

International

BRIEFLY

Ghali, Suharto discuss Bosnia:

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met Saturday with President Suharto to discuss international issues, including conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and East Timor.

Suharto reiterated his view that only leaders in of Yugoslavia and its former republics could solve the complex involving Bosnian Muslims, Serbs Croats and others.

Iran intends to sign NPT:

Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani said on Friday his country would support extending the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) if unspecified conditions set by Tehran were met.

We intend to sign (the treaty) but we have certain conditions, Rafsanjani told a news conference at the end of a visit to the former Soviet Republic of Georgia.

Top Kashmiri HR Lawyer shot:

A top human rights lawyer was in critical condition Saturday after two unidentified gunmen fired bullets at him in his office in Kashmir, police said.

Courts in the state's summer capital, Srinagar, closed down and hundreds of lawyers crowded a hospital where Jammu-Kashmir Bar Association president Abdul Qayoom was operated upon.

Thatcher, Sir Hillary honoured:

Queen Elizabeth II on Saturday honoured Margaret Thatcher and Everest conqueror Sir Edmund Hillary with membership in the Order of the Garter, the country's oldest order of chivalry.

Lady Thatcher's office issued a brief statement saying the former prime minister was "deeply honoured and absolutely delighted".

Mayor of a Philippine city killed:

Mayor Honorato Perez of the northern city of Cabanatuan and a bodyguard were killed in an ambush in that city early yesterday, a radio station in the Philippine capital reported.

Privately-owned Dzal Radio station said the two were shot dead by unidentified assailants. The bodyguard died instantly while Perez was rushed to the hospital but later died.

Communists mark Lenin's birthday:

Small groups of Communist supporters marked the 125th anniversary of Lenin's birth Saturday, and a poll showed a large number of Russians want the former Soviet leader's body to remain on Red Square.

On an unusually warm and sunny spring day, hundreds of people, many of them old, laid flowers at Lenin's tomb on Red Square.

Deng's daughter cancels Tokyo trip:

A daughter of Deng Xiaoping has canceled a planned visit to Japan, raising fears that the health of the 90-year-old Chinese leader has deteriorated.

The Economic Times said Deng Rong, the youngest daughter of Deng, said she could not attend next month's meeting in Tokyo of a Sino-Japanese friendship association because she was ill herself.

Quake hits southern Iran:

An earthquake measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale shook several towns in southern Iran yesterday the official Iranian News Agency Irna reported.

There were no immediate details of damage or casualties from the tremor, which hit the towns of Ghenaveh, Deilam and Bahbahan near the Gulf coast and Ahvaz in the west.

Eritrea joins NAM:

Movement (NAM) has accepted the East African nation of Eritrea as its 112th member, a press report said yesterday.

Eritrea has been officially in stated as the newest member. So now the total number of members is 112.

Child suicide rate up in US:

The suicide rate among US children has soared since 1980 chiefly due to the growing availability of guns, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) said in a report.

Between 1980 and 1992, the suicide rate among 10- to 14-year-old increased 120 per cent, from 0.8 per 100,000 to 1.7 and among 15- to 19-year-old the rate increased 28.3 per cent, from 8.5 to 10.9 per 100,000, the report said.

Algerian CNT member killed:

A member of Algeria's transitional legislative authority, Arezki Oukid, was killed Friday in Algiers, the organisation said in a statement on television.

Oukid, 71, who was also a member of the Liberal Social Party, is reportedly the fifth member of the National Transition Council (CNT) killed in attacks attributed to armed Islamic groups.

Malaria claims 60 in Assam:

Sixty people have been killed in a two-week outbreak of malaria in India's northeastern state of Assam, officials said on Friday.

Thai soldiers kill 2 car thieves:

Two suspected car thieves were shot dead in a clash with Thai soldiers yesterday as they tried to smuggle two vehicles across the border into Cambodia.

The two, who were believed to be Cambodian, were killed after they opened fire on Thai soldiers who ordered them to stop as they approached a remote border checkpoint in two cars in the early hours of Saturday, a Thai army officer said.

Filipino Imam held:

A Muslim religious leader and two Muslim policemen have been arrested for allegedly aiding fundamentalist terrorists, the police chief of General Santos said yesterday.

Superintendent Renato Santos, Police Chief of General Santos city, told the Catholic Church-owned DXCP Radio station that city Imam Sheikh Mohammad Abedin, Inspector Emil Absari and patrolman Abdul Manan Muksan were arrested Friday as they stepped out of a mosque.

Saudi Arabia executes 1 more:

Saudi Arabia has executed a man for murder, raising to 37 the number of people beheaded in the conservative kingdom this month.

Saudi Television, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, said the man was beheaded on Friday in northern Saudi Arabia after a religious court convicted him of murder.

5 more die in Karachi violence:

The industrial district of Karachi was plunged into further violence yesterday following an outbreak of political conflict, overnight that claimed five lives, police said.

Rival factions of the ethnic based Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) were engaged in a "hit and run" spree, a police official said after recovering a bullet-riddled body of an activist early morning.

Serbs block diplomats at Sarajevo airport Ghali warns of UN withdrawal if factions defy ceasefire

JAKARTA, Apr 22: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali warned today that UN peacekeepers could be withdrawn if the warring factions in Yugoslavia do not respect a ceasefire, reports Reuter.

If they don't want to respect the ceasefire, we can do nothing. Our mandate is to help the protagonists of the dispute. But if the political will does not exist, then we must withdraw, he told a foreign affairs forum in Jakarta.

Boutros-Ghali arrived in the Indonesian capital on Friday to help commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Asia-Africa Conference in the Hilltown of Bandung.

He said the United Nations cannot enforce peace because its mandate was to help maintain a ceasefire in Yugoslavia.

If there is a political will in maintaining the ceasefire, then we will assist, he said during a question-answer session.

Both the Bosnian government and the Bosnian Serbs turned down a renewal of the truce deal signed at the end of December in talks with UN special envoy Yasushi Akashi on Thursday.

The truce has been torn apart in recent weeks by Bosnian government army offensives that have won strategic high ground allowing them to dominate vital Serb communications routes.

The Bosnian Serbs have responded by shelling civilian area and say they are mobilising to strike back at the Muslims.

An earlier report from Sarajevo adds: Bosnian Serbs blocked US and German diplomats at Sarajevo airport, refusing to allow them to enter the city in a humiliating blow for international peace efforts and the United Nations mission.

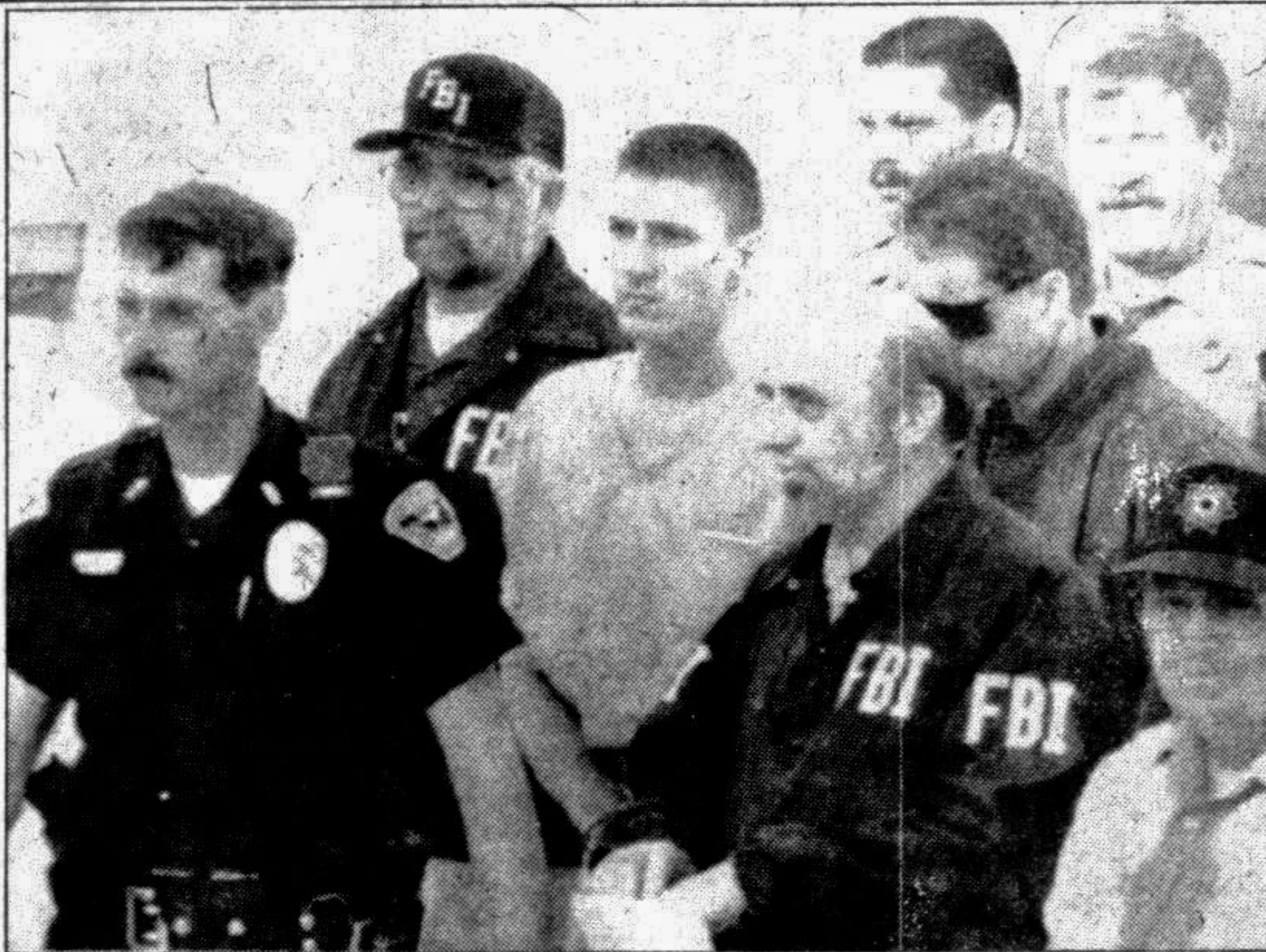
The Serbs forced the diplomats to spend the night on French army cots at the city's shell shattered airport terminal, UN officials said.

Serb officers protested against the arrival of three western peace envoys and a senior United States diplomat on a UN plane questioning why they had come to the Bosnian capital.

The Serbs issued an implied threat to shoot the envoys and withdraw all cooperation if the diplomats tried to travel into the city from the UN air airport on its outskirts.

I deeply deplore this incident today, said UN special envoy Yasushi Akashi who stayed in Sarajevo after two days of talks with the Bosnian government and the Serbs to try to negotiate the envoy's safe passage.

I hope we can resolve this unfortunate incident in a satisfactory manner so these diplomats can continue the difficult search for peace, Akashi said.



Tim McVeigh, 27 is led from the Noble County Courthouse by FBI agents after being charged on Friday with involvement in the April 19 bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The FBI is also questioning another suspect in the incident. Terry Nichols, who turned himself into authorities in Herington, Kansas.

Rao slams NPT, stresses fair global pact

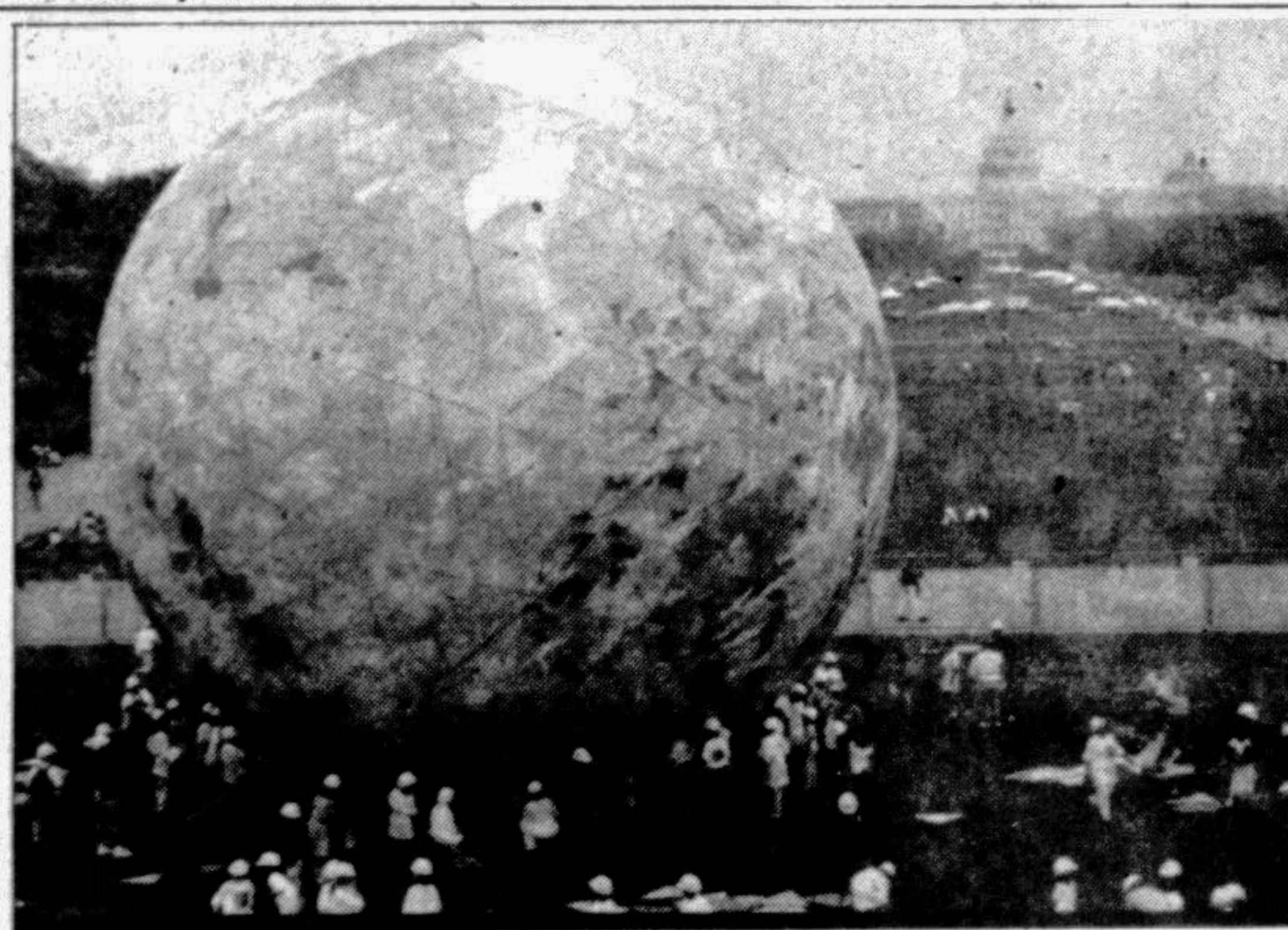
NEW DELHI, Apr 22: Indian Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao on Friday slammed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) for failing to prevent arms races and stressed the need for a fair and verifiable global pact, reports AFP.

The failure of the NPT is evident from Pakistan's clandestine activities to achieve nuclear weapons capability, Rao told a joint conference of senior members of India's defence forces.

India opposes the NPT on the grounds that it discriminates against countries that do not have nuclear weapons and has not been a signatory to the pact.

New Delhi has reacted sharply to last year's admission by former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that Islamabad possessed a nuclear bomb.

India, which exploded a nuclear device in the western desert state of Rajasthan in 1974, says it does not have a bomb and will not make one.



More than 1,200 students from across the US assemble a five-storey globe on the National Mall in Washington on Friday. The globe is part of the festivities to mark the 25th anniversary of Earth Day. Which was celebrated on Saturday.

Fresh LTTE attack, just a tactical move or resumption of war?

COLOMBO, Apr 22: After 100 days of peace, the battle is on again in Sri Lanka. Within days of its collapse, a ceasefire in this island's ethnic conflict now looks like a cruelly teasing interlude in a war that has dragged on for almost a dozen years, reports AP.

What no one knows is if the war has resumed or if Tamil rebels are just increasing pressure on the government, which had been hoping for a peace dividend to spark economic growth.

If the skirmishes die down within the next few days and there is no over-reaction by the military, there may still be hope for peace talks, said Charles Abeysekera, a member of the government's team negotiating with the rebels.

The government scrapped a 5-year-old economic embargo on the rebel-held Jaffna Peninsula and gave other concessions, but the rebels held out for other demands.

The rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, claiming systematic discrimination of Sri Lanka's Tamils by its Sinhalese majority, have been fighting for independence in the Tamil-dominated north and east since 1983.

Peace talks began in October after a war-weary nation threw out the party that had led Sri Lanka for 17 years and chose President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who promised to end the war with a deal for greater Tamil autonomy.

Four rounds of talks proved futile.

The military responded Thursday by destroying two rebel boats and shelling their coastal bases. Casualty figures from those attacks were not immediately available.

On Friday, rebels ambushed police near the town of Uppuveli, 145 miles northeast of the capital Colombo, and killed at least five policemen. Six were wounded and one was missing.

It seems unlikely the Tigers will return to the peace process, unless there is significant movement towards their unmet demands, said Saravanamuttu Paikiasothy, a political commentator.

But Kumaratunga has promised to keep trying to negotiate to end the war that already has claimed more than 34,000 lives.

Critics say she did not take seriously enough the rebel's threats to halt the peace process, and the government was ill-prepared for resumed hostilities.

I don't think the government thought of a fall back position if the talks failed, said Harry Goonatilake, a former air force chief.



A young boy shouts slogans during a march by the Islamic fundamentalist group Hizb-ut-Tahrir on Friday, to express their wish for the reestablishment of the Khilafat (Islamic state) and to protest against the influence of western secular society on Islamic states. The protest included chants against Benazir Bhutto, Pakistan's Prime Minister, King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

India threatens 'counter-strategy' if US delivers F-16s to Pakistan

NEW DELHI, Apr 22: Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee has said New Delhi will be forced to adopt a "counter-strategy" if a US freeze on the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan is lifted, reports AFP.

If it (the delivery of F-16s) happens, so far as our security is concerned we will have to take the counter-strategy, Mukherjee said in a televised interview late Thursday.

No country can compromise its security environment, Mukherjee did not spell out the measures India would take but said it would not like to enter into an "uncalled for arms race" sparked by Pakistan's "enhanced striking power".

The Clinton administration is planning a review of the Pressler amendment which banned the sale of military hardware and F-16s to Pakistan after failing to impose a variable cap on Islamabad's nuclear programme in 1990.

Filipinos protest senatorial bid of Marcos' son

MANILA, Apr 22: Former Philippine President Corason Aquino on Friday led thousands of people in a campaign to reject the senatorial bids of the son of the late ousted dictator Ferdinand Marcos and coup plotter Gregorio Honsan, reports Reuter.

Hundreds of people marched through Manila's financial district carrying banners urging voters to reject Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr and "Gringo" Honsan, who led three of six coup attempts while Aquino was president.

Marcos and Honsan are running for the senate in the may 8 elections.

Bouquet for Winnie

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 22: President Nelson Mandela has sent a bouquet to his estranged wife Winnie, who has been hospitalised here for a kidney disorder, private Radio 702 said Friday, reports AFP.

The president included a card wishing a speedy recovery for the woman he sacked from her ministerial post twice in the past three weeks, the radio said.

Doctors have described Winnie Mandela's condition as "serious but stable".

She was admitted to a private hospital on Tuesday believed to be suffering from stress following her dismissal by Mandela, her successful demand to be reinstated on technical grounds and her second and final sacking.

But a later statement from the Linksfield Park Clinic said her condition was "in no way related to stress or any other possible psychosomatic disorder."

Off the Record

Spencers separate

LONDON: Earl Spencer, Princess Diana's only brother, confirmed Friday that he and his wife would be living apart "for the foreseeable future," reports AP.

Spencer, 30, said earlier this month that his 29-year-old wife, the former model Victoria Lockwood, was in a private clinic near London. He said the countess, who has been treated for addiction and eating disorders, has "serious psychological problems."

The couple's statement, issued by their lawyers Fladgate Fielder, followed The Sun newspaper's report Friday that they would separate.

The couple said, "notwithstanding past happiness together, they decided earlier this year that for the foreseeable future they would live apart," and that the decision was "entirely amicable."

They married on September 16, 1989, after a six-week romance, and had four children in four years, including twin girls. Their only son, 12-month-old Louis, is heir to the title.

The marriage hit early trouble when Spencer admitted a brief affair with an old flame six months after the wedding. Friday's statement said the countess will have a house on the Spencer estate, "to enable the children to spend as much time as possible with their parents."

Rare egg indeed!

LONDON: One of the biggest bird eggs ever laid — from a Madagascan great elephant bird — sold in London at auction on Thursday for 15,525 pounds (25,060 dollars), reports Reuter.

The bird, which resembled a giant ostrich, became extinct well before the turn of the 19th century. The egg was about 300 years old and the owner was a French biologist.

The 15-inch (38 cm)-long egg was bought by Museon, a museum in The Hague in the Netherlands, where it will go on display in an exhibition about island evolution, said Bonhams auctioneers.

N Korea may resume nuclear talks with US

TOKYO, Apr 22: North Korea left open the possibility today that it might resume talks with the United States on their deal to end the communist state's nuclear programme, reports Reuter.

A statement by the North Korean Foreign Minister carried by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), monitored in Tokyo, said Pyongyang was studying a proposal by the United States to hold higher-level talks after meetings between technical experts broke down in Berlin this week.

The talks stalled over North Korean opposition to South Korea supplying reactors to replace Pyongyang's present models which produce plutonium that could be used in nuclear weapons.

Just after the negotiations broke off, roving ambassador of the US State Department Robert L Gallucci proposed political talks with the DPRK (North Korea) in the first week of May in Geneva, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said.

We will take a necessary decisive measure, after getting a detailed report of the negotiations from the DPRK delegation and sounding of the real intention of the US side on the government level.

AFP adds: The North Korean chief negotiator to nuclear talks with the United States Friday blamed the "unrealistic and unreasonable" US approach to the Berlin talks for their failure.

Speaking to reporters shortly before returning home, Kim Jong U repeated Pyongyang's rejection, on safety grounds, of South Korean technology to replace a North Korean plant that Washington suspects of having a weapons capability.

Kim said it would be up to the North Korean government to decide on "relevant action"

been scheduled to leave Sunday for a meeting in Paris with representatives from 23 donor countries, postponed her trip because of the renewed warfare.

Most foreign investors had adopted a wait-and-see attitude pending results from the negotiations anyway, but a massive resumption of military operations on both sides will have a severe negative impact on investor confidence, said Roberto Benjerrod, the World Bank representative here.

The Colombo Stock Exchange, which had been static during the past few months, declined by more than 3 per cent in trading since Wednesday.