Kashmiris while denying them the right to opt for complete independence.

Peres for independent Palestinian state

JERUSALEM, Apr 9: Israel's Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has proposed the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the self-rule Gaza Strip, officials said today, reports AFP.

The minister outlined the proposal before parliament's Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee, his aides said.

In return for a sovereign state Peres suggested the Palestinians might relax demands for an Israeli army deployment on the West Bank as envisaged in the Israeli-PLO autonomy accord, the Daily Haaretz reported.

But Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat has rejected the offer because he fears it would confine him to the tiny Gaza Strip and edge him out of control of West Bank affairs.

This plan is contrary to the declaration of principles (on autonomy) of September 13, 1993, and shows that Israel is looking to separate the West Bank from the Gaza Strip, Tayeb Abdelrahim, Secretary General of the Palestinian Self-Rule Authority, told AFP.

Haaretz said today that Peres discussed the idea of an independent state of Gaza with the Palestinian international cooperation "Minister" Nabil Shaath.

Peres told the newspaper however that "all sorts of ideas are being raised, but only those coming from signed documents will commit the Israeli government."

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is to hold ministerial meetings on Monday on the state of negotiations with the Palestinians on the implementation of the autonomy accords.

Palestinian self-rule was launched in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho last May for an interim period of five years.

Talks on extending autonomy on the West Bank have stalled over an Israeli military redeployment outside Palestinian towns, originally scheduled for last July ahead of elections to a self-rule council.

The Jewish state has so far refused to withdraw its troops because of security fears for its 130,000 settlers on the West Bank.

Turkish troops may enter UN camp to flush out Kurds

SILOPI, Turkey, Apr 9: Turkey on Saturday threatened to enter the UN refugee camp at Atrush in northern Iraq to flush out Kurdish separatist guerrillas it said may be sheltering there, reports AFP.

Defence Minister Mehmet Golhan said there were rumours that rebels from the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) were in the camp, which houses refugees from Turkey as well as Iraq, but added there was "no concrete proof."

"We will go into the Atrush camp if it turns out that it is sheltering the rebels, which has been denied by the UNCHR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)," he said.

Cross-border clashes claim 12 in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, Apr 9: Heavy cross-border fighting continued for a third straight day, Sunday in this troubled former Soviet republic, with four Russian border guards and eight Muslim militants reported killed in recent clashes, reports AP.

The fighting, which already has claimed at least 31 casualties, was the bloodiest in months, and could rival a battle in the summer of 1993 in which 25 Russian border guards were killed.

The worst flareup of violence was in the southwestern Gorny Badakhshan region, where Islamic guerrillas based in neighbouring Afghanistan shelled a Russian border post, killing four servicemen.

The shelling resumed Sunday morning, Border Guard officials told the ITAR-Tass news agency. The militants reportedly were using heavy artillery to bombard the outpost from three directions.

Overnight Sunday, Russian and allied border guards also repelled two guerrilla attempts to infiltrate into Tajikistan across the River Pyandzh, killing eight Muslim militants and suffering no casualties, ITAR-Tass said.

Riots kill 8 in Tehran

TEHRAN, Apr 9: Eight people including a child and a policeman died in last week's riots in two poor suburbs of Tehran, according to a toll circulating among Iran's official circles, reports AFP.

Five demonstrators and a policeman were killed Tuesday in clashes in Akbar Abad and Nisamshahr around 20 kms (12 miles) southwest of the capital, according to the toll cited to AFP on Sunday by reliable sources.

Two demonstrators died the next day in hospital. The exact number of people wounded, estimated at dozens, is not known. Iranian authorities have given no official toll of the riots, which were triggered by rising transport prices.

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