

## BRIEFLY

## Police officer shot dead in Bihar

The officer in-charge of Chainpur Police Station in Palam District, Kiran 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 Ikaizoboh 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. Ikaizoboh 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

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 forgo 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 go ahead.

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.

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 bypassed in 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.

"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."

## 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 Thiruchelvam 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.

Thiruchelvam, 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 Thiruchelvam'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.

Thiruchelvam, 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 a residential neighborhood, police said.

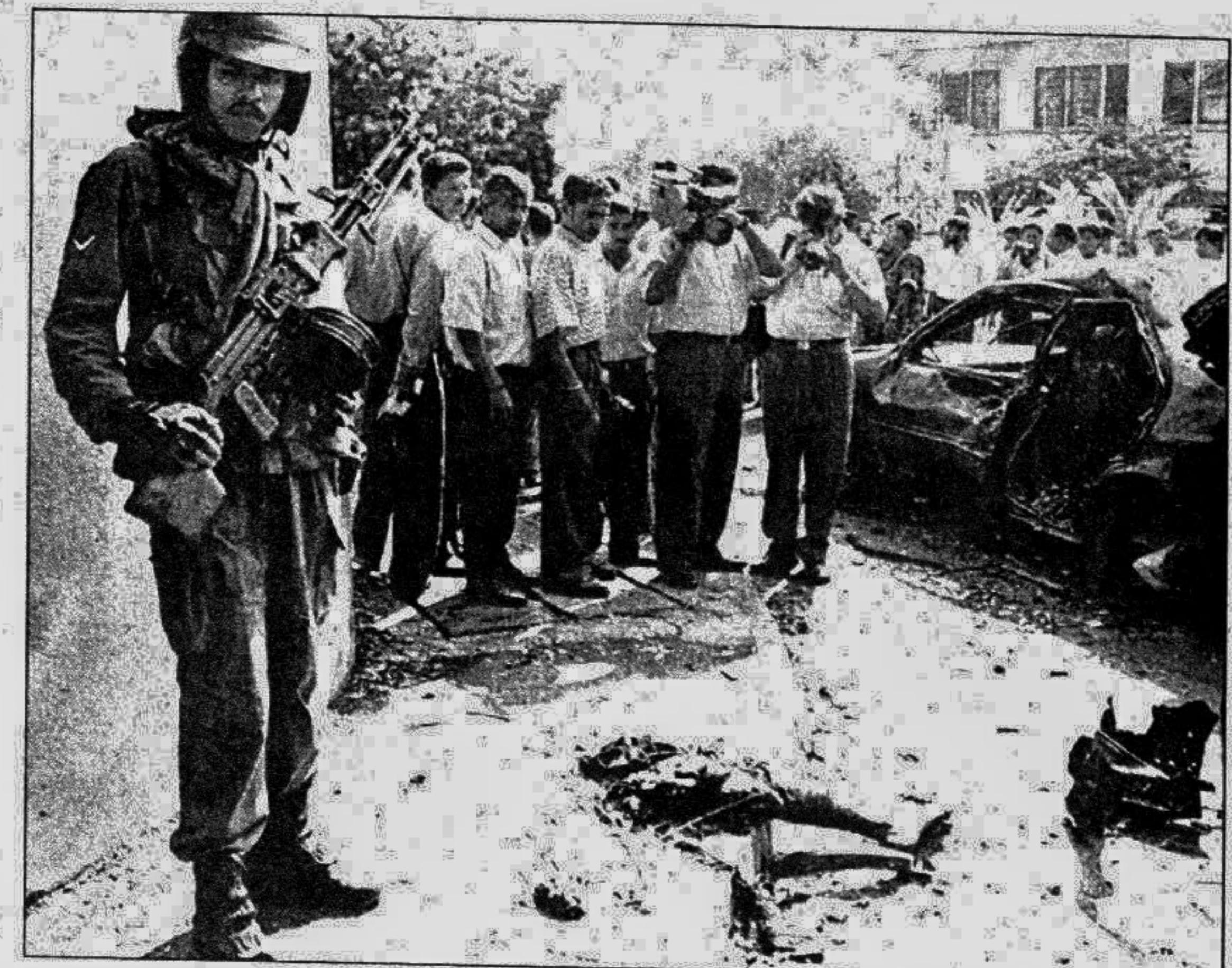
The Tamil Tigers have been

blamed for the assassination of

three other TULF politicians,

including its founder, Appai-lai Amritalingam 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 Thiruchelvam 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 I 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 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 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 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 heightened 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 deterrence.

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 800 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, 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.

## 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 overnight while battles eased at Koh-i-Safai. Frontlines to the north and central provinces were quiet.

Five rockets were fired by the opposition forces and struck the capital, residents said. Combined figures 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.

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.

Masoud 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.

commander Ahmad Shah Massoud.

Backed by a squadron of MiG jet 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 Bagrak Airbase.

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WASHINGTON, July 29: A key Senate committee unanimously voted Wednesday to slap sanctions on Belgrade, block Yugoslav assets in the United States and fund Serb opposition in bid to oust Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, reports AFP.

President Bill Clinton's administration has said it backs the tough measures, which aim to dry up international funds for Milosevic's government and make it an pariah among multilateral institutions.

The bill, which the Senate Foreign Relations Committee passed by voice vote, must be approved by the full Senate, the House of Representatives, and signed by Clinton to become law.

The measure would withhold US funds from any international financial institution lending Yugoslavia's government funds or providing other assistance over opposition from Washington.

It also directs US representa-

tives to multilateral organisations like the United Nations, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and NATO to fight any Yugoslav participation in those bodies.

And the bill would block all Yugoslav assets in the United States, and prohibit strategic exports to Yugoslavia, bilateral military cooperation and US loans and investment in Yugoslavia.

The measure also bars top

Serbian and Yugoslav government officials and their families from entering the United States, and earmarks 100 million dollars for Serbian opposition.

It also would increase radio and television broadcasts by Voice of America and Radio Free Europe into Yugoslavia.

The sanctions could be ended once the White House certifies to Congress that Yugoslavia has made significant progress in democratisation and pledged to hand over indicted war criminals to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague.

In May, the ICTY indicted Milosevic for war crimes and crimes against humanity for the atrocities committed in Kosovo.

## 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 Shibusi told SABC state radio.