Saddam sacks Interior Minister: Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Monday fired his halfbrother from the post of Interior Minister against a backdrop of mounting instability in the country. AP reports from Iraq.

Presidential decrees broadcast on state-run radio said Wathban Ibrahim al-Takriti was relieved of the position he had held since 1991 and reappointed him presidential ad-

viser, a largely ceremonial function. He was replaced by Mohammed Zemmam Abdel-Razzaq. another member of Saddam's al-Takriti clan and former governor of Saladin province north of Baghdad.

7 rebels killed in Tripura: Seven insurgents were killed and two others were seriously injured in a fierce gunbattle between two insurgent outfits at Oawaighati, a remote hill top tribal hamlet under Ampi police station of south Tripura district on Wednesday bast, PTI

reports from Agartala. Official's sources in Agartala said yesterday that the members of Tripura Tribal Democratic Force (TTDF) and All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) fought a fierce gunbattle in which seven TTDF insurgents were killed on the spot and two ATTF insurgents sustained serious bullet injuries.

Israeli soldier attacks church: An Israeli soldier sprayed automatic weapon fire inside a church In the town of Jaffna on Monday, causing extensive damage

reports from Jerusalem. Israeli Police Minister Moshe Shahal called the attack, in the biblical port town south of Tel Aviv, an "insane act by an individual." Police sources said it appeared the soldier, who was arrested, was deranged.

but no casualties, police and church officials said, Reuter

Sino-Vietnam border talks begin: Vietnam and China started a new round of talks on demarcation of their 1,400 km land border yesterday, the Foreign Ministry said. Reuter reports from Hanoi.

The fifth session of the two countries' joint working group on the land border, expected to last one week, would focus on "issues relating to the border," a ministry statement said, without disclosing details.

Huge drugs seized in Colombia: Law enforcement agencies in Colombia seized three tons of Marijuana in Narino on Sunday when they found the drug traffickers are using gasoline tank trucks for transporting drugs. Xinhua reports from Bogota.

Also on Sunday, the third army brigade dismantled a laboratory capable of producing over 4,000 kilograms of cocaine a week in the rural area of Caloto, where seven packages of caustic soda, six of potassium chloride and other materials for processing drugs were found.

MTV to publish books for teens: MTV, the non-stop music video channel, announced Monday it was branching out into publishing with plans to release as series of books for teenagers on subjects such as sex education or university studies. AFP reports from New York.

MTV and publishing house pocket books, both owned by media group Viacom, will release the series called MTV books which will feature works of fiction, collections of photographs and behind-the-scene reports on MTV.

Rare birds' eggs seized in UK: Police and wildlife officers were Monday examining 2,500 rare birds' eggs in England after seizing what is believed to be the largest haul of its kind in Britain. AFP reports from England.

The eggs included some from extinct species such as the red-backed Shrike and from Peregrine Falcons, Ospreys, Goshawks, and Cornerakes, all scarce or rare breeding birds which are given special legal protection.

3 Thai car thieves shot dead: Three suspected members of a car theft gang were shot and killed in a police sting operation in central Thai town, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

Police in the town of Nakon Pathom, west of Bangkok, said they were forced to open fire when the suspects began shooting after they realised the buyer of a stolen heavy truck they were selling was in fact an undercover policeman. All three suspected gang members were killed in the early Tuesday incident.

DHL owner dies in plane crash: American multimillionaire Larry Hillblom was killed in plane crash near the South Pacific island of Saipan, a spokesman for his DHL worldwide express company said Monday. AFP reports from Honolulu.

The 52-year-old had been a resident of Saipan for about 10 years and was on a pleasure trip Sunday with two others when his small plane crashed into the seas, according to Dean Christon.

### Irish defence minister resigns:

Ireland's Defence Minister Hugh Coveney resigned on Monday after acknowledging a press allegation that he approaching a semi-state utility about a consultancy job for his former firm, Xinhua reports from London. According to a Reuter report from Dublin, Irish Prime

Minister John Bruton forced Coveney's resignation from the five-month-old coalition government, but allowed him to stay on as a junior finance minister with special responsibility for public expenditure and the office of public works.

Demirel arrives in Beijing: Turkish President Suleiman Demirel and a delegation of 150 people arrived in Beijing Tuesday for a five-day official visit in China. AFP reports from Beijing.

Demirel is making his first visit to China. Chinese President Jiang Zemin was to welcome him with an official ceremony in Tiananmen Square before beginning the first in a series of meetings, the Xinhua News Agency said.

Kurds kill 3 in S Turkey: Turkish Kurdish rebels raided a village is southeastern Turkey near the Syrian border on Monday, killing three people, the Anatolia agency said. AP reports from Ankara.

Eight Kurdish rebeis attacked the village of Karafakililar in the Mediterranean coastal Hatay province and opened fire on houses there, killing three people, the dispatch said. Two other villagers were seriously wounded

Egypt's TV to show film on Nasser: Egypt's state-run television will show the first movie ever made on the country's former President Gamal Abdel Nasser at the Cairo TV festival marking the station's 35th anniversary, an executive said on Monday, AFP reports from

## Three top leaders quit

# Rebel Cong faces setback

NEW DELHI, May 23: India's rebel Congress (I) Party was facing a rebellion of its own today, as three senior leaders quit in protest less than 24 hours after being named to its top policy-making body, reports AFP.

K K Tewari, K N Singh and Satyanarian Rao, in a joint letter to the rebel Congress president, Narain Dutt Tiwari, said they would have nothing further to do with the breakaway Congress set up last week.

The three, who were named to the rebel party's Congress Working Committee on Monday, complained that they had not been consulted about the setting up of the 25member policy-making body on the formation of other party

"We have decided to keep

ourselves away from all the activities of the fledgling organisation in protest," they said in their letter.

The three said they had joined the revolt against Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao because they were fed up with the "capricious, arbitrary and autocratic behaviour of the Narasimha Rao regime and his leadership."

But the very first moves by the leadership of the rebel Congress had left them "deeply disappointed," they said.

"There seems to be an attempt by some persons close to the leadership to manipulated things and negate any element of free expression of opinions," they said. "This shows a marked tendency towards personal control and intolerance of even honest and

sincere expression of a differing point of view."

The 109-year-old Congress split on Friday for the third time since India's independence in 1947 when Tiwari was named president of the rival party in place of Rao at a meeting attended by some 50,000 anti-Rao Congress workers.

The rebels claim that the 73-year-old Rao is incapable of leading India's oldest political party to victory in general elections due early next year and demanded that he step aside as Congress president.

Tiwari, a 71-year-old veteran politician from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, announced office-bearers of the new Congress on Monday.

Former minister Arjun Singh, who sparked a rebellion

against Rao by quitting his government in December, was named the "working president" of the breakaway

Congress. The Congress headed of Rao immediately expelled Tiwari from the party for six years and threatened to take action against any other party members who join the rebel organisation.

K K Tewari, one of the three rebel leaders who quit the rival Congress today, is a former cabinet minister and has been an outspoken critic of Rao's economic reform, which the rebels claim have eroded support for the party.

K N Singh and Satyanarian Rao, who also quit the rebel Congress today, previously held senior positions in the Congress party.

## Rao let TADA die to win Muslim support in polls

NEW DELHI, May 23: The Indian government scrapped Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP In- before enacting the new law. an unpopular anti-terrorism law today but its bid to enact new legislation was running. into trouble in parliament, reports AFP.

Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's government allowed the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (preventive) Act (TADA) to lapse when it came up for renewal in parliament today.

But it said thousands of people detained under TADA would continue to face prosecution under the law, which is non-bailable, provides for closed-door trails and leaves the onus of proving innocence on the accused.

TADA was enacted in 1985 to combat a violent Sikh separatist movement in the state of Punjub and given sharper teeth in 1989 to stamp out a Muslim rebellion in neighbouring Kashmir.

To replace TADA, the government has been seeking to pass amendments to the Criminal Code, a move which has sparked warnings from Indian human rights and Muslim groups and sections of the opposition.

A coalition of centrist and left-wing parties in parliament's upper house dubbed the new law a "sinister fraud" on Monday and vowed to defeat it when it comes up for a

The main opposition dian People's Party), which has 119 MPs in the 545-member lower house, also came out against the bill saving its definitions of terrorism were

"Any activity disrupting normal life and functioning. including trade union activity, would invite action under the new law." BJP MP Sushma Swarai said.

The opposition Communist Party of India (Marxist) demanded better safeguards against misuse of the new law. Jaipal Reddy of the centrist Janata Dal (People's Party)

### UNSC renews sanctions on Bosnian Serbs

UNITED NATIONS. May 23: The UN Security Council renewed for another four months Monday the commercial and diplomatic sanctions imposed on the Bosnian Serbs for fomenting war, reports AP.

France Ambassador Jean-Bernard Merimee, the council president, said arms, oil, air and other sanctions in place since September 23 would continue as long as the Bosnian Serb leadership in the mountain resort of Pale outside Sarajevo refuse to agree to an international peace plan.

urged Rao to seek a consensus TADA was misused because

the definition of terrorist activities was loose and the scope was broad," he said.

Defending the proposed legislation, Home Minister Shankar Rao Chavan said it provides for bail and would be used only by senior police officers. "A law such as this is needed because of the situation in the country," he said.

Some 54,000 people mostly from minority communities. face cases under TADA. Some 17,000 TADA detainees were freed last year after the central government, the Supreme Court and others put pressure on state administrations.

Prime Minister Rao let TADA die amid fears that India's 120 million Muslims may shy away from his Congress (I) Party if the law remained in place because of the perception that it has been used against the community.

Ahmed Bukhari, deputy lmam of India's largest mosque, the Jama Masjid, denounced the proposed new law in an open letter to Rao on Tuesday.

He welcomed the scrapping of TADA but said the government was "very cleverly trying to make fools of the minorities and the oppressed of society simply by changing the name of the act."

### Yeltsin vetoes parliamentary election law

MOSCOW, May 23: President Boris Yeltsin on Tuesday vetoed a new election law that would have made it easier for parties rather than independent candidates to win seats in the Russian parliament, re-

The law would have formalised the rules that helped hard-liners such as Valdimir Zhirinovsky win a large number of seats in parliament in the last election. Reformist candidates did well at the ballot box running as independents.

The law also would have forced top government officials to stop down from their positions temporarily before running for office - a provision that would have badly hurt a new pro-Yeltsin block filled with government ministers.

Some newspapers have expressed concern that Yeltsin's veto could delay the next parliamentary election, now scheduled for December. The speaker of the State Duma, however, has said a compromise is possible.

After signing the veto, Yeltsin began preparing a formal message to the State Duma, the parliament's lower house, his aide Mikhail Kras-

The Duma approved the law May 11. Under its rules, 225 legislators will be chosen from party lists and 225 from single mandate constituencies.

Yeltsin suggested that only 150 lawmakers be elected on party tickets.

Chinese actress Annie Shizuka Inoh poses for photographers Monday at the Cannes Palais des Festivals, during the presentation of the Chinese film by Hsiao-Hsien, "Haonan Haonu," in competition in the 48th Cannes International Film festival. - AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

Grandson takes 71 years

LONDON: An Australian has reached the summit of Mount Everest 71 years after his grandfather - George Leigh Mallory - was lost on the mountain. The Times reported vesterday. reports AFP.

George Mallory. 35, from Melbourne, Australia, took the same route followed by his British pioneer grandfather in 1924 and reached the 29,028 foot summit on May 14, said The Times.

He was one of 13 climbers on a US expedition commemorating the first attempt to conquer the world's highest peak. The original expedition ended with the disappearance of

George Leigh Mallory and his climbing partner Andrew Irvine, who were last seen about 3,000 feet from the summit. Since that ill-fated expedition there has been argument over whether the crudely-equipped Mallory and Irvine could have overcome the remaining obstacles and reached the

### Narrowly escaped!

QUETTA, Pakistan: A last-minute pardon saved a Pakistani convicted murderer from hanging after he had been led to the gallows, jail officials and lawyers said on Monday, reports

With his hands tied behind his back, Kamal Khan Barozai was taken to the gallows on Sunday at Machh jail in the south western province of Baluchistan after his appeals against the death sentence were rejected

But while the wardens, a magistrate and a doctor went through the last formalities for the hanging, the murdered man's sister came running to announce her family's pardon for the convict under Islamic law.

The magistrate stopped the hanging, and lawvers said Barozai would have to go back to the original trial court. which could set him free or sentence him to prison after hearing the victim's heirs.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat holds hands with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres as he escorts him to his car following their meeting in Gaza City Monday. Israel -uspended the expropriation of 53 hectres (131 acres) of mainly Arab lands in East Jerusalem and Peres vowed a major Israeli effort to meet a July 1 deadline for the next stage of Palestinian autonomy and promised some goodwill - AFP/UNB phote gestures.

## Russia agrees to talk on | Cancel visa for Taiwanese Chechnya: Dudayev

VIENNA. May 23: Chechen break away from the Russian separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev and the Russian government have agreed to direct talks in Grozny on Thursday to halt the fighting in Chechnya, a European security official said on Monday, reports Reuter.

The talks would be held under the auspices of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe at their Chechen capital, the OSCE official said:

"The chairman in office of the OSCE has officially proposed the holding of talks between parties involved in the crisis in Chechnya with a view to reaching a peaceful settlement of the crisis," the official told Reuters. "All invitees have accepted

the invitation," she added. She said the talks would be held on tomorrow. It was not immediately clear whether they would be preceded by a

ceasefire

The 53 nation OSCE, made up of all European countries plus the United States and Canada, has been trying to help negotiate an end to five months of fighting in which thousands have been killed and hundreds of thousands forced

Russian President Boris Yeltsin ordered troops to the Caucasus region on December 11 to crush Dudayev's bid to

to flee from their homes.

Federation.

A senior Chechen official said on Monday that Dudayev was working on a plan to stop the conflict.

"Yes, Dudayev is working on such a plan, but few details are available." Chechen spokesman Mouladi Udugov told Reuters in Moscow by telephone from mission in the wrecked, an undisclosed location in the breakaway territory.

> Russian troops, backed by helicopter gunships and artillery, are slowly pushing their way towards. Chechnya's southern mountains where rebel groups are based.

### Armenians won't talk further with Azeris YEREVAN, May 23: Armenia

announced today that it would not take part in the next round of talks with Azerbaijan on the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, until it received security guarantees for its energy supplies, reports AFP.

Armenia was reacting to Sunday's new attack on a pipeline supplying it with gas. The Armenian Foreign Ministry blamed the attack on "agents of the Azerbaijani government.

### president, China tells US TAIPEI, May 23: Taiwan's Another report from Beipresident thanked the United

States Tuesday for allowing him to pay a private visit, while China angrily demanded that the trip be cancelled, reports AP.

The conflicting reactions highlighted the problems ahead for the Clinton administration as it opens a fresh crack in the wall of diplomatic isolation China has built around Taiwan. Although President Lee

Teng-hul will only be making a low key, unofficial visit to Cornel University, his alma mater, Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen summoned U.S Ambassador Stapleton Roy in Beijing to warn of the "serious damage" to US-Chinese relations the visit would cause.

In Taipei, Lee's office issued a statement calling the U.S decision "a very good one.

" President Lee expresses his thanks for all the support at home and from the United States to enable him to visit his alma mater." it said

Taiwanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Rock Leng called it, "another important step in enhancing the substantive relations" between the United States and Taiwan. The decision is mostly a result of Taiwan's democratic and economic achievements," he said at a news conference.

ing says: 'China on Tuesday strongly objected to the Clinton administration's decision to allow Taiwan's president to visit the United States and warned that it would seriously harm China-U.S relations.

" If the United States mistakenly appraises the situation and clings obstinately to this course, it will certainly bring serious damage to China-U.S relations and the United States will bear full responsibility for the consequences," the Foreign Ministry said in a state-

It called on the United States to immediately cancel the visa for Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui.

Foreign Minister Qiang Qichen on Tuesday called in U.S Ambassador Stapleton Roy and fodged a strong protest. The State Department an-

nounced on Monday that Lee would be granted a visa so that he could appear at Cornell University, his alma mater. The decision has strong support in Congress.

Lee's visit is "in a strictly private capacity" and does not represent any change in U.S policy, which is based on the principle that there is only one China, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said in Washignton.

### 20 more die in Karachi violence

KARACHI, May 23: The unrest in Pakistan's largest city. Karachi, escalated sharply. claiming 20 more lives Monday and raising the number of fatalities in the past five days of violence to 53, officials sources

said, reports AFP. Three main hospitals in the city reported admitting more than 30 people with sharpanel and bullet wounds.

The violence appeared to be spreading rapidly with sniper shootings and clashes between militants and security forces reported from most parts of the port city.

Chaos gripped the large Abbasi Shaheed Hospital for an hour late Monday after gunmen fired from adjoining buildings.

### Israeli Arab MPs come out successful where AL, UN failed seizure after Israel put the drop the no-confidence mo-The Israeli government on tion for fear that it might lead also an Israeli Arab, said: "It's

rael's minority Arab population has for the first time forced the government to switch pol icy and suspend the confiscation of Palestinian land in

Jerusalem, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had to beat a retreat on Monday in the face of a noconfidence motion by the Hadash Communist Party and the Arab Democratic Party (ADP), whose five MPs represent the 850,000 Arab citizens of Israel.

Hadash MP Salim told AFP. won where the Arab League

"It's our greatest victory." "We never flinched and we

and the United Nations Security Council failed," he said.

PLO Chairman Yasser

the first time the Israeli Arab MPs have used their electoral weight and managed to influence Israeli policy in such a sensitive area as Jerusalem."

The no-confidence vote threatened to bring Rabin's government down once the right-wing opposition decided to support it. despite being in favour of confiscation.

The right-wing nationalists had been prepared to exploit the opportunity even though they proclaim that Arab citizens should be excluded from the decision-making process on issues crucial to the future of the Jewish state.

Paradoxically, Arafat even tried to persuade the ADP to to Rabin's demise and a hard- . Until the mid-1960s they line right-wing government But in the end the Arab Is-

raelis brought him something he and the rest of the Arab world had failed to achieve. They make up 18 per cent

of the population of Israel but only 13 per cent of the electorate because of a high number of children. They have traditionally been unable to take full advan-

more than half voting for Zionist parties, such as Rabin's Labour and even Likud. The Israeli Arabs are the minority who stayed behind in 1948 when Israel was created

and 800,000 of their compa-

tage of that 13 per cent, with

lived under military govern- the expropriation of 53 ment which restricted their movements and, as the authorities today admit, seriously discriminated against them.

"I am ashamed, as a Jew and as an Israeli, of the situation of the Arabs of Israel," Rabin said during the 1992 election campaign.

Some may consider Monday as a slight revenge or even a coming of age. Another report from Amman says, Israel's decision to

Jordanian Foreign minister

Abdel Karim Kabariti said

halt the confiscation of Arab land in East Jerusalem is a claimed Tuesday. The Arab League called off a "step in the right direction."

Monday decided to suspend hectares (131 acres) of land in annexed East Jerusalem and to set up a ministerial committee to re-examine the question.

The suspension was a "positive step in the right direction, which must be followed by the total cancellation of the decision," to seize the land, Kabariti told AFP.

AP adds, international pressure forced Israel to suspend its latest confiscation of Arab land in East Jerusalem, Foreign Minister Amr Moussa

summit planned for Saturday in Morocco to discuss the

plan on hold. Moussa called the Israeli decision "a step in the right direction." The Israeli government

facing a no-confidence vote Monday that threatened to bring down the government, backed down on the plan to confiscate 57 hectares (140 acres) of land in East Jerusalem.

Five Arab legislators whose support is crucial to the coalition government brought the motions to protest the confiscation plans. The motions failed after the government reversed its policy. But Moussa said the deci-

sion was also due to the uproar the confiscations touched off across the Arab world.

### DPRK doesn't want to be pessimistic in N-talks with US

KUALA LUMPUR, May 23: North Korea doesn't want to be pessimistic in its talks with the United States on resolving a stalemate over dismantling the communist nation's feared nuclear programme, an official said Tuesday, reports AP.

Officials from the two sides gathered Tuesday for "technical-level meetings." but the third day's talks began six hours behind scheduled and in the absence of team leaders Thomas Hubbard and Kin Gye Gwan.

" We all hope for a positive result but I don't know how long the experts will meet. said the official, who asked to remain anonymous.