

## BRIEFLY



Workers put the finishing touch to sign on the Carlton Hotel facade on Tuesday on the Cannes croquette. The festival will kick into high gear on Wednesday as movie stars, journalists cinephiles and curious converge on the French Riviera for the world's premier cinematic event.

— AFP photo

## UNSC calls for ceasefire in Congo:

As the Congolese government stepped up its nine-month war against rebels, the Security Council called a new for the warring parties to agree to a ceasefire, AP says from UN.

Also Tuesday, the council asked the rebels and the government of President Laurent Kabila and his allies to "demonstrate an attitude of responsibility and a greater willingness to cooperate" with peace initiatives.

## Sharif in S'pore:

Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will arrive in Singapore today for a three-day official visit, the Singapore Foreign Ministry said Tuesday, Xinhua says from Singapore.

During his visit, Sharif will meet Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong for talks on bilateral and regional issues. Sharif will also meet Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and call on Singapore President Ong Teng Cheong.

## Jeep collision kills 6 in India:

Six persons of a marriage party including four women were killed and 21 injured when an overcrowded jeep collided with a tupper, near Bramhapuri, about 125 kms from here yesterday, police said, PTI reports from Nagpur.

The driver of the jeep was among the deceased. The injured including six boys and four girls were rushed to a hospital at Chandrapur.

## Hillary visits Ireland:

US First Lady Hillary Clinton returned to Ireland early yesterday for a two-day visit on both sides of the border aimed at demonstrating continued American support for the peace process, AFP reports from Shannon.

The US first lady embarked on her fourth visit to the country amid tight security at Shannon airport, County Clare, in the west of the country.

## Chris Patten to be EU Commissioner:

Britain's Labour government is to choose the former governor of Hong Kong, pro-European Conservative Chris Patten, as a European commissioner to replace Sir Leon Brittan, the Financial Times said Wednesday, AFP says from London.

Citing ministerial sources, the paper said the decision could be seen both as a snub to Conservative leader William Hague, as it would go against his nominated choice, but also a boon, as it would remove any threat of Patten attempting to replace Hague as Tory leader.

## Philippines landslide kills 10:

A landslide killed 10 people, including three children, in a mountain village in the southern Philippines, disaster officials said Wednesday, AP says from Manila.

The landslide was triggered by heavy rain Monday afternoon in the town of Pantukan in Compostela Valley province, Antonio Cloma of the Regional Office of Civil Defense said.

## Israel marks 50th anniversary of UN membership

UNITED NATIONS, May 12: Israel marked the 50th anniversary of the day it joined the United Nations by pledging to uphold the UN's ideals of working for peace but vowing it would continue to protect itself, reports AP.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, a keynote speaker at a dinner marking the occasion Tuesday, noted that the right to self-defense was enshrined in the UN Charter and was key to the founding of Israel in 1948.

"Since then we were forced to hold the sword in one hand to defend ourselves while our other hand was already seeking peace and cooperation with our neighbours and the world community at large," Sharon told a crowd that included Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Israel's first UN Ambassador, Abba Eban, and former UN Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Earlier in the day, Sharon unveiled a gift to the United Nations to commemorate its anniversary — a decorative stone from the entranceway of a 4th century Western Galilean synagogue that was recently uncovered by archaeologists.

The stone, which is prominently displayed in the hallway leading into the Security Council from the Delegates' Lounge, features carvings of traditional Jewish ritual symbols, including a menorah.

In accepting the gift, Annan noted that people who have suffered the deepest depths of human evil, is a fitting addition to United Nations headquarters, he said.

Israel's history is intertwined with that of the United Nations, which was conceived of as a response to the horrors of the Holocaust.

But the relationship between the two has been rocky at best: The Arab-Israeli conflict dominated the world body's first years of existence, and over the years Israel has found itself relying more and more on the United States to protect its interests in the 185-member General Assembly, which is heavily weighted in favour of Arab states and their allies.

In addition, Israel is the only UN member state that doesn't belong to a UN regional group, which prevents it from fully engaging in UN activities, such as being nominated for committee — the Security Council included.

At the dinner held in the UN Delegates Dining Room, Annan was interrupted by applause when he pledged to work to change the situation.

He also told Al-Iqtissadiya newspaper that the issue was not even under review. "There is no such study, and every society has its own specific ways," Prince Nayef said.

"I believe we must not make an issue of the question of women," he said. "Women are the sisters of man, but God granted each human being his rights and his obligations."

## Saudi Arabia to keep women off roads

RIYADH, May 12: A Saudi minister said Wednesday that women would continue to be kept off the roads in the conservative Moslem kingdom and reiterated their place was not behind the wheel, reports AFP.

"The state has no will or intention to allow women to drive in Saudi Arabia," said Interior Minister Prince Nayef bin Abdul Aziz, squashing rumours that the driving ban was about to be dropped.

He also told Al-Iqtissadiya newspaper that the issue was not even under review. "There is no such study, and every society has its own specific ways," Prince Nayef said.

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# 'Signing of CTBT now not so easy'

## Sonia misled the president, Vajpayee says

MUMBAI, May 12: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee last night charged Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi with misleading the President K R Narayanan by claiming that her party had the support of 272 MPs to form government at the centre, reports PTI.

"Sonia misled the president by claiming 272 MPs were with Congress, whereas BJP and allies maintained their strength of 270 MPs including the Lok Sabha Speaker and did not fall victim to any horse trading," he asserted kicking off the BJP-Shiv Sena campaign for the coming mid-term Lok Sabha polls at the historic Shivaji Park in central Mumbai.

Shiv Sena Chief Bal Thackeray was conspicuous by his absence at the largely attended rally as he was indisposed.

Vajpayee said the Congress would not be able to form the government at the centre on its

own and would necessarily have to face the reality of "sharing power with regional parties." "Regional parties have to be respected and will ask for representation at the centre," he said.

Addressing the rally which was also organised to commemorate the first anniversary of the "Pokhran II tests," the prime minister in an implicit rejection of CTBT, said India could not be pressurised to give up its nuclear weapons capability and would continue with its missile development programme.

India could not compromise on its national security particularly in view of the ongoing indiscriminate NATO bombings of Yugoslavia and renewed tension on the Kashmir border which was "hotting up," he said.

Another report from Calcutta says: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee would hold

talks with various opposition parties on the question of India signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), Union Power Minister PR Kumaralam said yesterday.

Describing it as a major issue, Kumaralam told a press conference here that if parliament was in session it would have been easy to take a decision on the issue.

"When you sign an international treaty, it is required that parliament puts its stamp on the issue," he said.

But now it would not be easy to take a decision since parliament has been dissolved, he said.

However, the minister said, the government would have to take other necessary decisions to keep the administration running as there was nothing in the constitution called "Caretaker" government.

Meanwhile BJP and its coalition partner the BJD yesterday formally launched their election campaign for the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in Orissa with Union Home Minister L K Advani asserting that the Vajpayee-led government would be voted back to power with a decisive mandate.

No matter when the elections are held, the people would repose their faith in the BJP and its allies to avenge the conspiracy of the Congress and the communists which forced a mid-term election on them, leaders of both the parties told a large gathering here while observing the resurgent India day to commemorate the first anniversary of Pokhran II.

Advani said, though the Congress was opposed to early polls, his party would reap the benefit of the elections to be held in September-October.

## BBC denies Pakistani allegations

ISLAMABAD, May 12: The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has rejected the allegations levelled by the Nawaz Sharif government that it has violated journalistic ethics and has been presenting only one-sided picture of Pakistan and its government in a documentary it is making on alleged corruption at the high-level, reports PTI.

In a letter to the Information Minister Mushahid Hussain, the editor of BBC's correspondent programme, Fiona Murch, said the request of the BBC to interview Premier Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shahbaz Sharif, had been turned down by the government.

The BBC also reminded the minister that he himself was interviewed by the corporation as was the Law Minister Khalid Anwar.

Murch said the visa for the BBC crew members were sought in normal manner with their purpose of the visit also specified and therefore, "I refute your allegation that BBC team's Modus Operandi Lends credence to the view that malafide intent is motivating its work," he added.

She further said BBC would be delighted to interview the premier or his brother during the next two weeks.

## Fresh fighting kills 34 in Sri Lanka

COLOMBO, May 12: At least 30 LTTE rebels and four Sri Lanka security personnel were killed in renewed fighting between Tamil guerillas and government troops in the Northern region, the Army said yesterday, reports PTI.

Eighteen rebels were killed when troops attacked a rebel hideout at Pariyamadu in North West Manner area early Monday. The rebels retaliated with propelled grenades and small arms but could not withstand intensified attack by security personnel, army said in a statement.

## US welcomes Israeli court decision

WASHINGTON, May 12: The State Department Tuesday welcomed a decision by Israel's Supreme Court that stops Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from closing Palestinian headquarters in Jerusalem, reports AP.

"It appears that a confrontation has been avoided and we welcomed that," Department spokesman James P Rubin said.

Six days before national elections, the high court ordered Israel's police minister and Palestinian officials to explain within seven days why they had failed to achieve a compromise.

Netanyahu, in a tough re-election fight, tried to close the offices to demonstrate his intention to maintain Israel's control over Jerusalem.

Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority seeks a state with its capital in Jerusalem. The Clinton administration takes no official position on Jerusalem's future or on statehood.

On Monday, the State Department avoided any comment on Netanyahu's move to close the offices. But after the Israeli court blocked him, the department on Tuesday welcomed the ruling and said it was important that both sides continue efforts to resolve the dispute peacefully.

## Gusmao asks students to end protests

DILI, May 12: Worried that attacks from anti-independence militia groups could derail a UN-sponsored ballot on the future of his troubled homeland, East Timor's jailed resistance leader Jose Alexandre "Xanana" Gusmao has ordered pro-independence students to stop daily protests, reports AP.

In a statement released to reporters on Wednesday, Gusmao warned students that demonstrations, held almost daily in the territorial capital Dili, had provided militias "with a pretext to kill people."

## Turkey to allow its bases for air strikes

# NATO continues bombing Y'slavia: Seven killed

BELGRADE, May 12: Unmoved by President Slobodan Milosevic's promise to withdraw some of his troops from Kosovo, NATO has continued bombing Yugoslavia, killing at least seven people and pounding bridges, roads and rail links, reports AP.

Yugoslav state-run media reported strong NATO attacks in central, southern and northern Serbia and in its Kosovo province. International monitors in Albania also spoke of heavy fighting between Serb forces and ethnic Albanian rebels in southern Kosovo.

Serbian Socialist Party Secretary General Gorica Gajević, a close Milosevic ally, said allied missiles rained down while she and other government officials toured the Jugopetrol oil storage depot Tuesday in Nis, a southern industrial city and the reputed army headquarters of the Kosovo operation.

"We were the target and victim of a criminal plane," Gajević said after a missile landed

20 meters (yards) away, injuring Dusko Matkovic, a deputy chairman of the ruling party, in the arm. A police officer was killed in the attack.

Other NATO attacks Tuesday killed at least six people, including an elderly married couple and a 4-year-old girl in a Serb village in Kosovo, the Yugoslav media reported.

Serbian state television said NATO missiles hit a central residential area in Vladicin Han in southern Serbia late Tuesday. The private Beta news agency said an attack on a bridge killed two people who were crossing it.

An attack by Yugoslav MiG warplanes near the Albanian border with Kosovo killed three Kosovo Liberation Army fighters and wounded 20, rebel sources said on condition of anonymity. They said one Serb plane was shot down.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe reported 30 wounded ethnic Albanian rebels had been brought to a hospital in Bajram Curri in

northern Albanian. It was not immediately clear if the casualties were from the attack reported by the KLA.

Reuter adds from Washington: The United States on Tuesday rejected demands by China and Russia that NATO halt its bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, and officials said NATO would widen its military base by launching air attacks from Turkey.

"We are going to continue with prosecuting the air campaign until the NATO conditions are met, and that alone will be the cause of any suspension of the bombing," White House spokesman Joe Lockhart told reporters.

China, furious over the NATO bombing of its embassy in Belgrade, said it will not consent to a UN Security Council discussion of a peace plan until the air war stopped.

Separately, US officials welcomed Turkey's announcement that its bases would be made available for NATO.



A protester holds a representation of a NATO missile at the start of a large anti-US/anti-NATO protest in Hong Kong on Wednesday. As protests in mainland China over the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade slowed, Hong Kong people continued to protest the NATO action which led to the death of three Chinese citizens. — AFP photo

## Netanyahu appeals for support from own party in Monday's polls

JERUSALEM, May 12: Admitting he has made mistakes, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is appealing to his traditional supporters not to abandon him in Monday's national election, reports AP.

Trailing in the polls, the prime minister has broadcast television ads this week acknowledging shortcomings during his three years in power.

"Some of you don't agree with all that I have done," says Netanyahu, seated in an arm chair in his office.

"I never claimed that I am innocent of any errors," he said. "But I can say, with my hand on my heart, that I believe I have led the state of Israel along the only road that will lead to security and a genuine peace," he said.

Netanyahu's character has been at the center of the campaign. His opponents have repeatedly attacked him for unkept promises, a recession and a reputation for being untrustworthy.

The tactics appear to be

working. Polls forecast disgruntled supporters of Netanyahu's Likud Party turning elsewhere. With 33 parties contesting parliamentary elections and five candidates for prime minister, Netanyahu has had a difficult time finding new voters.

In radio and TV ads aired Monday and Tuesday, Netanyahu called on Likud supporters who shares his hard-line principles "to set aside any other consideration," when voting.

"I call on you to return home, to the Likud, so that together we can defend our home, the state of Israel," he said.

The latest ads represent the third time in as many weeks that Netanyahu has changed campaign strategy. From the start, Netanyahu and senior party members have clashed over tactics.

A first crop of ads and posters featured Netanyahu only and made little reference to Likud or its candidates for parliament.

Next, negative ads suggested that Netanyahu's main challenger, Labour leader Ehud Barak, would give in to Palestinian demands in peace talks and Israel's security.

Barak, a former military chief and Israel's most decorated soldier, has presented himself as tough on security with positions similar to those held by Netanyahu.

Then Netanyahu ran ads airing footage from suicide bombings carried out by Islamic mil-

Time may be running out from the prime minister. Polls in recent weeks have shown the gap between Barak and Netanyahu growing, with some surveys showing Barak up to 12 points ahead.

A woman, supporter of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L), argues with opposition Labour leader Ehud Barak's supporters, on Tuesday in Jerusalem. — AFP photo

## Off the Record



Two models parade the latest fashion from Australian label Easton Pearson at the Sydney Fashion Week on Wednesday. Australia's top designers as well as those from New Zealand and Hong Kong will parade their garments in the week-long show which has attracted media and buyers from around the world. — AFP photo

## All work and no play...

HANOI: Vietnamese women working in cities are finding life to be all work and no play, making it difficult to find a husband, a report said yesterday, reports AFP.

Women of marriageable age who have taken jobs in the industrial sector complain that full days at the factory and long commutes home leave them too exhausted to put any effort into dating, the Vietnam News reported.

Nguyen Minh Hoa, professor at the Ho Chi Minh City College of Social Sciences and Humanities, was quoted as saying women now comprise 70 per cent of the urban workforce in textiles and food processing.

According to her survey of 100 residential areas in Ho Chi Minh City, 42 per cent of the residents were unmarried women aged 30 or more.

Most Vietnamese women marry in their early 20s, and are considered "e chong" (unmarriageable) beyond the age of 28.

## Cloned Tasmanian Tiger?

SYDNEY: The fabled Tasmanian Tiger, assumed extinct for more than 60 years, could be brought back to life by cloning after a perfectly preserved specimen was found, scientists said Wednesday, says AFP.

Australian Museum director Michael Archer says a live clone could be created from DNA taken after a preserved baby tiger was found in a bottle in the bowels of the museum. Archer, a professor of paleontology, said it was feasible that people could own them as pets within 50 years.

"We've discovered the miracle bottle in which this time capsule is just waiting to pop back into life," he said.

The baby tiger, a little smaller than a cat, was bottled in 1866.

By chance, it was preserved in alcohol, rather than formalin, which would have destroyed the DNA.

He said the potential of the baby thylacine was much more exciting than the movie Jurassic Park.

"If this can be done it is the beginning — there's all kinds of extinct animals that we human beings drove to extinction waiting on the same assembly line to be kick-started again."

## China playing with fire, S'pore paper says

SINGAPORE, May 12: China is "playing with fire" for allowing anti-American protests and refusing to accept apologies by the United States for the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Singapore's leading newspaper said Wednesday, reports AP.

"There is no reason for the Chinese people to disbelieve US explanations for the tragic error, not least because they are so embarrassing," the government-controlled Straits Times daily said in an editorial.

"Nor is there any reason to doubt the sincerity of the US President's apology to the Chinese," it said.

"What is regrettable is the failure of the Chinese media to report the apology promptly, and for the Chinese government not to accept it."

Criticising the protests in China as "inexcusable," the paper warned Chinese authorities

they are "playing with fire, allowing anti-American protests and refusing to accept apologies by the United States for the bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Singapore's leading newspaper said Wednesday, reports AP.

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## More aid needed for famine-stricken N Korea

SEOUL, May 12: A World Food Programme (WFP) team has determined that more international aid is needed for communist North Korea, where some three million have reportedly died from famine, reports from Pyongyang said, reports AP.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)

said the team toured "food for work projects, nurseries, kindergartens, hospitals and houses" during a week-long stay which ended Tuesday.

The team "recognised that assistance given by the international community up to date has proved effective and it is necessary to continue international aid in the future," the KCNA said.

It said the team met North Korean officials, who "expressed thanks to the international community for rendering humanitarian assistance to the Korean people who have been suffering from years of natural disasters and exchanged views with it on a series of matters arising in continuing assistance."

The WFP has launched an emergency appeal for 260 million dollars to help feed some eight million North Koreans over the next year. It said last month the Stalinist state faced its "hardest months" of hunger April and June.

David Norton, WFP coordinator for North Korea, said North Korean people would be forced to eat roots, seaweed, cabbage stalks and corn cobs which could cause serious digestive problems.

The WFP's latest appeal was the UN agency's fifth effort to help North Korea since widespread food shortages emerged in 1995. It aims to deliver 585,000 tonnes of food.

The operation, to star July 1, will need 441,500 tonnes of grain, 23,200 tonnes of oil, 23,000 tonnes of vegetables, 40,000 tonnes of corn-soya blend, 8,800 tonnes of sugar, and 48,400 tonnes of nutrition bars.

The aid will be directed mainly at children and older people.

## Bombing raid claims 29 lives in DRC

KISANGANI, Congo, May 12: At least 29 people were killed and 16 wounded on Tuesday in a government bombing raid on two towns in the rebel-held east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, senior rebel officials said, reports Reuters.

The surprise raid was the latest incident in a regional war in Congo involving at least seven countries that started last August when rebels in the east backed by Rwanda and Uganda took up arms against President Laurent Kabila.

Rebel commander Bob Ngoy said a Russian-built Antonov cargo plane dropped bombs in two residential districts of Goma, the rebel headquarters on Congo's eastern border with Rwanda.

An Antonov also dropped three bombs on Ivira, a port town south of Goma on Lake Tanganyika, just over the border from the Burundian capital, another Congolese military source said.

The plane flew over and dropped bombs on a residential area of the city. There were 26 dead and 15 wounded," Ngoy told Reuters by satellite phone from Goma, saying the bombs fell just before 8:00 pm (18:00 GMT).