

House Armed Services Body chief calls for US N-test ban

CAMBRIDGE, June 2: The chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Les Aspin, said Monday that the United States should stop testing nuclear weapons to set an international example, reports AP.

"We've been preaching non-proliferation to other nations, but we haven't been willing to give much on our own nuclear programme. Here's our chance," the Wisconsin congressman told graduates of Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"International cooperation is at the core of non-proliferation efforts and that cooperation is going to be difficult to achieve if the United States insists on continuing with nuclear testing," he said.

Aspin said the end of the Cold War eliminates the need for nuclear weapons arrayed to counter the Soviet Union's superior conventional forces, but this country now needs new solutions to complex nuclear problems, including proliferation.

The Defense Department opposes testing limits. The White House has said testing is already at a low level and there are no plans for further limits.

But Aspin, whose leadership of the defense committee gives him a powerful voice on this issue, joins a growing number of lawmakers calling for a test ban.

Oregon Congressman Mark Kopetski is expected to offer an amendment to the fiscal 1993 defense budget this week that would halt nuclear testing for one year, provided the former Soviet republics continue a ban they announced in October 1991.

The amendment has 213 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives, including Majority Leader Richard Gephardt. Aspin predicted Monday the amendment will pass.

Offer on forests' hypocritical, critics say US joining Rio summit as world's environmental leader: Bush

WASHINGTON, June 2: George Bush claims the United States is going to the Earth Summit as the world's environmental leader. But his critics claim he's become "the hypocritical president" when it comes to the environment, Reports AP.

Bush announced Monday that the United States would put an extra \$150 million in the pot to help save the world's forests, prompting environmental groups to launch a barrage of criticism at the man who says he wants to be known as the environmental president.

The president's attempt to help the Third World fight deforestation "is like the Yugoslavs sending a peace-keeping force to the Middle East," said Nathaniel Lawrence of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Bush traveled to the Goddard Space Flight Centre in Greenbelt, Md to make his announcement in front of a huge photograph of Earth taken by astronauts returning from the moon. He applauded workers for their role in managing satellites that monitor the environment.

The president, trying to polish his environmental record for the 100-nation



summit opening this week in Rio de Janeiro, offered the added \$150 million and challenged other countries to double their conservation budgets and to double the amount available to poorer countries for reforestation efforts to \$2.7 billion a year.

Bush said the US will go to Rio "proudly as the world's leader not just in environmental research, but in environmental action."

He said he invited comparison of the record that the nation and his administration have built.

It was not long in coming. "Bush has broken his promises on practically every environmental issue that concerns every man, woman and child," the Sierra Club said.

Bill Clinton, Bush's Democratic challenger for the presidency, said Bush went along with a gutted global warming treaty "because the

people who control the Bush administration's policies did not want to reinvest in our environment."

The criticism comes on the heels of Bush's insistence on a watered-down summit pact on global warming and his stated refusal to sign a summit biodiversity treaty aimed at protecting a wide variety of the world's plants, animals and natural resources.

Michael Fischer, the Sierra Club's executive director, said Bush "promises to chain saw America's forests but now he's going to hide behind a fig leaf forest deal and go down to Rio to blow hot air."

Bush recently decided to allow limited logging on ancient forests in Oregon, home of the northern spotted owl, a threatened species.

Bush said he came to office committed to environmental leadership

Off the Record



NEW YORK: Best featured actor in a play, Larry Fishburne from "Two Trains Running" (L) poses with his trophy and presenter Farrah Fawcett after the telecast of the 46th annual Tony Awards, May 31. — AFP/UNB photo

Polluted Ganges water for Earth Summit

NEW DELHI: The head of a Hindu religious sect in India is taking a bottle of polluted water from the sacred Ganges river to the Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro, the United News of India (UNI) said on Monday.

Mahant Veer Bhadra Mishra is heading for Brazil to receive the "global 500 roll of honour" for his efforts in cleaning up the Ganges, one of India's holiest and most polluted rivers.

His bottle of dirty water would tell the gathering of world leaders and environmentalists that "all is not well with the Ganges" UNI said.

Devout Hindus believe that bathing in the Ganges washes away a life time of sins.

They believe that if a spoonful of Ganges water is poured into the lips of a Hindu on his deathbed, it will cleanse his sins and make his journey into the next world easier.

Mishra, a professor at one of India's oldest universities, the Benares Hindu university in Varanasi, said the river was still filthy despite a massive clean-up effort by the government, UNI said.

Hundreds of Hindus are cremated every day along banks of the Ganges, which originates in the Himalayan mountains and flows across densely populated northern India.

Doctor prescribes mouthfuls of shampoo

LEEDS, England: A man alleged to have practised as a doctor for 30 years without any qualifications prescribed mouthfuls of Shampoo, a British court heard on Monday, reports Reuter.

Pharmacist Martin Spicer said the accused, Muhammad Saeed, also told some patients to rub cough medicine on their skin and to take tablets by the spoonful.

"If one five millilitre of hair shampoo is to be taken three times a day, you tend to think something is wrong," said Spicer.

He told a court in Leeds, northern England, that he noted serious errors in more than 250 prescriptions written by Saeed over a six-month period.

Saeed, 64, denies charges of obtaining money by false pretences and property by deception. The case continues.

Clock to show growth of population

NEW DELHI: India, the world's second most populous nation, plans to install illuminated clocks in selected cities to show the minute-by-minute growth of its population, the government said Monday, reports AP.

Three large clocks and 30 smaller ones will be erected at strategic locations and carry family planning messages to increase public awareness of the rapid population increase, an official statement said.

The 33 clocks will cost more than 800,000 dollars, the statement said but did not specify when they would be put up.

India's population totals nearly 850 million — or 16 per cent of the world's total.

If present growth continues, it is expected to reach almost one billion people by the end of this century.

Frozen embryos in legal limbo

KNOXVILLE: Seven frozen embryos are in legal limbo after Tennessee's Supreme Court ruled that a divorced woman cannot use them to make her ex-husband a father against his will, reports AP.

The five-member court ruled unanimously Monday that Mary Sue Davis Stowe cannot implant or donate the test-tube embryos she and Junior Lewis Davis conceived three years ago before their breakup.

It was left unclear what might happen next to the 4 to 8-cell embryos frozen in liquid Nitrogen at a Knoxville fertility clinic.

The court said the clinic "is free to follow its normal procedure in dealing with unused pre-embryos, as long as that procedure is not in conflict with this opinion."

Charles Clifford, Davis' lawyer, said the embryos probably will be destroyed.

Rebel factions uniting Sudan's govt refuses to discard Islamic law

ABUJA (Nigeria), June 2: Two rival factions of the main Sudanese rebel army said Monday they are reuniting in the nine-year-old civil war because Sudan's government refuses to discard Islamic law, reports AP.

The announcement came as the guerrillas based in the black, mostly Christian and animist southern Sudan entered their second week of Nigerian-organized peace talks with the Arab, Islamic government based in the north.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army, led by Col. John Garang, split in August.

Since then, the rebels have been dealt a string of defeats by the army of Sudanese leader Lt Gen. Omar Hassan al-Bashir. Since February, the rebels have lost control of a dozen strategic towns.

An SPLA spokesman said the peace talks will not produce results unless the government allows a referendum on self-determination for the south.

The rebels are demanding the abolition of Sharia, or Islamic law. A third guerrilla group, the Nasir faction, has been demanding that the south secede from Sudan, the largest nation on the African continent.

The Sudan government has offered to share power and to exempt the south from Islamic law, but rejected any discussion of secession or self-determination for the south.

"We will never bargain on the basic question of Sharia, unity of Sudan federalism and the political system, these are no issues for bargaining," said Maj Gen. El-Zubair Mohamed Salih, the No.2 man in al-Bashir's government, according to the official Sudan news Agency.

Iran threatens crackdown on anti-govt demonstration

NICOSIA, June 2: A senior Iranian official on Monday condemned anti-government demonstrations sparked by economic unrest and said that the Islamic Republic would not tolerate opposition, Tehran television reported, says AP.

Many Iranians, fed up with runaway inflation, shortages, and gross mismanagement, have demonstrated in several cities around the country over the past month in protests that have led to arson and looting.

Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, head of the judiciary, warned on the television report monitored in Nicosia that establishment will crackdown on "any violation of the law resolutely and with power".

Protests in Shiraz, Arak and Mashhad have alarmed officials. They are the first serious challenge to the country's Islamic government since it was established after the 1979 revolution.

In a rare admission of disturbances, state-run Tehran radio reported tens of thousands of shantytown residents in Mashhad went on a rampage of looting and arson Saturday, after government workers tried to raze their squatter dwellings. The radio report also was monitored in Nicosia.

Iranian newspapers, operating under censorship, made oblique references last week to demonstrations in Arak, capital of central Markazi province, in which 2,000 to 3,000 people reportedly were arrested.

Similar unrest also was reported in Shiraz last month.

An Iranian opposition group, the Iraq-based Mujahideen Khalq, said Monday that Mashhad was under martial law.

The group said in a statement that several people were shot dead in Saturday's clashes with law enforcement officers, and that "some 1,000 were arrested."

Those reports could not be confirmed.

Lankan troops take control of LTTE base

COLOMBO, June 2: Sri Lankan troops took control of a key Tamil Tiger guerrilla base on the island's northeastern coast after heavy fighting on Monday, a military spokesman said, reports Reuter.

He said four soldiers were killed in the battle for Alampiti.

An isolated coastal town in the Mullaitivu district used by the rebels to funnel supplies to jungle camps in the interior.

The spokesman said troops recovered the bodies of six rebels while a guerrilla radio message intercepted by the army said the rebels lost another 14 fighters in an air strike just before the base was overrun.

More than 300 rebels and 70 soldiers have been killed since last Thursday when government forces launched simultaneous operations against rebel position in Mullaitivu and the rebel-controlled northern Jaffna peninsula.

BRIEFLY

Colombia grants asylum to Garcia: The Colombian government said on Monday it had granted diplomatic asylum to former Peruvian President Alan Garcia after he took refuge in a Colombian embassy building in Peru, Reuter reports from Bogota.

Colombia's Foreign Ministry said Garcia, an outspoken opponent of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori, had entered the Colombian ambassador's residence in Lima on Sunday evening and asked for diplomatic asylum.

"The national government has decided to grant the asylum requested by ex-president Alan Garcia," it said in a statement.

Garcia, president from 1985 to 1990, has lived underground since Fujimori dissolved congress and temporarily closed the courts on April 5.

Crimea to remain part of Ukraine: The heads of the Ukrainian and Crimean parliaments agreed on Monday that Crimea will remain part of Ukraine but enjoy special economic status, Reuter reports from Moscow.

ITAR-Tass news agency said the agreement was reached at a meeting in the Black Sea port of Yalta, and a statement issued afterwards, described the Crimean peninsula, once under Russian jurisdiction, as "an integral part of Ukraine."

Crimea was handed over to Ukraine in 1954, but the Russian parliament has declared the decision illegal and Ukrainian nationalists fear Russia aims to seize the territory.

Monday's statement said Crimea should have "all the political and legal conditions which allow it to realise the special potential which flows from its geographical location, to have an economy which is open to external investments, and to become a zone of economic and cultural cooperation."

Miller new NATO chief for Atlantic: US Admiral Paul Miller has been appointed NATO's supreme allied commander for the Atlantic, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) announced Monday, AFP reports from Brussels.

Miller, currently Commander in Chief of the US Atlantic fleet, will take over later this month from American Admiral Leon Endry.

Based in Norfolk, Virginia, the supreme allied commander Atlantic is one of the two main military commands of the NATO alliance, along with the Belgian-based supreme allied commander Europe, a post also traditionally held by a US officer.

Jews on hunger strike in Israel: Hundreds of Ethiopian Jewish immigrants were on a hunger strike in Israel on Monday demanding better housing, Israel television said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

The immigrants, living in hotels and temporary absorption centres at the government's expense, demanded to be moved to permanent houses and not the mobile homes that were prepared for them.

Last year, about 14,000 Ethiopian Jews were brought to Israel in a dramatic airlift. There are now some 45,000 Ethiopians in Israel, many have yet to learn Hebrew and become integrated in Israeli society.

One killed in Japan train crash: One man was killed and 142 others were injured Tuesday in a rush-hour commuter train crash that was caused by brake failure at a station outside Tokyo, officials said, AP reports from Tokyo.

A 40-year-old man died shortly after being taken to a hospital, while other passengers hurt in the accident were receiving medical treatment at seven hospitals near Toride City, northeast of Tokyo.

The front car of the crowded train was heavily damaged when it crashed through a station wall after jumping over a barrier at the end of the platform following brake failure, said Tadahiko Kosuge, a Toride Fire Department spokesman. The station is the last in the train line.

Three of the 142 people injured were in serious condition, Kosuge added.

Arafat in 'excellent' health

AMMAN, June 2: PLO Leader Yasser Arafat left the intensive care unit here overnight following an operation to remove a blood clot on his brain caused by a plane accident in April, a PLO official said today, Reports AP.

Arafat is in "excellent" health and will be able to receive visitors later today, according to Yasser Abed Rabbo, the Palestine Liberation Organization's Information Department Director.

King Hussein of Jordan visited Arafat for a second time Monday to ask about his health, an official said, adding that Jordanian Prime Minister Zeid Ibn Shaker also visited Arafat late Monday.

Arafat, 62, was recovering well from surgery to remove the blood clot caused by his plane accident in the Libyan desert, Dr Yusef Kussus, Head of Medical Services at the Al-Hussein Medical Center, said Monday.

"There were no complications. No side effects," Kussus told a press conference following Arafat's operation. "He is conscious, awake and in good shape."



AMMAN: PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat arrives at Marka airport in Amman May 31. Arafat underwent surgery here Monday to remove a blood clot from his brain, a consequence of the plane crash he was in last April. — AFP/UNB photo

Y'slav envoy to UK expelled

LONDON, June 2: The British government announced on Monday that it was expelling the Yugoslav Ambassador Svetozar Rikanovic "in accordance with sanctions" decided on Saturday by the United Nations, reports AP.

Rikanovic has until June 15 "to get affairs in order" before leaving the country, a spokesman for the foreign office said. Adding that the ambassador would not be allowed to return to his post in London until his country had complied with the UN Security Council's Resolution 757.

Floods kill 23 in Brazil, Argentina

SAO PAULO, Brazil, June 2: Floods caused by heavy weekend rainfall in southern Brazil and northern Argentina have left 23 people dead and over 100,000 without homes, civil guard officials said on Monday, reports Reuter.

Rivers in southern Brazil flooded towns and cities, officials said, leaving some 58,000 people homeless. Some 23 died in the floods, they said.

Television broadcasts showed water flowing over the gabled roofs of houses in towns

Russia postpones withdrawal of troops from 3 Caucasus states

MOSCOW, June 2: Russia has postponed the pullout of former Soviet troops from the troubled republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the Defence Ministry said Monday, reports AP.

"We do not intend to withdraw our troops there while they're daily submitted to danger and humiliation and where they are looked upon as occupiers," Grachev said.

In the latest violence, a truck carrying humanitarian aid from Britain was destroyed by a land mine Monday near the village of Kichan in Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenian officials said. ITAR-Tass said one person died.

There were an undetermined number of casualties in village of Martuni which was shelled by Azerbaijan forces, ITAR-Tass said.

Meanwhile, in the central Asian republic of Kyrgyzstan, President Askar Akayev claimed control over all former Soviet troops and equipment stationed there starting Monday, the independent Interfax news agency reported.

Several other former Soviet republics, including Ukraine, previously took similar steps.

Last week, Russian defence officials said they would divide former Soviet weapons evenly among Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia.

All three republics have been clamouring for equipment and supplies since the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Like other former Soviet republics, they say they are entitled to most or all of the conventional forces stationed on their soil.

Rabuka sworn in as PM

SUVA, June 2: Former army commander and coup leader Sitiveni Rabuka was sworn today as Prime Minister of Fiji's first elected government since 1987 after striking a surprise deal with one of the two ethnic Indian parties, reports AP.

Rabuka, who now heads the Fijian Political Party (FPP) was appointed by President Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau to head a coalition government

Shamir wants to step up Jewish settlement

PSAGOT (West Bank), June 2: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir told Jewish West Bank settlers late on Monday that their numbers must increase to end forever the possibility of a Palestinian state, reports Reuter.

"Even 120,000 is not enough though thank God we reached this and it is a great force," he declared.

"We need more, more, to prevent forever the establishment of this calamity called the state of Palestine. It will not rise, it will not be," shouted the Likud Prime Minister, who is seeking re-election in a June 23 national elections.

Shamir's government has stepped up Jewish settlement on Arab land captured in the 1967 six-day war. About 100,000 Jews currently live in enclaves amid 1.75 million Palestinians in revolt against Israeli rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We must thrust forward... the land of Israel must be settled by Jews from one end to the other," said the headline prime minister, drawing applause from religious Jewish settlers.

Shamir was in Spagoit, a settlement of 150 families perched over the Palestinian town of Al-Bireh, to receive honorary citizenship.

Latest polls show Shamir trailing opposition Labour Party Leader Yitzhak Rabin in the run-up to the election.

Shamir warned the settlers his political foes endangered Israel. "We must block the leftists' path," he said.

He said Israel was committed to peace talks with its Arab neighbours but vowed nothing could stop it from building "everywhere in the land of Israel."