

BRIEFLY

Israel seeks to nab PA spy chief:

Israel has issued an arrest warrant for a Palestinian intelligence officer on charges he was involved in the deaths of two Arab land dealers, Jerusalem police said Thursday. It also filed a complaint against the Palestinian Authority with the United Nations, AP reports from Jerusalem.

Israel wants to arrest Hussein Saadeh, head of Palestinian intelligence in the West Bank city of Ramallah, said Jerusalem police spokesman Shmuel Ben-Ruby.

The two victims, Farid Bashiti and Ali Jamhour, were suspected by the Palestinians of having sold land to Jews. Both were residents of Jerusalem and had Israeli identity cards, but it was not clear if either held Israeli citizenship.

CIA agent jailed for 23 yrs:

Harold Nicholson, the highest-ranking CIA agent ever charged with spying, was sentenced Thursday to 23 years in prison, the Justice Department said, AFP reports from Washington.

Nicholson, 46, pled guilty to espionage after prosecutors accused him of selling information to the Russians from June 1994 until his arrest in November 1996.

The 16-year veteran of the Central Intelligence Agency earned some 180,000 dollars from the Russians and could have been sentenced to life in prison. He was sentenced in Federal Court in Alexandria, Virginia.

2 killed in US shootout:

A plastics worker opened fire at a company in Santa Fe Springs Thursday after arguing with a colleague, killing two people and injuring four before turning the gun on himself, police said, AFP reports from Los Angeles.

After the altercation, plastics inspector Daniel Marsden, 38, began running through the building and shooting those in his path, said police spokesman Chuck Drylie.

Of the fatal victims, one aged 38, died of a bullet wound to the chest, and another, 55, died as a result of his multiple injuries.

4 Russian journalists freed:

Four Russian journalists who were kidnapped and taken hostage in Chechnya over three months ago have been released, Russian news agencies reported early yesterday, Reuter says from London.

Interfax and Itar-Tass agencies, monitored by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), said the freed journalists would return to Moscow shortly.

Three of the journalists are from Radio Russia and the fourth is a correspondent for Itar-Tass news agency.

Book on Jagjivan Ram published in Delhi:

The Vice President, Dr K R Narayanan, Thursday released the book *Adhunik Bharat Ke Nirmata Babu Jagjivan Ram* in PTI says from New Delhi.

The book, authored by Dr O P Maurya and published by the publication division, describes the various facts of the life, works and achievements of Jagjivan Ram.

Hailing Babuji as one of the pillars of modern India, Dr Narayanan said that he built India from the grass roots and gave it its finishing touches from the top.

Canadian killed in India:

A Canadian citizen, suspected of being the mastermind in the 1985 bombing of an Air India jumbo jet 'Kanishka', was killed while in police custody in India, CBC radio reported on Thursday, AFP says from Toronto.

All 329 people aboard the Air India Boeing 747 died when it exploded off the coast of Ireland on a flight from Canada, in a terrorist act blamed on Indian Sikh militants, 278 of the people on board were Canadian citizens.

The radio said, sources have confirmed that Talwinder Singh the chief suspect, a Canadian citizen, was captured, interrogated and then killed by Indian police.

US, ROK, DPRK officials meet in NY:

US, North and South Korean officials met in New York Thursday for the second time in a week to try to narrow differences over proposed four-party Korean peace talks, the State Department said, Reuter reports from Washington.

The department's Korea office director Mark Minto led the US delegation. Names of the North and South Korean negotiators were not immediately available.

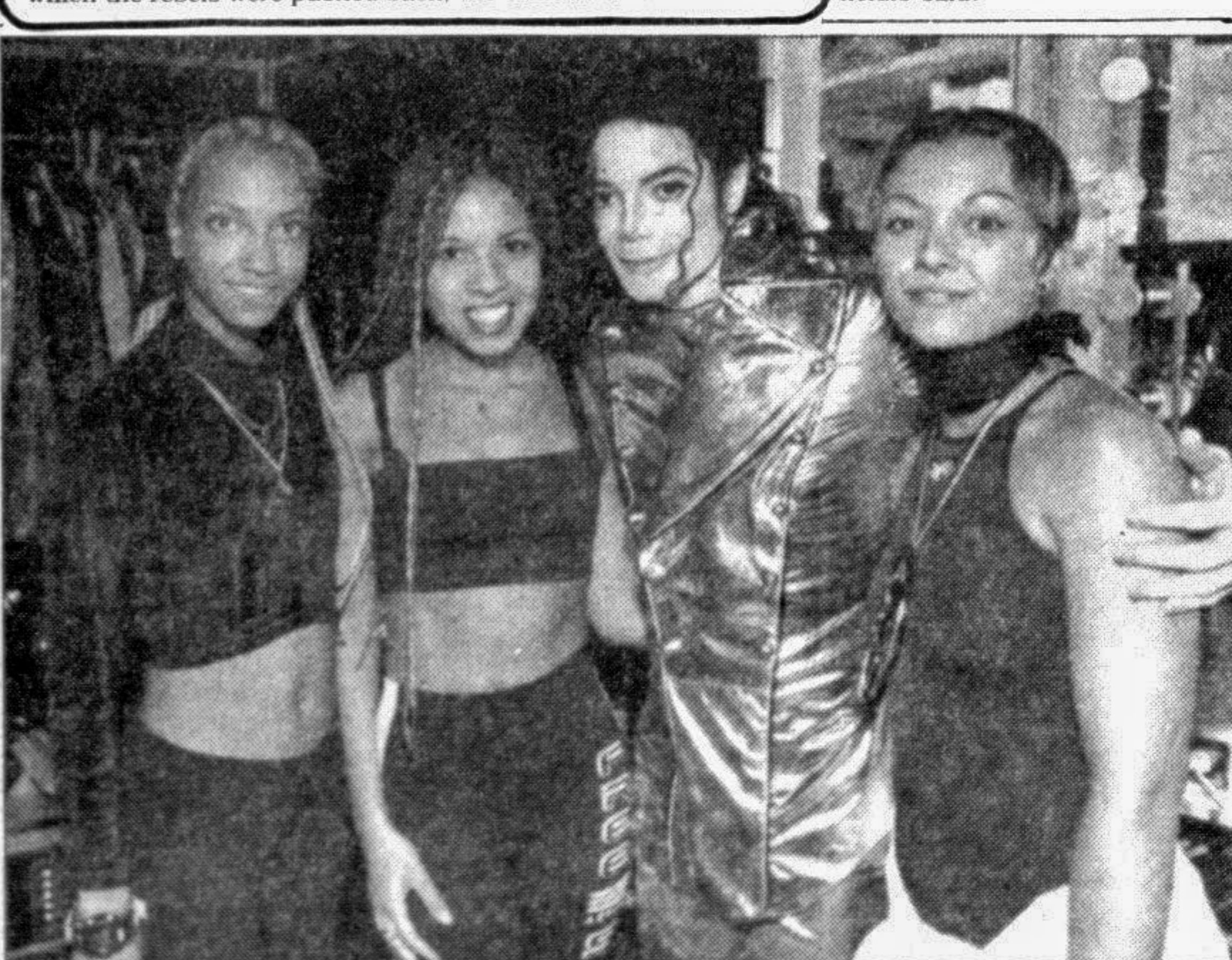
The talks aim to win Pyongyang's acceptance of a US-South Korean proposal launched last year to hold negotiations, also involving China, on a peace treaty to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

Rebel leader killed in Colombia:

A rebel soldier believed to be a leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) was killed in a clash at a border post near the Arauca river, military officials said Thursday, AFP says from Caracas.

"Commandant" Juan Mecha, member of the command of a FARC column, died in a dawn raid Wednesday by rebels on a battalion of paratroopers in Apure state some 600 kilometers (372 miles) southwest of the capital.

A senior Venezuelan army officer, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Morales Hernandez was shot twice in the leg in the attack, during which the rebels were pushed back, the officials said.



US mega pop star Michael Jackson poses with Ricky, Lee and Jazzy (L to R) of the German girlie rap group Tic Tac Toe prior to his concert in Cologne's Muegensdorfer Stadium Thursday. Following Michael Jackson's wish, Tic Tac Toe will perform as warm-up act during his concerts in Gelsenkirchen on June 15 and at the Hockenheimring on August 10.

Revolution in disease diagnosis, drug testing

CANBERRA, June 6: Australian scientists, after a decade of secret research, yesterday unveiled a microscopic machine that could revolutionise disease diagnosis and drug testing, reports Reuter.

The Nanomachine is a tiny biosensor that combines biology and physics — with moving parts the size of molecules — to detect molecules and identify minute amounts of substances.

Research team leader Bruce Cornell said the sensitive device can detect a range of substances, including drugs, hormones, viruses and pesticides and can identify gene sequences.

This biosensor is a unique blend of the ability of biology to identify individual types of molecule in complex mixtures, with the speed, convenience and

low cost of microelectronics," Cornell, from the cooperative research centre for molecular engineering and technology, said in a statement.

The sensor, tipped to be a billion dollar bonanza for Australia when it goes into commercial production in about two years, is the world's first functioning Nanomachine — machines with parts measured in billions of a metre.

Cornell and his team say it is so sensitive that if one sugar cube was thrown into Australia's world famous Sydney harbour, it could measure the increased sugar content.

The device will allow simple detection of almost all diseases within minutes from a small blood or saliva sample — ending the need to wait days for pathology test results.

PA rejects Netanyahu's ideas of peace accord

JERUSALEM, June 6: Palestinian leaders on Thursday rejected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's proposal to give them isolated chunks of the West Bank in a permanent peace agreement, reports AP.

"I think the idea is a very simple reflection of the Israeli position of devouring land," said Marwan Kanafani, a spokesman for Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat. "It's not only a non-starter, but a diversion from the main principle of land for peace."

On Wednesday, Netanyahu had outlined his ideas for a permanent peace agreement with the Palestinians to the Israeli Cabinet.

Netanyahu did not present any maps, but Israeli commentators said Thursday that according to the prime minister's outlines, Israel would seek to retain control of up to 55 per cent of the West Bank.

The Palestinians hope to establish a state in all of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with east Jerusalem as a capital. Israel captured those territories in the 1967 Mideast war.

Under the Netanyahu proposal, Israel would retain West

Bank land surrounding Jerusalem, including the Jewish settlement of Maale Adumim east of the city. It would also annex the Jordan valley and large settlement blocs, including Gush Etzion south of Jerusalem.

Israel would also seek to retain control over major West Bank roads and water sources.

If implemented, the plan would leave the Palestinians with disconnected patches of land that would make it very difficult to establish a state.

Netanyahu's senior aide, David Bar-Ilan, confirmed that there would be no geographic continuity, but said safe passages could be established between Israeli and Palestinian areas.

The proposal also implied that some smaller Jewish settlements would have to be dismantled or come under Palestinian sovereignty. Bar-Ilan said the proposal was a departure from the ideology of the ruling Likud Party, which had maintained that Israel must retain control over all of the West Bank and Gaza.

"This represents a tremen-

dous adjustment of expectations by the Likud Party. For the first time in its history, it admits there will be another entity" between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, Bar-Ilan told The Associated Press.

He said he expected the plan would win the support of four-fifths of the Israeli population. "There may be attacks from the extreme left or the extreme right, but the centre will support this plan," Bar-Ilan said.

In his appeal for a broad consensus, Netanyahu presented his proposal as an updated version of a plan presented to the Israeli Cabinet in 1968 by Yigal Allon, a leading figure in the Labour Party and mentor of the late Yitzhak Rabin.

The Allon plan was never formally adopted but served successive Labour governments as a guide for Jewish settlement construction in the West Bank. Under Allon's proposal, Israel would retain about 20 per cent of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and areas around Jerusalem, and the Palestinians would end up with a single land unit in the rest.

Mother Teresa accepts US Congressional Gold Medal

WASHINGTON, June 6: Mother Teresa on Thursday visited a bastion of power and influence to accept an award from the US Congress for her lifetime of service to the world's least powerful and influential, reports Reuter.

In an hour-long ceremony in capital, Rotunda, the frail, ailing Nobel peace prize winner accepted the Congressional gold medal for her tireless efforts ministering to the poor.

"Today we honour someone who shuns honours. We praise someone who would rather not be praised," Senate majority leader Trent Lott said.

"We all understand that she would rather, at this moment, be at one of her order's convents, feeding a hungry child, helping with an adoption or holding the hand of someone who would otherwise die alone," Lott said.

LTTE kills 2 cops

COLOMBO, June 6: Separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas shot dead two policemen wearing a key badge in eastern Sri Lanka today, local officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the constables on the Kalladi bridge in the district of Batticaloa, the officials said, reports AFP.

Gunmen of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacked the constables on the Kalladi bridge in the district of Batticaloa, the officials said.

Jayalalitha to appear in court next week



NEW DELHI, June 6: An Indian court Thursday ordered Jayalalitha Jayaram, a film-actress-turned-politician compared to former Filipino First Lady Imelda Marcos, to appear in court next week for rampant corruption, reports AFP.

The Madras High Court ordered Jayaram, 48, who ruled

the Southern State of Tamil Nadu for five years until she was trounced in provincial elections last year, to respond to corruption charges on Wednesday.

Judge S Sambandam said he "took cognizance" of formal charges alleging that the former had salted away "at least 19 million dollars."

A 30-member police team has given the court 750 documents showing that Jayaram and her cronies had acquired at least 160 plush properties, including lavish town houses and country estates besides a treasure trove of jewellery.

"The actual value of the assets might be 10 times more as the calculations are based on the registration value of the properties and not current real estate prices," an official said.

Jayaram's main house in Madras disgorged 10,500 sarees, 350 pairs of shoes, and 26 kilograms (57.2 pounds) of gold after a police raid last year.

People dying from levels of air pollution, UK researchers say

LONDON, June 6: People in cities are dying from levels of air pollution that are well below accepted national and international standards, researchers reported today, says Reuter.

Klea Katsouyanni of the University of Athens and researchers from 12 European cities looked at the effects of sulphur dioxide and black smoke on health.

Their findings reported in the British medical journal, showed that even at current accepted levels pollution still affects health and kills people, further reductions in levels are needed, they said.

"This is the first time there is a large coordinated study on air pollution effects on mortality whereby we combined 12 cities using exactly the same protocols and confirm the conclusions that have been re-

ported for single cities," Katsouyanni said in a telephone interview.

"There is a measurable effect of relatively high air pollution levels on mortality, which is a very important effect,"

But Katsouyanni, said the "relatively high" pollution levels are really not high and are well below accepted national and international standards, "if we reported this 10 years ago I think people would not have believed us."

The researchers studied data from Athens, Barcelona, Bratislava, Cracow, Cologne, Lodz, London, Lyons, Milan, Paris, Poznan and Wrocław, covering over 23 million people.

Katsouyanni, said countries are currently reassessing the accepted levels for air pollution, and pollution has declined from peak levels of the late 1950s and 60s.

War with Israel in 1967 was a mistake: King Hussein

AMMAN, Jordan, June 6: In a remarkably candid speech, King Hussein told his countrymen Thursday that he considers his decision to join other Arab nations in the 1967 war with Israel a major blunder, reports AP.

"In reality, it was probably our duty to try to prevent this country from being part of that battle," Hussein said in a statement to the nation on the 30th anniversary of the Six Day War.

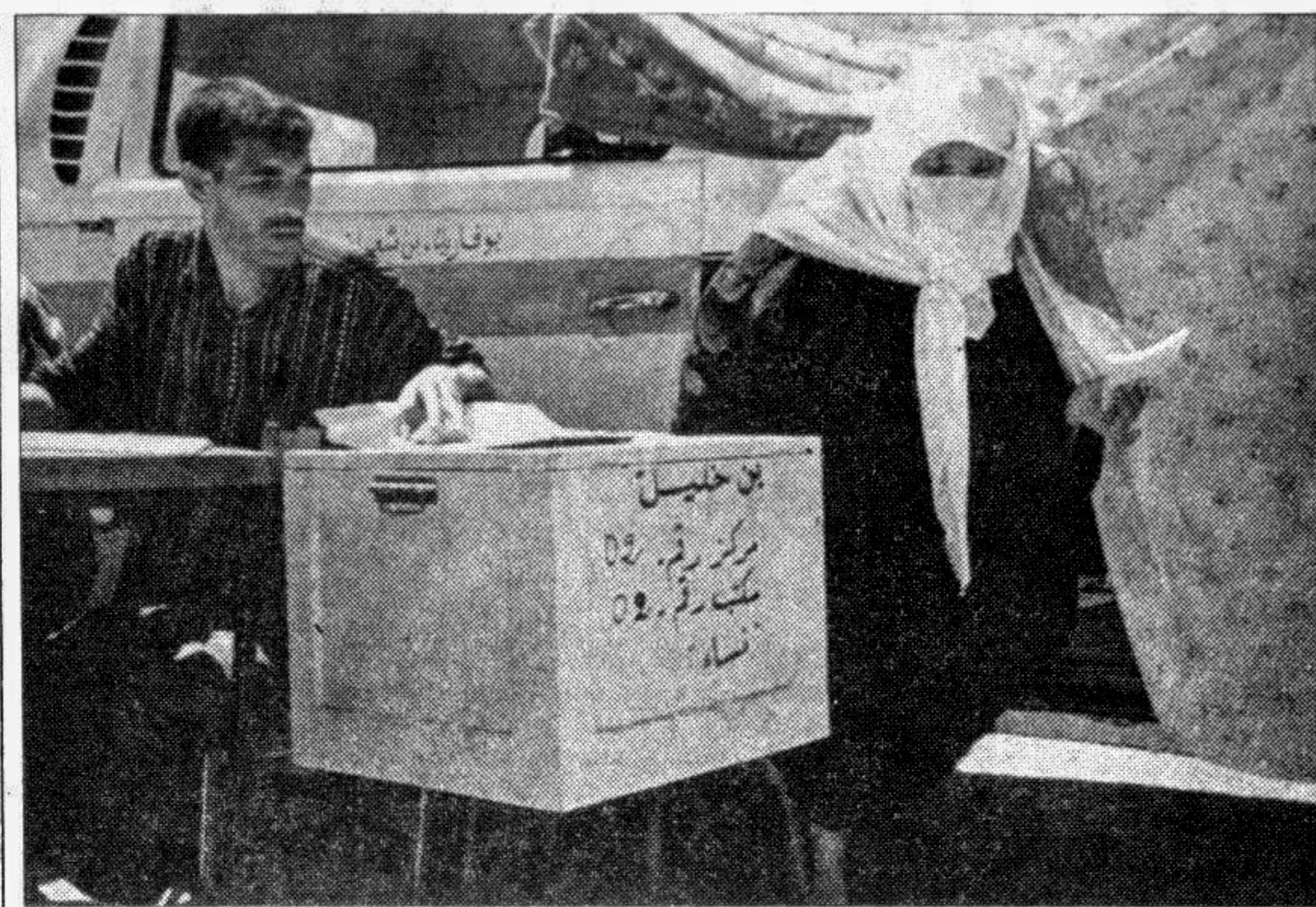
Hussein has alluded to the war as a mistake before but has rarely, if ever, been so frank. His speech was aimed at rallying support among Jordanians for his efforts to build peace

with Israel.

"Jordan signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, the only Arab country besides Egypt to do so. Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Saudi Arabia also fought Israel in the war."

Hussein rebuked Muslim fundamentalists and nationalists opposed to the settlement. Hussein blamed the humiliating defeat on a lack of coordination among the Arab armies.

In the half-hour speech broadcast by Jordan Radio, Hussein said the Arab mobilisation for the war was merely "propaganda, radio speeches, talk... that was not based on any reality or real preparation."



An Algerian woman prepares to cast her ballot Thursday at a mobile voting station in an Algiers suburb. Algerians went to the polls to elect a legislature for the first time since war with Islamic extremists flared in 1992, with the fear of more terrorist attacks looking over them.

— AFP/UNB photo

Opposition parties heading for defeat in Algerian polls

ALGIERS, June 6: Officials early Friday reported lower-than-expected turnout in parliamentary elections, pointing to defeat of opposition parties but also weak support for the army-backed regime, reports AP.

Results from Thursday's elections, the first since cancellation of a similar vote sparked a Muslim insurgency five years ago, were not expected until noon (1100 GMT).

President Liamine Zoueral, whose Democratic National Rally was tipped to win the election, had been seeking a strong turnout as a new mandate for his struggle to crush the insurgency that has left 60,000 dead in this petroleum-rich North African nation.

But the Interior Ministry reported before dawn that 66.3 per cent of the nation's nearly 17 million voters turned out for the election, down sharply from the 75 per cent rate in the presidential election two years earlier. Turnout was only 43 per cent in Algiers.

Low turnout was expected to undercut Zoueral's chief rival

in the elections, the moderate Islamic leader Sheikh Mahfoud Mahnah.

Mahnah, who leads the Movement for a Society of Peace and won 25 per cent in the presidential election, filed complaints for nearly 400 cases of election fraud.

The party later said the number would climb with more protests, including tampering with so-called "itinerant polling stations" used to gather votes from the scattered population.

"Movable polling stations still belong to the single-party era," he told a news conference late Thursday night.

But the low turnout would also hurt Zoueral, a retired general strengthened by the 75 per cent turnout rate in 1995 when he was first elected to the job to which he was appointed.

Exiting his polling booth on Thursday, Zoueral asked the Algerian people "to vote to combat terrorism." The Interior Ministry even extended voting an extra hour Thursday night in apparent hope of boosting participation.

But the Islamic Salvation Front, the party robbed of its imminent election victory in 1992 and later banned, had called for a boycott.

"What's the point of voting?" said Fatiha, a 47-year-old woman with five children who lives with her family in a school where her mother is a janitor.

"Each time we vote, nothing changes. We only get death." Some 300,000 security forces were deployed around the country to guard against attacks by Muslim militants trying to sabotage the vote.

The military patrols underlined the strife since the January 1992 army coup that aborted the nation's first multiparty parliamentary vote to thwart a likely victory by the Salvation Front.

Two bombs exploded Thursday near Djelfa, 250 kms (150 miles) south of the capital, and injured two Algerian election observers, said Noureddine Ait Messaoudene, a spokesman for Mahnah's party. One of them was a party member.

Cong leadership Rao's aide comes out in support of Sharad Pawar

NEW DELHI, June 6: Aides of former Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao yesterday came out openly in support of Sharad Pawar in the party's presidential poll, saying the organisation needed "a dynamic, forward looking and bold leader," reports AP.

Talking to newsmen here, former AICC General Secretary Devendra Dwivedi, said Pawar is the right choice at this critical juncture of our history."

Charging Congress President Sitaram Kesri, who is in race for the top post, with "doing little" to revitalise the organisation during the past 10 months, Dwivedi said "the events of the past one year have confirmed once again that there is no alternative to the Congress except a better revitalised and a new look Congress."

Jiang calls for stable Sino-US relationship

BEIJING, June 6: President Jiang Zemin has urged the United States to stabilise ties as anti-Beijing groups in Washington increase their calls to revoke favourable trade tariff rates for China, reports AP.

Jiang called for "active efforts" from all political circles in the United States to promote a healthy and stable Sino-US relationship, the official Xinhua news agency reported today.

"Sino-US relations have shown a trend towards improvement since the latter half of last year, and whether the opportunity can be seized to promote a healthy and steady relation requires concerted efforts," Jiang said.

Taliban offer 3-point peace package to its opponents

ISLAMABAD, June 6: Afghanistan's Taliban rulers are ready to hand over "exclusive control" of northern Afghanistan to its opponents, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said on Thursday, reports AP.

The Taliban religious army has been locked in a ferocious battle with its opponents, who threw them out of northern Afghanistan last week in a ferocious 16-hour battle.

At least 300 Taliban soldiers were massacred several leaders imprisoned, and several hundred soldiers taken captive.

At a news conference in the Pakistan capital, a Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman, Ifkhar Mursheed, said the Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar has signed off on a three-point peace package with the opposition, known

as the National Islamic Front for the Deliverance of Afghanistan.

The package agrees that the "northern parties should have exclusive control of the north," said Mursheed.

It also promises that the Taliban will not try to disarm its opponents and that the Taliban's former ally, Malik Pahlawan, would together with the Taliban, decide on the type of Islamic rule for northern Afghanistan.

Mursheed said Pahlawan was given the three-point agreement last Saturday.

Pahlawan's spokesman, Humayun Powzie, says the northern alliance is ready to talk to the Taliban but under the leadership of either the Organisation of Islamic Conference or United Nations.

Indonesia scraps plans to buy US F-16 fighter jets

JAKARTA, June 6: The government said Friday that it has cancelled a deal to buy nine F-16 fighter jets from the United States because of repeated criticism of Indonesia's human rights record by US congressmen, reports AP.

Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said the decision to cancel the fighter deal was conveyed in a letter that President Suharto sent to President Bill Clinton on Monday.

Indonesia also has decided to pull out of a US-sponsored International Military Education and Training programme, known as IMET, Alatas said at

a news conference.

Quoting from the letter, Alatas said the decision was a reaction to "wholly unjustified criticism in the United States Congress against Indonesia, which are linked to its participation in the IMET programme and the planned purchase of the F-16 planes."

Several members of Congress have recently urged Clinton to postpone or cancel the fighter deal because of alleged human rights abuses by Indonesia's military, particularly against separatists in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor.

NATO seeks close links with ME, N African states

LISBON, Portugal, June 6: Urged by its southern members, NATO is cautiously seeking enhanced links with North African and Middle Eastern nations at the same time as the alliance pushes ahead with expansion into eastern Europe, reports AP.

Although the agenda is dominated by discussions about bringing in new members from the former Soviet Bloc, next month's NATO summit in Madrid, Spain, will consider ways of improving ties with Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania.

"The new NATO can have a positive influence in the Mediterranean," Secretary-General Javier Solana wrote in an article published recently in three Arab newspapers. "To help build a peaceful, friendly, economically vibrant Mediterranean region is a major

strategic objective."

As they fly into Madrid the alliance leaders have only to glance at the map understand why Spain and Portugal are pressing them not to neglect the southern flank.

Lisbon is closer to violence-ravaged Algeria than it is to Paris, while the southern tip of Spain lies less than 20 kilometers (12 miles) from the Moroccan coast. By comparison, the plains of Poland and Hungary can appear remote from mainland Europe's most westerly nations.

Other NATO allies on the Mediterranean, including France and Italy, have backed the call of tighter relations with their neighbors to the south.

To further bolster the southern flank, France and Italy also lobbied at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers outside Lisbon last week for Romania and

Slovenia to be included along with Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, when the alliance starts its eastward enlargement.

To meet concerns of southern allies the North Atlantic Treaty Organization launched a "Mediterranean dialogue" in 1995 with the six North African and Middle Eastern nations.

Solana's predecessor as NATO chief, Willy Claes, said at the time that the new links would help counter Islamic fundamentalism, which he warned was "at least as dangerous" as the communist threat once faced by the alliance.

NATO stressed it was not seeking new enemies, but its decision to open contacts with friendly countries in the region reflected growing concern about and arc of instability stretching along NATO's southern flank from the Balkans, though the

Middle East, to North Africa.

In the two years since then NATO has made great stride toward it old Cold War enemies to the east, but advanced only cautiously to develop what Solana calls the "unexplored potential" of cooperation with the south.

"After five meetings, I think we have not moved at all," complained Muhammad Chabane, Egypt's ambassador to Belgium, where NATO is based. "They are very slow paced. So far, there is no meat to it."

At the Madrid summit, NATO will endeavor to put a little more flesh on the bones of the relationship.

The alliance plans to create new structure that will allow each of the five Mediterranean nations to hold regular meetings with the NATO allies. "It will provide the possibility of greater contact and give us a greater appreciation of the

worries and preoccupations of the Mediterranean countries," said Javier Conde, Spain's ambassador to NATO.

Other ideas on the table include offering observer status at some NATO military exercises, inviting delegations on fact-finding visits to NATO headquarters, and opening more places on peacekeeping and other courses at NATO's military schools.

"We're talking about making NATO more transparent, says Rodica Radam-Gordon, an Israeli diplomat involved in the NATO talks. "It's upgrading the dialogue, making it more political."

The aim is to build confidence and reduce mutual mistrust.

"We have got to spend more money on getting these people to know what NATO is all about," said Conde.