Washington's permanent representative to the UN Bill Richardson meets with Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga in Colombo on Saturday.- AP/UNB photo

Muslim guerillas kill 17 in Kashmir

JAMMU, India, Apr 19: At least 17 Hindus were killed by Muslim separatist guerrillas in an overnight raid on a remote village in India's Kashmir state, a spokesman for the border security force said Sunday, reports AFP.

The spokesman said heavily armed guerrillas descended on the village of Barankot, some 200 kilometres north of the Kashmir winter capital Jammu, late Saturday and opened fire indiscriminately on

claim of responsibility for the

Police said troops were being sent to the village, which takes two days to reach because of poor roads.

In the past six months, at least 30 Hindus have been killed by Muslim separatists fighting for Kashmir's secession from India. The rebel drive has claimed more than 20,000 lives in the disputed state since 1989.

India accuses neighbouring Pakistan, which administers part of Kashmir, of fomenting insurgency. Islamabad denies the charge but extends diplomatic support to the movement for self-rule.

Kashmiri Muslim insurgent groups want a UN-brokered ref-There has so far been no erendum to decide the future of Kashmir, the only Muslimdominated province in Hindumajority India. Some factions want a merger with Pakistan while others want indepen-

BUEFFIY

Chinese dissident off to US: China's most prominent political prisoner, Wang Dan, was today put on board an aircraft bound for the United States following his release on medical parole, a dissident close to the

family said, AFP reports from Beijing. Xu Liangying told AFP he was telephoned by Wang's mother who said the student leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square prodemocracy demonstrations had been put on a flight departing Beijing at around 9 am. He said Wang was accompanied by a US diplomat.

Austria goes to polls: Austria's 5.8 million voters went to the polls yesterday in presidential ballots, with outgoing head of state Thomas Klestil predicted to the comfortably re-elected for a second six-year term, AFP says from Vienna.

The 65-year-old former diplomat, who was elected in 1992 on the ticket of the conservative Austrian People's Party (OEVP) is credited with 60-66 per cent of the vote according to the latest opinion polls. Four other candidates are standing, but none is expected to garner more than 20 per cent.

Pakistani fighter crashes: A Pakistani fighter aircraft crashed Saturday during a routine training flight, the air force announce, AFP reports from Islamabad.

The pilot ejected safely from the plane which came down near the town of Gojra in Punjab province, the statement said, without identifying the type of the aircraft. An inquiry has been ordered to investigate the cause of the crash.

Lawyer shot dead in Colombia: Criminal defence lawyer and human rights advocate Eduardo Umana was shot dead Saturday in his capital city office, the victims' family said, AFP reports from Bogota.

The victim's brother, German, said two men and a woman arrived at Umana's office and, after subduing his secretary, shot him in the head. The family blamed the killing on ultra-right

Blast kills 3 in China: An explosion at the Fuzhou railway station in southeastern China killed three people and injured six others, the official Xinhua News Agency reported late Sunday, AP says from Beijing.

Police were investigating the cause of the early Friday blast, which according to eyewitnesses was caused by the explosion of a passenger's luggage left between two coaches, the report said. It said that two of the six injured were in serious condition.

Canadian PM to visit Cuba: Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien confirmed in Santiago Saturday that he will travel to communist ruled Cuba soon but did not specify when the visit would take place, AFP reports

from Santiago. It would be Chretien's first visit to President Fidel Castro's Cuba, and the first such visit to Havana by a Canadian Prime Minister while in office. In Ottawa earlier Saturday, officials privately said the trip was expected to take place around April

Israeli shepherd shot dead: one Israeli was killed and a second one wounded Sunday in a shooting outside Hebron, Israel Radio reported, AP says from

Israel Radio said the shooting occurred after a dispute between Israeli and Palestinian shepherds. The Palestinians grabbed the Israelis' weapons and shot them, the radio report said. Settler leader Aharon Domb said one of the Israelis was killed and another critically wounded in the shooting in the West Bank hills south of Hebron.

Congolese editor arrested: A Congolese newspaper editor was arrested Saturday after publishing allegations that a government official kept holding cells at his home where opponents were allegedly tortured and

killed, AP says from Kinshasa Andre Ipakala, editor and proprietor of La Reference Plus daily newspaper, was arrested at his home, employees of the publication said. Officials did not comment on the jailing, which came two days after the newspaper printed an allegation against a senior leader of President Laurent Kabila's former rebel movement by a local human rights group known as

Japan-Russia talks end without major progress

ITO, Japan, Apr 19: Address- cause of a territorial dispute ing each other as Boris and Ryu. the leaders of Russia and Japan went fishing together Sunday in a sign of their friendship and mutual commitment to conclude a formal peace treaty by 2000, reports AP.

ANADDEM-F.

At this weekend's "no necktie" summit at a seaside resort outside of Tokyo, the two leaders picked up where they left off at their last meeting in Siberia five months ago.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin and Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto reaffirmed their personal ties and proposed expanded economic cooperation between their nations.

However, many of the same old issues which have long dogged relations between Japan and Russia prevented the two leaders from making major

progress at this summit. Five decades after World War II, Russia and Japan have yet to sign a peace treaty, mainly be-

over four tiny islands in the southern Kuril chain. Soviet troops seized the islands in the closing days of the war. Yeltsin and Hashimoto said

they discussed various issues relating to the promised peace treaty, including one "serious" Japanese proposal that neither side would disclose. But there were no major breakthroughs. Both sides discussed cooper-

ation in space development. business training for Russians, peaceful uses for nuclear energy and the clean-up of oil spills. Other initiatives, according

to Japanese and Russian officials, included: — an agreement to set up an investment company to encourage Japanese investments

in Russia. a proposal from Yeltsin that Japan and Russia build a fish-processing facility on the disputed islands together, an idea which Tokyo promised to

Lankan navy sinks 5 rebel boats, 10 killed

COLOMBO, Apr 19: Navy, gunboats attacked a flotilla of Tamil rebel boats off Sri Lanka's northeastern coast early Sunday, sinking at least five of them, a military official said, reports AP.

At least ten Tamil Tiger rebels were killed in the attack off the coast of Trincomalee, a key navy base said the official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Four rebel boats were damaged in the confrontation, which lasted about an hour, the official said. There were no casualties among the navy, he

Further details were not

immediately available. The rebels are fighting for a separate homeland for minority Tamils in Sri Lanka's north and east, claiming that they are discriminated against by the majority Sinhalese who control the government and the military.

Christ's statue bleeding in India!

CALCUTTA, Apr 19: A church in the eastern Indian city of Calcutta was swarming with members of the minority Christian community over the weekend after word spread that blood was oozing from two statues of Jesus Christ kept there, reports AP.

Hundreds of people rushed to two houses in the premises of the city's Trinity Church after resident Ajanta Chatterjee reported seeing blood on the hands, feet and head of a small statue of the crucified Jesus on Thursday.

The visitors included curious Hindus and Muslims as well. eyewitnesses said.

Hours later, her neighbor Amalendu Mandal also claimed seeing trickles of blood on a sixinch statue in his room, local residents said.

As crowds welled over the next few days, local police rushed reinforcements to the site to control the crowds. Eight devotees are being allowed at a time to go up a narrow flight of stairs to Chatterjee's house where the 18-inch statue is

Experts of the governmentrun Central Forensic Research Laboratory took samples of the blood Sunday after a group of rationalists challenged the dis-

A group of nuns from Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity visited the church Saturday to have a glimpse of the "bleeding" statues and prayed in the church courtyard but refused to comment.

Similar religious passion had gripped India two years ago when millions of Hindus thronged temples across the country to feed statues of the elephant-headed God Ganesha spoonfuls of milk, which was said to have disappeared.

Iran blasts US move to operate Farsi radio station

TEHRAN, Apr 19: Despite assurances that a US-funded Persian-language radio service will not aim to undermine Iran's government, Tehran on Saturday criticized the planned move as a throwback to the time of antagonistic relations

with the United states, reports "These kinds of activities show more contradictions between words and actions of the US officials toward the Islamic Republic of Iran," Mahmoud Mohammadi, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, said. "This is a return back to the

former policies of the United

The administration of US President Bill Clinton had originally opposed the broadcasts, arguing that the radio service could undermine Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's call for improved contacts with the United States. The broadcasts were ordered by Congress

The administration has said that Farsi language programming could offer political and foreign news, without becoming

an anti-government station. Ties between Iran and the United States began to thaw slightly after Khatami's call, with the two sides allowing wrestling teams to visit the other country earlier this year.

Iraq observes 'Dignity Day'

BAGHDAD, Apr 19: President Saddam Hussein joined tens of thousands of Iraqi volunteer soldiers in a show of force in Baghdad on Saturday, as cracks began to appear in February's weapons accord with the United Nations, reports AFP.

Dressed in civilian clothes and sporting a hat, Saddam along with senior Baath Party enemies.

Iraq said it had assembled a million-strong volunteer force in February to repel a possible US attack during the Iraqi-UN crisis over disarmament, which was defused by the Feb 23 accord brokered by UN chief Kofi Annan.

Iraq's dispute with UN weapons inspectors also flared again on Saturday, with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Said Al-Sahhaf accusing chief UN arms inspector Richard Butler of issuing a false and biased report.

"It draws groundless, false and erroneous conclusions dictated by political motives." Sahhaf told reporters in Cairo.

Arafat accuses Hamas of playing into Israeli hands

RAMALLAH. West Bank, Apr 19: Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has accused the militant Hamas group of playing into Israeli hands, saying suicide attacks give Israel an excuse not to hand over more of the West Bank, reports Reuters.

"Don't you believe that some of these military attacks have delayed handing over the land to us until now? This is the truth," Arafat said in an interview broadcast on Saturday night on the Orbit Satellite Television News channel.

Arafat said he was committed to his side of the Oslo interim peace deals but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was "looking for reasons and excuses to delay im-

plementing agreements."
"We should not give him these excuses. We must fulfil our commitments," Arafat said in the 90-minute interview. He said Netanyahu would

benefit if a suicide attack were to take place now in Tel Aviv," it would be an opportunity for him to tell the world I told you so," Arafat said. The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas, Arafat's

main opposition, has killed scores of Israelis in suicide bombing in an attempt to wreck peace deals signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) since

Two suicide bombings in Jerusalem in 1997 depended a deadlock in peace talks that has

LONDON, Apr 19: Talks here

between the Pakistan govern-

ment and the leader of the Mut-

tahida Qaumi Movement (MQM)

have failed to make headway in

resolving the complaints of the

Mohajirs in Pakistan, reports

who lives in exile in London.

held several rounds of talks

with Nisar Ali Khan, Pakistan

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's

emissary, through the week,

MQM sources said. Hussain in-

sisted that promises across the

table were not being matched by

cadres are being terrorised and

killed in hundreds in Pak-

istan's Sindh province. The

MQM headquarters in London

The MQM alleges that its

action on the ground.

MQM leader Altaf Hussain,

lasted for more than a year. Netanyahu has said a long overdue Israeli troop withdrawal from more of the West Bank depends on whether Arafat crackdown harder on Hamas and other militant

The United States is pushing proposals for a staged Israeli withdrawal from a reported 13.1 per cent of the West Bank in return for Palestinian security steps.

US special envoy Dennis Ross is expected to return to the region later this week to try to advance the plan after failing to narrow deep differences during a visit last month. Tensions between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority

have soared following the death

in the West Bank last month of

Hamas master bomb maker Muhyideen Al-Sharif. The authority says other members of Hamas's military wing, Izz El-Deen Al-Qassam, killed Sharif in an internal dispute and has detained sev-

eral men it says have confessed

to the killing.

Hamas denies the charges and has alleged that Palestinian security officials collaborated with Israel in Sharif's killing. Its military wing has threatened revenge attacks in Israel, and Hamas says it is carrying out its own investigation.

Arafat appealed to his people to forge national unity in order to regain their occupied land

US President Bill Clinton was handed a saxophone by an Argentine journalist nicknamed

"Figureti" as he and other leaders attending the Summit of Americas made their way to

lunch in Santiago, Chile on Saturday. Looking on are Canadian Prime Minister Jean

Chretien, left, and Bahamian Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham, centre. — AP/UNB photo

No headway in Pak govt talks

with MQM in London

keeps detailed records of all in-

of Sharif's Pakistan Muslim

League (PML), has been threat-

ening to withdraw from the rul-

ing coalition if the government

MQM is unlikely to carry out its

threat after the strong plea by

the Pakistan government emis-

the MQM leader that the gov-

ernment in Pakistan has no

control over the forces terroris-

ing the MQM. These forces were

described as the "agencies" and

the MQM has been alleging that

these are government agencies,

the largest of them being the

Inter Services Intelligence (ISI)

sarv at the London talks.

However, sources said the

Khan is believed to have told

cannot protect the Mohajirs.

The MQM, which is an ally

but he rejected what he said were attempts by Hamas to form a parallel authority.

"This is totally rejected. We approve of political pluralism but we reject military pluralism," Arafat said. He criticised Netanyahu and

his right wing government for not implementing agreements, and said Palestinian patience was wearing thin. "We had a seven-year-upris-

ing. We can start all over again for 20 years if Israel continues to refrain from meeting its commitments. All options are open, 'Arafat said. AP adds: Arafat said the

British Prime Minister Tony Blair's visit to the Palestinian areas in the next few days is important because Europe can put economic pressure on Israel. Some 70 per cent of Israel's trade is with Europe, he said. US Vice-President Al Gore and US Mideast peace coordina-

tor Dennis Ross are both expected to visit the region during the next few weeks. Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians have stalled since March 1997, when Israel began building a Jewish

settlement in traditionally Arab east Jerusalem. Reuter also adds: British Prime Minister Tony Blair will present ideas from the European Union to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu today in hopes of resuscitating

"To us this was clear confes-

The present round of talks

ended with an offer by Hussain

to wait and see - but only for

some time. Sharif, who per-

sonally intervened in the talks

through a telephone call from

Islamabad, promised more

stern action to stop the "agen-

cies" from terrorising the Mo-

hajirs — the name for Muslims

who migrated from India to

Pakistan during the partition

sued from here, MQM leader

Mohammed Anwar declared,

Earlier, in a statement is-

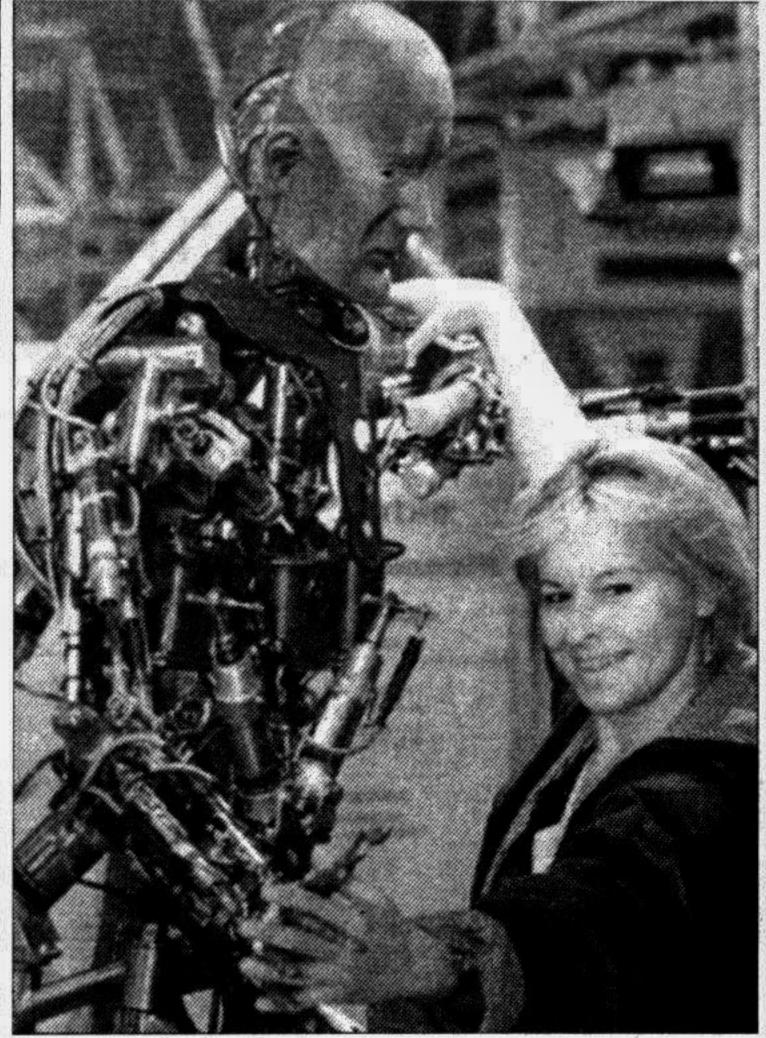
sion by a senior government

leader that the government is

not fully in charge in Pakistan,"

an MQM leader told IANS.

Middle East peace talks.



Hostess Iris Frohwein shows to photographers the German company Festo's Tron-x, a robot which is driven with compressed air, at the industrial fair in Hanover, northern Germany, yesterday. The biggest industrial fair of the world will open its doors for the public today.

UUP endorses N Ireland peace plan

BELFAST, Apr 19: The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), the largest political party in Northern Ireland, Saturday gave a decisive endorsement to the Northern Ireland peace deal signed last week, reports AFP.

Delegates meeting here voted first to soundly defeat a motion to reject the peace plan, 515 to 238, and then voted 540 to 210 in favour of the historic accord itself.

David Trimble, who had gambled his party mandate on the UUP accepting the historic accord, said he hoped the vote had opened a "new era" in a Northern Ireland which would be a "multinational and multiracial state where people can work together." He added "If the motion had

jected it. I would have gone to Downing Street and said it's off," referring to both the peace deal and planned referenda on May 22 on both sides of the border on the island.

President Bill Clinton to stay

away from Northern Ireland until after the referenda on the deal which envisages the province remaining within Britain but allowing the Irish government a say in its affairs.

An ebullient party leader,

failed and the council had re-

Trimble also warned US

Speaking after the vote, Trimble said Clinton, who is

considering a visit to the province next month, should avoid trying to influence the outcome of the poll. British Prime Minister Tony Blair, on a visit to Jeddah, said of Saturday's vote, "I am delighted at the result. It under-

scores the courage and the determination of David Trimble and the leadership of the Ulster Unionist Party." Sinn Fein leader Gerry

Adams greeted the UUP vote with a "well done, David."

Trimble, who negotiated the accord for the pro-British unionist side, had been greeted on his arrival by shouts of "treachery" from hardline unionists opposed to the plan.

The scene was a sign of the divisions that remain in the unionist camp.

Presidential aide predicts

Yeltsin will get his choice for PM

MOSCOW, Apr 19: A top presidential aide predicted Sunday that reluctant Russian lawmakers will decide not to risk their jobs and vote this week to confirm President Boris Yeltsin's choice for prime minister, reports AP.

Acting First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov, travelling in Japan with Yeltsin, said Friday's vote will differ from the two previous ballots in which parliament's lower house, the State Duma, rejected Sergei Kiriyenko.

"The first two votes were about Kiriyenko's nomination, Nemtsov said, according to the ITAR-Tass news agency. Instead, the third vote will be on "the fate of the State Duma."

Yeltsin is threatening to disband parliament if they reject Kiriyenko again. That would force new elections in three months, forcing Duma members to campaign again for their

The Duma — controlled by Communists and other hardliners - has made it clear that they are not happy about Yeltsin's nomination of Kiriyenko, a 35-year-old former banker with little govern-

ment experience.

Leaders of 34 American nations agree to form anti-drug alliance

SANTIAGO, Apr 19: Leaders of 34 American nations agreed on Saturday to form an antidrug alliance despite concern at the move from Republican members of the US Congress. the alliance will be launched with negotiations beginning in Washington next month, reports Reuters.

Brought together by the organisation of American States, it will have as its centerpiece the regions' anti-drug czrs to evaluate and report on drug fighting efforts in each member country, including the United States, the world's largest drug

US officials have said the body could eventually replace a 12-year old US programme that makes US military and economic aid to other countries conditional on Washington's annual certification of compliance with anti-drug efforts.

The certification programme required under US law, has been deeply resented by many Latin American countries, which say it is punitive and ignores drug demand created by US users.

Two US lawmakers on Friday responded to the plans for the alliance, which was agreed at the summit of the Americas of 34 leaders from all the Americas except for Cuba, which was not invited.

come, cannot become a substi-

tute for certification," said Rep.

Benjamin Gilman of New York,

chairman of the House Interna-

"The alliance, while wel-

tional Relations Committee, and Rep. Dennis Hastert. chairman of a House subcommittee on National Security. "The OAS could also become

yet another forum for drug-producing and transiting nations to join those who blame the drug problem soley on US demand, ignoring the effect that massive amounts of cheap, pure drugs from their own countries have on that very same demand," they said in a state-

White House national security adviser Sandy Berger told reporters in Santiago on Saturday the alliance would complement the certification programme and there were no plans for now to scrap the programme which would require congressional action.

In addition, attitudes over who is responsible for drug abuse — the consumers in the United States or foreign producers - have become less polarized, he said.

This was demonstrated in discussions on the issue at the summit of the Americas in Santiago, which Berber contrasted with the first such summit in Miami, in 1994. In Miami, he said, "we alone

spoke to the drug problem, it was kind of an US-versus-them discussion. He said as much as open

trade and the evolution of democracy were now the Hemisphere's agenda so too was the drug problem.



— AP/UNB photo

officials watched the parade marking "Dignity Day," to show Iraq's determination to show Iraq's determination to of Cambodian conflict' last week) is the end of a very

BANGKOK, Apr 19: Thailand's Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan said today he hoped the death of notorious former Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot will mark the end of a long and painful chapter of Cambodian conflict. Surin told Reuters that the

association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the international community were looking forward to finding ways to ensure lasting peace and reconciliation in Cambodia through its July election. "We hope it (Pot Pot's death

long and painful chapter of Cambodian conflict. We hope various factions will seize this opportunity to reflect and reevaluate all the problems that occurred in the recent past, Surin told the news agency in an interview. 'This passing away of a very,

very important element in the conflict that had been long lasting, offers a good opportunity do some soul-searching on how to move forward so that our friends in Cambodia can have a reasonable hope of living in

Surin made the statement before the start of the meeting between the ASEAN Troika which comprises Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines, and the so-called friends of Cambodia which include the United States, Japan, France and Australia. The meeting will review the

latest developments in Cambodia and focus on how to ensure a free and fair election in the country which had been plagued by civil war for decades.