

BRIEFLY

Former Nepalese PM dead: Former Nepalese Prime Minister Tanka Prasad Acharya died of kidney and urinary disease at home Thursday night at the age of 78, reports Xinhua from Kathmandu.

During his 18-month premiership from 1955 to 1956, Nepal established diplomatic relations with the then Soviet Union and signed an agreement to maintain the friendly relations between the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Nepal and start trade and intercourse between the Tibet region of China and Nepal.

Quake rocks Myanmar: An intense earthquake, measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale, rocked Myanmar late Thursday, the Hong Kong royal observatory said, reports AFP.

The epicentre of the tremor, which struck at 14:22 GMT Thursday, was initially determined to be about 300 kilometers (448 miles) east of Mandalay, it said Friday.

An earthquake with a magnitude of six is capable of causing severe damage.

13 killed in Sumatra bus mishap: Thirteen people died and 20 were seriously injured Wednesday when a bus plunged into a ravine in north Sumatra, a press report said in Jakarta, reports AFP.

The driver swerved to avoid a truck and plunged into a 1,600-meter (4,800-foot) ravine in Munthe, 120 kilometres (75 miles) from Medan, the provincial capital of north Sumatra, the Kompas daily quoted an official as saying.

Eleven victims died immediately and two on the way to hospital, he said.

Russian health workers strike: A health workers strike in Russia has spread to 157 establishments, the Russian news agency Ria reported Thursday in a dispatch monitored in London by the BBC, reports AFP.

The strike is part of a national protest launched on Monday by health workers who are demanding increased funding for health establishments and pay increases.

Ria said that according to the Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unions, strikes have been called in 15 administrative districts.

Forty establishments are on strike in the town of Chelyabinsk, in the Urals, 80 in the Udmurt republic, west of the Urals, and 20 in north Ossetia.

Bush to visit Poland: US President George Bush will pay a one-day official visit to Poland on July 5, President Lech Walesa's office said on Thursday, reports Reuter from Warsaw.

He will have talks with Walesa and Prime Minister Jan Olszewski.

Bush will be in Europe to attend summits of the Group of Seven leading industrialised nations in Munich and the conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in Helsinki.

Filipino mayor candidate killed: A candidate for mayor of a town of 60,000 people was killed as he was about to attend a wedding reception, police said Friday. His wife told reporters he had been receiving death threats from a rival candidate, reports AP from Philippines.

Dr. Manuel Rebuena, a physician and former municipal health officer, was a candidate for mayor of Oas in the May 11 election, during which voters will also choose a successor to president Corason Aquino.

Police said an undetermined number of assailants opened fire when Rebuena arrived to attend the reception in a mountain village near Oas, which is about 305 kilometers (190 miles) southeast of Manila.

No suspects have been arrested, police said.

Fire claims 8 in China: A restaurant fire in China's richest special economic zone killed eight people, it was reported in Hong Kong Friday, reports AFP.

The fire started early Thursday and spread quickly to engulf the restaurant's second floor, trapping the victims, six women and two men, reports said.

The restaurant in Shenzhen's Baoan county, close to the border with Hong Kong, was owned by a man from the British colony.

Another eight people escaped unhurt from the fire, which was reported to have the highest death toll of any blaze since the zone was set up some 10 years ago as a showcase for China's economic reforms.

ICRC man shot dead in Kabul: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will withdraw nearly half of its staff from Afghanistan after one of its workers was shot dead, a spokesman said Thursday, reports Reuter from Kabul.

The spokesman said staff would be cut to 40 from 75 and those remaining would stay in the capital.

An unknown gunman killed an Icelandic male nurse on Wednesday south of Kabul. The reason for the killing was not known, but the incident raised fears among western aid workers of further attacks.

ICRC workers cross lines separating rival forces to make prison visits and work in hospitals.

1.8 lakh Ethiopians in Kenya: Refugees fleeing conflict and brought are pouring into camps in Kenya and dying at alarmingly high rates, a spokeswoman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said Friday, reports AP from Nairobi.

An estimated 180,000 refugees are staying at camps in northern and eastern Kenya, and about 1,500 new refugees are crossing the border daily, according to the High Commissioner.

Most have arrived in recent months as ethnic conflict has flared in southern Ethiopia and clan warfare has overwhelmed Somalia.

The refugees, mostly women and children, are trekking hundreds of miles (kilometers) with little food and water, said Sylvana Foa of UN High Commissioner headquarters in Geneva. Many embark on their journeys in poor health and arrive in "pitiful shape," she said.

Khmers' arms seized in Thailand: A large haul of Khmer Rouge arms and ammunition found for ethnic minority guerrillas in Myanmar has been seized near Aranyaprathet, a border police officer said yesterday, reports AFP from Thailand.

The officer said the haul, found about 100 metres (yards) inside Thailand on Thursday, was about to be transported by black market arms dealers across to the Thai-Myanmar border when his men, acting on a tip-off, seized it.

Parliament fails to elect Speaker in Italy

ROME, Apr 24: Nineteen days after the legislative elections highlighted dwindling public confidence in the governing coalition, Italy's two chambers of parliament failed to elect Speakers on an inaugural day marked by chaos and confusion, reports AFP.

It was the first time in the history of post-war Italy that a new parliament failed to elect its leaders on its first day, and it highlighted the crisis of the Italian political system.

There were two rounds of voting in the 325-member Senate and three in the 630-member Chamber of Deputies, but no one obtained the required majority.

Chad still suffers from political instability, poverty

N'DJAMENA, Chad, Apr 24: In its fourth decade of independence, this central African country still suffers from clan warfare, political instability, poverty and foreign meddling, reports AP.

School-age soldiers confiscate cars and motorbikes at gunpoint. Innocent people are still get caught in the ethnic and military violence that afflicts the world's eighth-poorest country.

The growing demand across Africa for democracy and accountable government has been felt, however, and with time and outside help, the cycle of war and suffering may be broken.

An independent weekly newspaper, a new human rights group and individuals who have nothing more to lose are putting combined pressure on President Idriss Deby to keep his promise of December 1990 and bring democracy to the country.

When Joseph Behidi, vice president of the 10-month-old Chadian Human Rights League,

Bush, Yeltsin reach mutual understanding

Russia to resume nuclear arms test after October

BOSTON, Apr 24: President George Bush and Russian President Boris Yeltsin have reached a "mutual understanding" for Russia to resume nuclear arms testing after its voluntary moratorium ends in October, a leading anti-nuclear group said yesterday, reports Reuter.

The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) made the assertion in a 44-page report based on a two-week mission to assess the nuclear status of four former Soviet republics.

IPPNW, which won the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize, alleged that the Russian military-industrial complex continues to exert "enormous influence" on Yeltsin, who it said was apparently also being "urged" by the United States to resume such tests.

Yeltsin signed a decree on February 27 ordering the preparation of tunnels at the Novaya Zemlya test site for the purpose of conducting tests

when the moratorium expires, the IPPNW quoted "several sources in Moscow" as saying.

Diplomats have said NATO is worried chances for keeping the former Soviet arsenal safe may be slipping away, and the suggestion the United States is



encouraging tests aimed at improving the Russian arsenal could be embarrassing.

The IPPNW said the delegation was told by several

Russian officials that Russia "will almost certainly resume nuclear testing after the current moratorium expires in October."

AP adds from New York: Russian President Boris Yeltsin is misunderstood in the



West and suffers from foreigners' long-held affection for Mikhail Gorbachev, a top Yeltsin aide says.

Gailina Starovoitova, Yeltsin's

senior advisor for ethnic affairs, said Yeltsin is not given due credit for his political talents and leadership and for avoiding the widespread ethnic bloodbath many predicted when he took power last year.

"I'm afraid he's underestimated here in the West," she told a group of Associated Press editors in a question-and-answer session. "It's a pity, because he's a real leader of public opinion in our country and he's a symbol of democracy."

The Russian president's spontaneous decision last Aug 19 to climb atop a Soviet tank and read a decree typified his "great intuition," she said.

Starovoitova, one of the most outspoken reformers in the Congress of People's Deputies, came to the United States this week on vacation. She blamed what she calls Yeltsin's misleading image on the vagaries of the Western press as well as the Russian administration itself.

New evidence of cosmic Big Bang found

WASHINGTON, Apr 24: A US satellite has found new evidence of the cosmic "Big Bang" that gave birth to the universe 15 billion years ago, scientists said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

An image of the entire sky taken by the US space agency's cosmic background explorer satellite shows that looks like a magenta and blue Easter Egg, but is actually a celestial map of tiny temperature fluctuations that are the relics of the first, massive explosion from which the galaxies were formed.

These temperature fluctuations — only about 30 millionths of a degree warmer or

cooler than the rest of the sky, which is deathly cold — give substance to theories that have been widely accepted but never proved.

"These small variations are the imprints of tiny ripples in the fabric of space-time put there by the primeval explosion process," said George Smoot, the principal investigator of the team that made the discovery.

"Over billions of year, the smaller of these ripples have grown into galaxies, clusters of galaxies and the great voids of space," Smoot, a scientist with Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and the University of

California, said in a statement.

Since the theory of the "Big Bang" was first developed in the 1940s, scientists have predicted that residual microwave energy in all directions across the sky.

This cosmic background radiation was first detected in 1964 by Nobel laureates Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson.

But their finding left one central mystery: If the spreading background radiation is identical in all directions, how did clumps form that developed into planets, stars and other features of the universe?

Scientists have searched for irregularities in the background radiation that could ac-

count for the formation of galaxies and the fluctuations in temperature discovered by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) satellite may be one clue.

Because the universe is so vast, the NASA satellite is peering back in time as well as space, "seeing" features as they were when the universe was perhaps only a billion years old, which have taken billions of years of reach earth's neighbourhood.

At the time of the "Big Bang, the universe was tightly compressed into a space smaller than a single atomic particle, scientists believe.

Sudan rejects sanction against Libya

KHARTOUM, Apr 24: Sudan rejects the United Nations Security Council resolution imposing sanctions against Libya and "stand by" its neighbour in the present international stand-off, Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Shalul was quoted Thursday as saying, reports AFP.

In the first reaction by a member of the Sudanese government to the air-travel and military embargo, Shalul said that resolution 748, "adopted at the demand of the United States, Britain and France is aimed not only at Libya but all the states of the region."

"Sudan stands by Libya in the present crisis," he told the transitional National Assembly

in Khartoum. But, according to press reports of his speech, he gave no indication of how Sudan was doing so in practical terms.

The Sudanese National Assembly has described the embargo which went into force against Libya April 15 as "unjust" and "absurd."

The western powers decided on the move because Libya has refused to hand over two people suspected of being responsible for the Lockerbie plane-bombing of 1988.

Shalul also said Sudan had good relations with Syria and Jordan, and that there were "signs of improving relations with other Arab countries which misunderstood the

China will continue to cooperate Myanmar

BEIJING, Apr 24: Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on Thursday defended Beijing's policy of cooperation with Myanmar's ruling junta, cast out by the rest of the international community, reports AFP.

"The outside world has adopted the approach of isolating and boycotting Myanmar," Qian told a press conference. "As Myanmar is our neighbour, we have to keep in contact."

Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans recently criticised China, of the few supporters of the hardline regime in Rangoon, for its policy towards Myanmar.

Walesa surrounded by yesmen

WARSAW, APR 24: President Lech Walesa has come under a virulent personal attack from ex-members of his inner circle, who say the man who led Poland out of Communism is now isolated, erratic and surrounded by yes-men, reports AP.

The charges, made in a six-page section of the country's largest newspaper on Wednesday, have been dismissed by presidential spokesman Andrzej Dryzy clmski.

But they have lent a new air of uncertainty to Poland's 3-year-old democracy as it struggles to reform an economy wrecked by four decades of communism.

Walesa, 49, once seemed unassailable. After leading the Solidarity trade union for a decade, he was chosen by a 74 per cent majority in 1990 to be the country's first popularly elected head of state.

Leading the charge against Walesa are his former top lieutenant, Jaroslaw Kaczyski, former presidential campaign manager Jacke Merkel, former



spokesman Jaroslaw Kurski and other longtime associates and aides. The article in Gazeta

Myborcza was written by Kurski.

It quotes current and former workers in the president's palace and chancellery, who paint a picture of Walesa as cowardly, indecisive, scheming and unequal to the job of President.

Instead of leading reforms, Walesa began "playing unclear games aimed at strengthening his own influence and conserving the old communist arrangement," charged Kaczyski, head of the Center Alliance party and former Chief of Walesa's chancellery.

"Astonishment, helplessness, fears about his own security nervous telephone calls to Jaruzelski and Kiszczak — these were the president's reactions during the first hours of the Moscow coup" last August, said Merkel. He was referring to Gen Wojciech Jaruzelski and Gen. Czeslaw

Kiszczak, the former Communist in charge of the army and police until they handed power to an elected Solidarity-led government in 1989.

Merkel alleged that Walesa drafted a letter recognizing the leaders of the short-lived Soviet Communist coup, and it was blocked from being sent only at the last minute by then Prime Minister Jan Krzysztof Bielecki.

Arkadiusz Rybicki, Walesa's former Secretary, said the president is "surrounded by yes-men" having rid himself of any advisers who posed difficult questions.

Walesa "constantly refers to his tiredness. But this is sheer mystification," said Krzysztof Wyszowski, a former member of the Walesa campaign staff. The president's palace is a closed place so it has been easy to coalesce that nothing is done there, that there is nothing but emptiness inside."

Off the Record



Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of former Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini, talks to reporters on Thursday, as she arrives for the first session of the new Italian parliament after the general elections. Alessandra Mussolini was elected for the neo-fascist MSI (Italian Social Movement). —AFP/UNB photo

Care bear flew 80,000 miles

PHILADELPHIA: When schoolgirl Anne Wheeler sent her favourite bear off on an airplane for a geography project, her father warned her she might not see him again, reports AP.

Care Bear came home Monday after flying 80,000 miles (130,000 kilometers) and visiting more than a dozen countries. He was loaded down with souvenirs from around the world and a log book full of good wishes from airline pilots, passengers and even a few customs agents.

"The way people took to the bear is incredible," said Mark Wheeler, a customer service representative for the carrier Air, which handed the long-distance bear back to his daughter at Philadelphia's airport.

Teresa favourite among Miss Universe

BANGKOK: Mother Teresa, comforter of the sick and dying in India, was most often chosen as "the world's greatest person" in a survey of contestants in the Miss Universe 1992 pageant, reports AP.

Others chose philosophers, their parents, or world leaders like President Bush, Russian President Boris Yeltsin and former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, pageant spokeswoman Sara Meza said Friday.

Seventy-eight contestants will participate in the pageant May 9 in Bangkok.

In the survey, the contestants most often named Pope John Paul II as the person they would like to meet. Others named law professor Anita Hill, who accused US Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment, the British royalty, and Walt Disney.

Miss Japan, Akiko Ando, 19, joked that she would most like to meet "a boyfriend," Meza said.



Miss Belgium, Anke Van Dermeersch and Miss Venezuela Carolina Izak pose for photograph at Dusit Thani hotel in Bangkok on Thursday. Misses Belgium and Venezuela are contesting for the 1992 Miss Universe beauty pageant hosted by Thailand May 9. —AFP/UNB photo

Only nudity condition of entry

MELBOURNE: It was a case of no nudes, bad news for the Valhalla cinema, reports AP.

The avant-garde theatre offered free entry today to a special matinee showing of "Naked Lunch," the bizarre new film by Canadian director David Cronenberg.

The only catch was that nudity was a condition of entry. Considering that winter is just around the corner, changing rooms were available for doffing clothes after arrival.

But the Valhalla was forced to cancel the show when no one turned up.

ANC youth young rejects Klerk proposal

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 24: The influential ANC youth wing Friday rejected a proposal by President FW de Klerk that would clear the way for South Africa's first black head of state but preserve some white influence, reports AP.

The African National Congress Youth League said the plan was designed to perpetuate white power and delay true democracy and was unacceptable because the government would oversee elections for the interim government.

"The impression that... the proposals are a step forward, must be rejected with the contempt it deserves," the group said in a statement.

Col Deby, 39, seized power December 1, 1990, from his former comrade in arms, Hissene Habre, who had held power since June 1982.

He told Africa No 1 radio of Gabon recently that his government would establish multiparty democracy in Chad, a desert nation with 5 million people, a life expectancy of 39 years and annual per capita income of 160 dollars.

Mahamat Hassan Abakar, a judge investigating crimes by Habre's regime, said evidence indicates more than 10,000 people died at the hands of security forces and millions of dollars in aid was diverted to foreign bank accounts.

French lawyers who visited Chad in late February said arbitrary arrests, torture and killings continued under Deby.

French, German and US diplomatic missions publicly support moves toward democracy.

been evident for months. On October 13, army officers of the Hadjerai clan rebelled. Rebel attacks were reported around Lake Chad in January.

On February 21, officials said they had thwarted a coup attempt that began with a raid on a police station. They put the death toll at 6 to 13.

Enoch Djondang, president of the human rights organization, said he had reports of 78 people killed in villages south of the capital in reprisals by Deby's presidential guard.

"We're pessimistic about the national conference," said Djondang, a 31-year-old law student. "There's a complete rupture between the power structure and other organizations. We haven't even begun to discuss important things like development, decentralization and religious coexistence."

More optimistically, he said people were beginning to volunteer reports of human rights violations, and his group had more than 500 dues-paying members.

was murdered February 16, Julienne Zamtato helped organize the first protest march ever held in Chad.

"A few of us just went toward the presidency," said Mrs Zamtato, who has seven children. "We were all women, with our hands on our heads to show our intentions were not violent. They could shoot us if they wanted. They had already killed our husbands and fathers and brothers."

Several thousand women joined the February 18 march along the main thoroughfare which runs past the heavily guarded presidential palace. Dumbfounded soldiers held their fire.

It is widely believed that Behidi, a lawyer, was killed on orders of security force members who oppose plans for a national conference in May to draft a new constitution and set a timetable for democratic elections.

An official investigation of the killing reported no results.

Dissatisfaction with the Deby regime has