

International

Abiola's wife shot dead

LAGOS, June 5: Gunmen shot and killed the wife of imprisoned opposition leader Moshood K. Abiola near her home on Tuesday, reports AP. Kudirat Abiola, 44, an outspoken critic of the military government, was in her car when she was shot at close range by six gunmen. Her doctor, Ore Salomok, said she died about two hours later in the operating room at Eko hospital. Salomok said Mrs. Abiola's driver also was shot and died of his wounds. The United States and Britain called for a swift and thorough hunt for the killers. Opposition politicians, expressing shock at the killings, suggested government involvement. They want to dominate us, but with the help of God the will of the people will prevail, said Michael Ajasin, 94-year-old leader of the opposition National Democratic Coalition. Her death is ominous, said Dr. Wahab Sosunmu, a former civilian minister and a leader of the opposition.

Mrs Abiola openly criticised the government of Gen. Sani Abacha. Her husband, a millionaire businessman who was widely believed to have won Nigeria's nullified 1993 presidential election, was jailed on a charge of treason in 1994 after he proclaimed himself president. Witnesses said the gunmen opened fire on Mrs. Abiola's white Mercedes Benz Tuesday morning as she was returning from a visit to Ibeju Ode, in Ogun state, an hour's drive from Lagos. Witnesses said the car swerved off the road, and the gunmen moved in to fire at close range. The car's windshield and back window were shot out, the witnesses said. Police were searching for gray Peugeot 505 which fled the scene. In Washington, State Department spokesman Glyn Davies called on the Nigerian government "to thoroughly investigate the crime, diligently pursue these killers, and to ensure they're identified and duly prosecuted."

India's new govt to retain option to build N-weapons

NEW DELHI, June 5: India's new centre left government said today that it would retain the option to build nuclear weapons until universal nuclear disarmament was achieved, reports Reuters. The United Front government will continue to work for universal nuclear disarmament and will retain the nuclear option till this goal is achieved, the four day old government said in a policy statement. India exploded an atomic device in 1974 but says it has never built a nuclear weapon. Western experts believe both India and neighbouring Pakistan could quickly assemble nuclear weapons. India's longstanding policy has been to retain the option to build nuclear weapons in the event national security were to be threatened. The government of former prime minister PV Narasimha

Rao, whose Congress Party was defeated in recent general election, refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) last year, claiming it would not lead to global nuclear disarmament. Another report says, India's new centre left government said today that peace could be brought to rebellious Kashmir by granting citizens greater autonomy while keeping Jammu and Kashmir state within the nation. Respecting article 370 of the constitution as well as the wishes of the people, the problems of Jammu and Kashmir will be resolved through giving the people of that state the maximum degree of autonomy, the government said in a policy statement. Article 370 of the constitution grants Jammu and Kashmir state special status but

separatist leaders claim the autonomy has been eroded in recent years. Farooq Abdullah, leader of the largest pro-India party in Jammu and Kashmir, the National Conference, has called for restoration of the state's autonomous status as a precondition for participating in state assembly polls. Last week he said the new government of Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda might offer package granting the Himalayan state greater autonomy before organising assembly elections which were last held in 1987 before the outbreak of a separatist revolt. AFP adds, India's new United Front Government pledged today to provide a greater degree of autonomy to Kashmir and hold state assembly elections "as soon as possible" in the troubled Himalayan territory.

Blast kills 5 in northern Calcutta

CALCUTTA, June 5: A three-story building collapsed after a truck parked outside exploded in a northern Calcutta suburb Tuesday, killing at least five people and injuring 30 others, an official said, reports AP. A fire engulfed the Baranagar area as inflammable sulphur stored on the ground floor of the building burned, said Manish Gupta, the state home secretary. Calcutta is the capital of West Bengal state. The five killed included one woman and a child. Their bodies were charred beyond recognition, United News of India news agency said. No one has claimed responsibility for the explosion. H.P. Dey, the owner of the building, and a tenant family lived on the first and second floors of the building. The blast could be heard from a distance of one kilometer (half a mile) local residents said. Dey was a dealer in refined sulphur and used the ground floor as a storehouse, police said.



Lady Diana, Princess of Wales waves to the crowd on a walking tour of the Northwestern University campus with university president Henry Bienen (L) on Tuesday in Evanston, Illinois. Diana will be visiting Chicago in the next few days. — AFP/UNB photo

'Suu Kyi can't be trusted as leader with British husband'

YANGON, June 5: Myanmar military government broadened recent attacks on democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi today with a newspaper commentary saying she could not be trusted to be a leader because she has a British husband, reports Reuters. Referring to Suu Kyi as the "Puppet Princess", a commentary in the state-run New Light of Myanmar said the 1991 Nobel peace laureate could not be trusted to keep state secrets if she were ever to become the country's leader. "Will the wife in the last matters that are connected with the affairs of the state?" said the article, written under the pen name "patriot."

she cannot be trusted in the least," the commentary said. Myanmar's official media is seen as the mouthpiece of the military government. Suu Kyi has repeatedly been attacked verbally for her marriage to British academic Michael Aris. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) says she is not a true Myanmar because she lived abroad for many years and married a foreigner. Over the past two weeks, Myanmar has stepped up its propaganda against foreign interference in the country, calling Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy (NLD) party "stooges" of imperialists. On Tuesday the New Light of Myanmar carried a veiled warning that the NLD might be outlawed, attacking the party's recent plan to draft a new constitution.



Indian Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda releases the "common minimum programme" of his six-party coalition yesterday at a news conference in New Delhi pledging to continue the economic reforms begun by former premier PV Narasimha Rao. Harkishan Singh Surjeet, leader of the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M), is on his left. — AFP photo

Arab League's move to ease Kuwait, Libya tension

CAIRO, June 5: The Arab League has launched "discreet" contacts to ease tensions between Kuwait and Libya after Libyan leader Moamer Gaddafi questioned the emirates' right to independence, a league official said Tuesday, reports AP. League Secretary General Esmat Abdel Meguid intervened after receiving an official protest from Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabja Al-Ahmed at Gaddafi's remarks, said the officials who asked not to be named. Sabah also asked Abdel Meguid to "contact the Libyans to clarify their true attitude towards Kuwait," the official said, adding the league head was involved in "high-level" contacts. Gaddafi said during a speech last week at Cairo University: "Kuwait should never have gained independence if it is not even capable of defending itself," referring to Iraq's 1990 invasion of the Gulf Emirate. The remarks struck a nerve in Kuwait, which recalled its charge d'affaires in Tripoli and threatened to cut off diplomatic ties with Libya.

Netanyahu will explore new approach to talks with Syria

JERUSALEM, June 5: Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu will explore a "completely new approach" to peace talks with Syria that would involve limited agreements on specific issues, a top foreign policy adviser said Tuesday, reports AP. Zalman Shoval, former Israeli ambassador to Washington and foreign policy spokesman for Netanyahu's Likud Party, said Israel would not focus on a full peace treaty with an exchange of ambassadors, as did the outgoing government. "The new Israeli government will see if there is a possibility of some sort of compromise or a completely new approach which will look to incremental progress," Shoval said in an interview with the Associated Press. Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad said after talks with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak on Monday that he

was ruling out negotiations until Netanyahu made his positions clear. The resumption of the negotiations is out of the question now, Assad said in Cairo. "Things are not going in a positive way. We have to be fully alert and on guard." Dore Gold, another policy adviser to Netanyahu, said he expected Syria to resume talks with Israel under its new leadership just as it had under the right-wing government of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir at the Madrid peace conference in 1991. "I would stress that Assad sent a delegation to Madrid to negotiate with Israel, and I believe they will do so in the future," Gold told AP. Shoval said the new government will try to work out agreement with Syria on specific issues "without necessarily the envelope of a former peace treaty, which is problematic."

He said issues such as sharing water, a cease-fire in Lebanon, economic cooperation and Syria's presence on the US list of nations that sponsor terrorism could be negotiated. For its part, he said, Israel might not insist on having full diplomatic relations as was demanded by outgoing Prime Minister Shimon Peres. The Peres government, supported by President Clinton, offered an extensive troop pullback on the Golan Heights in exchange for full diplomatic and trade ties with Syria. Syria wants all of the Golan back in exchange for a peace treaty. "We could negotiate things that are more important for both Syria and Israel than necessarily having an ambassador in Tel Aviv and Damascus, which I understand is problematic for Assad," said Shoval.

IRANIAN ENVOY ARRIVES IN KABUL

An Iranian envoy arrived in Kabul on Tuesday expressing support for the embattled Afghan government's efforts to hold talks with its opponents to end Civil War, the official Kabul radio reported, Reuters reports from Islamabad. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Boroujerdi's talks with Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani covered current moves for peace talks and other political and economic matters, said the broadcast monitored in Islamabad. It said Boroujerdi also held talks with Deputy Prime Minister Sayed Mohammad Ali Jaid and Foreign Minister Najibullah Lafraie.

3 Red Cross workers killed in Burundi

Gunmen ambushed and killed three Swiss Red Cross workers on Tuesday as the delegates returned from a supply mission in Burundi, a central African nation bloodied by ethnic violence, AP reports from Geneva. The three men had been delivering water and medical supplies to civilians and hospitals in the northern province of Cibitoke, the International Committee of the Red Cross said. Their four-wheel-drive vehicle, marked with the Red Cross emblem, was attacked near the village of Mugina as the men were returning to the capital Bujumbura Tuesday afternoon, spokesman Tony Burgener said.

US businessman detained in China

Chinese police have detained a US businessman, William Ping Chen, for the alleged import of banned goods and for evading customs checks, the Xinhua News Agency said yesterday, Reuters reports from Beijing. Public security officials in Shanghai detained Chen on June 3, Xinhua said. Chinese authorities had already notified the US consulate in Shanghai or Chen's detention, it said.

Drought strikes Namibia

Namibian President Sam Nujoma has declared his country drought-stricken, with about 180,000 people requiring food relief from the government and foreign donors, the Sapa News Agency reported Tuesday, AFP reports from Windhoek. Nujoma told a press conference Monday that his government expects to spend 159.3 million Namibian dollar (36.5 million US), to provide food and water relief to people most affected by the drought. The Namibian leader said the government also hopes to raise about 171.3 million Namibian dollars (39.3 million US) from foreign donors to provide water to rural areas.

13 killed in Brazil road mishap

A truck loaded with cooking gas canisters smashed into a school bus in the Brazilian state of Goias, killing 11 students and the drivers of both vehicles, a television report said, AP reports from Sao Paulo. The accident occurred Monday near the city of Jaraguá, 590 miles (950 kilometers) northwest of Sao Paulo, the Globo TV network reported Tuesday. Globo TV said the two drivers and 11 of the 26 students on the bus were killed. Eight students were injured. The network did not say what caused the accident nor whether the gas canisters exploded.

Cholera claims 700 in Sudan

An international medical aid agency said on Tuesday a cholera epidemic sweeping war-ravaged southern Sudan had killed at least 700 people in the last seven weeks, Reuters reports from Nairobi. The death toll only represents the tip of the iceberg as many areas in South Sudan are inaccessible to relief workers due to the ongoing civil war, said the Belgian branch of Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF-doctors without borders). In a statement, it reported more than 1,800 cases of Cholera in the past seven weeks. Out of these 360 people from Adok district alone had died. It did not give a breakdown of deaths in other districts or how it reached the total of at least 700.

New US navy chief named

President Clinton has chosen Adm Jay L. Johnson to succeed Adm Jeremy M "Mike" Boorda, the Navy chief whose May 16 suicide shook the naval community, officials said Tuesday, AP reports from Washington. The administration officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the Pentagon planned to make the announcement Wednesday. They said Clinton probably would meet with Johnson, the vice chief of naval operations, in an effort to boost Navy morale. Defense Secretary William Perry had promised to get a successor in place quickly to help the Navy recover from the suicide of the popular commander.

Former first deputy KGB chief dies

Georgy Tsinev, a former first deputy chairman of the KGB secret police, has died in Moscow at 88, an official said, AP reports from Moscow. Tsinev died in Moscow on May 31, but the cause of death was not being announced, according to a duty officer at the Federal Security Service, one of the KGB's successor organizations. Tsinev joined the State Security Ministry, or MGB in 1953 and rose through the ranks of the agency, which later changed its name to become the State Security Committee or KGB, said the officer, who declined to be named.



Scared local inhabitants of the Magam-Rakh village sit outside their homes from which they were driven out on Tuesday ahead of massive searches to locate the deadbodies of the four foreign hostages. According to information from the arrested militants, the hostages were to be executed December 19. Officials and diplomats still believe that all four foreign hostages are alive. — AFP/UNB photo

Aqaba meet begins to coordinate policy towards new Israeli leadership

AQABA, Jordan, June 5: The leaders of Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians meet in Aqaba today to coordinate policy towards new Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu and his revisionist attitude to Middle East peace talks, reports Reuters. Netanyahu's victory in elections one week ago took Israel's Arab neighbours by surprise and has thrown into question their assumptions about where negotiations might go next. Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad has already met Lebanese President Elias Hrawi and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The foreign ministers of Syria and Egypt then held two rounds of talks in Riyadh with Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal. Now it is the turn of Mubarak, King Hussein of Jor-

dan and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat — the three Arab leaders who have formal peace agreement with the Jewish state. Mubarak is cautiously trying to steer the Arab states towards a larger meeting but he is anxious not to raise expectations too high in case his plans crash on the rocks on old Arab grievances, Arab diplomats say. Mubarak and Assad said on Monday that Netanyahu, a rightwinger opposed to territorial concessions, had not made a favourable first impression but they agreed before forming a further opinion to give him time to form a government and explain his ideas in more detail. At Wednesday's summit in Awaba, a Red Sea port and tourist resort from which Israeli, Egyptian and Saudi terri-

tory are all clearly visible, Mubarak and King Hussein will try to reassure Arafat and the Palestinians that they are not alone. The Palestinians, living in semi-independent limbo under Israeli military and economic domination, are the most vulnerable of Israel's peace partners and the most fearful about the implications of Netanyahu's election victory. "They will press Netanyahu to honour the commitments that (outgoing Israeli prime minister) Shimon Peres concluded, especially with Arafat," said a senior Arab diplomat in Amman. One of the first test cases will be how Netanyahu decides to handle Israel's promise to redeploy its troops in the sensitive West Bank town of Hebron.

Yilmaz appeals for EU to end Greek aid boycott

BRUSSELS, June 5: Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz appealed Tuesday for the European Union to overcome Greek protests that have held up a 470 million dollars aid package for Turkey, reports AP. "We expect the European Union to abide by its commitments," Yilmaz told reporters. "We see the present obstacles raised by Greece as a problem that the Union should solve." But Yilmaz, battling for political survival at home, is unlikely to have found comfort in talks with EU Commission President Jacques Santer, who is powerless to unblock the aid unless Greece agrees. Proposals to unfreeze the aid need unanimous support among the European Union's 15 member nations. Greece refuses to go along because of a territorial dispute with Turkey over a group of Aegean Sea islands.

Dalai Lama swears in govt-in-exile

DHARAMSALA, June 5: The Dalai Lama sworn in the 12th Tibetan government-in-exile on Tuesday and said China has let loose terror in Tibet, reports AP. Eight cabinet ministers were chosen from among 46 members of parliament who were elected during a three-month long election process. The Tibetan Parliament in exile is a policy-making body for the 120,000 refugees who fled Tibet and most of whom are living in India. No government, including India's recognizes the Dalai Lama's government in exile as the legitimate authority of Tibet.

Kim Jong II visits military unit

SEOUL, June 5: North Korea's reclusive leader visited a front-line military unit Wednesday in his first reported public appearance in more than a month, the communist country's official media reported, reports AP. Kim Jong II's visit came amid increased tension along the two nations' heavily guarded border. The North marched heavily armed troops into the demilitarized zone in April in violation of the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. Its troops again violated the buffer zone in May. Kim, visiting a unit guarding the border near the east coast, said: "The enemies should not be allowed to intrude into an inch of the territory" and that "the precious gains of socialism the Korean people achieved and defended at the cost of blood should be safeguarded with credit," the North's official Korea Central News Agency said.

Unorthodox homework

MAUREPAS, France: Disciplinary procedures were ordered Tuesday for a teacher who assigned her chemistry class students to calculate how much gas would be needed "to kill the Jews," reports AP. The junior high school instructor, whose name was not released, handed out the unorthodox homework at a school in this town about 30 kilometers (18 miles) southwest of Paris. The homework asked students to calculate how much carbon monoxide would be needed to kill a certain number of Jews confined to the back of a truck. Regional school officials said Tuesday they had begun disciplinary procedures "without prejudging the reasons, intentions or mindsets of the teacher." In a letter to France's education minister, the International League Against Racism and Antisemitism denounced the assignment as "scandalous."

Sleep was his last wish

BEIJING: A 105-year-old man died peacefully in his sleep in early May in north China's who was born in 1891, ate a dinner of pork and rice at his home in Jingling county, then told his family he wanted to sleep, according to the "Beijing Youth Daily," reports Xinhua. Early the next morning, when the family tried to take him, Zhao said, "I want to continue my sleep, go and mind your own business. Don't bother me." He soon fell into a coma that lasted four days and nights. Family members said he even snored. He died on May 4. Doctors said Zhao's body functions were normal, but he died four days later. Zhao's 81-year-old son said his father was healthy and seldom ill. The old man liked flowers, taking walks, chatting and reading books. He was nearly riser, exercised regularly, and had a healthy appetite that favoured fish, pork and fruits. As a child, Zhao delivered newspapers in Tianjin. He married in 1909.

For putting picture on telephone credit card

LOS ANGELES: Muhammad Ali is suing a film production company for putting his picture on a telephone credit card, reports AP. The 500,000 dollars lawsuit filed Thursday says Ali granted Los Angeles-based Forever Films the rights to use his name and likeness in promoting the 1989 movie "Champions Forever." In 1994, however, Forever Films allegedly allowed Nevada-based phone company Amerivox to use the boxer's photograph. "Those rights were limited to the movie," said Kevin Gaut, Ali's attorney. "We didn't say they could do whatever they wanted." Forever Films spokesman Ron Hamady had no comment on the dispute.

300m Chinese wear spectacles

BEIJING: More than 300 million Chinese wear spectacles and Beijing has set aside June 6 as National Eye-Care Day, the Beijing Youth Daily said Tuesday, reports Reuters. More than five million Chinese are blind, while another 16 million including 10 million children, have poor sight or eye diseases, of which 75 per cent are curable, it said. The newspaper quoted a survey that showed 78.8 per cent of urban students aged between 19-22 were near-sighted. The rate in rural areas was nearly 75 per cent. Moreover, 70 per cent of spectacles on the market in China were sub-standard, it said.



The Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson (L) poses for photographers with Dr Lorraine Hale co-founder of Hale House, after receiving the 1996 Mother Hale Award for Caring on Monday in New York. The Duchess was honoured with the award for her work helping children in need. — AFP/UNB photo