

# BRIEFLY

## 10 Maoist rebels killed in Nepal:

Police have shot dead 10 Maoist rebels and arrested five of their comrades this week as part of a three-week-old operation to flush them out of their jungle hide-out, officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Kathmandu.

In this weeks fighting, eight of the rebels were killed in Jajarkot district when a group of 40 guerrillas ambushed the police who fired on them in self defence, a home ministry statement said. Jajarkot is about 320 kilometres west of the Nepalese capital Kathmandu. Two others were killed elsewhere in the area.

## 5 killed in Cambodian attack:

Five people including two landmine clearance workers and two children were killed in an attack on a northwest Cambodian village, officials said yesterday. AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

Unidentified gunmen, whom some authorities said were affiliated with the resistance army of deposed co-premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh, attacked the village of Boeung Trakoun near the Thai border late Thursday. The Cambodian Mines Action Centre (CMAC) reported that two of its deminers and two children of deminers had been killed. At least 10 others including another two deminers, were seriously injured, it said.

## Moro rebels abduct 3:

Muslim separatist guerrillas raided a town near Zamboanga in the Philippines, abducting a district chairman and two councillors, police said yesterday. AFP reports from Zamboanga.

Masked members of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) raided an isolated district of Sirawal town Thursday, abducting district chairman Alunday Kadil and two councillors, the regional police chief said.

## Gunmen kill 3 cops in Algeria:

Five armed men killed three policemen in the Algerian town of Jijel, east of the capital, in an area until now relatively untouched by the bloodshed in other parts of the country, press reports said yesterday. AFP reports from Algiers.

The Swat Al Ahrar daily reported that the three were shot dead Friday near a cafe in the town, which is 300 kilometres east of the capital. A security forces search resulted in the shooting of one of the gunmen.



Pope John Paul II is hugged by Cardinal Christoph Schoenborn, Archbishop of Vienna, during the holy mass at the Dome of Salzburg, Austria, Friday. The Pontiff is on a three-day visit to Austria. — AP/UNB photo

## Rebels hold airport in Guinea-Bissau

MPAK, Senegal, Jun 20: Gunfire riddled through the northern outskirts of Guinea-Bissau's capital on Saturday as the country's breakaway army leaders held off advancing Senegalese troops near the city's airport, rebel radio and military officials said, reports AP.

Although the renegade soldiers have been cut off from the city and their main supply of ammunition, they continued to hold the airport, a Senegalese military commander said on condition of anonymity.

## Hariri urges US to help revive talks with Israel

UNITED NATIONS, June 20: Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri Friday dismissed Israel's offer to withdraw its troops from his country and instead urged Washington to help revive three-way peace talks which broke down in 1996, reports AP.

On Tuesday, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright asked Hariri to seriously consider Israel's offer to withdraw its troops from southern Lebanon. Last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told reporters at the United Nations that the Israeli offer was made with "no conditions."

Following a meeting with Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Hariri said Israel's offer did not constitute an unconditional withdrawal as called for in UN Resolution 425.

"They want us to guarantee the borders and to guarantee the security of Israel in the absence of a peace agreement between Israel and Lebanon," Hariri told reporters.

Hariri said Israel should either withdraw unconditionally

"and take the responsibility by itself" or agree to resume peace talks with Lebanon and Syria which broke down in February 1996.

The talks broke down because Netanyahu refused to adopt the offers made to Syria by previous Israeli governments to give up the strategic Golan Heights as part of a peace treaty. Syria strongly influences Lebanese policy.

Lebanon and Syria are willing and ready to continue the negotiations from where it has stopped and we are ready to sign a peace agreement with Lebanon, Syria and Israel within three months if Israel decides to go ahead with the negotiations and live in peace in the region," he said.

Hariri said he conveyed that position to President Clinton and other US officials in Washington this week.

"We have asked the Americans to play a positive role in restarting the negotiations," he said. "We hope this will happen as soon as possible."

## No intention to conduct further N-tests: Sharif

KARACHI, Jun 20: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said Friday Pakistan had no intention to carry out further nuclear tests in the near future, reports AFP.

"We have completed our series of nuclear tests and we have no intention to conduct a nuclear test in foreseeable future," Sharif said.

The Prime Minister who returned from the Chaghi site of Pakistani nuclear tests in southwestern Baluchistan province, said there was no radiation after the explosions.

"I was proud to be there. I felt great. It was fantastic," Sharif told reporters.

"We went there till the end. Had there been any radiation nobody could have gone there," he added.

Pakistan conducted five nuclear tests on May 28 and a sixth on May 30, saying its response was necessary to restore strategic balance disrupted by five Indian blasts on May 11 and 13.

Islamabad announced a unilateral moratorium on future testing on June 11. However, a foreign office statement Thursday said Pakistan still reserved the right to conduct nuclear test if considered necessary in the supreme national interest.

## Kashmir massacre

### Hunt for Muslim militants

SRINAGAR, India, June 20: Indian security forces today launched an operation to hunt down suspected Muslim separatist militants who massacred 25 Hindus in a wedding party, police said, reports BSS.

Kashmir's police chief Gurbachan Jagat said troops and police commandos had sealed off jungles near Friday's massacre site in the mountainous district of Doda.

Jagat identified the killers as members of the pro-Pakistan Hizb-ul-Mujahideen guerrilla group.

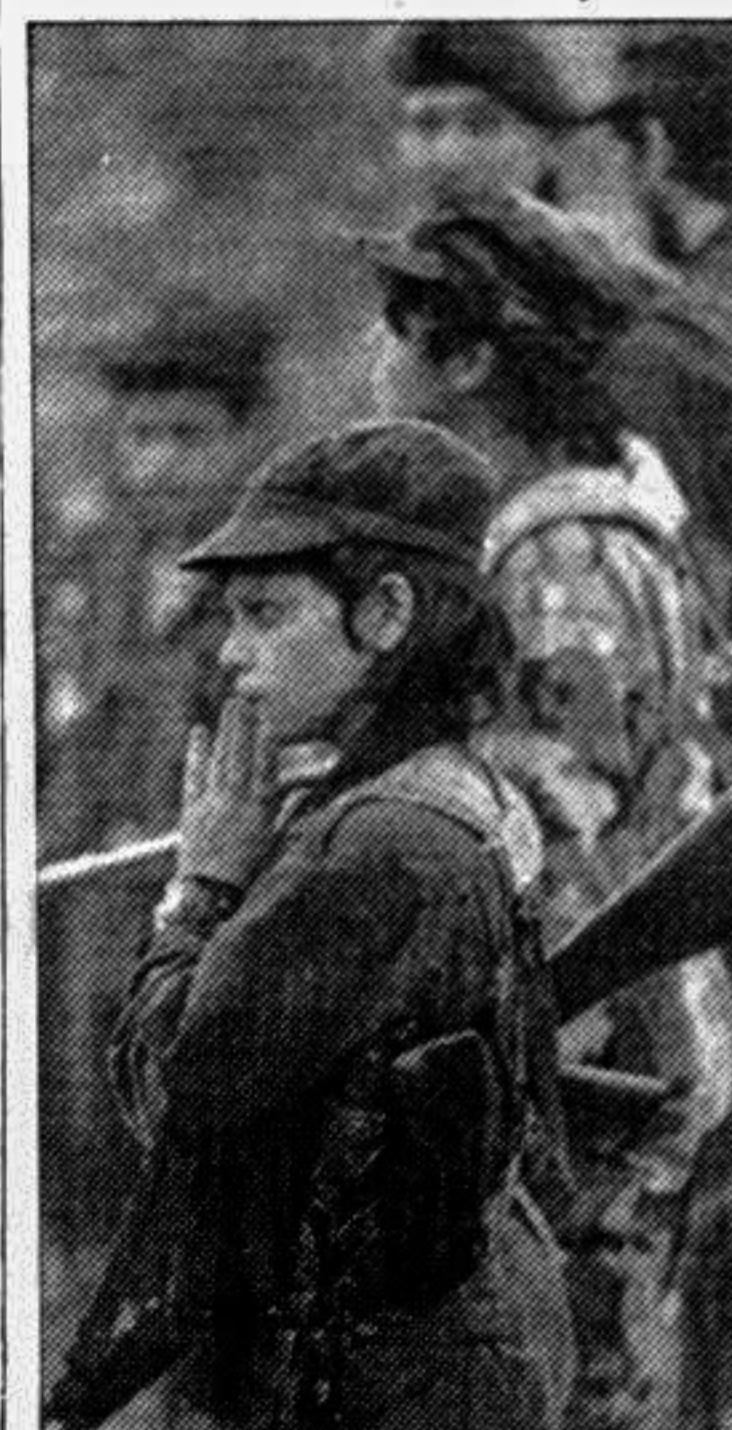
The shootings took place at Champnagri town.

## 55 killed in Kashmir bus plunge

SRINAGAR, Jun 20: Rescue workers Saturday pulled out 22 more bodies from the wreckage of a bus that fell into a deep gorge in India's northern Kashmir state, taking the death toll in the accident to 55, reports AP.

Most of the victims were members of a marriage party who were travelling to Jammu. Others were pilgrims returning from a revered Hindu religious shrine. The accident took place Friday evening.

Traffic officials said the accident happened because the bus driver failed to make a sharp turn on the steep mountain road and lost control of the bus. It plunged into a deep gorge, killing 52 people on the spot. As many as 18 were injured, three of whom died later Friday.



A female guerilla pauses with other soldiers while patrolling the mountains in the Meta region southeast of Bogota, Colombia, Friday. Members of the main rebel groups are not participating in today's national runoff presidential election. — AP/UNB photo



Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (2nd R) being briefed about the concrete tunnel specially built for nuclear testing. He visited the site of last month's nuclear tests in Chaghi, 150 km north of Quetta city, Friday. — AP/UNB photo

## Yugoslavia to strike back if NATO intervenes militarily

PODGORICA, Yugoslavia, Jun 20: Yugoslavia's army will defend the country if NATO intervenes militarily over the crisis in Kosovo, Yugoslav Prime Minister Momir Bulatovic warned Friday, reports AFP.

"We will do everything in our power to make sure there is no foreign military intervention," he said in a report carried by the official Tanjug news agency.

"But if, against our wishes, there is intervention, the constitutional duty of every citizen is to defend himself." The armed forces in particular would "defend the country against any aggression," said Bulatovic, a protégé of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

The premier's words echoed those Thursday of Ivica Dacic, the head of Milosevic's party.

## Crisis in Kosovo

### Love knows no barrier

Bulatovic added that "a military intervention cannot settle the problems in Kosovo, but will only complicate them."

He said however that he believed NATO's threats to launch an action to end the bloodshed in the breakaway Kosovo province had been deflated after the "success" of a meeting between Milosevic and Russian President Boris Yeltsin in Moscow on Tuesday.

In that meeting Milosevic pledged some concessions, such as agreeing to resume talks and allowing international aid agencies unlimited access. But he refused to order his police, paramilitary and army forces to withdraw from Kosovo.

Bulatovic also criticised a resolution passed by the parliament in Montenegro — Serbia's junior partner in Yugoslavia — demanding the pull-

out from Kosovo of Montenegrins doing military service.

"The measure was unconstitutional, illegal and contrary to morale," said Bulatovic, himself a Montenegrin.

Meanwhile, preliminary studies on possible military action by NATO forces in Kosovo are in their final stages and favour air strikes as opposed to military intervention on the ground, a NATO source said Friday.

Once the studies are over, NATO ambassadors will move to action, possibly requesting fine-tuning of plans for one of the options.

Although this would be an extra step, it would not necessarily mean that a final decision had been made in favour of a military strike, the source said, under cover or anonymity.

## Muslim group calls for end to attacks on Habibie

JAKARTA, Jun 20: A leading Indonesian Muslim group has called for an end to attacks on President BJ Habibie so he can focus on implementing pledged political and economic reforms, a report said today, reports AFP.

"Habibie's presidency is legitimate and we need to convey this because there are people who are still disputing Habibie's legitimacy," acting chairman of the Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI), Achmad Tirtosudiro, told The Jakarta Post daily.

Tirtosudiro said Habibie, founder and patron of the organisation, should be given the chance to govern.

Habibie had as minister of research and technology under former president Suharto helped found ICMI in 1990 to promote the interest of Indonesian Muslims, who account for 90 per cent of the country's some 200 million people. He

chaired the group until last year.

ICMI has assumed a position of prominence in the politics of the world's most populous Muslim nation, but splinters have emerged within its ranks.

Protests and criticism have been continuing against the legitimacy of Habibie's presidency, which has been questioned by some opponents since the former vice president assumed power May 21.

## Recruitment of children as soldier a war crime: UNICEF

ROME, Jun 20: The recruitment of children under the age of 18 into armed groups must be considered a war crime under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC), the Deputy Director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said Friday, reports AFP.

"The recruitment of children under 18 years of age into armed forces or groups, or their participation in hostilities, either direct or indirect, should be considered a war crime under the jurisdiction of the ICC," Stephen Lewis told delegates gathered in Rome for the launch of the international tribunal.

"The ICC is also an opportunity to reaffirm the fundamental value of the rights of children and women, particularly when they are used and abused as a means to terrorise societies and achieve military victories," he added.

He said women and children have become prime targets in armed conflicts and pointed to organised massacres, systematic rape, mutilation and the

forced pregnancies of young girls kidnapped in Rwanda or in Bosnia.

Lewis said in most cases these victims have no recourse to the justice system.

He added that six crimes against minors must be considered as war crimes but said the ICC should have no jurisdiction over children under the age of 18.

He also advocated the setting up of rehabilitation programmes for children having committed a crime and said schools, hospitals and places of worship should never be targeted during an armed conflict.

The laying down of anti-personal land mines must also be considered a war crime, Lewis added.

Junior Italian Foreign Minister Patrizia Toia called for a concrete promise by all the international community to bring to an end crimes against children and a promotion of children's rights.

Highlighting the scale of the

problem participants said some one in ten of Angolan children were enlisted as soldiers.

In India, half a million children were working in the sex industry, while 200,000 young girls were forced into prostitution and slavery in Nepal.

Delegates representing 156 countries have been meeting in Rome since Monday to set up the first permanent International Criminal Court that would judge war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

The conference, running through July 17, is also being attended by 250 non-governmental organisations.

A huge human rights lobby group calling itself a coalition, and including Amnesty International, the International Federation of the League of Human Rights (FILDH) and Human Rights Watch, are pushing for an autonomous court and prosecutor not bound by first getting the consent of countries involved.

## US blasts Israel for 'provocative' plan

WASHINGTON, June 20: The Clinton administration Friday assailed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel for considering a development plan for Jerusalem designed to attract more Jews to the city, reports AP.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright conveyed her displeasure to Netanyahu in a telephone call. Before she did, State Department spokesman James P. Rubin went public with a scathing condemnation.

He called the plan provocative and insensitive, and said "it's difficult to understand" why Netanyahu was considering it.

Government planners submitted the development programme to the prime minister on Thursday. According to some accounts, it would expand the city westward, boost investment and seek to keep the Jewish population at about 70 per cent.

The United States never has recognised Jerusalem as Israel's capital. While President Clinton's 1992 campaign platform called for US recognition, he backed off once in office on the grounds Israel and the Palestinians had agreed to negotiate the future of the city.

Last summer, Albright

called for a "time-out" in the building of new homes for Jews in Jerusalem or on the West Bank. Since then, the State Department has described any contrary action by Israel as provocative.

Accordingly, Rubin said "we believe it is extremely hard to understand why Israel would even consider taking such a provocative step at this sensitive time in the negotiations."

And, he said, "this is the worst kind of time for considering such steps when there is no peace process back on track; when there are no negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis; when the multilateral peace talks have broken down."

Ziad Abu Ziad, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, on Thursday called the plan "a racist approach, part of the ethnic cleansing policy Israel is implementing against Arabs in east Jerusalem."

Israeli troops reunited Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, capturing the eastern part of the city from Jordan which had occupied it since 1948. The Palestinians are seeking to establish a state on land Israel is relinquishing in the US-mediated negotiations that are now stalemated.

## Off the Record

### Love knows no barrier

NEW DELHI: Love knows no barrier of nationality or borders.

What else can be said about a Pakistan soldier who crossed the Line of Control (LoC) into Jammu and Kashmir with the intention of marrying an Indian woman with whom he had fallen in love, reports IANS.

Mohammed Bashir of Pakistan's 815 Mujahid Battalion had fallen in love with Shabnam of Kiran village in the Kashmir valley's Keran region, reported The Times of India newspaper in a front page story.

Cross-border love between the two developed in March this year when Bashir was attending a "sniper rifle course" at Nilam located close to the LoC in the Kashmir valley, the paper said.

"We used to talk mostly in sign language. I told her I loved her and wanted to marry her to which she nodded in agreement," Bashir, who hails from a Poonch district of Azad Kashmir or Pakistan-administered Kashmir, was quoted as saying by the paper.

According to the paper, Bashir is already married and has two children. As his first wife was suffering from polio, he wanted to marry Shabnam, the paper said.

Once the training was over Bashir took two months leave with the aim of marrying Shabnam. "On April 23, I returned to Nilam, did a reconnaissance of the area and then crossed over on the night of April 26. No one opened the door (at Shabnam's house) and so I forced myself in," he revealed.

His proposal for marriage was opposed by Shabnam's parents and Bashir was reportedly hit on the head by her father. Soon after regaining consciousness he left her home but was later found by an army patrol on April 27 near the village in a semi-conscious state, the paper said.

### 'Festival of ecstasy'

NEW DELHI: What Viagra can do, rich and racy Indian dishes can do better! Jiggs Kalra, renowned gourmet and food writer is all set to open in Mumbai a unique food festival that aims to make people feel good — and maybe even perform better!

"It is a festival of ecstasy," said Kalra of the festival opening in a hotel on July 3. The spread of some 40 dishes through the week-long event will have a generous content of traditional herbs and spices that act as "elixirs, tonics and aphrodisiacs", he said.

The fare will ensure the "well being" of all, he added. Guests would be able to choose from a lavish spread including special shrimp, crab, mutton and a host of vegetarian dishes — each with a pinch of one and a toss of another exotic herb or spice that give that extra taste and zest.

Asked whether there was any significance in the timing of the festival — considering reports on Viagra appear in newspapers almost every day — Kalra told IANS: "Well, if one wants to be provocative, I'd say who needs Viagra in this country?"

## Ranariddh won't join boycott of polls

PHNOM PENH, June 20: The leader of Cambodia's main opposition party, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, said Saturday he will not join a boycott of upcoming elections despite concerns they will not be free or fair, reports AP.

He warned of an increase in violence as the July 26 election date nears. There have been several new reports of politically-motivated killings of opposition members in the past week.

"I am committed to participating in the elections, sure," he told reporters.

Instead of boycotting or calling for a postponement of the elections, he said pressure should be exerted on Cambodian leader Hun Sen to ensure the polls will be as free and fair as possible.

On Friday night, opposition politician Sam Rainsy announced that his party is withdrawing from the election campaign because it failed to meet

minimal conditions for fairness.

He said he was announcing the boycott in anticipation that the so-called Friends of Cambodia — a grouping of Western and Asian countries seeking an end to the country's continuing political unrest — were about to endorse the July 26 polls.

Ranariddh said he would look to the Friends of Cambodia, meeting in Bangkok, Thailand this weekend, to assess the political climate and pressure Hun Sen to put minimum conditions in place for fair polls.

Opposition politicians Sam Rainsy and Son Soubert announced Friday that their parties were prepared to withdraw from the campaign because they did not think the elections will be credible.

Ranariddh was ousted by his co-premier Hun Sen in a coup d'etat one year ago which shattered a tense dual leadership formed after UN-brokered elections in 1993.

## Clinton won't meet dissidents on China trip

WASHINGTON, Jun 20: US President Bill Clinton will not meet political dissidents on his China trip next week because of concerns they will be penalised by the government, Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth said Friday, reports Reuters.

"At this point, I don't believe we're going to have dissidents on the schedule," Roth told a news briefing.

A main consideration "is what would happen to (dissident) people if you met with them, and the possibility that what could result is exactly the opposite of what you want — instead of advancing the cause of freedom and democracy and human rights you'd end up worsening it," he said.

Not seeing dissidents is likely to add to the controversy surrounding the trip.

## US optimistic about Chinese halt on export of missiles

WASHINGTON, June 20: Next week's meeting between President Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin may produce a Chinese commitment to stop exporting missile technology and parts to countries like Iran and Pakistan, a senior administration official said Friday, reports AP.

"It's possible," said Stanley Roth, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. "It's one of the issues we're working on" in last-minute negotiations between Beijing and Washington that could result in one of a few important security agreements in a mostly symbolic summit.

Progress also is expected on halting the spread of chemical and biological weapons, Roth said.

China had been pressing for a boost in US satellite and technology sales in exchange for agreeing to adhere to all aspects of the Missile Technology Control Regime, an international pact that bars export of long-range missiles, technology and parts. But any deal appeared sidelined by the investigations in Congress and by the Justice Department into the possibility that sensitive missile guidance technology was illegally shared with China after a failed 1996 satellite launch.

Roth, however, indicated at a State Department briefing that talks have shifted away from any linkage, making a deal possible.

"We've had pretty extensive negotiations beyond the original offer," Roth told reporters. "There's been additional wrinkles and discussions, but I can't tell you what the final package will look like."

On Friday, the head of China's commercial space launch service denied that his country had acquired technology by sending US satellites into orbit, and warned that US companies would suffer if such deals were banned. Zhang Xinxia, president of China Great Wall Industry Corp, on a 10-day US tour, called a news conference in Los Angeles to assure Americans that his company has not received US secrets.

"There was no such thing as a technology transfer," Zhang said through an interpreter.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who is accompanying Clinton to China, plans to travel to Japan when Clinton heads home so she can brief top officials there on his nine-day trip. State Department spokesman James P

Rubin said. The July 3 stop appeared designed to allay any suggestion Clinton was snubbing Japan, a strong and sensitive American ally.

"We do think that China's position in Asia is something of importance to our Japanese friends, and that is why we thought it was appropriate to have the secretary be in a position to brief them on the discussions that the president had in Beijing," Rubin said.

Clinton is scheduled to leave Washington on Wednesday for China, making the first visit by an American president since the 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy students in Tiananmen Square. The president will visit several cities and villages and hopes to speak to the Chinese people in a live broadcast, although Beijing hasn't given final approval for

such direct contact, Roth said.

"He'd obviously like to give the Chinese people a better understanding of the United States. And one of the most effective ways in a country as vast as China... is by being able to communicate directly through mass media, if the Chinese will permit that," Roth said. "It will be done in the proper spirit. He is a guest in a foreign country."

Although Clinton doesn't plan to meet dissidents, the president has said he will speak out against China's human rights record while there and call for more political and religious freedom.

Roth said the administration was concerned that if Clinton did sit down with dissidents the communist government might harass them after he leaves. "One of the main considerations, of course, is what

would happen to people if you met with them and... instead of advancing the cause of freedom, democracy and human rights, you end up worsening it."

If China does agree to stop helping the missile programmes of Iran and Pakistan, the United States will continue to press Beijing to sign the international pact known as MTCR, US officials say.

At October's US-China summit in Washington, Beijing agreed to halt shipping anti-cruise missiles to Iran and to refuse any new assistance to its nuclear programme. Since then, China has issued export controls on technology that could be used to make nuclear weapons. The United States, however, is pressing for stricter measures and for similar export controls for chemical and biological materials.

## Russia hails US offer to renew ties with Iran

MOSCOW, Jun 20: Russia welcomed Friday a US offer to normalise relations between Washington and Iran, but called on the United States to stop preventing other nations from trading with Tehran, reports AFP.

Improved relations between the two countries would help "improve the political climate in the Middle East," and also lead to "greater stability and security in the rest of the world" according to a Russian Foreign Ministry statement quoted by the interfax agency.

It said Moscow hoped the offer "will be followed by concrete measures," and called on the United States to "put a stop to its attempt to impose its laws abroad to prevent economic cooperation between Iran and other countries."