

BRIEFLY

Egyptian writer shot dead: An Egyptian writer known for his pro-secular and anti-fundamentalist views, Farag Fuda, was fatally shot Monday in an attack by two members of an Islamic fundamentalist group, police said, AFP reports from Cairo.

He died after being hospitalised suffering seven bullet wounds, Fuda's 18-year-old son and a friend were also injured with gunshot wounds. One of the two assailants was arrested.

The attack occurred in the evening as the writer left his office in the Medinet Nasr suburb of Cairo to go to his home in Helipolis, another suburb.

He was about to get into his car when the two assailants, riding a motorcycle, opened fire on him, police said.

Rutskol in Argentina: Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskol arrived in Buenos Aires Monday on an official working visit prior to joining other world leaders at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro on Thursday, officials said, AFP reports from Buenos Aires.

Rutskol's agenda includes meetings with Argentine President Carlos Menem and Economy Minister Domingo Cavallo, as well as visits to the Congress and various industrial facilities, officials said.

Ukrainian president Leonid Kravchuk is expected to arrive in Buenos Aires yesterday followed by Argentina President Leon Ter Petrossian on Thursday officials said.

Following the conclusion of the UN conference on environment and development Sunday, Bulgarian President Zhelev and South Korean Prime Minister Won Shik Chung are to make official stopovers, officials said.

Bus collision leaves 14 dead: Fourteen people were killed and 24 were injured early on Monday when two buses collided on a stretch on highway 175 kilometres (109 miles) from the Venezuelan Capital, Radio reports said, Reuter reports from Caracas.

Most of the casualties were Colombian and the rest were Venezuelan, Radio Rumbos said.

The buses collided on a highway between the towns of Nirgua and Bejuma, west of Caracas. The cause of the collision was unclear.

The injured were transported to hospitals in three states for treatment and their condition was not immediately known.

Curfew on vehicles in Lima: President Alberto Fujimori on Monday announced an overnight curfew on vehicles in the capital in a bid to stop a wave of powerful car bomb attacks, AP reports from Lima.

Maotist rebels detonated a 1,100-pound (500 kilogram) car bomb Friday outside a television station, killing four people.

Fujimori said the temporary curfew would take effect within the next few days and would allow cars, buses and trucks on the streets between 10 pm and 5 am with official permission. He said it would not stop nighttime economic activity.

The capital city of 7 million people has been in a state of emergency since 1986 due to guerrilla activity. Lima was under curfew for 18 months from 1986 to 1987, and urban travel was banned from 1 am to 5 am.

5 killed in Texas mishap: A church van carrying children to camp ran a stop sign Monday and collided with a cement truck, killing five people and injuring 10, officials said, AP reports from Mineola.

The van, one of three carrying children from Dallas Chinese Bible Church, failed to stop at an intersection with US 69, about 80 miles (130 kilometers) east of Dallas, said Brad Tullis of the state Department of Public Safety.

The van was struck broadside by the cement truck, which was travelling on the highway. The 60-year-old truck driver wasn't injured.

Skid marks extended across the road and grass was scorched where the burning van came to a halt.

Czech federation is lost: Klaus Talks end without accord

PRAGUE, June 9: Talks between Czechoslovakia's top two politicians failed today and Prime Minister-designate Václav Klaus said the country looked likely to split, reports Reuter.

The (Czechoslovak) federation is lost, Klaus said after meeting Vladimir Meciar, leader of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) which swept the eastern region in a weekend general election.

"According to HZDS, even the common state is lost," Klaus said.

Klaus and Meciar met for six hours of talks after the elections highlighted deep differences between the two parts of the country.

Klaus's right-wing Civic Democratic Party (CDS) won in the western Czech republic but

Meciar's nationalist-minded HZDS swept the eastern region.

Voters overwhelmingly backed Meciar's platform of greater autonomy for Slovakia. He insisted that Czech politicians say would effectively break up the Czechoslovak federation.

Klaus said the HZDS wanted to create a sovereign Slovak state with international status and only then find a formulation for continued loose links with the Czech republic.

"In no way does the CDS have a mandate from voters for this," said Klaus, emerging from the meeting at a government villa in the central town of Brno.

He said a further meeting would be held in Prague on

Thursday, but was deeply pessimistic.

"The talks have shown deep, essential differences on Czechoslovakia's future set-up," Klaus added.

Meciar refused to comment but HZDS Deputy Chairman Milan Knazko said the agreement to meet again gave some hope.

Klaus said Meciar's side presented a new positive element by proposing that the issue of declaring a sovereign Slovak state should be solved by a referendum.

"In such a case, the only way would be to hold the same referendum with the same question in the Czech republic as soon as possible," Klaus said.

Previously, the HZDS had said it would declare sovereignty through the Slovak National Council (regional par-

liament). The HZDS will dominate the council when it convenes later this month.

Knazko said the two sides agreed on the formation of federal bodies - presumably a bare-bones caretaker government. Asked for details, he said: "sorry, it's raining," and left.

Klaus said a new government must be formed quickly because the current government would not be able to deal with even the most essential issues.

Most of the present 18-member Cabinet lost their parliamentary seats in the elections. President Václav Havel asked Klaus on Sunday to try to form a new government.

Klaus said the Federal parliament and a government must be established before a presidential election.

Off the Record

Zulu King's fifth wife from rival Zhosha group

JOHANNESBURG: Zulu King Goodwill Zwelithini is to take a woman from the rival Zhosha ethnic group as his fifth wife, the Johannesburg Star newspaper said late Monday, reports AFP.

The rivalry between the two large ethnic groups has in recent years been reflected in violence between the predominantly Zulu Inkatha Freedom Party and the African National Congress, many of whose leading members are Zhosha.

The paper said the wedding was expected to take place at the King's official seat, the Royal Kraal (household) at Nongoma in KwaZulu tribal homeland.

Although the bride-to-be Nonuphulelo Mchiza, is not of royal blood, she was chosen by the Zulu monarch from a group of maidens during a traditional reed dance last October. Domestic news agency SAPA said 43-year-old Zwelithini had paid 20 head of cattle in lobola (dowry) for the 19-year-old Zhosha woman, plus a "Nquthu" - an extra beast paid for a virgin.

Mchiza, a first-year student teacher, comes from Umzimkulu, in Transkei tribal homeland. According to protocol, KwaZulu leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, who handles the King's private affairs, is remaining tight-lipped about the wedding plans.

Just because he was a snitch and a pest

PATERSON, N.J.: Three teenage boys who plotted the ritual killing of a schoolmate were sentenced Monday to the maximum 20 years each by a judge who said they had thrown away supportive families and success in school, reports AP.

Prosecutors say the three joined with two others to strangle Robert Solimine Jr, 17, by wrapping a cord around his neck as he recited the 'Hail Mary' prayer in his car on February 16.

It was a ritual slaying with religious and Mafia overtones, and Solimine was killed because the defendants thought he was a snitch and a pest, prosecutors said.

"You're going to have to say a lot of Hail Marys to salvage anything," Superior Court Judge Carmen Ferrante told the last defendant he sentenced, a 14-year-old boy.

Ferrante detailed the defendants' good grades, their families' love, the part-time jobs where they worked, their lack of involvement with drugs and alcohol, and their adherence to curfews as he struggled to discern why the trio helped kill Solimine.

Porno star now a church trustee

PARK CITY, Utah: Harry Reems, who appeared in hundreds of pornographic films and co-starred in "Deep Throat," is a happily married church trustee, reports AP.

Television talk shows have been after Reems to tell viewers about his films and his 30-year struggle with alcoholism, but he says his sole purpose these days is to save people from killing themselves with alcohol.

"I know today that those of us who are spared, every day we live, we live with the grace of God," said the 44-year-old Reems, now a real estate agent in this resort town 40 miles (65 kilometres) east of Salt Lake City. He was born Herbie Streiber.

He says he was given a glass of scotch by his father at age 11, and ended up drinking a gallon of vodka a day. His movie earnings bought him a palatial Malibu beach home, but he later wound up living in a Los Angeles supermarket trash bin asking for handouts.

On July 1, Reems will celebrate three years of sobriety. He's become a trustee in the Park City Community Christian Church and he's been married for two years.

"I have learned what a miracle is," he said.

Muslim, Croat forces capture 3 Serb mountain strongholds

BELGRADE, June 9: Rebel Serb gunners bombarding the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo were silent this morning after Muslim and Croat defence forces mounted the first serious counter-attack in two months of fighting, local reporters said, reports Reuter.

Sporadic shooting was heard around the Bosnian capital but the blistering Serb bombardments which cut a swath of destruction through the city centre for three days subsided.

Muslim and Croat forces on Monday captured three of the Serb mountain strongholds from which the rebels had rained down artillery fire. Part of a fourth Serb stronghold was also taken in a day of heavy fighting on Monday.

Local reporters said Muslim and Croat defenders had given the Serbs their first bloody nose in the battle for Sarajevo, capital of the New Balkan state of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But they noted the Serbs still held strong positions above the city.

The intensive round of fighting which began on Friday left streets littered with dead, hospitals overflowing with wounded, electricity cut and buildings ablaze. Large parts of the city are in ruins.

No death count was available.

The Serb irregulars rebelled in March after the majority Muslim and Croats voted for independence, breaking with the state of Yugoslavia founded in 1918. The minority Serbs wanted to stay part of the remnant, Serb-dominated Yugoslav state.

AP adds from Sarajevo: Terrified residents rushed to shelters past bodies of victims and blazing buildings under the heaviest bombardment yet of the war.

Meanwhile, the Security Council on Monday approved sending 60 UN military observers to Sarajevo as a first step toward making relief flights possible to the besieged Bosnian capital.

The move would put UN peacekeepers on the fiercest battlefield of the year-long Yugoslav civil war. If successful, they would ensure that the besieged, battered Sarajevo gets food and medicine.

Tens of thousands of Sarajevo residents are huddled in basement bunkers, cut off from food and reliable water supplies by roadblocks set up by Serb militias. Relief convoys, by the Red Cross and others, have come under attack.



MUSLIM AID: Chairman of the "Muslim Aid" organization, former rock star Cat Stevens now Yusuf Islam, holds a fifteen days old Croatian refugee baby late Sunday inside a camp. —AFP/ UNB photo

Diplomatic storm over PLO official's killing

PARIS, June 9: A diplomatic storm blew up between France, Israel and Palestinian leaders after a top PLO security official was shot dead outside a Paris hotel on Monday, reports Reuter.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat immediately blamed Israel's intelligence service Mossad for the killing of Atef Bseiso, Deputy Security Commissioner for the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Israeli officials in Paris and Jerusalem dismissed the charge. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said: "I am not able to say anything and I don't know anything."

Israel's army intelligence chief Uri Sagie also refused to comment, but made clear he was not sorry that Bseiso was dead.

He alleged that Bseiso had been a member of the Black September Movement which killed 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 and carried out other attacks on Israelis.

After the Munich raid, Israel vowed vengeance against the leaders of Black September. The country has an open policy of tracking down people it suspects of killing or hijacking its citizens.

But David Dabonn, an official

at Israel's embassy in Paris, told Reuters the killing was more likely to have been the result of a power struggle within the PLO leadership.

Sources close to the French investigation said they were still examining the evidence. "We are ruling out nothing for the moment", one source said.

Whatever the truth, it is likely to embarrass France and strain its relations with both sides in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The French Interior Ministry said Bseiso had regular contacts with the DST, the French counter-intelligence service, about the safety of Palestinians in Europe.

Palestinian sources said he had been due to see intelligence officials while in Paris.

France could therefore face Palestinian criticism for failing to protect him. But it could also come under attack from Israel for its links with Palestinian leaders.

France's links with the PLO have been an especially touchy subject following the government crisis which followed radical Palestinian leader George Habash's admission to a French hospital in January.

A judicial source hinted that Bseiso had been in Paris on a delicate diplomatic mission.

Media go beyond the bounds

LONDON, June 9: Britain's gossipy media faced the threat of curbs today in a backlash against its reporting of allegations that Princess Diana tried to kill herself, reports Reuter.

The archbishops of Canterbury, George Carey, sharply rebuked the media as allegations that Diana has had a troubled marriage to her-to-the throne Prince Charles made headlines for a fifth day.

The media had gone beyond the bounds of what "a society claiming to respect basic human values," should observe, said the head of the church of England.

Editors also came in for savage criticism from the press complaints commission which spoke on Monday of "an odious exhibition of journalists dabbling their fingers in the stuff of other people's souls."

The commission oversees a voluntary code of press conduct which the government will review in July, under pressure from members of parliament for new laws to curb media intrusion into private lives.

The cabinet minister responsible, National Heritage Secretary David Mellor, said may people would welcome the commission's statement.

Harrods, the fashionable London department store which is patronised by the

royals, said on Monday it would not sell "Diana: her true story," the book by Andrew Morton which triggered the frenzy in the British press.

It is being serialised by the Sunday Times and says Diana made five "suicide bids" early in her marriage, on one occasion using a serrated lemon

slicer.

Other newspapers have had their own stories about what they say is a troubled union between Diana, 30, and Charles, 42 who had crisis talks on Monday with his mother, Queen Elizabeth.

Sunday Times Editor Andrew Neil hit back at critics, saying the kind-inwaiting's marriage was a legitimate

matter of public interest. He issued a signed statement by a man who was used as a source by Morton.

The royal "mole" identified himself as James Gilbey, a 35-year-old bachelor who escorted the then Lady Diana Spener around town before her marriage in 1981.

"I can confirm that the princess discussed with me on numerous occasions her attempted suicides as she has done with other close friends," said Gilbey.

The backlash failed to dent enthusiasm for his story among several tabloids.

"Suicidal" di poured out her heart to me" said the splash in Tuesday's sun which is owned, like the Sunday Times, by Australian tycoon Rupert Murdoch.

Diana was pictured giving cameramen an icy glare as she took eldest son William, nine, to school.

The 1,000-year-old marriages - in recent months - Princess Anne's divorce from husband Mark and Prince Andrew's split from flame-haired "Fergie", the Duchess of York.

A Charles-Diana break-up would be a bigger scandal but constitutional experts say it would not stop Charles being king.

Mujahideen urged to return goods

KABUL, June 9: The caretaker Afghan government urged Mujahideen fighters Monday to return goods they stole from Kabul during last week's four-day sectarian war between two rival groups, reports AFP.

"We request the Mujahideen brothers to return the looted goods and assure Kabul citizens that their property will be restored, said the caretaker government in an announcement on national television.

It did not say how it will implement the restoration as caretaker President Sibghatullah Mojaddedi's administration has no central authority in unpoliced Kabul.

Traders and civilians have reported widespread looting during the inter-sect battle that flared last Tuesday between the Shi'ite Hezb-i-Wahdat and the dominant Ittehad-i-Islami which left more than 100 dead and more than 3,000 wounded or missing.

Most prisoners of war have been released and efforts are continuing to free the rest, the announcement said referring to the 2,600 people set free after their abductions by both sides.

Mojaddedi's government urged Mujahideen commanders to maintain security.

Nepali Congress wins local elections

KATHMANDU, June 9: The ruling Nepali Congress has won almost two thirds of the mayor's and deputy mayor's positions along with 331 city council seats and 18,742 village council posts, electoral officials said Monday, reports AFP.

The Nepali Congress has, however, been the centre of criticism from opposition parties in winning the local government elections including 22 mayorships and 21 deputy mayorships as well as 331 city council memberships.

"Of the total 44,539 village and town council seats, the Nepali Congress has won 18,742 village and town council seats as of Monday evening

when over 85 per cent of the vote counting have been completed," an electoral commission officials told AFP.

The Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist and Leninist) (NCP-UML) has won six mayor's, five deputy mayor's, and 182 city council seats representing about 22.52 per cent of the vote and altogether won 10,108 village council seats, the official said.

The former Panchayat National Democratic Party (NDP) has won two mayor's and deputy mayor's seats as well as 148 city council and 3,612 village council seats after capturing 9.8 per cent of the vote.

The Nepal Sadbhavana Party and the extreme left United People's Front (UPF) did poorly winning about 2.6 per cent and 1.39 per cent of the vote respectively, the officials said.

Meanwhile, the NCP (UML)'s politburo and a member of parliament C.O. Madnal told reporters the ruling party had manipulated the local council elections and described the party's officials as "thugs terrorising the voters."

5 cops injured in IRA blast

BELFAST, June 9: Five policemen were injured in an Irish Republican Army bombing blitz across Belfast Tuesday police said, reports Reuter.

Firebombs were set off in four city centre stores, a Sematex bomb caused extensive damage to a hotel and the policemen were caught in the blast from a car bomb that erupted in a residential area of North Belfast.

MPs' no to holding polls in Romania

BUCHAREST, June 9: Romanian legislators have voted after several hours of stormy debate against holding presidential and legislative elections at the end of July, reports AFP.

The National Assembly, one of two houses in the legislature, had previously proposed holding the elections on July 26.

But in a secret ballot at a joint session with the Senate late Monday the deputies vote 220 against and 182 for holding the elections next month.

The two chambers have adopted two bills on holding the elections for parliament and president, but several articles still have to be worked out.

The elections are already technically overdue under an agreement

"Bill on UN force a step towards Japan's re-militarisation"

TOKYO, June 9: A controversial bill clearing the way for Japanese troops to serve abroad as peace-keepers passed a major parliamentary hurdle early today but left-wing opposition parties vowed last-ditch efforts to kill it, reports Reuter.

The opposition, and many people in neighbouring Asian countries subjugated by imperial Japanese troops earlier this century, fear the measure is a first step towards Japan's re-militarisation.

The upper house of the Diet finally approved the Peace-Keeping Operations (PKO) bill by 137 votes to 102 after an exhausting Socialist-Communist filibuster which forced lawmakers to slog through four consecutive all-night sessions.

The measure, which now goes to the government-controlled lower house for formal enactment, would allow Japanese troops to be sent overseas on active service for the first time since World War Two.

The opposition argued that the bill contravened Japan's post-1945 "peace constitution" and other laws forbidding the use of military force to settle international disputes.

contradictions and defects of the bill and will continue our battle to kill it."

Socialist Chairman Makoto Tanabe told the Daily Asahi Shimbun: "We must have the bill scrapped and start from scratch."

Tanabe referred to a veiled threat from some leaders of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to dissolve the lower house if the bill failed to pass by the scheduled end of the Diet session on June 21.

This would mean a snap general election. National polls for half the upper house are already slated for next month and, according to conventional political wisdom, a double election would favour the LDP, which has held power since 1955.

Tanabe said he would nevertheless prefer a double election to passage of the bill, which would allow Tokyo to send a 2,000-man unit of help UN Peace-Keeping Operations such as those now underway in Cambodia.

"The PKO bill is a political issue worth seeking the public's judgement," Tanabe told Asahi.

The final vote in the upper chamber took place after weary Socialists dropped a bizarre "ox-walk" filibuster under which each legislator approached the voting rostrum at a snail's pace, sometimes taking up to 30 minutes to vote.

Only the smaller Communist Party, with 14 upper house members, persisted with the tactic, delaying Tuesday morning's vote by more than one hour.

Before the bill went to the vote, the Socialists had caused huge delays by submitting no-confidence motions against Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, the head of the Diet Steering Committee and the Chairman of the upper house PKO committee.

The original version of the bill, drafted by the government, was passed by the lower house in December. But it was watered down after strong opposition from the Socialists and Communists.

The revised text would ban the government from committing troops to such UN combat duties as separating warring factions. Separate legislation would be needed to lift the ban.

By agreeing on a diluted version, the LDP sealed a pact with two small centrist parties to gain a voting majority in the upper house.

The government first mooted the bill in late 1990 when the United States was seeking partners for a military coalition to force Iraqi President Saddam Hussein to withdraw his invasion forces from Kuwait.

Japan, hampered by its anti-militarist laws,

was unable to contribute troops or military equipment but instead donated some 13 billion dollars towards the Gulf war effort.

But, to the government's chagrin it still came in for bitter allied criticism that it was seeking to safeguard its vital oil supplies from the Gulf by paying soldiers of other countries to fight for Japan's interests.

They rush to push to PKO bill through, and the continuing absence of ailing Foreign Minister Michio Watanabe, could torpedo Miyazawa's plans to attend the current Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Tokyo dailies said on Tuesday.

There was no immediate official confirmation of the reports.

The troop deployment measure is the Miyazawa government's key legislation in the current Diet session, and failure to get it into law would be a serious political setback.

With Watanabe in hospital awaiting surgery for gallstones, Miyazawa has taken over as acting Foreign Minister.

In that role, he might feel it necessary to remain in Tokyo to pilot his legislation through, the reports said.

Tamils kill 13 Lankan troops

COLOMBO, June 9: Tamil Tiger rebels ambushed a military patrol in northeastern Sri Lanka Tuesday, killing 13 Sinhalese soldiers, military officials said, reports AP.

Two rebels died when the troops returned fire, officials said.

Two soldiers were injured in the attack near the villages of Mahindapura and Aripu villages, about 130 kilometers (143 miles) northeast of Colombo, officials said.

At least 7,000 people have been killed since June 1990 when rebels from minority Tamil community resumed their campaign for an independent homeland in the north and east.

In Colombo lawmakers began debating in Parliament an opposition motion of no-confidence against Speaker Mohamed Haniffa Mohamed.