

**BRIEFLY**



Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres heads the first weekly government meeting in Jerusalem Sunday, after losing the power in last week's general elections to the right-wing and religious block led by Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu. — AFP/UNB photo

**Hafez Al-Assad in Cairo:** Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad arrived in Cairo yesterday for talks with his Egyptian counterpart Hosni Mubarak in a push to forge a common Arab front to deal with a future right-wing Israeli government, AFP reports from Cairo.

Mubarak received the Syrian leader at Cairo Airport before the two headed to the presidential place for their meetings. The two presidents were to hold a working lunch and then give a press conference, the state news agency MENA said.

**UN conference habitat II opens:** The last major United Nations conference of the 20th century, Habitat II on human settlement, open yesterday in Istanbul to try to lay down a code for future living standards for the world's population, Reuter reports from Istanbul.

The conference, which has a packed agenda bringing together the findings of earlier UN summits, including last year's Women's Conference in Beijing and the 1994 Population Summit in Cairo, brings together politicians, urban planners and aid group.

**China takes possession of ship:** The Chinese Navy has taken possession of its largest ship, an ocean supply vessel that can carry 20,000 tonnes of cargo, Xinhua reports from Beijing.

The Nanyuan 935, built by the Dalian Shipyard, has a cruising radius of 12,000 nautical miles and can be self-sufficient for up to 45 days, the news agency said in a dispatch late Sunday.

**Arafat arrives in London:** Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived in London on Sunday night for a two-day visit during which he will hold talks with British prime Minister John Major about Middle East peace efforts, Reuter reports from London.

Arafat, arriving two days after Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu was chosen Prime Minister of Israel, declined to say whether he thought the hardliner's election would jeopardise the peace process. "We are respecting the democratic choice of the Israeli people," he told reporters at London's Heathrow Airport.

**Sandstorm kills 5 in China:** A severe sandstorm killed five children in western China's desert region of Dunhuang last Wednesday, the People's Daily said yesterday, AFP reports from Beijing.

The five victims were among a group of eight children who fell into an irrigation ditch. Three were saved. The sandstorm, which lasted almost 24 hours, caused an estimated 50 million yuan (6 million dollars) of damage, the paper said.

**Heathrow airport marks 50th yr:** London's Heathrow airport on Sunday ended more than a week of celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the start of passenger services with a fly-past of more than 30 planes, AP reports from London.

They included Boeing's latest widebody jet the 777, a supersonic Concorde and a 1940s Lancaster bomber, the military version of an Avro-Lancaster, the first civil aircraft to take off from Heathrow on a flight to Sydney, Australia, on May 28, 1946.

Travelers in those days checked in at army tents on the north side of the airfield. Today, Heathrow is used by 54 million passengers a year, 44.25 million of them international travelers.

**41 executed in China:** Forty-one people have been executed in China's central province of Shaanxi, a newspaper report said, AFP reports from Beijing.

Seventeen people were executed in Ankang and 13 in Xi'an on May 30, while 11 were executed in Hanzhong on May 27, the Shaanxi daily said. Authorities have executed hundreds of people since the launch in April of an attempt to clampdown on crime.

**Heatwave claims 186 in Pakistan:** At least 186 people have died in a heatwave gripping central and southern Pakistan over the past several days, the Pakistan Press International (PPI) said yesterday, AFP reports from Islamabad.

It said 97 people died in southern Sindh and Baluchistan provinces since the oppressive weather gripped the country last week. The state-run Radio Pakistan, however, put the toll at 45 dead.

**US may reimpose ban on rump Yugoslavia, says Christopher**

GENEVA, June 3: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said on Sunday sanctions could be reimposed on the rump Yugoslavia unless Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic ensured the removal from power of top Bosnian Serb leaders, reports Reuter.

Christopher told a news conference after talks with Milosevic that the Belgrade strongman had not done enough for the departure from the public scene of the Serbs' President Radovan Karadzic and military chief Ratko Mladic.

"I left him in no doubt what my views are... that they (Karadzic and Mladic) should be removed from office and handed over to the United Nations war crimes tribunal in The Hague which has indicted them," Christopher said.

Milosevic referred to assurances he had given that Karadzic would be stepping down, but Christopher said he told him "that just wasn't enough. What we wanted to see was real action."

Christopher said all that was needed for "a virtually automatic" reimposition of sanctions was a finding by the top international civilian or military officials in Bosnia that the Dayton accords which ended the Bosnian war last November were not being observed.

"That's very important tool we have that we pointed out today. I'm not in the business of deadlines but there is a growing impatience on the part of the international community," he said.

**Congress wins 4 out of 6 seats in Kashmir**

ANANTNAG, India, June 3: Former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao's Congress party won four of the six parliamentary seats in Jammu-Kashmir state, results of which were declared Sunday, reports AP.

The elections were the first in the state since a separatist insurrection broke out in 1989. Dozens of Muslim militant groups are fighting for the region to become independent or joint Pakistan. More than 14,000 people have died in the conflict.

Election officials said Congress candidates were returned from Ladakh, Jammu, Baramullah and Srinagar.

The rightwing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party was leading in Anantnag, where counting had to be stopped after supporters of rival groups clashed.

Local election officials said that counting had to be suspended twice due to the violence. When the clashes took a violent turn with rival groups taking out their guns, Indian forces posted there opened fire killing at least seven people. However, United News of India said only five people died in the violence.

**Sudan arrests 19 for involvement in anti-govt plot**

KHARTOUM, June 3: Sudanese security forces have arrested 19 people for involvement in a plot against the government led by the opposition in exile, the government daily Al-Engaz al-Watani reported today, says AFP.

Some of the suspects were arrested as they tried to cross from Sudan into an unnamed country, while the others were rounded up from their homes in Khartoum and Kessala Town on the Eritrean border, the paper said.

The suspects, all colleagues from work or school, were charged with conspiracy to wage war against the state and undermine the constitution, said government prosecutor Adel Abdel Wahhab, quoted by the paper.

Two of those arrested had recruited cadres for the opposition in exile, the paper said without specifying when the arrests took place.

Eritrea has openly supported the Sudanese national Assembly (SNA), an opposition coalition.

**Buckingham Palace denies report on Charles, Diana**

LONDON, June 3: Buckingham Palace on Sunday dismissed as "complete speculation" a British newspaper report that Prince Charles and his estranged wife Princess Diana were poised to announce a 12 million pound (18.45 million US) divorce settlement, reports Reuter.

The Sunday Mirror said Charles, heir to the British throne, had softened his tough line in acrimonious negotiations as a gift for his mother Queen Elizabeth, in the year of her seventieth birthday.

The paper said 34-year-old Diana, who makes a three-day visit to Chicago this week, had also climbed down from an original demand for a settlement of as much as 40 million pounds.

But a spokeswoman for Buckingham Palace poured cold water on the report. The position has not changed. Discussions over the details of the divorce are still going on," she said.

Diana's spokeswoman, Jane Atkinson, also denied that an agreement had been struck. "As far as I am concerned, there is no announcement imminent," she said.

**2,400 hospitals in Japan use unheated blood contaminated with HIV virus**

TOKYO, June 3: Some 2,400 Japanese hospitals have been using unheated blood products which were possibly contaminated with the HIV virus, more than twice the previous estimate, government officials said today, reports AFP.

The Health and Welfare Ministry officials said the latest estimate involved hospitals treating patients who were not haemophiliacs, raising fears of increased cases of the human Immune-Deficiency Virus (HIV) among such patients.

**New Indian govt confident of lasting full 5-yr term**

NEW DELHI, June 3: India's new coalition government, buoyed by the surprise entry of a Communist Party, dismissed predictions today that it was bound to collapse and said it would last a full five year term, reports AFP.

Jaijal Reddy, a spokesman for the centrist Janata Dal, the main party in the United Front coalition, said the new government was as solid and united as a rock.

"We don't have to make any more efforts to get the backing of other parties," he told AFP today, a day after the Communist Party of India (CPI) announced it was joining the administration.

The CPI's entry marks the first time since India's independence in 1947 that a Communist Party will participate in the government in New Delhi.

The party's decision to break ranks with other leftist groups was announced Sunday, shortly after Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda named a cabinet comprising members of the five parties which have already joined the government. Newspapers reported today

that Inderjit Gupta, the CPI general secretary, may be given the powerful Home Ministry portfolio, which was left vacant in the cabinet unveiled by Deve Gowda on Sunday.

Reddy said the United Front, which has been promised the support of the Congress (I) Party of former premier P.V. Narasimha Rao, would last a full five years and was in agreement on foreign policy, defence and economic issues.

"As far as external policy and defence are concerned, there is an extraordinary national consensus," he said "about the economic reforms too there is no major problem."

Deve Gowda has named Harvard educated lawyer Palantapan Chidambaram, one of the chief proponents of the reforms, as finance minister a move applauded by industry.

But the entry of the CPI could spell trouble for the reforms begun five years ago by Rao when India was on the verge of bankruptcy.

CPI deputy general secretary A.B. Bardhan slammed Deve Gowda on Sunday for

promising the reforms would continue in their present form, saying: "We don't approve of those kind of statements."

Deve Gowda's government can only remain in power with the legislative backing of Rao's Congress Party, which commands 140 seats in the 545 member Lok Sabha.

Reddy denied newspaper reports that the Congress and the United Front had struck a deal allegedly involving support for a Rao bid for the presidency and the induction of Congress heavyweights into the cabinet next year.

"There is absolutely no truth in this," he said. "There is no deal with the Congress and neither of us are looking into the distant future."

The United Front, which has a combined strength of 114 MPs, has been told by President Shankar Dayal Sharma to prove its majority in the Lok Sabha by June 12.

The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which relinquished power on May 28 after just 13 days in office, said meanwhile that the United Front would not last long.

**NATO FMs to approve task forces for Europe-only**

BERLIN, June 3: NATO enters a new era Monday, creating a more flexible, more European defence organisation better adapted to a post-Cold War world, reports AP.

Foreign ministers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation will approve a new concept allowing creation of small, Europe-only task forces to deal with hotspots and peacekeeping operations using NATO assets.

At the same time, the 16-nation organisation will launch a long-term study on reforming the NATO command structure, downsizing and eliminating some of its many headquarters around the continent and changing the way they operate.

For decades, NATO strategy was based on stopping a massive Soviet advance through Central Europe. With the end of the Cold War and easing of the Russian threat, NATO may be called on for a new range of challenges, such as the operation in Bosnia.

Under a new concept called "combined joint task forces," two or more NATO countries could form a force using their own troops and borrowing assets from NATO, such as large transport planes, satellite intelligence and sophisticated

communications. Those assets are mostly American.

The most important objective is to allow NATO to be more flexible," said Robert Hunter, the US ambassador to NATO. "For us Americans, there is a bonus — to enable the Western European Union for the first time to be effective."

Command and political control of such task forces would be turned over to the Western European Union, a 10-nation European organisation formed in 1954 but which until now has been largely a toothless talk shop.

Such task forces may never be needed. The Americans say it is likely the United States would be involved in any operation of any consequence.

The advantage of the task force concept is it keeps operations within the NATO framework.

"It is necessary that the support of the United States for a European identity become a reality," French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said in an interview with the Paris daily Le Monde. For us, the European identity should not be virtual, but real."



Bosnian Muslim men are peering out of a broken buswindow after they were ambushed by Serbs in the village of Potocani, some five kilometers South of Doboj on Sunday. At least 10 persons suffered minor injuries by flying glass and stones thrown by a mob of some 200 Serbs as the buses with some 100 Muslim refugees left the village after a visit to their former homes in the Serb entity. — AFP/UNB photo

**LTTE seeks help from new Indian govt for Eelam**

COLOMBO, June 3: Sri Lanka's separatists Tamil Tigers, who suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of security forces, have asked the new government in neighbouring India for help, Tamil sources here said today, reports AFP.

The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) called for "far reaching changes" in New Delhi's foreign policy and an end to the crackdown against Tigers who are in India, said the rebels' journal, Viduthala Puligal.

Tamil sources who made a copy of the bi-weekly newspaper available to journalists today said the rebels were keen to mend fences with India and had issued an appeal for New Delhi's help for their struggle for a separate state called Eelam.

Tiger guerrillas were armed and trained by India from 1983 until 1987 when the rebels repudiated an Indo-Lanka peace pact aimed at ending the separatist struggle for a homeland.

Indian troops sent to Sri Lanka to supervise the peace deal ended up fighting the LTTE until they withdrew in 1990 after some 1,140 troops were killed.

A year later, former Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi was killed by a Tamil suicide bomber. The Tigers now stand charged with the assassination.

Since then, India has been cracking down hard against Tiger activities in their former sanctuary of south India and strengthened patrolling the Palk Strait to prevent rebels boat traffic between the two countries.

The Tamil Eelam people expect the new government of India to give up the policies of the earlier governments regarding the Tiger movement, stop all steps taken against Tigers and become an ally of their struggle," the rebel newspaper said.

Reuter adds: Eight Sri Lankan civilians were killed in the northern Jaffna Peninsula when the tractor they were riding hit a landmine, the Defence Ministry said today.

The mine, laid by the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), also wounded one civilian when it detonated on Sunday, a ministry statement said.



The first Palestinian presidential airplane lands during the opening ceremony of the first Palestinian airport, in Rafah on Sunday. According the Israeli-Palestinian deal, Israel will have security control at the airport. — AFP/UNB photo

**Off the Record**

**Clues of ancient civilisation**

KATHMANDU: Researchers recently have found nearly 3,000-year-old human remains in northern Nepal, according to official daily the rising Nepal today, reports Xinhua.

In a recent excavation project in a burial cave with an elevation of 3,600 metres in northern Nepal's Mustang district, the researchers found a mummified leg of a woman and a foetus.

According to the archaeologists, the mummy believed to be the oldest found in the Himalayan region, might hint that the human settlement in the area could be dated back to about 3,000 years ago and could help trace out the development of early human civilisation in the area.

The exact date of the findings was yet to be known before laboratory results come back from Germany, but it could be dated back to as early as the 8th century BC, the newspaper quoted a senior Nepali archaeologist as saying.

The new findings in Mustang Valley, not far from Nepal's northern border with China's Tibet autonomous region, would help study the history of Nepal up to 2,900 years ago, the expert believed. At present, Nepal has a written history of 1,700 years.

The excavation also found ancient household items including a leather bag and some artifacts in the burial cave. The excavation work in the valley began in 1991 with the cooperation of a foreign institute and the first phase of the work concluded recently found more than 3,000 man-made burial and dwelling caves in the valley, according to the experts.

**Bid to block 'chat lines'**

MANILA: The Philippines' National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) seek here on Sunday it will ask providers of international telephone services to block access to numbers offering phone sex or party "chat lines," reports AFP.

NTC chief Simeon Kintanar was quoted as saying they were making this appeal after it was found that the largest number of complaints regarding supposedly improper telephone bills, were made to overseas numbers offering phone sex or chat line services.

Kintanar noted that most of the complainants would insist that no one in their household could have made such calls but it would later be discovered that someone in the house, usually a youth, had indeed made these calls.

Advertisements for these party chat lines and thinly disguised phone sex services appear in local publications and on television.

**Test tube quadruplets!**

RIO DE JANEIRO: A 35-year old public official has become the first Brazilian woman to give birth to test tube quadruplets after in vitro fertilisation, doctors said on Monday, reports Xinhua.

The four babies, one boy and three girls, weigh between 1.92 and 1.58 kilograms and are all doing well. Dr Manuel De Carvalho said. The chance of survival of babies who are born weighing between 1-1.5 kilograms is over 96 per cent.

**Bid to get Russia, Chechen rebels talk back on track**

MOSCOW, June 3: An international mediator met with Russia's military commander in Chechnya on Sunday to try to get negotiations back on track in the breakaway republic, reports AP.

A week-old agreement between President Boris Yeltsin and Chechnya's rebel leader depends on talks and on adherence to a ceasefire. Yeltsin, who faces voters in two weeks, wants to be able to point to progress toward ending the 18-month war.

But fighting marred the first day of the ceasefire Saturday. And talks set to begin the same day in neighbouring Dagestan were cancelled by the rebels to protest a clash Friday outside the town of Shali.

Tim Guldman, leader of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, met Sunday with the commander of Russian troops in the republic, Vyacheslav Tikhomirov, the

ITAR-Tass news agency said. Guldman also was to meet with the rebels' military chief, Aslan Maskhadov, and the Interfax news agency reported contacts Sunday between Maskhadov and Russia's military command.

Discussions centered on 26 Russians the rebels captured Saturday in the Nozhai-Yurt region southeast of Grozny, the Chechen capital, and on 10 Chechens taken prisoner by the Russians a day earlier in Shali.

The Russian side has proposed a round of talks Wednesday and Thursday in Nazran, capital of Ingushetia, a Russian republic bordering Chechnya.

ITAR-Tass quoted a top rebel official, Said-Khasan Abumuslimov, saying setbacks "will be overcome and the dialogue on ending the war" would continue.

But Interfax reported that while the Chechen separatists were ready to resume talks, cern," the radio said.

Later Sunday, Netanyahu met with Egypt's ambassador to Israel and discussed a possible meeting with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, Israel Radio said.

On Sunday, Netanyahu aides began sounding out potential coalition partners, including the much-strengthened religious parties. One religious negotiator said the new government would move to shut businesses on the Jewish Sabbath and ban the import of non-kosher meat.

The new Knesset will convene June 17 and Netanyahu hopes to form his new government by then, Israel radio said. Netanyahu has 45 days to present his government for majority approval in the Knesset.

**US may reimpose ban on rump Yugoslavia, says Christopher**

GENEVA, June 3: US Secretary of State Warren Christopher said on Sunday sanctions could be reimposed on the rump Yugoslavia unless Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic ensured the removal from power of top Bosnian Serb leaders, reports Reuter.

Christopher told a news conference after talks with Milosevic that the Belgrade strongman had not done enough for the departure from the public scene of the Serbs' President Radovan Karadzic and military chief Ratko Mladic.

"I left him in no doubt what my views are... that they (Karadzic and Mladic) should be removed from office and handed over to the United Nations war crimes tribunal in The Hague which has indicted them," Christopher said.

Milosevic referred to assurances he had given that Karadzic would be stepping down, but Christopher said he told him "that just wasn't enough. What we wanted to see was real action."

Christopher said all that was needed for "a virtually automatic" reimposition of sanctions was a finding by the top international civilian or military officials in Bosnia that the Dayton accords which ended the Bosnian war last November were not being observed.

"That's very important tool we have that we pointed out today. I'm not in the business of deadlines but there is a growing impatience on the part of the international community," he said.

**Netanyahu talks peace but supporters demand tough line**

JERUSALEM, June 3: In a conciliatory victory speech, Benjamin Netanyahu pledged to pursue peace with the Arabs, urged unity in a divided Israel, and lavished praise on outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres, reports AP.

But the prime minister-elect seemed a bit out of synch with the thousands of euphoric supporters who crowded a Jerusalem convention hall Sunday to celebrate the end of four years in opposition. They hoisted for a tough line on security, booed at the very mention of peacemaker Peres and listened politely to the words of peace.

"Tonight I extend the hand of peace to all Arab leaders and to our Palestinian neighbours," said Netanyahu, whose address was carried live by Cable News Network (CNN), the British

Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Arab satellite channels.

"We plan to advance the process of dialogue with all our neighbours in order to achieve stable peace, real peace, peace with security," he said.

A jubilant crowd chanted "Bibi, King of Israel," referring to Netanyahu by his nickname, as the 46-year-old US-educated leader stood with his wife Sarah waving from the stage.

The militant mood in the audience of Likud Party activists — many of whom carried signs vilifying Israel's liberal media — underscored the difficulties Netanyahu will face from within his own ranks should he abandon Likud's traditional hardline stance and embrace the outgoing government's peacemaking.

The audience chanted demands for the appointment as defence minister of tough-talking Ariel Sharon, a former general and who as defence minister under Menachem Begin masterminded the 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Sharon says he would never speak to PLO chief Yasser Arafat.

Netanyahu has suggested he would choose a far more moderate figure for the job, like reserve Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai or even Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert.

Netanyahu won the May 29 vote with a campaign that blamed Peres for being soft on the Arabs and not preventing terrorist attacks that have killed some 200 Israelis in the past three years.

Although he was a bitter foe

of the 1993 Israel PLO accord, Netanyahu in recent months said he accepts the Palestinian autonomy it established in the West Bank and Gaza and would continue talks with the PLO on a final peace deal.

The chances that such talks could be successful seem dimmed, however, by Netanyahu's pledges to prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state. He has also suggested he would give Israeli troops a freer hand in operating in PLO-ruled areas — likely to be seen as a violation of the existing accords.

Netanyahu pledged Sunday to strengthen relations with Jordan and Egypt, which already have peace treaties with Israel, and to pursue new agreements with other Arab states.

But he avoided mention of the Palestinian demand for statehood and made no specific policy statements on issues his government will face immediately, like the planned troop pullout from Hebron.

Peres' Cabinet on Sunday announced it would leave the pullout from the West Bank town — which Israel has promised by mid-June — to Netanyahu. Peres had originally agreed to withdraw the troops by March 28, but delayed it following a series of suicide bombings by Palestinian militants in Israel that left 63 dead.

Israel Radio said Palestinian officials criticised his speech Sunday for not answering difficult questions. Hannan Ashrawi, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, said the speech "awakened con-