

## BRIEFLY

**Arafat arrives in Cairo:** Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Cairo from Algiers yesterday and called on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak before heading back towards the Gaza Strip, official sources said. Reuter reports from Cairo.

Arafat did not speak to reporters at Mubarak's palace in northeastern Cairo. He frequently briefs the Egyptians on the state of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

**'Superman' actor hospitalised:** Actor Christopher Reeve, best known for his starring role in a series of Superman movies, was thrown from his steed during a horse jumping competition and was in stable condition on Sunday, AP reports from Charlottesville, Virginia.

The actor was admitted to the University of Virginia Medical Center in Charlottesville after the accident on Saturday, said his publicist, Lisa Kasterler.

**Quake shakes Cyprus:** An earthquake measuring 5.7 on the Richter scale shook the coastal resort town of Paphos in Cyprus yesterday, causing people to run into the streets in panic. Reuter reports from Nicosia.

Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CYBC), quoting preliminary figures released by the Athens Observatory and the Seismological Centre of Salonika, gave the estimate of the quake's strength and said it struck at 7:58 am (0458 GMT).

**Armenia plans to reopen N-plant:** Desperate for energy Armenia is pushing ahead with plans to recommence a nuclear power station despite concerns that it could be a time bomb threatening the region, AP reports from Medzamor, Armenia.

Citing the republic's history of violent earthquakes, the United States has become the most vocal Western opponent of the Medzamor plant, scheduled to resume operations in July.

**China detains 6 more dissidents:** A student whose legs were crushed by a tank when the military cracked down on the 1989 pro-democracy protests has been detained in southern China along with five other activists, a human rights group reported on Monday, AP says from Beijing.

The six are among several dozen dissidents who have been detained this month as the government tries to prevent activism in the period around the anniversary of the June 4, 1989 crackdown. Some have been released, while others remain in custody.

**35 Lankan soldiers missing:** All 35 Sri-Lankan soldiers reported missing after Tamil Tiger Guerrillas overran an isolated army camp have been accounted for, the army said yesterday. Reuter reports from Colombo.

Twenty-two soldiers and 16 guerrillas were killed in Sunday's seven-hour battle for the Taravakulam camp in the eastern district of Batticaloa, a military spokesman told Reuters. Twelve of the bodies had been burnt. Ten soldiers were wounded.

**Tajik talks yield no results:** Peace talks between Tajikistan's government and the exiled opposition aimed at ending a three-year conflict have made no progress and may end without concrete results, UN mediator Ramiro Piriz Ballon said. Reuter reports from Alma Ata.

"So far, there has been no agreement between the two sides on any small constructive step," Piriz Ballon said on Sunday evening after one week of talks.

**22 fugitives to die in Algeria:** An Algerian court condemned 22 fugitive Muslim rebels to death for threatening state security and for murders committed during an ambush, the Algerian state news agency APS said on Sunday. Reuter reports from Tunis.

The death sentence imposed by the Criminal Tribunal in the town of Bouira, some 90 km (56 miles) east of Algiers, means that 55 fugitive guerrillas have been condemned to death since Algeria abolished its feared special courts in February.

**7 die as boat capsizes in Sweden:** Seven white-water rafters drowned and an eighth was missing on Sunday after their rubber dinghies capsized in icy waters in northeast Sweden, police said. Reuter reports from Stockholm.

The victims were among 14 braving the fierce-flowing Rone river, near Boden, about 90 km (60 miles) south of the Arctic Circle.

**First library in Tibet opens:** Tibet's first library has opened in Lhasa with books donated by Chinese publishing houses, an official report said on Monday, AP reports from Beijing.

An opening ceremony was held in the capital on Friday for the 18.8 million yuan (2.3 million dollars) library. The new library has 590,000 books, mostly donated by 500 Chinese companies, the Xinhua News Agency reported.

**4 French tourists in Senegal die:** Four French tourists missing since April 6 in Senegal's separatist southern province of Casamance are dead, an authoritative source said on Sunday, quoting rebels. Reuter reports from Dakar.

The bodies of French couples Catherine and Claude Cave and Jean Paul and Martine Gagnaire had not yet been found but the source said they were apparently buried in Senegal and a rebel who had taken refuge in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau knew where.

**Iran to improve ties with Iraq:** A senior Iranian official on Sunday stressed Tehran's willingness to improve ties with Baghdad after leading a delegation to Iraq last week for meetings with ministers, the official news agency IRNA reported. AFP says from Tehran.

Ali Khorram, an advisor to Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati, said the meetings had produced a "positive result."

Iraq would soon send a delegation to Tehran following his delegation's visit to Baghdad last week in an effort to heal divisions between the countries following their 1980-88 war, he said.

**21 MNLF men held in Philippines:**

Twenty-one suspected members of a Muslim extremist group were captured in a military raid on the southern island town, a military official said yesterday, amid charges the raid would jeopardise peace talks between the government and a Muslim insurgent group. AFP reports from Zamboanga, Philippines.

## Opposition wins Spanish local polls

MADRID, Spain, May 29: The centre-right Popular Party scored a resounding victory over Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez's ruling Socialists Sunday in regional and municipal elections, reports AP.

Popular Party leader Jose Maria Aznar said his party's triumph in at least 10 of 13 regions and 42 of 52 provincial capitals would pave the way for the conservatives to oust the Socialists in the next general election.

We have obtained a clear and ample victory," Aznar told thousands.

# NATO plans to send 40,000 troops to rescue UN peacekeepers in Bosnia

BRUSSELS, May 29: NATO is refining contingency plans to send up to 40,000 troops, backed by tanks, warships and air power, to rescue UN peacekeepers if they are overwhelmed by the conflict in Bosnia, reports AP.

A full-scale evacuation would be the biggest military operation in the 46-year history of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and would almost certainly involve NATO troops directly in the fighting.

Short of a complete pullout, NATO's plans also include pinpoint missions by rapid reaction units to withdraw the most vulnerable UN units.

NATO officials insist they still want the 20,000 UN troops to stay in Bosnia and continue trying to protect civilians and aid supplies.

But they say the contingency plan is necessary insurance in the event of renewed full-scale combat, which could make the United Nations' peacekeeping role untenable.

Allied military planners were revising their strategies even before the Serbs started jacking peacekeepers hostage Thursday in retaliation for NATO air strikes.

Last week, NATO's Supreme Commander in Europe, U.S. Gen. George Joulwan, asked the military chiefs of the 16 allied nations to ready specific units and equipment.

The United States offered to provide 25,000 troops for the evacuation plan.

France and Britain are also expected to be major contributors — partly by switching the approximately 7,000 troops they already have in Bosnia from UN to NATO command.

Germany has offered Tornado ground attack planes and 2,000 backup troops, including medical units.

Most other allies have also said they will send troops.

Now that Serbs have seized more than 300 peacekeepers

as human shields and increased attacks on others, the deadline for a NATO decision is looming.

This situation is completely unacceptable and it can't continue like this," Foreign Minister Herve de Charette of France said Friday. "We will study all options, including that of withdrawal."

Much of Plan 40,401, as the evacuation project is known at NATO military headquarters, is secret. But some details have filtered out.

The operation, which planners believe could last up to three months, will likely be code-named "Determined Effort."

NATO insists the alliance will have sole command, in contrast to the current system requiring a U.N. request for NATO air strikes in Bosnia.

Overall command would be given to U.S. Adm. Leighton Smith, NATO's southern European commander. Troops in

Bosnia will likely be led by British Gen. Michel Walker, who commands NATO's rapid reaction force.

The NATO troops will seek to secure routes leading out of Bosnia to the Croatian seaports of Split and Ploce. Helicopter units will be on standby to evacuate trapped peacekeepers.

The operation's headquarters will be in the Croatian capital, Zagreb. A frontline base is planned in the Bosnian town of Kiseljak, near Sarajevo.

Warplanes flying out of bases in Italy and from aircraft carriers in the Adriatic Sea will provide air cover. Naval vessels patrolling the coast of former Yugoslavia will also back up the operation.

The heavy firepower is considered necessary to deter all sides in the conflict from trying to stop the peacekeepers' withdrawal or to seize tons of U.N. arms and other military equipment.

## US considers Lanka's request for military aid

COLOMBO, May 29: The United States was considering military aid to Sri Lanka to fight separatist Tamil rebels who have escalated their ethnic war, leaving over 500 people killed in a month, a press report here said today, reports AFP.

The state-owned daily news said the US was contemplating providing non-lethal items including barges which would transport troops to the battle zones.

The newspaper, in a report by its Washington correspondent, quoted the State Department's head of the South Asia Bureau, Robin Raphael, as saying the bureau received a request for help from President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government.

## Computer link with human brain may be possible

LONDON, May 29: Scientists may be able to link the human brain directly to a computer within 50 years, a British study predicts, reports Reuter.

The independent newspaper reported today that the study by professor Peter Cochrane, a leading British technology futurologist, said scientists by the year 2020 may start to develop ways to link powerful silicon chips directly to the brain, possibly by growing nerve cells on the chip.

The link would create a physical connection between the carbon-based memory of the human brain to the silicon memory of the computer chip, the newspaper said.

## Iran against US reinforcement in Gulf

TEHRAN, May 29: Iran has warned against any US military reinforcement in the Gulf, saying it threatened world peace and stability, Tehran radio said Sunday, reports AFP.

The warning came after a meeting Saturday of the National Security Council, the country's top military and political decision-making body, chaired by President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, it said.

The council commissioned the foreign ministry to make contacts with Iran's Gulf Arab neighbours to "inform them of the threat posed by the build-up of US forces" in the region, according to the radio.

The United States has said it is planning to reinforce its Fifth Fleet in the Gulf to meet alleged threats posed by Iran and Iraq.

The concentration of US forces in the region is a proof that the United States pursues a militaristic policy in a bid to perpetuate and legalise its illegitimate presence in the Persian Gulf, the council said in a statement.

refused to join the UN force supposed to solve this European crisis.

As the situation deteriorated, talk of a pullout grew. But that also would draw in NATO, the only force capable of helping the peacekeepers get out.

For now, the pullout threat is on hold as critics and contributors to the UN mission unite under pressure.

The peacekeepers themselves say they are ready to fight or negotiate. But a choice must be made — and quickly.

"Somebody will have to tell us what's our next step," said Alexander Ivankov, spokesman for the UN force.

## Expansion of Palestinian autonomy

# Arafat, Peres firm to honour July 1 deadline

RABAT, May 29: Palestinian Leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met on neutral ground in Morocco and affirmed a commitment to honouring a July 1 deadline for agreement to expand Palestinian autonomy and looked beyond to a common market of Arabs and Jews, reports Reuter.

The Palestinians on Sunday in an optimistic mood, convinced Israel would not renege on a pledge made before host King Hassan, the Arab leader both sides count as a valuable ally.

Peres came out of the four-hour meeting which ended in the royal palace in Rabat in the early hours of Sunday satisfied that the uproar over its decision, later frozen, to seize Arab land in East Jerusalem had given way to Arab pragmatism.

The Moroccans congratulated themselves on another diplomatic victory by King Hassan, whose behind-the-scenes diplomacy in the Arab-

Israel conflict in the last three decades led President Bill Clinton to call him "the voice of reason" in the Middle East.

"The Israelis and Palestinians confirmed their real commitment to reach, before July 1, 1995, an agreement on the second phase of the interim accord, including the redeployment of Israeli troops, security arrangements, elections, the transfer of authority and the other points inscribed in the accords of Oslo, Washington and Cairo," Peres and Arafat said in a joint communiqué.

The statement was agreed during the meeting between Arafat and Peres in the presence of King Hassan.

It made no specific mention of Jerusalem, where on Sunday tens of thousands of Jews marched to the Arab half of the city to celebrate 28 years of Israeli rule over all the city.

The Israeli government vowed on Sunday never to give up its rights over the whole of the city without a fight.

## Off the Record

### Beware of Aussie!

SYDNEY: Australia has been intercepting, decoding and translating sensitive trade and diplomatic information from the Japanese Embassy in Canberra, a newspaper reported Monday, says AP from Sydney.

Quoting unidentified sources, the Sydney Morning Herald said surveillance and eavesdropping had been also conducted against the Canberra diplomatic missions of Indonesia, Malaysia, Iraq, Iran and Russia.

Last week Australian Broadcasting Corp TV and the Herald reported that Australia laid fiber-optic eavesdropping cables and bugs in the walls and foundations of the Chinese Embassy prior to its completion in 1990.

The United States provided the bugging devices for the Chinese Embassy and retained exclusive control of the intercepted information, they said.

The Japanese Embassy in Jakarta used microwaves to eavesdrop on the Australian Embassy in Indonesia, the Herald reported last week. Japan's Foreign Ministry denied the story was true.

The Herald said Monday that comprehensive transcripts of conversations and cables from the Japanese Embassy were available to Australian diplomats in a regular delivery to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The transcripts are sent to departments in the department's headquarters building in a special locked bag, but they are widely available to even relatively junior staff, the paper said.

It said the surveillance of foreign missions revealed the conversations of Australian bureaucrats visiting them for consultations.

### Dual use of masks

SANTIAGO: Many people in Chile's smog-ridden capital wear surgical masks, but the masked man who walked into a suburban bank Thursday was trying to protect his identity, not his lungs, reports AP.

No one paid much attention to the man until he brandished a gun, got 1 million pesos (dls 25,000) from a teller and fled on foot, police said.

Air pollution is often a problem in Santiago, and it has worsened sharply in recent days. Authorities ordered 250,000 motor vehicles off the streets and 187 industries idled Thursday and Friday.

### Disguised robbers

JOHANNESBURG: Thieves dressed as shop workers escaped with a trolley-load of money from a hypermarket in Johannesburg on Monday, South African police said, reports Reuter.

Three men dressed in pick and pay uniforms entered the hypermarket... and demanded the safe keys at gunpoint... they took a substantial amount of cash and put it in a trolley," said warrant officer Azwini Nengovela.

"The robbers then took a lift to the roof parking and escaped with the money," he said. The amount was not disclosed.

## 40 Pak clerics barred from entering into Sindh

ISLAMABAD, May 29: Pakistani authorities have banned the entry of nearly 40 "inflammatory" Muslim religious scholars into the country's troubled province of Sindh for three months, officials said today, reports AFP.

The ban is part of nationwide measures, including a police alert, to avert sectarian trouble during Shi'ite religious ceremonies during Moharram, the first month of the Islamic calendar, due to start this week.

The scholars, all from Punjab province, were likely to stir "hatred and ill-will" between different sects through "inflammatory speeches" and other activities, the Sindh provincial government said.

Karachi, capital of Sindh province, has been rocked by violence linked to ethnic, po-

litical and sectarian problems for a long time. More than 1,550 people have been killed in the city since early last year.

During Moharram, Shi'ite Muslims congregate and hold processions to commemorate the martyrdom in 680 of Imam Husayn, grandson of Prophet Mohammad (SM), at the hands of Umayyad troops.

Some militants sections from the majority Sunni Muslim community hold strong views against the Shi'ite public rituals, which includes passionate oration and beating of chests by processions.

Federal and provincial authorities have convened a series of meetings with religious leaders from the two sects ahead of Moharram in an effort to promote religious peace.

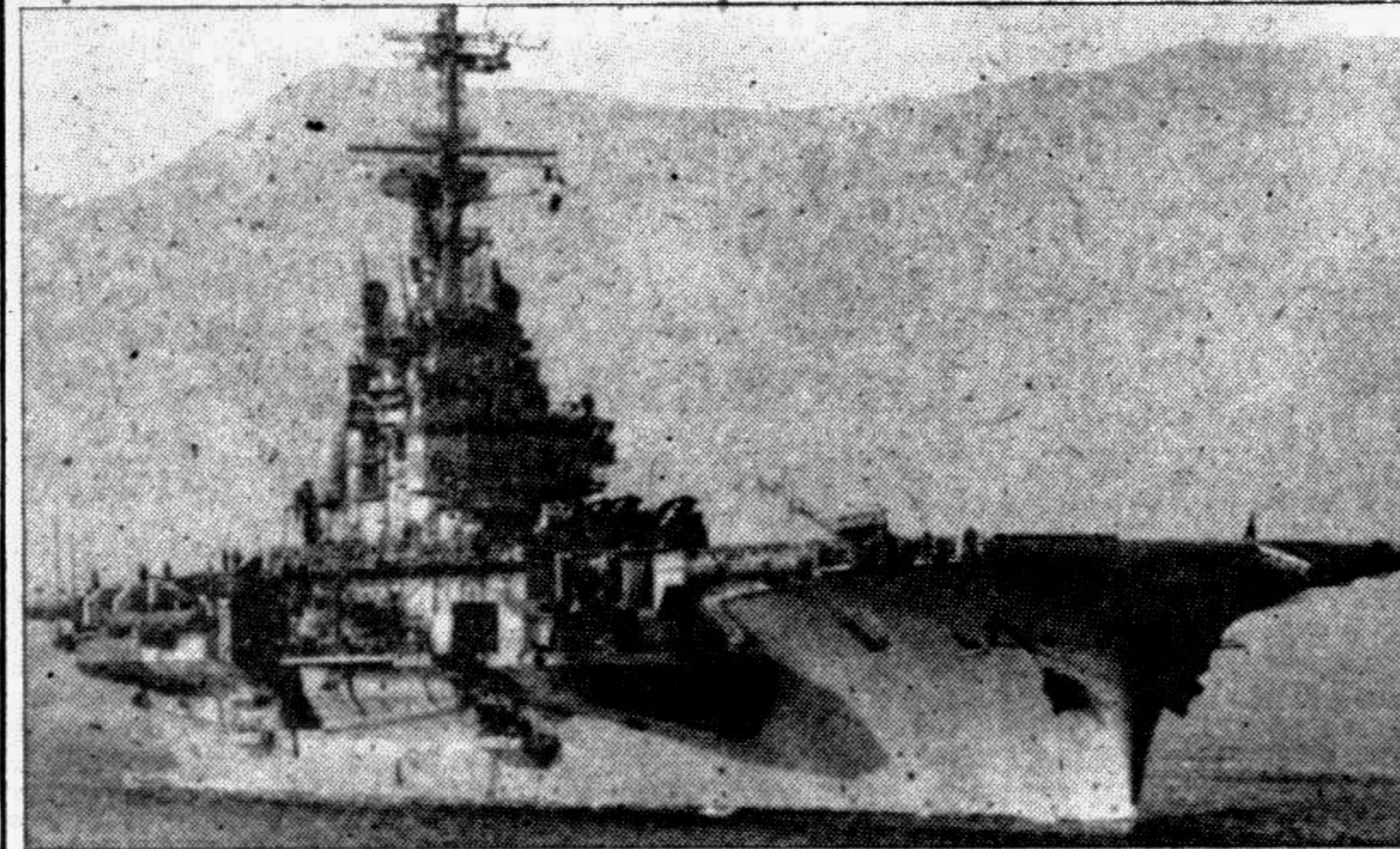
## Jordan bans anti-peace treaty rally

AMMAN, Jordan, May 29: Reversing itself for a second time in two weeks, the government banned a demonstration Monday by opponents of the peace treaty with Israel, reports AP.

The demonstration had been organised by 11 leftist and Muslim fundamentalist groups opposed to last year's Jordan-Israel treaty and the normalisation of relations.

The government, which had approved the protest last week after banning it earlier, gave no reason for the decision.

Hundreds of demonstrators defied the ban.



The French aircraft carrier Foch leaves Sunday the southern port of Toulon for the Adriatic Sea to reinforce French UN peacekeepers serving in Sarajevo and in Bosnia. Among the 230 UN peacekeepers held hostage by the Serbs, 94 are French, according to French chief of staff, Admiral Jacques Lanzeade.

# 'Rao should be replaced by Hitler-like figure'

BOMBAY, May 29: A right-wing Hindu leader whose party rules India's most industrialised state has dismissed Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao as ineffectual and said he should be replaced by a Hitler-like figure, reports AFP.

Bal Thackeray, chief of the Shiv Sena Party which swept to power in the western state of Maharashtra in March, described Rao as "inactive" and said the Prime Minister "has not been able to do anything for the country."

"This country needs an aggressive Hitler," Thackeray told reporters in this Maharashtra capital Saturday while releasing a Marathi language book by Bal Samant on the Führer entitled, Hitler — a

great tragedy," newspapers reported today.

"Hitler was determined to root out corruption from Germany. He lived for that ideal," the Shiv Sena chief said. "I will buy 500 copies of the book and distribute them free of charge so that people know what kind of a man he was. It should also be translated into English."

Newspapers said the revisionist biography gave little space to Hitler's contempt for democracy and the church and his role as a dictator and war-monger.

The book shows Hitler in a far from unfavourable image. He is seen smiling, reading with children, giving autographs, surrounded by admiring youngsters. The Times of India said.

The Shiv Sena, founded by Thackeray 28 years ago, has been critical of Rao's ruling Congress (I) party for allegedly pandering to Muslims, India's largest religious minority.

Thackeray was widely blamed for inciting anti-Muslim riots in Bombay after the December 6, 1992 destruction of the Babri Mosque.

11,836 killed in Kashmir since '89

NEW DELHI, May 29: At least 11,836 people have been killed in the bloody Muslim separatist campaign raging in Kashmir since 1989, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported Sunday, says AFP.



US movie star Sharon Stone congratulates Sarajevo-born film maker Emir Kusturica after he won the Golden Palm for his movie 'Underground' at Cannes International Film Festival.

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For months, UN soldiers have been shot at or held hostage. "Safe areas," with hundreds of thousands of Bosnian civilians, have been shelled at will. UN convoys have been blocked. UN cease-fires and buffer zones ignored.

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Force strength for Bosnia has risen from 100 to 21,000 as the international community variously ordered peacekeepers to get aid delivered, keep warring sides apart, protect civilians or monitor heavy weapons.

What nobody wanted to do was fight.

A series of vaguely worded UN resolutions hobbled the troops. An early one authorised peacekeepers to use "all means necessary" to perform their mission. But that mission was never defined.

Another passed by the Security Council in May 1993, set up six "safe areas" for civilians that lightly armed and

thinly stretched peacekeepers could not enforce. On Thursday, a shell killed 71 people in Tuzla, a "safe area."

An "exclusion zone" around Sarajevo, created in February 1994 and meant to keep heavy guns away from the city, worked only as long as the Serbs took a NATO airstrike threat to enforce it seriously.

Once that fear faded in November, Serbs took hundreds of hostages. No more airstrikes were called, and fighting went on despite a UN-negotiated four-months cease fire that began January 1.

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# UN mission in Bosnia fighting for its own existence

SARAJEVO, May 29: They came to observe a war next door and ended up being sucked into one on their doorstep. Now the UN mission in Sarajevo, former monitor of the war in Croatia, is literally fighting for its life, reports AP.

From the start, the UN mission was a mission impossible: There was no peace to keep. Today, scores of Bosnia's 20,000 peacekeepers are Serb hostages or captives, some chained to potential NATO targets.

They are hoping help comes from an unlikely source — the very world leaders whose vacillation helped create their predicament.

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refused to join the UN force supposed to solve this European crisis.

As the situation deteriorated, talk of a pullout grew. But that also would draw in NATO, the only force capable of helping the peacekeepers get out.

For now, the pullout threat is on hold as critics and contributors to the UN mission unite under pressure.

The peacekeepers themselves say they are ready to fight or negotiate. But a choice must be made — and quickly.

"Somebody will have to tell us what's our next step," said Alexander Ivankov, spokesman for the UN force.

The one UN success of the past three days was a French counterattack on Serbs who seized a UN observation post. It came at a price: two French soldiers dead, 10 wounded.

Tellingly, that move was ordered by Gen. Herve Gobillard, the top French general in Sarajevo, who acted without checking with UN regional headquarters in Zagreb, Croatia, or the United Nations in New York.

Orders to Sarajevo come down slowly and confused. Had Gobillard waited for superiors instead of reacting quickly, the UN post would surely have been lost.