

BRIEFLY

Benazir leaves for London: Former Pakistan prime minister Benazir Bhutto left for London Tuesday on a private visit and said she wished her jailed husband could join her for urgently needed medical treatment, AFP reports from Karachi.

Benazir who met with her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, in jail in Karachi on Monday, said he was seriously ill and needed immediate and urgent medical treatment. "I wish that Zardari could go for medical treatment abroad," she said without disclosing the nature of his illness.

SA opposes NATO expansion: South Africa on Tuesday criticised the proposed expansion of NATO as well as enhanced nuclear defence programmes in Europe because they would spread rather than dismantle nuclear materials, Reuters reports from United Nations.

The planned expansion of NATO would entail an increase in the number of non-nuclear weapon states which participate in nuclear training, planning and decision-making and which have an element of nuclear deterrence in their defence policies. South Africa's UN Ambassador KJ Jeje said.



A model wears a woven cap with a multi-coloured sweater at the showing of the Todd Oldham Fall 1997 collection Tuesday in New York. Over 50 designers are showing their latest fall collections in New York through April 11. — AFP/UNB photo

Strong quake shakes Philippines: A fairly strong earthquake jolted the northern Philippines early today but there were no immediate reports of casualties or damage, the State Volcanology Institute said, Reuters reports from Manila.

The tremor struck at about 2 am (1800 GMT) on Tuesday and measured six on the open-ended Richter scale, based on preliminary data, an official at the institute said.

Shuttle Columbia landed: The Space Shuttle Columbia landed in Cape Canaveral yesterday after its mission was cut short because of problems with one of the shuttle's three electricity-producing fuel cells, AFP reports from Florida.

The shuttle glided to a landing at the Kennedy Space Centre in Cape Canaveral, Florida, at 2:30pm (1833 GMT), more than a week early on a planned 16-day mission. The faulty fuel cell had been shut down and posed no threat to the seven-member crew.

Algerian FM arrives in Seoul: Algerian Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf arrived in Seoul Tuesday for a four-day visit aimed at strengthening economic ties, AP reports from Seoul.

Attaf is the highest-ranking Algerian official to visit since the two countries opened diplomatic ties in 1990. He is to meet with Foreign Minister Yoo Chong-ha and sign treaties that increase economic ties and promote culture and technology exchanges. Attaf also is to visit the Daewoo Motor Co plant west of Seoul. Daewoo runs a hotel and car dealership in Algeria.

China blasts US for profiting from wars

BEIJING, Apr 9: China today blasted the United States for profiting from wars and bloodshed around the world, calling it "the world's number-one arms exporter," reports AFP.

"Among the 50 main clashes worldwide in recent years, one or both sides in 45 used American weapons," the official China Daily said in an editorial.

It highlighted Washington's "astonishing sales achievements" in recent years, citing a 55 per cent US share of global arms exports last year, compared to 19.3 and 37.8 per cent in 1981 and 1991, respectively.

"No doubt the weapons exports have brought the United States big bucks," it said, adding that "a fortune" had been made from decades of fighting in the Middle East.

"During clashes between

Iran and Iraq, Uncle Sam did not sit idle ... it sold 23.7 billion dollars worth of weapons to the two countries.

To safeguard its "global interests," the United States has never been bored sticking its nose into others' affairs.

"Its widespread weapons exports are part of this strategy," the editorial said, without detailing the exports' role.

Washington has frequently criticised China in recent years over alleged transfers of technology or components used in weapons of mass destruction to other countries.

US support of international arms-limitation treaties is often portrayed in the Chinese state media as an attempt by an over-armed military power to keep its lead over weaker countries.

US child abuse record high

WASHINGTON, Apr 9: Child abuse and neglect remain at record high levels in the United States, with about one million substantiated cases a year and many more cases going unreported, US officials said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Data from 1995, the most recent available, showed that for the third consecutive year one million children were abused or neglected, half under the age of eight.

About 1,000 children were known to have died from abuse or neglect that year, although the true number could be twice as high.

"Child abuse and neglect continue to be a shameful tragedy in our country, and every one of us has a stake in preventing it," health and human services secretary Donna Shalala said in a statement.

The numbers, however, seem to have levelled off although at an unacceptably high level after four years of steady increase, the Department of Health and Human Services said.

These figures take into account only those cases that have been reported and confirmed, other studies have shown that the actual figure of children abused or neglected may be close to three million a year.

April is national child abuse and neglect prevention month and federal authorities are distributing a bulletin called "promoting prevention."

NAM against selective UNSC expansion

NEW DELHI, Apr 9: The Non-Aligned Movement yesterday warned against any partial or selective expansion or enlargement of the United Nations Security Council, to the detriment of developing countries, reports AFP.

The two-day NAM foreign ministers' conference concluded here adopting a five-point New Delhi Declaration sending a strong message on this critical aspect of the UN reforms.

The NAM package, agreed by the foreign ministers of the 113 nation grouping after a marathon two-day brain storming session, also warned against any effort to decide this issue before general agreement is reached.

The use of veto, the NAM package said, should be curtailed with a view to its eventual elimination. There were divergent views even among the NAM members of this crucial issue. While some favoured its abolition others supported its retention in the present form.

Big five pledge to N-disarmament measures

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 9: The world's five nuclear powers for the first time issued a joint statement pledging their commitment to nuclear disarmament measures, reports AFP.

The statement, backed by Britain, China, France, Russia called to prepare for a conference in the year 2000 which will review progress by the nuclear powers in complying with the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The statement was read to delegates by France's chief delegate to the Geneva conference on disarmament, Joelle Bourgeois, on behalf of the five nations.

Western diplomats said it was the first time that China had agreed to join the other four nuclear powers in such an approach, which aimed to give more weight to the nuclear disarmament process following the NPT's indefinite renewal in May 1995.

Tories slightly narrow Labour's lead

LONDON, Apr 9: Britain's ruling Conservatives have slightly narrowed the opposition Labour Party's commanding lead with 22 days left until the May 1 election, according to the latest opinion polls published today, reports Reuters.

An ICM poll in the Guardian newspaper showed the Conservatives up two points to 34 per cent while the Labour Party was unchanged at 46 per cent since last week. The Liberal Democrats were down two to 15 per cent.

The Labour lead over the Tories is 12 points, the lowest since August 1996, the newspaper said. ICM has consistently shown a narrower Labour lead than other polls.

The figures are adjusted to take account of the suspected unwillingness of some voters to acknowledge their support to the Conservatives, it added.

A Gallup poll in the Daily Telegraph also showed Labour slipping. Its support dropped two points to 51 per cent while backing for the Conservatives was down one to 32 per cent.

Labour's lead over the Tories now stands at 19 per cent, it said, adding that the swing towards Labour since the 1992 election now stands at 13.3 per cent.

Pakistan plans to buy French fighter planes

ISLAMABAD, Apr 9: A Pakistan Air Force (PAF) team is in France discussing the planned purchase of 32 Mirage 2000-5 fighters, PAF chief Air Chief Marshal Abbas Khattak said yesterday, reports Reuters.

He told reporters that Pakistan had asked France to transfer technology with the top-of-the-range jets, seen as an alternative to US F-16s whose sale was blocked by Washington in 1990, owing to suspicions over Pakistan's nuclear programme.

We wanted 85 per cent of the airplane's frame and 50 per cent of avionics (instruments) to be produced in Pakistan, Khattak said. That production would be in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates and Turkey, he added.

France initially agreed to that proposal but later insisted on signing an agreement only for the sale 32 Mirage 2000-5s, Khattak said.

Suu Kyi appeals for int'l action to protect NLD members

BANGKOK, Apr 9: Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has appealed in videotape smuggled from Yangon for strong action by other nations to protect members of her political party from the military government, reports AP.

The tape, seen in Bangkok, was to be played before the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva later Tuesday.

The regime has denied the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights access to the country. Suu Kyi has been under virtual house arrest since November and messages from her have been increasingly rare.

"I put the political rights of



Commission in Geneva later Tuesday.

The regime has denied the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights access to the country. Suu Kyi has been under virtual house arrest since November and messages from her have been increasingly rare.

"I put the political rights of

the National League for Democracy and others working for democracy in Myanmar as the most important item on the agenda of the Human Rights Commission," Suu Kyi said.

The tape was made before a parcel bomb exploded Sunday night at the home of Lt Gen Tin Oo, one of the four most powerful generals of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council. The general's eldest daughter was killed, but he escaped injury.

No one has claimed responsibility for the blast and the government has yet to accuse anyone. Suu Kyi's party espouses political change through non-violent means.

The 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner said her party's rights were of paramount importance because all other democratic political parties operating on a national level in Myanmar already had been crushed by the government.

The NLD won 82 per cent of the vote in a 1990 national election that the military refused to honour. A UN General Assembly resolution that year called on Myanmar's authorities to respect the election results and institute democracy.

Suu Kyi urged the United Nations to see that the resolution was implemented and not to "just regard it as a piece of pa-

per."

Since May 1996, the military government has staged a series of increasingly harsh crackdowns on Suu Kyi's party, arresting hundreds and sentencing many to long prison terms.

Several party members have been forced to resign under threats from the government. Suu Kyi said, and others have been rounded up by the army to be used to carry equipment in battle zones.

"We need maximum attention on what is happening to the NLD," Suu Kyi said, "because it is an indication of how far the authorities are prepared to go to prevent democracy from taking root in Myanmar."

Suu Kyi also urged the Thai government to stop forcing Karen refugees back to Myanmar and to allow the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to help them.

"We would like the Thai government to look upon these refugees with compassion," she said.

More than 15,000 Karens have fled a recent Myanmar army offensive, joining an estimated 70,000 refugees from Myanmar already living in Thailand. The Thai government has refused the UNHCR access to the camps, and has denied forcing anyone back.

Indo-Pak talks end

NEW DELHI, Apr 9: The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan ended talks in New Delhi on Wednesday and Pakistan's negotiator said he was "very satisfied," reports Reuters.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan, flanked by his Indian counterpart, Inder Kumar Gujral, told reporters after a 90-minute breakfast meeting that he was "very satisfied" with the first face-to-face meeting between the two ministers.

Gujral said he hoped the two nations' foreign secretaries, the highest ranking civil servants in the foreign ministries, would meet soon to carry forward peace talks that resumed last month.

"The discussions we were having between Pakistan and India have built the confidence among each other," Khan said.

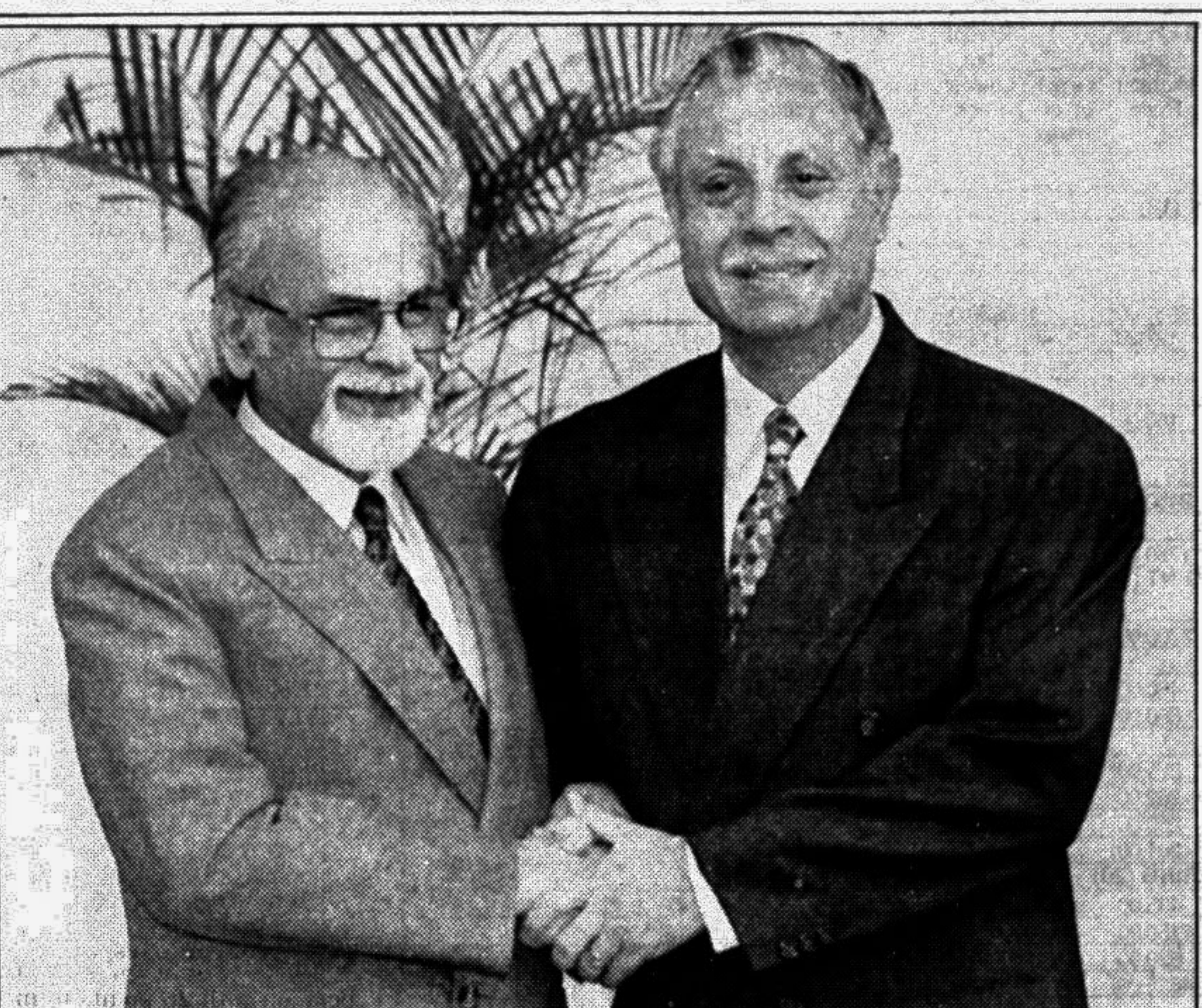
The visiting Pakistani minister, who attended a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement early in the week was expected to return to Islamabad later on Wednesday.

Earlier report said Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Gohar Ayub Khan arrived separately at a former prince's place in the Indian capital for a breakfast meeting expected to last about one hour, authorities said.

Gujral warmly greeted the visiting Pakistani minister, putting his arms around Khan in a hug, and the two men stood hands clasped before photographers ahead of the breakfast talks.

It was the first meeting of the two nations' foreign ministers since the South Asian neighbours resumed high-level talks last month and came during expectations that their prime ministers would meet on the sidelines of a regional summit next month in the Maldives.

On Tuesday, Khan said he would not allow the fresh negotiations to reach a deadlock and was prepared to "talk and talk" until the two sides settled their differences.



Pakistan Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan (R) is greeted by his Indian counterpart Inder Kumar Gujral during the first official talks between the two countries at Hyderabad House in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP/UNB photo

US urged not to ratify global convention to ban chemical arms

WASHINGTON, Apr 9: Four former defence secretaries urged the Senate Tuesday not to ratify a global convention to ban chemical weapons, saying it would afford little, if any, protection against such weapons, reports AFP.

The White House is pressing for ratification of the chemical weapons convention before April 29, when it is due to go into effect whether or not the United States ratifies it.

"It's obvious that it's the right thing to do for the world ... if we don't ratify it then the rest of the world will be forced to treat us like the rouge states ...

and we'll deserve it," President Bill Clinton told reporters Tuesday.

Failure to ratify the treaty would "lessen our credibility ... across the board," Albright told the Senate Foreign Relations committee, headed by Republican Jesse Helms, a staunch foe of the treaty.

But Schlesinger told Senators that "only the threat of effective retaliation" could protect US soldiers in the field as "most nations do not care a fig for international norms."

China blasts US for profiting from wars

BEIJING, Apr 9: China today blasted the United States for profiting from wars and bloodshed around the world, calling it "the world's number-one arms exporter," reports AFP.

"Among the 50 main clashes worldwide in recent years, one or both sides in 45 used American weapons," the official China Daily said in an editorial.

It highlighted Washington's "astonishing sales achievements" in recent years, citing a 55 per cent US share of global arms exports last year, compared to 19.3 and 37.8 per cent in 1981 and 1991, respectively.

"No doubt the weapons exports have brought the United States big bucks," it said, adding that "a fortune" had been made from decades of fighting in the Middle East.

"During clashes between



Speaker of the US House of Representatives Newt Gingrich and Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott pose for photographs before the start of meetings in Capitol Hill in Washington, DC Tuesday. The two met with House and Senate Republican leaders to discuss the budget. — AFP/UNB photo

Netanyahu back from US Violence escalates anew in West Bank

JERUSALEM, Apr 9: Violence escalated to a new pitch on the West Bank as fierce Arab-Israeli clashes underlined the failure of an American effort to revive the peace process, reports Reuters.

Israeli soldiers and settlers shot dead three Palestinians on Tuesday and wounded scores in the bloodiest day of violence since peace moves came to a halt last month over Israel's construction of a new Jewish settlement in Arab east Jerusalem.

Prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, just back from talks in Washington with US President Bill Clinton, insisted peace could still be salvaged, while Palestinians called for action against settlers.

"We condemn these terrorist crimes that were carried out by the Jewish settlers," said PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat after a settler shot dead a 24-year-old Palestinian shopkeeper on the streets of Hebron in the West Bank.

Israeli police said settlers fired their army-issued sub-machineguns after Arabs sprayed them with tear gas and pelted them with stones. Palestinians said the shooting was unprovoked.

"We demand from the Israeli Prime Minister and his gov-

ernment to immediately and firmly condemn this terrorist act and begin collecting arms from settlers," Erekat told Reuters.

Hundreds of Palestinians pour into the streets after the shooting near Israeli-controlled areas of the divided city, battling soldiers for hours with stones and petrol bombs.

Troops fired rubber-coated metal bullets — the army's ammunition of choice for culling riots — to keep the crowd from overrunning Jewish enclaves where about 400 settlers live.

The bullets pierced the skulls of two Palestinians, who died of their wounds. Hospital officials said 103 people were injured in the clashes. The army said six soldiers were lightly hurt.

Clinton declares major disaster in Minnesota

WASHINGTON, Apr 9: President Clinton Tuesday declared a major disaster in Minnesota and ordered federal aid for the areas struck by severe flooding, winter storms, snowmelt, high winds, rain and ice, reports Reuters.

Clinton declares major disaster in Minnesota

WASHINGTON, Apr 9: President Clinton Tuesday declared a major disaster in Minnesota and ordered federal aid for the areas struck by severe flooding, winter storms, snowmelt, high winds, rain and ice, reports Reuters.

Indo-Pak talks end

NEW DELHI, Apr 9: The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan ended talks in New Delhi on Wednesday and Pakistan's negotiator said he was "very satisfied," reports Reuters.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan, flanked by his Indian counterpart, Inder Kumar Gujral, told reporters after a 90-minute breakfast meeting that he was "very satisfied" with the first face-to-face meeting between the two ministers.

Gujral said he hoped the two nations' foreign secretaries, the highest ranking civil servants in the foreign ministries, would meet soon to carry forward peace talks that resumed last month.

"The discussions we were having between Pakistan and India have built the confidence among each other," Khan said.

The visiting Pakistani minister, who attended a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement early in the week was expected to return to Islamabad later on Wednesday.

Earlier report said Indian Foreign Minister Inder Kumar Gujral and his Pakistani counterpart Gohar Ayub Khan arrived separately at a former prince's place in the Indian capital for a breakfast meeting expected to last about one hour, authorities said.

Gujral warmly greeted the visiting Pakistani minister, putting his arms around Khan in a hug, and the two men stood hands clasped before photographers ahead of the breakfast talks.

It was the first meeting of the two nations' foreign ministers since the South Asian neighbours resumed high-level talks last month and came during expectations that their prime ministers would meet on the sidelines of a regional summit next month in the Maldives.

On Tuesday, Khan said he would not allow the fresh negotiations to reach a deadlock and was prepared to "talk and talk" until the two sides settled their differences.

Off the Record

Bumper baby!

BEIJING: A Chinese mother in central Henan province has given birth to a bumper baby who was the same size as an 18-month-old toddler, the China Daily reported Tuesday, says AFP.

The huge baby, weighing nine kilograms (19 pounds, 13 ounces) and measuring 70 centimetres (28 inches) long was born by caesarean section on March 31.

"He was as big as an 18-month-old infant, but there was nothing abnormal about him," said doctor Li Xiao, head of obstetrics at the Queshan country hospital in Henan province.

"However, he does eat a lot. His mother doesn't have enough milk for him," Li added.

The mother, Li Mao, said she ate nothing special during the pregnancy, although she was always very hungry.

British etiquettes seen vanishing in HK

HONG KONG: "Sir" and "Honourable" are likely to vanish in the etiquette of post-colonial Hong Kong, according to a leading arbiter of high-society manners in the British colony, reports AP.

Hong Kong's new Chinese masters will probably prefer "Mr." "Mrs." or even "Comrade," says the monthly Hong Kong Tatler in its latest issue.

"With the dawning of a new era and the end of British sovereignty, there will be new faces on the scene and Chinese customs and etiquette will undoubtedly carry more weight," writes social editor Ong Chin Hui.

"What happens to British protocol after June 30 is, at time of writing, unclear," he says.

In any period of flux there is a danger that standards may slip and conventions fly in the face of a brash new order.

Ong apparently is counting on "the British model of etiquette" to go on underpinning Hong Kong's tycoon-driven season of gala receptions, charity balls and dinner parties.

The ground rules won't change, according to the Tatler: reply promptly to invitations, turn off cellular phones at dinner parties, cover the mouth when using a toothpick.

But Hong Kong society must also be ready for changes in protocol, Ong writes.

Mainland Chinese "appear to eschew honourable mentions and are referred to as plain Mr. or, more rarely in the new era, Comrade," he says.

The British governor, until his departure on June 30, remains "His Excellency, The Right Honourable Christopher Patten," while his successor, a Hong Kong shipping magnate, will be addressed as "The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Mr Tung Chee-hwa."

Members of the legislature and the governing Executive Council will cease to be "honourable," and "Plain Mr, Mrs, or Miss will do."

China has promised that as a special administrative region, or SAR, Hong Kong will be highly autonomous and keep its legal system, freedoms and capitalist economy.

US child abuse record high Immigration to play a lesser role in US population growth

WASHINGTON, Apr 9: Child abuse and neglect remain at record high levels in the United States, with about one million substantiated cases a year and many more cases going unreported, US officials said on Tuesday, reports Reuters.

Data from 1995, the most recent available, showed that for the third consecutive year one million children were abused or neglected, half under the age of eight.

About 1,000 children were known to have died from abuse or neglect that year, although the true number could be twice as high.

"Child abuse and neglect continue to be a shameful tragedy in our country, and every one of us has a stake in preventing it," health and human services secretary Donna Shalala said in a statement.

The numbers, however, seem to have levelled off although at an unacceptably high level after four years of steady increase, the Department of Health and Human Services said.

These figures take into account only those cases that have been reported and confirmed, other studies have shown that the actual figure of children abused or neglected may be close to three million a year.

April is national child abuse and neglect prevention month and federal authorities are distributing a bulletin called "promoting prevention."

WASHINGTON, Apr 9: Immigration will play a less important role in US population growth in future years as the number of immigrants coming to this country remains constant while the overall native-born population greatly expands, according to the US Census Bureau, reports AP.

The US population is projected to balloon to 394 million in 2050 from 263 million in 1995, but immigration into the United States will hold steady at 820,000 immigrants per year, according to Robert Perkins, a mathematician at the Census Bureau's Population Projections Branch.

The effects of immigration are going to be less and less bas-

sically because the Hispanic and Asian-Pacific populations (already) in the United States will continue to grow," Perkins said.

Perkins also said that by 2005, Hispanics will surpass blacks as the largest minority group in the country. Hispanics, he said, will comprise 12.6 per cent of the population and the black population 12.4 per cent.

Quoting statistics from a new Census Bureau report called "How We're Changing, Demographic State of the Nation: 1997," Perkins said that by 2050 Hispanics will account for about a quarter of the total population and will outnumber blacks, Native Americans, and Asians combined. Asians, who now account for about 3.5 per cent of the total population, will make up 8.2 per cent in 2050.

Hispanics, Perkins said, are growing the fastest because they have both the highest fertility rate and the greatest numbers of immigrants, and also because their average age is the youngest of the minority groups, and therefore they will have the lowest mortality rate among all population groups.

Perkins said these projections "only stand if the population trends of the past continue in the future." The statistics do not take into account, for example, a new immigration law that went into effect April 1 which toughens the rules on aliens trying to enter or stay in this country.

The Census Bureau notes, meanwhile, that non-Hispanic whites, who currently represent nearly three-quarters of the population, will account for less than 61 per cent of the population by 2030 and just slightly over half in 2050.

The Census Bureau report estimated about 23 million foreign-born persons lived in the United States in 1995, representing 8.8 per cent of the US population or one in 11 persons, up from 4.8 per cent in 1970. However, the report said a much greater proportion of the

US population was foreign born during the early part of the 20th century. The report said the per cent of foreign born reached a high of 14.7 per cent in 1970.

The report said more than one quarter — 6.7 million — of the total foreign-born population in 1995 came from Mexico. The Philippines was the country of origin of the second-largest group, with one million people born there. Over half a million foreign-born persons came from each of the following countries: Canada, China, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Jamaica, Korea, Germany, Great Britain, and Poland.

California had the largest foreign-born population of any state in the United States in 1995, with over 7.7 million persons, or one-quarter of all California residents. New York ranked second in the number of foreign born with three million. Other states with large numbers of foreign born include Texas with 2.1 million, Florida with two million, New Jersey with 1.1 million, and Illinois with one million.

Among the foreign born in 1995, 68 per cent were white, 7.1 per cent were black, and 18.4 per cent were from Asia and the Pacific Islands. Nearly half (46.4 per cent) of all foreign-born persons were of Hispanic origin.