#### Taliban fight street battles with Shi'ites in Mazar-i-Sharif

MAZAR-I-SHARIF, Afghanistan, May 28: The Taliban Islamic militia fought fierce street battles with Shi'ite Muslims through the night and this morning in this newly conquered northern Afghan town, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Rival factions traded small arms and machine gun fire and explosions from heavier

weapons shook Mazar-i-Sharif. The fighting erupted on Tuesday afternoon when the purist Taliban sent a column of tanks and armoured personnel carriers into the northern Saidabad district, inhabited by Shi'ite Muslim Hazaras.

Witnesses said armed Shi'ites fought the Taliban

parties banned in Sierra Leone FREETOWN, May 28: The

new military ruler in Sierra Leone, Major Johnny Paul Koroma, on Tuesday night suspended the country's 1991 constitution and banned all political parties "until further notice," reports AFP.

Speaking on state radio, Koroma also said, "As from now on, all legislation will be by military decrees.

"We shall soon publish a timetable for a return to democracy after free and fair elections but we don't want any democracy that is based on tribalism and regionalism." He said in a first policy address since the army seized power here on Sunof spending more money on lo-cal civil defence units than on

the regular army. He said the former government had been "treating the welfare of the Kamajors (the local civil defence unit) more seriously than the army."

According to Koroma, the deposed civilian government claimed to have spent between 200,000 and 250,000 dollars on the armed forces every month which was "not reflected in the status of the ordinary soldiers."

"The Kamajors on the other hand got 350,000 dollars which did not include logistics." On the press law, Koroma said the civilian government

"had intended to use it to wipe out freedom of a expression." "As far as we are concerned, the press has a right to operate

Koromah, seized power in Sierra Leone on Sunday, forc-ing elected President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to flee to Guinea. "The United States con-

Constitution suspended, political

freely according to the laws of the land," he said. threw Sierra Leone's first democratically elected govern-ment in three decades," Dinger Meanwhile, the United States condemned the military

International

Despite the turmoil, the State Department said there were no reports of casualties among the 38 Americans at the US Embassy in Freetown or the estimated 40 others, most of whom work as missionaries throughout the country.

"There are no plans at the moment to evacuate Americans at this time,' Dinger said, but he added that contingency planning was under way.

US diplomats in Freetown met with Koromah on Sunday to underscore their concerns for the safety of foreigners and to urge him to return authority to the elected leadership.

#### US, DPRK to resume missile talks in June

WASHINGTON, May 28: The United States and North Korea have rescheduled for June 11-13 talks on dealing with American concerns over Pyongyang's transfer of missile technology to Iran and Syria, officials said Tuesday, reports AP.

The talks were to have been held two weeks ago but North Korea postponed them for tech-

nical reasons. "The talks will address North Korean missile prolifera tion activities, which are of great concern to the United States." State Department spokesman John Dinger said.

The American side will headed by Robert Einhorn, a deputy assistant secretary. North Korea will be led by Li Hyon Chol, director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The talks are a follow-up to an initial round held in Berlin in April 1996. The discussions will be held in New York.

The agenda is expected to in-clude reports that North Korea is preparing to deploy long-range Rodong I missiles that may be capable of hitting South Korea and much of Japan.

According to US officials, North Korea has sold longrange Scud missiles to Iran and

In last year's first round meeting in Berlin, the United States sought a freeze on North Korean missile exports and production.

The United States wants North Korea to join an international agreement to restrict exports of such weapons.

#### Sharif's approval rating drops

ISLAMABAD, May 28: Only 36 per cent of Pakistanis think Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is doing a good job, compared to 62 per cent who gave him a thumbs up after he first took office in February, according to a survey released Wednesday, reports AP.

A Gallup Survey on Sharif's first hundred days in office found that many Pakistanis are confident his government will turn around the laggard economy, but worry about increasing sectarian violence.

In a poll conducted March 30, two weeks after Sharif took office, only 3 per cent thought he was doing a bad job.

But in the May 15 poll, 18 per cent gave him a negative rating. Nevertheless, almost 50 per cent of Pakistanis surveyed believed Sharif's administration would be able to turn around the economy within the next five years. Only 20 per cent were

pessimistic. Sharifs government is battling a staggering external debt of more than 32 billion dollars, high unemployment and rampant corruption in the public

A majority of Pakistanis said they supported a strong line against graft, with 73 per cent favoring immediate dismissal of corrupt officials.

#### UNDCP, AKDN sign cooperation accord

Prince Aga Khan, the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslims, and Giorgio Giacomelli, Under Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), signed a cooperation agreement between the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and the Vienna-based United Nations Programme recently in the French city of Aiglemont Gouvieux, according to a press re-

UNDCP helps countries find innovative ways of controlling the supply of and demand for

For decades the AKDN has been involved in social and economic development initiatives in more than 20 countries of sub-Saharan Africa and South West and Central Asia", said the Aga Khan.

"UNDCP is extremely pleased to sign this agreement with the Aga Khan Development Network. Partnership with effective private organisations, such as the AKDN, is essential to the success of our important mission", said Gia-

comelli. The Aga Khan Development Network comprises agencies with specific mandates that range from the fields of health and education to the built environment, rural development and the promotion of private - AFP/UNB photo sector enterprise.

> band permission for permanent contraceptive methods, the re-

> countries have been hindered in implementing population programmes by a shortage of funds and trained personnel, the report said.

The UN conference agreed to spend dlrs 17 billion a year on population by 2000, but Wednesday's report said the annual global expenditure is still

"well below half" that figure.

Western donors are expected to pay one-third and developing nations two-thirds.

oping countries are prepared to commit the resources needed to meet the goals" set by the Cairo conference, the report said. "The question remains whether richer nations are prepared to

## Off the Record



A file photo taken May 6, 1994 shows former Arkansas state employee Paula Jones giving a press conference in Washington. The Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that Jones, who brought a sexual harassment case against US President Bill Clinton, can sue him while he is still in office. Jones is seeking 700,000 US dollars in compensatory and punitive damages from Clinton, who she says sexually harassed her when he was governor of Arkansas in 1991. - AFP/UNB photo

#### Drop your shields, men

MBABANE, Swaziland: Drop your shields, men. Citing Biblical law, a traditional chief in this mountain kingdom has banned the use of condoms, reports AP. Health authorities were shocked by his action, which con-

tradicted their efforts to encourage condom use to prevent the spread of the AIDS-causing HIV virus and other sexually transmitted diseases. Chief Jameson Ndznatabantfu Maseko, of the Ekhupeleni

area in northern Swaziland, said using condoms misuses and wastes a man's reproductive fluid, the independent Times of Swaziland reported Monday. But he was not opposed to woman using contraceptive pills. Addressing hundreds of his subjects at his village Sunday

said condom use violated God's laws as stated in the Old Testa-The chief did not say how he hoped to monitor the sex lives of his subjects but instructed that anyone using or being forced

during a visit by Health Ministry field officers, Chief Maseko

to use condoms be reported to him immediately. Health Ministry principal secretary Myekani Vilakati said if reports were correct, the AIDS and family planning programmes would have to start all over again - this time by eduction cating the country's traditional leaders.

#### Pop music king pops into Warsaw

WARSAW, Poland: Michael Jackson buzzed over Warsaw in a helicopter Tuesday, reportedly scouting sites for an amusement park he's thinking of building in the Polish capital, reports AP.

Straight after getting off his private plane at the Warsaw military airport, Jackson, wearing sun-glasses despite the rain, went straight to a waiting chopper to view potential investment

The head of the State Agency of Foreign Investment, Waldemar Dabrowski, said Monday that the deal, if realised, could be worth more than dlrs 100 million.

He is scheduled to meet Poland's First Lady, Jolanta Kwasniewska, Wednesday to discuss the investment, the presidential press office said.

the exhaust fumes, toured the historic Wilanow Royal Castle and visited one of Warsaw's leading secondary schools. Jackson was to leave for Germany on Wednesday to prepare for a concert Saturday in Bremen.

Later Tuesday, the pop star, equipped with a mask against

#### Cheese rolling competition

LONDON: At least 18 people were injured, some seriously, in an annual cheese rolling competition in the English countryside, paramedics said on Tuesday, reports AFP.

A record crowd of 4,000 turned out Monday to watch the Cooper's hill cheese rolling contest near Gloucester, central England, in which competitors race each other while rolling huge cheeses down a steep hill.

Most seriously injured was a man in the crowd who tried to avoid a bouncing eight pound (3.6 kilogram) double Gloucester

cheese as it went off course. He lost his balance and went head over heels about 100 feet (30 meters) down the hillside. Paramedics said he had suffered a potentially serious head

Of the 17 other casualties, ambulance workers said six more

were spectators. One of the winners of the four races, 21-year-old postman Craig Carter, of Brockworth, near Gloucester, reached the finishing post despite breaking his left arm as he tumbled down

Three years ago, when he last won a race, he broke his right

#### Hunt for flying bills

SEOUL: A construction worker angered by bribe-taking politicians dumped the equivalent of thousands of dollars in front of Seoul's City Hall Tuesday, causing a massive traffic jam as hundreds of people scrambled for the bills, reports AP. "Politicians promise to work for the country, but once

elected, they turn into liars and thieves," Kim Nam-shik wrote on the fliers he tossed out a 27th -floor window of the President Hotel along with 3.7 million won (dlrs 4,100) of his own money. Kim, 36, was arrested on charges of trespassing and violating traffic codes. Police said they have been able to recover 80,000 won (dlrs 89) of the money.

As bills floated down, drivers and passengers got out of their cars to join pedestrians running after the money, causing a massive traffic jam at the busy intersection.

Last week, President Kim Young-sam's son, Kim Hyun-chul, was arrested on charges of collecting dirs 3.6 million in bribes. His arrest came in a four-month investigation into a bribes-forloans scandal surrounding the bankruptcy of Hanbo Steel Industry Co.

Robot in brain surgery

BEIJING: Scientists have developed China's first robot capable of performing brain surgery, and the mechanical man has passed the technical assessment, reports Xinhua.

Combining robotics technology, the robot was jointly developed by the Robot Institute associated with Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and the general hospital of the navy of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. Scientists say the robot is capable of precision surgical techniques, can work in a shorter period of time, and does not use general anesthesia.

On May 5, the PLA hospital successfully carried out a brain operation using the newly-developed robot to remove a tumor from the crainopharyngeal canal of a nine-year-old. The patient was discharged from hospital on May 12.

#### He accused the former civilian government of elected forces who were being attacked. | President Ahmad Tejan Kabban Lankan warships kill 21

COLOMBO, May 28: Sri Lankan warships and aircraft sank seven boats in a Tamil rebel convoy Wednesday carrying hundreds of fighters to reinforce rebel defenses against a major army offensive. At least 21 guerillas were killed, mili-

tary officials said, reports AP. The boats were destroyed in a battle off the Kokkilai Beach in the northeastern district of Mullaittivu, the military officials said on condition of

anonymity. Most of the ships carrying troops escaped, and the rebel fighters landed on a nearby beach, the officials said.

There were no casualties on

the government side in the clash 255 kilometres (155 miles) northeast of Colombo, the Sri Lankan capital. A major battle of the 14-year civil war was shaping up for control of a key highway that

About 20,000 soldiers are fighting for control of the 88kilometres (55-mile) highway from Vavuniya to Killinochchi, which would open a land route from the government-con-

has been under rebel control for

Tigers in sea battle trolled south through rebel territory to the northern tip of Sri Lanka on the Jaffna Peninsula. Tanks, jet bombers, helicopter gunships and artillery

are supporting the army's ad-The military says if has lost 89 soldiers since the offensive began May 13. Another 145 soldiers were wounded. The military claims at least 230 rebels have been killed, which

the guerillas say is exaggerated. The convoy of boats was taking hundreds of guerillas from

the eastern Batticaloa district

#### Kabila to be sworn in as president today

KINSHASA, May 28: Laurent Kabila will be sworn in Thursday as President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, his Interior Minister Wenze Kongolo announced today on national

television, reports AFP. The swearing-in ceremony would take place at the parliament, he said.



coup in Sierra Leone Tuesday

but said it had no immediate

plans to evacuate some 438

Americans currently in the

power in Freetown to return au-

thority promptly to the coun-

try's elected leadership and Par-

liament." State Department

tionary Council (AFRC), under

the leadership of Major Johnny

The Armed Forces Revolu-

spokesman John Dinger said.

"We call upon those claiming

West African country.

The presidents of the three ex-Soviet Baltic republics and Poland and Ukraine, (L-R) Lennart Meri (Estonia), Guntis Ulmanis (Latvia), Algirdas Brazauskas (Lithuania), Aleksander Kwasniewski (Poland) and Leonid Kuchma (Ukraine), shake hands after holding a summit in Tallinn Tuesday. The presidents urged NATO on Tuesday to keep its doors open after admitting a first wave of new members in July. Their summit took place as NATO leaders and Russian President Boris Yeltsin signed a cooperation accord in Paris, effectively clearing away Moscow's bitter opposition to its Cold War foe's expansion.

- AFP/UNB photo

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**UAE** recognises Taliban regime: The United Arab Emirates on Tuesday recognised the Taliban Islamic fundamentalistiregime in Afghanistan. The third country to do so after Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the official news agency WAM said, AFP reports from Abu Dhabi.

Jail rebellion ends in Brazil: With the release of eight remaining hostages and the transfer of 20 inmates, prisoners in a jailhouse Tuesday ended a two-day

rebellion that left two dead, AP reports from Sao Paulo. The uprising broke out Sunday afternoon during visiting hours at the jail in Ferraz de Vasconcelos, a low-income suburb on the eastern outskirts of Sao Paulo. At first, the inmates held hostage 15 relatives, eight adults and seven children including a

14-month-old baby, said warden Juarez Pereira Campos. Japan welcomes NATO-Russia deal: Japan yesterday welcomed the signing in Paris of a cooperation accord between NATO and Russia, with Prime Minister Ryutaro

Hashimoto saying it was a "good thing," AFP says from Tokyo "I am going to look at how it will affect Asia," the premier said. "I think it is a good thing." Russian President Boris Yeltsin

signed the agreement on Tuesday. UN-chartered ship in Sierra Leone: A United Nations-chartered ship has arrived in Sierra Leone to evacuate UN staff and their dependents, diplomats said on

Tuesday, Reuter reports from Freetown. Diplomats said the El Salvadore had arrived on charter from Liberia and the evacuation of non-essential US staff and their dependents was expected to start today. "It is not clear how they will get people to the ship," one diplomatic source said.

UK publishes chemical arms programme: The Ministry of Defence published details of Britain's chemicals weapons programme Tuesday, showing that it has had no offensive capability since 1956, AP reports from London. A 238-page document released by the ministry reported that

small quantities of nerve agent were produced until 1978 at a

Royal Air Force base at Portreath, southwestern England, for

research into antidotes. In 1956, Britain decided to halt plans

for the large scale development of nerve agent, and in 1960 it announced it would dispose of its entire stock of offensive chemical weapons. Detained journalist freed in WB: A Palestinian-American journalist who was detained after

broadcasting live from the Palestinian legislative council was released Tuesday, AP reports from Ramallah. The legislature is one of the few outlets of criticism against Yasser Arafat's government, and the order to detain the journalist. Daoud Kuttab, had come directly from the Palestinian

leader. Official Palestinian TV covers the parliament sessions, but only broadcasts edited excerpts. Toyota to recall 260,00 vehicles: Toyota Motor Corp. said Wednesday it is recalling about 260,000 cars, mainly sport utility vehicles sold in Japan

because of two faulty parts, AP reports from Tokyo. Included in the recall are 2,000 vehicles shipped to Latin America and 5,800 sent to Europe. The recall does not affect any cars sold in North America. The greatest portion of the cars affected by the recall, 170,000 had rubber plugs for engine coolant that were found to be leaky, which could cause the engine to overheat.

tries, millions of women are

still denied free choice in hav-

their human rights, the UN

many more are permanently

injured or infected," it said.

"Most of these people are

women, and most are in devel-

According to the report, the

effects of denying women access

to reproductive and sexual

health care are grim: 585,000

women still die every year from

pregnancy-related causes, the

equivalent of one woman every

minute, and many times that

number are disabled as a result

oping countries."

of childbirth.

## Suu Kyi, other opposition leaders still under siege

YANGON, May 28: Myanmar riot police maintained their cordon around the homes of Aung San Suu Kyi and other opposition leaders Wednesday to stop them from holding a congress of their political

party, reports AP. In a massive sweep across Myanmar, the military government has arrested at least 316 members of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy to prevent them from traveling to Yangon to attend the congress

scheduled for May 27-28. The meeting was intended to commemorate the NLD's landslide victory in a 1990 national election the military refused to honour. Suu Kyi's party won 82

per cent of the seats in a parliament the regime refused to

convene. More than 200 NLD mem 12 bers made it to Yangon for the congress, but following the party's policy of nonviolence, they did not challenge riot police at the barricades blocking their leaders homes and the NLD's Yangon office.

Peace Prize for her nonviolent struggle for democracy.

regime received in Bangkok late tion in Yangon is calm, with

Suu Kyi won the 1991 Nobel

Tuesday night said the situabusiness as usual.

A press release from the

But business seems to be tak-

trades the kyat at the black market rate, which was fluctuating between 180-185 kyat for

one dollar in recent days. That's down from about 160 kyat for a dollar before US economic

> military began its arrests. President Clinton announced he was invoking the sanctions on April 22.

sanctions took effect last

Wednesday, the same day the

ing a turn for the worse in

Myanmar as a result of the re-

rency, the kyat, is plunging on

the widely-used black market.

Officially, the kyat trades at

about six for one US dollar.

The value of Myanmar's cur-

Nearly everyone, however,



Michelle Commander from Taiwan listens to the roar of a veloraptor super action hand puppet in a store Tuesday in Universal City. The movie "The Lost World: Jurassic Park" broke box office records over the Memorial Day weekend and may bring in one billion dollars in revenues from merchandise.

### Over 40,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees leave Congo

NAIROBI, May 28: More than 40,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees have been flown home from the new Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since repatriations began a month ago, UN officials

had returned by Tuesday following more flights from Kisangani and Mbandaka, UN High Commissioner for Refugees spokesman Peter Kessler said from Kisangani.

# said Tuesday, reports AFP. A total of 40,349 refugees

Many of the refugees had fled to the forests in late April, they said to escape Tutsi troops al-lied to the rebels of Laurent Kabila who took power in mid-May and renamed Zaire the

atively low-cost improvements in health care systems," the reing children — a violation of port said. Population Fund said in its ancouples lack access to the full nual report Wednesday, reports "This massive denial of human rights causes the deaths of millions of people every year:

> "The international community has agreed repeatedly that

ily planning. slowing down.

During 1990-95, the population grew by 81 million people every year, compared to the peak growth years of 1985-90. when the population grew by 87 million per year.

lation and Development, the first in Latin America. And a number of countries are adopting population policies reflecting the Cairo agreements, including Botswana, Cambodia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Syria and In South Africa, the new

constitution prohibits discrimination grounds of sex, pregnancy or marital status and recognises men's and women's right to make reproductive de-

a husband to approve any contraceptive services for his wife, and 60 others require a husport said. Many other developing

"The evidence is that devel-

do the same."

#### Women still denied free choice in having children Brazil has established a Na-The 1994 UN population LONDON, May 28: Despite "Much of this death and sufconference in Cairo, attended tional Commissioner on Popupromises made by 180 counfering could be averted with rel-

by 180 countries, adopted a 20-

year plan based on research

showing that educated women

with access to family planning

have fewer children. It calls for

In addition, 350 million range of modern family planning, it said. And at least 75 million pregnancies every year are unwanted, resulting in 45 million abortions, 20 million of which are unsafe.

reproductive health is a right for both women and men," said Dr Nafis Sadik, the population fund's executive director. "The challenge now is to make this right a reality for every individual." The report calls for equality

of the sexes and increased in-

vestment in education for girls

and sexual and reproductive

health care.

improving the status of women and providing universal access to reproductive and sexual Uganda. health services, including fam-According to Wednesday's report, population growth is

The world's population in mid-1997 is 5.85 billion, it said. Many developing countries have made progress toward slowing the population explo-

cisions. A new Women's Charter in Sri Lanka acknowledges women's right to control their reproductive lives, and a new social security law in Colombia recognises women's rights to sexual and reproductive health. But 14 countries still require