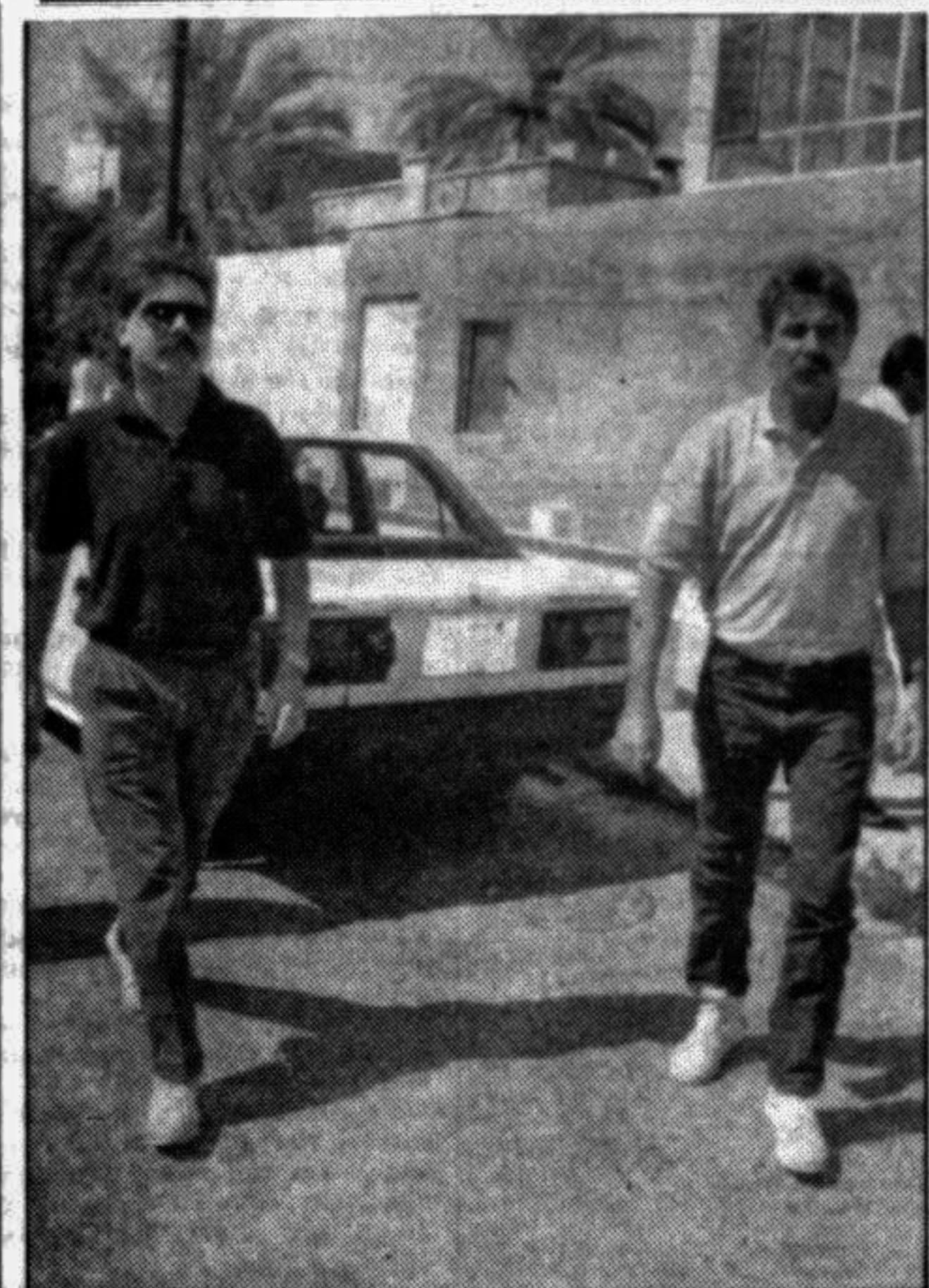


BRIEFLY



Two Americans pardoned by President Saddam Hussein, David Daliberti, 41 (R) and William Barloon, 39, walk free in Baghdad Sunday after spending 113 days in jail for illegally entering Iraq. Both men were arrested March 13 after they said they strayed across the Iraqi border by mistake. — AFP/UNB photo

Ghali arrives in Burundi: UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali arrived in Burundi Sunday on an 18-hour visit just hours after at least seven people were killed and six wounded in renewed ethnic violence. AFP reports from Bujumbura.

British poet Sir Spender dead: The last surviving member of Britain's 1930s generation of heavyweight poets, Sir Stephen Spender, died on Sunday aged 86, hospital sources said, AFP reports from London.

2 die as ship sinks in Maharashtra: Two crew were killed, one was injured and three others were missing when their cargo ship sank off the coast of India's western state of Maharashtra, police said yesterday. Reuter reports from Bombay.

Quake rocks Russian town: An earthquake rocked the town of Komsomolsk-On-Amur in Russia's Far East on Sunday night but no damage or serious casualties were reported, ITAR-Tass news agency said yesterday. Reuter reports from Moscow.

Tajik President meets Rafsanjani: Visiting Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov and his Iranian counterpart Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani held their first round of talks Sunday on bilateral cooperation in cultural, political and economic areas, Xinhua reports from Tehran.

Croatian FM arrives in Tehran: Croatian Foreign Minister Mate Granic arrived in Tehran on Sunday for talks with Iranian ministers bilateral relations and the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the official news agency IRNA said, AFP reports from Tehran.

Two killed in Zagreb: Two people, including a UN soldier, were killed close to the Croatian town of Osijek Sunday during an attack by Croatian Serb separatists, Croatian television said late Sunday, AFP reports from Zagreb.

Yeltsin to remain in hospital: President Boris Yeltsin must remain in hospital for the time being to complete his medical treatment after a heart problem, his press service said in a statement, Reuter reports from Moscow.

Khmers resist govt troops near Thai border
ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand, July 17: About 1,000 Cambodian troops closed in on a key rebel base near the Thai border early today but met with tough resistance from Khmer Rouge guerrillas, a Thai border officer said, reports AFP.

Mass desertion from MTA shakes opium warlord Khun Sa
BANGKOK, July 17: Myanmar's opium warlord Khun Sa has been hit by a mass desertion of as many as 2,000 men from his powerful rebel army and some have gone over to the Myanmar army guerrilla sources said today, reports Reuter.

LTTE acquires radar-guided anti-aircraft missiles

COLOMBO, July 17: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas have acquired radar-guided anti-aircraft missiles, the independent Sinhalese-language Divaina newspaper said today, quoting reliable sources in the north.

It said the rebels had bought Russian-made "Strela" anti-aircraft missiles from Belgian arms dealers.

But a senior air force officer told Reuters it was unlikely the rebels had radar-guided missiles as they had to be launched from a missile pad and were meant to attack aircraft flying at high altitude. Guerrillas usually prefer shoulder-held heat-seeking missiles with shorter ranges and the military has said it believed the rebels used them to shoot down Sri Lankan aircraft.

Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) guerrillas shot down an air force Pucara ground attack aircraft as it pulled out of a dive last Friday during an army offensive in the northern rebel stronghold of Jaffna.

The rebels, fighting for an independent homeland for minority Tamils in the island's north and east, downed two Avro transport planes with missiles in April, the first use of missiles in a 12-year war in which more than 50,000 people have died.

AFP adds: Sri Lanka's Tamil Tiger guerrillas today claimed they pushed back a military advance against their northern Jaffna stronghold with a counter-offensive in which a navy ship and an air force plane were destroyed.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in a statement sent here from its London office said they drove out the army from areas it had newly captured from the Tigers in the Jaffna peninsula.

The military denied the claim and said it was still consolidating its control in a 78-square-kilometre (31-

square-miles) area taken from the guerrillas.

The LTTE statement came after four Tiger frogmen with explosives strapped to their bodies blew themselves up beneath the hull of the navy command and surveillance ship, the Editara, outside the port of Kankesanthurai Sunday, killing three sailors.

The Tigers claimed killing eight sailors while the rebel radio station, the Voice of Tigers announced they lost 17 suicide cadres known as Black Sea Tigers in the pre-dawn offensive against the navy on Sunday.

There had been no air operations by the Sri Lankan Air Force after the rebels shot down a Pucara ground-attack aircraft over the Jaffna Peninsula on Friday, the LTTE claimed.

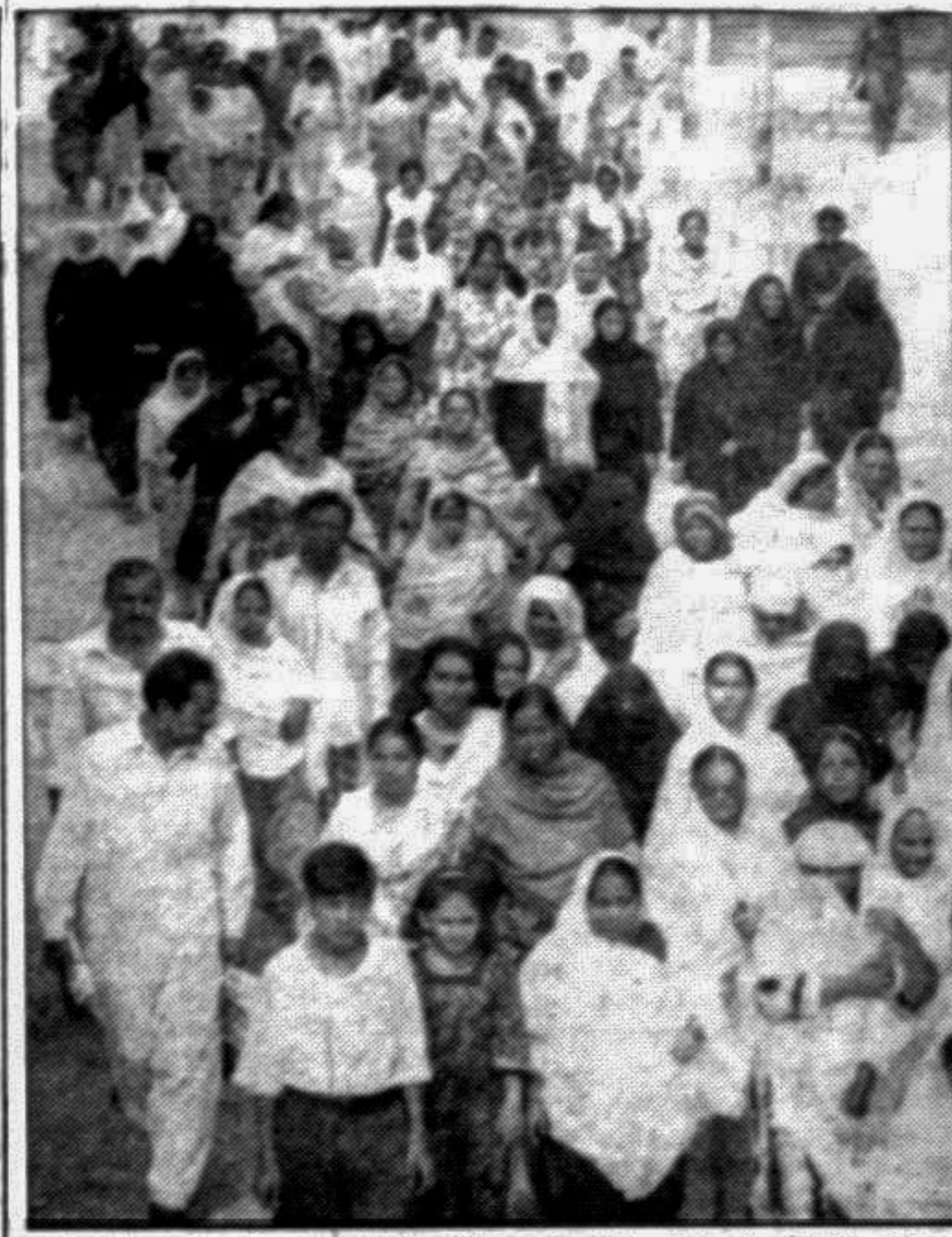
"The LTTE counter-offensive continues in the Valikaman west area. At least 150 government army men were killed and a greater number wounded," the statement said, referring to the group's offensive code-named "Leap of Tiger."

Tigers have already admitted losing 63 men in Friday's counter-attack while the army says they lost 33 killed and another 95 wounded in action.

Eight days ago, the army launched its biggest ground offensive, code-named Leap Forward, to advance into LTTE-held territory, and the military's new defence lines have been moved six kilometres (four miles) toward the town of Jaffna.

Defence analysts believe that the LTTE's blasting of the Editara would be a setback to a possible military push towards Jaffna, the capital of Tamil separatism.

The Editara played a key role in providing logistics and ferrying thousands of troops to launch the Leap Forward offensive. It also served as a "mother ship" for patrol raft used for surveillance.



Anxious residents of the Hansabad locality in Molir, the city's eastern part, vacate the area amid the continuing ethnic tension in Karachi Sunday. — AFP/UNB photo

US, KSA may press Qatar to cool ties with Iran

DOHA, July 17: Qatar's new Emir, who took power in a bloodless coup last month, may be forced to cool his country's relations with Iran under US and Saudi pressure, diplomats here said, reports AFP.

Qatar is all the more sensitive to such pressure because it needs the United States to help it develop its immense natural gas field which it shares with Iran, they added.

"Riyadh's and Washington's quick recognition of the new Qatari government took place after Doha gave assurances it would distance itself from Iran," an Arab diplomat told AFP.

Qatari government officials, however, said they gave no such assurances.

The new Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani who overthrew his father on

Imran, Jemima off to Lahore to start new life

LONDON, July 17: Newlyweds Imran Khan and Jemima Goldsmith set off late Sunday for Pakistan, to start their new life after their marriage in May, the British national news agency Press Association said, reports AFP.

The couple, who went through separate religious and secular wedding ceremonies in Paris and London, were set to stop off in Saudi Arabia for a visit to relatives before heading for Khan's home in Lahore, Pakistan.

Jemima, a 21-year-old student, became a Muslim before she married the 42-year-old Khan in May, and has adopted the Muslim name Haqia Khan.

Imran, former Pakistani cricket captain, and Jemima will share the family's home in Zaman Park, one of Lahore's most exclusive suburbs, with Imran's 75-year-old father.

Vichy sent Jews to Nazi camps, admits Chirac

PARIS, July 17: President Jacques Chirac on Sunday admitted for the first time that France as a whole was responsible for the round-up of Jews sent off to Nazi death camps during World War II, reports AFP.

He said at a memorial service the blame for the deportations of some 76,000 Jews during World War II could no longer simply be put down to the war-time Vichy regime, but had to be shouldered collectively by the French nation.

"Yes there are errors, there are mistakes. There is, without doubt, a collective fault," he said.

His comments were hailed as historic by French Jewish leaders who had for long sought such admission in vain from Chirac's socialist predecessor Francois Mitterrand.

"It is a turning point because it puts an end to France's official responsibility being swept under the carpet," said Henri Hajdenberg, head of the Council for Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF).

Chirac, attending a memorial service to mark the anniversary of the biggest mass roundup of Jews in 1942, said: "Those dark hours will forever darken our history and are an offence to our past, our traditions."

"France, the country of light and of human rights, land of welcome and asylum, France on that day did something which cannot be repaired... it delivered those who were under its protection to their executioners."

"To recognise the mistakes of the past and mistakes made by the state, not to cover up anything about the darkest hours of our history, is simply to defend the idea of man, his freedom and his dignity," he said.



Bosnian Muslim women weep at the United Nations refugee camp in Tuzla on Sunday as they tell the reporters that their husbands and sons were taken away by Serbs combatants after the fall of the "safe haven" enclave Srebrenica five days ago. Bosnian government officials said that some 5,250 men were still being held by the Serbs. — AFP/UNB photo

'Stern Western actions against Serbs could lead to Balkan war'

STOCKHOLM, July 17: European mediator in former Yugoslavia Carl Bildt warned late Sunday that tougher Western measures against the Bosnian Serbs could lead to a Balkan war lasting several years, reports AFP.

Bildt was interviewed by Swedish television during a stopover in Geneva after talks in Belgrade with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic on how the conflict could be resolved.

At the same time the chiefs of staff of the armed forces of Britain, France and the United States were discussing in London French proposals to prevent the Bosnian Serbs seizing further UN-declared "safe areas" in eastern Bosnia.

Asked his opinion on the consequences of taking a stronger stand against the Bosnian Serbs, Bildt replied, "such measures would mean that we were heading for war in the Balkans."

Such a war would last "several years," and end in a political settlement, which was what the European Union and United Nations mediators were seeking now, he said.

Following the fall of the Muslim enclave of Srebrenica last week and the expulsion of thousands of women and children in "ethnic cleansing," Bildt said officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross would go as soon as possible to visit the men detained by the Serbs.

Turks protest Ghali's today's Ankara trip

ANKARA, July 17: Around 1,000 demonstrators gathered here on Sunday to criticise a visit next Tuesday by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Anatolian news agency reported, says AFP.

The demonstrators chanted anti-UN slogans accusing Boutros-Ghali of being the main reason for the plight of Muslim in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya and Cyprus.

The crowds also claimed Boutros-Ghali was responsible for Muslims suffering "in Nagorno-Karabakh, Palestine and Kashmir," the news agency said.

Speakers during the protests said the United Nations had lost its image under the leadership of Boutros-Ghali.

Iraq threatens to halt cooperation with UN

BAGHDAD, July 17: Iraqi President Saddam Hussain today threatened to stop cooperating with UN weapons experts unless he is assured economic sanctions will be lifted, reports AFP.

"We can't make any more sacrifices without something in return," Saddam Hussain said in a speech broadcast on radio and television.

"Iraq is not required to continue complying with the decisions of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarming Iraq without it being linked to a lifting of the embargo," he said in a speech broadcast on radio and television.

The speech on the 27th anniversary of the Baath Party's rise to power came as UN germ warfare experts headed here to see if Baghdad was nearer fulfilling a promise to disclose all its germ warfare secrets by the end of July.

The United States wants Iraq to comply with all UN Security Council resolutions before the oil embargo is lifted.

Other council members like Russia, France and China want the embargo lifted once Iraq meets its disarmament obligations imposed after Iraq was driven from Kuwait in 1991 Gulf War.

Reuter adds, President Saddam Hussein warned the United Nations today that Iraq could not continue complying with demand to disclose its arms programme without a lifting of crippling trade sanctions.

Final accord to resolve Chechen conflict soon

LONDON, July 17: A final agreement to resolve the Chechen conflict could be signed in two or three days, the Russian delegation leader to the peace talks said late Sunday, ITAR-Tass news agency reported, reports AFP.

But he added that the status of the breakaway republic cannot be determined until elections are held there in November and confirmed that this was still a stumbling block in the talks.

Vyacheslav Mikhailov, Russia's nationalist and regional policy minister, said the illness of his Chechen counterpart Usman Imaev was the only reason for a three-day break in peace, called earlier Sunday.

Sudan asks OAU to mediate border dispute with Egypt

KHARTOUM, July 17: Sudan yesterday called on the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to mediate in its dispute with Egypt over the contested Halaib border region along the Red Sea, reports AFP.

The official Sudanese news agency SUNA said Khartoum's Ambassador in Addis Ababa, M Osman Al-Sayed, had passed a message from Sudanese President Omar el-Beshir to his Ethiopian counterpart, Meles Zenawi, the current OAU Chairman.

The message charged Egypt with aggression in Halaib, which Sudan regards as part of its territory, and called on the OAU to "assume its responsibility."

According to SUNA, similar message were sent to the OAU's Secretary General, Salim Ahmed Salim, and to the Ethiopian foreign minister.

Salim expressed his concern and willingness to help resolve the dispute, the news agency said.

Sudan has asked the United Nations Security Council for an arbitrated settlement after border incidents at the end of June resulted in the deaths of three Sudanese, according to Khartoum.

Sudan has also asked the International Court of Justice and the Arab League to mediate the border dispute, and has called on Egypt to accept arbitration.

Unmanned Chinese supersonic plane tested

WASHINGTON, July 17: China has tested an unmanned supersonic plane that was remotely controlled from the ground effectively with a large Cruise missile, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) says, reports PTI.

In a paper authored by Rober Shuey a CRS specialist, distributed to members of the Congress and made available to the public, another report states that China is funding the development of a Cruise missile in Israel.