

Cambodia rejects int'l tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders

UNITED NATIONS, Mar 13: The Cambodian foreign minister on Friday rejected UN proposals for an international tribunal to try former Khmer Rouge leaders for genocide outside Cambodia, reports AFP.

At a meeting with UN chief Kofi Annan at which he presented his government's response to a UN report, Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Nambong instead sought foreign assistance in establishing a national court to meet international justice standards.

Annan did not directly respond to the request, according to his spokesman Fred Eckhard who said that the UN chief stressed that the Cambodian judiciary in its current state "is unlikely to meet minimal justice standards."

Annan also said that a South African-style "Truth Commission", which is a recommendation backed by Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen, was positive but "not a substitute for justice."

The government's about-turn comes two years after Hun Sen signed a formal plea to the United Nations for a tribunal to bring Khmer Rouge leaders to justice, nearly 20 years after the genocidal regime collapsed.

Hor Nambong said after the half-hour meeting that he and Annan agreed that the former Khmer Rouge leaders should receive a fair trial and should not have impunity.

He noted that his country would put on trial former Khmer Rouge leader Ta Mok, known as 'the butcher', who was arrested on May 6.

The UN panel submitted to Annan last month recommends the trial of 20 to 30 surviving Khmer Rouge leaders at an international tribunal in the Asia-Pacific region, on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity.

But Hor Nambong insisted that because the perpetrators of the 1975-1979 genocide were Cambodian, as were the almost two million victims of the infamous Maoist Khmer Rouge faction, the court had to be in Cambodia.

He also said that the Cambodian constitution barred the extradition of Cambodian nationals by a foreign state.

"We have to set up a national tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders to respond to interna-

tionals standards, we will request assistance from foreign experts to the Cambodian court," he said.

Hor Nambong added there was only a "nuance of difference of opinion between himself and the UN secretary-general."

Annan briefed the Cambodian minister on the report's main conclusions, but did not take a personal stand at the meeting in support of the report's call for the international court.

Annan aides said that he would not issue specific recommendations to the UN Security Council when he submits the 61-page report next Monday to the 15-member body and to the 185-nation General Assembly.

5 paramilitary men killed in ambush in Assam

GUAHATI, India, Mar 13: Five Indian paramilitary personnel were killed today in an ambush by suspected tribal militants in the far-eastern state of Assam, police said, reports AFP.

Two other members of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were seriously injured in the attack in Assam's north Cachar hill district, an officer said here.

The CRPF men were on their way to Jatanga, a bird sanctuary 250 km from here, to fetch water for their camp when the militants opened fire with automatic weapons.

No one claimed responsibility for the attack.

Indian army and paramilitary forces have launched a hunt for the killers, the police said.

Thousands of people have died in oil-and-tea-rich Assam in ethnic violence.

Only Congress can provide stable govt at centre: Sonia

KOHIMA, Mar 13: Congress President Sonia Gandhi today said coalition governments at the centre were unable to deliver goods to the people as they were marked with inner conflicts and contradictions leading to instability, reports PTI.

"Instability is not at all good for the country and coalition partners very often manipulate the government decision adversely affecting the interest of the nation," Sonia Gandhi, who arrived here this morning from Imphal, Manipur, along with her daughter Priyanka Vadhra, said.

Sonia, who was addressing a public rally here at the local ground, said, "Only the Congress can provide a stable government at the centre with

its ability and experience.

Making a veiled reference to the earlier United Front government and the present BJP coalition at the centre, the Congress president said the non-Congress and fractured coalition governments at the centre were functioning over the last three years.

Only Congress has the ability and experience to govern at the centre, she said stating that her party had respect for secularism and provided equal status and opportunity to all ethnic and religious groups without any prejudice.

Referring to the north-east in general and Nagaland in particular, Sonia Gandhi, at-

though in Naga traditional "Makheia" and shawl, called for discarding the role of violence in democratic society and asserted that peaceful solution to the Naga political problem must be found.

"Although we are in opposition at the centre, I reaffirm our commitment to the problems of the north eastern region which needs special attention for ensuring peace, progress and development," the Congress president said.

She also said as a sensitive border state, Nagaland needed special attention from the centre and endorsed Chief Minister SC Jami's observation that his state should not be put at par with other north eastern states while dealing with problems.



US President Bill Clinton holding an umbrella in freezing rain lives the 72-year-old house where he was born in Hope, Arkansas, after a dedication ceremony on Friday. Clinton had not seen the inside of the white woodframe house trimmed in green since he was 2 years old. — AFP photo

Moro rebels breach truce, attack govt troops

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, Mar 13: Muslim guerrillas have breached a ceasefire and attacked a unit of Philippine troops, leading to the deaths of an undetermined number of rebels, the military said today, reports AFP.

Guerrillas of the separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) attacked the army detachment at Matanog town in Maguindanao province on Thursday using mortars and rocket-propelled grenades, the military said in a report.

Troops fought back and caused an unknown number of MILF casualties, with the rebels fleeing when military reinforcements arrived, the report added.

The fighting came despite the sealing of a ceasefire covering Maguindanao in February after a series of battles left at least 32 people dead.

Although preliminary peace talks between the government and the MILF resumed after the fighting in February, skirmishes continue to take place.

The 12,000-strong MILF is fighting for a separate Islamic state in the southern Philippines, the stronghold of the country's Muslim minority.

In a separate development, MILF vice-chairman Mohammad Murad said communist rebels in the south had sought refuge in MILF territory to evade a massive military operation aimed at recovering two kidnapped military officers.

But he added the MILF was still discussing whether an earlier tactical alliance reached between the Muslim and communist New People's Army (NPA) insurgents allowed such a move by the leftists.

The two rebel groups had agreed to help each other in defending areas under their control which came under attack by government troops, but earlier this month the MILF turned down communist appeals for heavier weapons to fight the military.

Sri Lanka will reintroduce hanging

COLOMBO, Mar 13: Sri Lanka will resume hanging criminals after a gap of 22 years, the presidential secretary said Saturday, reports AP.

President Chandrika Kumaratunga took the decision in response to appeals from people that capital punishment be restored to prevent heinous crimes, the secretary said. At least 12 people are facing death penalty in Sri Lanka.

Death penalty exists in Sri Lanka, but it has been kept in abeyance since 1977. The law requires the president to sign the black warrant after a court has convicted an accused.

Successive presidents declined to sign the death orders after 1977, turning the death sentence into life imprisonment. Sri Lanka is a predominantly Buddhist country.

The demand to restore hanging mounted after last year's gruesome murder of an Indian woman who was honeymooning with her Sri Lankan sailor husband in the island nation.

Off the Record

They love her lipstick....

TORONTO: North American women may be divided on their opinions of Monica Lewinsky as a person, but many appear to agree on one point — they love her lipstick, reports Reuters.

So much so that they can no longer find the Club Monaco lipstick or lip liner worn by Monica Lewinsky during her interview with Barbara Walters anywhere in North America.

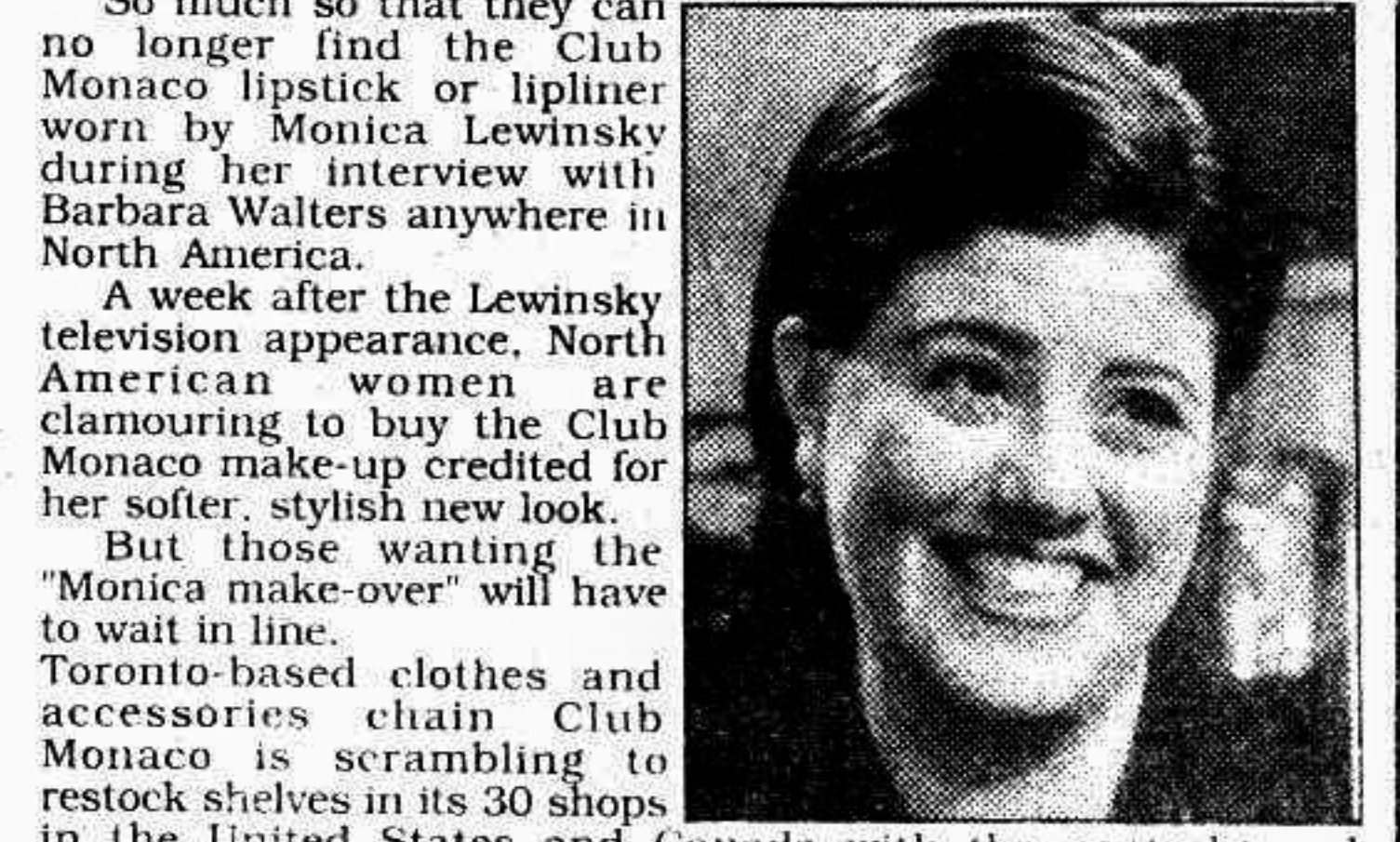
A week after the Lewinsky television appearance, North American women are clamouring to buy the Club Monaco make-up credited for her softer, stylish new look.

But those wanting the "Monica make-over" will have to wait in line.

Toronto-based clothes and accessories chain Club Monaco is scrambling to restock shelves of its 30 shops in the United States and Canada with the neutral-toned lipstick, lip liner, blush and becoming the hottest cosmetic products of the season.

"It's really taken us by surprise, our name is definitely out there because of this," said Gerald Levac, a director of marketing and cosmetics at Club Monaco's Toronto head office.

Despite the windfall created by Lewinsky's appearance in Club Monaco colours, chosen by a New York make-up artist for her television appearance, Levac said he isn't considering asking her to be a spokeswoman for Club Monaco products.



BRIEFLY

British frigate visits Shanghai: The British frigate HMS Boxer docked Saturday in Shanghai for the Royal Navy's first goodwill visit to China since the return of Hong Kong, AP reports from Shanghai.

The crew plans to throw a party for local children and play soccer against a Chinese army team during its five-day stay. With a crew of 260, the Boxer is on its last voyage before returning to Britain to be decommissioned.

Lebanese army put on alert: Lebanon put its army on alert Friday night after Israeli helicopters overflew the Bekaa plain in central Lebanon, witnesses said, reports AFP from Baalbek.

Tanks were deployed along the seaboard in Beirut, guns pointing out to sea and troops manning road blocks along the mountain route from the capital to the Bekaa region held their arms at the ready. The Shi'ite anti-Israeli resistance movement Hezbollah also placed its forces on maximum alert footing or during increased security measures to thwart and eventual Israeli commando operation directed at Hezbollah leaders, Lebanese security officials said.

Pak opposition alliance splits

By Syed Talat Hussain

ISLAMABAD, Mar 13: Pakistan's fragile rainbow opposition, Pakistan Awami Ittehad (PAI) suffered a deadly blow when its founders decided to part ways. Chairman of the PAI, which was created at the initiative of Ms Benazir Bhutto to oust the sitting prime minister Nawaz Sharif, Wednesday announced that he is forming his own PAI and has expelled Ms Bhutto's PPP besides other smaller parties. "They deviated from the basic documents of the Alliance and now we have expelled them," said Mr Qadri, a religious scholar who heads his rightwing party which has nominal support base and has never won a single seat in the last three elections.

Qadri's pique against the larger political parties such as the PPP stems from the fact that he has been sidelined in many decisions lately including the decision of the PAI to start a nation-wide agitation campaign against the Sharif government. Qadri accuses Ms Bhutto of following and pursuing "negative agenda" and says that she is averse to the idea of sharing power.

However, the split of the PAI has not surprised anyone because the parties which formed this Alliance had little in common. In fact Qadri was completely against the PPP when the latter was in power and used to issue religious edicts saying that the rule of a woman was a curse for this country.

Even when political expediency and circumstances brought different parties together under the label of the PAI Qadri and his religious allies and Ms Bhutto with her political allies in the PAI remained odd bed-fellows.

There were rifts and intra alliance wrangling which have now resulted in the dissolution of the PAI. Japan's oil search takes it to Taliban's Afghanistan.

Royal medical records by roadside!

AYR, SCOTLAND: The British royal family's confidential medical records have been discovered dumped at the side of a road, Buckingham Palace said late Friday, reports AFP.

A spokesman for the British royal family confirmed police had informed royal staff of the find beside a road on the seaford at Ayr, southwest Scotland, after it was reported in The Sun newspaper.

According to the paper, the file contained details of security arrangements of past royal visits, blood types and medical details.

The Buckingham Palace spokesman said, "As far as we are concerned, it is a police matter."

Police said an inquiry had begun.

"We can confirm that we are in receipt of historical health board documents the contents of which we are not in a position to discuss," said a spokesman.

Although the document is not recent, there is obvious concern as to how it came to be in the public domain, he added.

The Sun said the folder contained 70 pages, many of them marked confidential, about 10 members of the royal family, including queen Elizabeth II.

The unnamed man who found the documents while walking his dog told The Sun: "I couldn't believe what I was reading. It listed details of 27 royal visits over eight years and I now know the blood types and other medical details of 10 members of the royal family."

Chinese Protestants face fine:

Thirteen Protestants detained since Chinese police raided their underground church more than two months ago have been told to pay a fine or face forced labour, a right group reported Saturday, AP says from Beijing.

Police arrested 40 Protestants in breaking up a Christmas Day service at a private home outside Shanghai city in central Henan province, and all but 13 have since been released, the Hong Kong-based Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said. The 13 kept in a city detention centre, were told this week to pay fines of 2,000 yuan (240 dollars) or be sent to labour camps.

House built in less than 4 hrs



A soldier watches a market place while patrolling an area of rising tension in central Karachi yesterday. Two activists of a Sunni Muslim party were shot dead by unidentified gunmen while preaching on a roadside in a suspected religious attack. — AFP photo

'60 pc arrest by Indian police unjustifiable'

NEW DELHI, Mar 13: Sixty per cent of all arrests by the police in India were "unnecessary and unjustifiable," Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Justice MN Venkatchaliah said Friday, reports Xinhua.

These accounted for 43 per cent of the total expenditure incurred by prisons. The NHRC leader said while addressing a group of District and Sessions Judges and officers from correctional services.

In Delhi's Tihar jail, according to the Times of India today only 10 to 15 per cent of the inmates were convicts, the rest being under trials.

The daily quoted Venkatchaliah as saying that most of the complaints reaching the NHRC relate to the police and it was reportedly said that even innocent people with mental disabilities were sometimes being held in prisons.

"There is a very low rate of convictions as the investigations carried out leave much to be desired," he said. "The degree of acquittals is very demoralizing for the public as the offenders get away scot-free."

US apartment fire kills 6 kids:

The woman's screams shot out from her third-story window toward the busy intersection and Fire Station 8 across the street. "Save my children," she cried before plunging from her flaming apartment to the ground, AP reports from St Louis.

But the blaze, apparently sparked out of fury after a fight, moved too fast even for the neighbouring firefighters. Six children, aged 7 months to 9 years, were trapped and none survived. Three of them were found huddling together inside a closet. Hours after Friday's fire, authorities arrested a 23-year-old man — police said he was the boyfriend of the frantic victim — at his home just nine blocks away. Witnesses said he and the woman had been fighting outside the brick apartment building earlier in the day. Firefighters across the street also reported seeing a man outside the building with what may have been a red gasoline container.

New supernova discovered:

Astronomers canvassing the sky for asteroids that could threaten Earth stumbled upon a supernova in a galaxy 650 million light-years away, Jet Propulsion Laboratory researchers say, AP reports from Pasadena.

The supernova was photographed by NASA's Near Earth Asteroid Tracking System on Feb 18. The images captured the star's appearance as it looked just a few weeks after the ancient explosion occurred. The star was unknown to astronomers before the accidental discovery. The supernova, named 1999am, was a white dwarf star in orbit with a companion star before it exploded.

Singapore warns int'l TV network against political coverage

SINGAPORE, Mar 13: Citing fears of electoral interference, Singapore has asked international television network broadcasting here to abide by strict local rules in their political coverage, the country's leading newspaper reported Saturday, reports AP.

"If we are not careful, foreign broadcasters, like foreign newspapers, can undermine some of our important social and other policies," George Yeo, Information and the Arts Minister, was quoted as saying by The Straits Times.

The paper is the most influential in the island republic, where media are tightly controlled and reports often express government opinion.

Yeo, who was speaking in Parliament late Friday, said the move was necessary to prevent international TV stations with audiences in Singapore from undermining the country's identity.

"A few may even be tempted to interfere in Singapore's domestic politics, especially before a General Election," Yeo said.

"During election time, the rules of campaigning must apply to these foreign channels, as they apply to (government-controlled Television Corporation of Singapore)," Yeo added.

"Otherwise, some candidates may be tempted to lobby foreign channels or even buy air time from them."

Singapore's next election is scheduled for Jan 2002.

International stations that can broadcast in Singapore through cable channels are BBC, CNN, CNBC Asia and Bloomberg TV.

Chris Blackman, vice-president of CNBC Asia, said any suggestion that CNBC wants to interfere in Singapore's political life is "totally erroneous."

"The only agenda we have is fair and accurate reporting," Blackman told The Associated Press.

Allegations of N-espionage refocus attention on China's spy network in US

WASHINGTON, Mar 13: New allegations of Chinese nuclear espionage have refocused attention here on what experts describe as Beijing's vast and well-developed spy network in the United States, reports AFP.

And while damage resulting from this security breach could prove very serious indeed, experts suggest it is the political gamesmanship around this scandal that marks a new turn here.

"This is a very important event, and it looks nasty," said James Lilley, a former CIA station chief in Beijing and US ambassador to China, adding: "We have contaminated the process by political intervention."

"Espionage is part of the business," Lilley said. "But don't get up and start playing games with it. Don't say it happened on (former president Ronald) Reagan's watch, politics is inevitable, but let's sober up."

Congressional Republicans were outraged when Vice President Al Gore sought to rebut charges of US incompetence in dealing with the alleged espionage by insisting it had occurred "under a previous administration."

With US Chinese relations already slipping badly on several fronts, some legislators have called for a broad re-assessment of US China policy while others want National Security Adviser Sandy Berger to resign.

Speaking out on the controversy for the first time, President Bill Clinton on Thursday denied hiding security breaches from Congress in 1996-97 out of fear they would fuel criticism of his policy of engagement with Beijing and then acted too slowly to correct the problems.

It was Clinton's first response to week-old reports alleging that China stole nuclear weapons secrets from the Los Alamos Nuclear Weapons Laboratory in New Mexico during the 1980s — which apparently helped Beijing design smaller warheads similar to the advanced US W-88 warhead.

"In the great scheme of things, it's not all that new," said Douglas Paal, who spent seven years counselling former presidents Reagan and George Bush as an Asia policy adviser at the White House.

Paal, Lilley, and others with expertise in Chinese intelligence operations contend that Beijing's efforts to acquire US technology are vast, long-standing, and in many ways uniquely difficult to crack.

"What we have is a whole slew of Chinese high-tech operations that have been going on for years and years and years, and they get (information) with many different means," Lilley said.

They have run literally hundreds of operations," he said, "much of it in dual-use technologies that could plausibly be used in both sinister and not-so-sinister applications."

For example, a federal grand jury indicted a Chinese national and a Chinese-born Canadian on Tuesday for allegedly trying to smuggle to China a type of gyroscope that improves missile accuracy.

But gyroscopes also have other uses, and sorting out exactly which enterprises might threaten national security isn't always easy.

Meticulous planning, extraordinary patience, and ruthless exploitation of thousands of ethnic Chinese here give Beijing's spymasters an edge over their counterparts from other countries, said Paal.

The United States, with its wealth of high technology and historic openness, also presents a uniquely compelling target for anyone in the gumshoe business looking to acquire weapons expertise.

Arafat orders release of all Palestinians in Gaza Strip

GAZA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, Mar 13: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who returned from a brief visit to London and The Hague, ordered Friday the release of all Palestinians detained during two days of violence in the Gaza Strip, reports AFP.

President Arafat met Palestinian security officials Friday night at Gaza International Airport to hear a report on the unrest and then ordered that all the Palestinian detained in connection with it be released. Colonel Tawfik Jaber, Chief of Palestinian Secret Services told reporters, he did not say how many people had been arrested.



Foreign ministers of the Czech Republic Jan Kavan (L), Hungary János Martonyi (C) and Poland Bronislaw Geremek (R) watch as US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright signs the accession documents that brought the three countries into NATO at the Harry S Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, on Friday. — AFP photo