

International

Chandrika threatens to curb freedom of press

BRIEFLY

Iran for lifting Bosnian arms ban: Iran on Saturday demanded the lifting of the UN arms embargo preventing Bosnian Muslims from defending themselves, and poured scorn on the United Nations for being unable to guarantee the safety of its men, AFP reports from Zagreb.

Referring to the seizure of 251 UN peacekeepers by Bosnian Serbs in Serb-held territory in Bosnia, Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibi asked the United Nations "to explain how the organisation plans to guarantee peace if it is incapable of ensuring the safety of its own men on the ground."

Gen Barak to join Israeli govt: Former armed forces chief of staff General Ehud Barak is to join the Israeli government by early August, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's cabinet announced Saturday, AFP reports from Jerusalem.

Barak, 52, will enter the cabinet before the summer recess of parliament on August 2, according to the announcement.

Int'l terrorism declines: A panel of US terrorism experts admitted Saturday that although there has been a recent decline in terrorist attacks worldwide, international state-sponsored terrorism remains a serious threat, USIS reports.

The experts discussed "International Terrorism: The Continuing Threat" on the Washington-based ON THE LINE, USA-sponsored radio programme. They included Philip Wilcox, US Coordinator for Counter-Terrorism at the State Department; Robert Satloff, executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy; and Laurie Myroie, an associate of the Foreign Policy Research Institute and author of *Study of Revenge: Saddam's Terror Against America*.

2 die in Filipino polls violence: Two people were killed Saturday as political partisans clashed in the latest violence related to national elections earlier this month, authorities said Sunday, AP reports from Masuu, Philippines.

The killings brought to 83 the total number of fatalities since the election campaign began in January.

Bomb explosions were also reported in other towns in the southern Philippines, where special ballots were held Saturday. Poll officials postponed or declared the May 8 elections a failure in 13 Muslim towns due to armed fighting and ballot-snatching among rival politicians.

Algerian TV newsman shot dead: An Algerian television journalist was shot to death near his home in Algiers, the Algerian Press Agency APS reported yesterday, AFP says from Algiers.

It said that Mourad Hmatzi, 30, was killed Saturday while getting out of his car upon returning from work.

50 kg cocaine seized in UK: Fifty kilos (120 pounds) of cocaine were seized Saturday in the southern English county of Kent, customs officers said, AFP reports from London.

A Briton was arrested after the haul, which was the subject of a six month investigation by customs inspectors. The drug, with a street value of eight million pounds (12 million dollars), was found in a super market car park in the town of Beckenham.

2 die during Bihar by-elections: Two people were killed in clashes during by-elections for 26 assembly seats in 13 Indian states on Saturday, news agencies said, Reuters reports from New Delhi.

The deaths occurred in the violence-prone eastern state of Bihar where more than 50 people were killed during regular assembly polls last March.

Captive French soldier back: A French UN soldier held captive by the Bosnian Serbs overnight at a site in central Sarajevo escaped from the Serbs' control and is now back in the hands of the French, a UN spokesman said yesterday, AFP reports from Sarajevo.

The Frenchman had been held captive by around 10 Serbs, who were held in their position at an observation post on the Vrbanijska bridge in the centre of the city by French UN soldiers.

Rabbani holds out olive branch to Dostam

KABUL, May 28: President Burhanuddin Rabbani on Saturday held out an olive branch to northern Uzbek warlord General Abdul Rashid Dostam, saying he was willing to end hostilities, reports AFP.

The fighting could end if Dostam ceased his "rebellion against the Islamic state of Afghanistan," presidential spokesman Abdul Aziz Murad said.

Dostam, in alliance with Hezb-i-Islami faction chief and former premier Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, launched an abortive bid in January 1994 to oust Rabbani from power.

"Since currently an inclination is seen on the part of Dostam to give up his rebellion, the state will not therefore be prone to fight them any longer," Murad said.

Dostam's militia and Hekmatyar's forces had held positions in and around Kabul until early this year, but they lost them when the Taliban Army, led religious students, reached the gates of the capital.

The Taliban, energized by a string of victories that put them in control of about 10 provinces, drove Hekmatyar and his fighters from his Charasayab base near Kabul. But subsequently the Taliban have been beaten off by Rabbani's forces.

The last fighting between the forces of Dostam, who heads the National Islamic

Movement of Afghanistan (NIMA), and the pro-Rabbani forces were reported in February in northern Kunduz province. A relative lull has prevailed since then.

"As far as Dostam is concerned, we have said time and again that the state was not the first to start the fighting against him," Murad said.

Earlier, a senior Kabul official, Abdul Rahman, Minister for Civil Aviation, told journalists that contacts with Dostam for a peace deal had started.

The negotiations also covered exchange of prisoners and ending the "state of war" between the two sides and withdrawing a jihad (holy war) call against Dostam forces, Murad said.

He did not indicate who was involved in the contacts and where and when they had taken place.

"Jihad had been proclaimed against them after they rose against the Islamic state," the presidential spokesman said, adding it would be annulled should Dostam give up his opposition.

Meanwhile, travellers are reported to be facing severe hardship due to the virtual closure of the Salang highway, the main artery between Kabul and the north, parts of which are controlled by Dostam and pro-Rabbani troops.

COLOMBO, May 28: Accusing the media of irresponsible reporting of the country's civil war, President Chandrika Kumaratunga said on Sunday that she may have to curb their freedom, reports AP.

"We take the war situation seriously and the media should play a responsible role. Trying to analyse military secrets is advantageous to the enemy," Kumaratunga said in her speech while inaugurating a media centre in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka.

"If the newspapers continue to behave in a manner which is not in the national interest at this time of grave national crisis, the government will have to take note and consider necessary action," the President said.

When Kumaratunga's socialist coalition won elections last August, she promised a complete freedom of the press in the country. But many journal-

ists accuse her of reneging on her promise.

A Sunday newspaper editor has been charged with defamation for reporting that she has attended a lawmaker's birthday party. Kumaratunga says she wasn't there.

Several newspapers have criticised the President for her unpublicised visits to Colombo's luxury hotels and vacations abroad.

Kumaratunga has accused the press of misusing the freedom and appointed a Cabinet subcommittee to draw up a code of ethics for journalists.

Police detained two photographers on Wednesday when they sought permission to take photographs of machine-gun position near the Presidential Palace.

Kumaratunga has accused the Tamil guerrillas of planning to assassinate her, and military intelligence reported that the rebels have acquired light air-

craft or glider planes for suicide attacks on their targets.

The government says at least 600 people have been killed in the renewed fighting in the north and east since the rebels broke a truce and called off peace talks on April 19.

AFP adds: President Chandrika Kumaratunga today slammed Sri Lanka's press for giving details of anti-aircraft gun positions here and called for responsible reporting of the island's bloody ethnic war.

Kumaratunga said details of military movements and strategies published in the local press were not in the national interest, and urged journalists to exercise their freedoms in reporting the war responsibly.

"They are trying to say that the security situation is so bad that even the President's residence needs anti-aircraft missiles," Kumaratunga said while opening Sri Lanka's first Na-

tional Information Centre (NIC) here.

Press reports said that an anti-aircraft gun had been mounted at Kumaratunga's temple trees residence, and several other key places in the capital, against a possible Tamil Tiger rebel air attack in the capital, Colombo.

"The difference in reporting is scandalously evident... we have definite information from British and French authorities that the LTTE got aircraft in knocked down form in 1992. But these papers did not report it," Kumaratunga said.

It was the first confirmation from the Colombo government of reports from India that the LTTE had acquired six French-built micro-light aircraft with short takeoff and landing capabilities.

"We have been laughed at for not having a strategy simply because we did not tell the media."



US Defence Secretary William Perry (R), his British counterpart Malcolm Rifkind (C) and German Defence Minister Volker Ruehe addressing a press conference Saturday at Gatwick airport, near London. Perry cut short a visit to a NATO base in Naples to meet his German and British counterparts amid a sharp rise in tension in Bosnia.

India may ask Lanka for Prabhakaran's extradition

NEW DELHI, May 28: India is likely to take up with Sri Lanka soon the issue of extradition of LTTE chief and main accused in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case V. Prabhakaran, reports PTI.

The Ministry of External Affairs may be initiating moves in this regard soon, official sources said.

The sources said that with the situation in the island having changed after the breakdown of talks between the Sri Lankan government and the militant Tamil organisation, there was better response expected from the island's government.

Golan was 'Syrian land' admits Peres

JERUSALEM, May 28: Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres admitted the Golan was "Syrian land" in a newspaper interview published today, reports AFP.

"The decision to make a peace agreement with Syria stems from our moral values," Peres told the Yediot Aharonot during an interview from Rabat, the Moroccan capital.

"We do not want to keep hold of Syrian land. The Golan plateau is Syrian land and we have settled on Syrian land," Peres told the daily, adding that he had told King Hassan of Morocco the same thing.

He met the king and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Rabat overnight Saturday.

"Our choice is a moral one," Peres told Israeli state radio on Sunday in a telephone interview from Rabat.

"We do not want to exercise power over another people, and that includes the Golan plateau which is not part of Eretz Israel (the land of Israel)."

Prime minister Yitzhak Rabin raised the prospect Friday of the evaluation of an Israeli settlement on the Golan under the first stage of a withdrawal as part of a peace deal.

7 die as Khmers clash with troops

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand, May 28: Seven Cambodian civilians died during the night after Khmer Rouge guerrillas clashed with Phnom Penh government forces southeast of Poipet, Cambodian officer Thim Saréth said today, reports AFP.

He said the two sides fought for about an hour shortly after midnight near route 5 some four kilometers (2.5 miles) southeast of the Cambodian border town of Poipet.

Phnom Penh troops called in reinforcements, including two T-54 tanks, and the Khmer Rouge retreated after setting fire to a hamlet where 15 houses were burned down, the officer said.

Off the Record



French actress Beatrice Dalle arriving Friday at the Palais des Festivals in Cannes, before the screening of the film 'Underground' by Sarajevo-born director Emir Kustarica, which has emerged as a late strong contender for this year's Golden Palm.

Herbal contraceptive

NEW DELHI: Tulsi (ocimum sanctum), and Indian herb known for its therapeutic values, has anti-fertility property as well, Indian scientists have found, reports PTI.

A team of doctors at the Rohtak Medical College demonstrated that leaves of Tulsi could reduce sperm count in rats by half.

Though various parts of Tulsi are known for curing diseases such as Malaria, Bronchitis, Diarrhoea and several skin ailments. It was for the first time scientists received evidence that the plant has contraceptive effect too, they said.

Interestingly, historical records say that Indian Ayurvedic physicians had been prescribing this plant which grows freely in Indian backyards as contraceptive since ages.

"But this traditional practice has slowly receded more or less to rural areas," they said in an article appearing in the latest Indian journal of medical sciences.

Unusual operation

LONDON: Two doctors used a knife and fork, a coat hanger, a bottle and adhesive tape to operate on a woman who suffered a collapsed lung during a flight from Hong Kong to London, the airline said Tuesday, reports AP.

Paula Dixon, 39, from the northern Scottish city of Aberdeen, was recovering in a west London hospital Tuesday. A British Airways spokesman said Paula Dixon complained of pains in her arm while flight BA032 was preparing to take off from Hong Kong with more than 300 passengers on board.

Twenty minutes later, with the Boeing 747 airborne at the start of the 14-hour flight, she reported chest pains and two doctors on board diagnosed fractured ribs and a collapse lung.

"To release the collapsed lung, we needed to insert a chest drain," one of the doctors, orthopedic specialist Professor Angus Wallace from Nottingham, told the tabloid Today.

Row over Taiwan President's visit China cancels meet with US

BEIJING, May 28: China's government on Sunday cancelled meetings with US officials in retaliation for Washington's granting a visa to the President of Taiwan, reports AP.

China will postpone consultations on nuclear cooperation and on controlling the spread of missile technology, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by the official Xinhua news agency.

Planned visits to China by the director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency in June and by the deputy assistant secretary of state for political and military affairs in July must also be put off, the statement said.

It was the fourth action taken by the government since Washington decided May 22 to allow Taiwan President Lee Teng-Hui to visit Cornell University, his alma mater in New York State.

China had long warned the United States that allowing Lee to visit would affect relations. The Clinton administration had previously denied Lee permission but changed tacks after the US Congress voted to allow a private visit.

Taiwan is the seat of the Nationalist government which fled China's mainland in 1949 after losing a civil war to Communist forces.

Washington recognised the nationalists as China's sole legitimate government and kept military forces on Taiwan until 1979, when it formally recognised Beijing and downgraded relations with Taiwan.

CCRCA alleges HR violations

GUWAHATI, May 28: The Committee for Citizenship Rights of the Chakmas of Arunachal Pradesh (CCRCA) has alleged violation of human rights of the Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh by the state government and its agencies in the last half of 1994, reports PTI.

Submitting a memorandum to the National Human Rights Commission Chairman, Justice Ranganath Misra, in Delhi last week, the committee alleged that 144 Chakmas died of malaria during the period in the Chakma-inhabited areas. 186 Chakma houses were set ablaze to forcibly evict them from the state by the government and educational institutions were closed.

"I do not want British troops to leave," he was quoted as telling the Mail on Sunday. "I am absolutely certain they are doing a worthy, while job."

Dilemma over Kashmir polls

SRINAGAR, May 28: India's election chief faces a dilemma as he confronts a deadline over whether to hold elections in the troubled state of Kashmir, reports Reuters.

Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao wants polls in Jammu and Kashmir state by July 18 when the federal government's authority for direct rule expires.

But most political parties in the state told Election Commissioner, TN Seshan at the weekend, that a five-year-old separatist rebellion which has intensified since a shrine was destroyed by fire on May 11 has made conditions unsafe.

"Many were of the view that the situation was not quite conducive for holding the elections," Seshan told reporters after meeting local representatives of 16 parties on Saturday in the state's summer capital, Srinagar.

For weeks Seshan has been saying a decision on Kashmir polls would come any day. He said the same thing in Srinagar.

But there is growing speculation that the election process might be launched before July 18, while Rao's government realises it might not be completed by then.

The Sunday Times of India said the government was considering to ask parliament before it adjourns on June 2 to extend direct rule beyond July 18 in case polls cannot be finished by then.

The government plans to stagger the state polls, holding elections probably first in Jammu and Ladakh, the more peaceful areas of the state, and then in the Kashmir Valley where the separatist revolt is centred. The process could take weeks.

Rao believes elections would help restore peace in India's only Muslim-majority state, where 20,000 people have died in the five-year separatist insurgency.

That would be a valuable

coup ahead of general elections due next year and help relieve pressure from Western nations trouble about human-rights concerns.

A strike in the valley on Saturday marked Seshan's visit to Kashmir. Feeling has turned against the elections after the 15th-century shrine to a Kashmir's patron saint burnt down during a standoff between the Indian army and separatists.

The army says the shrine and the town around it were destroyed by the separatist guerrillas.

Seshan said three factors would influence his decision.

"First, we would have to consider the security atmosphere for the candidates," he said. "Then, the necessary staff may not be available. Some of them are in fact already on strike. And finally, the question of worry and fear among the voters because of threats from the militants."



PLO leader Yasser Arafat (L) shaking hands with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres Saturday as Moroccan King Hassan II (C) looks on in Rabat. The three men met to discuss the Middle East peace process and the Israeli decision to suspend confiscation of Arab land in Jerusalem.

New UN mission to clarify Iraq's biological warfare potential

DUBAI, May 28: The head of the UN drive to disarm Iraq begins a new mission to Baghdad on Monday to press authorities for missing materials with chemical and germ warfare potential.

Rolf Ekeus, Chairman of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), told AFP he was "reasonably confident" Iraq would deliver on a pledge to disclose details about its chemical programme.

But, speaking by telephone from UN headquarters in New York, he stressed that Baghdad must also explain what hap-

pened to 17 tonnes of growth media which can be used to make biological weapons.

The missing germ warfare material was the "major outstanding problem," Ekeus said. "This must be clarified. The Iraqi reaction at least on the government level is that they will help us to clarify."

Ekeus four-day mission comes hot on the heels of one by his deputy, Charles Duelfer, who left Baghdad on May 17 with no new information or either the chemical or biological warfare questions.

Iraq set no timetable for providing biological information, but Duelfer said it had promised to provide Ekeus answers about missing material which can be used to make a combat nerve gas known as UX.

"We expect to clarify the UX issue. We are reasonably confident that the issue will be settled," Ekeus said.

UN suspicions that Iraq is hiding material to make chemical and biological weapons have dashed any Iraqi hopes of a quick end to the UN sanctions imposed after President Saddam Hussein sent his

troops into Kuwait in August 1990.

In an April 10 report to the UN Security Council that followed his last visit to Baghdad in March, Ekeus said, "precursors for the production of at least 200 to 250 tonnes of UX cannot be definitely accounted for."

However, Iraq which has acknowledged that its scientists worked on UX from September 1987 to September 1988, said it had satisfied UN concerns about all aspects of its chemical programme.

It complained the file was

being reopened as a pretext to maintain sanctions.

Ekeus also said Baghdad had not revealed its previous research into biological weapons for accounted for the disappearance of the growth media which can be used to develop anthrax and botulism.

All the Security Council members expressed their concern about biological agents, with Russia, China and France dropping efforts to have the oil embargo lifted depending further explanations from Baghdad.

The official Iraqi press has

accused Ekeus, a former Swedish diplomat, of bad faith and playing into the hands of Washington which has taken a headline against the lifting of sanctions.

Ekeus, who is to make his next written report to the Security Council on June 19, described his mission as "part of the ongoing dialogue" between the United Nations and Iraq.

He is due to arrive in Baghdad after a night in Bahrain, where the UNSCOM regional field office is located, and leave Iraq on Thursday.

US didn't ask India to abandon plans to deploy Prithvi

NEW DELHI, May 28: The United States has not asked India to abandon plans to deploy a short-range missile along the border with Pakistan, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said today, reports AFP.

Mukherjee told the Press Trust of India (PTI) on his arrival here after a four-day official trip to Washington that US leaders he talked to did not exert any pressure on him.

"There was no such thing," he was quoted as saying.

Major wants UK troops to stay in Bosnia

LONDON, May 28: Prime Minister John Major said in an interview published Sunday that he wants Britain's 3,380 troops to remain in Bosnia despite the seizure of UN observers by Bosnian Serbs, reports AP.

"I do not want British troops to leave," he was quoted as telling the Mail on Sunday. "I am absolutely certain they are doing a worthy, while job."