# BRIFILY

Taiwanese Prime Minister Lien Chan arrived in Prague on Sunday for a private three-day visit, which may include unofficial talks with Czech leaders although the countries have no diplomatic relations, Reuter reports from Prague. Lien was making the visit at the invitation of Prague's Charles University.

Nepalese flood toll rises to 69: The death toll from floods and landslides in eastern Nepal has risen to 69 with eight more bodies recovered at the weekend and 41 still missing as rains continued to lash the country, a Home Ministry spokesman said yesterday, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

"The torrential rain which began on Friday in three villages in Khotang district is still continuing and it has made relief operations very difficult," said ministry spokesman Keshav Raibhandari.

40 militants held in Pakistan: Pakistan authorities arrested 40 Islamic militant protesters in the northwestern district of Swat on Sunday after they clashed with security men, official sources and witnesses said, Reuter reports from Peshawar.

Police and the paramilitary frontier corps fired tear gas to disperse hundreds of stone-throwing militants who had occupied a police station at Matta in a protest against a local land rate they described as un-Islamic, witnesses said.

Quake shakes Kobe again: An earthquake registering 3.4 on the Richter scale jarred the Kobe area in western Japan yesterday but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, the Meteorological Agency said, AFP reports from Tokyo. There was no danger of Tsunami tidal waves, an agency

official said.

Forest fires rage in Russia: Dozens of forest fires were raging Monday in the Russian Far East, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported, AP reports from Khabarovsk, Russia.

It said more than 15,000 hectares (37,000 acres) of Siberian taiga were ablaze in 63 separate fires in the Khabarovsk region

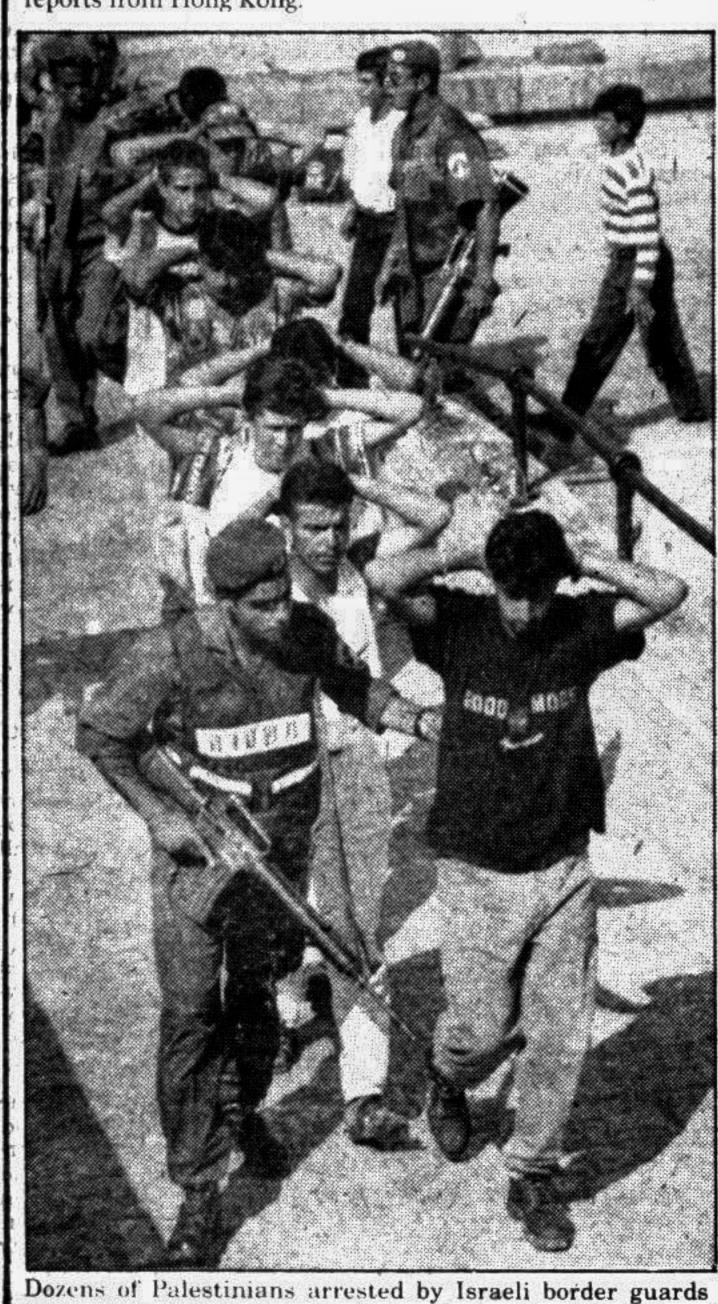
27 die in Chinese bus plunge: Twenty-seven passengers died in an accident in central Jiangki province Saturday when their bus veered off a highway and plunged into a river, a newspaper reported yesterday, AFP says from Shanghai.

The Liberation Daily reported that 30 others were saved from the Changshan river into which their bus fell from a 7.5 metre-high highway.

Volcano creates island in Tonga: An undersea volcanic eruption in the Pacific Ocean has presented Tonga with a brand new baby island that is getting bigger every day, AP reports from Suva, Fizi.

The eruption began about two weeks ago, at first sending a plume of smoke and steam more than 8,500 feet (2,600 metres) into the air above Tonga's Ha'apai group of islands, which lie on a volcanic fault line.

Fire claims 7 in China: Seven people were killed and another four injured in separate fires that broke out at an entertainment centre and hotel in southern China's Guangdong province, reports said yesterday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.



with their hands over their heads in the Old City of Jerusalem on Sunday after a Jew was stabbed while walking in the streets of the Old City. In the past week three Jews have been stabbed in the area. -AFP/UNB photo

## Indian navy intensifies patrol in Palk Strait

# Delhi blocks LTTE stronghold to help Colombo fight rebels

NEW DELHI, June 19: Since the ceasefire in Sri Lanka's civil war collapsed, India has begun using warships to blockade the Tamil rebels' stronghold, two Indian sources said Monday, reports

· However, India's top military spokesman denied that the navy had formed a blockade. He said it was simply working harder to prevent smuggling, poaching and terrorism off its coast.

India's navy has long patrolled its southern shores and the 25-mile-wide Palk Strait that separates India from Sri Lanka and the rebels' main fortification, Jaffna Peninsula.

But the two sources said on condition of anonymity that the stepped up patrols have focused on Jaffna. They also said that Indian ships and aircraft are operating deep in the Indian Ocean to seal off Sri Lanka's northeastern

Rebel boats on the peninsula have long collected weapons and supplies from Tamil supporters in southern India and from trading vessels arriving from countries such as Singapore and Thailand.

The Indian government often avoids publicity saying that it is trying to help Sri Lanka fight the Tamil rebels because 60 million Tamils live in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and many feel sympathy for their Sri Lankan brethren.

India also is concerned about rebel reaction.

The government blames the rebels for killing former Prime Minister Rany Gandhi

during as election campaign in Tamil Nadu in May 1991 India also deployed 100,000 troops in Sri Lanka in 1987 to fight the rebels, and 1,165 of the soldiers were killed

The Tamil rebels have been fighting for autonomy in northern and eastern Sri Lanka for 12 years, and the battles have intensified since they broke a three-month ceasefire in April.

India's top military spokesman, T G Nallamuthu of the Defence Minister, denied in a interview Monday that Indian forces are taking any unusual steps to help Sri Lanka fight the rebels.

"What we are doing is good and effective patrolling to protect our coast and see that there is no unauthorized movement," he said. "This not

extraordinary ... there is no blockade. "We are simply trying to ensure that there is no terrorist activity, no smuggling and no poaching in that area.

The government's top spokesman, S Narendra, also denied that India was imposing a blockade of Tamil Tiger

"We certainly have no de-ployed the navy all around. It is, however, our duty to guard our coast line against arms smuggling and terrorism," he said in a separate in-

India has 61,000 men in a navy that includes 15 submarines, two aircraft carriers five destroyers, 17 frigates and several patrol vessels. It also includes 64 combat aircraft and 75 helicopters.

### Murayama won't reshuffle cabinet or call snap polls

PARIS, June 19: Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama said Sunday he had no immediate plans to reshuffle his cabinet or call for snap elections, as Tokyo faces mounting pressures to address domestic and foreign problems quickly, reports Reuter.

"We are facing urgent issues and the cabinet ministers are doing their best. I trust them. I have not considered a cabinet reshuffle," Murayama told reporters after arriving in Paris on Sunday for talks with French President Jacques Chirac and European Union (EU) officials.

The Socialist premier said his three-party coalition gov-ernment had been successful in passing series of budgets for the current fiscal year starting April 1995 and saw no reason why it could not cope with pending issues.

"It's not good to dissolve the parliament when you are still tackling problems," he

Some of Japan's major concerns are possible trade sanctions from the United

States and its fragile economic recovery which has been battered by surging yen and ailing financial institutions.

Murayama stressed that Japan needed to keep vigilant over its limping economy and said he had instructed a committee of cabinet ministers to be established to monitor the economy and oversee implementation of past economic measures.

lapan also taces massive rebuilding after a devastating earthquake killed more than 5,000 people and destroyed most of port city of Kobe. National security is also at stake as series of violent incidents, like the nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway system, struck Japan.

Murayama has come under fierce attack for an alleged lack of leadership in addressing these issues.

Having survived a no-confidence vote just before the Group of Seven (G-7) summit meeting in Canada, he now. faces an upper house election in July when he returns home

#### Pak tribesmen demand strict Islamic law

ISLAMABAD, June 19 Tribesmen blocked roads and occupied government buildings to demand the enforcement of strict Islamic law in their remote corner of north-

They said two people were killed and nearly 30 injured in clashes with police.

western Pakistan, authorities

said Monday, reports AP.

Hundreds of police and paramilitary troops moved into the Swat district, about 180 kilometres (108 miles) from the federal capital, on Sunday to try to dislodge demonstrators holed up in government offices in Matta, Kabbal and Mardyan.

Late on Sunday police arrested the leader of the demonstration, Maulana Sufi Mohammed, along with 40 followers. However, police said demonstrators still blocked several roads in the area, although most of the government offices had been cleared.

#### Students called strike paralyses Kathmandu

KATHMANDU, June 19: Shops and schools across the Kathmandu valley remained shut and private vehicles stayed off the roads today in response to a strike by student groups against mid-term elections, eye witnesses and officials said, reports Reuter.

Representatives of the Nepal Students Union, who organised the strike, said they were protesting against the kingdom's communist rulers' recent decision to hold elections in November. Police said stone-throwing

protesters had damaged six vehicles, student leaders said about 500 protesters had been arrested. But police put the number closer to 40. "The mid-term elections

ordered last week are not in the interest of the country," student leader NP Saud told Reuters.

#### ROK president wants summit with DPRK

HONG KONG, June 19: President Kim Young-sam of South Korea says he will seek a summit with North Korea's new leader, Kim Jong II, re-

In an interview with Time Magazine released Monday, Kim said "the idea of a summit will be discussed" when Kim Jong II formally succeeds his late father as North Korean president "some time in the future."

North and South Korean presidents have never met. A' summit which was being arranged for last July was scuttled by the death of North Korean President Kim II Sung.



to throw an egg at a group of right wing anti-gay protestors during the 25th Annual San Francisco Lesbian, Gay Bisexual Transgender Pride Parade on Sunday. San Francisco police estimated some 400,000 people turned out for the march. -AFP/UNB photo

## Chechens leave Budennovsk

MOSCOW, June 19: Chechen guerillas with volunteers acting as human shields left the Russian town of Budennovsk today for Chechnya, Interfax news agency said, reports AFP.

The guerillas left at 2:32 pm (1032 GMT), Interfax said, quoting Stayropol deputy district administrator Alexander Korobinikov.

It was not immediately clear whether they had hostages with them, although the government had demanded they release all hostages first. The Interfax news agency said all hostages had been released.

A spokesman for Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin told The Associated Press that the rebels would be accompanied by about 80 volunteers, including local officials and members of the Russian parlia-

The rebels had demanded they be escorted en route to Chechnya by lawmakers and others to ensure their safety aboard the buses. The six buses and the re-

frigerator truck pulled up early Monday in front of the hospital where the rebels had been holed up with the hostages since Wednesday. Efforts to free the hostages bogged down for more than six hours Monday while officials and rebels argued over who would escort the gunmen back to Chechnya. The government rejected a rebel demand to take 150 hostages with them.

At least two times early Monday, Chernomyrdin was shown on Russian television speaking by telephone with rebel leader Shamil Basayev. "All hostages must be left

in the hospital," Chernomyrdin told him. "The volunteers - that is another story. Shamil! Shamil! Wait a second! How can I guarantee you safe passage if you have some hostages with you?"

Early Monday, peace talks began in the Chechen capital Grozny, between a high-level Russian delegation and a Chechen group sent by President Dzhokhar Dudayev.

The Russian military declared a ceasefire Sunday night in its combat operations in Chechnya. The Chechen delegation to Monday's peace talks was led by Usman Imayev, Dudayev's justice minister, and Aslan Maskhadov, the chief of staff of Dudayev's forces.

# Off the Record

#### 'Divorce is a tragedy'

LONDON: A divorce should not get in the way of Prince Charles ascension to the throne, a senior Church of England cleric said Sunday, but marrying his mistress could present a problem, reports AP.

Why should it?" John Habgood, the Archbishop of York, told Independent Television, when asked if the prospect of a divorce from Princess Diana could get in Charles' way. "Divorce is a tragedy, but then tragedies happen to all sorts Charles and Diana separated in 1992. Subsequent autho-

rised biographies revealed that an affair between the prince and a married woman, Camilla Parker Bowles, helped lead to the split. Parker Bowles own divorce proceedings this year have

led to speculation that she and Charles may marry, although Charles and Diana have not made any plans themselves to divorce. The outgoing archbishop — the church's second ranking

cleric, after the Archbishop of Canterbury - had reservations about Charles and Parker Bowles getting together.

"This would create further problems and I am not going to speculate," Habgood said.

#### Wives get all credits

MINNEAPOLIS: The only surviving US signer of the UN charter says his wife and the wives of Soviet delegates helped break a stalemate at the conference to create the United Nations, reports AP.

Harold Stassen's reminiscence about the back-door diplomacy of his wife, Esther, and the other women come on the eve of the United Nation's 50th anniversary. Only a handful of people knew about it at the time, he said.

The 300 delegates from 50 nations were struggling with the veto issue, which could have aborted the United Nations before it was born, said Stassen, a former Minnesota governor and 10-time Republican presidential candidate. The Soviet delegates insisted that the Soviet Union,

along with the four other major powers, had to have the authority to veto all UN activities. That meant the Soviets would have had the power to block inquiries or investigations about anything and could have even prevented issues from being put on the agenda for discussion.

At one of the spouses' outings during the conference, the Soviet wives told Stassen's wife that Stalin had dictated the Soviets' veto position and only he could change it. The Soviet delegates were afraid to directly ask Stalin to compromise for fear that he might consider it a sign of weakness and become angry with them.

The women suggested that President Truman communicate with Stalin to break the deadlock. Stassen relayed the suggestion to the State Department.

One of Truman's aides, Harry Hopkins, took up the issue with Stalin while in Moscow on other business. Stalin then authorised his delegates to be more flexible and the veto was limited to decisions being considered by the UN Security Council.

#### Pakistan plans to buy jets alternative to F-16s ISLAMABAD, June 19:

Pakistan is considering acquiring military planes from Russia, France or Sweden as alternative to F-16 aircraft being denied by the United States Defence Minister Aftab Shabaan Mirani said here, reports AFP.

He told parliament late Sunday that Pakistan would look for Russian Su-27, French Mirage or an advanced Swedish aircraft Griffin in case it has to scrap the deal for 38 multi-role F-16 planes. The deal has been in jeopardy since 1990 when the US

clamped an embargo on military purchases by Pakistan over its controversial nuclear programme. Pakistan, which has al-

ready paid 658 million dollars for the jets under a 1989 deal, insists that Washington either honour its commitment or refund the money.

When Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visited the United States in April, President Bill Clinton promise to help remove impediments caused by the Pressler Law which forbids US aid to countries pursuing a weapon oriented nuclear programme. However, no headway has been made so far.

Mirani said Pakistan was cooperating with China in a project to manufacture Super-7 aircraft which is near-equal to F-16. The aircraft will be ready around 1997-98, the minister said.

#### Tories renew appeals for party unity

LONDON, June 19: Lead ers of Britain's ruling Conservatives renewed their appeals for party unity amid mounting speculation that Prime Minister John Major might be ditched before the next general election, reports Reuter.

Major's authority took a battering last week when openly defiant Euro sceptic Conservative members of parliament attacked him over future policy towards the European Union. Senior Conservatives re-

sponded by calling for new moves to boost the popularity of the party now trailing the opposition Labour Party by record levels in the opinion

### UK company supplied arms to both Iran, Iraq during war

LONDON: June 19: A British company linked to a serving Cabinet Minister broke an arms embargo against warring Iran and Iraq by supplying weapons to both sides and training them in their use, The Times reported today, says AFP.

The paper quoted Gerald James, former Chairman of BMARC, a company of which current Treasury Secretary Jonathan Aitken was a director at the material item. Aitken has always denied earlier reports that he knew about islegal arms sales by the

James said BMARC sold several hundred Swiss made Skyguard antiaircraft systems

to both Tehran and Baghdad during their 1980-88 war and trained hundreds of their ar-

tillery men in Britain.

"The Iranians used to come in batches of 50 and I assume they were allowed into Britain with proper visas," James said.

He said the training of the Iranians at BMARCs test centre at Faldinworth in Lincolnshire, eastern England, ended in 1985 but that the Iragis continued to come until the end of the decade.

James backed other BMARC insiders by saying that skyguard sales to Iran were discussed openly by the company's board, on which Aitken sat from 1988 to

## Aideed appoints Once important PLO HQs now wrapped in terrible silence

MOGADISHU, June 19: Somalia's main warlord General Mohamed Farah Aideed has appointed a cabinet of more than 60 ministers and deputy ministers in his first decree since being elected president of Somalia at a conference of his supporters

In the decree released here Sunday night, General Aideed said a few more ministers would be appointed later.

Thursday, reports AFP.

Aideed headed the United Somali Congress/Somali National Alliance (USC/SNA) faction until he was sacked and replaced by his former financier Osman Hassan Ali 'Ato' at a conference organised by a river USC/SNA faction in southern Mogadishu on June 11.

## TUNIS, June 19: The most

striking feature of the PLO headquarters in Tunis is the from the kitchen, where mint tea and thick, black coffee are brewed, reports AP.

The lack of activity underlines the fading influence of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, which once controlled a billion-dollar financial empire and had a guerilla army equipped with tanks, artillery and missiles.

Yasser Arafat, who headed the movement since 1968 from Jordan, then Lebanon and finally Tunisia, has allowed the PLO to wither since the Israel-Palestinian accord was signed September 13,

shrunk to less than 100. The Power and money have old fighters-turned-bureau-

gradually shifted to the Palestinian authority, the self-rule government that Arafat set up quiet. The only bustle comes to run the West Bank region of Jericho and the Gaza Strip where he is now based.

Yasser Arafat has Palestine in his briefcase. Wherever he goes, it goes with him," said Ahmed Abu Ismail, who works at the the PLO's propaganda office. The PLO headquarters in

Tunis — once so important that the Israelis bombed it in October 1985, killing 73 Palestinians and Tunisians is now a skeleton scattered in four or five villas across Tu-Once numbering more

then 1,000, the PLO staff has

crats who stayed behind oppose either the peace accord or the way Arafat is imple-

"The Palestinian Authority is a local government that was set up as an adventurous experiment to test Israel's intentions for peace," said Fraouk Kaddoumi, the PLO's foreign minister. "A year has passed since the accord was implemented. It hasn't achieved anything. It has only proved that Israel does not want peace. Most PLO offices have

closed. Its 90 embassies will

be reduced because the organ-

isation cannot pay for them.

PLO diplomats in Geneva

were ejected from their offices

because they could not pay

the rent. The phones at some

Tunis offices occasionally are shut off because the bills have not been paid. One sign that Arafat has no

plans to spend time in Tunis is his own villa. Tiles covering a section of its facade are unwashed, the white walls are peeling, plants in the tiny garden are dry. The lack of work has given

PLO officials time to help out at home - they change diapers, feed their children, do housework. They anxiously wait for travelers from Gaza, lapping up gossip - and jokes - about the doings in the self-rule zones.

They also live in constant fear their salaries will stop. "We're jobless employees

now," said Hamad Abu Ismail, who works in the propaganda

colleagues spending office hours smoking and drinking Arafat's supporters say the

office surrounded by bored

disgruntled bureaucrats have not done enough to keep the PLO in the limelight. All they do is sit in front of the television and criticise

us," said Yasser Amro, minister of education in the Palestinian authority. "I may make mistakes. But

at least I'm working," he added. "If you just sit in Tunis drinking tea, people will forget you. After its creation in 1964,

recognition, placing at least as

the PLO put the Palestinian cause on the world stage. With the backing of Arab oil money, it won international

many diplomatic missions abroad as Israel. It also acted as a unifying umbrella for eight rival Palestinian fac-

Most of all, the PLO set as its main goal the return of the 2 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants who were uprooted from what is now Israel in 1948 and from the Gaza Strip and West Bank in 1967.

The fear in Tunis and other points outside Gaza and the West Bank is that the goal is in jeopardy. Talks on the final status of refugees are set for 1996, but dissidents contend the self-rule government is too weak to fight for the refugees in negotiations with

#### talks with MNLF. MANILA, June 19: The

Manila resumes

Philippines resumed peace talks with autonomy seeking Muslim guerrillas today amid warnings of renewed war in the country's south if they failed, a government negotiator said, reports AFP. The negotiations, which

started in the southern city of Davao, are expected to focus on the possible integration of certain members of the Moro National Liberation Front MNLF into the military, said Congressman Eduardo Ermita, vice chairman of the government panel The MNLF waged a

bloody war for secession in Mindanao and other southern islands of mostly Roman Catholic Philippines in the early 1970s