

International

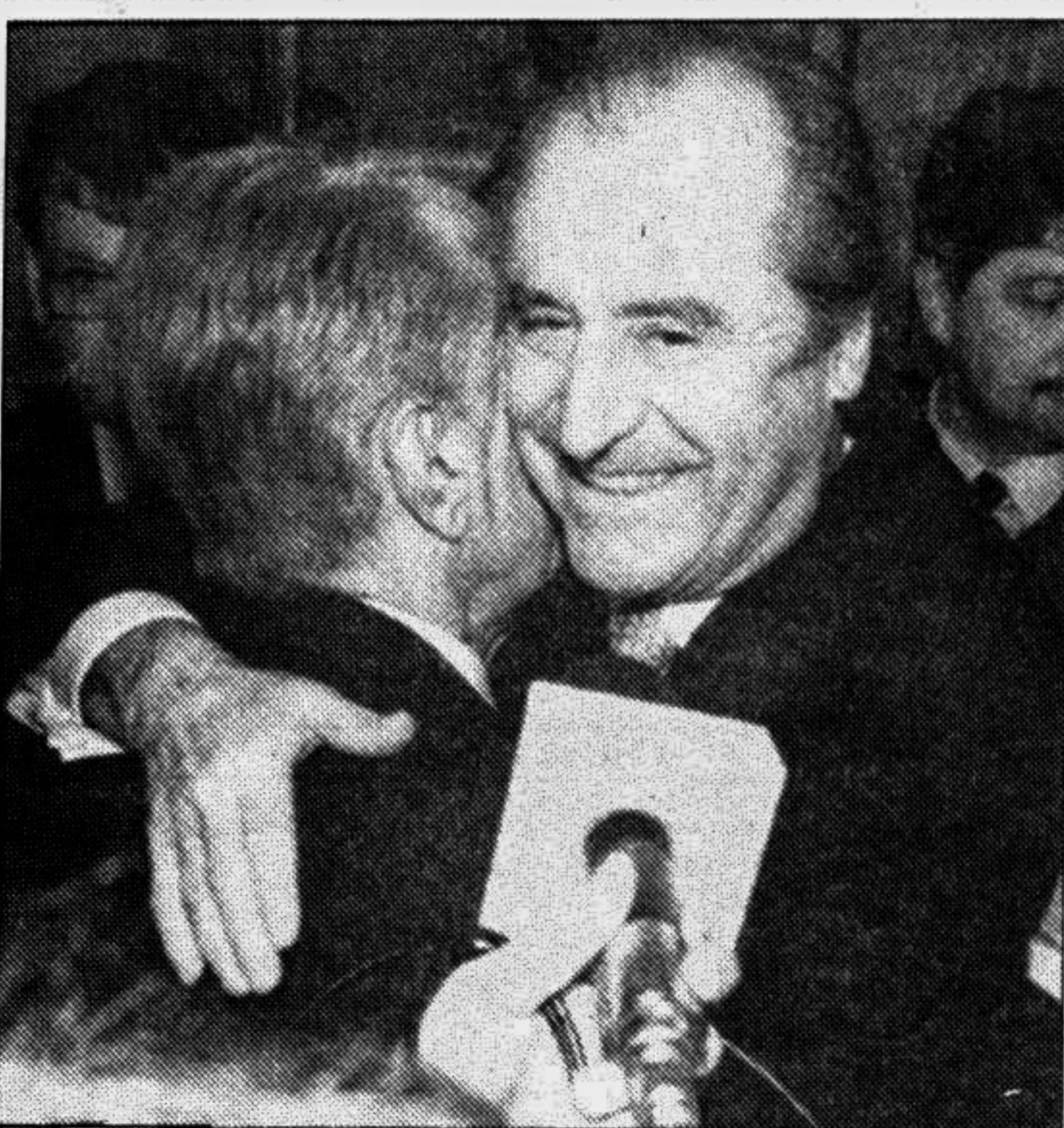
3 union ministers reject 'ultimatum'

'Jayalalitha should leave alliance'

NEW DELHI, Apr 20: A crisis within India's new coalition government deepened here today, with three cabinet ministers rejecting an ultimatum...

with corruption. Jayalalitha, a leader from southern India whose support is vital for the newly-elected multi-party coalition...

quently scrapped through a confidence motion due to outside support. The Press Trust of India (PTI) said Jayalalitha's demands amounted to 'an ultimatum'...



Austrian President Thomas Klestil (R) is hugged by former Viennese mayor Helmut Zilk on arrival at his election office in Vienna Sunday evening. Klestil was re-elected to a second 6-year term, winning 63 per cent of the vote in Sunday's presidential election. — AP/UNB photo

Attack on village in Kashmir: Death toll rises to 25

JAMMU, India, Apr 20: Officials raised the death toll from a weekend massacre to 25 Hindus as information trickled out Monday from a remote northern Indian village that was attacked by Muslim militants...

Attack on village raises fear of Khmer terrorism

PHNOM, PENH, Apr 20: An attack on a fishing village that killed 21 people raised fears Monday that the remnants of the Khmer Rouge are turning to terror tactics in response to a pro-government military offensive that has put their backs to the wall, reports AP...

regime that caused the deaths of as many as million people between 1975 and 1979. His death finished hopes he might one day be tried for crimes against humanity. Now that Pol Pot is dead, Khmer Rouge leaders were reported by Thai military officers to be meeting Monday to discuss merging with another armed faction in an effort to improve their image and ease international pressure against them...

Talks between Taliban, UN reach impasse

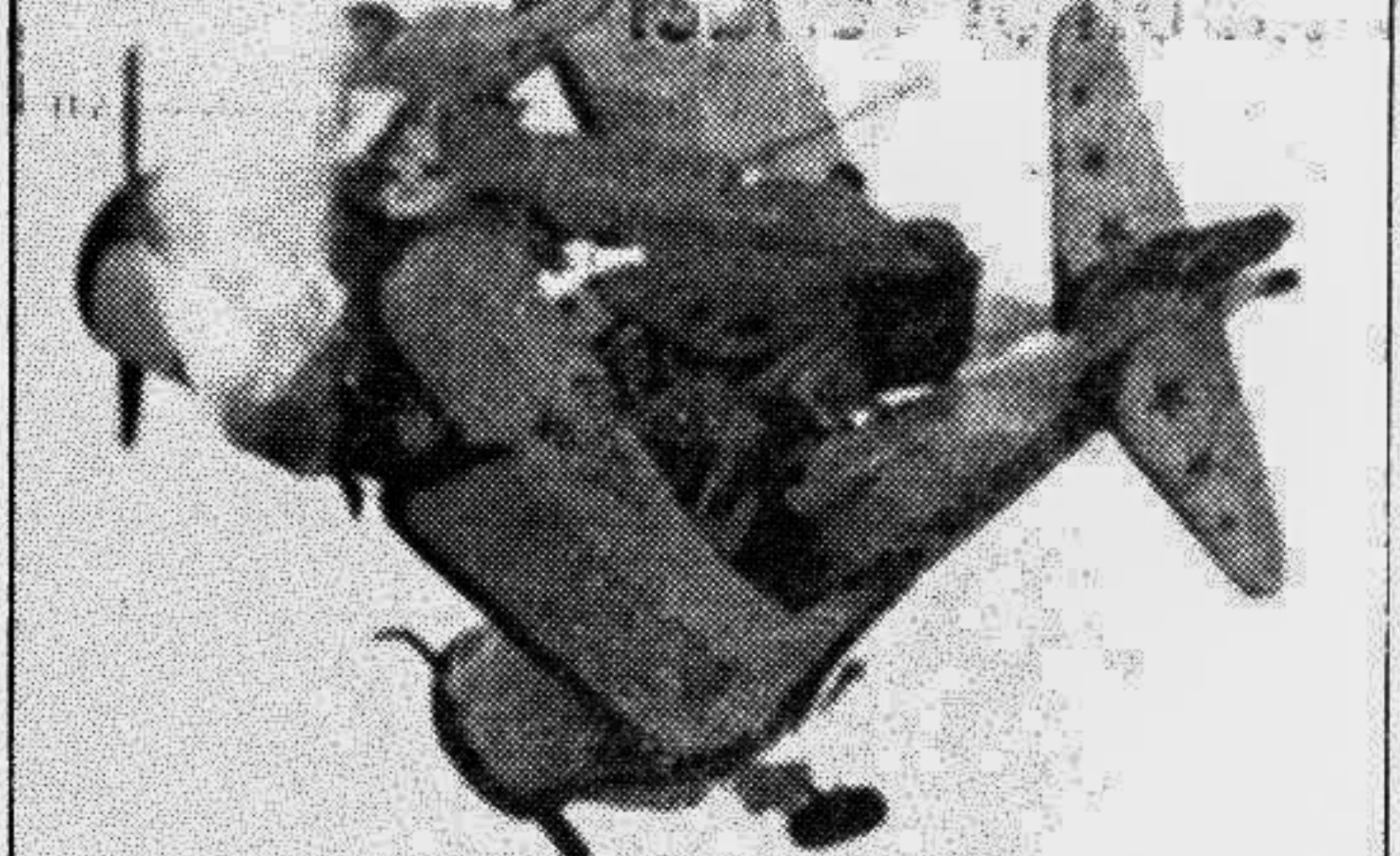
ISLAMABAD, Apr 20: The United Nations refused to send a negotiation team to neighbouring Afghanistan Monday after the Taliban religious army rejected its leader, Alfredo Witichi-Cestari, the UN's coordinator for humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, reports AP...

neighbouring Afghanistan, to demining to help reduce one of the world's biggest poppy growing areas. The Taliban's decision also derails an agreement apparently reached by Washington's ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson during his one-day shuttle diplomacy trip to Afghanistan last week...

of Afghanistan, where the opposition rules, bitter fighting among partners in the anti-Taliban alliance had forced the UN to withdraw all its international staff. As a result the UN operations in Afghanistan — a country devastated by nearly two decades of war — has been reduced to the capital of Kabul, its environs and partially in western Afghanistan...

BRIEFLY

- 2 found dead in taxi in Pakistan: Pakistani police yesterday found the bullet-riddled bodies of two young men in the troubled port city of Karachi, police said, AFP reports from Karachi. The bodies were found in a taxi in the city's western district of Orangi town, police said, adding that the victims' arms and legs had been tied with rope. Medical tests for Wang Dan in US: Newly freed from a Chinese prison, Wang Dan, a leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square pro-democracy protests, underwent medical tests for a possible tumor after arriving in the United States, AP reports from Detroit. Wang, the second major Chinese dissident to be released in six months, has suffered for months with a throat infection and headaches that his family believes may indicate a brain tumor. Mexican Nobel laureate dies at 84: Mexican writer and Nobel prize laureate Octavio Paz, 84, died late Sunday, the television station Televisa reported, AFP says from Mexico City. Paz won the Nobel prize in literature in 1990. He is probably best known for a collection of essays entitled 'The Labyrinth of Solitude.' Paz was also a major force behind the Mexican literary magazine Vuelta. 2 Pak kids shot by Indian troops: Indian troops opened fire on Pakistani soldiers patrolling the disputed Kashmir border Monday killing two children walking to school, the authorities said, AP reports from Islamabad. The details were sketchy, but according to government officials, the children were walking to school near Kotli, some 400 kms northeast of the federal capital of Islamabad when the firing began. The children died immediately and another four were injured.



Two biplanes, belonging to the Red Baron Flying Group, from Marshall, Minnesota fall to the ground after colliding in mid-air over Kissimmee, Florida Sunday. Pilots Randall L. Drake and James Edward Lovelace were killed. The two planes were part of a four plane formation when they collided at 1,000 feet. — AP/UNB photo

3 to die in China for killing

A court in China's southern Guangdong province has sentenced three men to death for the hotel killing last month of a US engineer, the China News Service reported on Monday, Reuters says from Beijing. The court in Dongguan city found the three men from northern China guilty of premeditated murder in the March 23 slaying of Leonard Phillips, an engineer employed at the Duracell battery factory in the city, the agency said. Linda McCartney dies of cancer: Linda McCartney, 56, a 1960s flower-child photographer who married the last bachelor in The Beatles and built a multimillion-dollar vegetarian food business, has died from cancer, AP reports from London. Geoff Baker, a spokesman for her husband, Paul McCartney, said she died Friday while on vacation in Santa Barbara, California. Her husband and children were with her. The couple revealed in December 1995 that McCartney was being treated for breast cancer. The treatment at first appeared to be working well, but in March the cancer was found to have spread to her liver, Sunday's statement said.

Blair proposes peace summit in London Palestinians set conditions, Israel willing to attend

GAZA CITY, Apr 20: A Mideast peace summit in London can only be arranged once Israel commits itself to a substantive West Bank troop withdrawal and agrees to freeze construction of Jewish settlements, Palestinian officials said Monday, reports AP. The idea came up Sunday in talks between visiting British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said he was willing to attend. While not rejecting the summit idea outright, Palestinian officials said Monday that a high-level meeting only makes sense once the United States has made its peace proposals public. Arafat advisor Ahmed Tibi said the Palestinian leader would not agree to another meeting without assurances of progress, saying too much time has been wasted already with public relations exercises. The [Israeli] prime minister is interested in having as many meetings as possible so that he can come out and tell reporters that there is progress, Tibi told Israeli army radio. The point is that the prime minister has to agree to the American proposals on the agenda, on redeployment, on the cessation of unilateral ac-

tions, including settlement building, Tibi said. With his first visit to the Middle East, Blair is trying to raise Europe's profile in the negotiations, but is also acting in coordination with US President Bill Clinton, a political ally. Under the latest proposal, Blair, Netanyahu, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright would meet in London soon — possibly on May 4 — to try to break the impasse over the scope of a West Bank troop withdrawal. A US peace package, which has been floated for several weeks but never been made public, calls for Israel to withdraw from 13.1 per cent of the West Bank in several stages, with each to be met by Palestinian security gestures. Washington also wants Israel to freeze Jewish settlement construction, a demand rejected by Israel. Blair was to meet later Monday in Gaza with Arafat to discuss the summit idea. The two leaders were also expected to sign an anti-terrorism agreement under which the European Union would send instructors to train the Palestinian security forces. Israel has complained that the Palestinian Authority is not doing enough to combat Islamic militants responsible for more than a dozen suicide bombings in Israel since 1994. On Sunday, Netanyahu said he was willing to attend a London summit. I want to make it clear that I am prepared to go anywhere, at any time, and specifically in the next month to any location and possibly to London to try to advance the process, Netanyahu said in a joint news conference with Blair.

Communist deputies to reject Yeltsin's choice of PM MOSCOW, Apr 20: Communist Deputies in the Russian Parliament will reject President Boris Yeltsin's choice of prime minister, Sergei Kiriyenko, when he is nominated for a third and final time this week, Communist Party boss Gennady Zyuganov said yesterday, reports AP. A special plenum of the party, which constitutes the largest voting bloc in the Lower House Duma, is to be held on the eve of Friday's final vote to discuss the on going confrontation between Parliament and the Kremlin over Kiriyenko. The Assembly's leaders would have to pursue joint policy-making with the Irish Republic, a requirement designed to appeal to the north's substantial Catholic minority. But the very idea of sitting in a Belfast administration is heretical to many Irish Republican Army supporters. With more than 1,000 people in the audience, and Adams watching them from the head table, Sinn Fein activists denounced the idea of helping govern a six-county state they refuse even to call Northern Ireland. In the six counties, said Martina McKelvey of Belfast, 'voting yes would mean saying yes to going into an assembly, which to me means accepting partition. It would mean going against everything I was meant to believe in republican principle.' The more I read this document, the less I see in it for republicans, agreed John Murphy of the Irish Republic border town of Monaghan. Throwing back Adams' as-

Sixty bonded labourers freed in Sindh

KARACHI, Apr 20: Pakistani authority busted a private jail and freed 60 bonded labourers including women and children from the jail of a feudal lord in southern Sindh province, officials said Sunday, reports AFP. Local administration and police officials raided the agricultural fields of a landlord in Nawabshah city, some 200 kilometres (120 miles) north-east of here Saturday, and liberated peasants and their family members, they added. The peasants, including 22 women and children, had been enslaved for working in the fields for the past seven years. The action was taken after a bonded laborer escaped the fields and approached Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Lahore to brief him about the 'inhuman treatment' in the private jails. 'We were treated as slaves. They made our lives miserable,' said peasant Janatan Bibi after being released. The released peasants were in poor condition, many of them wearing torn clothes. Most bonded labourers are low-caste Hindus and are enslaved by rich feudal lords after other family members were unable to repay debts, human rights activists said.

Off the Record

For love of kitty ..... LONDON: Paul and Joanne Green sawed through the kitchen ceiling, dismantled the staircase, ripped up flooring and tore out the bathtub in search of Rocky, a kitten lost in the bowels of their home's plumbing, reports AFP. The 30-something couple and their three children, with help from firemen and a thermal detector, spent seven hours Saturday tracking the kitten whose desperate mewlings reverberated through the walls and floors of their house in Tivdiale in the English West Midlands. Then, late in the day, when all seemed futile, Green dislodged bathroom fixture and 'he just tumbled out of the pipe into the palm of my hand' the search was over. 'We had tried to coax him out with food but just as we thought we'd got him he would decide it was time to move on,' Green said. 'He must have climbed at least 3 metres during his travels.' Green said the family faced several day's work restoring the house to its previous condition, 'but we all love the cat and are just happy he's back with us.' 'We would have torn down the whole house if necessary,' his wife added. 'White elephants'? LAMPANG, Thailand: Banks go bust and just about every Thai's wallet shrinks. But even in these economically gloomy times, few regard the kingdom's eleven pampered albino elephants as 'white elephants,' reports AP. With at least four keepers assigned to each revered beast, their days are spent ambling through lush forests. An evening bath, then snacks of sugar cane and tamarind precede a snooze in immaculate, well-guarded pavilions. This befits animals once held so sacred and power-giving that wars were fought over them in Southeast Asia. Far from costly, useless possessions — as the English term would have it — white elephants continue to be highly prized in tradition-rich Thailand. Some traditions, however, are being tailored in face of the financial constraints imposed by the Asian economic crisis that has hit Thailand hard. 'We want to preserve the white elephants but His Majesty would rather give the money to people in need. And I feel the same way,' says the royal veterinarian, Phiphatanachatr Diskul. Thus, the elaborate induction ceremonies for newly found white elephants — costing some 30 million baht (1.2 million dollars) and involving 3,000 people — have been suspended until better times. And keepers keep a sharper eye on daily expenses.

4 parties back Abacha as their candidate

Lagos, Apr 20: Four of Nigeria's authorised political parties have now backed junta leader Sani Abacha as their candidate in presidential polls due on August 1, leaving just one movement yet to decide, reports AFP. Official radio and television on Sunday reported that the four parties had adopted the head of the military regime as their sole candidate in the poll, which is aimed at ending the junta's transition to civilian rule. The biggest group, the United Nigeria Congress Party (UNCP), on Thursday asked the 54-year-old Abacha to be its candidate during a congress in the northern state of Kaduna. The general, who seized power in a November 1993 coup which toppled an unelected civilian administration installed by a previous military regime, has made no public comment confirming that he will run in the poll. On Saturday, three parties — the Congress for National Consensus (CNC), the Democratic Party of Nigeria (DPN) and the National Centre party of Nigeria (CNC) — all chose Abacha at their separate conventions.



Actor Hugh Grant and actress and model Liz Hurley arrive at London's Grosvenor House Hotel for the British Academy Awards Sunday. — AP/UNB photo

Hashimoto for redrawing border with Russia north of disputed islands

TOKYO, Apr 20: Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto proposed redrawing his nation's border with Russia north of four disputed islands, at his weekend summit with President Boris Yeltsin, reports said today, says AFP. The court in Dongguan city found the three men from northern China guilty of premeditated murder in the March 23 slaying of Leonard Phillips, an engineer employed at the Duracell battery factory in the city, the agency said. Linda McCartney dies of cancer: Linda McCartney, 56, a 1960s flower-child photographer who married the last bachelor in The Beatles and built a multimillion-dollar vegetarian food business, has died from cancer, AP reports from London. Geoff Baker, a spokesman for her husband, Paul McCartney, said she died Friday while on vacation in Santa Barbara, California. Her husband and children were with her. The couple revealed in December 1995 that McCartney was being treated for breast cancer. The treatment at first appeared to be working well, but in March the cancer was found to have spread to her liver, Sunday's statement said.

Sinn Fein supporters begin crucial debate over peace deal

DUBLIN, Apr 20: The IRA-allied Sinn Fein party has begun the wrenching process of deciding whether to help govern Northern Ireland, the traditionally pro-British state it has long vowed to eliminate. Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams and his supporters spent all weekend edging the party's would-be revolutionaries toward accepting sweeping reforms for Northern Ireland as the best next step to a united Ireland. At the party's annual Dublin conference, Adams opened the floor for critics of the peace accord, which was reached April 10 among eight parties, including Sinn Fein. He postponed any internal vote for two weeks to allow people to vent their frustrations and to minimize the chances of a dangerous split. The agreement goes before voters in both parts of Ireland on May 22. If approved, it would create a Northern Ireland Assembly in which Protestants and Catholics would take responsibility for departments now run by the British govern-

ment. The Assembly's leaders would have to pursue joint policy-making with the Irish Republic, a requirement designed to appeal to the north's substantial Catholic minority. But the very idea of sitting in a Belfast administration is heretical to many Irish Republican Army supporters. With more than 1,000 people in the audience, and Adams watching them from the head table, Sinn Fein activists denounced the idea of helping govern a six-county state they refuse even to call Northern Ireland. In the six counties, said Martina McKelvey of Belfast, 'voting yes would mean saying yes to going into an assembly, which to me means accepting partition. It would mean going against everything I was meant to believe in republican principle.' The more I read this document, the less I see in it for republicans, agreed John Murphy of the Irish Republic border town of Monaghan. Throwing back Adams' as-

sertion that the plan could be 'transitional' to a united Ireland, Murphy said he foresaw a permanently transitional period, where all we've got is all we're ever going to get. Christe Beattie, a Sinn Fein veteran in north Belfast, said it could be political suicide for Sinn Fein to enter 'a devolved British parliament in the occupied six counties.' Other speakers defended the accord as offering slices from the full loaf of bread they still intend to get. They stressed that Sinn Fein's recent electoral gains — two seats in the British Parliament, which they boycott, and 17 per cent of the northern vote — came because of the IRA truce and Adams' pragmatic leadership. 'There are gains in the document, and also dangers in the document,' said Sinn Fein's vice president, Pat Doherty, who urged the audience to 'be sophisticated enough, clever enough, even devious enough' to back it. Many speakers disappointed

'The Full Monty' tops British Academy Award

LONDON, Apr 20: 'The Full Monty', the sleeper English success that has become Britain's highest grossing movie ever, was named best film Sunday at the British Academy Awards (BAFTA), and stars Robert Carlyle and Tom Wilkinson took the actor and supporting actor trophies as two of the movie's not-so-reluctant Sheffield strippers, reports AFP. It trumped, among others, Oscar favourite 'Titanic,' which sailed away without a single prize. But the black-tie ceremony at London's Grosvenor House ended on a tearful note, with producer David Puttnam's announcement from the podium of the death — made public only while the show was in progress — of Linda McCartney, the photographer and wife of Beatles performer Paul. Lord Puttnam, vice president of the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, praised the 56-year-old McCartney as 'a remarkable woman who was half of a remarkable marriage.' He urged the star-studded crowd to rise in 'a short but warm standing ovation.' Earlier ovations of a cheerier sort went to two award recipients. A killed Sean Connery was granted a special Academy Fellowship, and told the crowd, 'They say it's better to give than to receive, but tonight, I'm not so sure.' Best actress winner Judi Dench ('Mrs. Brown') brought the room roaring to its feet once more. 'I do it all again,' Dench said of a shoot marked by consistently terrible weather. The 63-year-old actress was also an actor at last month's Academy Awards. Other multiple winners, mostly in technical categories, were 'The Wings of the Dove' and 'L.A. Confidential,' both with two prizes. Besides Dench, 'Mrs. Brown' was cited for best costume design. Best foreign language film went to 'L' Apartment' from France. A loser in the same category was Sally Potter's 'The Tango Lesson,' a film mostly in English.