

# BRIEFLY

**Suharto to announce cabinet today:** Newly reelected President Suharto will announce his new Cabinet on Saturday as Indonesia battles its worst economic crisis in three decades. AP reports from Jakarta.

State Secretariat officials said on Friday that Suharto would name the lineup in a nationally televised address. The new ministers would be sworn in on Monday and hold their first Cabinet meeting with Suharto on Tuesday, the officials said.

**MQM activist's body found:** Police found the bullet-ridden body of a militant ethnic activist dumped in a park in the southern port city of Karachi, authorities said Friday. AP reports from Karachi.

The bloodied corpse was found Thursday in the central district of Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, they said.

The victim was an activist with Altal faction of the Mohajir Qami Movement, or MQM, which represents Indian Muslims who immigrated to Pakistan when it gained independence from Britain 50 years ago.

**Yeltsin suffering from sore throat:** President Boris Yeltsin cancelled his meetings Friday after doctors said he was suffering from an acute respiratory infection, officials said. AP reports from Moscow.

The Kremlin press service said Yeltsin, 67, was suffering from a sore throat because of the infection and was being treated with antibiotics. Yeltsin was staying at his country home outside Moscow and had not been hospitalised, according to officials.

**Liz Taylor released from Hospital:** Oscar-winning actress Elizabeth Taylor has returned home after spending nine days in hospital for a slight compression fracture in her lower back, her spokeswoman said Thursday. AFP reports from Los Angeles.

The actress fell at her Bel Air home on February 27 as she was preparing to celebrate her 66th birthday. She was taken to Cedars Sinai Hospital and left on Sunday, said her publicist Shirine Coburn. She returned on Tuesday for a routine examination.

**China to launch weather sat:** China will launch a weather satellite in October to replace two other satellites which have stopped functioning, the China Daily said yesterday. Reuter reports from Beijing.

The satellite, part of the Fengyun 1 series, will be placed in a synchronous solar orbit to replace two other satellites of the same type — one launched in 1988 and the other in 1990, the newspaper said.

The upcoming launch would be China's fourth for a weather satellite, the China Daily said, quoting an official of the National Meteorological Satellite Centre.

**USS Stennis arrives in Gulf:** The aircraft carrier USS Stennis arrived in the Gulf Thursday to replace the carrier USS George Washington, which will leave Saturday for home with four escort ships, the Pentagon said. AFP reports from Washington.

With the Stennis, the United States will temporarily have three aircraft carriers in the Gulf and some 44,000 soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen in the region.

But the departure of the George Washington will mark the first reduction in the size of the US fleet in the Gulf since the start of a US military buildup against Iraq last November.

**1 Cuban dies, 2 missing as boat sinks:** One person died and two others were missing Thursday when a small boat carrying 16 Cuban refugees capsized off the coast of Miami Beach, the Coast Guard said. AFP reports from Miami Beach.

Three Coast Guard cutters and a helicopter are searching the site of the shipwreck four (nautical) miles from Miami Beach, said Luis Diaz, a spokesman for the Coast Guard.

He said the Coast Guard received a warning signal and went out to meet the eight metre (24 foot) long boat. As the cutter approached, the boat capsized and dumped the passengers overboard, Diaz said.



Former Pakistan cricket captain and now politician Imran Khan, left, shakes hands with the President of Chechnya Aslan Maskhadov, right, prior to a reception at the Commonwealth Institute in London where the president met with members of the Muslim Community Thursday. — AP/UNB photo

## Number of nuclear bombs has shrunk by nearly half

WASHINGTON, Mar 13: Four out of five nuclear storage sites worldwide have been closed since the end of the Cold War and the number of bombs has shrunk by nearly half, a study to be released today showed, reports Reuter.

The survey by the Natural Resources Defence Council estimated the five declared nuclear power plants deployed about 36,000 nuclear weapons at the end of last year, down from nearly 70,000 in the mid-1980s.

The warheads are housed at an estimated 142 spots in 11 countries, "a five-fold decrease" in the number of storage sites in less than a decade, according to the council, a Washington-based group widely considered authoritative on nuclear-related issues.

The number of warheads and deployment sites was due to go on shrinking as older nuclear weapons continue to be retired and the United States and Russia pare their arsenals under Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) treaties.

"If one key to disarmament is verification and physical control, the trends in nuclear deployments... provide hope

that forces, weapons and materials can be constrained and controlled," especially if transparency increases it said.

William Arkin, a nuclear weapons expert who is one of the three co-authors of the study, estimated that the five nuclear powers maintained as many as 1,200 nuclear storage sites when US-Soviet tensions peaked for their last time in the mid-1980s.

"By 1990 that number had declined to 600 and today it's down" to an estimated 142, he said in a telephone interview.

No longer housing nuclear weapons on their soil today are: South Korea and the US Pacific territory of Guam as well as former Warsaw pact military alliance members Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and what were East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

Fourteen former Soviet republics also are no longer deployment sites: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

About 14,000 of the almost 36,000 existing warheads await

## Talks with BJP continues Jayalalitha denies rumours of setting conditions



J. Jayalalitha  
CHENNAI, Mar 13: AIADMK General Secretary Jayalalitha last night said she had not set conditions, such as dismissal of the DMK regime in Tamil Nadu or allotment of specific portfolios to persons of her choice, for extending support to a BJP-led government at the centre, reports PTI.

Talking to private television channels at her residence here, she said the AIADMK had wanted certain issues central to the interests of Tamil Nadu to

be incorporated in the common national agenda for the new government.

The BJP was, however, showing a negative attitude to this demand, and hence the delay in giving its letter of support, Jayalalitha said.

I am in touch with both L K Advani and A B Vajpayee, and discussions are still continuing, she added.

Jayalalitha was talking to reporters last evening informally at the residence of former minister Madhusoodanan. She had gone there to unveil the portrait of his mother who passed away recently.

Asked whether she had put any pre-conditions for extending support, she said, I do not wish to speak about it, the matter is still in the stage of discussions.

She said she would like to wait for the outcome of the discussions before giving more details about the developments to the press. "I will explain everything to you later."

Asked whether she was planning to undertake a trip to Delhi in the near future, she merely said, "I will let you know when I go."

## Landslide claims 20 lives in northern Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, Mar 13: At least 20 people were killed and dozens more were missing after a torrent of mud and rocks roared down a mountain in Pakistan's rugged Kashmir province, the authorities said Friday, reports AP.

Rescue workers were struggling to reach the remote villages deep within the Himalayan Mountains in north-eastern Pakistan, they said.

It wasn't immediately clear when the landslide occurred, but in recent weeks relentless rains have battered much of Pakistan causing flash floods in southwestern Baluchistan province and landslides in the northern mountain regions.

Authorities in the Kashmir capital of Muzaffarabad said soldiers were being recruited to try to reach the area of the landslide.

Tens of thousands of Pakistani soldiers are deployed in Kashmir, a disputed territory that was divided between India and Pakistan when the Asian subcontinent gained its independence in 1947.

In Baluchistan people were struggling to recover from the devastating floods of recent weeks that left 300 people dead and another 40,000 people homeless, their sun-baked mud homes washed away.

On Friday the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies appealed for \$535,000 to help victims of the floods.

Still 1,500 people are missing since floods roared through the Turbat district of Baluchistan province, located 1,100 kilometers (660 miles) southwest of the Pakistani capital, Islamabad.

Heavy rains turned the usually dry Dasht river into a torrent that destroyed thousands of mud and brick homes in the poor, remote area.

The flood waters receded last week, olera epidemic in hundreds of villages littered by animal carcasses.

The Red Cross fears further floods when the snow melts in mountains to the north and the annual spring rains begin, the Red Cross statement said.

## Lankan jets bomb 2 LTTE camps

COLOMBO, Mar 13: Sri Lankan Air Force jets today bombed two Tamil tiger rebel camps close to where government troops are trying to take a strategic town, Defence Ministry officials said, reports Reuter.

A large number of rebels were killed or wounded in the attack on the guerilla camps north of Mankulam town, some 260 km northeast of the capital Colombo, they said.

There was no immediate response from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The bomber pilots reported that they had successfully destroyed the rebel camps, the government officials said.

## Clinton likely to visit India in September

WASHINGTON, Mar 13: President Bill Clinton is likely to visit India in September, US officials have said, reports PTI.

President Clinton is likely to make three trips to Asia this year — to China in June, to India and Pakistan in September and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit in late November, they said yesterday.

Clinton who was supposed to visit New Delhi, some time in February last postponed it because of elections in India.

The Chinese visit on the other hand is being advanced five months ahead of schedule as it is felt that waiting too long will neutralise the positive impact of Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to Washington.

## Al-Fayed emerged satisfied after meeting with French judge

PARIS, Mar 13: Egyptian millionaire Mohammed Al-Fayed emerged "satisfied" after a two-hour meeting Thursday with a French judge probing the deaths of his son Dodi and Diana, Princess of Wales, his lawyer said, reports AFP.

Lawyer Georges Kiejman told reporters that Al-Fayed felt "satisfied" after his first meeting with investigating Magistrate Herve Stephan, who is in charge of the probe into the August 31 crash in Paris.

Al-Fayed had "confirmed in a written statement his confidence and his gratitude to the judge and to police Kiejman said.

Kiejman said he was speaking for Al-Fayed, owner of the plush Ritz Hotel where the couple spent their last hours, as he was moved obviously by having to evoke details about the crash.

The lawyer stressed that his client, who hurriedly left the Paris lawcourts accompanied by nine bodyguards, met the judge as a civil party in the probe.

## CPP meet to elect party leader Mar 16 'Uncertainty may compel Indians to see another polls in 2 years'

NEW DELHI, Mar 13: India, plagued by political uncertainty is most likely to see another elections in two years, former premier Vishwanath Pratap Singh said in remarks published today, reports AFP.

Singh, who headed India's first coalition government in 1989-90, said neither the Hindu nationalists nor the Congress, the nationalists' arch foe, would be able to provide a stable administration.

Nationalist leader Atal Behari Vajpayee admitted late Thursday his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) only had the support of 240 members in the 545-seat parliament.

The Congress has 141 seats and the outgoing United Front coalition 91.

Vajpayee's bid to be sworn in as prime minister as the head of a nationalist coalition following deadlocked elections re-

ceived a setback when a key ally refused to give its backing in writing.

Former premier Singh said Vajpayee's predicament only showed the uncertainty of coalition politics.

"The price of an unstable government and the price of another election has to be weighed," The Statesman and other newspapers quoted him as saying.

"Nobody wants another election, but I don't think it can be wished away."

"Whether it is a BJP or non-BJP government, it will not be in office for long, definitely not more than two years... even if the Congress and United Front come together, there will be problems."

The February-March elections have led to a badly-fragmented parliament.

PTI adds, the much awaited meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party to elect its leader has been postponed and would now be held on March 16.

"The CPP meeting scheduled to be held on March 14 has been rescheduled to March 16 at 5:00 pm, AICC General Secretary Oscar Fernandes announced.

The change in the schedule of the meeting took place following requests from MPs that it be deferred in view of the holy festival and weekend.

The Congress working committee last week had already requested Sonia Gandhi to help the party evolve a consensus on the CPP leadership.

Party leaders Sharad Pawar, Vijaybhaskara Reddy, Rajesh Pilot, Dr M Anmohan Singh, K Karunakaran and Madhavrao Scindia are prominent contenders for the CPP leadership.

## US Senate calls for trial of Iraqi president

WASHINGTON, Mar 13: The Senate took up a broadly supported measure Thursday calling for an international tribunal to try Iraqi President Saddam Hussein for war crimes, reports AP.

The resolution, by Sens. Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania and Byron Dorgan of North Dakota, was expected to be overwhelmingly approved on Friday.

The measure, largely symbolic and a gesture of Senate frustration at getting the Iraqi leader to comply with UN resolutions, urges President Bill Clinton to petition the United Nations to establish an international tribunal "for the purpose of indicting, prosecuting and imprisoning" the Iraqi leader.

"The indictment itself, even in absentia, could give the United States the high moral ground," said Specter.

During brief debate on the resolution, no one spoke against it and sponsors predicted an overwhelming vote of approval Friday.

Dorgan told the Senate the Saddam had used chemical weapons on his enemies, both inside and out, had waged war against Iran and Kuwait, had attacked Israel and had plotted the assassination of former President George Bush.

## Astronomers spot baby galaxy

NEW YORK, Mar 13: Astronomers say they've spotted the most distant object known, a baby galaxy so far away that its starlight may have taken 12.2 billion years to reach Earth, reports AP.

That means it's being seen as it appeared when the universe was only about 820 million years old, just a "blink of an eye" after the universe began, said astronomy professor James Graham of the University of California at Berkeley.

Those numbers depend on the assumption that the universe is 13 billion years old. That's reasonable, but scientists disagree on the exact age.

Astronomers can't make out individual stars in the galaxy; only their combined light can be detected. It's the earliest starlight ever seen, Graham said.

Studying such early galaxies should help scientists discover how present-day galaxies formed and when, Graham said. The baby galaxy may have been on its way to merging with other infant galaxies to form a mature one.

Scientists have spotted a series of infant galaxies at huge distances in recent years. The newfound galaxy, called RD1, doesn't set a record by much. Under standard assumptions, RD1 is 12.2 billion light years away, about 90 million light years farther than the last record-holder.

## New cancer cases decline for 1st time in US

WASHINGTON, Mar 13: The rate of new cancer cases among Americans inched down for the first time, meaning over 70,000 fewer people than expected were diagnosed between 1992 and 1995, the government said Thursday, reports AP.

The good news comes after two decades of increasing cancer cases — and almost two years after doctors spotted the first-ever drop in cancer deaths.

But everybody didn't benefit: some cancers, such as deadly melanoma, still are rising, and black men and Asian women have missed out on the progress.

"We have to make sure the best (medical) practices are being applied to everyone," said National Cancer Institute Director Richard Klausner, warning that cancer remains "a daunting problem."

"As exciting as today is, and it is historic, the gains... are fragile," agreed Assistant Surgeon General John Marks, who said problems such as recent increases in teen-age smoking threaten to fuel a rebound.



Benazir Bhutto, left, former prime minister of Pakistan, talks with Asfandiyar Wali, centre, member of Awami National Party (ANP) and Ajmal Khattak, President of ANP after a meeting Thursday, in Islamabad. Khattak whose was ally of Premier Nawaz Sharif's government was separated, planning to join Benazir for grand alliance against Sharif government. Benazir with other leaders vowed to start campaign soon to throw away Sharif's government. — AP/UNB photo

## Arabs seek resumption of spl UN session on Palestine

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 13: The 22-member Arab group is requesting the resumption of an emergency special session of the UN General Assembly on Palestine, Arab sources said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

It also wants the reconvening of a regular assembly session to make a new bid to upgrade the UN observer status of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), they said. The aim is to hold both meetings next Tuesday.

The emergency session would be to follow up a call the assembly made last November for a conference of the parties to the fourth Geneva Convention, which bars settlements on occupied territory, to enforce its provisions in the Israeli-occupied territories.

Last November's resolution, adopted by an overwhelming majority, asked Switzerland as the repository of the convention of the PLO wants the assembly to reiterate the call for a meeting of experts, by the end of April, and to make a renewed call for a meeting of all signatories of the convention.

AFP adds, Lebanese President Elias Hrawi and his Syrian counterpart Hafez Al Assad are

due to hold a summit meeting in Damascus on Saturday a Lebanese official said Thursday.

## S'pore police arrest 200 suspected illegal immigrants

SINGAPORE, Mar 13: In the latest operation against illegal immigrants from crisis-stricken Southeast Asian countries, Singapore police arrested nearly 200 suspected immigrants in an overnight raid, reports AP.

In an island-wide operation Thursday night, police raided coffee shops, construction sites and lodging houses. Those arrested came from China, Thailand, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Many of them were working illegally at construction sites.

The raids are part of stepped-up efforts to wipe out the illegal immigrant problem in Singapore, police said in a statement.

The summit will also be attended by Lebanese parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and Prime Minister Rafic Hariri, the official told.

The talks will focus on last week's Israeli proposal to withdraw from South Lebanon, he said.

Last Saturday, Hariri held talks in Damascus with Assad, Syrian Vice President Abdel-Halim Khaddam and with the Foreign Minister on the proposal.

Syrian Foreign Minister rejected any negotiations over the 20-year-old UN Security Council resolution 425 stipulating an immediate Israeli withdrawal from Southern Lebanon during a trip to Beirut last week.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has proposed that Israel withdraw its troops which occupy a border zone in South Lebanon if the Lebanese government agreed to take charge of security in region.

Syria the main power broker in Lebanon with about 35,000 troops stationed there, refuses to make any deals with Israel unless the Jewish state returns the Golan Heights it captured from Syria in 1967 and annexed in 1981.

## Ethnic Albanians reject Serb offer for talks

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia, Mar 13: Anxious to stave off further international sanctions, Serb leaders came to Kosovo province with hints of autonomy for ethnic Albanians. But residents — along with the United States — dismissed the offer as propaganda, reports AP.

The proposal for talks that ultimately could lead to autonomy is "a farce, worthy only of a criminal and fascist-like regime," said Adem Demaci, leader of the Albanians' Parliamentary Party of Kosovo and an activist who has spent decades in Serb jails.

"They came as lords to their servants, to ask if the servants have any complaints," he added.

In Washington, the State Department called the Serb overture Thursday "a propaganda exercise."

"It seems like the Belgrade authorities are proposing things that are designed to fail," spokesman James P Rubin said.

More than 90 people have died in Kosovo since Feb 28 in two police offensives against Albanian separatists in the restive southern province of Serbia. Serbia is the larger of Yugoslavia's two remaining republics.

Serb police said they were acting against militants of the Kosovo Liberation Army who are pressing for independence in the province, where ethnic Albanians outnumber Serbs 9-to-1. But Albanian leaders say the police massacred dozens of civilians, including women and children.

The US State Department has accused Serb forces of "ethnic cleansing" of Albanians in Kosovo and insisted that Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic could have prevented the slaughter.

Serbia's Deputy Prime Minister Ratko Markovic arrived in Kosovo's capital, Pristina, with the message that "this is a problem of Serbia, and we are capable of solving it ourselves."

Despite international sympathy for their plight, the Albanians are in a tough spot diplomatically.

The United States and other world powers have signaled their opposition to Kosovo's independence from Serbia — they fear a change of borders. Britain and the United States made an unsuccessful bid for UN Security Council backing for the measures. Instead, the council issued a statement Wednesday emphasizing Yugoslavian territorial integrity.

## US ready to offer army training to Balkan states

WASHINGTON, Mar 13: The United States is prepared to offer military training to Balkan countries neighbouring Kosovo to help bolster stability in the volatile region, the State Department said Thursday, reports AP.

The training would be offered under NATO's Partnership for Peace programme which counts Albania, Bulgaria and other countries in the region as members.

"It would be to give them the confidence that their military will be in a position to operate and defend their borders and be able to prevent an outflow of refugees from cascading into a regional military conflict," said State Department spokesman James Rubin.

Scores of ethnic Albanians have died in a Serbian crackdown launched earlier this month on Kosovo, a southern province where Albanians make up 90 per cent of the population.

The United States is worried that the violence in Kosovo could spread from Macedonia and draw forces from other countries in the region into the conflict.

Meanwhile, the Serbian government on Thursday invited

the main leader of the Kosovo Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova, and other Albanian representatives to talks with a Serb delegation, the state news agency Tanjug said.

The government asked Rugova to meet the delegation today in the province's capital Pristina, it said.

Rugova's Kosovo Democratic League Thursday refused to meet the delegation saying it was not offering real talks. No Albanian leader showed up for talks with the Serb government delegation, saying they had received no formal invitation and demanding international mediation for the negotiations.

The Serbian government said in a statement it had not "sent invitations Thursday, as it did not want to be the one to designate the representatives of the Albanian ethnic minority."

The delegation, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Ratko Markovic, also invited Rugova's main political rival, Adem Demaci of the Parliamentary Party, as well as Social Democrat Luleta Pul-Begirli, Christian Democrat Mark Krasnjuh, Trade Unionist Hajrulah Gorani, and Hizvi Islami of the Peasant Party.