

BRIEFLY

Walesa to seek reelection: Polish President Lech Walesa yesterday announced he plans to stand for re-election as president in an election due later this year...

Nazarbayev's tenure extended: President Nursultan Nazarbayev said Sunday that voters in his Central Asian country gave him a clear mandate to remain in office until the year 2000...

Japan ready to recognise Bosnia: Japan has expressed readiness to recognise the state of Bosnia Hercegovina, the Vice-President of Bosnia's Muslim-Croat Federation Ejup Ganic said Sunday...

Bombay is now Mumbai: Bombay, India's bustling financial capital, will be known by its native name from Monday. The provincial government announced yesterday...

Funeral for ROK gas victims held: Eleven hearses slowly circled the dusty school yard on Sunday morning. Hundreds of students stood silently with heads bowed to bid farewell to classmates who were among 100 people killed in a gas explosion...

UNTA frees 7 POWs: The rebel UNITA movement has freed seven prisoners-of-war (POWs), the first such release since it signed peace accords with the Angolan government last November...

One more to die in China: A man who doused his ex-wife with kerosene and set her on fire after she refused to remarry him has been sentenced to death...

Chiang Kai-Shek's widow to visit US: Chinese anti-nationalist leader Chiang Kai-Shek's 96-year-old widow will address the US Senate, 52 years after her last speech to Congress in Washington...

Palestinian cop shot dead: A Palestinian policeman has shot dead a fellow policeman on the Gaza Strip, the authorities said yesterday...

Vietnam bans child labour: Communist Vietnam has banned child labour in 81 harsh and harmful work environments, the semi-official Vietnam Investment Review reported yesterday...

5 killed in Mogadishu: At least five people were killed and 11 others were injured when a clan militia gang's artillery piece accidentally discharged outside Mogadishu's sea port...

Ghali arrives in NZ: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived in New Zealand yesterday to begin a four day visit. AFP reports from Wellington...

Anti-govt rally in Bahrain: Riot police stormed a university campus in Bahrain to disperse about 200 students staging an anti-government protest...

Peace talks on Nagorno-Karabakh to resume soon: LONDON, Apr 30: The warring sides in the seven-year-old conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian majority enclave inside Azerbaijan...

Chirac likely to win French presidency: PARIS, Apr 30: Conservative Jacques Chirac is likely to win the French presidency with between 54 and 55 per cent of the vote...

Gaddafi invites Clintons to live safely in Libya: TRIPOLI, Apr 30: Libyan Leader Moamer Gaddafi on Saturday invited US President Bill Clinton and his wife Hillary to live in safety from right-wing American extremists in Libya...

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Troops on top alert in Colombo fearing LTTE attacks today

COLOMBO, Apr 30: Security forces in the Sri Lankan capital were placed on top alert today ahead of the May Day holiday amid fears that Tamil rebels may try to carry out attacks here...

The authorities adopted further security measures including checks on passengers at Colombo's main railway station for Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) rebels who may have infiltrated the capital...

"We cannot afford to drop our guard. The Tiges have done it in the past and they might do it again," said a military official, referring to the LTTE's previous bombing campaigns in Colombo.

The government was confident that security forces would ensure that they are geared to face any threat posed by the LTTE while ensuring maximum possible security and safety to the civilian population...



A police officer inspects the damage of a bomb site on Saturday in northern Kashmir where Muslim guerillas are fighting for a separate state. — AFP/UNB photo

Cong plans to amend TADA to woo Muslim voters

NEW DELHI, Apr 30: The Indian government, seeking to tone down tough anti-terrorist laws ahead of next year's elections, was set to call a crucial meeting with opposition parties...

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

Rao told parliament on Friday there was still a need for an anti-terrorist law, but it is clear that the law as it is should not continue.

TADA enacted by parliament in 1986 during unrest in the northern state of Punjab, is due to expire on May 23.

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

At the weekend, Chavan said he was calling a meeting of opposition leaders and state chief ministers in the coming week to discuss the changes in the law.

He said there was a need to bring in changes that would minimise TADA's misuse by state governments.

The Chairman of the state-sponsored National Human Rights Commission, Rangnath Misra, recently wrote to all parliament deputies asking them not to vote for an extension of TADA.

TOKYO, Apr 30: Japan, which put severe limitations on its military after its World War II defeat, now wants to give it greater latitude to support U.S. actions overseas...

The emphasis would be on greater cooperation with the United States in UN peace-keeping operations, Kyodo said.

It said logistics support for U.S. forces also would be considered in case of a blockade imposed against communist North Korea, which has been threatened with sanctions if it reneges on an agreement to shut down its feared nuclear programme in exchange for replacement reactors and economic and diplomatic benefits.

Quoting unnamed government sources, Kyodo said Japan would take such actions under a new interpretation of its security treaty with the United States. Under the

treaty, Japan provides bases for U.S. forces, and the United States promises military support if Japan is attacked.

It said Defence Agency Director-General Tokuchihiro Tamazawa would present the new interpretation to U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry when the two meet in Washington Tuesday.

The agency is looking for a new role for the treaty now that Japan faces no immediate military threat, Kyodo said.

After its 1945 defeat in World War II, Japan adopted a constitution that bans using force to settle international disputes.

But a 1992 law permits it to send troops to join UN peace-keeping operations as long as the troops are working under UN command in the area of a cease-fire, and are requested by the United Nations.

officials to sell US weapons systems. US Embassy personnel and senior government officials will also formally help push arms sales overseas.

The United Nations last year accused arms dealers of cashing in on the Asian economic boom by dumping their weapons on the financially vibrant region.

Rafeuddin Ahmed, former executive secretary of the Bangkok-based UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said rising arms exports to the Asia-Pacific region required urgent global action.

Taking advantage of the healthy fiscal position of many governments, international arms producers and traders are vigorously pushing arms sales in the region," he told

about 16.5 billion USD worth of weapons in the next five years.

The UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The arms deals with Asian countries were also being 'sweetened in a non-transparent manner,' Ahmed said.

The potential destabilising impact of such arms build-up needs no elaboration.

Ahmed told delegates the Asia-Pacific region required an estimated average of about 140 billion dollars annually for infrastructure building.

But as East Asian countries prepare to spend US\$ 140 billion over the next decade in infrastructure, some military analysts say part of the money will also be channelled into military infrastructure since most of the countries in the region are modernising their

ROK gas blast: Two arrested

SEOUL, Apr 30: South Korean prosecutors said today they had arrested two people and were seeking warrants for the arrests of five others in connection with the subway gas explosion in Taegu city that left 100 dead...

The seven, from the Taeback Construction Co, its subcontractor Pyojuun Cable Co, and from Wooshin Construction Co, were among more than 20 people taken in Friday and Saturday for questioning in connection with the country's worst-ever peace-time blast.

Five of the seven, including drilling engineers and inspectors, were from Pyojuun — the subcontractor involved in the drilling that ruptured the pipe — one from the main contractor, Taeback Construction and the last from the subway builder, Wooshin Construction.

There it was apparently ignited by a welding torch used by a subway construction worker.

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The Indian press reported that several government ministers and key state Congress figures were involved in an intensive round of weekend discussions to try to unite the party.

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Off the Record



A Thai model covered with elaborate body paint poses on the catwalk on Saturday. The Bangkok fashion show, featuring only local designers, was staged to reflect concern with Thailand's environment. — AFP/UNB photo

Kissing delegates

CAIRO: A man caused a stir at a UN Crime Conference in Cairo when the closed circuit camera system transmitted life-size pictures of him kissing a woman in the back seats of the main conference hall, reports Reuter.

For two minutes the scene appeared on giant banks of television screens dotted around the complex.

"There was a fat man sitting next to a woman in a dress. First he put his hand on her leg and then he kissed her once. The camera moved away," one witness said. The names and nationalities of the couple were not available.

"In general we'd like the participants to stick to the debate," UN spokesman Tim Wall said.

Miraculous reunion!

LONDON: A father and daughter, reunited after 34 years, discovered they lived in the same town and went to the same pub in northern England, the British press reported on Saturday, says AFP.

In the early 1960s, Albert Shaw went off to do his military service in Germany after separating from the woman with whom he had a daughter, Valerie. The young mother died soon after from tuberculosis but the father was never informed as his name did not figure on any legal document due to the fact they were not married.

But 34 years later in the town of Doncaster a miracle occurred thanks to a local postwoman, Audrey, to whom Valerie recounted her past.

"I know your dad — he's my brother", Audrey exclaimed. The reunion took place in a pub, regularly visited by both father and daughter without either of them ever knowing.

"There were tears, but it was smashing", said Albert, a 62 year-old builder.

I have seen Valerie every day since we met and cannot believe we used to sit in the same pub together without knowing it.

Besides finding his daughter, Albert also discovered he had two grand-children — Lisa, 14 and Adam, 12.

Western governments have warned that fighting in Bosnia might escalate seriously without the restraining influence of a truce. France and Russia have threatened to withdraw peace-keeping troops if a ceasefire deal is not signed.

Meanwhile, AFP adds: Sporadic fighting continued in some areas around Bosnia today with pockets of activity.

Fighting continued sporadically around the country "at recent levels," UN protection force spokesman Major Herve Gourmelon said.

In Sarajevo, two mortars hit the logistic road leading over Mount Ignan.

The United Nations had hoped to get at least a written commitment by both sides not to engage in hostile action if attempts to prolong the ceasefire failed.

Russia sends 2000 more troops along Tajik border

DUSHANBE, Apr 30: Russia has sent 2,000 troops to reinforce its contingent of border guards in Tajikistan after a series of bloody clashes with Islamic rebels along the Tajik-Afghan border, a Russian general said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

The reinforcements sent to the volatile Gorno Badakhshan area of eastern Tajikistan, bringing the number of Russian frontier guards in the country to 17,000, their deputy commander General Alexandre Tymkko said.

The general indicated that Russian military commanders were planning an assault to regain control of a section of the main road linking the capital

armed forces. In an economic survey of the region, ESCAP says the economies of South and East Asia grew more than six times faster than the global economy last year. While the world economy grew only one per cent, the combined output of South and East Asia grew by 6.9 per cent.

Cardamone told IPS the United States and other arms exporters were feverishly courting the Middle East and East Asia because "that is where the money is."

The Pentagon projects only about US \$2.2 billion dollars in arms sales to Latin America and US \$2 billion dollars to Africa.