

BRIEFLY

US diplomat meets Harry Wu: A senior US diplomat yesterday met Chinese-American rights activist Harry Wu, who was arrested by Chinese police last week on espionage charges.

Floods claim 11 in Assam: Floods have killed 11 people, forced thousands from their homes and affected one million in India's far eastern state of Assam.

Iraqi opposition for new leader: A senior Iraqi opposition figure said Sunday that a rebel alliance seeking to topple Saddam Hussein will shortly form a new 'field leadership' to replace the Iraqi National Congress.

Gingrich against ban on China: House of Representatives Speaker Newt Gingrich said Sunday he would oppose broad sanctions against China in response to the arrest of Chinese American human rights activist Harry Wu.

20 bear cubs rescued in Shanghai: Police and forestry officers in northern Hebei province recently rescued 20 black bear cubs which were being taken to a farm to be bred for their gall bladders.

Worker rewarded in China: A worker was rewarded this week for calling to report a gas leak last month in this capital city of East China's Zhejiang province.

Filipino vice-mayor shot dead: Four gunmen shot dead a vice-mayor while he was having his shoes shined in a busy commercial district in the southern Philippines.

Lebanese rockets hit Israel: About 20 Katyusha rockets hit northern Israel from Lebanon Sunday, provoking an artillery barrage by Israeli forces as the circle of deadly violence escalated.

Strong quake rocks Russia: A strong earthquake measuring 6.4 points on the open-ended Richter Scale was recorded in the Pacific Ocean some 470 kilometres (290 miles) from the Russian far eastern island of Sakhalin early Monday.

3 Iranian dissidents killed: Gunmen on Monday shot and killed three officials of Iran's main armed opposition group in Iraq, the People's Mujahadeen Group said.

Earthquake shakes Myanmar: An earthquake measuring 6.6 on the open-ended Richter scale hit northeastern Myanmar early yesterday, a Thai official said.

Seoul store collapse death toll 177: The official death toll in the Seoul department store collapse rose to 177 yesterday, as rescuers working in driving monsoon rain recovered 17 bodies overnight.

3 Palestinians held in Hebron: Israeli police on Sunday arrested two Palestinian cameramen and a woman journalist as they were filming a rally organised by the left-wing peace now group in Hebron.

Diarrhoea claims 700 in Liberia: A brutal diarrhoea fever has killed 700 people in the past two months across an isolated region in the north of this war-torn African country.

Ali Mahdi for imposing Sharia: Clan militia leader Ali Mahdi Mohamed wants Islamic Sharia law, with amendments for their to execution for murder, imposed across Somalia to bring law and order to the anarchic country.

French navy commandos storm Greenpeace ship, 21 held

MURUROA, French Polynesia, July 10: The French authorities detained 21 people Sunday from the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior and accompanying zodiacs that tried to approach the French nuclear test base at Mururoa.

UN threatens NATO airstrikes as Serbs advance on Srebrenica

SARAJEVO, July 10: Bosnian Serbs faced a threat of NATO airstrikes after advancing on Srebrenica, a UN-declared 'safe area' for more than 40,000 Muslims, reports AP.

Off the Record



Miss Piggie's Gerard Pipart honours red for afternoons in a gown whose plunging neckline anchors in a rose-knotted corset, stretching the silhouette, under a sunflower hat of plumes for the Fall-Winter 1995-1996 high-fashion collection shown in Paris Sunday.

It's a royal barbecue! LONDON: Fifty firemen and no fewer than ten fire engines rushed Sunday to Buckingham Palace after a fire alert only to find that the flames were from a barbecue in the royal stables.

Sex tells nothing expresses everything VATICAN CITY: Pope John Paul II said Sunday sexuality was the language uniting men and women, an expression of their love and yet also a gift from God to create new life.

Now Miss Piggy-Kermit romance at sea! SHEPPERTON, England: Ahoy there, me hearties! It's the Muppets at sea, reports AP.

Must be dinosaur's cousin PARIS: Archaeologists digging around vineyards in southwestern France say they've found a new dinosaur, looking much like a brontosaurus with heavy protective plates on its back.

Syria rejects Israeli presence on its soil as part of peace deal

DAMASCUS, July 10: Syria today rejected out of hand any Israeli presence on its territory as part of a peace deal ahead of a new Middle East shuttle mission by US envoy Dennis Ross, reports AP.



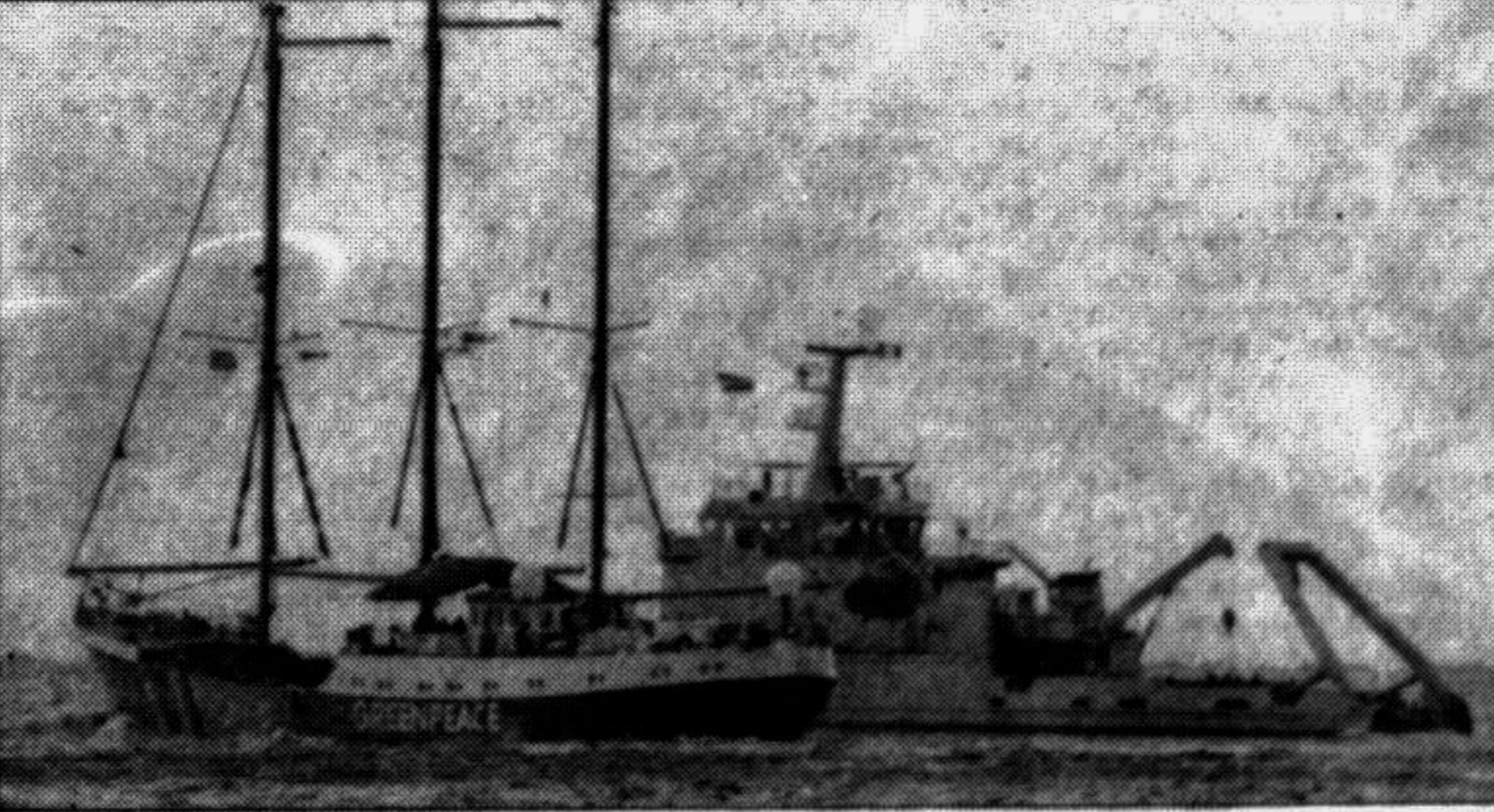
PLO leader Yasser Arafat tours with World Bank President James Wolfensohn (R) the beach of Gaza City Sunday. The World Bank granted a 20 million US dollars aid to the Palestinian authority through an agreement signed between Arafat and Wolfensohn.

Bid to ship bomb-making materials to Khartoum foiled

CAIRO, July 10: Egypt said it foiled an attempt Sunday to smuggle bomb-making material through Cairo International Airport to Egyptian Islamic extremists in Sudan, reports AP.

Abolition of Executive Presidency Lanka may not meet July 15 deadline

COLOMBO, July 10: The Sri Lankan government said Sunday it was committed to the abolition of the executive presidency but that it could not meet its self-imposed July 15 deadline, reports Reuter.



The French navy tugboat Rari (R) which rammed on Monday the Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior II to prevent it from entering the entrance channel of Mururoa atoll in the South Pacific.