

BRIEFLY

Police officer shot dead in Bihar:

The officer in-charge of Chainpur Police Station in Palamu District, Kirani Singh, was shot dead on Wednesday by suspected extremists, the police said. PTI reports from Bihar.

The Police Superintendent, R K Singh, told PTI before leaving for the spot that armed assailants fired at Singh when he was conducting raids at Chainpur Market. Singh died on the spot, he said. A manhunt has been launched to arrest the killers.

Gunmen kill ex-Nigerian minister:

Nigerian former sports and transport minister Anthony Ikazoboh was shot dead in front of his wife by four gunmen in a suspected assassination, a top police spokesman said yesterday. AFP reports from Lagos.

Lagos State Police Commissioner Sunday Aghedo told reporters the retired air commodore was shot Tuesday night as he returned to his home in a beachside district of Lagos from attending church. Ikazoboh was shot by the gunmen who appeared to have followed him home.

Malaria kills 10 in Indonesia:

Malaria has killed 10 people in the eastern part of Lombok island, just east of the Indonesian resort island of Bali, a report said yesterday. AFP reports from Jakarta.



A mother holding her baby chants anti-government slogans during a protest rally in Rawalpindi city, some 25 kilometers from Islamabad, 28 July 1999. Thousands of people participated in a protest rally against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif over the withdrawal of Islamic guerrillas from strategic peaks in Indian Kashmir.

— AFP photo

Suicide bomber kills Tamil lawmaker

COLOMBO, July 29: A suicide bomber assassinated a moderate Tamil lawmaker Thursday, leaping onto his car at a busy intersection and detonating the explosives strapped to his body, police and an army officer said, reports AP.

Neelan Tiruchelvam was killed immediately in the back seat of his car. His driver, five police guards and a bystander were wounded, hospital officials said.

No one immediately claimed responsibility, but officials blamed the Liberation Tigers for Tamil Eelam, or LTTE, which is fighting for an independent Tamil homeland and has been accused in previous assassinations of prominent Sri Lankan leaders and Tamils who oppose them.

Tiruchelvam, who was under police protection because of Tamil Tiger threats, belonged to the moderate Tamil United Liberation Front party, or TULF. He headed the International Center for Ethnic Studies, a think tank studying the background and elements of the ethnic strife between the dominant

Sinhalese and the Tamil minority. He was a member of the team that drafted President Chandrika Kumaratunga's peace plan, and was actively lobbying for its support in parliament, which is sharply divided over it. The plan was to be formally submitted to the legislature next month.

Assistant police superintendent G. Dissanayake, of the Terrorist Investigations Department, said the attack bore the hallmarks of the Tamil Tigers. Transport Minister Ahm Fowzie also said it appeared to be the work of the Tigers.

"It's sad to see the LTTE is continuing to do this," Fowzie told The Associated Press. But he said the government would press ahead with its peace proposal.

The bomber jumped off the back of a motor scooter and onto Tiruchelvam's car as it approached a road junction near his house, followed by a police jeep, residents in the area and police said.

The assailant also was killed in the explosion, said

army Col. A. Amunugama, who was among the first persons to reach the scene. The vehicle was shattered.

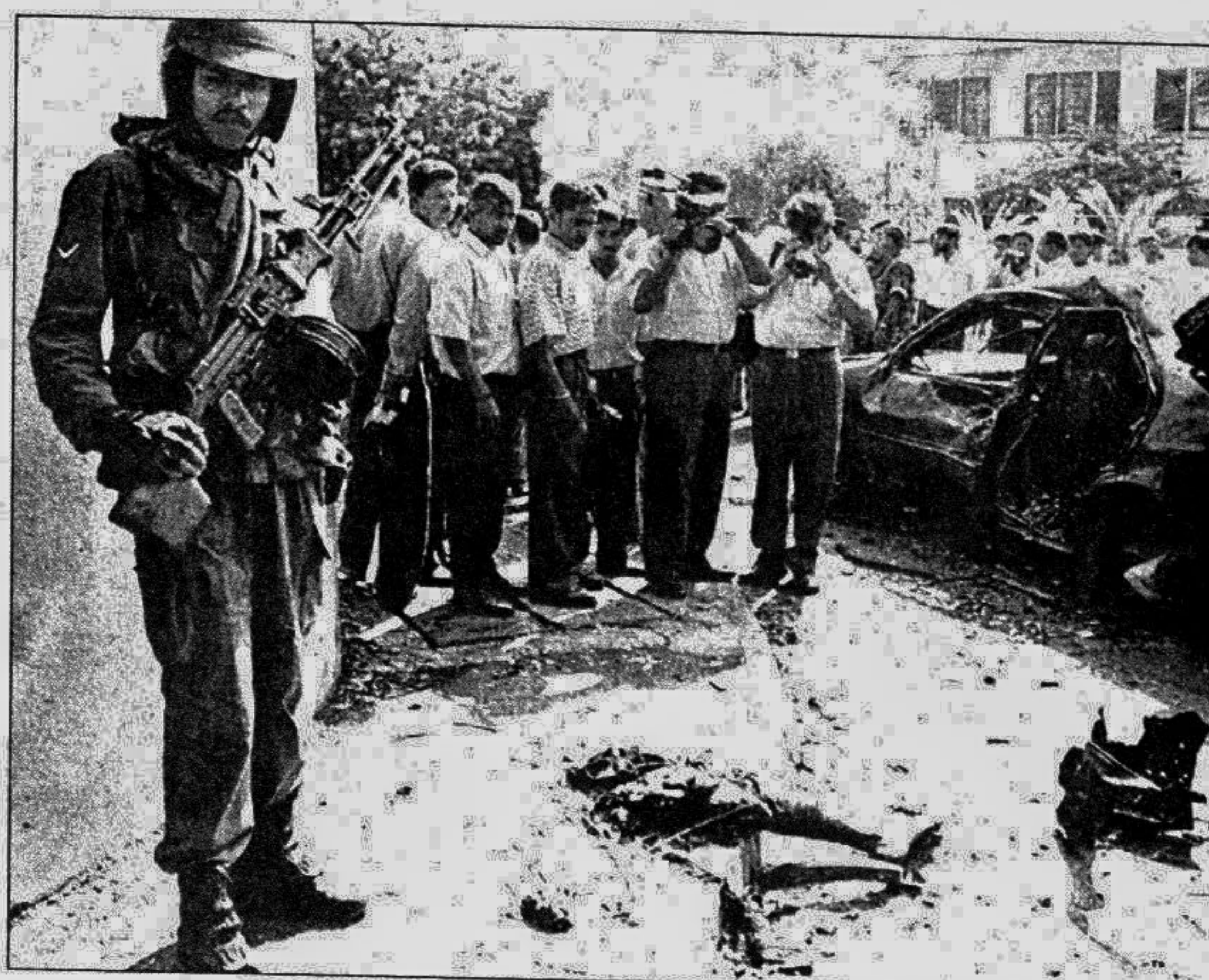
"I saw two men on a bike approaching the car," said Shanaka Fernando, a sales executive who was heading to his office. "One of them got off and ran towards the car and exploded himself." The other man apparently was injured but escaped, he said.

Tiruchelvam, who was in the back seat, was killed immediately. His driver and a bodyguard in the front were also wounded and taken to a hospital, said Amunugama.

At least three vehicles were damaged in the explosion near the busy Borrella area near a residential neighborhood, police said.

The Tamil Tigers have been blamed for the assassination of three other TULF politicians, including its founder, Appapillai Amrithalingam in the 1980s.

The TULF advocates solving the ethnic dispute through talks and devolution of power to the provinces. It opposes the violent methods of the Tamil Tigers.



Photographers and passersby gather around the remains of a Tamil Tiger suicide bomber who assassinated moderate Sri Lankan Tamil legislator Neelan Tiruchelvam on Thursday in the diplomatic quarter of the Sri Lankan capital Colombo.

— AFP photo

Israel will 'fully implement' Wye accord: Barak

ALEXANDRIA, Egypt, July 29: Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak said here Thursday following talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak that he would "fully implement" the Wye River land-for-security agreement with the Palestinians, reports AFP.

"I reiterated our commitment to the Wye agreement and our intention to fully implement it," the new Israeli prime minister said at a joint press conference in this Mediterranean port city with the Egyptian leader.

Barak said he would move forward with the October 1998 Wye River accord once an Israeli-Palestinian committee delivers its "suggestions" concerning the deal, which calls for further Israeli troop withdrawals from the West Bank.

The panel was set up following a summit between Barak and Yasser Arafat on Tuesday during which the Palestinian leader reluctantly agreed to consider a set of Israeli proposals. It is to submit its report within two weeks.

Because of security fears for Jewish settlers in the West

Bank, Barak has proposed implementing only part of the scheduled withdrawals for now while the rest would go ahead as part of a final peace agreement with the Palestinians.

"We have raised certain ideas with Chairman Arafat about ways, means and the timing of implementation of the Wye agreement within the context of how to move forward towards a permanent status agreement," Barak said Thursday.

"It is only if we agree upon (these ideas) with Chairman Arafat that we will insert these modifications," he said.

Barak also said Israel was committed to pursuing peace negotiations with the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon but cautioned against over-optimism.

"We are determined to leave no stone unturned on the road to peace," he said. "We are ready to open the Palestinian track, the Lebanese track, the Syrian track and even the multilateral track."

"I feel that we have to go forward but have never pretended to have magic solutions to solve a conflict of 100 years in three

weeks or three months," he said.

Mubarak told reporters he believed Barak would honour the Wye accord, whose implementation has become the first test of sorts for the peace intentions of the new Israeli government.

"It may be delayed for a week or two weeks but it will be implemented," the Egyptian president said. "The final status negotiations (with the Palestinians) will begin after the complete implementation of the Wye agreement."

"I hope with my heart that the agreement will go forward and that peace will occur in the Middle East," he said, adding that Israel and Egypt "have a very good mutual understanding on the peace process."

Barak arrived here earlier Thursday for his second visit to Egypt since taking power three weeks ago.

He immediately went into talks with Mubarak at the presidential palace in Alexandria while Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy held a separate meeting there with his Egyptian counterpart Amr Mussa.

Strong warning against N Korean missile launch S Korea to buy 100 US missiles

SEOUL, July 29: US and South Korean defence chiefs warned Thursday the United States and its allies would use "all available means" against North Korea if it test-fires a new missile, reports AFP.

The warning was issued by US Secretary of Defence William Cohen and South Korean Defence Minister Cho Sung-Tae following high-level security talks between the two nations.

"(South) Korea and the United States agreed to exhaust joint efforts to deter North Korea from launching another missile based on the common perception that a missile launch would have serious negative consequences," the two chiefs said in a statement.

Cohen later warned of "diplomatic and economic" consequences for North Korea if it carried out a test-firing, apparently ruling out military retaliation.

"In case North Korea proceeds with the launch, Secre-

tary Cohen and I agreed to respond strongly, mobilising all available means through consultations between the United States, Japan and (South) Korea in order to make North Korea realise that it will have more to lose than gain by way of missile firing."

The statement underlined growing fears North Korea's missile launch would shatter regional stability and heighten tensions between the two Koreas, still technically at war following their 1950-53 conflict.

At a joint press conference with Cho, Cohen said US policy toward North Korea could be summarised in three words: deterrence, dialogue and determination.

Meanwhile, South Korea is to buy some 100 high-tech air-to-ground missiles from the United States which can pinpoint North Korean missile and artillery bases, the defence ministry said Thursday.

The announcement came

amid reports that South Korea will ask visiting US Defence Secretary William Cohen to allow it to boost the range of its ground-based missiles to 500 kilometres from 180 kilometres.

South Korea will spend some 80 million dollars on some 100 AGM 42 "Popeye" missiles from US-based Lockheed Martin between 2000 and 2003, a defence ministry spokesman said.

The missiles, each worth 800,000 dollars, can be attached to F-16 fighters as well as to B-52 bombers and can target objects with minute precision at a range of more than 100 kilometres.

Seoul has already earmarked four billion won (3.3 million dollars) in its 2000 defence budget for the first instalment on the rockets which are so accurate they can hit the window of a building or the mouth of a missile silo, officials said.

I will accept results of E Timor vote, says Megawati

JAKARTA, July 29: Indonesian opposition leader and presidential hopeful Megawati Sukarnoputri said Thursday she would accept the outcome of the referendum on East Timor, even if its people choose independence, reports AFP.

"It is not my intention whatsoever not to respect the decision of the people of East Timor," Megawati said in a nationally televised speech.

"The agreement signed by Indonesia and Portugal is binding in nature for the whole Indonesian nation," she said.

Megawati was making her first policy speech since her Indonesian Democracy Party-Struggle (PDIP) topped the June 7 elections with 33.7 per cent of the vote.

She called on all sides in East Timor to forsake violence. "There should be no efforts by any side through whatever

means to influence the choice of the people in East Timor," she said.

She however lambasted Indonesian President B.J. Habibie's decision to hold the referendum, making it clear that had she been in power she would never have allowed it to go ahead.

The decision was "in violation of and in contempt of" an act of the People's Consultative Assembly which incorporated East Timor as Indonesia's 27th province shortly after Jakarta invaded it in 1975, she said.

The people of the former Portuguese colony invaded by Indonesia in 1975 are due to vote on August 30 whether to accept or reject an offer of autonomy under Indonesia, or to push for independence.

The vote is being conducted by the United Nations under an agreement signed in New York.

Rockets hit Kabul as Taliban offensive leaves 120 dead

KABUL, July 29: Afghanistan's bloody summer offensive entered its second day Thursday amid rocket strikes on Kabul and intense fighting along frontlines to the north of the capital, reports AFP.

Five rockets were fired by the opposition forces and struck the capital, residents said. Combined fighting from medical, Taliban Islamic militia and opposition reports claimed at least 120 people had been killed in battle and by rockets.

The opposition also claimed the recapture of lost ground in the valleys surrounding the strategically important district of Nejrab.

However, most of the district and the main city of Nejrab remained in Taliban hands after it was seized late Wednesday.

Nejrab is one of seven known entry points into the Panjshir Valley, where anti-Taliban forces have heavily fortified themselves as the last obstacle to total Taliban domination of Afghanistan.

An opposition spokesman said fighting was heavy on the Old Road and the New Road overnight while battles eased at Koh-i-Safi. Frontlines to the north and central provinces were quiet.

"But fresh fighting erupted early this afternoon at Koh-i-Safi and along the New Road," he added.

The Old and New Roads are about 25 kilometres (12 miles) north of Kabul, the nearby mountain range of Koh-i-Safi is to the east, and further east are the twin districts of Nejrab and Tagab.

A Taliban spokesman was unavailable for comment on the fighting, however, in an official broadcast supreme leader Mulla Mohammad Omar urged all Muslims to hold special prayer services and for an end to "tyranny under tyrants".

The Taliban — which holds 80 per cent of Afghanistan — has begun a major campaign aimed at ending the country's protracted civil war by wiping out forces loyal to opposition

commander Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Backed by a squadron of MiG-3 fighters, tanks and artillery the militia had claimed a steady advance towards the Panjshir through Nejrab with heavy strikes along the New Road which leads to the alliance's Bagram Airbase.

Analysts say the offensive could involve as many as 100,000 men from both sides after the Taliban bolstered its ranks through an intensive recruitment drive.

Massoud claims this includes foreign mercenaries.

Heavy artillery duels were clearly audible in Kabul overnight while sporadic mushroom clouds of dust dotted the city's skyline after rocket strikes aimed at Kabul airport.

The United Nations suspended humanitarian flights to Kabul.

The opposition spokesman claimed at least 100 Taliban troops had been killed in battle since Tuesday and many more had been injured.

UNGA authorises \$200m for Kosovo

UNITED NATIONS, July 29: The UN General Assembly (UNGA) authorised an initial \$200 million budget Wednesday to finance the UN mission in Kosovo — but surprisingly only agreed to ask members to pay \$125 million, reports AP.

The General Assembly's refusal to assess members the entire amount requested by Secretary-General Kofi Annan triggered concern from the United States and the European Union that the UN operation, which is virtually running Kosovo, might run out of funds.

In a report to the Security Council on July 13, Annan had asked for an initial budget of \$200 million to fund the operation until a full budget is presented to the General Assembly in October.

Some Third World members of the General Assembly's budget committee objected to the absence of detailed information on how the money would be spent and expressed concern that Kosovo was getting special treatment — possibly at the expense of other UN peacekeeping operations, particularly in Africa.

Guatemala noted that the United Nations was bypassing NATO's military campaign in Kosovo but was now called upon to play a central role in financing the province's rehabilitation — a "huge expense" which might have been avoided.

Nonetheless, the General Assembly adopted the resolution without a vote.

The Americans and Europeans went along because it was the best deal they could get, and

the Third World countries backed it to support the people of Kosovo and the UN effort to get the province running again.

Nonetheless, Finland's UN Ambassador Marjatta Rasi, speaking on behalf of the European Union and many other European countries, expressed serious concern that the UN Mission in Kosovo, known by its initials UNMIK, might not have sufficient cash to carry out its complex mandate.

Referring to the \$125 million assessment figure which was decided on by the General Assembly's budget committee, she said: "It is not based on substance, nor on a thorough consideration of the needs of UNMIK. It's a political figure, pure and simple."

"Should UNMIK now have difficulties in fulfilling its mandate pending adoption of its budget and the next assessment, the General Assembly would bear the responsibility," she warned.

Deputy US Ambassador Peter Burleigh said the resolution provided "critical monetary support" to end the humanitarian tragedy in Kosovo and expressed regret that only \$125 million would be assessed.

"We support this resolution in the hope that it will provide sufficient funding to enable UN start-up operation in Kosovo," he said.

Should the funding prove insufficient, however, he said the United States expects that the General Assembly will respond quickly to this challenge and expeditiously provide the necessary additional funds.

3 teachers killed as colleague opens fire at S African school

JOHANNESBURG, July 29: Three teachers were shot dead by a colleague at a high school in the South African township of Soweto outside Johannesburg early Thursday, police reported, says AFP.

"At about 8:30 the suspect (who) is a teacher at the Anchor High School, entered the staff

room. Without saying a word he pulled out his firearm and started shooting one of his colleagues, a man, police spokesman Inspector Mazima Shubiri told SABC state radio.

"He shot him several times in the head. Then he turned the gun on two female colleagues. He shot them in the stomach.

All three died on the scene."

The suspect, an economics teacher, was arrested by police. Education Minister Kader Asmal was due to visit the scene of the shootings later Thursday, his office said.

Shocked colleagues at the school, which has a staff of 40, stood around outside the

premises and wept.

Classes at the 1,000-pupil Soweto school were immediately suspended, accountant teacher Thabo Ralephata told AFP.

The dead male teacher taught economics and North Sotho, one of South Africa's 11 official languages, said Ralephata, who has worked at the school for 14 years.

His female colleagues taught English and history, and geography.

"It seemed to me he had personal problems. At the end of the day he thought the rest of the staff were his enemies," Ralephata said of the suspect. "I never thought he had a gun."

Ralephata said staff had repeatedly complained to management at the school about his behaviour, "but they never did anything about it."

"He often used abusive language in the school."

An earlier row with a female clerk at the school ended with the clerk taking the suspect to court over an alleged physical assault, according to Ralephata. "That lady went to the police and a docket was opened. Unfortunately when the matter went to the court there were no witnesses."

The shooting happened in the Soweto suburb of Orlando West, where former president Nelson Mandela shared a home with his former wife Winnie which has now been turned into a museum.



Teachers from the Anchor high school at Orlando West, Soweto, south of Johannesburg look at a blood stain in their staff room on Thursday after a staff member shot dead three teachers.

— AFP photo

Off the Record

Disease robbed Hitler of victory

VANCOUVER: Adolph Hitler suffered from Parkinson's disease and its symptoms may have contributed to the Allies' victory in World War Two, an international conference on the disease was told on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

The mental inflexibility associated with the disease may have been reflected in the Nazi leader's slowness to respond to the 1944 Normandy invasion, researchers told the International Congress on Parkinson's Disease in Vancouver.

Hitler was suffering from the physical and mental symptoms of Parkinson's by the time of the invasion, and his aides attempted to keep his problems a secret, according to Tom Hutton, a Texas neurologist who co-authored the study.

Parkinson's causes slowly spreading tremors and worsening muscular weakness that can lead to debilitating muscular rigidity. It is believed caused by the death of nerve cells that normally produce dopamine, a brain messenger chemical.

Hutton contends that by the time of the Normandy invasion, Hitler had suffered Parkinson's for 10 years, at which point many with the disease have cognitive problems such as an inability to process conflicting information.

Hitler is said to have been so convinced the Allies would attempt to invade France at Calais that he initially refused to release Panzer units that could have helped stop Allied troops in Normandy.

"Hitler's slowness to counterattack at Normandy may have been secondary to mental inflexibility and difficulty in shifting concepts due to Parkinsonism," according to the discussion paper prepared for Hutton's presentation.

The study by Hutton and JL Morris of the Neurology Research and Education Centre in Texas cited reports from officials who treated Hitler in 1944 and 1945 that described him as having lost "his mental flexibility."

Keep your mobiles on!

BUCHAREST: Romania's government ministers have been told to keep their mobile phones switched on, after one among them could not be reached to attend the funeral of Morocco's King Hassan II, government sources said Wednesday, reports AFP.

Prime Minister Radu Vasile issued the edict after President Emil tried in vain to contact one of his ministers to attend Sunday's funeral in Rabat.

In the end, Romania had to be represented by its ambassador in Rabat, Ion Balin.