

BRIEFLY

26 missing as ships collide in ROK:

At least 26 seamen, mostly from the Philippines, were missing after their freighter sank after it was rammed over the weekend by another foreign ship off South Korea's southern coast, maritime police said yesterday. AFP reports from Seoul.

The Cyprus-registered 14,900-tonne Annaspiratou with 26 sailors aboard was hit Saturday by the Greece-registered freighter Polyedekis in foggy weather near the southern island of Kioe, maritime police said. South Korean Navy boats immediately launched an overnight search but failed to rescue any of the missing crew who included a Greek captain, an Egyptian sailor and 24 Filipinos, the police said.

Cypriot president to meet Clinton:

Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides is to meet US President Bill Clinton in Washington on Monday, with hopes rising that the time may finally be right to end the Mediterranean island's 22-year division, AFP reports from Nicosia.

The separation of Cyprus between Greek- and Turkish-Cypriot zones, with 1,200 UN peacekeepers manning a buffer zone in between will be at the top of the agenda during the two leaders' meeting officials said. Cypriot foreign minister Alecos Michaelides said there was a new declared US interest that could help push forward a solution in coordination with the United Nations and European Union.

Jazz queen Ella Fitzgerald dies:

Jazz Legend Ella Fitzgerald, beloved by millions as America's "First Lady of Songs" died on Saturday at her Beverly Hills home. She was 78 years old, Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

Fitzgerald, who had been in declining health in recent years with complications from diabetes, died peacefully, surrounded by family and friends, spokeswoman Andres Hecht said. The exact cause of death was not released, but Fitzgerald had rarely appeared in public since 1993, when both of her legs had to be amputated below the knee.

Mild quake rocks Philippines:

A mild earthquake rocked the southern Philippine island of Mindanao before dawn yesterday but caused no damage or casualties, authorities said, AFP reports from Manila.

The quake, measuring 2.5 on the Richter Scale, made hanging objects sway in the city of Iligan but was barely perceptible in the city of Cagayan De Oro which is located just beside the epicentre. Government volcanologists said the quake was caused by the movement of a local fault in Misamis oriental province.

Slayers of Greek tourists killed:

Two Muslim militants who shot and killed 18 Greek tourists near the pyramids were killed in a gunbattle with police, Egypt's interior minister said Saturday, AP reports from Cairo.

The shooting erupted when police tried to arrest the men, Hassan el-Alfy said. Four policemen were also killed and 14 others wounded, he said in comments carried by the state-run al-Akhar al-Yom newspaper. El-Alfy did not say when the militants were killed. But police said in April that two militants believed to have carried out the attack died in a shootout with police in the town of Malawi, a militant stronghold 260 kilometres (160 miles) south of Cairo.

Christopher to visit Israel next week:

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher will visit Israel next week to help prepare Prime Minister elect Benjamin Netanyahu's first official trip to Washington the Jerusalem Post newspaper said on Sunday. Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Netanyahu's spokesman denied Christopher's visit was agreed. The newspaper, quoting diplomatic sources, said Christopher would also brief Netanyahu on "secret details" in Israeli Syrian peace talks in which the US has played a role.

Gunmen kill 17 in Colombia:

At least 17 people were murdered in two separate grisly incidents in Colombia early Saturday, police said, AFP reports from Bogota.

In a crowded neighbourhood of the country's second city, Medellin, heavily armed men opened fire on a group of young men, killing 10 of them aged between 17 and 24. While fleeing the scene the assailants opened fire again, killing two more youths. The motive for the massacre was not immediately clear.

Papandreou recovering:

Former Greek prime minister Andreas Papandreou, recovering from serious illness plans to attend his Pasok Party special congress at the end of the month, the parliament Speaker said Saturday, AFP reports from Athens.

The 77-year-old socialist was forced to resign as the country's leader in January after coming close to death but remains president of Pasok the ruling socialist party. Papandreou whose return to the political scene has rated political problems for his successor Prime Minister Costas Simitis is "very worried about the unity" of his party Speaker Apostolos Kaklamania said.

France condemns violence in Bahrain:

French President Jacques Chirac has sent a message of support to Bahrain assuring the Gulf Emirate of France's backing for its attempts to restore order and stability, the Bahraini agency GNA said Saturday, AFP reports from Manama.

Chirac told the Emir of Bahrain Sheikh Issa bin Salman al Khalifa, that he condemned recent violence in the Emirate and underlined the friendly relations between the two countries GNA said. The Emir called for support from several

Burundi peace mediator asks African states to intervene if he fails

DARESSALAAM, June 16: Burundi peace mediator Mwalimu Julius Nyerere here today asked African countries to intervene in the country if his peace initiatives failed, reports Xinhua.

The former Tanzania president briefed the press of the current political developments in that war-tattered country.

Nyerere was reacting to a question posed on him on whether he sanctioned the idea of military intervention as suggested by some African countries recently.

"I don't find anything bad in intervening with the situation in Burundi if it gets out of hand," he said, adding "we cannot keep quiet when we see our neighbours kill each other."

He said the current developments in Burundi indicated

that the country would plunge into bloodshed on a genocidal scale, like the neighbouring Rwanda where some one million people were slaughtered in 1994.

He said, however, there was a big possibility for the antagonist parties in Burundi to strike a deal for an everlasting peace in their country through dialogue.

The mediator said that the bone of the conflict was that both the Hutu and the Tutsi feared for their existence.

"The Hutu's account for an estimated 85 per cent of Burundi's 5.6 million people. Burundi's blood letting was triggered by a failed coup against the government of Ndeyaye and his Front for Democracy in Burundi (Frodebu) which won 71 per cent of the vote,

Afghan captors allow 7 Russian hostages to vote

MOSCOW, June 16: Seven Russians held hostage in Afghanistan since August 1995 have been allowed by their captors to take part in voting for their new president, Interfax news agency said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Interfax said the crew of the 11-76 cargo plane, seized by the rebel Islamic Taliban militia 10 months ago, had been taken to the city of Kandahar to vote. It gave no details.

The Russian government has failed in all its attempts to free the crew of the chartered plane, which was carrying a load of ammunition for government forces fighting against Taliban.

Interfax quoted an official from Russia's ethnic region of Tatarstan, where the plane was registered, as praising Taliban for giving the seven prisoners an opportunity to vote.

Clinton expresses outrage at blast in Manchester

WASHINGTON, June 16: President Bill Clinton expressed outrage at a bomb blast in Manchester, England that injured more than 200 and vowed US support for the "continuing search for peace," reports AP.

Calling the blast a "brutal and cowardly act of terrorism," Clinton said the attack "underscores the need for all of us to join together to fight terrorism and violence in all parts of the world."

British Prime Minister John Major said earlier the explosion bore all the hallmarks of the Irish Republican Army.

It was the first attack outside London since the IRA broke off a 17-month ceasefire with a bomb on February 9 in the capital's Canary Wharf district in which two people were killed and scores injured.

Clinton noted that talks aimed at ending the conflict over Northern Ireland had begun in Belfast, and that the people of Northern Ireland had voted to send representatives to those talks.

Diana criticised for self-absorption

LONDON, June 16: Right-wingers in Britain's ruling Conservative Party have criticised Princess Diana for her "self-absorption" and called on her to divorce from the Prince of Wales as quickly as possible, press reports said today, reports AP.

They quoted an anonymous editorial in the magazine Way Forward, organ of a group headed by former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, that said the princess had a "voracious appetite" for the perks of royal life.

The Princess of Wales has steadily forfeited the sympathy she so skillfully built up over the last years, the article said.

"Her self-absorption has become increasingly apparent and it is time to separate her irrevocably from the core of the institution which had earlier been so ready to embrace her."

It added, "The future of the monarchy is the Prince of Wales and its future thereafter is Prince William (Charles and Diana's elder son).

Indian Muslims in UK urge Gowda to free TADA victims

LONDON, June 16: The Indian Muslim Federation in Britain has urged the Indian Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda to immediately release innocent Muslims still imprisoned under the Terrorists and Disruptive Elements (Prevention) Act (TADA), reports PTI.

In a letter to Gowda, the chairman of the federation, I A Shaikh said, ejection of BJP from power was not an end, but means to an end — justice for minorities, particularly the Muslims, would be done by giving them jobs in police, army and governmental and semi-governmental departments.

Any ill feeling against and mistrust, specially on baseless and assumed grounds against any community was detrimental to healthy progress of the country, Shaikh said

tials, the Russian president was welcomed with open arms when he visited Beijing in April.

Yeltsin's visit was on the heels of the visit to Seoul and Tokyo, of US President Bill Clinton who not only reaffirmed the continued presence of US troops in the region, but together with Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, carved out an enhanced role for Japan in Asian security.

Analysts say China therefore viewed the April 24-26 visit of Yeltsin as the perfect response to the Clinton's trip.

Russian-Chinese bilateral documents finalised during the visit included a joint declaration on international policy cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as agreements on military aid and energy, transport and communications projects.



Chechen women display a banner reading "Troops out/No elections" during a protest gathering on Grozny market place on Saturday as the Russian presidential and local elections are underway in Chechnya. —AFP/UNB photo

Troops kill 8 LTTE rebels in fighting Govt wants to tame Tigers before talking peace

COLOMBO, June 16: The government toughened its stance on talking peace with Tamil Tiger rebels on Sunday, with the deputy defence minister saying there will be no negotiations until the guerrillas are tamed, reports AP.

"We have to take them and bring them to a position in which they feel they have no alternative but to talk to us. When we are sure they have been tamed, then we will talk with them," Gen Anuruddha Ratwatte said.

The rebels are fighting for a homeland in the north and east for minority Tamils. They accuse the majority Sinhalese, who control the government and military, of widespread discrimination in education and jobs. More than 42,000 people have been killed in the fighting since the war began in 1983.

The rebels must give up their weapons before the government will negotiate, Ratwatte said in an interview with the state-owned Sunday Observer.

"I am talking about a complete laying down of arms. There is no question of any symbolic action," Ratwatte said.

Ratwatte noted that the rebels have, in the past, used negotiations to prepare for more war.

"Each time, it was they who broke off the talks and attacked without warning. This time we will not make that mistake," he said.

The guerrillas scuttled the last peace talks and a truce in April 1995 after saying the government was not sincere in its efforts to end the war peacefully.

Parliament is considering President Chandrika Kumaratunga's plan to make Sri Lanka a federation of eight regions, including a Tamil-dominated one, each with wide powers of self-rule.

The rebels have rejected the proposal, which would also have to be accepted by voters in a referendum.

The guerrillas have been retreating in the face of a series of military onslaughts which began in the northern Jaffna Peninsula in October.

The rebels have tried to divert troops away from the main front in the north by attacking small military bases in the east, massacring Sinhalese civilians.

AFP add: Security forces stepped up attacks against Tamil Tiger guerrillas, killing at least eight rebels in separate confrontations, defence officials here said today.

Troops killed six men of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and seized their weapons in the northern peninsula of Jaffna overnight while two more were killed in the eastern district of Batticaloa, officials said.



Police handout photo of bomb damages in Manchester City Centre after an explosive device concealed in a van went off on Saturday. More than a hundred persons were injured, four of them critically. Police reported that a person using an IRA code telephoned a warning. —AFP/UNB photo

'Tough days ahead as SLORC firm to destroy pro-democracy move'

BANGKOK, June 16: A senior member of Myanmar's exiled opposition expects difficult days ahead as the military government in Yangon continues trying to destroy the country's democracy movement, the Bangkok Post reported today, says Reuter.

The comments were made by Tin Maung Win, vice president of the Democratic Alliance of Burma, an umbrella organisation of anti-government groups.

"I see more difficult days ahead as the SLORC, in a futile attempt to destroy the pro-democracy movement, commits more blunders and becomes more irrational," Tin Maung Win said, referring to the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

He told the Post in an interview he thinks the Burmese people will act as one and be-

come more defiant of the regime and more assertive in their quest for democracy.

Tin Maung Win's remarks come amid growing pressure by the SLORC on the democracy movement in Myanmar.

Frenchmen march against tough immigration laws

PARIS, June 16: Several thousand people marched through major French cities on Saturday to protest against increasingly tough immigration laws and to demand residency rights for long established migrants without documents, reports Reuter.

Organisers said 10,000 people took part in a march through central Paris.

long forgotten days.

The 4,000 km Sino-Russian border that once witnessed bitter clashes between Russian and Chinese armies, now hums with bilateral trade that touched 5.46 billion US dollar last year.

"Moscow believes the Russo-Chinese alliance together with the political and military bond of the Commonwealth of Independent States can become a counter-balance to NATO expansion," Voskresenski says.

"But such an alliance must not be directed expressly against the West," he says. "Russia should keep its Western and eastern policies on different planes allowing it geopolitical stability and intensive contact with all parties."

Top Israeli peacemaker pessimistic about ME peace

JERUSALEM, June 16: A top Israeli peacemaker predicted Saturday that the emerging right-wing government of Benjamin Netanyahu will not pursue a final peace settlement with the Palestinians, reports AP.

"He will not go forward with an agreement with the Palestinians based on what was signed by both sides," said Yossi Beilin, a Cabinet minister who engineered the Israel-PLO autonomy accords. "The results will be grave for the future of Israel."

Netanyahu, meanwhile, was meeting with lawmakers from religious and centrist groups in an effort to conclude coalition deals that will enable him to present a new government to the Knesset for approval early next week.

The Likud Party leader, a bitter opponent of the Israel-PLO accords, scored a narrow upset victory over Prime Minister Shimon Peres in Israel's

May 29 election.

Although he says he now accepts the existing Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza and will continue peace talks, he remains strongly opposed to the independent state which Palestinians hoped would be the end result of the process.

The emerging Israeli government, based on parties that opposed the Israel-PLO peace deals, indicates Netanyahu "has no intention" of meeting the May 1999 deadline set for reaching for a final peace settlement, said Beilin.

The Palestinians and other Arab nations, increasingly concerned that the peace process is in danger, have called a summit in Cairo later this month to discuss the new situation.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat accused Netanyahu of avoiding contact with the Palestinian leadership, despite its efforts.

Afghan leaders' planned meet in US criticised as pro-govt factions ignored

KABUL, June 16: A senior Afghan government official Saturday criticised a planned meeting of Afghan leaders in Washington, saying the sponsors had ignored some important pro-government factions, reports AP.

Deputy Foreign Minister Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzi described the move which is reportedly sponsored by US Senator Hank Brown as "imbalanced and regrettable" but said the Afghan government would attend the meeting.

The chairman of the US Senate sub-committee for the Near East and South Asia has reportedly invited leaders of Afghan factions to a conference in Washington on June 25 to discuss ways to resolve the Afghan civil war.

Brown recently toured Afghanistan to meet various Afghan leaders.

Ghafoorzi said Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, Rasool Sayyaf's Itihad-i-Islami, Ayaulah Mohseni's Harakat-i-

Islami and Wahdat-i-Islami a breakaway Shi'ite faction headed by Mohammad Akbari, had not been invited.

He said President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his main military commander, Ahmad Shah Masood, had been invited as leaders of Shurai Nazari group despite the fact that the group has since merged with Rabbani's Jamiat-i-Islami Party.

The official said many Afghans had been invited from outside Afghanistan as experts, though no experts from within the country had been invited.

"When one believes in a political process no one should be negated," Ghafoorzi said.

He denied reports of his resignation but confirmed that he had not been present in his office for around two weeks because of problems with his seniors, which he would not detail. Ghafoorzi said the problems were being sorted out and that he hoped to return to work in coming days.

Off the Record

Disappeared along with partner

BRASILIA: The last known specimen in the wild of a rare breed of Brazilian parrot flew the coop just as scientists were hoping it might mate with a female raised in captivity, a newspaper said on Saturday, reports Reuter.

Biologist Marcos Da-Re told Correio Braziliense the so-called small blue parrot disappeared along with a female from a different breed known as the maracana parrot, which had been its partner for several years.

The maracana had prevented a small blue female raised in a zoo and introduced as a potential mate, from approaching its possible partner. Now cattle handlers and hunters are on the lookout for the flyaway birds in the remote Raso Da Catarina area of Bahia state, northeastern Brazil.

The small blue parrot, scientifically known as cyanopsitta spixii, was virtually wiped out by hunting until Da-Re backed by international wild life groups, began promoting conservation among local communities, the newspaper said.

As well as the wild male, 15 specimens of the small blue parrot are known to be in captivity around the world, it said.

Usual cardiac exam of an unusual patient

WASHINGTON: Everything about the high-tech cardiovascular exam was standard — except for the patient, reports AP. It took a dart to anaesthetise him. It took six people to carry his 370-pound (170-kilogram) hairy frame into the operation room. And while the electrocardiogram was in process, it took two doctors to clean his teeth.

The cardiovascular exam on Gus the gorilla is part of an ongoing effort by the National Zoo to improve the health and longevity of these primates. The procedure, funded by the zoo, has been done before on nine orangutans and four other gorillas — two of them males — since September 1995.

Dr Richard Cambre, head of the department of animal health at the zoo, said the examination was important because gorillas, especially males, have a relatively high incidence of cardiovascular disease. Some have even died, one as recently as two months ago in Seattle.

A medical team of nine — all of them masked and dressed in green robes — hooked Gus up onto monitors with green, blue and orange bands and inserted a tube into his windpipe to help him breathe an anaesthetic, the same type used in human operating rooms.

Then, with the beeping sound of Gus' heart echoing through the room, the team took his blood pressure — it was normal — monitored his breathing and his heart rate and then began the ultrasound procedure.

As the monitor showed the fuzzy image of Gus' heart pumping blood, Dr Steven Goldstein, a cardiologist who did the electrocardiogram, noticed that although the gorilla's aorta was normal, his left ventricle was not squeezing out as much blood as it should.

Goldstein said that he had detected the same abnormality in one of the two other male gorillas he has tested.

Cambre said that he and the other physicians will study tapes of the examination to determine what the next step would be.

China, Russia moving toward geo-political alliance

MOSCOW/BEIJING, June 16: Once close allies, then bitter rivals, Russia and China are today moving toward what analysts in Beijing and Moscow view as a potentially powerful geo-political alliance that will be closely watched by Western and Asian governments, reports IPS.

Neither China nor Russia seek a return to Cold War years, and the two see mutual benefits for forming an alliance that would counter perceived Western interference in their traditional spheres of influence.

In Moscow's case, the concern is of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) expansion into Eastern and Central Europe.

For Beijing, the 100,000 American troops in Asia are seen as a potential obstacle to the speedy reunification of

Taiwan with the mainland and to China's eventual bid to claim disputed territory in South China Sea waters.

"One of the reasons for Moscow's new emphasis on the Far East is its disenchantment with Western democracies, which do not regard the Kremlin as an equal partner. Just look at NATO's expansion plans," says Alexei Voskresenski, a senior expert with the Russian Academy of Sciences' Far Eastern Studies Institute.

On the other hand China sees the cementing of ties with Russia serving its own ambitions. "China wants to secure all its borders, especially the one with Russia so that it can turn its sights to the South-East," says a military analyst in Beijing.

So that although senior Chinese communists detest Yeltsin's democratic creden-

ties, the Russian president was welcomed with open arms when he visited Beijing in April.

Yeltsin's visit was on the heels of the visit to Seoul and Tokyo, of US President Bill Clinton who not only reaffirmed the continued presence of US troops in the region, but together with Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, carved out an enhanced role for Japan in Asian security.

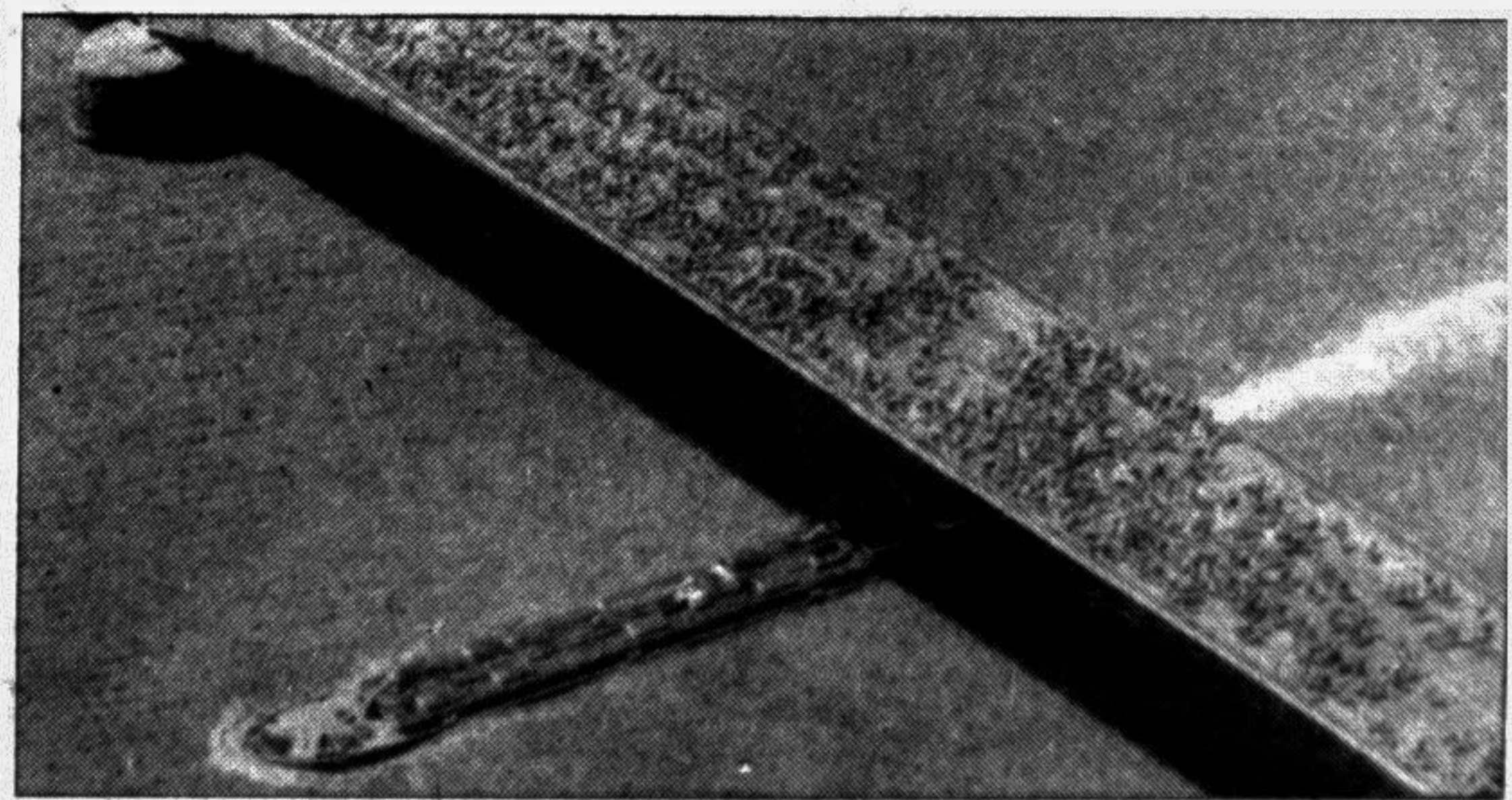
Analysts say China therefore viewed the April 24-26 visit of Yeltsin as the perfect response to the Clinton's trip.

Russian-Chinese bilateral documents finalised during the visit included a joint declaration on international policy cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as agreements on military aid and energy, transport and communications projects.

The two also discussed a pact on three disputed plots of land on the border, which are to go to China under a 1991 delimitation treaty. Yeltsin's commitment to return disputed border lands to China has been appreciated by the Chinese leadership.

The pace of Russian-Chinese relations has steadily gained momentum since Yeltsin first visited in December 1992. Two years later the Chinese reciprocated, coming to Moscow to sign no-strike first nuclear accords.

And while Beijing indicates there can be no return to the Stalin-Mao 'eternal bond' of the 40s and early 50s, they also maintain that the tension of the 1960s when rival regimes nearly went to war in 1969 in a border clash over a disputed river island, are also



Thousands of people cross over Bonn's Kennedy Bridge on their way to the hugest post-war trade union rally to condemn Chancellor Helmut Kohl's stiff austerity programme. Police estimated the crowd at 350,000. —AFP/UNB photo