

International

Investigation into Dhahran blast

Clinton sends clear message to KSA seeking cooperation

WASHINGTON, July 16: US President Bill Clinton on Monday sent a clear message to Saudi Arabia that the United States expected its full cooperation on an investigation into the bombing that killed 19 US servicemen near Dhahran, reports Reuter.

Clinton's comments came amid growing concern in Washington that Saudi officials are not fully cooperating in the search for the perpetrators of the June 25 bombing. Asked in an interview on the MSNBC network why he didn't simply phone King Fahd and demand better cooperation, Clinton replied, "no, we've had several talks about it and we expect cooperation. I do expect it."

"Any time a crime is committed and a country is high profile, that nation wants to believe that it can handle it and do what's right. And I understand that," he said. "But this is a case with international ramifications and we have to cooperate."

US defence officials earlier denied published reports that Saudi investigators had found the getaway car used in the bombing north of Dhahran.

The car that was found is apparently not the vehicle involved in the June 25 incidents, one of the officials, who asked not to be identified, told Reuters.

US concerns about Saudi cooperation mounted on Sunday when the official Saudi

press agency reported that Defence Minister Prince Sultan said Riyadh did not favour a Pentagon proposal to move some of the 5,000 US troops in Saudi Arabia away from big bases to safer areas of the Kingdom.

But one defence official said the Saudis had contacted the Pentagon on Monday to say Prince Sultan had been misquoted and had not shut the door on the shift of some US troops.

The officials said the matter was under discussion and a formal proposal had not been presented to the Saudis. They added that the Saudis had assured the Pentagon of ongoing cooperation in protecting US forces.

Plane crash claims 32 in Holland

EINDHOVEN, The Netherlands, July 16: Thirty-two people, including many members of a Dutch military brass band were killed when a Belgian military aircraft crashed at Eindhoven Airport in the southern Netherlands, reports Reuter.

The 26-year-old C-130 Hercules plane banked steeply as it tried to land ploughed into a field in the airport's military section and burst into flames just after six pm (1600 GMT) on Monday.

Thirty-two people lost their lives in a most terrible way. Dutch Junior Defence Minister Jan Gmelich Meijling told a news conference at the air base.

All four Belgian crew members were among the dead and up to nine of the 40 or 41 people on board were seriously injured, he said.

Civil and military emergency services brought the fire under control within 50 minutes, while police sealed off the air base to keep away crowd of onlookers.

Fresh violence claims 12 in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, July 16: Tamil Tiger guerrillas shot dead five soldiers and lost seven of their own men in fresh violence in northern and eastern Sri Lanka today, military officials here said, reports AFP.

Members of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) ambushed an army patrol in the eastern village of Naagathenna and escaped after killing five soldiers and wounding another, a military spokesman said.

He said seven Tigers were killed in a separate confrontation in the northern peninsula of Jaffna today. The troops recovered four automatic rifles and 25 hand grenades from the victims.

No further details were immediately available.

The latest violence came as the Tigers admitted losing one of their fighters in the biggest attack against the military in northern Sri Lanka since December.

Militants kill 6 Hindu labourers in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, India, July 16: Muslim rebels shot dead six Hindu labourers overnight after kidnapping them in Srinagar, summer capital of the troubled Indian state of Kashmir, police said today, reports AFP.

A police spokesman said the workers were abducted while taking a boat ride on Srinagar's picturesque Nagin Lake on Monday. He said the victims came from the northern state of Rajasthan.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the killings, police said, adding that the workers had been staying on a houseboat on Dal Lake, one of Srinagar's main tourist attractions.

Kashmir government spokesman Kulbhushan Jindiyal condemned the killings as "senseless."

It is the third such incident to involve migrant labour since the outbreak of Muslim insurgency in Kashmir.

Ten workers from Nepal were abducted by masked gunmen on May 5 in Srinagar and shot dead. Separatists killed 11 Hindu labourers in the northern district of Kupwara on July 6.

Gowda seeks six month extension of federal rule over Kashmir

NEW DELHI, July 16: Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda on Monday sought a six-month extension of India's federal rule over Kashmir, but pledged to hold legislative elections in the troubled Himalayan state within two months, reports AFP.

Deve Gowda asked members of the Upper House of parliament, the Rajya Sabha, to approve a six-month extension of presidential rule over Kashmir from July 18.

But the new prime minister promised to restore a democratically elected government to the strife-torn state before the extension expired.

Deve Gowda said free and fair state assembly elections would be organised in Kashmir within two months.

Gore sees chance of peace in Chechnya Rockets hit Yandarbiyev's family house, 10 killed in Grozny

MOSCOW, July 16: A house belonging to parents of Chechen separatist leader Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev in south-eastern Chechnya has been hit by rockets fired by Russian helicopters, ITAR Tass news agency reported today, reports AFP.

It said no one was killed but one person was wounded when six helicopter gunships raided the village of Starye Ataq, 15 kilometres (nine miles) south of Grozny at 8 pm (1600 GMT) Monday, targeting several houses, including one belonging to Yandarbiyev's parents.

Yandarbiyev, the successor of general Dzhokhar Dudayev who was killed last April, had been received by President

Boris Yeltsin last May.

That meeting marked the start of efforts to end the war triggered by a massive Russian military intervention.

Meanwhile at least 10 people were killed on the outskirts of the Chechen capital Grozny when two armoured personnel carriers opened fire on three civilian cars ITAR-Tass news agency reported today.

Reuter adds, US Vice President Al Gore said early this morning there was a "distinct chance" that a cease-fire in Chechnya could be restored within a few days and that a partial withdrawal of Russian troops may take place.

India to take part in talks on new draft of CTBT

NEW DELHI, July 16: India reaffirmed on Monday it wanted to keep open the option for nuclear tests but said it would take part in talks on a new draft of a global nuclear test ban treaty later this month, reports Reuter.

Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral told parliament, India would not sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) because it did not require the five declared nuclear powers to commit to a time-table for nuclear disarmament.

India's demand was a major issue that held up conclusion of the CTBT before a June 28 deadline and which must be resolved when negotiators meet again on July 29 in Geneva.

The United Nations-sponsored conference on disarmament had set itself a deadline of June 28 to wrap up a treaty text for signature at the 51st General Assembly in September.

"For 22 years, we have exercised a policy of unparalleled

restraint and refrained from undertaking additional nuclear tests," Gujral said in a statement. India's only underground test was in 1974.

"Yet, as has been stated in this house by previous governments, we continue to maintain our option so that we are able to take all necessary measures to cope with any threat that may pose to the security of the nation."

Gujral said India was sceptical of a new CTBT draft to be discussed in Geneva but said New Delhi would stay in the talks.

India last year resisted Western pressure to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), saying it allowed the nuclear powers to retain their arsenals while blocking other nations' access to nuclear arms.

"We have never accepted the notion that it can be considered legitimate for some countries to rely on nuclear weapons for their security while denying this right to others," Gujral said.

BRIEFLY

Tornado claims 25 in China: A tornado has devastated six towns in China's eastern Jiangsu province, killing 25 people and injuring more than 600, local officials said yesterday, Reuter reports from Beijing.

The tornado struck the northern part of the province early Monday, with most casualties occurring in rural areas where many poorly built houses collapsed in the winds, a local broadcast official said.

Indian minister resigns: Andhra Pradesh governor, Krishan Kait yesterday accepted the resignations of roads and buildings Minister Ayyana Patrudu and handloom and textiles minister L Ramana, from the cabinet with immediate effect, PTI report from Hyderabad.

The resignations had been accepted by the governor on the advice of the Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, according to a press communique from Raj Bhavan, Patrudu and Ramana, who were elected to the Lok Sabha in the recent elections, had earlier submitted their resignations to the Chief Minister.

Floods claim 10 in Nepal: Incessant rains have claimed at least 10 lives in Nepal and inflicted extensive damage to property, the state-run news agency RSS said Monday, AFP reports from Kathmandu.

"Floods have affected 11 districts in the tropical low-land and hilly regions," it said. Continuous rain has caused flooding in different districts, in which many houses were either swept away or submerged under water.

Strong quake shakes Mexico: A strong earthquake that hit southern Mexico on Monday measured 6.5 on the open-ended Richter Scale, the US National Earthquake Information Service said, Reuter reports from Mexico City.

"We consider it a strong earthquake," Bruce Presgrave, spokesman for the golden, Colorado based outfit told Reuters. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage in the quake, whose epicentre was put 20 miles (32 kms) east of Petalad in the southwestern state of Guerrero. It hit at 4:24 pm local time (2124 GMT).

Algerian newsmen go on strike: Journalists for Algeria's top independent newspapers went on strike Monday to press for the freedom of a cartoonist jailed for poking fun at the flag, AP reports from Algiers.

The independent journalists and editors stayed at home in a one-day protest aimed at persuading the government to release Chawki Amari, a cartoonist for the French-language La Tribune newspaper. Amari was jailed on a charge of "offending the national emblem" for drawing a cartoon of Algeria's July 5 independence day celebrations that depicted Algerian flags on display like underwear in a lingerie shop.

Road mishap kills 17 in Mexico: A bus plunged into a rain-slicked highway in central Mexico early Monday, killing 17 people and injuring 26 others, authorities said, AP reports from Mexico City.

The Televisa news network quoted a police officer as saying the bus apparently was speeding when it ran off an interstate highway 65 miles (100 kilometers) northwest of this capital. The bus plunged down a 25-foot (8-metre) embankment, according to the official Mexican news agency Notimex. The driver was among those killed.

India honours 2 noted writers: Hindi fiction writer, Krishna Sobti, and Sanskrit scholar and writer, Vidya Niwas Misra, were presented the Sahitya Akademi fellowships in New Delhi Monday, PTI reports from New Delhi.

Krishna Sobti, 71, has written a score of novels in Hindi beginning from Dar Se Bichhuri (Separated from the flock) to Dil-o-Danish (heart and mind). Misra, 70, a former chief editor of Navbharat Times and former Vice-Chancellor of Kashi Vidyapeeth, has a number of collections of essays to his credit.

US tourist killed in Egypt: An Egyptian man described as mentally disturbed stabbed and killed a 56-year-old US tourist outside a Cairo hotel on Monday, police said, AFP reports from Cairo.

The woman was stabbed in the back with a knife while standing outside the Semiramis hotel in the downtown area, the police said. The woman was not identified. Police said she died at the scene of the attack.

Benazir to visit South Korea: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto is scheduled to pay her first official visit to the Republic of Korea on July 22-24 at the invitation of South Korean President Kim Yong Sam, the official Associated Press of Pakistan reported yesterday, Xinhua reports from Islamabad.

Benazir will be accompanied by federal ministers, Parliamentarians, senior officials, media representatives and leading Pakistani businessmen on her visit. She is scheduled to have formal talks with Kim Yong Sam and meet heads of South Korean business corporations and leading figures in the fields of commerce, trade and industry.

Blast damages ANC HQs in SA: A small explosion late Monday slightly injured one man and caused minor damage to the national headquarters of the African National Congress, AP reports from Johannesburg.

White rightists set of a car bomb explosion near the same building in downtown Johannesburg in 1994, causing nine deaths and raising concerns historic all-race elections scheduled just days later would be disrupted. But voting was peaceful, and the black-led ANC's victory ended white minority rule in South Africa. Police could not immediately determine a motive or make arrests in Monday's explosion. The ANC said in a statement the blast was caused by a hand grenade.

Cambodia-ROK ties strengthened: Cambodian Second Prime Minister Hun Sen said Tuesday his visit to South Korea has laid the foundation for strong economic ties between the two countries, AP reports from Seoul.

Hun Sen came to Seoul Sunday for a four-day visit, becoming the first high-ranking Cambodian government leader to visit South Korea since the two countries cut off formal diplomatic ties in 1975. In May, the two countries agreed to exchange representative offices as a first step toward establishing full diplomatic relations.

Indian to get Magsaysay award: An Indian philosopher who founded a school of thought that mixes Eastern and Western teachings as an alternative to communism and capitalism will receive this year's Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, AP reports from Manila.

The award body announced Tuesday that Pandurang Shastri Athavale was selected for "tapping the ancient wellsprings of Hindu civilization to inspire spiritual renewal and social transformation in modern India."

3 poisoned to death in Philippines: Three fishermen died and two children were hospitalised after eating puffer fish, a delicacy that can be deadly if incorrectly prepared, police said Tuesday, AP reports from Manila.

Police said the victims fell ill Sunday after eating the fish during a party in the fishing village of Cabusao in Camarines Sur province in Luzon island's southern Bicol region. Cabusao is about 250 kilometres (156 miles) southeast of Manila.

Quake hits Russia: An earthquake measuring 7.3 on the open-ended Richter Scale was recorded off Russia's Kamchatka peninsula this morning, China's Xinhua news agency said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

The earthquake was measured by China's state seismic station in waters to the east of Kamchatka peninsula, at 56.9 degrees north latitude and 165 degrees east longitude, Xinhua said. It hit at 11:48 am Beijing time (0348 GMT). Xinhua quoted the state seismic station as saying.

19 executed in China: Nineteen people have been executed for theft of telecommunication lines since China's "Strike Hard" anti-crime campaign began in April, a news report said Tuesday, AP reports from Beijing.

Theft of communication lines for sale as scrap has seriously disrupted the national system, the legal Daily (Fazhi Ribao) reported.

Judge punished in Canada: A judge who skipped a court hearing to oversee repairs on his car has been suspended for 30 days without pay, AP reports from Manitoba, Canada.

The 1995 incident was one of several which led to misconduct proceedings against Manitoba Provincial Judge Brian Corrin. The punishment, determined by a panel of six judges, was the harshest possible short of removing the 50-year-old Corrin from the bench.



US civic leader Rev. Jesse Jackson (2nd R) shakes hands with a supporter on arrival at Nissan Motor Corporation to meet with Executive Vice President Yoshikazu Kawana Tuesday. Jackson arrived in Japan Saturday for a six-day visit, bringing home to Japanese corporate leaders his campaign against sexual and racial discrimination in Japanese plants in the United States. — AFP/UNB photo

Arafat refuses to meet Netanyahu's envoy

GAZA, July 16: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has refused to meet an envoy from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, PLO officials said on Tuesday.

"Dore Gold telephoned and asked to meet Arafat yesterday but the president refused to meet him," a senior Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) official told Reuters.

Gold is Netanyahu's senior political adviser. Israeli media had said Gold was seeking a meeting with Arafat ahead of the headline Netanyahu's inaugural trip to Egypt on Thursday.

Netanyahu's spokesman said he was checking the report. Gold was not available to comment.

Other PLO officials confirmed the snub. They said Arafat rejected Gold because he did not want to allow Netanyahu to exploit contacts with Palestinians to ease his talks with Egypt's President

Hosni Mubarak.

Netanyahu was elected on May 29. Gold became the first member of his administration to meet Arafat on June 27.

Netanyahu has resisted meeting Arafat himself, despite three years of face to face talks with Arafat by previous Israeli leaders. The right-wing leader did not soften his position when he met peace talks sponsor US President Bill Clinton last week in Washington. Netanyahu returned to Israel on Sunday.

Arab states and the Palestinians have been outraged by his rejection of the principle of trading occupied Arab land for peace, the basis of nearly five years of Middle East peace talks.

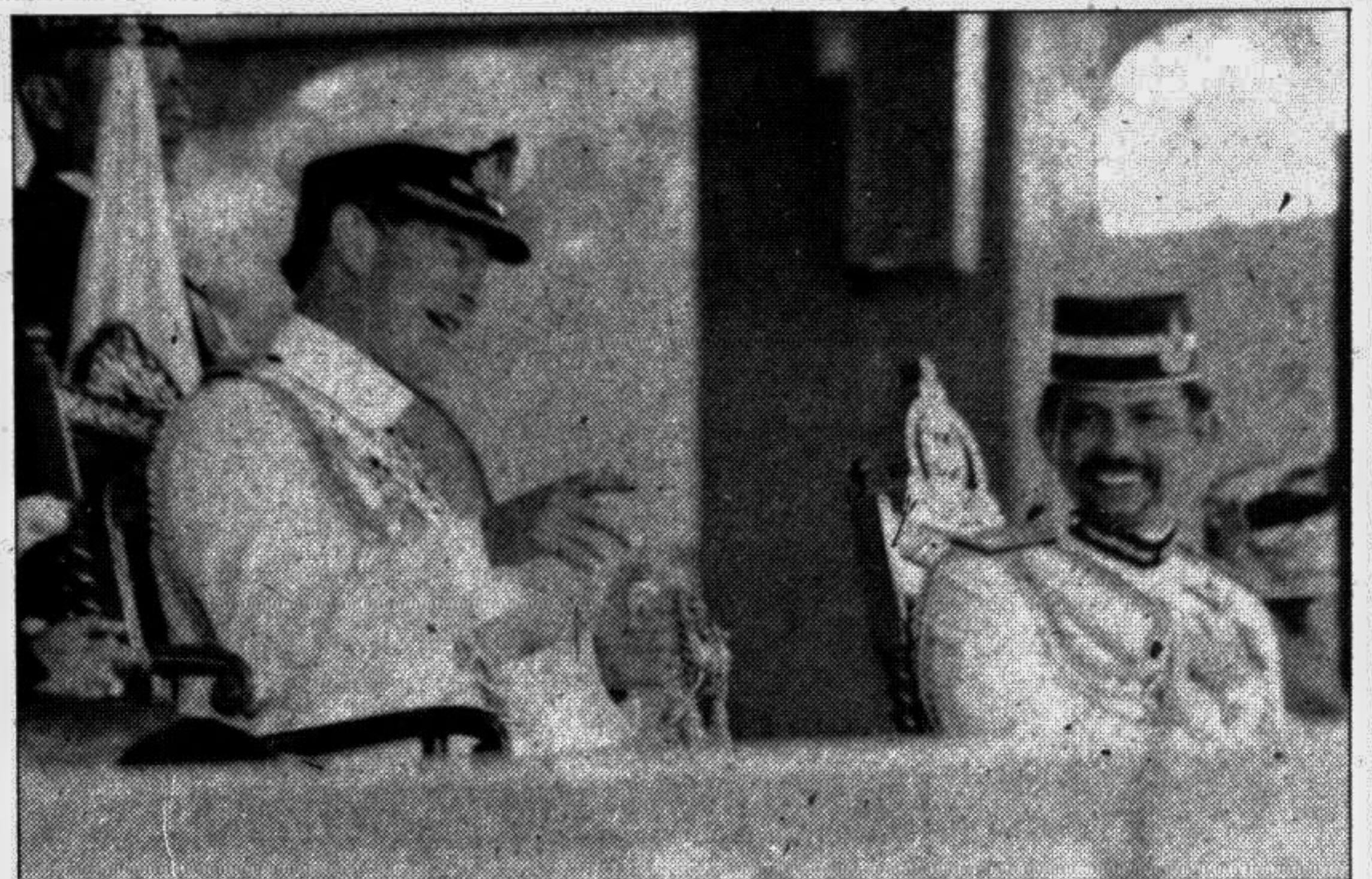
AP adds: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat conceded Monday that he faces difficulties with the new hard-line Israeli government, but said it was too soon to say the peace process is in a crisis.

Arafat, returning to the Gaza Strip from a trip to Cairo, said he and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak had discussed how to push the Middle East peace talks forward "in spite of what we are facing from the other side."

Late Monday, Palestinian sources told the Associated Press that Arafat was meeting with an unnamed Israeli official in his Gaza office. The sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, gave no further details.

Asked to confirm the meeting was taking place, a senior Israeli government source said only: "It is perfectly possible that someone from the prime minister's office is there."

Earlier, Israel TV reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's advisors planned to present Arafat with a list of demands for continuing peace negotiations before Netanyahu leaves for Egypt on Thursday to meet with Mubarak.



Britain's Prince Charles (L) shares a light moment with Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkhiah during a parade to mark the Sultan's 50th birthday, on Monday in Bandar Seri Begawan. The Prince of Wales arrived here on Sunday for a three-day visit in conjunction with the celebrations. — AFP/UNB photo

New cycle of violence threatens peace in Northern Ireland

BELFAST, July 16: David McKnight picked his way past the charred tangle of metal and brick, all that remained of a row of shops destroyed by fellow Protestants last week.

"There has to be a chance still for the peace process to succeed," he said, reports AP.

"But I cannot see what."

After a week of widespread rioting and a car bomb that destroyed a country hotel, many people in Northern Ireland are fearful of a new cycle of violence. The bomb was the first in Northern Ireland since the IRA began a truce in September 1994.

In Londonderry, Catholic priest the Rev Con McLoughlin voiced the same deep pessimism at the funeral of a man killed in rioting.

"Scarcely in 21 years since I have been here have I found people so depressed and sickened even to the point of despair," he said.

Talks on the future of the province resume in Belfast on Tuesday.

Calling the violence "the worst setback for many years," Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew said Monday the British government will meet with all parties at the talks and with the Irish government to try to salvage the

peace process.

Mayhew, Britain's senior official in the province, also announced a review of sectarian marches.

Protestants rioted for four days after the police refused to allow a parade by the Orange Order, the leading Protestant fraternal organisation, to pass through a Catholic neighbourhood in Portadown, 25 miles (40 kms) southwest of Belfast.

When the police capitulated and forced the march through, angry Catholics took to the streets.

There was still no claim of responsibility Monday for the car bomb that devastated a hotel in Enniskillen, 80 miles (130 kms) southwest of Belfast early Sunday after the guests were evacuated.

The Irish Republican Army, which ended its 17-month truce with a bomb in London on February 9, denied responsibility. Its Sinn Fein party allies are barred from talks until the IRA calls a new ceasefire.

Many streets remained littered Monday with the burnt frames of cars, bottles, bricks and twisted traffic signs. In the Catholic Falls Road in Belfast, children gathered around a burned out truck hurled stones at passing traffic.

Catholics accuse the British government of forcing police to give in to the Protestant marchers massed at a church in Drumcree, near Portadown.

"It was a disgrace. That march should never have been allowed," said Angle Boyle, as she left her house beside the

walls of the British Army base at the Falls Road.

"Before Drumcree, I thought the peace process could succeed. Now, there's not a chance," said 15-year-old Siobhan Monaghan, who was shopping in central Belfast.

"I am immigrating to the United States when I am 18 — I can take no more of this."

Many in the Protestant majority already were skeptical about the peace process, believing their interests were being ignored.

"What peace process?" asked David Acheson, as he pulled the metal shutters on his security business near the row of torched shops in Protestant east Belfast. "I don't think there ever was one."

Nearby, second hand dealer John McLoughlin indignantly surveyed the shell of a school and charity shop burned in rioting Friday.

"The police fired thousands of rubber bullets at Catholics. But how many did they use at Portadown? Very few. And they fired into the ground," he said.

"What you saw last week was justified Protestant anger," said Johnny Green, 19, in the fiercely Protestant Shankill Road.

Some optimists remain. "It's a few hotheads who are causing all the trouble. It will all blow over," said pharmacist Ron Wilson, a Protestant.

"You have to hope — and pray," said Ellen McGee, a Catholic from west Belfast. "What else can you do?"

Off the Record

Hunting for charity

WAUSAU, Wisconsin: There are so many deer in the US state of Wisconsin that hunters are being urged to kill an extra one, preferably a doe, and donate the meat to charity, reports AP.

The state says the white tail deer population is out of control in some parts of the state, causing crop damage and contributing to car accidents.

State Rep. John Gard wants to take advantage of that large population. He heads the Hunting for Charity Task Force, a coalition exploring ways to encourage hunters to donate meat to food pantries across the state.

"This is a very large food source that really has gone unrealised in charitable contributions. There is just not a network out there to donate meat right now," he said.

The basic Wisconsin gun hunting license entitles a hunter to one buck, with additional permits available for does. In some overcrowded areas, the state already is requiring hunters to kill a doe before they can bag a buck, prized for their antlers.

There are obstacles to Gard's goals. "There are a lot of people who still won't shoot a doe, which is the goose that laid the golden egg," said hunter Victory Fah, 50, of Ogema.

And not all charities will readily accept wild venison, which is not inspected by the US Department of Agriculture. Second Harvest Food Bank in Milwaukee, for example, has decided the health risk is too great, president Bonnie Bellehumeur said.

He was just trying to help his pupils

ROME: An Italian teacher who handed out salami sandwiches to student sitting an examination has been disciplined — for hiding the answers between the slices of bread, reports Reuter.

Ettore Szokoll, 30, was suspended as an examination supervisor at the Fratelli Calvi High School in Bergamo, northern Italy, for two months on Monday, the Italian news agency ANSA reported.

It said Szokoll, a law teacher, slipped out of the room where students were sitting an electronics test on June 27, got a friend to work out the answers, photocopied them and struck a deal with a bar-keeper to slip them into 15 salami sandwiches.

Another invigilator supervising the examination became suspicious and found the answer sheet inside one of the snacks, ANSA said.

It said Szokoll could face charges of abuse of office and a damages suit from the school.

Szokoll was not available for comment.

Tallers live longer

LONDON: Tall people are likely to have a greater life expectancy than their shorter counterparts, up to a point at least, says a British expert on ageing, reports Reuter.

Bernard Harris told the British Congress of Gerontology which started in Manchester on Wednesday that taller people were likely to live longer and have better health.

"It is quite clear the death rate goes down as height increases," said Harris, of Southampton University. "The fact is there is a long-term relationship between height in childhood and height."

Harris said some research has shown that women aged 40-44 and up to 5 feet 6 inches (1.7 metres) tall had half the mortality rate of women eight inches (20.3 gm) shorter.

"What else can you do?"