

BRIEFLY

Belarus ratifies CTBT: Belarus ratified the international Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Wednesday, only six days after its union member Russia made the same move. ITAR-TASS reported, AFP says from Moscow.

The Belarusian Council of the Republic unanimously voted to ratify the treaty, making it the 32nd of the total 44 states whose ratification is required for the ban's enforcement. The CTBT bans all forms of nuclear testing.

Tokaimura N- accident claims 2nd life: A second Japanese uranium plant worker exposed to massive radiation in the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl died Thursday, AFP reports from Tokyo.

Tearful doctors who had fought for Masato Shinohara's life lashed out at the "human greed" they said was behind the accident last year at Tokaimura, about 120 km northeast of Tokyo. Shinohara, 40, died at the University of Tokyo Hospital at 7:25 a.m. (4:25 BST Wednesday) from multiple organ failure after radiation sickness ravaged his body, doctors said.

9 killed in Turkey accident: Nine people were killed and 32 others injured when a bus and a truck collided early Thursday in the central Anatolian town of Konya, the Anatolia news agency reported. AFP says from Ankara.

Nineteen of the injured were reported to be in critical condition, the agency said. The all-news NTV channel said that the accident was believed to have been caused by excessive speed and faulty overtaking.

US denies any impact of Elian case on relations with Cuba

Cuban visitors arrive to meet Elian

WASHINGTON, April 27 : The US government's single concern in the Elian Gonzalez case was the boy's best interests, and there was never any intention of modifying US policies toward Cuba, a state department official said Wednesday, reports AFP.

"I do not see that there is any animus to review our policy toward Cuba," said Peter Romero, acting assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs.

Romero said Cuban President Fidel Castro had made "the most cynical attempt to try to pass himself as a family man."

"Castro's actions during the time that Elian was with Lazaro Gonzalez in Miami were absolutely deplorable," Romero said. "He manipulated this for complete domestic purposes."

"I have seen a lot of articles saying that the decisions that we made with respect to Elian had to do with Fidel Castro and

policy considerations," Romero said.

"In all the meetings that I attended I never heard anybody in any of those meetings say, we can't do this because of the Cubans."

"The decisions that we made with respect to Elian were made in that child's best interests, according to our law."

Romero said the United States would maintain its current policies toward Cuba.

"We believe that our policy is a correct one: economic sanctions and other kinds of instruments to isolate a renegade regime and an undemocratic regime, and on the other side, people to people contacts."

Meanwhile, visitors from Cuba arrived at the rural retreat east of Washington late Wednesday where Elian Gonzalez and his immediate family spent a second day in seclusion, as legal battles continued over the future of the six-year-old.

Barak ready to transfer village near Jerusalem to PA

JERUSALEM, Apr 27 : Israel is prepared to make a goodwill gesture to the Palestinians that may involve the transfer of a village close to Jerusalem touted as a possible capital of a future Palestinian state, officials said today, reports AFP.

The influential Haaretz newspaper reported that the government of Prime Minister Ehud Barak was set to transfer full control of Abu Dis, on the edge of occupied east Jerusalem, to the full control of Yasser Arafat's self-rule authority.

It described the move, which it said would be presented by

Barak to his security cabinet next week, as an "advance" on a further Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank which is expected to take place in June.

Foreign Minister David Levy did not rule out such a gesture, while at the same time hinting that a May deadline for a framework peace accord with the Palestinians may not be met.

"If we are convinced that we are really heading towards a final status accord in September, it will be possible to advance some of our decisions," Levy said.

Pak military rulers warned of peace talks with India

'Jihad only way to settle Kashmir dispute'

MURIDKE, Pakistan, Apr 27: Hundreds of Islamic clerics warned Pakistan's military rulers Thursday against peace talks with neighbour India saying jihad or holy war was the only way to settle the protracted Kashmir dispute, reports AP.

They also warned the army, which seized power from Pakistan's civilian government last October, to resist demands from the United States to shut down some of the more militant Islamic groups headquartered here.

The leaders of these groups, like Harakat-ul-Mujahideen, were among an estimated 1,200 clerics attending a one-day meeting held to support jihad.

Organised by Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, one of the militant groups fighting Indian soldiers in its Kashmir territory, the clerics from throughout Pakistan met in a tent village in Muridke, 25 kilometers (15

miles) west of the Punjab provincial capital of Lahore.

"War is clear. Instead of diplomacy and holding talks we should resist and tell the nation that jihad is the only solution to retrieve Kashmir," said Maulana Sibgatullah Shirwani, the speaker who opened the conference.

Lashkar-e-Tayyaba said groups fighting in Indian Kashmir should be helped by the government, not attacked.

"We are trying to make our leaders realise that they should not succumb to American pressure to put pressure on freedom fighters by trying to ban their organisations," said Yahya Mujahid, a leader of Lashkar-e-Tayyaba.

Pakistan's military ruler general Pervez Musharraf has so far rebuffed US demands to shut down groups down saying they have not broken any Pakistani laws.

However, his six-month-old government has announced plans to try to regulate religious schools or madrassas where young boys are schooled in fighting jihad or holy war.

Musharraf has said he wants to bring these schools into the mainstream of the Pakistani education system, something Islamic militants are resisting.

Increased religiously motivated killings in Pakistan between rival Shiite and Sunni Muslims also has promoted Musharraf's government to threaten to shut down groups found to be involved in violence.

Most of the victims of a recent series of religiously motivated killing have been Shiite Muslims. The worst incident occurred earlier this month when 15 Shiite Muslims were killed in eastern Punjab province when their prayer meeting was attacked with grenades and machine guns.



A girl collects water from a well for her family yesterday at village Pal in the drought-hit north-Indian state of Rajasthan, where most of the wells and other water sources have dried-up due to minimal rainfall since last year. Shortage of drinking water has forced people of several villages to drink the remaining murky waters from dried-up wells and water holes. Millions of people are estimated being affected by the drought in Rajasthan and its neighboring state of Gujarat. — AFP photo

Cook puts onus on Zimbabwe to agree a land reform deal

Farmers seek meet with war veterans

LONDON, Apr 27 : Britain put the onus squarely on a visiting top-level Zimbabwean delegation today to agree a peaceful solution to the rural anarchy gripping the country or accept the blame for the land reform crisis, reports AFP.

As he prepared to host a day of talks with a team of Zimbabwean government officials, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said he was ready to help Britain's former colony -- but only if the violence stopped and a start was made on preparing for elections.

"If there is no agreement, it will be responsibility of Zimbabwe and not us," Cook told BBC radio.

"We are ready, we are willing to help, we always have been willing to help with land reform, but we are not going to appease," Cook said. "There will be no help unless there is an end

to the occupations and a start on the elections."

Britain has spoken out against the violent seizure of white-owned farms by black squatters, but Zimbabwe says the alarming development is a legacy of Britain's former imperial rule in the country and its failure to help fund a solution to rural poverty.

Squatters have illegally occupied hundreds of white-owned farms, with the open support of Mugabe and the Zimbabwean government. The violent land grabs and related political violence have left at least 12 dead this month.

Cook repeated Thursday that he would bring another 36 million pounds (\$58 million dollars) to the table to help fund land reform -- but only if the forcible redistribution movement is discontinued and overdue parliamentary elections are set up

and are free and fair.

The elections have already been put back once and prospects are dimming that they will take place in May as now scheduled.

Cook dismissed Mugabe's insistence that Britain was to blame for all Zimbabwe's ills.

Meanwhile, white farmers in Zimbabwe sought a meeting today with war veterans' leader Chenjerai Hitler Hunzvi in an attempt to find a peaceful solution to the violent crisis over land reform.

Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) director David Hasluck told AFP a time and venue had not yet been set for the meeting with Hunzvi, who has spearheaded the invasion by squatters of hundreds of white-owned farms.

"We hope to get together and review the situation," Hasluck said.

Gunbattle in Quetta: 4 killed

QUETTA, Pakistan, Apr 27: Four people were killed and 23 others injured here today in a gunbattle between Pakistani police and alleged criminals, administration officials and witnesses said, reports AFP.

The clash occurred when police backed by para-military troops raided a suburban neighbourhood to arrest an ethnic Pashtun group activist accused of involvement in murders and kidnappings, they said.

The accused Mohammad Yusuf, member of Pakhtunkhwa Milli Party, escaped but his son and three of his supporters were killed in the gunbattle which raged for nine hours, a police official said.

Water crisis

Karnataka assembly protesting inaction

BANGALORE, Apr 27: Main opposition BJP members in the Karnataka assembly yesterday staged a walk-out protesting government's alleged inaction in taking steps to tackle the water scarcity problem in the state, reports PTI.

BJP members led by Jagadish Shettar blamed the government for not spelling out steps it had initiated to meet the scarcity and trooped out of the house.

Revenue minister HC Srikanthiah said the government would release necessary funds to deal with the situation in the affected areas.

Clintons to live in NY in any case

BUFFALO, New York, Apr 27 : The first couple will reside in New York state whether or not the First Lady wins the US Senate race in November, Hillary Clinton said late Wednesday in a televised town meeting here, reports AFP.

During the public meeting at the University of Buffalo shown on CNN, Clinton responded to a question about whether she and her husband -- the US president -- will stick it out in New York if she loses the race, saying "Absolutely!"

"I've planned of living in New York after the White House years. Bill and I have talked about that. It has always been something I wanted to do. I intend to make this my home," she added.

Clinton will face off against New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani in the Senate race on November 7, the same day that presidential elections will be held.

Vajpayee advised not to make speeches

NEW DELHI, Apr 27 : Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has been told not to make speeches while he recovers from a throat infection, an official said today after he failed to attend a meeting of his BJP party.

Ashok Tandon, the prime minister's spokesman, told AFP Vajpayee had been advised to "rest his throat for the next two days," adding he had "been advised not to make speeches."

Vajpayee last week postponed a meeting with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook for a day due to his throat infection.

Spanish PM Aznar takes oath of office

MADRID, Apr 27 : Spain's Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar took his oath of office today in the presence of King Juan Carlos, a day after being officially endorsed by parliament for a second four-year term, reports AFP.

Aznar swore to faithfully respect the obligations of the post of prime minister, to remain loyal to the king, to safeguard the constitution and the confidentiality of cabinet deliberations in front of a copy of the constitution and the Bible.

He was expected to announce his new government line-up later Thursday.

Estrada rejects ransom demand by kidnappers

ISABELA, Philippines, Apr 27: Philippine President Joseph Estrada has rejected a demand from kidnappers of 21 hostages from a Malaysian resort island for up to \$2.4 million in ransom, an official said Thursday, reports AP.

"Absolutely not. The government policy is not to give ransom," presidential Executive Secretary Ronaldo Zamora said.

The 21 hostages, including at least 10 foreigners, were kidnapped Sunday and are being held by Muslim extremists in the mountains of impoverished Sulu province at the tip of the southern Philippines, officials said.

At least two Malaysian hostages are expected to be freed shortly because they are Muslims, a police source said.

Meanwhile, the governor of a nearby province where soldiers are attacking a Muslims, a

police source said.

Meanwhile, the governor of a nearby province where soldiers are attacking a Muslim rebel stronghold to free 27 other hostages offered citizens a 30,000-peso (dhs 730) bounty for each guerrilla they kill.

"They are the enemies of the citizens, the enemies of the republic, the enemies of Islam," Basilan Gov. Wahab Akhar told The Associated Press.

The two kidnappings, the worst in the Philippines in years, have drawn wide attention to the country's quarter-century Muslim separatist rebellion, which has killed more than 120,000 people.

Both were allegedly carried out by members of the Abu Sayyaf, a loosely organized Muslim extremist group linked to many previous kidnappings. The two incidents, however, may not be directly related, several officials said.

Bin Laden in Kosovo

BELGRADE, Apr 27 : Islamic Saudi millionaire Osama bin Laden, wanted for terrorism by the United States, is in Kosovo, the official Yugoslav news agency Tanjug said Wednesday, reports AFP.

"After hiding out for several years in Afghanistan," the agency said in a dispatch from Kosovo's capital Pristina, bin Laden has found a new refuge in the Balkans, precisely in Kosovo, the nest of European terrorism.

Tanjung said bin Laden, whom the agency described as a

"terrorist and Islamic fanatic," arrived from Albania after having formed a group of 500 Islamic fighters in the eastern region around Korce and Pogradec to carry out "terrorist acts" in Kosovo.

He also planned similar acts in the southern region of Serbia bordering on Kosovo including Preshevo, Medvedja and Banovci, the Yugoslav agency said.

Tanjung said bin Laden arrived in Kosovo accompanied by "a close collaborator, Abu Hassan."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Norway Assisted Primary Education Development Project of Quality Improvement Directorate of Primary Education, Bangladesh

Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216

Memo No P&D/37-Pry/99/276 Dated: 19-4-2000

Re-Tender Notice

- 1 The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has received a grant from the government of Norway towards the cost of Primary Education Development Project for Quality Improvement. It is intended that the part of the proceeds of this grant will be applied to eligible payments under implementation of contracts for which this invitation is issued.
- 2 The Director General & Project Director, Norway Assisted Primary Education Development Project for Quality Improvement (PEDPQI), Directorate of Primary Education, Mirpur-2, Dhaka-1216 invites sealed tenders from the Agents/Sellers/Distributors/Dealers/Suppliers for the supply of Weighing Machine for Thana Resource Centre (TRC).
- 3 The detail description of the item may be found in the tender schedule. A complete set of tender schedule with terms and conditions can be obtained from the office of the undersigned or Senior Assistant Secretary (Dev 1), Building # 6, Room # 619, 6th floor, Primary and Mass Education Division, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka on all working days during office hours from 27-4-2000 up to 8-5-2000 upon submission of written application enclosing the original Bank Challan of Tk 750.00 (Taka seven hundred and fifty) only paid (non-refundable) to the Account Head No 1/2431/0001/2366 in favour of the Director General, Directorate of Primary Education, Bangladesh.
- 4 The tenders will be received in the tender box in person kept in the office of the Directorate of Primary Education, Mirpur Section-2, Dhaka-1216 and Office of the Senior Assistant Secretary (Dev 1), Building # 6, Room # 619, 6th floor, Primary and Mass Education Division, Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka up to 12:00 hours on 9-5-2000. The tenders will be opened in the office of the undersigned at 14:30 hours on the same date i.e. 9-5-2000 in presence of the bidders or their authorised representative (s), if any.
- 5 The bidder shall have to furnish at least 2.5% (two and a half per cent) his quoted value as earnest money in a form of Pay Order/Demand Draft in favour of "The Director General, Directorate of Primary Education, Bangladesh" from any schedule bank of Dhaka city.
- 6 The bidder shall have to submit the sample of weighing machine along with the tenders otherwise the tender will be rejected.
- 7 The DPE reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tender bids without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Md Baharul Islam
Asstt Director & Member Secretary
of the Tender Committee
For Director General
& Project Director

DFP-9749-24/4
G-776

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Prime Minister

Old Sangsad Bhaban

Dhaka

Tender Notice

Tenders are invited in order to purchase 3 network laser printer for using at the office of the Prime Minister. Tender schedule will be available on payment of Tk 400/- (four hundred) only from 07-05-2000 to 09-05-2000. The amount is non-refundable. Technical and financial tender will have to be submitted separately. Tender will be opened at 12:30 pm on 10-05-2000 in presence of tenderers (if any)

2. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without showing any cause.

DFP-9706-24/4
G-778

Md Rabiul Islam
Systems Analyst



BCIC International Tender Notice

বিসিআইসি'র পণ্য শিলায়নে জাতীয় অর্থগতির প্রতীক

Managing Director, Khulna Newsprint Mills Ltd., Town Khalishpur, Khulna invites sealed quotation under 2 (two) envelope system against International Tender Enquiry No. KNM/PD(F)-08/2000 dated 11.04.2000 for purchase of 1000 M Ton Hard White Shavings on C&F(C) Mongla Liner term basis under CASH FOREIGN EXCHANGE. The quotation will be received within 11.00 AM on 15.5.2000 in the office of Sr General Manager (Purchase), BCIC, Dhaka and Addl Chief Manager (Purchase), KNM Ltd., Khulna which shall be opened immediately thereafter. Tender documents shall be available on payment of Tk 1000/- (one thousand) per set (non-refundable) from 1) KNM Ltd., Khulna 2) BCIC, 30-31, Dikrasha C/A., Dhaka & 3) BCIC Branch Office, 6-Agrabad C/A, Chittagong. Earnest money is Tk 1% of the total quoted C&F(C) value. No tender documents shall be sold on the date of opening. The authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids without assigning any reason thereof.

BCIC-286-20/4/2000 Addl Chief Manager (Pur)
DFP-9699-24/4 For Managing Director
G-777



During the taping of a segment at the Rock of Aphrodite for the 49th annual Miss Universe Pageant, Sonija Kwok, Miss Hong Kong 2000, and Lara Dutta, Miss India 2000, pose in their Oscar de la Renta swimwear on Tuesday. Delegates from 79 countries are competing for the title of Miss Universe 2000. — AFP photo

Indonesian army chief apologises for past deeds

JAKARTA, Apr 27 : Indonesian army chief General Tyasno Sudarto has apologized for "mistakes" made by the military in the past, according to a report today, says AFP.

"In my capacity as army chief of staff, I formally offer our apologies to the Indonesian people," the Antara news agency quoted Sudarto as saying.

"We are fully aware that members of the army as human beings have not been free from shortcomings and mistakes."

Sudarto did not mention any specific incident. He was responding to a call from President Abdurrahman Wahid for the Indonesian armed forces

(TNI) to apologize to the people for its past conduct.

Under the 32-year rule of former president Suharto, himself a retired general, the military, especially the army, played an all-pervasive and often decisive role in Indonesian politics.

Following Suharto's downfall in May 1998, the military has been in the spotlight for its abuses of human rights and power.

Its political role, legitimized under Suharto, has also increasingly come under attack: one of the main demands of reformists is that it leaves poli-

tics altogether.

Sudarto, speaking in central Java's capital of Semarang, was also quoted as saying his apology came with "deep humility and sincerity."

Meanwhile, the Indonesian army will this year begin to map the country's border area with East Timor, which for 24 years until October was ruled by Jakarta, according to a report today.

The mapping will be conducted by the army's topography directorate, the section's head Brigadier General Budi Triarso told the Suara Karya daily newspaper.

A year with mummified wife

TAIPEI, Apr 27 : Taiwan police today found a man who had been living for more than a year with his mummified dead wife, believing she would be resurrected, a news report said, says AFP.

Police in the Taipei suburb of Luchou raided the home of Chang Chun-lin after his 19-year-old daughter accused him of sexual harassment and beating his two other children under the influence of alcohol, the United Evening News said.

While searching his home, the police found a dried body in Chang's bedroom. Chang, who is in the furnishing business, told police it was his wife Wang Hsui-chi who died in December 1998. Before she died, the woman, who used to be a shaman, said she would be resurrected.

31 killed in fresh fighting in Lanka after camp fall

Chandrika returns after treatment

COLOMBO, Apr 27 : At least 31 people, including nine soldiers, were killed in fresh fighting in northern Sri Lanka following a major military debacle at the hands of Tamil Tiger rebels, officials said today, reports AFP.

Fresh fighting erupted in the Nagarkovil and Walimunai areas in the Jaffna peninsula on Wednesday during which 22 members of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were killed, a defence ministry spokesman said.

He said nine troopers were killed in the two clashes.

Military sources said fighting raged in the Pallai area of the peninsula on Thursday too but there were no immediate reports of casualties.

The LTTE has been stepping up pressure on the Jaffna

peninsula since Saturday's capture of the strategic base of Elephant Pass at the entrance to the region.

Official figures show at least 214 government soldiers were killed while withdrawing Saturday from Elephant Pass, now in the hands of the LTTE which has vowed to retake Jaffna too.

Military officials said with Elephant Pass's capture, the Tigers had significantly increased their chances of retaking all of Jaffna, the Tamil homeland which they ran as a de facto state before losing it to government forces in December 1995.

Meanwhile, Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga returned home Thursday after undergoing medical treatment at an undisclosed foreign destination, state radio said.