

## BRIEFLY

**Yeltsin, Clinton meet Wednesday :**

The Russian and US Presidents are to meet in Moscow on Wednesday under strong domestic pressure to take hard lines on issues ranging from Russian nuclear technology exports to the war in Chechnya. AFP reports from Moscow.

Both President Boris Yeltsin and his US counterpart Bill Clinton face elections next year and they are being pressed to act tough during their summit, to be held the day after massive World War II commemorations in Moscow.

**LTTE kills 6 troops, 4 civilians :**

Tamil Tiger Guerrillas mounted fresh attacks against security forces in eastern Sri Lanka yesterday, killing at least six soldiers and four civilians, the military said in a statement. AFP reports from Colombo.

Gunmen of the Rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the statement said adding that four civilians were also killed in the crossfire.

**State prosecutor killed in Algiers :**

A lone gunman, believed to be Muslim militant, has shot dead an Algerian state prosecutor in Algiers, an Algerian newspaper reported today. Reuter says from Tunis.

Liberte Daily said Djamel Amar Aissani, 35, was killed on Saturday morning before the eyes of his two children outside their house in the Algiers district of El Mouradia.

**3000 drug dealers held in China :**

The South China province of Guangdong arrested 3,000 drug dealers and 18,000 users in a recent two-month sweep, the Yangcheng Evening News newspaper said. Reuter reports from Beijing.

During the crackdown authorities closed 570 underground drug shops and 1,900 parlours where the drugs were used and seized more than 450 guns, the Saturday edition said.

**2 die in Russian train derailment :**

Two people died when a freight train derailed and caught fire on the Trans-Baikal rail line in Siberia, new agencies said Sunday. AP reports from Moscow.

The accident happened Saturday night near the Omutnaya station in the Amur region, they said.

**Flood claims 42 in Indonesia :**

Flooding in North Sumatra, Indonesia, claimed at least 42 lives and left 17 people missing until Saturday. Xinhua reports from Jakarta.

Floods and landslides in Labuhan Batu and Tapanuli Selatan districts have also injured about 500 people and forced 5,000 people to flee their homes, according to reports reaching yesterday quoting spokesman for the South Tapanuli administration Sarnadun Harahap.

**2 Greenpeace activists detained :**

Israeli police detained two of several Greenpeace activists trying to block a ship from dumping toxic waste into the Mediterranean yesterday the environmentalist group said. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

A Greenpeace spokesman said police pulled the two activists from inflatable boats circling an Israeli ship off the coast of Haifa carrying toxic waste from the Haifa Chemicals Ltd company.

**20 Germans held during clash :**

Police arrested 20 people on Saturday as they broke up a fight between leftists and neo-Nazis who were marking a half century since Germany's World War II defeat. At least two people were injured. AP reports from Munich, Germany.

All but one of the arrested were leftists, police said.

**Blast in Latvian synagogue :**

Unknown attackers hurled a bomb into a synagogue in the Latvian capital on Saturday damaging the building and its contents but causing no casualties, an eyewitness and a Jewish community leader told Reuters, in Riga.

This was done by barbarians, we do not know why synagogue president Mihails Arons said. The eyewitness said she saw the device thrown from a passing car through the synagogue window shortly before dawn.

**Strong quake jolts C Java :**

A strong earthquake jolted central Java early Saturday, but there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties, AP says from Jakarta.

The quake, which had a preliminary magnitude of 5.6, struck the ancient city of Yogyakarta shortly after midnight Saturday, said Sumber Harto of the Meteorology and Geophysics Agency.

**Violence claims 25 in Brazil :**

Twenty-five people were killed Friday as a wave of violence put a stranglehold on this city. It was the second consecutive day that on that city had twenty five homicides, the Rio daily O Globo reported on Saturday. AP says from Rio-de-Janeiro.

Both city and state authorities appeared helpless. The wave of homicides came some 40 days after the beginning of Operation Rio 2, in which the army and armed forces were supposed to put a stop to widespread violence.

**Milosevic talks to US mediator :**

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic had talks late Saturday with US mediator Robert Frasure on the latest developments in the situation in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, his office said. AFP reports from Belgrade.

An official statement issued through Tanjug news agency said Frasure, the US representative on the five nation contact group on the former Yugoslavia, gave Washington's viewpoint on the latest fighting which saw Croatian troops recapture the Serb-held Croatian enclave of western Slavonia.

**Student hurt in gas blast dies :**

A school boy who was critically injured in last month's deadly gas explosion has died, officials said Sunday. AP reports from Seoul.

The death toll remained unchanged at 101, however, because a set of unidentified remains that rescue officials had counted as separate body turned out to be body parts from other victims.

## Dissidents launch all-out offensive against Rao

NEW DELHI, May 7: Alarm bells are ringing for India's beleaguered Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao as his critics launch an all-out offensive to oust him as leader of the ruling Congress (I) Party, reports AFP.

The dissidents are increasingly making bold attacks on the 73-year-old Rao, blaming him for the inertia that has gripped the Congress following a series of stunning election defeats in half-a-dozen states.

The routs, beginning in December in Rao's southern home state of Andhra Pradesh, have increased the pressure on

the premier. His mellowed aides now advocate peace with the party's vocal rebels.

The dissidents are in no mood to listen, however.

"There is no question of compromise," said K K Tewari, a former federal minister and a spokesman for the dissidents, who have announced a rally here on May 19 to split the 109-year-old party.

"Earlier, Rao's supporters kept threatening us," he added. "Now, everyone is running around appealing for unity."

"But for unity, Rao must go

lock, stock and barrel as the Congress president. This is our minimum demand. If this cannot be accepted, then we will not rest," Tewari said in an interview.

Rao suffered a shock this week when K Karunakaran, an unabashed loyalist until recently, echoed the dissident's demand, saying it was time the party got "a working president."

The appeal was immediately taken up by Sharad Pawar, an influential Rao opponent, and Rajesh Pilot, an outspoken junior minister who wants the premier to make up with his

growing critics.

But one party official said that would be difficult. "Whatever Rao says now matters little to his critics," said the official, who asked not to be identified. "They want the P.M. to go as party President. The PM is not going to oblige them. So there is no meeting ground."

To make matters worse, Congress MPs opposed to Rao want changes in the country's budget for fiscal 1995-96 and a vote in parliament on their amendments, a move which has the potential to bring down the government.



Friends of Bosnian Amel Hodzic mourn during his funeral at Sarajevo's Kovaci cemetery on Saturday. Hodzic, 17, and Bosnian soldier Mehmed Carbo were killed May 3 by a sniper in the Bosnian capital. — AFP/UNB photo

## Lanka has not asked for military help : India

NEW DELHI, May 7: India today called for peace in Sri Lanka and said Colombo had not sought its military help to put down a renewed offensive by Tamil separatist rebels which shattered a fragile three-month-long truce, reports AFP.

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said India hoped for the success of the peace initiatives of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga aimed at ending the island's 12-year-old Tamil separatist conflict.

"We want that the peace initiative of the Sri Lankan government should succeed and normalcy to come back there,"

Mukherjee told the Press Trust of India in an interview.

Speaking on growing speculation that Kumaratunga sought military help from India during her talks with Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao here, the Indian foreign minister replied in the negative.

"They (Sri Lanka) have not asked us for military help," Mukherjee said when asked whether Rao and Kumaratunga discussed the issue in their talks during a summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation SAARC here last week.

Rao expressed fears Thursday on the Sri Lankan crisis and describe the use of

missiles by the Tamil rebels as a "frightening" development. But did not offer comments on India's possible military help to Colombo.

But diplomats told AFP in New Delhi that the request was made at "the highest levels" of the two governments, indicating it may have had come during Kumaratunga's talks with Rao on Tuesday.

Indian sources say Kumaratunga may have sought help for military training for the Sri Lankan defence forces, arms and increased naval surveillance of the narrow strip of sea dividing the two countries.

## Plan to amend Pak blasphemy law receives setback

ISLAMABAD, May 7: Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's plan to amend the country's blasphemy law has received a setback as legislators in a key Pakistani province joined religious parties in opposing the proposed government move, reports AFP.

Benazir, who replaced the conservative government of former Premier Nawaz Sharif in October 1993, has said the law should be revised to prevent its abuse and allay fears of persecution among the religious minorities in Muslim Pakistan.

The law, promulgated in 1985 by the then military ruler Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, lays down the death penalty for defiling the Prophet Mohammad (SM).

Religious parties have opposed any amendment tooth and nail.

They were joined this week by the Punjab Assembly, which unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the government not to amend the law in a way which would be "repugnant" to the holy Quran and "Sunnah," the traditions of the Prophet Mohammad (SM).

The resolutions reflects the sentiments of the people in the populous Punjab province home to 60 per cent of the country's 130 million people. Ghafoor Haider, secretary general of the religious-political party Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI) told AFP on Saturday.

The resolution came after Benazir's adviser on human rights, Kamran Rizvi, announced last month that the proposed changes call for punishment of up to 10 years imprisonment for those falsely accusing others of blasphemy.

As a safeguard against abuse of the blasphemy law, another amendment proposed that a case be registered by the police only after a judicial inquiry by a magistrate finds sufficient ground to initiate the proceedings. Rizvi said.

His statement triggered angry reaction from the religious parties. Hamid-ul-Haq, spokesman for the Milli Yakejty (National Solidarity) Council, grouping over a dozen religious parties, said a country-wide protest campaign would be launched on May 29 if the government introduced the proposed changes.

It will be the government's "worst mistake" if the law was amended, said Haider.

He denied the law targeted the country's Christian minority, saying that it was for everyone.

## 7 shot dead in UP

NEW DELHI, May 7: Maoist guerrillas Saturday shot dead three policemen at a village in northern India and then killed four men who witnessed the massacre, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

The attackers stormed Gorkha village in the state of Uttar Pradesh, seized the policemen and tied them up with ropes and gunned them down from point blank range, the news agency said.

They also rounded up an army soldier on leave and three other villagers who had witnessed the shooting and shot them as well before escaping, the police said in the Hindu Holy City of Varanasi.

Local officials said the gunmen were Maoist guerrillas, but gave no further details.

## BJP against allowing alien newspapers into country

NEW DELHI, May 7: India's main opposition group, the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, (BJP), is strongly opposed to allowing foreign newspapers and news agencies into the country, the Press Trust of India said today, reports Reuter.

"We have strong reservations particularly about the print media since the printed word counts a lot," the news agency quoted party President L K Advani as saying in an interview.

"Foreign news agencies may pollute news at its source," Advani was quoted as saying.

Advani supported a cabinet resolution passed in 1956 that bars foreign news agencies from sending news directly to subscribers. PTI said.

## Angolan govt, rebels pledge peace

LUSAKA, May 7: Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos and rebel leader Jonas Savimbi told the world Saturday they were burying the hatchet and were ready to work together for peace after two decades of bitter strife, reports AFP.

"Savimbi and myself played during our discussions good political will to move hand in hand to consolidate the peace process... the meeting we held was a big success and the result was beyond my expectations," Dos Santos told a press conference after their meeting here.

A smiling Dos Santos said they had succeeded during their four and half hour meeting in resolving their problems.

Savimbi — who has led UNITA for almost three decades said he had been moved by the cordial atmosphere which prevailed during their meeting and the reception Dos Santos gave him.

## Christopher denies move to recognise Castro govt

WASHINGTON, May 7: Secretary of State Warren Christopher denied on Saturday that the Clinton administration was moving methodically towards recognition of President Fidel Castro's government in Cuba, reports Reuter.

"That is false," Christopher declared on the Cable News Network programme Evans and Novak.

US officials are bracing for a struggle with Congress over Cuban policy, firmly resisting attempts by republican lawmakers to tighten sanctions on the communist state.

Key Republicans are backing legislation meant to further isolate Cuba and damage its economy with the goal of

bringing down Castro.

But President Bill Clinton angered many conservative members of congress this week when he ended a decades long right for Cuban refugees to enter the United States instead returning those picked up at sea back to Cuban authorities.

Senator Jesse Helms chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and co-sponsor of the new bill has warned the administration might be softening the US stand against the communist state.

But Christopher said the administration was living within the terms of the Cuban democracy act.

## Serb forces ignore NATO airstrike threat

SARAJEVO, May 7: Serb forces ignored a UN threat of NATO airstrikes and continued to shell the town of Bihać in northwestern Bosnia, United Nations officials said today, reports Reuter.

Two artillery shells fired by Croatian Serbs crashed into the town on Saturday, seriously injuring an elderly woman and a teenage girl.

Another shell landed overnight but details of damage or casualties were not yet available, said UN spokesman Major Herve Gourmelon.

Bihać town's civilian population is technically protected from attack by NATO warplanes who are on hand to bomb guns that target the surrounding UN "safe area."

In practice, UN commanders have been reluctant to call on the jets, fearing Serb

reprisals against peacekeepers.

But the shelling of Bihać every day since a four-month truce in Bosnia ended last Monday has pushed them towards ordering warplanes into action.

"Air strikes are certainly possible, if not certain if attacks on Bihać continues," a UN official said on Saturday.

Elsewhere in Bosnia, artillery and mortar exchanges continued among the length of the northern confrontation line where government soldiers oppose separatist Bosnian Serbs.

The UN said the central towns of Gradacac and Doboj were the focus for the heaviest fire, but cautioned that the shelling was "moderate" by the standards of the region and concentrated around solidly-held frontlines.

## Off the Record

## Goddess of luck smiles again

LONDON: It hasn't lost its magic: After weaving "Goldfinger" and "The Man with the Golden Gun," Ian Fleming's gold-plated typewriter turned a 174 dollars investment into a 90,000 dollars bonanza, reports AP.

An anonymous buyer "involved in the film business with a great interest in James Bond" paid 56,250 pounds (90,000 dollars) Friday — more than six times the estimate — for the typewriter at Christie's auction house in London. It was put up for sale by Fleming's stepdaughter, Fionn Morgan.

## Rhythm of Bon Jovi !

JAKARTA: Dozens of Indonesians were injured or lost consciousness when scores of youths lost patience and barged through gates set up for a concert by rock superstars Bon Jovi in Jakarta, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

A Reuter photographer said dozens of mainly teenage girls were trampled during the rush late on Saturday that demolished one of three gates leading into the Ancol Open-air entertainment centre near Jakarta's main harbour.

Dozens of others fainted from heat that left the estimated crowd of 100,000 bathed in sweat for the once-only show. The trampled were rushed to nearby emergency medical centres but there were no serious injuries, he said.

## 'Condomania' opens for business

SINGAPORE: Singapore's first condom store is raising eyebrows and titters but the owner says customers have been streaming in since he opened for business three days ago, reports AP.

"We have liberated the condom from adult store sleaze and freed the buyer from the nervousness of visiting a drug store," said owner John Shimeall, an American citizen.

Shimeall, who runs four other condom boutiques in Japan, says the stores are his contribution toward the global fight against AIDS. He opened his first store in Japan two and a half years ago after several of his friends died from the disease.

"Condomania," located in Singapore's glitziest shopping area, Orchard Road, tries to relieve some of the embarrassment many feel when buying prophylactics by stocking a number of novelty items.

There are the self-explanatory ones like "Glow in the Dark" and "Full Body", a raincoat that's shaped like a condom. Others look like lollipops and monkeys. One fits the hand and another is a hat shaped like a half-unrolled condom.

"These are novelties meant to be given as humorous gifts and not like adult sleaze you would find in a sex shop," said Shimeall, 35. Born to an American lawyer and a Japanese mother, he lives in Tokyo.

## 'Israel's plan for Jerusalem dangerous'

CAIRO, May 7: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat today attacked Israel's plans for Jerusalem as "very dangerous" and criticised demands by some U.S. congressmen that Washington move its embassy to the city from Tel Aviv, reports Reuter.

"What Jerusalemis facing now is very dangerous... What is happening there violates the resolutions of the U N Security Council and the General Assembly," Arafat told reporters at Cairo airport as he left for Gaza after an Arab League meeting on Israel's plans to confiscate land in east Jerusalem.

Foreign ministers at the Arab League's extraordinary meeting on Saturday agreed to seek an urgent U N Security Council meeting to stop Israel's plans to confiscate land in East Jerusalem for Jewish housing.



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II chats with King Hussein of Jordan during the banquet Saturday held at the city of London's Guildhall to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe. — AFP/UNB photo

## World leaders in London to mark VE Day

LONDON, May 7: World leaders assembled in London today in an atmosphere of remembrance and reconciliation to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II in Europe, reports Reuter.

Britain's Queen Elizabeth told a banquet that the struggle against tyranny did not end with Hitler's defeat in 1945 and remembering the bravery and sacrifice of the war years could help protect peace in Europe in the 21st century.

"We are on the brink of a new century, a new millennium. It is up to us to set it on a peaceful confident and prosperous course," she said on Saturday.

German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Israeli President Ezer Weizeman listened as the Queen spoke of the untold millions of casualties, "both servicemen and civilians in the most devastating war in history."

But British Prime Minister John Major will stay away from

next week's military parades in Moscow marking the end of the war in Europe, a spokeswoman said, she said Major's absence was due to scheduling problems and was not a protest at Russia's military campaign in Chechnya.

Decisions by Kohl and French President Francois Mitterrand not to go to Moscow have been viewed by some as a protest against the Russian offensive.

Veterans from the allied forces were the heroes of the opening day of public commemorations of VE-Day (Victory in Europe) in Britain before the dignitaries take over today with a service of reconciliation in St Pauls Cathedral, a lunch at Buckingham place and a lambo-re in Hyde Park.

On Saturday the huge London park welcomed with enormous affection one of modern Britain's strongest links to the war years the Queen's mother now 94.

In blazing sunshine, she opened a three day festival and asked the young of today to remember the courage and sacrifice of the Britons of half a century ago.

"Good bless them all," she finished. Major a baby during the conflict, echoed the Queen in his plea for people used to peace not to underestimate its worth.

It is our responsibility to keep faith with those who fought to prevent future wars, Major told the crowds.

"This is not an exercise in simple nostalgia, it is an affirmation of the links that bind us together as a nation, across the generations from those who lived through the war to the children of today."

US president Bill Clinton opted to stay away from the British ceremonies to be followed by events in Paris, Berlin and Moscow but Vice President Al Gore commemorated his country's role in the War at a ceremony in Cambridge.

## First multi-party polls in Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA, May 7: Ethiopia on Sunday holds the first multi party general election in its 2,000-year history, set to return the former guerilla ruling coalition to power, reports Reuter.

The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) led by President Meles Zenawi ends four years of transitional rule with a controversial test dividing Ethiopia into nine new ethnic based federated states.

Most of the opposition is boycotting the poll making an EPRDF victory inevitable but human rights groups are up in arms at the EPRDF's failure to end completely violations that made Ethiopia's Marxist rulers until 1991 a byword for terror.

A total of 2,832 candidates are standing including more than 900 independents. Results will be announced on May 23.