

BRIEFLY

ROK to send food aid to DPRK:

South Korea Red Cross said Monday it will send 11,200 tons of corn and powdered corn to hunger-stricken North Korea this month. AP reports from Seoul.

The 7,000 tons of corn and 4,200 tons of powdered corn are the first part of 50,000 tons of relief aid the South Korean Red Cross plans to provide to the North by the end of July under an agreement reached last week in Beijing. On Monday, South Korea told the North Korean Red Cross that it will ship the first batch by Chinese train between June 12 and 19.

Suharto to visit Turkey:

President Suharto will leave June 13 for Istanbul, Turkey, to attend a meeting of eight predominantly Muslim nations, a senior official said Tuesday. AP reports from Jakarta.

The first summit of these countries, opening June 15, was suggested by Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan when he met Suharto during a visit here last year. Murtidono, minister at the State Secretariat, said the meeting is expected to be held annually, but the heads of government have yet to decide this.

7 of a family sentenced in India:

Seven persons of a family were sentenced to life imprisonment Monday in connection with a dowry death case. PTI reports from Muzaffarpur.

The order was passed by the third additional sessions judge, Muzaffarpur, Paras Naty. Those awarded life imprisonment included the husband, parents-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law of the deceased, Rinki Kumar (18) who died on July 15, 1994, at Goraiyan village under Khudami police station in the district.

Tudjman visits Serb-held area:

President Franjo Tudjman visited the last strip of Serb-held land in Croatia on Monday, and promised nervous Serbs there would be no revenge when his government resumes control. AP reports from Beli Monastir.

Tudjman was booed and jeered by several hundred Serbs who gathered in this town at the far northeast corner of Croatia. It has been in Serb hands since the 1991 war that broke out when Croatia declared independence from the Yugoslav federation. Tudjman has been under heavy pressure from the United States and other Western countries for not allowing Serb refugees to return to their homes in parts of Croatia, and on Monday he tried to reassure the Serbs.

Blast claims 2 in Albania:

At least two people were injured in a powerful explosion at a bus station in the centre of the Albanian capital Tirana on Monday, witnesses said. Reuters from Tirana.

The blast occurred just minutes before a 9 pm (1900 GMT) curfew began, witnesses said, and came hours after a bomb in a crowded cafe injured at least 20 people.

Ruling party retains majority in Canadian parliament

OTTAWA, June 3: The governing Liberal Party suffered some embarrassing election setbacks, including losses by two Cabinet ministers, while heading toward a reduced majority in a Parliament more divided than ever by regional interests, reports AP.

For the first time, a party playing on anti-Quebec sentiment — the western-based Reform Party — seemed almost certain to emerge as the main opposition force in the House of Commons after Monday's balloting.

The centrist Liberals, who five weeks ago, were cocky enough to call the election 18 months early, held 174 seats in the outgoing Parliament. They seemed likely to end up with a net loss, while probably winning more than the 151 needed to form a majority government under Prime Minister Jean Chretien.

Early returns from the four Maritime provinces were devastating for the Liberals. They had held 31 of the 32 seats there, but lost two-thirds of them, including the Nova Scotia seat of Health Minister David Dingwall and the New Brunswick seat of Defense Minister Doug Young.

But the Liberals rebounded, as expected, in populous Ontario, heading toward a near-sweep of the 103 seats. And they were doing well in Quebec, adding perhaps a half-dozen seats to the 19 they held before.

The separatist Bloc Quebecois was leading in more than half of the 75 Quebec districts. Chretien was locked in a tight race with the Bloc Quebecois candidate in his district.

But the Liberals' claim to be

the only truly national party in Canada was in jeopardy. They were in danger of winning only a few seats in the far west, leaving Ontario as their only major stronghold.

About 20 million Canadians were eligible to cast ballots at 53,000 polling stations spread across the world's second-largest country in terms of geography. In all, 1,672 candi-

dates were running.

Reform, which ran its first national campaign in 1993, tried to expand its support with suggestions that Chretien and other mainstream leaders have spent too much energy trying to defuse separatist sentiment in Quebec.

Reform's leader, Preston Manning, was denounced as an



Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien reacts to his governing Liberal Party re-election victory Monday in Shawinigan, Canada. Chretien was elected with a vastly reduced majority, according to a Canadian television network. — AFP/UNB photo

anti-Quebec bigot by several of his rivals, including Jean Charest, whose Progressive Conservative Party was battling with Reform for right-of-center votes.

The Progressive Conservatives, reduced to just two seats in the 1993 election, fared well in the Maritimes, winning at least 13 seats. The other big winner there was the left-wing New Democratic Party, which won at least seven seats.

The NDP was the only party to hit hard on the need to curb a 9.6 per cent jobless rate.

Chretien, 63, was seeking to become the first Liberal prime minister since 1953 to win consecutive majorities. He led the Liberals to a landslide win in 1993 as voters fed up with Brian Mulroney reduced the Progressive Conservatives from a parliamentary majority to only two seats.

When Chretien called this election April 27, opinion polls indicated the Liberals would add to the 174 seats they held in the outgoing Parliament.

But the Liberals ran a lackluster campaign, and the final polls last week indicated they would likely lose some seats.

The Liberals' main first-term accomplishment was to slash a record \$13 billion deficit by more than two-thirds. But they were unable to bring down the jobless rate and they failed to prevent increasing polarization on the status of Que-

49 civilians killed in bombardment Truce halts fighting in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, June 3: A fresh truce halted fighting in Sierra Leone's capital after Nigerian gunboats bombarded the city as part of efforts to restore its civilian president, who was ousted on May 25 in the west African country's third coup in five years, reports Reuters.

The international committee of the Red Cross brokered the ceasefire to allow an evacuation of more than 600 civilians trapped by fighting around a Nigerian-protected hotel on Monday.

The United States, which has airlifted out around 1,300 Americans and foreign nationals, considered plans to evacuate another 200 or more who were still there but refrained from comment on Nigeria's attack.

"We are interested in diminishing the violence and seeing if this fragile ceasefire that they've been working on can't be fully implemented," White House spokesman Mike McCurry said.

In Zimbabwe's capital Harare, Organisation of African Unity summit host Robert Mugabe called for restoration of democracy in Sierra Leone. He and fellow African leaders denounced the coup.

It said the new military council had been unable to contact Nigerian authorities in Freetown to discuss the intervention.

A first ceasefire agreed after lengthy negotiations between the Red Cross and the rebels collapsed just as an evacuation was being put together. A second deal took three hours to broker.

Nigerian ships in the bay west of Freetown began a bombardment at daybreak on Monday the morning after talks between Nigerian and British diplomats and the coup leaders at the seafort military headquarters fell apart.

AFP adds, at least 49 people, mainly civilians, were killed in the Sierra Leonean capital Monday as a result of a Nigerian naval bombardment and clashes pitting Nigerian troops against Sierra Leonean soldiers and rebels, hospital sources said.

US regrets ASEAN move to admit Myanmar

WASHINGTON, June 3: The State Department expressed regret Monday over the decision of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to admit Myanmar's military regime as a member, reports AP.

Spokesman John Dinger said the United States hopes ASEAN will urge Myanmar authorities to address rights abuses and to enter into a dialogue with the country's democratic forces.

In deciding to admit Myanmar, ASEAN foreign ministers acknowledged there were concerns about Myanmar's human rights record. But they said they would have more influence over Myanmar leaders if Myanmar is allowed to join.

The ministers also agreed at their meeting Saturday in Malaysia to admit Cambodia and Laos. The three will be formally admitted in July.

Taliban sending troops to western front Afghan opposition forms new alliance for talks

KABUL, June 3: The Taliban religious army was sending fresh troops to its front lines in western Afghanistan while on Tuesday its enemies announced the formation of a new, larger alliance, reports AP.

The National Islamic Front for the Deliverance of Afghanistan will include former military chief Ahmed Shah Massoud, Uzbek leader Malik Pahlawan, Shiite Muslims belonging to Hezb-e-Wahadat, former prime minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Israeli Muslims and a small royalist party, led by Pir Ahmed Gailani.

"If the Taliban wants to negotiate they will have to negotiate with the Islamic Front," said Humayun Powzie, a spokesman for Pahlawan.

The Islamic Front replaces the earlier anti-Taliban alliance, that did not include either Hekmatyar or Gailani.

Just last week the Taliban

religious army had control of roughly 90 per cent of the country.

But its Uzbek allies, led by Malik Pahlawan, pulled out of the alliance when the Taliban tried to disarm Pahlawan's men and tried to force residents of northern Afghanistan to follow the strict brand of Islam they espouse.

There also are significant ethnic differences between the Taliban and residents of the north.

The Taliban belong to Pakistan's largest Pashtun ethnic group, which live mostly in the southern two-thirds of the country.

While in northern Afghanistan, most people belong to the many smaller ethnic groups, like Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen and Shiite Muslims.

In the past two days the Taliban has offered to open negotiations, but only with Pahlawan.

Amnesty Int'l accuses Kabila of HR abuses

LONDON, June 3: African leaders should demand an investigation into reports that troops loyal to Congo's new ruler President Laurent Kabila massacred 123 unarmed civilians, Amnesty International said Monday, reports AP.

The London-based human rights group said African nations should press for the inquiry at a meeting of the Organisation of African Unity currently taking place in Harare, capital of Zimbabwe.

Kabila took control of the mineral rich Democratic Republic of the Congo — formerly Zaire — last month after President Mobutu Sese Seko fled.

"We are appealing to African leaders to show at the OAU summit that the safety and physical integrity of human beings in ex-Zaire are more important than the country's mineral wealth," Amnesty said.

Amnesty said Kabila should not be allowed to hide his own human rights abuses

Three days ahead of polls Algeria puts its citizens on alert against bomb attack

ALGIERS, June 3: Algeria put its citizens on alert Monday after a third bomb attack in two days in Algiers killed seven people, injured 37 and sowed fear three days before hotly-contested legislative elections, reports AFP.

Islamic radicals were blamed for all three bombings since Sunday, including the one Monday morning at a busy market that sparked confusion and panic in the Casbah, the old quarter of Algiers.

The casualty toll was issued by the authorities, but it risked going higher as many of the injured were in grave condition.

On Sunday, a total of 10 people died — according to press reports — when bombs went off in two buses in the capital, where major political parties Monday wound up the official campaign period with big rallies.

Tung blames UK for breakdown with China over Hong Kong

HONG KONG, June 3: Future leader Tung Chee-hwa says Britain is to blame for its breakdown with China over Hong Kong, saying it should never have changed the colony's election system without China's consent, reports AP.

But overall, Hong Kong has much to thank Britain for, he told the BBC.

In a World Service radio and TV interview broadcast in Hong Kong Tuesday, 28 days before the change of sovereignty, Tung said, Britain changed course in the last five years of colonial rule, "and I think it was wrong to do so."

"To go ahead without the consent of the future sovereign — it shouldn't have happened," he said.

Tung was referring to electoral reforms introduced by Gov. Chris Patten that widened the franchise in defiance of Beijing's wishes.

Israel's opposition party votes to choose new leader

JERUSALEM, June 3: Israel's main opposition Labour Party, hungry to unseat Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government, votes today to choose a new leader with ex-army chief Ehud Barak tipped to succeed Shimon Peres at the helm, reports Reuters.

The leadership vote marks a milestone for Labour, a passing of the political torch from former prime minister Peres, 73, and his slain predecessor Yitzhak Rabin, whose rival camps ruled the often contentious party for nearly a quarter-century.

The heavily favoured Barak, 55, has cast himself as heir to Rabin's warrior-turned-peace-maker mantle.

"I see myself as his follower and the one to continue his legacy," Barak told a news conference on Monday.

The winner of the Tuesday contest is expected to face Netanyahu in national elections slated for the year 2000.

Echoing Rabin, who spear-

headed Arab-Israeli talks until an ultra-nationalist Jew gunned him down after a 1995 peace rally, Barak said Labour was "committed to take calculated risks in the Middle East in order to achieve peace."

The voting closes at 1900 GMT and exit polls are expected to predict the winner soon afterwards. Only Labour Party members can vote.

Opinion polls have shown Barak Neck and Neck with Netanyahu, 7, whose first year in office has been buffeted by peacemaking crises and shadowed by corruption allegations.

AP adds: Palestinians in a disputed part of Jerusalem have built more than 1,000 homes or additions without permits in the last six months at the direction of the Palestinian Authority, an Israeli newspaper said Monday.

Mayor Ehud Olmert called the illegal building "a cancer that directly threatens Israel's sovereignty in Jerusalem," and said it could not be ignored.



A resident of this remote village of Kedungdung in East Java on Monday tells about the attack on this government office and car last week, following the Muslim-based PPP allegations of vote rigging by ruling Golkar party. Re-polling will be conducted Wednesday in some towns of East Java where ballots were burn down during the riotings. — AFP/UNB photo

Stay away from HK affairs, China warns US, UK

HONG KONG, June 3: China has warned Britain, the United States and other foreign powers to stay out of Hong Kong affairs after July 1, Beijing-controlled news reports said today, reports AFP.

In an article on the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule on July 1, the official Bauhinia monthly magazine sounds an alert over interference by other countries in Hong Kong, the semi-official China news service said.

"Any interference by foreign forces on Hong Kong affairs could only destroy Hong Kong's prosperity and stability and will turn Hong Kong from an 'economic city' into a 'political city,'" the article warned.

"By becoming a political arena, the investment and economic benefits of foreigners, including those from the United States and Britain, in Hong Kong could naturally be affected," it said.

Bauhinia published by the Chinese government's Hong Kong and Macau affairs office.

"Hong Kong affairs before June 30 are a matter between China and Britain, and after July 1 are China's internal affairs," the magazine declared.

Hong Kong revert to Chinese sovereignty after more than 150 years of British rule.

The article accused the United States of interfering "more and more" in Hong Kong affairs noting an article by US consul General in Hong Kong, Richar Boucher as admitting that year senior members of the US administration were interested in Hong Kong.

It also noted the "high level" reception given to Martin Lee, head of Hong Kong's largest political party, the Democratic Party, on recent visits to Washington.

The US State Department had applied "a double standard" by saying the ban on foreign donations to local political groups suggested by Hong Kong's future leader would affect Hong Kong democratic development, the article said.



The leader of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Laurent-Désiré Kabila (R), greets Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat Monday at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) summit in Harare. It is Kabila's first meeting with African heads of state since he became the president of Congo, formerly Zaire, after ousting president Mobutu Sese Seko. — AFP/UNB photo

Islamic students from Pakistan being recruited to fight for Taliban

ISLAMABAD, June 3: Islamic seminarians studying in Pakistan grabbed assault rifles and rocket launchers and headed west across the border to Afghanistan to join their brothers-in-arms, the Taliban, reports AP.

As many as 600 young Islamic students have been going to Afghanistan every day for the past two weeks, officials at the Taliban recruitment office in Pakistan said Monday.

Most of the soldiers in Afghanistan's Taliban religious militia, which swept into Kabul last September and now rule two-thirds of the country, are Islamic seminarians turned guerrillas fighters.

"Our office registers the Talibs (Persian meaning student) coming from different parts of Pakistan and then makes arrangements for their journey to Afghanistan and provides them with meals," said Mullah Abdul

Haq, head of the Taliban recruitment office in the frontier capital of Peshawar, about 190 kilometres (114 miles) northwest of the federal capital.

Haq said only Afghan nationals studying in Pakistan are allowed to join the Taliban militia.

These schools have students from Afghanistan, central Asia and several African nations.

However, the anti-Taliban alliance claims to have captured dozens of Pakistanis fighting on the side of the Taliban. In recent days there also have been several reports of young Pakistani recruits fighting on the front line north of the Afghan capital.

The anti-Taliban alliance, as well as several countries in the region, has accused Pakistan of aiding the Taliban army, which was born roughly three years ago in the southern

Afghan city of Kandahar.

The Taliban moved quickly to consolidate its power overthrowing rival Islamic groups that had been fighting each other for several years. By September of last year it was the largest single force in the country.

In territory under its control, the Taliban has imposed strict Islamic rule that closes schools for girls, forces women out of the work force and men to grow beards and pray in the mosque. The Taliban also has banned music, most games and videos, all considered against Islam.

Haq said several Islamic schools in Pakistan's Baluchistan and Northwest Frontier Provinces have closed at the request of the Taliban. This he said, was to allow the students to fight.

One of the biggest religious schools in the frontier

province, Darul Uloom Haqqania, about 140 kilometres (84 miles) northwest of the federal capital, is run by Pakistani Senator Sami-ul-Haq.

The senator, who is a strong proponent of the Taliban army and a similar form of strident Islamic rule in Pakistan, closed his school.

"We have a big number of Taliban and they are summoned by their leadership for Jihad (holy war) therefore we closed (the school) on May 28," said Mohammed Ibrahim, a teacher at Haqqania school. It will reopen June 13.

In Afghanistan the Taliban army has been under heavy attack in recent days on at least three different fronts. The biggest battle appeared to be going on in northern Afghanistan, where just last week the Taliban was in control.

Europe's left wing leaders celebrate Socialists' victory in France

PARIS, June 3: Europe's left-wing leaders on Monday celebrated the Socialists' parliamentary election victory in France, saying it is part of a European trend toward preserving the welfare state, reports AP.

Critics, however, saw the election constituting a step backward from conservative President Jacques Chirac's efforts at free-market reform and budget-cutting to boost the private sector and qualify for Europe's single currency.

With Socialist leader Lionel Jospin named prime minister Monday, 13 of the 15 members countries in the European Union are governed by left-wing parties or coalitions.

"Europe is getting back to the roots of its great continental tradition, where the welfare state is reformed, not thrown away," Italy's left-wing Prime Minister Romano Prodi said.

A leftist French government would be more understanding if Italy failed to meet deficit-cutting requirements for the euro.

Prodi's sentiment was echoed by the Social Democratic Party in Germany, who will be trying to defeat Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservatives in national elections next year.

"Major and Juppe had to go; Kohl will follow," said party deputy-president Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul, referring to the recent defeat of conservative Prime Minister John Major in Britain and Prime Minister Alain Juppe in France.

Greece's premier, Costas Simitis, sent a congratulatory telegram to Jospin saying the telegram "opens new possibilities and prospects for all European Socialists. The Socialist choice of today is the choice of the Europe of tomorrow."



Lionel Jospin, leader of the Socialist Party in France, is shown in a portrait. — AFP/UNB photo

his party's surprise election victory. Blair offered no public comment on the Socialist victory.

Spanish Socialist party leader Felipe Gonzalez joined the throng of congratulations from the left, saying "this demonstrates a renewed push for European socialism."

Gonzalez lost the prime ministership after 14 years when his party was voted out of office last year.

His country's new conservative government underplayed fears that the French Socialists would derail attempts to introduce the single European currency, the euro, by 1999.

French plans to meet the Maastricht requirements for the euro "would not be affected by the change in government," said Finance Minister Rodrigo Rato.