

BRIEFLY

Benazir in Kuala Lumpur: Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto arrived in Kuala Lumpur yesterday for a three-day visit to boost bilateral ties with her Malaysian "brothers" and enhance relations with Southeast Asian countries, officials said, AFP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

The 41-year-old leader was accompanied by her three children and a 20-member delegation including Foreign Affairs Minister Asef Ahmad Ali and Minister of State for Finance Makhdoom Shahabuddin and officials from the Pakistani Board of Investment.

EU mediator Carl Bildt in Sarajevo: European Union mediator Carl Bildt arrived in Sarajevo yesterday for a second round of talks with Bosnian government leaders to try to restart the peace process. United Nations officials in the capital said, AFP reports from Sarajevo.

He was expected to meet Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic. Bildt first visited Sarajevo 10 days ago and snubbed Bosnian Serb leaders by not travelling to their mountain stronghold of Pale, outside the capital.

Taiwan calls for talks with China: Taiwan today called for continued negotiations with China in order to resolve fishing and other practical issues between the two sides after Beijing accused the Taiwanese navy of killing a Chinese fisherman, AFP reports from Taipei.

"There is a need for our two sides to maintain a smooth negotiation channel in order to resolve something like this," Kao Koong-Lian, Vice Chairman and spokesman of the Mainland Affairs Council, Taiwan's top mainland policy planning body, told reporters in Taipei in response to the Chinese charge.

Attempt on UP minister: A 15-year-old boy was killed when an unidentified man fired a gunshot at a government minister in a northern state, a news agency reported Thursday, AP says from New Delhi.

The incident highlighted the growing lawlessness in the state of Uttar Pradesh, where caste clashes are frequent and political rivalries often are settled through gunshots.

Floods claim 20 in Ghana: Twenty people, including four children, died in flooding caused by days of torrential rain, according to television reports in Lome, AFP says from Lome.

Sixteen bodies were found Tuesday and four Wednesday in several parts of the country, a Ghana police officer announced Wednesday on Ghanaian television, received in Lome, in neighbouring Togo.

Mandela arrives in South Korea: South African President Nelson Mandela arrived in South Korea yesterday to start a three-day visit to develop economic ties, Reuter says from Seoul.

Mandela, who arrived after a five-day visit to Japan, was to visit the national cemetery before heading off to Seoul National University to receive an honorary degree.

Turkish author Nesin dies: Prominent Turkish author and secularist Aziz Nesin, the focus of riots by Islamists two years ago which led to nearly 40 deaths in a hotel fire, has died of a heart attack, state radio said on Thursday, Reuter reports from Ankara.

Nesin, 80, died shortly after midnight in the western resort of Cesme where he had been invited to autograph his books.

Police defuses bomb in Tibet: Security forces discovered and defused a bomb planted at a monument in Lhasa, the capital of Chinese-occupied Tibet, a pro-Tibetan lobbying group reported Thursday, AP reports from Beijing.

Police foiled the attempted sabotage on June 25 amidst a tightening of security in and around Lhasa, the Washington-based International Campaign for Tibet said citing unnamed sources.

3 drown into river in US: Three young children drowned when the van they slept in rolled into the Columbia river while their parents stopped at a park to use the restroom, authorities said, AFP reports from Cheilan, Washington.

David and Jennifer Hoffpauir stopped at Beebe Bridge Park late Tuesday on their way home from watching Independence Day fireworks, and saw the van was gone when they came out of the restrooms.

Chi Haotian arrives in Myanmar: Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian has arrived in Myanmar on a goodwill visit, a Chinese embassy official said on Thursday, Reuter reports from Yangon.

Chi, leading a nine-member delegation, was expected to meet Myanmar's armed forces commanders and leaders of its military government.

Floods claim 17 in Afghanistan: Floods caused by heavy rains have killed 17 people in northern Afghanistan's Takhar province, the official Kabul radio said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Islamabad.

The broadcast, monitored in Islamabad, said the flooding in Takhar's eastern district of Farikhar also damaged houses and agricultural land.

Actor Shashi Kapoor awarded: Noted Indian actor, Shashi Kapoor, was awarded the outstanding performance of the year award for his work in Ismail Merchant's 'Mohabbat' by the Bengal Film Journalists Association in Calcutta Wednesday, PTI reports from Calcutta.

At a function held in Calcutta Wednesday noted film maker, Shyam Benegal, was also awarded the Satyajit Ray Award for his outstanding contribution to film.

4 tourists abducted in Kashmir: Muslim militants have abducted two British and two American tourists in Kashmir and were holding them hostage at an unspecified location in the troubled northern Indian state, police said Thursday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

Police identified the hostages as Paul Wells and Keith Manigan from Britain and John Donald and Fred Hutchings of the United States adding that they were abducted on Tuesday from Aroo near Kashmir's resort town of Pahalgam.

Brezhnev's widow, Viktoria, dies: Viktoria Brezhnev, the widow of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev who shunned the limelight during her decades as a Kremlin wife, has died at a state medical centre, a newspaper reported Thursday. She was 87, AP reports from Moscow.

Mrs. Brezhnev had suffered from diabetes and recently from gangrene, the daily Moskovskiy Komsomolts said. She was hospitalised two weeks ago at the Kremlin hospital and died on Wednesday.

5 executed in Jordan: Five young Jordanians were hanged at dawn in a prison in Amman yesterday after having been found guilty of murder and rape, police said, AFP reports from Amman.

Four of the convicts, aged between 19 and 27, had raped and murdered a five-year-old boy at the end of last year. The fifth, a 25-year-old, killed a neighbour.

Dalai Lama seeks int'l help for Tibetan struggle

NEW DELHI, July 6: The Dalai Lama celebrated his 60th birthday Thursday by asking for a present: 'The world's help to stop China from destroying Tibet's ancient Buddhist culture,' reports AP.

"I appeal, please help us!" the exiled Tibetan leader said in a speech that contained his first criticism of China during a three-day seminar in New Delhi to celebrate his birthday.

The man, whom 6 million Tibetans revere as god and consider an incarnation of Lord Buddha, said he would like to arrive at a "mutually agreeable solution" with the Chinese. There has been little progress, he said, because China fails to respond.

"The continued Chinese occupation of Tibet poses an increasing threat to the very existence of a distinct Tibetan national and cultural identity," the Dalai Lama said.

"This is not a struggle to preserve old institutions. It is a struggle for national survival," he said.

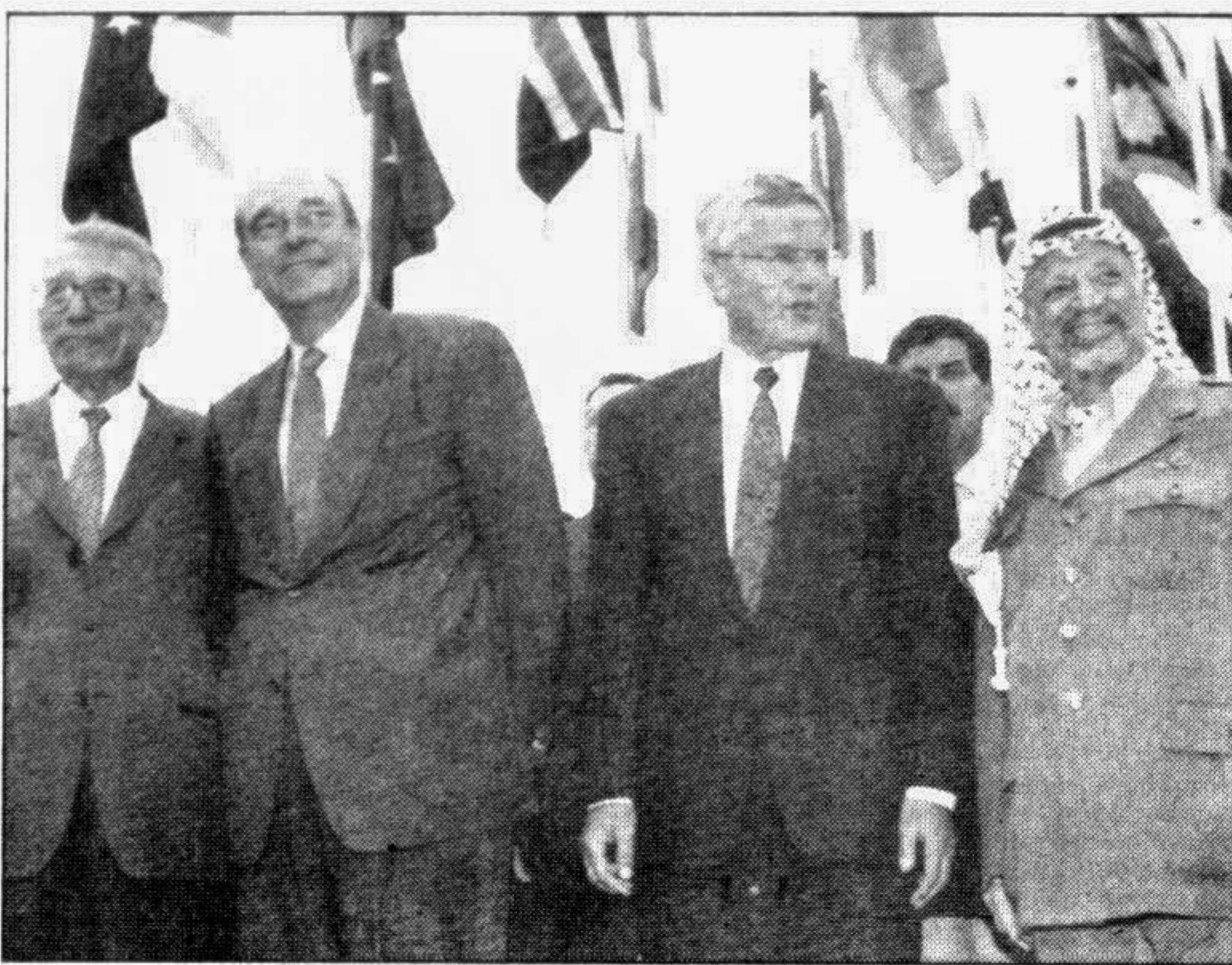
from more than 2,000 people who had assembled at the conference hall in the Ashok Hotel, the monk said: "The Tibetan spirit is extremely strong."

To make sure no one missed his comments, a copy of the six-page speech was distributed to the audience.

The Dalai Lama, who turned 60 Thursday, the closing day of the seminar, fled his Himalayan homeland in 1959 during a failed Tibetan uprising nine years after China invaded and annexed Tibet.

He set up a government-in-exile in Dharamsala, 250 miles north of New Delhi, where many of India's 120,000 Tibetan refugees now live, and he won the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize.

But his nonviolent campaign hasn't managed to push Chinese troops out of Tibet. Human rights groups accuse them of jailing and torturing independence activists and settling millions of ethnic Chinese in the area to dilute Tibetan culture.



(From Left) UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali, French President Jacques Chirac, Swiss Confederation President Kaspar Villiger and PLO leader Yasser Arafat pose for newsmen in the gardens of the United Nations headquarters in Geneva on Wednesday during ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. — AFP/UNB photo

Amnesty blasts US for backing human rights abuses abroad

WASHINGTON, July 6: Citing the easing of US trade restrictions against China and the export of weapons to governments that use them to suppress dissidents, Amnesty International on Wednesday blasted the Clinton administration for abetting human rights abuses abroad, reports AP.

"The hands of the United States are far from clean when it comes to human rights," said William Schultz, Executive Director of Amnesty International (USA), at a news conference here on the report which also was released in London.

Schultz described as a "dismal failure" the administration's policy of trying to entice China to improve its human rights record by promoting free trade.

Since 1994 the United States has twice renewed a trade clause granting favourable treatment of China's ex-

ports to the United States, despite widespread criticisms of Beijing's persecution of dissidents. The administration explained the move by saying that free trade would influence Beijing to clean up its image.

But China's human rights abuses have steadily worsened over the past year, Schultz told reporters at the National Press Club.

If the United States has had little impact on an adversarial government such as China's it also has been unsuccessful in exerting pressure on Turkey — "an allied government utilising US-supplied arms to commit human rights against its own people," Schultz noted.

Thousands have died in a decade-long conflict between Turkish security forces and Kurdish rebels fighting for self-rule in the country's eastern regions.

Given the State Department's own admission that US weapons were being used to suppress the uprising, Schultz called on the administration to prevent further weapons deliveries.

"But this is not the first time that the United States has been stilled by its association with thugs and murderers," he commented.

US citizens have been murdered by agents of the Central Intelligence Agency in Latin America, and US intelligence services have been engaged in torture, deaths and disappearances on the continent, he said.

Holding up a garden trowel, Schultz said Amnesty International would send such utensils to all members of Congress and the administration to remind them "of their obligation to dig up and bring to light the whole truth about CIA-inspired human rights violations throughout the Americas."

Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (R) reviews the honour guard with her Malaysian counterpart Mahathir Mohamad (L) during an official welcome ceremony at the Parliament Square yesterday. Bhutto is in Malaysia for a three-day official visit to strengthen relations and enhance economic cooperation. — AFP/UNB photo

Turabi fuels war of words with Egypt by saluting attackers

KHARTOUM, July 6: Sudan has raised the stakes in its war of words with neighbouring Egypt and gone on the offensive by saluting the attackers who tried to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, reports AP.

The country's spiritual leader Hassan al-Turabi, the man behind the Islamist military government in Khartoum, has praised the gang that failed to assassinate Mubarak as his motorcade drove through Addis Ababa on June 26.

"A group of Mujahideen have cropped up from Egypt's soil, chasing Egypt's Pharaoh (Mubarak) anywhere he goes," he said in a speech made earlier this week but only published yesterday by the official news agency

Sura.

It was his first show of support, since the assassination attempt, for the armed Egyptian Muslim militant group Jamaa Islamiyya, which claimed the attack and vowed to kill the president.

Last week after Mubarak implicated Sudan in the attack, Turabi, the eminence grise of Sudanese politics, and government ministers contented themselves with a simply denying being involved.

Now, however, there is a different tone to their statements.

"Egypt is today experiencing a drought in religion and faith. A catastrophe has befallen the Egyptian," Turabi said.

"Allah (God) has willed that Islam be revived from Sudan and Islamic religion will flow along with the waters of the Nile to cleanse Egypt from obscenity," he added.

He recalled he had previously spoken with Mubarak about thought, politics, religion and faith but "found the president too dumb to understand my speech."

The government in Khartoum has also gone on the offensive.

General Al-Yayey Ibrahim Mohammad Khair, the Interior Minister, has threatened to withdraw from international treaties previously agreed with Egypt if Cairo continues to attack Sudanese troops in the disputed Red Sea border region.

700 Palestinians seek Israeli citizenship

JERUSALEM, July 6: Nearly 700 Palestinians living in Jerusalem have asked for Israeli citizenship for their families this year, according to an Interior Ministry report published today by the Jerusalem Post, says AP.

The figures from January 1 to June 13 compared with 430 requests for the whole of 1994. The ministry grants citizenship in virtually all cases.

Syria, Israel agree on air surveillance

BEIRUT, July 6: Syria and Israel agreed on air surveillance instead of early warning systems as part of a peace deal during military talks last month in Washington, a high-ranking Lebanese source said today, reports AP.

The source, who was quoted by the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper, said the talks between Syrian and Israeli chiefs of staff Hikmat Shehawi and Amnon Shahak "achieved some progress concerning the security arrangements" which will accompany an eventually Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

"This progress means that they reached a final agreement on the fate of early warning systems, that is they agreed to forget about setting them up in certain areas in both countries", the unnamed source was quoted as saying by the London-based Al-Hayat newspaper.

"In exchange they will rely on air surveillance by using satellites or sophisticated planes, including a pilotless plane produced in the United States," the source added.

The source was speaking after a visit to Beirut on Tuesday by Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq Al-Shara to brief Lebanese leaders on the outcome of the Washington talks.

India to celebrate cinema centenary in September

NEW DELHI, July 6: The centenary celebration of arrival of cinema in India would begin in September this year with a function being organised at Hyderabad, reports PTI.

This will be followed by festivals of films exhibitions and seminars in the film producing states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Delhi.

In Andhra Pradesh, Cinema Centenary celebrations would be organised in the first week of October, in Kerala and West Bengal during November and in Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu during March and April respectively.

In Delhi, centenary celebrations would coincide with the 27th International Film Festival of India to be held from January 10 to 20 1996. Similar programmes are also proposed to be organised in Karnataka.

Among the proposals being finalised are a comprehensive exhibition on 100 years of world cinema and the arrival of cinema in India which will be compiled by the Directorate of Audio Visual Publicity (DAVP) and the National Film Archives of India (NFAI).

Ruling coalition sweeps polls in Armenia

YEREVAN, July 6: The moderate nationalist ruling coalition was re-elected in Armenia's first post-communist elections, and a draft constitution adopted, sources close to the government said today, reports AP.

The ruling Republic Bloc reaped in some 85 of 150 seats, the sources added. But the Central Election Committee has not yet given any official results.

Meanwhile, Armenia's first post-communist elections and a referendum on the constitution were free, but, not fair, Organisation for Security and Cooperation Europe (OSCE) observers said today.

"The delegation of the OSCE revealed that the elections may only be considered by international standards as generally free but not fair," a statement said today.

Moscow won't allow Bonn to recycle its plutonium

BONN, July 6: Russia will not allow its plutonium to be recycled in a German factory, as Bonn has planned, Russia Atomic Energy Minister Victor Mikhalov said in an interview with the German weekly Die Woche.

"We will in no circumstances deliver any military plutonium to Germany. There has never been any discussion in this subject and there never will be," he told the magazine in editions out on Thursday, reports AP.

Officials in Germany's coalition government recently proposed using a German factory to recycle plutonium from Russian atomic bombs into material which can be used to fuel nuclear power plants.

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel was to have taken up the matter with the Russians.

The plant, which had the strong support of US President Bill Clinton, was discussed yesterday by the German cabinet, but no decision had yet been taken.

The idea is to take plutonium contained in old Soviet Nuclear weapons — an estimated 120 tonnes — mix it with uranium to make bars of fuel for the civilian nuclear industry.

The plan would also prevent the closure of a new factory built by Siemens at Hanau, near Frankfurt. The Hanau factory is the only one in Germany capable of converting the plutonium to peacetime use.

The scheme was largely the brainchild of Herman Otto Solms.

UN extends easing of sanctions against Yugoslavia

UNITED NATIONS, July 6: The Security Council voted on Wednesday to extend its easing of sanctions against Yugoslavia and urged the Balkan state to recognise the borders of Bosnia, reports AP.

The vote was 14 to 0 with Russia abstaining.

The resolution suspends the ban on travel sports and cultural contacts with Yugoslavia for another 75 days.

It calls for mutual recognition between Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Croatia and says that recognition between Yugoslavia and Bosnia would be "an important first step."

The resolution also said the council will "consider further steps... in light of further progress in the situation."

The council first eased its sanctions in September after Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic announced he was closing his border with Bosnia to all but humanitarian aid deliveries

to pressure the Bosnian Serbs into accepting an international peace plan.

Gerhard Henze, the acting German ambassador, said reports of 688 incidents of border crossings by soldiers were "disturbing" and added that the resolution "sends a clear signal to the authorities in Belgrade not to engage in military assistance."

Henze also said the council should be "ready to consider further substantial sanctions relief measures" if Yugoslavia recognises Croatia and Bosnia and strengthens its border closure.

Milosevic is regarded as key in pressuring the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan.

US Ambassador Madeleine Albright said Washington was "disturbed by indications of increasing military cooperation" between Yugoslavia and the Bosnian Serbs.

Off the Record

Sunglasses wearer of the year

LONDON: Hiding behind shades got Princess Diana a place in the sun on Wednesday — along with fellow celebrity — shy celebrities Elizabeth Hurley, Michael Jackson and Imran Khan, reports AP.

A bevy of British fashion editors named Diana, shy of paparazzi since the collapse of her marriage to Prince Charles over two years ago, Sunglasses Wearer of the year.

Jackson, who has dodged the media ever since allegations of child molestation surfaced last year, was number two on the list.

Elizabeth Hurley, who went underground last week after boyfriend Hugh Grant was caught on Sunset Boulevard in a BMW with a streetwalker, came in third.

Pakistani cricketer Imran Khan, who is doing his best to keep his recent marriage to British heiress Jemima Goldsmith out of the public eye, bowled eighth.

Others among the top ten included tennis star Andre Agassi (4) and supermodel Elle McPherson (9).

For those times she's ready to face the glare, Diana wins a 3,000-pound (4,800 dollars) glasses case hide the shades. She also wins a thousand pound 1,600 dollars gift voucher at a Bond Street optician and a thousand pounds goes to the charity of her choice.

The other nine get 500-pound vouchers at the opticians — for those rare window-shopping expeditions.

"No-win, no-fee"

LONDON: A firm of British lawyers took a big step towards US-style jurisprudence Wednesday by accepting a case under new regulations on a "no-win, no-fee" basis, reports Reuter.

In a clear break with British legal tradition, which prides itself a dignified and low-key approach, the firm of Shoosmiths and Harrison said it signed a contract with a personal injury client as soon as the new rules went into force.

The client, Mike Brown, is suing a company that organised and activity course on which he suffered a serious ankle injury in 1993.

If the suit succeeds, Shoosmiths will charge a success fee based on its costs. If it fails, an insurance fund will pay the court costs. This is slightly different from the US system in which lawyers take a percentage of damages awarded.

The new British regulations are at present restricted to personal injury, bankruptcy and European human rights cases. Critics of the new system fear lawyers will take on only cases they are sure they will win and rake in double the fees.

Wife is better than nurse

LONDON: Wheel chair-bound genius Stephen Hawking, who explained the mysteries of the universe in his bestselling book "A Brief History of Time," is to marry a nurse hired by his former wife to help him deal with his crippling motor neurone disease, reports AP.

The Daily Telegraph said Thursday the 53-year-old Cambridge University scientist will marry Elaine Masson at Cambridge Register office on September 16.

Hawking divorced his former wife, Medieval Linguist Jane Hawking, four years ago after 26 years of marriage and three children to live with Masson.

It was she who originally hired the nurse to help him, she told The Telegraph she knew nothing of her ex-husband's plans.

It's ok, if there is love

LANSING, Michigan: A third of the nation's voters believe that two people of the same sex should be able to get married if they love each other, a new poll showed Wednesday, reports AP.

The poll found 33 per cent believed same-sex marriages should be allowed, while 63 per cent disagreed, EPIC-MRA-Mitchell Research said. Four per cent were undecided.

Robin Kane, a spokeswoman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, found the 33 per cent figure encouraging, even though gay marriages are banned in every state.

However, Glenn Clark, executive director of the Michigan Christian Coalition, said allowing the marriages would be "just another step toward eroding the moral fiber of our nation."

EPIC-MRA founder Ed Sarpolous said he expected the question on same-sex marriages would get only single-digit support because voters are becoming more conservative.

Younger voters, those with higher incomes and those with more education were more likely to say such marriages should be allowed, he said.

Jeffrey Nontgomery, president of the Detroit Triangle Foundation, said the higher percentages for younger people showed a cultural shift, due in part to the media.

Good news for animals

LA CHAUX-DE-FONDS, Switzerland: A man who abandoned his dog in a forest here after it chewed up his computer was given a suspended 90-day jail sentence, justice sources said Wednesday, reports AP.

The 24-year-old man said during his trial that the appenzeller, named Desiree, had chewed his computer in November. Furious at the damage, he tied the animal to a tree in a forest north of this town in northwest Switzerland.

Desiree was discovered by walker several days later "in agony, completely dehydrated and overcome with cold," said Charles Guggisberg, had of the Animal Protection Society (SPA) which took in the pet, in the Daily Le Matin newspaper.

"It is still affected by the trauma of its ordeal and we had to put it in a shelter," he said.

The SPA has announced it will protest the leniency of the sentence.



A group of supermodels: join owner Tommaso Buti (C) at a press conference in New York to announce that Christy Turlington will become an investor in the theme restaurant Fashion Cafe on Wednesday. From left: Claudia Schiffer, Elle Macpherson, Buti, Noomi Campbell and Christy Turlington.

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Milosevic is regarded as key in pressuring the Bosnian Serbs to accept the peace plan.

US Ambassador Madeleine Albright said Washington was "disturbed by indications of increasing military cooperation" between Yugoslavia and the Bosnian Serbs.

Albright said there were indications that Yugoslav authorities were providing financial assistance and equipment to the Bosnian Serb army and cooperating with the Bosnian Serb air defence system.

Reuter adds from Geneva, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali and France's President Jacques Chirac pledged yesterday to press on with diplomatic efforts to end the three-year-old war in Bosnia.

Boutros-Ghali also told a news conference at the UN's European headquarters that he would do everything he could to ensure that the beleaguered UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) remained in the former Yugoslav republic.

"What is important is to continue the diplomatic negotiations," he said.

Boutros-Ghali said he would meet his top aides for former Yugoslavia in Geneva on Saturday to look at options in the peace process.