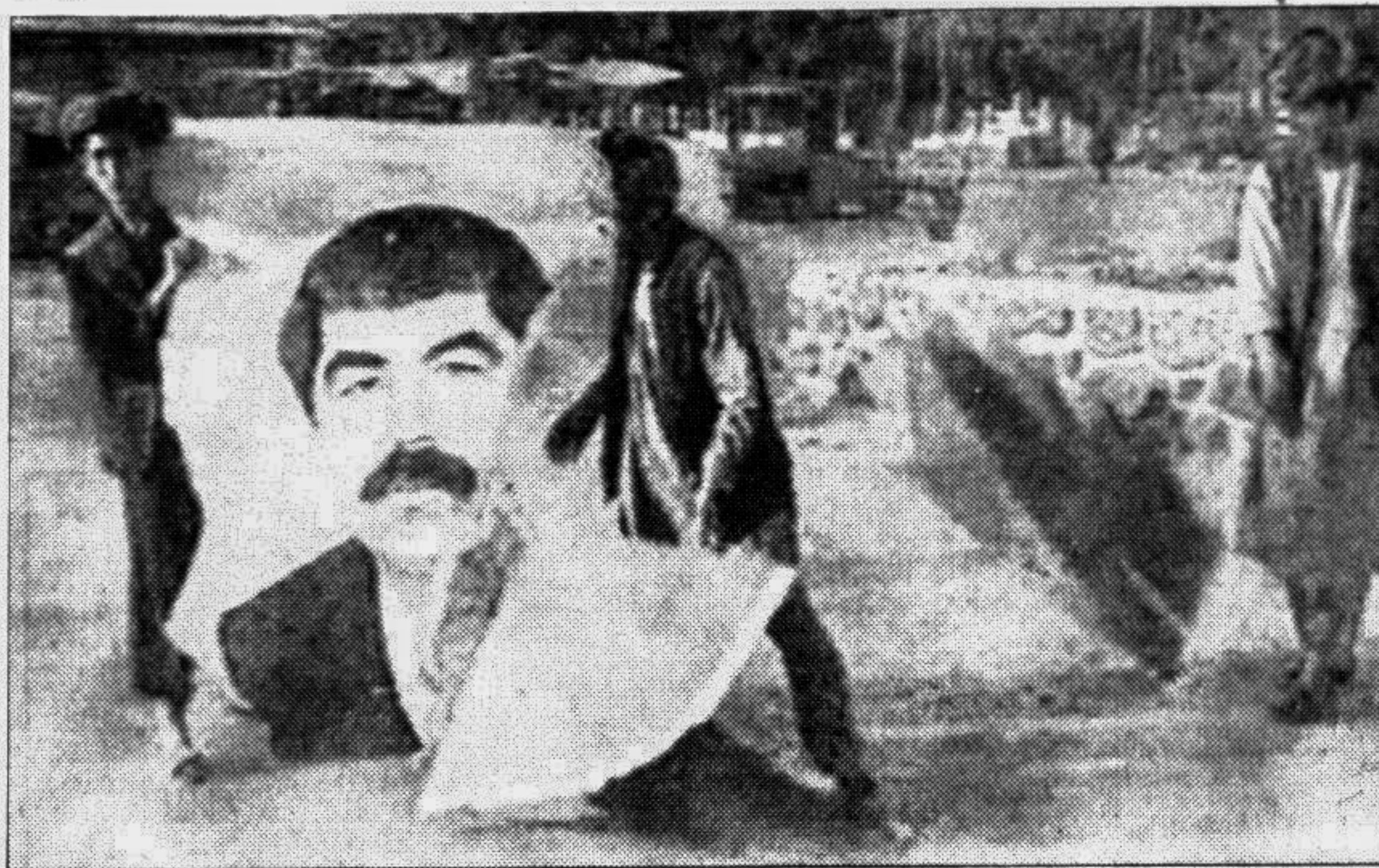


CARE suspends programme as aid workers beaten up

Taliban impose strict Islamic law in newly conquered areas

MAZAR E-SHARIF, Afghanistan, May 26: Thousands of turbaned Taliban soldiers brandishing their weapons began enforcing strict Islamic law in this newly conquered corner of Afghanistan Monday, warning foreign aid agencies to keep their workers indoors, reports AP.



Three men tear off a poster of warlord general Abdul Rashid Dostum, Saturday in Mazar-e-Sharif, northern Afghanistan. Taliban fighters and soldiers of the Afghan faction leader Abdul Malik took control of the city Saturday. Dostum fled to Turkey with his close aides and guards, hours after pro-Taliban forces captured his former stronghold. — AFP/UNB photo

and beaten with sticks, the agency said Monday. CARE said it was suspending a programme to feed widows in the Afghan capital until it received a guarantee from the Taliban that its workers will be protected.

These women work to monitor a feeding programme which caters to 10,000 widows in Kabul. They have a written authorisation from the Taliban to carry out a monitoring survey and work for the programme, said Paul Barker, the CARE director for Afghanistan, speaking from Peshawar, Pakistan. In Mazar-e-Sharif, an aid agency said one of its workers was driven off the streets and warned to stay indoors, in the first overt act here against the international groups since the Taliban seized control of this northern city on Saturday.

Kabila meets US, UK envoys

KINSHASA, May 26: The new strongman in Kinshasa, Laurent Kabila met the ambassadors of the United States and Britain at the weekend, the state-run television announced Sunday, reports AFP.

US Ambassador Daniel Simpson congratulated Kabila on his "total victory" and for having overturned the "32-year dictatorship" of former president Mobutu Sese Seko, the television of the Democratic Republic of the Congo-formerly Zaire said.

At Saturday's meeting, Simpson also praised the "soft-landing" of Kabila's forces when they entered Kinshasa, the report said. British High Commissioner Marcus Hope met Kabila after Simpson and delivered to him a message from Prime Minister Tony Blair, contents of which were not disclosed, the television said.

French Ambassador Michel Rougnon officially requested an audience with Kabila last week but has not yet been given an appointment.

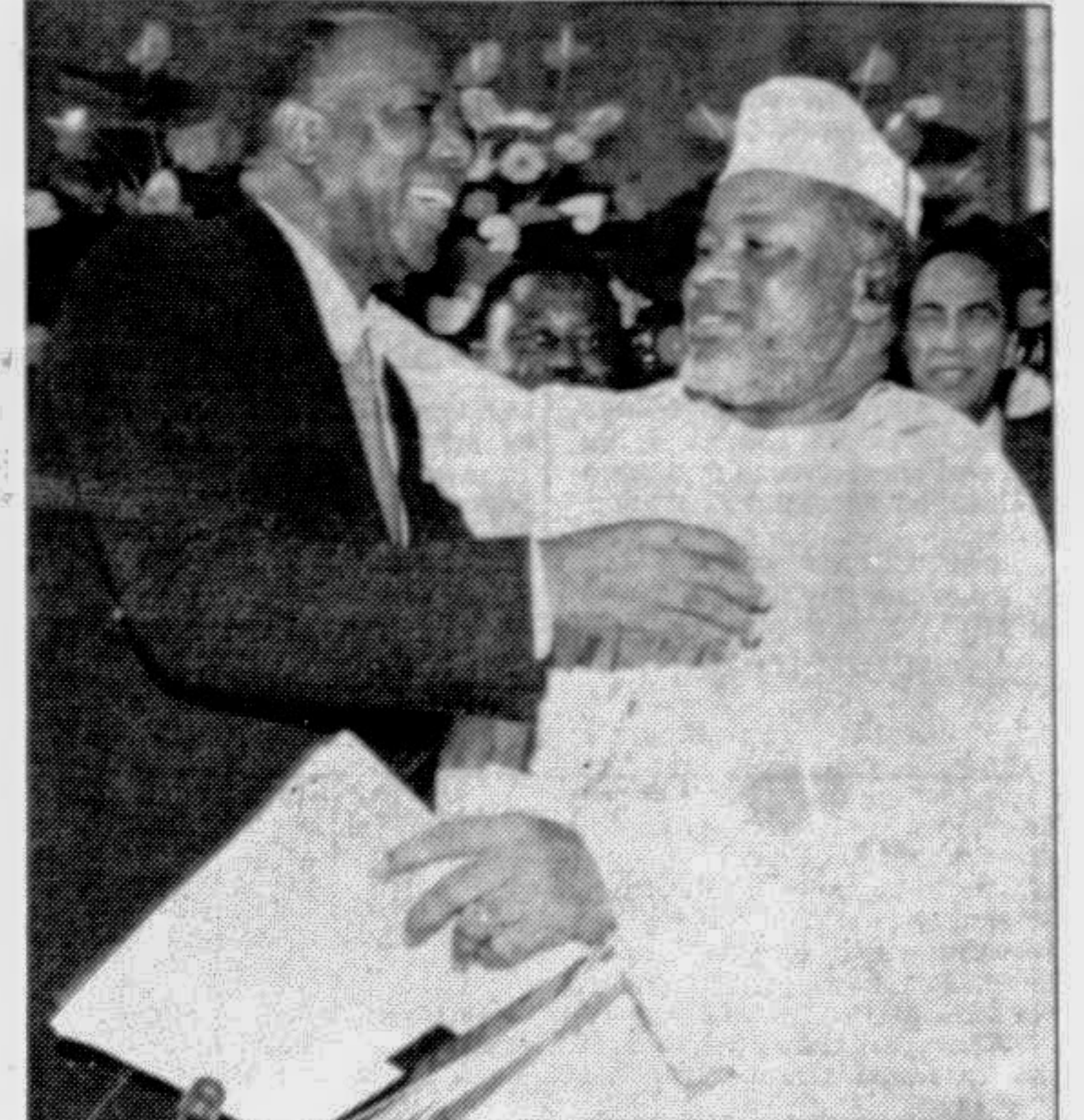
Annan criticises coup in Sierra Leone

UNITED NATIONS, May 26: Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Sunday criticised the coup in the west African country Sierra Leone, where the United Nations had been trying to the country recover from five years of civil war, reports AP.

Rebellious soldiers claimed control over Sierra Leone after seizing the legislature and burning the national treasury. The elected President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah reportedly fled to neighbouring Guinea.

In a statement Sunday, the United Nations said Annan was "distressed" to hear of the coup. The statement said Annan was especially concerned over reports that UN offices in Freetown had been looted and local UN staffers detained. No further details on those incidents were available. The United Nations and the international community firmly uphold the principle that the will of the people shall be the basis for the authority of government and that governments democratically elected shall not be overthrown by force, the statement said.

the government of the SLPP (Sierra Leone People's Party, led by Ahmad Tejan Kabbah) because of its failure to consolidate the gains purported to have been achieved by the brokers of peace in our motherland," Koroma said in his broadcast, without elaborating. He said the "military feared the disintegration of Sierra Leone into factional conflicts". He accused Kabbah's government of "nurturing sectional and tribal conflict".



Former Sierra-Leonean president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah (L) and rebel leader Foday Sankoh hug each other in this file photo taken November 30, 1996 in Abidjan, after signing a long-awaited peace accord that ended more than five years of civil war in the West African nation. Kabbah was overthrown Sunday in a military coup d'etat, as Sankoh said he was "still studying the situation." — AFP/UNB photo

Generals summon Turkish president

ANKARA, Turkey, May 26: Top generals summoned Islamic Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan Monday to discuss ways of curbing radical Islam and expelling pro-Islamic officers from the army, reports AP.

Newspapers said Erbakan, who has angered the military with his Islamisation policies, was headed for another confrontation with the military, who have asked him to retract his Islam-oriented policies and take measures to protect secularism.

Taiwan mobilises warships to monitor protests near disputed island

TAIPEI, May 26: Taiwan has mobilised warships and an early warning surveillance plane to monitor the protest by some 200 ethnic Chinese activists in waters near the disputed Diaoyu-Senkaku island group, sources said today, reports AFP.

Iran slams Turkish incursion in northern Iraq

TEHRAN, May 26: Iran on Sunday condemned the Turkish incursion in northern Iraq and called on Ankara to withdraw its troops immediately and unconditionally, reports AFP.

Chirac in danger of losing election gamble

PARIS, May 26: President Jacques Chirac is in danger of losing his election gamble, but it's not over yet, reports AP. Despite his conservative coalition's setback in Sunday's first-round parliamentary elections, the second round next week is still a wide-open race.

riding a wave of voter anger over France's record 12.8 per cent jobless rate. But the campaign is still hotly contested because few candidates won seats outright in the 577-seat National Assembly, which had been 80 per cent controlled by Chirac's coalition. Many candidates face a tough second round on June 1.

Search for Indonesian riot victims resumes

BANJARMASIN, Indonesia, May 26: Rescue teams resumed the grisly search on Monday for people burned to death when arsonists set a shopping mall on fire during a pre-election riot on Borneo island, reports AP.

US, UN extend support for next round of Indo-Pak talks

ISLAMABAD, May 26: The Pakistani Foreign Minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, has said both the Clinton administration and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan extended their full support for the next round of foreign secretaries level talks in Islamabad beginning from June 19, reports FTI.

Russian sensitiveness to Indian security may seal fate of Kiev-Islamabad arms deal

Russian sensitiveness to Indian security concerns may have sealed the fate of Ukraine's deal to supply sophisticated tanks to Pakistan, according to defence experts Moscow. They say that even Islamabad is now threatening to review the \$650 million contract after discovering that the T-80Us it had received in the first lot were outdated weapon systems.

Plane crash claims 6 in US

A skydiving plane crashed in a field of sugar beets Sunday, killing a pilot and five skydivers. One skydiver jumped out before the crash and safely floated to the ground, AP reports from Miami. Daryl Martin, a pilot who was fishing nearby, looked up when he heard what he thought was a plane with engine trouble and saw an aircraft spiraling to the ground. "One person jumped from the airplane before it went down," Martin told the MSNBC television network.

Road mishap claims 16 in India

Three trucks collided on a highway in northwestern India on Monday, killing at least 16 people and injuring another 22, Press Trust of India news agency said, AP reports from New Delhi. Four of the injured were hospitalised in serious condition, police said. Those killed were local commuters. The collision occurred near Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan state, 250 kilometres (155 miles) south of New Delhi.

Rains kill 14 in Philippines

Founding rains and strong winds killed at least 14 people in the Philippines and forced the government, stock market and schools to shut down, officials said Monday, AP reports from Manila.

Chopper crash kills 2 in India

Two crew members were killed when an Indian helicopter plunged into the sea while attempting to rescue an injured employee at an oil drilling vessel off Bombay, authorities said yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

2 armymen, 2 rebels killed in Mexico

Two Mexican army sergeants and two fighters from the Popular Revolutionary Army rebel force were killed in a skirmish in the southern state of Guerrero, an army spokesman said Sunday, AP reports from Mexico City.

Three army doctors were wounded in the shootout between leftist rebels and a contingent of soldiers traveling towards a military base in the state capital of Chilpancingo.

Australian PM apologises to aborigines

MELBOURNE, May 26: Australian Prime Minister John Howard made an unexpected personal apology today to tens of thousands of aborigines forcibly removed from their parents under a past government policy of assimilation, reports Reuter.

N-power to desalinate sea water

A growing shortage of fresh water for the world's increasing population has countries look keenly at the option of using nuclear power to desalinate sea water. An international meeting is to be held in Taejon in South Korea next week to discuss how best the problem of short supply of fresh water can be solved by using nuclear energy.

A woman in Kinshasa exchanges Zairean money, mainly for dollars, Sunday in a street called Wall Street. The exchange rate is fixed in the street. The new government has to put up with money carrying the effigy of ousted president Mobutu Sese Seko until they print their own money. — AFP/UNB photo