

International

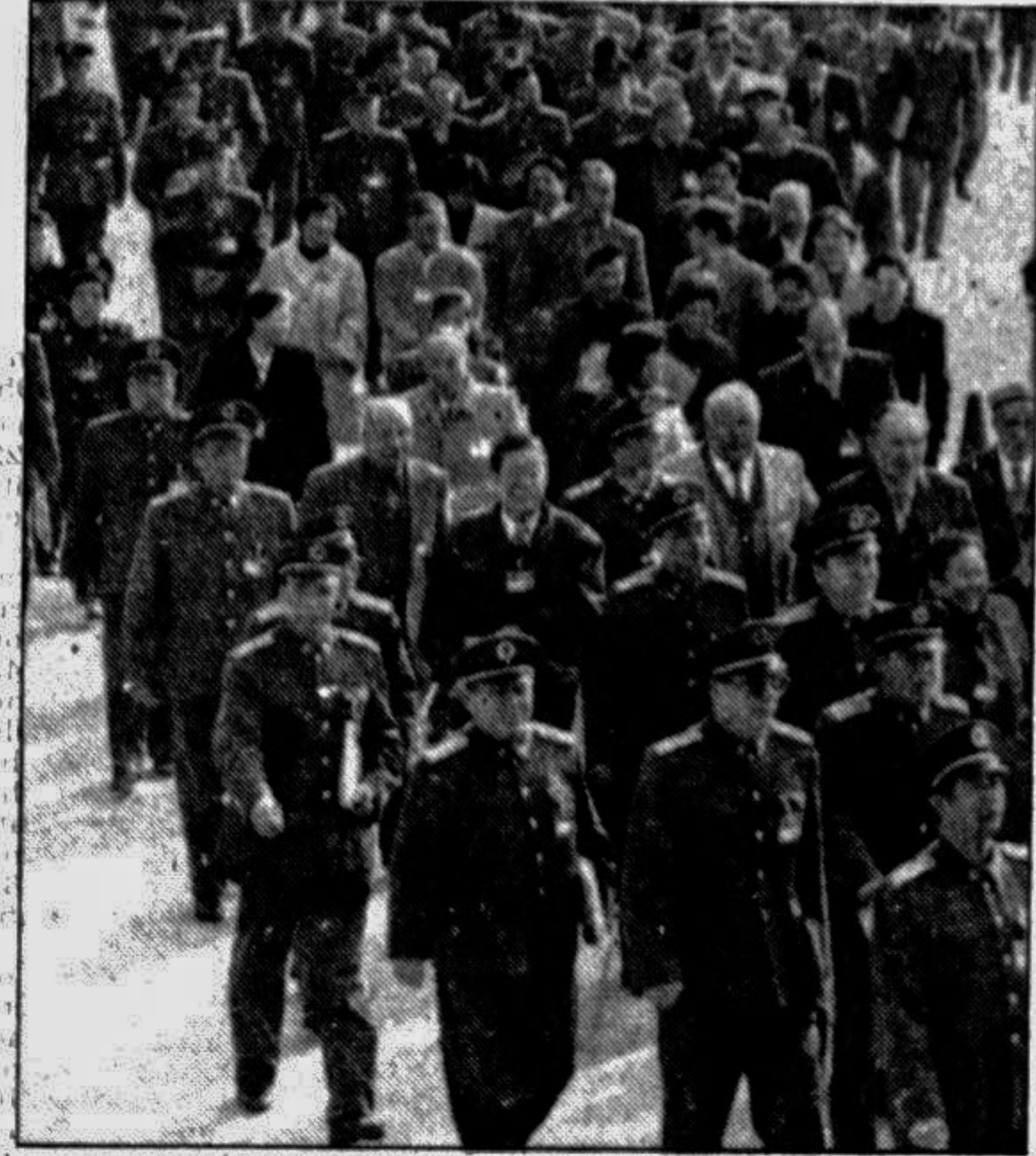
'Beijing to announce another military exercise next week'
China's top priority to head off Taiwan's independence move

WASHINGTON, Mar 12: As a second Navy carrier headed for Taiwan, Chinese officials tried to allay US concern over military exercises...

and dangerous," the senator said. As of Monday night, three days after the Chinese fired three dummy test missiles...

Liberation Army (PLA) would announce the third exercises before March 20. It said they would aim at simulating a blockade of airspace over the northern part of the Taiwan Strait.

which stretches to the midpoint of the Taiwan Straits — an unofficial border both sides try not to cross. The rectangle lies off the southeast Chinese coast and is 30 to 70 miles (50 to 115 kilometers) from the Taiwanese islands of Quemoy and Wuchiu.



Military delegates lead the way into the Great Hall of the People for the third plenum of the National People's Congress on Tuesday in Beijing.

Off the Record

Oh no, not again!

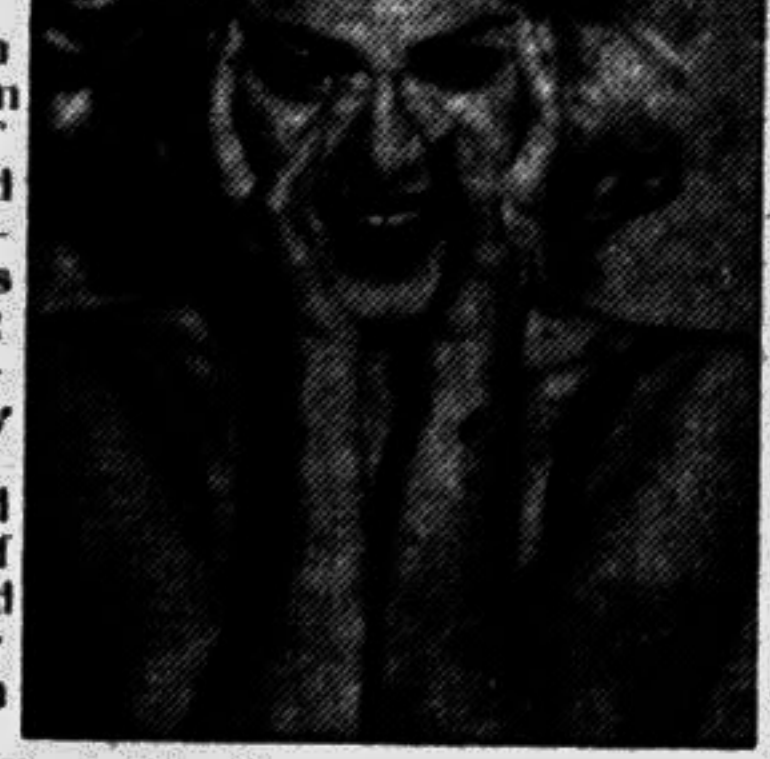
LONDON: Princess Diana made clear late Monday her determination to distance herself from a new claim that she had an affair with England rugby captain Will Carling, reports AFP.



And both Carling, who stands down as England captain after Saturday's match with Ireland, and his wife Julia had made known their anger that an unnamed "third party" — reported to be a friend of television presenter Julia — had made the claim.

Thanks Menem for changing mind

BUENOS AIRES: Eva Peron, portrayed by pop star Madonna, returned to the balcony of Government House as thousands of move extras cheered and chanted Peronist slogans from the square below, reports AP.



President Carlos Menem had denied permission to film scenes for the musical "Evita" on the balcony, then changed his mind. Reflecting the opinions of the many Argentines who consider the former first lady a saint, Menem had described Madonna as "totally unsuitable."

The presidential office had no comment on the change of heart, which followed Menem's 90 minute February 23 meeting with director Alan Parker and cast members Madonna, Jonathan Pryce and Antonio Banderas.

'NATO used 'low intensity N-arms' against Serbs'

LONDON, Mar 12: The Bosnian Serbs claimed Monday that NATO used "low-intensity nuclear weapons" against Serb targets around Sarajevo, Gorazde and Majevica during last summer's air strikes, reports AFP.

'Summit of peacemakers' will try to restart ME peace process

SHARM EI-SHEIKH, Egypt, Mar 12: World leaders gathered in Egypt this week for the "Summit of Peacemakers" will be asked to recommit themselves to the Middle East peace process and to pledge to light forces opposed to it, reports AP.

peace partners — Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians — Gulf nations, several North African countries and officials from Europe, Canada and Japan.

Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi has ridiculed the meeting charging that the international community is silent when Arabs are slaughtered but "when a few dozen Israelis die, it is the end of the world."

BRIEFLY

Israeli FM in Amman: Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak arrived in Amman yesterday to discuss bilateral ties and Wednesday's summit in Egypt on the Middle East peace process...

Serb Air Force Gen Maric dies: Bosnian Serb Air Force General Jovo Maric died on Monday in Belgrade following a road accident, the Bosnian Serb Army Chief of Staff's office said...

23 killed in Indian bus mishap: in a major accident, at least 23 passengers of a bus were killed and 30 others injured, several of them seriously, when the Trivandrum-Guwahati express rammied into a bus carrying a marriage party...

The state's Deputy Inspector-General of Police (Iqbal), SIS Ahmed, said that 18 persons were killed in the accident which occurred as the bus, carrying the marriage party, mounted the track at the unmaned level crossing and was crushed against by the speedily approaching train.

3rd century coins found in France: A Gallic farm dating to 300 BC, third century coins and a medieval leper colony were discovered by road crewmen building a highway overpass in Normandy, AP reports from Caen.

Archaeologists dated the more than 1,000 bronze and silver coins to the third century because they bore the name of Marcus Postumus, the Roman Gallic officer had proclaimed himself emperor of Gaul, but was killed by his own men in 268.

Swedish King, Queen in Malaysia: King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden arrived Tuesday for a five-day state visit at the head of a delegation that will discuss economic cooperation, trade and investment with Malaysia, AP reports from Kuala Lumpur.

Number of pensioners on rise in Russia: The number of pensioners in Russia has increased and one in five people in the country are now retired, an official said Monday, AP reports from Moscow.

8 miners burnt to death in Ukraine: Eight miners died Monday and four were burned after being trapped by fire 900 metres (3,000 feet) underground in a coal mine at Lugansk in the Donbass region of Ukraine.

Mexican gov't, rebels to hold talks: Mexican government and Zapatista rebel delegations Monday reported they agreed on an agenda for talks on democratic reform and social justice, AFP reports from San Andres.

However, government officials and representatives of ethnic Maya guerrillas in the impoverished southern state of Chiapas did not agree on terms for creating a commission to oversee the democratic reforms and any future peace agreement. Talks on democratic reform are slated to begin March 20 and will include discussions on political democracy, social justice, grassroots participation, human rights, the judicial system, national sovereignty, and democracy and the media.

Three sons of Chun sued: SEOL, Mar 12: Jailed ex-president Chun Doo-Hwan's three sons were sued today for using violence against their father's opponents in a melee inside the courthouse, where Chun and his coup-colleague Roh Tae-Woo stood trial, reports AFP.

Muslim-Croat fed takes over Sarajevo suburb from Serbs: ILLIZA, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Mar 12: Bosnian Serb residents of this Sarajevo suburb have left behind a virtual ghost town for the Muslim-Croat federation that takes over Tuesday, reports AP.



A French IFOR soldier tries to calm two terrified women after Bosnian-Serb policeman fired guns and detonated hand grenades during the departure from their police station in the Sarajevo suburb of Ildiza, on Monday.

Security forces launch major hunt for Tigers

COLOMBO, Mar 12: Security forces launched a major search operation for Tamil Tiger guerrillas in eastern Sri Lanka today, a day after 23 commandos were wiped out by the rebels, officials here said, reports AFP.

Iraqis allow UN team to inspect arms site

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 12: After 12 hours, Iraqi soldiers ended the second confrontation in a week by allowing UN weapons inspectors into a training base used by Saddam Hussein's elite guards, reports AP.

Vietnam blasts US sanctions against Cuba

HANOI, Mar 12: The United States is violating international law by toughening its sanctions against Cuba, Vietnam said Tuesday, reports AP.

rebels in a counter-offensive when the 23 commandos were killed. The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambushed the commandos from two bases who had assembled at Vellavel in the district of Batticaloa, to mount an anti-rebel operation in the area.

difficult to give consent' for the admission of the privilege motion'. Patil said at the end of a marathon five-hour parliament session. Influenced and pressurised through unfair means, the four MPs to vote against the non-confidence motion.

As of Monday, 27 countries plus the United Nations and the European Union had confirmed participation in the meeting, the Foreign Ministry said. They include the major

Sudan to continue to provide refuge to Hamas

KHARTOUM, Mar 12: Sudan will continue to provide refuge to the Palestinian hardline group Hamas which has claimed a series of bloody anti-Israeli bombings, its foreign minister said on Monday, reports AFP.

Hamas "are here under the formula of human refuge and they will continue to have this privilege of human refuge as long as they abide by the law of the country," Ali Osman, Taha told journalists.

The thugs, who aid officials said appeared directed by Bosnian Serbs hard-liners from their headquarters in Pale, seemed intent on proving that Bosnia's Serbs, Muslims and Croats cannot live together.

However, government officials and representatives of ethnic Maya guerrillas in the impoverished southern state of Chiapas did not agree on terms for creating a commission to oversee the democratic reforms and any future peace agreement.