

BRIEFLY

Birendra to visit London : King Birendra of Nepal is scheduled to leave for London next week to attend the commemoration of 50 years of peace after the end of the World War II, a palace announcement said Friday. AP reports from Kathmandu.

The Nepalese monarch was invited by Queen Elizabeth II of England, his aides said. King Birendra will be accompanied by his children, Prince Nirajan and Princess Sruti.

Jetliner crash-lands in UK : A jetliner crash-landed at Ringway Airport in Manchester, northern England, early Friday when part of its undercarriage collapsed after touchdown. AP reports from Manchester.

All 171 passengers and seven crew slid to safety down the evacuation chutes of the twin engine McDonnell Douglas MD-83, operated by Airtours, a charter company.

Oklahoma blast toll now 106 : The death toll in last week's Federal building bomb attack rose Thursday to 106, officials said, APP reports from Oklahoma City.

Ninety-four people still were unaccounted for, according to a spokesman at a special information centre set up for the crisis.

14 die in NZ platform collapse : Thirteen college students and a park guide plunged 30 metres (100 feet) to their deaths Friday when a wooden viewing platform on a cliff collapsed onto rocks below. AP reports from Greymouth, New Zealand.

Officials said the platform, which overlooked a spectacular narrow valley, was built three years ago and was designed to carry the weight of only 10 people. Police are investigating claims that 18 crowded onto it before it collapsed.

Fatah member's wife killed : Lebanese police shot dead the wife of a Palestinian guerrilla yesterday when they broke into his house to arrest him, security sources said. Reuter reports from Sidon, Lebanon.

They said police heard weapons being cocked in the house of Mohammad Rouhi Saleh, a member of Abu Nidal's Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC), and went in shooting. Saleh escaped without firing a shot but his 35-year-old wife Yusra was killed by police bullets, the sources said.

Singapore hangs 3 Malaysians : Three Malaysian labourers went to the gallows in Singapore on Friday for a murder they committed 10 years ago, a prison department spokeswoman said. AFP reports from Singapore.

The three men, who were hanged at dawn in Changi Prison, were identified by the spokeswoman as Jabar Kade Mastan, Gangthran Chadrin and Nadison Kumar.

Myanmar dissident surrenders : Banyar Zaw, secretary general of the dissident Burmese Association in Japan (BAJ), gave himself up to military authorities in Yangon, Myanmar official radio said on Thursday. AFP reports from Bangkok.

Radio Yangon, in a broadcast monitored in Bangkok said that the 26-year-old dissident had earlier surrendered to the Myanmar Embassy in Japan on April 21.

Keating to visit Japan May 24 : Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating will make a state visit to Japan from May 24 to 28, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said on Friday. Reuter reports from Tokyo.

Keating will meet Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and is expected to speak at a luncheon meeting of business leaders. The ministry said Keating will also meet Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko.

6 killed in Khmer attack : Six people were killed and many wounded by a Khmer Rouge mortar bomb which hit a video parlour in the northwest Cambodian border town of Popet. Cambodian officials said yesterday. Reuter reports from Aranyaprathet, Thailand.

Popet police chief Major Hem Teng told reporters the Khmer Rouge guerrillas fired six mortar bombs into the town late on Thursday. Six people were killed instantly when one of the bombs hit a packed video hall, he said without giving an exact number of wounded.

Rebels kill 5 in Manipur : Five persons were shot dead by armed extremists at Lilong Haoreibi Lairakhong area in Manipur's Thoubal district early Friday morning, according to official reports. PTI says from Imphal.

The victims were called out from their respective houses and lined up before being shot at from a point-blank range, the reports said. Police forces from Thoubal and Imphal have gone to the spot for investigation.

Canberra-Rome accord on defence : Australia and Italy have signed an agreement on defence industry and logistics cooperation strengthening the two countries' existing defence ties, Australian Defence Minister Robert Ray said on Friday. Reuter report from Canberra.

Ray said in a statement issued in Canberra he had signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Italian Defence Minister Domenico Corcione in Rome on Thursday.

Murderer executed in Alabama : A man who killed a crippled man with an axe during a break-in was executed in the electric chair Friday morning. AP reports from Atmore, Alabama.

Willie Clisby, 47, made no final statement. Clisby's attorneys argued in their final appeals that the electric chair is illegally cruel. In rejecting a request for a stay, federal judge A L Edmondson said there is no evidence that the disfigurement and burning of a corpse is cruel and unusual punishment.

10 die in Philippine raid : Muslim extremist guerrillas attack the southern Philippines coastal town of Tungawan on Friday, leaving 10 people dead, in the second such assault since the pillaging of the neighbouring town of Ipil earlier this month, police said. AFP reports from Zamboanga.

Heavy fighting raged in Tungawan, about 760 kilometers (471 miles) south of Manila in Mindanao island, after about 150 members of the fundamentalist group Abu Sayyaf raided the town around 12.30 PM (0430 GMT). Police sources in Zamboanga said.

Road mishap claims 12 in Iran : Twelve people died and 22 others were seriously injured when a bus collided with a tanker truck full of petrol in southeast Iran, the official agency IRNA reported, yesterday. AFP says from Tehran.

UN warns of 'full-scale war' as fighting erupts in Bosnia

SARAJEVO, Apr 28 : The United Nations warned of possible "full-scale war" in Bosnia amid heavy new fighting in Sarajevo and other trouble spots, reports AP.

Clashes were reported Thursday in Bosnia's northeast and northwest as well as in Sarajevo, where increased sniping led officials to temporarily shut all schools — a rare step since early 1993, when schools reopened in the Bosnian capital.

Serb sharpshooters and machine-guns targeted sections of "Snipers Alley," the main east-west route, and a supposedly more safe alternative road. UN officials spoke of skirmishes in several front-line areas within Sarajevo.

French peacekeepers returned sniper fire near the former Holiday Inn — near the spot where a French peacekeeper was killed by sniper fire this month — as did

French engineers near the western suburb of Stup after being caught in a crossfire. And an armored personnel carrier manned by Danish peacekeepers near Sarajevo's airport also fired back after finding itself in the middle of a firefight.

"We can assess the pattern basically as a slippage towards a full-scale war," UN spokesman Alexander Ivanko said Thursday. "We see lots of pockets of very heavy military activity."

Ivanko said the United Nations has strongly protested to both warring parties for recent increased use of heavy weapons inside the city's 20-kilometre exclusion zone.

Under a UN-brokered agreement, the zone is supposed to be clear of such Weapons. Ivanko said the United Nations has warned the combatants that "all available

means," including NATO air strikes, will be used to prevent attacks on civilians.

NATO has struck at Serb targets several times in the course of the more than three-year war, to protect civilians or UN peacekeepers. But with the United Nations now reluctant to use NATO air power because of fears of retaliation against its personnel, the NATO threat has lost its teeth.

Ivanko also warned that nations contributing troops to the peacekeeping effort will "have to look very hard at their presence here" if the violence that has left more than 200,000 people dead or missing continued.

Fighting escalated Thursday in northeastern Bosnia, along front lines near Serb-held Doboj, before ebbing later in the day.

Bosnian government troops continued a three-day-old in-

fantry attack on Serb positions south of the besieged government enclave of Bihać, in northwestern Bosnia, said another UN spokesman, Maj Herve Gourmelon. This fighting also declined late in the day.

In Sarajevo, a new round of UN-Serb talks on breaking the deadlock over who may travel on UN aircraft into Sarajevo ended with no agreement.

Earlier in the day, a plane turned back in midair after Serbs, increased that an earlier aircraft brought in UN civilians, said they could not guarantee the security of other flights. The United Nations later agreed to a Serb demand that the four fly out again by Thursday evening.

The Serbs claim Bosnian government figures have been using the flights to lobby abroad for weapons and other help.



US President Bill Clinton met Thursday with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in Washington. Kozyrev met with Clinton amid signs that next month's Moscow summit could be marked by friction on several fronts. — AFP/UNB photo

Tigers kill 19 soldiers Lanka will buy more weapons to meet security needs

COLOMBO, Apr 28: Sri Lanka will buy more weapons to meet security needs following intensified rebel activity in the north, defence sources said here today, reports Xinhua.

The present People's Alliance government cancelled a 72 million US dollar weapons deal after it assumed office last August.

Thereafter it refrained from buying any military equipment as an indication of its genuine desire for peace through a negotiated settlement.

The government plans to buy helicopters, naval craft,

armoured personnel carriers and other military hardware on a long term credit basis, the sources added.

AP adds: Avenging an attack on two of their bases, Tamil rebels killed 19 soldiers early Friday in an offensive in northern Sri Lanka, military officials said.

The battle, which also left five guerrillas dead and 14 soldiers wounded, came a day after troops and helicopter gunships killed at least 18 rebels.

In Colombo, a suspected rebel gunman on Friday shot

dead a ruling Peoples' Alliance politician. Vinodan Kumaraswamy, police said.

Kumaraswamy, 43, a Tamil politician, was the ruling party's organiser for the Jaffna Province, was shot five times with a revolver in his home by a man who escaped on foot.

No one claimed responsibility for the assassination and details were not immediately available.

In another incident on Friday, a policeman was killed and two wounded when rebels attacked a police post in the eastern Batticaloa district.



Workers exhume bodies from a mass grave at Kibeho refugee camp Thursday to count the dead following the massacre of Hutu refugees allegedly committed by the Tutsi-dominated Rwandan army April 23. — AFP/UNB photo

Hamas leader tortured to death in Israeli jail

JERUSALEM, Apr 28: A Palestinian suspect who died after three days of Israeli interrogation was killed by an "abnormal event" during his detention, police sources said on Thursday, reports AFP.

Initial autopsy results showed that illness was not to blame for the death on Tuesday of Abdel Samed Hrizat, a suspected Hamas guerrilla leader, they said.

Further examinations at the Abu Kabir Centre in Tel-Aviv were needed to establish the cause of death, they added.

Hrizat was arrested on Saturday in Hebron and taken to Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital in a coma on Monday after three days of questioning by agents of the Shin Beth, Israel's internal security service.

The Palestinian authority and Hrizat's family charged that Shin Beth agents tortured the 30-year-old computer programmer to death.

Jayalalitha loses ground

NEW DELHI, Apr 28: A film actress-turned-chief minister in southern India suffered a setback in her battle against prosecution as a court ruled an allegedly combative governor was justified in backing the case against her, reports AFP.

Jayalalitha Jayaram, whose AIADMK party rules Tamil Nadu state, lost ground on Thursday when the Madras High Court ruled that Governor M Channa Reddy could support the prosecution against her. She is facing corruption and criminal misconduct charges, dailies said on Friday.

Reddy has allowed Subramaniam Swamy, president of the Janata (people's) Party, to sue Jayaram for allegedly favouring her friends in a coal deal.

Japan expels soldier for aiding Aum

TOKYO, Apr 28: Japan's army expelled one soldier and suspended another Friday, saying they leaked word of police raids to the doomsday cult that is the prime suspect in the nerve gas attack on Tokyo's subways, reports AP.

The expelled soldier, Sgt. Takahisa Shirai, 25, also admitted to staging a firebomb attack on the Aum Shinri Kyo sect's headquarters the day before the subway killings in an attempt to disrupt a police investigation of the sect, officials said.

The revelations were a new shock for authorities who have been under fire for the slow-moving investigation into the sect.

More than a month after the Tokyo attack, which killed 12 people and sickened more than 5,500, police are still looking for Shoko Asahara, the cult's self-proclaimed messiah and guru.

Off the Record

Because she lives above the store....

WASHINGTON: The nation's First Daughter did not go to work with her parents for Take Our Daughters to Work Day, and the White House had a simple explanation: "She lives above the store," reports AP.

Chelsea Clinton, 15, went to school, as she did a year ago for the day set aside for parents who want to show their daughters the workplace.

"The Clintons take their daughter to work every day because they live above the store," said the First Lady's press secretary, Lisa Caputo. "And Chelsea is at school today."

But to dozens of daughters of White House staff and reporters, it was a special day.

Alix Kantor, 11, accompanied Trade Representative Mickey Kantor to a White House meeting and a quick television interview on the north lawn. As her father answered questions, Alix scribbled in a note pad. Several reporters brought their daughters, too.

The White House hosted a breakfast for about 50 staff daughters and girls who live in public housing and are taking part in the nationwide Ms Foundation Programme for Women, the chief sponsor of Thursday's event.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton was dropping by. The day was celebrated across country.



When patience is a necessity

ROME: Patience is a virtue. It's also a necessity for people calling Italian bureaucrats, reports AP.

A poll by the Rome newspaper Il Messaggero found, that callers to government ministries had to wait an average of 5.8 rings before they get an answer.

The quickest answers were at the ministries of public instruction and post and telecommunications, which picked up after one ring. The worst: agriculture, environment and industry ministries, which did not respond after 13 rings and then the line went dead.

The poll, conducted Wednesday between 5 pm and 5:30 pm, was in response to an inquiry begun by Public Works Minister Franco Frattini on the excessive waiting periods.

Italian government offices are supposed to be open until early evening because of an afternoon break.

'Claudia — the story of a life'

ROME: Italian actress Claudia Cardinale was raped and gave birth to a son who she pretended was her brother to avoid damaging her film career, according to extracts from her autobiography to be published in Italy on May 2, reports AFP.

Cardinale, 57, wrote that a "violent man of dubious character" raped her in her youth when she lived in Tunisia.

She continued her relationship with the man for a year, during which her first son Patrick was born, whom she presented officially as her brother.

Now 37 and living in New York, Patrick did not team until many years later that she was his mother.

Written in collaboration with Italian film journalist Anna Maria Mori, the autobiography "Io Claudia, Tu Claudia, Il Romanzo di Una Vita" (I Claudia, You Claudia, The Story of a Life) narrates an account of Cardinale's youth in a Sicilian family living in Tunisia, and the difficulty of being an actress and a mother.

Iron Lady getting soft?

KANSAS CITY, Missouri: No, the Iron Lady isn't getting soft, reports AP.

Lady Margaret Thatcher warned against social safety nets that she said encourage people to remain in poverty.

"As many, many good causes come to you, you have to say 'No.' And women are much better at it than men," she said, smiling.

Speaking at a fund-raiser Wednesday for a health centre that primarily serves the poor. The former prime minister of Great Britain said she has seen a stronger spirit of philanthropy in the United States than anywhere else.

"As you do better for yourselves, you turn around and give others a hand and help them up the ladder of opportunities," she said.

'Bionic man'

NEW YORK: They call Chuck Tiemann the bionic man, reports AP.

The former utility lineman in Braman, Oklahoma, lost his left leg and right arm in an accident atop an electrical pole 15 years ago. He's now among the first amputees to test a new generation of artificial limbs that provide the senses of touch, hot and cold.

Tiemann's local TV appearance helped him get the nickname — after the 1970s TV superhero. But he's not planning on lifting cars or outrunning trains any time soon. He's more concerned with simpler skills.

"The first time I could reach out and touch my wife's hand and feel the warmth after more than a decade — that was a very emotional moment," he said.

The sensory system is under development by the Sabolich Prosthetic Research Centre in Oklahoma City, a division of Novacare Inc, a large Valley Forge, Pennsylvania-based physical rehabilitation company.

Sabolich planned to formally unveil the system Thursday. It said the timing was coincidental to the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing that left a large number of people maimed.

The system uses pressure and temperature sensors and electronic circuits embedded in the false arms and legs. These circuits are connected to electrodes patched to the skin of the remaining limb. The electrodes transfer the pulses to nerve endings and the brain.

John Sabolich, Novacare's national prosthetics director, said two years of tests began this spring that ultimately will involve 120 amputees nationwide.

There are also benefits for non-amputees.

Fighting in Chechnya continues

MOZDOK, Russia, Apr 28: Sporadic fighting continued in Chechnya on Friday hours after Moscow's 14-day ceasefire began in the southern republic. Four Russian servicemen were reported wounded, says AP.

Later in the day, Russian and Chechen military commanders planned to meet to discuss the truce.

President Boris Yeltsin ordered the unilateral ceasefire for a Moscow visit by world leaders in May. The ceasefire took effect at 12:01 am Friday (20:01 GMT Thursday) and was to last until May 12.

President Bill Clinton on Thursday urged Yeltsin to make it a permanent settle-

ment. In a 30-minute telephone conversation, Clinton welcomed a halt in the fighting but said it had not eased his deep concern about the war-torn Caucasus.

Russian Maj Gen Gennady Troshcheyev planned to meet Friday with the chief of staff of Chechen forces, Aslan Maskhadov, to discuss the truce, the Interfax news agency reported.

There were few signs that the fighting in the breakaway region would stop.

Russian troops shelled the battered Chechen village of Bamut and squared off with rebel fighters Thursday.

Modern-day 'bandits' threatening Hajis

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates, Apr 28: Muslim pilgrims, who in centuries past feared being ambushed by bandits as their camel caravans trudged through the desert to Makkah, these days have to be wary of disreputable travel agencies, reports AFP.

In the past few years there have been reports of tour operators lodging pilgrims in crowded apartment rooms instead of the hotels advertised, and of putting them in buses that break down in the intense desert heat.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has taken steps to protect those making this year's pilgrimage to the holy cities of Makkah and Medina which

culminates on May 10.

The UAE's 60 *muqawwil*es, the agencies which organise pilgrimage of Hajj tours, have been ordered to set aside funds which could be used to settle any complaints filed by pilgrims.

The government has also launched a media campaign against dishonest tour operators.

Eleven agencies had their licences withdrawn after failing to "fulfill their contracts with the pilgrims", during the last Hajj, an official with the UAE's Religious Affairs Ministry told AFP.

For 6,500 dirhams (nearly 1,767 dollars), the travel agency promises to provide the pilgrim with the plane trip

from the UAE to Saudi Arabia, food and board, as well as transportation between the holy sites in Makkah and Medina.

For those travelling by road the trip costs 3,500 dirhams (950 dollars), *muqawwil* official said.

An expatriate in the Gulf Arab state of Bahrain who made the pilgrimage last year said that buses and their air conditioners often broke down and left passengers to endure the suffocating desert heat.

"The pilgrim is cheated as soon as he arrives in Saudi Arabia where he has to pay a tax of 440 dirhams (more than 110 dollars) that the *muqawwil* is supposed to have taken care

of," he added.

Then "the hotel promised in the brochures turns out to be an apartment where four to six people are crowded into a room," he said.

A travel agent contacted from Dubai said some end up sleeping in the open air or in mosques and have to wait days before they can reach their tour representative to complain.

Through cheating, "a tour operator can make a net profit of 40,000 dollars from each group of 100 pilgrims," according to an economist on a pilgrimage.

About two million Muslims are expected to make the pilgrimage this year.

Ex-Beijing party chief under house arrest

BEIJING, Apr 28: Former Beijing Communist Party chief Chen Xitong, who was fired on Thursday, has been placed under house arrest, reliable sources said today, reports AFP.

Chen was picked up by police late Thursday and taken to an unknown location shortly after the official announcement of his dismissal, they said.

The official news agency Xinhua reported today that the dismissal was linked to the recent suicide of Beijing Deputy Mayor Wang Baosen, who was accused of corruption.

Chen, 65, was replaced by Politburo member Wei Jianxing in his posts of municipal

party committee secretary and standing committee member, a Beijing government spokesman confirmed today.

UN bankrupt, says Ghali

CANBERRA, Apr 28: United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said today the United Nations was bankrupt and the persistent failure of UN members to pay levies was one of his greatest frustrations, reports Reuter.

"I am bankrupt — the UN is bankrupt. This is one of my greatest frustrations," Boutros-Ghali told.