

# BRIEFLY

## Israeli officer killed in Lebanon:

An Israeli officer was killed in a mortar attack by Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas in south Lebanon, an army spokesman said Saturday. AFP reports from Jerusalem.

The soldier, named as Lieutenant Yuval Nir, died of wounds sustained in Friday night's attack when eight mortar shells were fired at his patrol in the so-called "security zone" occupied by Israel in south Lebanon. Lebanese security sources said Friday that the soldier was seriously wounded near Markaba near the central sector of the occupied zone, sparking Israeli bombardment of nearby villages in retaliation.

## China executes 15 farmers:

Fifteen farmers convicted of kidnapping and extortion were executed in Fujian province, a Chinese newspaper reported Sunday. AP reports from Beijing.

The Fujian Provincial Higher People's Court sentenced the farmers on Saturday at a rally in Changdong, and the executions were carried out immediately afterward, the Legal Daily reported. Four others convicted of participating in the kidnapping ring were sentenced to death with the possibility of having the sentence commuted to life imprisonment. In addition, six people convicted in the same case were sentenced to life in prison and 10 received lesser prison sentences.

## Gunmen kill 11 in Somalia:

Heavily armed gunmen attacked a truck carrying food and passengers, killing 11 people and injuring another six, reports reaching Mogadishu said Saturday. AP reports from Mogadishu.

The attack, in which four women, three children and four men were killed, occurred Thursday in Thistle village, 60 kilometres (35 miles) west of Mogadishu. Witnesses said the gunmen, who were not further identified, first attacked the truck with a rocket-propelled grenade.

## Strong quake shakes China:

Strong earthquakes shook southeastern and far western China on Saturday, but there were no reports of casualties or serious damage. AP reports from Beijing.

A quake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.3 jolted the oasis town of Pishan on the edge of Taklimakan Desert shortly before 2 am (1800 GMT Friday), the State Seismology Bureau said. Residents of the town in the Xinjiang region — 1,700 miles (2,740 kilometres) west of Beijing and 150 miles (250 kilometres) east of China's border with Pakistan — felt the quake, but it was too small to cause any damage, said a seismologist who only gave his surname, Tang.

## Pope in Poland:

Pope John Paul arrived in Poland Saturday to start an 11-day visit of 12 cities during the seventh visit of his pontificate to his homeland. Reuter reports from Wroclaw.

The 77-year-old pope was met at Wroclaw airport by leaders of the Polish church and President Alexander Kwasniewski, a former communist.

## Man falls to death at Statue of Liberty:

A man who was not allowed to go up inside the Statue of Liberty climbed onto a short wall at the famous landmark and fell to his death, authorities said, AP reports from New York.

Elhajo Malick Deye of New York either slipped or jumped Saturday from the 3-foot wall (1m) on the huge concrete and granite base of the statue, and fell 100 feet (30m) to the ground, said Manny Strumpf, a National Parks Service spokesman. Deye apparently had insisted on going to the crown of the statue, which is reached by stairs inside the 152-foot (46 metres) tall structure. Police, however, said the park was closing and that he wouldn't be allowed up at 5 pm.

## Chechen municipal polls begin:

Grozny residents went to the polls Saturday in their first post-war municipal balloting to elect a mayor for the Chechen capital, still in ruins from heavy fighting. AP reports from Grozny.

Polling stations opened at 7 am and will stay open until 10 pm local time in the city. A turnout exceeding 50 per cent is required to make the election valid. A total of 12 candidates are competing for the post. The list is topped by Grozny's current mayor Lezha Dudayev, who is a nephew of the late separatist leader, Dzhokhar Dudayev, and Turpalali Adgiriyev.

## Hollywood's noted hairdresser dies:

Wynard Guilaroff, who created Judy Garland's braids in "The Wizard of Oz" and turned Lucille Ball into a redhead during a 40-year reign as Hollywood's most celebrated hairdresser, has died. He was 89, AP reports from New York.

Guilaroff died of pneumonia Wednesday at a nursing home in Beverly Hills, California, his son, Jon, told The New York Times in Sunday's editions. Guilaroff was the first hairstylist to be credited on screen for his work with such stars as Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Crawford, Lana Turner, Lena Horne, Grace Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, Ann-Margret and Marilyn Monroe. He served as chief stylist at MGM during the studio's golden years from 1934 to the late 1970s, becoming the man behind the hairdos in more than a thousand movies. Among those were "Bend Sinister", "The Philadelphia Story" and "Gentleman Prefer Blondes".



Algerians hold up a poster portrait of the president of the Movement of Society for Peace (MSP), formerly Hamas, Mahfoud Nahnah, during an electoral rally of 5,000 people in Blida Saturday. — AFP/UNB photo

# Clinton's remarks on Iran contain signals of amity

TEHRAN, June 1: Iran state radio on Saturday said remarks by US president Bill Clinton on Thursday indicated a gradual change in policy towards the Islamic republic, reports Reuter.

The radio, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation, described Clinton's remarks on Iran as "a gradual modification in the United States' hostile policy" towards Iran.

"Clinton drew his hand towards Iran and his remarks contained signals of friendship and compromise," the radio said.

It seems that Clinton's tone speaks of the fact that Washington officials have realised that it is about time for the US to give up its hostile posture in the face of Iran," it added.

Clinton, in his first public comments on the election of moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami as Iran's new president said he had never been pleased about the "estrangements" between the United States and Iran.

The US President, who made

his comments on Thursday while on a one-day official visit to Britain, said the Iranians were "very good people."

Washington accuses Tehran of supporting terrorism, blocking a US-brokered Middle East peace process and attempting to develop nuclear weapons. Iran denies these accusations.

"They (the Iranians) are very good people and I hope that the estrangements can be breached. But those are three big hurdles that would have to be cleared, and we'll just have to hope for the best," he added.

Meanwhile Gulf Arab foreign ministers hope the new Iranian president will usher in an era of improved relations, official Gulf news agencies said.

"In light of the results of the Iranian presidential elections, the foreign ministers expressed hope that the next phase will witness positive developments in relations between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and Iran," the ministers said in a statement late on Saturday at the end of a two-day meeting in

Riyadh, the agencies reported.

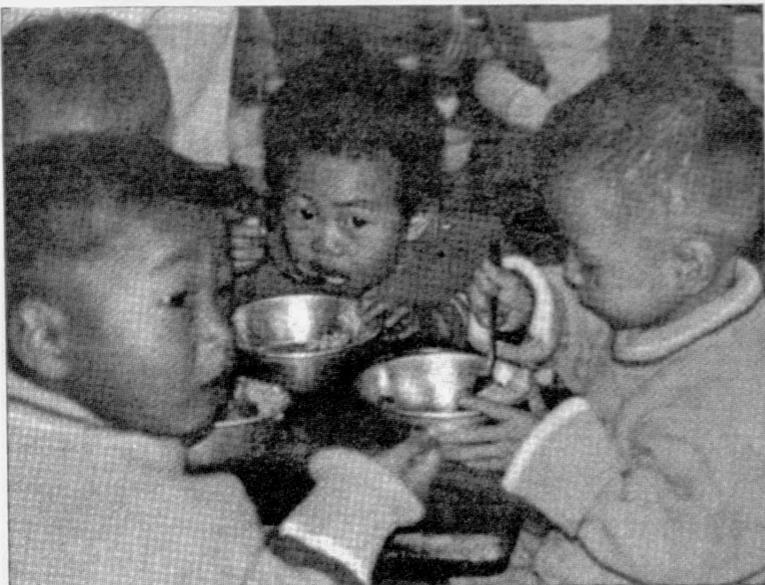
But they reiterated their condemnation of Iran for its "occupation" of three strategic Gulf islands also claimed by the United Arab Emirates and called on Tehran to take measures to build confidence with Gulf Arab states.

Moderate cleric Mohammad Khatami won a landslide victory in Iran's elections last month, the biggest political upset since the 1979 Iranian revolution.

Gulf Arab leaders have congratulated Khatami on his victory but diplomats said most would adopt a wait-and-see approach towards Tehran.

GCC states view the Tehran government with suspicion and have accused it of interfering in their internal affairs. Iran has denied the charges and is trying to improve ties with its Gulf Arab neighbours.

The GCC — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman — is a political and economic alliance.



North Korean children eat a meal provided by the International Red Cross at a centre in Hwanghae Province, North Korea May 26. The Red Cross announced that it had raised food aid to starving North Korea by a factor of five so that 740,000 of the nation's most vulnerable people would have access to grain supplies. — AFP/UNB photo

# Battle for Congress Party leadership

Neelesh Misra writes from New Delhi

The race for the leadership of the 112-year-old Congress Party in India has taken on bitter overtones as two powerful challengers girded up to face incumbent Sitaram Kesri in the first election for the presidency of the organization in 47 years.

Former Union ministers Rajesh Pilot and Sharad Pawar entered the contest for top job in the party, which props up the United Front government with crucial parliamentary support. The filing of nominations by the three candidates set the stage for the first election for the post since 1950.

But the race started on a bitter note when Pawar and Kesri publicly traded charges over alleged malpractices in the party's nationwide organisational elections scheduled to end before mid-June. Pawar accused Kesri of trying to manipulate the election by doctoring the list of over 7,500 "delegates" who form the electoral college.

The delegates, chosen by the members of the party from each of the small blocks into which different states are divided, choose the president through a direct election.

Kesri hit back at a news conference: "If they think the elections have been rigged, why are they contesting?" Kesri was selected provisional president when former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao quit the post following an adverse court ruling in a corruption case last year.

Pawar's accusation over the way Kesri was conducting the election echoed the mounting dissent in the party facing the worst popularity slump in its history, especially after the rout it faced in last year's national election.

"Bitterness should not become the legacy of India's premier party," party spokesman Vithal Narhari Gadgil told India Abroad News Service. "But I

believe that it is just temporary and will not cause much harm to the party."

Gadgil, who had earlier expressed hope that the contenders would withdraw and the choice would be made in accordance with the party's tradition of selection by "consensus," conceded that an election was now inevitable. "I do not think any of them will withdraw from the contest now," he said. In the 112-year-history of the party, an election has been held for the party president's post only five times with the party contriving a "consensus" on the leader's choice to present a united face.

"The Congress is fighting for its existence. There is a crisis both of leadership and credibility," Pawar, also leader of the party in the Lok Sabha, told reporters after filing his nomination papers. My first task is to revive the party and set my house in order." Another challenger to Kesri, senior Maharashtra leader A.R. Antulay, withdrew his candidacy in favour of Pawar. Both Pawar and Antulay were former Chief Ministers of Maharashtra state and bitter rivals but have sunk their differences to team up against the 78-year-old Kesri who replaced P.V. Narasimha Rao as party chief last year.

Before announcing his candidacy, Pawar met with Mrs Sonia Gandhi, the widow of slain former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who is now believed to be the party's most powerful power centre despite her seclusion from active politics. Pawar said he had requested Sonia Gandhi to take up the leadership of the party and had entered the contest only after she did not show any inclination.

Gandhi, who has not responded to a request to lead the party, has not taken sides in the power struggle in the Congress but Kesri's supporters have in-

terpreted her presence with the party chief in public functions as tacit support.

Kesri also urged her to take over leadership of the party. "I have been saying since 1991 (when Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated) that if Mrs. Gandhi takes over the leadership, it will benefit the party...if she accepts the leadership, I am ready to retire from the contest," Kesri was quoted as saying.

"I am not fighting for a party post, but for the health of the party," Pilot, at 50, the youngest of the presidential contenders, told reporters. He said the party needed a genuine democratic contest, and criticised Kesri supporters' demand to retain the present party chief by "consensus."

Analysts said the Congress Party's contest would be keenly watched by Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral, who was the leader most agreeable to Kesri from among a string of leaders in the 13-party coalition when the Congress Party withdrew support from the H.D. Deve Gowda government early this year. A change of guard in the party propping up the ruling coalition could upset political equations for the Prime Minister.

Gujral also witnessed a leadership crisis in his Janata Dal party, the main constituent of the United Front, as party president Lalo Prasad Yadav, also Chief Minister of Bihar state, was challenged by its working president Sharad Yadav. Both Yadavs are from Bihar state.

Investigators have sought to prosecute the Bihar Chief Minister in the state's Rs. 9.5 billion (\$271 million) livestock feed scandal, and Lalo Prasad Yadav could face increasing trouble in his legal battle if his control on the ruling coalition's main party is seen as loosening. — India Abroad News Service

## Murtaza murder

### Judicial Tribunal submits report

KARACHI, June 1: A Judicial Tribunal which investigated the murder of former premier Benazir Bhutto's estranged brother Murtaza Bhutto, Saturday submitted its sealed report to the government, suggesting the findings be made public, reports AFP.

Headed by a Supreme Court judge, Nasir Aslam Zahid, the three-member tribunal handed the 242-page report to officials of southern Sindh province.

The tribunal was set up in October by Bhutto almost a month before her government was dismissed by president Farooq Ahmed Leghari on charges of corruption and misrule. The tribunal recorded statements from 129 people including policemen, officials, reporters and politicians including Murtaza's widow Ghinwa Bhutto.

## Paula Jones' lawyer seeks presidential apology

WASHINGTON, June 1: A lawyer representing Paula Jones in her sexual harassment case against President Bill Clinton on Saturday set three conditions — including a presidential apology — for settling the case out of court, reports Reuter.

Joseph Cammarata, one of two lawyers representing the former Arkansas state worker, said any settlement offer would need to include "some sort of an apology," an affirmation of the truthfulness of Jones' account of what happened between her and the president and a statement exonerating her of any wrongdoing.

Those are some minimal requirements that if those are not presented, this case is dead in the water," Cammarata told CNN's "inside politics weekend."

He also said he and Jones' other lawyer, Gil Davis, would recommend rejecting any settlement offer that did not include some financial remuneration for "the three years of hell that Paula Jones has been put through, the humiliation, the embarrassment, having her name just dragged through the mud."

## Coal mine blast kills 50 in China

BEIJING, June 1: More than 50 miners have been killed after an explosion ripped through a coal mine in the northeastern Chinese province of Liaoning, according to local reports seen here today, says AFP.

The blast occurred at 7:00 pm (1100 GMT) on Wednesday in the Belongfeng mine in the city of Fushun, some 200 kilometres (125 miles) east of the provincial capital, Shenyang, according to local newspaper reports.

According to the newspaper, some 68 miners were working underground at the time of the explosion.

Some 24 hours after the blast, more than 50 bodies had been recovered, it said.

# India won't join global nuclear treaties

BOMBAY, June 1: Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral defended the country's unwillingness to join global nuclear treaties Saturday by saying the country's security would not be bargained away or compromised, reports Reuter.

He told a group of scientists that "the country's security will not be bargained or compromised under any circumstances."

"Don't try to exert any pressure... it would be hazardous for those who pressurise us. We would not sign it," he said, referring to current global efforts to reach a nuclear fissile material treaty.

Gujral, on a one-day visit to India's financial capital, he was speaking at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre on the outskirts of the city.

New Delhi refused to sign the comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in Geneva last August

saying it was opposed to its because the treaty would not commit the five declared nuclear powers — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — to a timetable for dismantling their arsenals.

The South Asian nation's long standing policy has been to keep the option to build nuclear weapons if threatened.

Gujral said that India had always showed self-restraint but reaffirmed that the option of going for nuclear weapons still remained open.

He said the government had decided to go ahead with increasing nuclear power generation to 500 megawatts from 250 megawatts and sufficient financial backing would be given for this purpose.

India's move, criticised by some foreign powers, at the CTBT talks in Geneva effectively prevented the treaty from being adopted.

# Second round of voting begins in France

PARIS, June 1: France's 39 million voters go to the polls today for crucial run-off ballots in which opposition Socialists hope to oust the centre-right and deal a severe blow to Gaullist President Jacques Chirac, reports AFP.

Pollsters predict the alliance of Socialists, greens and communists could win a comfortable majority in the 577-seat National Assembly, in what would be a spectacular turnaround in the French left's fortunes.

A leftwing win would also raise questions over France's role in Europe and in particular in a single European currency. France's European Union partner were therefore watching the result closely.

But with 32 per cent of voters abstaining in the first round of

voting last weekend, and each percentage swing in the national vote worth dozens of seats in parliament, the result is too close to call definitely.

The far-right national front, which scored a record 15 per cent of votes in last Sunday's first round, is also expected to play a decisive role, potentially splitting the rightwing vote to allow the left in.

In a symbol of the closeness of Sunday's ballots, Chirac on Saturday evening attended the French rugby cup final at the Parc Des Princes stadium in Paris flanked by the two men from whom he will have to choose a new premier.

They are Philippe Seguin, the outgoing National Assembly Speaker and champion of the right — and Socialist Party leader Lionel Jospin.

# Jackie's belongings go on display

BOSTON, June 1: Past the exhibits about the Cold War, the space race and the Cuban missile crisis is a new display case at the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum, virtually invisible behind the crowds of visitors straining to see what's inside, reports AFP.

It's a dress, the white silk wedding gown Jacqueline Bouvier wore when she married Kennedy in 1953. The gown is part of a collection of belongings her children gave to the museum after her death in 1994.

Only a few things were selected for the first public display. "She was reluctant to have too much of the focus on her," her daughter, Caroline, said at the museum last week.

The dress, which took seamstresses two months to make and used 50 yards (46 metres) of material, is the focal point at the end of a long, red-carpeted hallway in the museum representing the White House.

Also on display: her diamond-and-emerald wedding ring and the beige suit she wore to Kennedy's inauguration, with its famous matching pillbox hat.

"This is part of American history," said Anne Kintz of Warren, Connecticut, who toured the museum last week. "I've seen pictures of it so many times."

The fragile wedding dress will be on view only through the summer. On a screen behind it, home movies of the Kennedy wedding run continuously.

"It was such a lovely story, and she was bigger than life. I'm as interested in her as I am in him," said Joann Simpkins of Bedford, New Hampshire.

The new exhibit chronicles more than the first lady's matrimonial fashion sense, also documenting her personal side. Jacqueline Bouvier's baby brush, a sweater and her childhood prayer book are part of the display. So is an early report



card. Surprisingly, the highly poised woman got a poor mark in Forth as a girl "because her disturbing conduct in geography class made it necessary to exclude her from the room."

Included is a composition she wrote as a schoolgirl. To be kind, one must live outside of oneself and care about the happiness of others," it reads.

Her only known memo to her husband also is on display, a three-page handwritten argument in a sharply different tone about efforts to save the ancient Egyptian temples in the Nile Valley threatened by the Aswan Dam.

"Though they had hoped to get 30 million dollars from us, I think they will now be satisfied with an expression of the president's support," she writes. "Then they can hustle and find the rest of the money themselves."

A plum from the collection of 25,000 documents contributed by her children, though not yet on display, is a note about finding more literary shelf space in the White House.

# India, Russia discuss implications of Taliban's ascendancy

Arun Mohanty writes from Moscow

India and Russia held high level discussions here on combating terrorism, preventing drug trafficking and other related issues, especially in the light of the Taliban's gaining control over most of Afghanistan.

India's Border Security Force (BSF) Director General A.K. Tandon met General Andrei Nikolaev, Director of Russian border forces, and other high ranking officials during his six-day official visit to Russia. Reliable sources said attention was focused on repercussions of the Taliban advance in Afghanistan for both Russia and India.

Both countries have sufficient reasons to be alarmed in the event of a total takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban since it could lead to the export of their militant brand of Islamic fundamentalism to both India and Russia which have large Muslim populations,

diplomatic analysts here believe.

"Given the long animosity and border dispute between India and Pakistan, the infiltration of the Taliban, who are trained, armed and aided by Islamabad, into India cannot be ruled out altogether. Rather the Taliban infiltration to the troubled state of Kashmir is a real possibility," said an expert on Central Asia from Moscow's prestigious Institute of Oriental Studies.

"It is the case with Russia, which would be separated from Taliban-led Afghanistan by Central Asian republics which have troubled and not too sealed borders with Afghanistan. If the Taliban militants succeed in penetrating to the Central Asian countries of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzia, the Muslim dominated Russian republics like Tatarstan, Baskortostan, Dagestan, not to

speak of Chechnya, which are already witnessing Muslim resurgence, would come within the easy reach of Islamic fundamentalists in no time," says the expert, who did not wish to be identified.

Some potential political forces in the former Soviet Central Asian republics, which are struggling to define their Muslim identity, might embrace the Taliban, the expert believes.

"In Tajikistan, the armed opposition to the present government is partly motivated by Islamic ideology and use Islamic connections to get arms and training in Afghanistan. With peace still not guaranteed in Tajikistan, Russia fears that the country remains vulnerable to unrest spreading from Afghanistan. In parts of Uzbekistan, Islam fuels underground opposition to the government of President Islam Karimov," the expert said.

— India Abroad News Service

# OAU poised to press for two UNSC seats with veto power

HARARE, June 1: African leaders set out Monday to stake the continent's claim to be a major player on the world stage, and to shake off its image as a wretched onlooker, reports AFP.

The 53-nation Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which holds its 33rd annual summit here June 2-4, is expected to press its demand for two permanent seats with veto power in an expanded UN Security Council.

And many of the 30 heads of state due at the summit — including the new leader in Kinshasa Laurent Kabila — will no doubt echo South African President Nelson Mandela's view that the time is ripe for a political and economic African renaissance.

But with last week's military coup in Sierra Leone an ugly boil on the fresh face Africa wants to present, they will have a hard time convincing the world that commitments to democracy and human rights are more than cosmetic.

Zimbabwean Vice-President Simon Muzenda acknowledged at a preparatory meeting ahead of the summit that "most of Africa continues to be haunted by conflicts, hunger, economic decline and disease."

At the same time, he complained that this led to an "untrue" perception in the rest of the world that Africa is "an insignificant partner in international politics and economic relations."

"Lack of justice, fairness and openness in governing has kindled many uprisings. Nowadays the call for democracy, human rights and accountability can no longer be ignored."

apartheid and cold war interference in African affairs as whipping boys to divert attention from its own failures.

Now, nearly 40 years after the winds of independence began to sweep through the continent, three years after the end of apartheid and with the cold war long gone, those excuses are no longer available.

This, too, was acknowledged — partly — by Muzenda.

After listing some of Africa's problems, he said: "We are aware that most of these conflicts are partly of our own creation."

"Only in this way can Africa assert her right to be an equal partner in world affairs."

Diplomats say African leaders are in no mood to compromise on their demand for veto powers in an expanded Security Council, a stand which will fur-

ther delay the chances of agreement on enlargement of the Council.

They want two seats to take into account the interests of both Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arabic-speaking north, and Zimbabwe's Foreign Minister Stan Mudenge has compared a seat without veto powers to a castrated bull.

The only countries which currently have a veto in the Council are Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States, while Germany and Japan are pushing hard to join them.

Africa's insistence on similar privileges will make the bid by the economic giants of Europe and Asia more difficult, because the current permanent members balk at the idea of giv-

ing developing countries veto powers.

Africa's own economic problems are scheduled to be a major focus at the OAU summit, but efforts to form an African economic community will be plagued by the continent's aged-old problems of coups and conflicts.

Apart from Sierra Leone, the summit will discuss the crisis in the great lakes region and efforts to find permanent peace in Somalia, Liberia and Angola.

The outgoing chairman of the council of ministers, Libya's Omar Mustafa Al-Muntasser, said there had been a number of positive political developments in Africa.

But, he added: "It's not all moonshine and roses."