

# BRIEFLY

**Clash claims 4 in Manila:** Three communist guerrillas and a student were killed in a clash with police and soldiers east of the Philippine capital, a rebel spokesman said yesterday. AFP reports from Manila.

The New People's Army (NPA) guerrillas were inside a house near the town of Sariaya when they were attacked by a team of police and army scout rangers on Friday, NPA spokesman Gregorio Rosal said on radio DZRH in Manila.

**15 killed in China flood:** At least 15 people were killed or went missing in floods that disrupted traffic and shut the airport in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing, an official newspaper said Monday. AP reports from Beijing.

Another three people were killed and six were seriously injured in landslides last Thursday that buried more than 30 people in Zhejiang province, eastern China, the China Daily said.

**Hamas leader in Gaza:** Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas, flew Monday to Egypt after waiting more than two weeks to begin his journey home to the Gaza Strip, AP reports from Cairo.

Yassin, a 62-year old quadriplegic, went to Sudan on May 29 after a 14-week fund-raising tour of the Arab world and Iran. During his trip he repeatedly issued statements supporting armed struggle against Israel. Yassin, his son and an aide had waited more than two weeks in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, after Egypt denied them entry visas. Egypt was reportedly waiting until Israel officially announced that they would let the Hamas leader return to Gaza.

**Quake rocks Taiwan:** An earthquake measuring 4.4 on the Richter scale hit Eastern Taiwan yesterday but there were no immediate reports of damage or injury, seismologists said, AFP reports from Taipei.

The tremor struck at 8:15 am (0015 GMT), with its epicenter located 25.1 kilometers (15.6 miles) southeast of Chengkung city in eastern Taiwan. Taiwan sits on an earthquake belt but most tremors were centred underground which tones down their destructive strength.

## White House defends Clinton's visit to China

WASHINGTON, June 22: Top White House officials on Sunday defended President Bill Clinton's imminent trip to China and would not say if Clinton would meet with Chinese pro-democracy activists, reports AP.

The visit — the first by a US head of state since the 1989 massacre in Beijing's Tiananmen Square — has received sharp criticism from Republicans in Congress.

To defend the trip Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and national security advisor Samuel Berger took to the airwaves Sunday, while Clinton wrote an essay in Newsweek magazine.

"The more we bring China into the world, the more the world will bring freedom to China," Clinton wrote.

In remarks to Chinese reporters, Clinton called for a resumption of a dialogue on human rights, suggesting the two countries might hold "some sort of NGO (non-governmental organization) forum on human rights."

In those remarks, Clinton also praised China for working along the United States to promote peace in Korean peninsula and for helping to promote stability and to restore growth to the economies of Asia.

After earlier White House denials that Clinton would meet with dissidents, Albright and Berger on Sunday skirted the question of whether Clinton

would meet with pro-democracy activists.

Albright would only say that Clinton "will be meeting with a range of individuals."

Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth had said Clinton would not meet with dissidents, citing fears that activists might face government retribution.

But when pressed on that issue Sunday, Berger said the decision on whether or not to meet with dissidents had not been made, four days before the trip was to begin.

"We will make those judgments based upon what we think will be most effective in terms of achieving our objectives," Berger told ABC Television.

Clinton has faced strong criticism of his state visit, which begins Thursday, but many critics now appear to have accepted that the trip will go ahead, and are focusing on the message the President might deliver on democracy and human rights.

Albright told NBC television that Clinton would make "very clear" in meetings with government officials how the United States feels about Beijing's record on human rights.

She declined to say whether Clinton would say anything when he visits Tiananmen Square.

"We're going to China because it's a very important country to us," Albright said. "There is an



Colombia's new President-elect Andres Pastrana, accompanied by his family, greet supporters following his victory speech in Bogota, Colombia Sunday. He defeated Horacio Serpa in the presidential runoff election. With Pastrana, from left are his son Santiago, wife Nora and daughters Valentina and Laura. — AP/UNB photo

## Egypt calls for Arab military bloc

CAIRO, Jun 22: The Egyptian Defence Minister on Sunday urged Arab countries to copy countries in other parts of the world and form a military coalition to defend their interests, reports AP.

"Egypt is calling for an Arab military bloc to take up the challenges confronting the Arab World and make advances in technology," marshal Hussein Tantawi said in the Daily Al-Ahram.

"The big powers join military coalitions like NATO because no country can survive alone and the prosperity of nations can only be ensured if they have armed forces capable of defending it," the paper quoted Tantawi as saying.

Tantawi urged "Arab country to coalesce in all areas, particu-

larly the military field, because the entire world is moving towards coalitions and blocs," the daily Al-Gumhuriya reported.

"Current events require that we, along with brother and friendly nations, must make modernisation our goal, so we shall not fall behind in technological progress and be unable to keep pace with changes going on around us," Al-Gumhuriya quoted him as saying.

Tantawi made the remarks at a passing out ceremony for cadet officers at the general staff military academy. The promotion included officers from several countries, including Lebanon, Algeria, Kuwait, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Pakistan and Tanzania, press reports said.

## 17 Burundian delegations sign civil war ceasefire

ARUSHA, Tanzania, Jun 22: Seventeen Burundian delegations Sunday signed a civil war ceasefire to take effect before the start of detailed peace negotiations on July 20, the Hiredelle news agency reported, says AFP.

A draft communique had called for an immediate ceasefire, but the final version said it would start "by July 20 at the latest."

The delegations — representing all factions in the five-year-old civil war pitting Hutu rebels against the Tutsi-dominated army — had been holding peace talks in this northern Tanzanian town since last Monday.

The war, which erupted in October 1993, is estimated to have cost some 200,000 lives, most of the civilian.

## Prince William turns sixteen

LONDON, Jun 22: Admitting tacitly that his first birthday without his mother would be difficult, Prince William, Princess Diana's handsome elder son, turned 16 Sunday, spending the day with friends and talking on the phone to his family, reports AP.

Alongside hundreds of pictures and gushing columns of newspaper about the boy born to be king, tabloid newspapers marked the birthday weekend with new promises to respect his privacy — made after Diana was killed Aug 31 in a Paris car crash, with photographers in pursuit.

William, who with head-turning looks and a shy smile bears a striking resemblance to Diana, stared out from the pages.

An addition to celebrating his birthday with friends, whose names were not provided, William marked the occasion by giving an interview to the British news agency, Press Association.

## Jiang accuses India of starting S Asia crisis

WASHINGTON, June 22: Chinese President Jiang Zemin has accused India of starting the South Asia crisis with its recent nuclear tests and stressed China and the United States must develop a constructive, strategic partnership to ease tensions in the sub-continent, reports PTI.

"I wish to point out that nuclear testing is against international trends, no matter if the test is by India or Pakistan. However, we must not fail to note that it was India who started the South Asia crisis, Jiang told the Washington post in an interview.

China and the US should work together towards a con-

structive, strategic partnership whose task should include ease tensions in South Asia, he said referring to India and Pakistan's nuclear tests.

Asking India and Pakistan to unconditionally sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Jiang said the tests by the two countries have triggered a nuclear arms race in South Asia, resulting in sudden tension in the region.

This will inevitably endanger the peace and stability of Asia and the world at large and have a big impact on the international non-proliferation regime, he said.

## RAW blamed for violence in Karachi India behind wave of killing: Pak President

LAHORE, Pakistan, Jun 22: Pakistan's President Muhammad Rafiq Tarar said on Sunday there was solid proof that India was behind a wave of killings in the port of Karachi, reports Reuter.

Tarar accused the research and Analysis Wing Raw of Indian intelligence for an outbreak of violence that has killed dozens in recent weeks, the official APP news agency reported.

His allegations were made weeks before the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers Atal Behari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif, meet on the margins of a regional economic conference in Sri Lanka to try to defuse tension between the two neighbours.

Vajpayee and Sharif are expected to meet for the first time between July 29 and 31 at the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It will be their first meeting since India and Pakistan detonated nuclear devices last

month, incurring economic sanctions and the condemnation of major powers.

Tarar said the New Delhi government was retaliating with "terrorism" for the six nuclear explosions Pakistan says it carried out last month in response to India's five.

"It is the most cowardly act that India has resorted to terrorism in the port city after Pakistan conducted six nuclear tests last month," Tarar said at a religious conference.

Pakistan has repeatedly blamed India for a series of killings and bombings across the country. India denies the allegations and says Pakistan is guilty of terrorist acts on Indian soil, a charge Islamabad denies.

At least 10 people were killed, some after torture, in the restive southern city of Karachi at the weekend. The violence was thought linked to longstanding rivalry between factions of the dominant MQM political party.

## Security stepped up for Marcos' family

MANILA, June 22: President Fidel Ramos ordered tighter security for former first lady Imelda Marcos and her children Monday after Communist rebels threatened to seize them for "crimes to the people," reports AP.

Ramos told reporters that he had instructed government agencies to "monitor, preempt and counter these published threats."

On Sunday, a rebel spokesman condemned President-elect Joseph Estrada for allowing the burial of Imelda's strongman husband, Ferdinand, next month in a heroes cemetery in metropolitan Manila.

Spokesman Gregorio Rosal said special rebel units have been ordered to arrest the Marcoses so they could face trial in a rebel court.

He did not specify any charges against the Marcoses but mentioned human rights violations.

Rosal said the planned burial of Marcos at the Heroes' Cemetery was a "hard slap" at the victims of Marcos' 20-year autocratic rule.

Marcos was ousted in a "people power" revolt in 1986. He fled to Hawaii where he died three years later.

His body was only allowed to

return to the country in September 1993 and has been kept in a glass coffin in an air-conditioned mausoleum in his northern hometown.

Opponents say the burial of Marcos in the Heroes Cemetery would "desecrate" hallowed ground.

Marcos' supporters say his burial there is appropriate because he was a decorated veteran who fought during World War II.

Estrada, who was close to the Marcos family when he served as a suburban mayor, said burying Marcos would end the bitter conflict between Marcos' supporters and opponents.

He said the former president will not be given state honours at the burial, set for July 11.

AFP adds: The Philippine military is bracing for possible protests aimed at disrupting the burial next month of the remains of Ferdinand Marcos, an army spokesman said Monday.

"If they go ahead I think our higher headquarters will be directing us to prepare adequate security measures," Colonel Leopoldo Maligalig said over radio station DZRH in Manila.

"We are ready to perform our mission, possibly with the help of the Philippine national police," he added.

## Suharto ready to fight in court against charges

JAKARTA, Jun 22: Indonesia's former president Suharto will not remain silent and is prepared to fight in court against charges that he amassed a fortune during his 32-year rule, a report said today, says AFP.

"If a suit is brought against him, Pak Harto (Suharto) will not remain silent. He will come forward and fight," the chairman of the Indonesian Bar Association (IP HI) Abdul Aziz Muhammad Fahalmar said according to the Repubblica daily.

Speaking to journalists in Surabaya, Fahalmar said he had met with the veteran leader to propose the services of IPHI lawyers in defending him.

"Suharto is telling people to come up with proof and if there is really any Wealth Pak Harto said, please take it," Bahalmar said.

There has been mounting pressure for the government to probe into the wealth of Suharto and his family as crit-

ics accuse him, his family and associates of having enriched themselves during his rule.

The Indonesian business data centre, has estimated the wealth of the Suharto family at around 200 trillion rupiah (13.7 billion dollars) while the US magazine Forbes in its July 6 issue released Sunday put the Suharto family wealth at four billion dollars.

The Indonesian attorney general's office has set up a 35-man team to investigate the assets of current and former officials, including Suharto, while several private groups have also set up their own probe teams.

Suharto has already appointed an unknown lawyer, Yakuas Jacob, to coordinate and advise him and his family on legal defence against the charges.

Jacob has said that although Suharto wanted to defend himself in public, he had desisted because the attorney general had already begun his investigations.

## Habibie declares 4 slain students as heroes

JAKARTA, Jun 22: Indonesian's president Monday declared four student protesters shot dead by security forces last month as heroes of the country's reform movement, reports AP.

"In my view they are heroes and I declare them heroes," President BJ Habibie said during an emotional meeting with the parents of the dead at Jakarta's state palace.

"Nothing can replace those who died in this tragedy. I and the government offer our deepest sympathies to all the families who hope their sacrifice will not be wasted," he said.

The four were gunned down during a pro-reform rally at Jakarta's Trisakti University on May 12.

Their deaths triggered a wave of rioting that killed about 1,200 and helped force former President Suharto to quit after 32 years in power.

Habibie replaced Suharto and has since promised sweeping reforms, including free and fair elections next year.

The military has charged 18 police officers in the deaths.

Officials said later that hero status would be formally granted at a ceremony in the near future.

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