

BRIEFLY

US hails Fidel Ramos: The United States on Monday hailed the election of Gen. Fidel Ramos as the new Philippine President and said it looked forward to working with him, reports Reuter from Washington.

State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler called the election a "Reaffirmation of democracy in the Philippines."

She said it was "A credit to the outgoing President Corason Aquino administration, the Commission on elections, the Philippine military and police and the Philippine people."

"We look forward to working with President-elect Ramos and his administration on a variety of important issues," she said.

Mandela asks UN to help solve crisis:

African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela asked the United Nations on Monday to help solve the South African crisis, a UN official said, reports Reuter from United Nations.

Mandela telephoned UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to ask the Security Council to find "Ways and means to normalise the deteriorating situation in South Africa and try to resume the negotiations which have broken down," said Security Council President Paul Norderdaeme of Belgium.

More than 120 blacks have died since Wednesday, when 39 men, women and children were slaughtered in Boipatong township south of Johannesburg. The African National Congress (ANC) blamed the massacre on the government.

Fahd, Omani Sultan hold talks:

Saudi Arabia's King Fahd held talks Sunday in the western port of Jeddah with Sultan Qaboos of Oman, the Saudi Press Agency reported, says AFP from Jeddah.

The agency did not specify the tenure of the talks, but Omani sources on Saturday said the discussion were to focus on bilateral ties and Arab issues.

Diplomatic sources in the Gulf said the Omani leader would try to mediate in the border dispute between Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

200 leftists join Nepali Congress:

More than 200 Nepali Communist activists have denounced their respective parties and defected to the ruling Nepali Congress, a Home Ministry source said Monday, reports AFP from Kathmandu.

The activists came from a variety of left-wing groupings including the Nepal Communist Party (United Marxist and Leninist) (NCP-UML), and the United People's Front (UPF).

Seventeen of them had recently won local Village Development Council Elections on NCP (UML) and UPF tickets, the source said, adding that they had called on Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala at his residence Monday to inform him of their resignations.

32 killed in Sumatra road mishap:

An express train slammed into a passenger bus in the southern Sumatra province of Lampung, killing at least 32 people and seriously injuring 20 others, a news report said Tuesday, reports AP from Jakarta.

All of those killed and injured in the accident early Monday were aboard the Jakarta-bound bus, the mass circulation daily Kompas said.



CIS-MOLDOVA: Moldovan fighters man an anti-aircraft defence battery Monday, shortly after a helicopter attack by the Russian 14th Army near Bendery in eastern Moldova. Moldovan authorities accuse this army, which is based in the strife-torn Dnestr region, of backing Russian separatists. — AFP/UNB photo

Moldovan troops ignore truce, clash with separatists

KISHINEV, Moldova, June 23: Moldovan troops clashed repeatedly with Russian and Ukrainian separatists early Tuesday, ignoring an overnight cease-fire in the breakaway Trans-Dniester region, reports AP.

"The cease-fire was never respected," said Viorel Cibotatu, a Moldovan Defense Ministry spokesman.

The Trans-Dniester government also said the cease-fire, which was to have begun late Monday night, was broken almost immediately.

Both sides had agreed to the temporary truce in the city of Bendery, a separatist stronghold, after a day of fighting Monday that left at least 32 people dead.

The casualty toll from four days of intense fighting has climbed to 380 dead.

39 nations close to accord on banning chemical arms

GENEVA, June 23: The 39-nation Conference on Disarmament is so close to agreement on banning chemical weapons that on Monday it drafted for the first time a complete compromise accord, conference sources said, reports AP.

The provisions include up to 120 hours of warning before inspectors arrive at a plant or site suspected of being used for making or storing chemical weapons, the sources said.

This would be too little time for any offender to hide all the evidence, said the sources, who briefed reporters on condition that they not be identified.

Chances are good that the draft will be approved by the members of the conference by early August so that it can be approved by the UN General Assembly and signed in Paris

late this year or early next year, the sources said.

A UN organisation to supervise the accord would be set up in The Hague, which beat out Vienna and Geneva in the competition to host the organisation.

Members of a key working group will present the agreement to the conference Monday, and they will discuss it for the remainder of this week before taking a break until July 20.

"We'll all go home and take a deep breath" and hope that the different delegations will realise that the proposal is the best possible solution and will decide to accept it, one official said.

The talks to ban chemical weapons have been underway for 24 years, and conference insiders often have been optimistic over the years that

they were near agreement.

But the conference sources said this time there is a new mood that augurs well.

This is partly as a result of Iraq's use of the chemical weapons during the Iran-Iraq war and threat to use them during the Gulf war. The United States and Russia have also shown renewed interest in reaching agreement.

For accord, to be called a convention, to take effect, it would need to be signed by 65 countries.

Fifty European and North and Latin American countries already have indicated willingness to sign, and other nations have expressed interest, so it is likely the minimum could be enlisted, the sources said.

The members of the conference narrowed their differences on the most sensitive areas in a last-ditch negotia-

tion session last Friday.

The chairman of the working group and members of the key committee then could see where the middle ground lay in each area and worked over the weekend to draft an agreement with the proposed compromises.

A 188-page document was finished early Monday. Previous drafts of a convention always contained sets of optional wording at controversial points, but the new draft has only the proposed compromise.

The sources said the issue of "challenge inspections" was one of the most difficult.

A country will have a minimum of 12 hours warning that inspectors will be arriving at the border or an airport. The convention then spells out the steps that can take up to 108 hours.

Gen Dostum to stay neutral in Afghan power struggle

KABUL, June 23: The leader of a militia that helped end Communist rule in Afghanistan said Monday he'll stay neutral in the struggle for power in the new Islamic government, reports AP.

Gen Abdul Rashid Dostum said his 160,000-strong force would support any leader who could guarantee equal rights for Afghanistan's diverse ethnic minorities.

"Whatever the leaders in Kabul decide we will accept," Dostum said by radio from the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, his stronghold.

"We will support any leader who can guarantee the right of all nationalities and maintain peace and security as well."

Dostum's forces once

backed the Communist government of President Najibullah but joined rebel fighters loyal to Defence Minister Ahmed Shah Masood and helped topple Najibullah's regime in April after 14 years of civil war.

Under an accord drafted then, caretaker President Sibghatullah Mojaddedi is to hand over power Sunday to Burhanuddin Rabbani. The move is part of a transition toward holding national elections.

But Mojaddedi has accused Rabbani of breaking the agreement and has called for tribal elders and religious scholars to decide who should be president.

Syria won't give up an inch of Golan to Israel

DAMASCUS, June 23: Syria on Sunday asserted its full rights over the whole of the Golan Heights, occupied by Israel in 1967 and annexed in 1981, reports AP.

Higher Education Minister Kamal Sharaf said Syria "will not give up a single inch of (its) land and will continue to struggle until its liberation."

His comments, made in a speech carried by the official Sana news agency, came days after Israeli officials from the ruling Likud Bloc said they would not return the Golan to Syria.

However opposition Labour Party leader Yitzhak Rabin, who is running against it in today's parliamentary elections, had said he was not attached "to every single meter" of that territory.

Peace Sharaf said, stemmed from implementation of United Nations resolutions. "It is impossible without (Israel) withdrawal from occupied Arab territories and the Palestinian

people's recovery of their right to self-determination."

Damascus has repeatedly called for implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 242 which requires an Israeli withdrawal from "all or" the occupied territories, depending on whether the English or French versions of the resolution are applied.

Sharaf meanwhile urged the international community to pressure Israel into implementing the UN resolutions.

Clashes leave 103 dead in Chad

N'DJAMENA, June 23: Fighting between the Chad army and a group of rebels last Friday around lake Chad left 103 dead, the Army Chief of Staff Mahamat Ali Abdallah said Monday, reports AP.

He said the army had taken 72 prisoners and that around 10 soldiers had died with 30 injured.

ROK students attack ruling party hqs

SEOUL, June 23: About 60 college students wielding steel pipes attacked the headquarters of President Roh Tae-woo's governing party Monday to protest a government decision to postpone local elections, police said, reports AP.

Later Monday, Roh made a public apology for not holding the elections as stipulated by law. He had said earlier that too many elections in a single year could spur inflation.

In the southwestern city of Kwangju, about 700 students also protested, hurling rocks and firebombs against police who fired tear gas.

At the Democratic Liberal Party headquarters in southern

Seoul, five protesters were arrested and several riot police were injured in fighting, police said.

Television footage showed desks, chairs, files and office furniture smashed and piled to form barricades in an eight-floor office where some of the protesters shut themselves in.

Glass was shattered in an automobile showroom on the building's ground floor.

Later, Roh, in a meeting with senior secretaries, apologized for not holding the elections for mayors and provincial governors by the legal deadline of June 30.

Myanmar students stage anti-junta rally in Delhi

NEW DELHI, June 23: A dozen Myanmar students chanting anti-junta and pro-democracy slogans demonstrated here today against military plans to hold a "national convention," witnesses said, reports AP.

"Down with military rule," chanted the placard-waving protesters, who were stopped by police barricades about two kilometres (one mile) from the Myanmar embassy in the Indian capital's diplomatic enclave.

"Release Aung San Suu Kyi," they shouted, holding up portraits of the detained pro-

democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner.

Five students were escorted by police up to the embassy gates to deliver a petition denouncing the national convention sponsored by Yangon's military government, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

The petition, which embassy staff refused to accept, sparking another round of chanting, said the "political motivation" for the convention was "neither genuine nor sincere."

"We cannot ever accept the

auspices of SLORC for holding a national convention due to its record of oppression, abuses of Human Rights and its disregard of the wish of the people," it said.

It said the military junta was trying to "beguile" the Myanmar people and the international community while trying to consolidate its hold on power.

Police hustled the demonstrators into a waiting jeep and drove them away, witnesses said. The protesters were expected to be held briefly and released later Tuesday.



Myanmar students in Delhi Tuesday demonstrating against military rule in their country. Protesters were shouting pro-democracy slogans and were calling for the release of Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for over three years. — AFP photo

Polls in Japan July 26

TOKYO, June 23: Japan will go to the polls on July 26 in nationwide elections for the upper house of parliament, the government announced today, reports Reuter.

It will be the first major electoral test for Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, who took over from Toshiki Kaifu last November.

His Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) will be looking to do better than in 1989 when, with sex and corruption scandals tainting the cabinet and party leadership, it lost control of the upper house for the first time since 1955.

But the Conservative, pro-business LDP, in unbroken power now for 37 years, retains its stable majority in the more powerful lower house.

Violence mars polls in Papua New Guinea

PORT MORESBY, June 23: Papua New Guinea's national elections have been marred again by violence in the highlands region, with reports of ballot boxes being taken and destroyed, reports AP.

In some areas police and polling officials have been attacked, fights have been reported and candidates have even been arrested for illegally possessing high-powered firearms.

One sitting MP is among the candidates arrested and charged.

In several cases, ballot boxes were removed by police who before the elections boasted that they had mounted the country's biggest-ever security operation.

Up to 2,000 police personnel and 400 troops have been sent to likely trouble spots for the elections.

Off the Record

She's in a hurry for electric chair

DADE CITY: A prostitute who admitted killing seven middle-aged men who picked her up along Florida highways shouted her guilty plea Monday in one of the cases, reports AP.

"I'll never get a fair trial!" Aileen Wuornos said. "I'm pleading guilty in self-defence."

Ms Wuornos, who maintains she wants to go to the electric chair as soon as possible, already has been sentenced to death.

She has been convicted in four killings. She faces charges in another case and has not been charged in a seventh slaying she admitted.

Circuit Judge Lynn Tepper accepted Ms Wuornos' plea and set a sentencing date of July 14. Prosecutors plan to seek another death sentence.

Ms Wuornos, 36, was accused of first-degree murder in the shooting death of Charles E Carskaddon, 40, of Prairie Home, Mo. His body was found in June 1990 in a thicket off Interstate 75.

Ms Wuornos claims she killed the men only after they became abusive.

Shoe-off Anderson's show

LONDON: Anderson, who's becoming known as one of the great coloratura sopranos, sings without her shoes for her big mad scene in "I Puritani" at the Royal Opera House, reports AP.

That's how director Jonathan Eaton wanted it.

White foam representing snow swirled around his prima donna's ankles on what looks like a desolate winter battlefield during the English Civil War between King Charles I and Oliver Cromwell's Puritans in 1642-1646.

"I heard someone saying I was a wonderful American artist because no European singer would do it barefoot. But nobody can force me anymore to do anything I don't want to," Miss Anderson said in her dressing room after a triumphant opening night.

She got lots of shouted bravos and the applause ran on for nearly 10 minutes, a lot in London.

The soprano said she can determine how she's doing from an audience's attentiveness, not from the applause.

"Opening nights are awful — there's so much tension," she said. "I said to my hairdresser, I'd like to start with the third performance."

There was a buzz of expectancy for this "I Puritani" (The Puritans), which isn't often performed.

It was a Royal Opera debut for young Italian conductor Daniele Gatti. And Ms Anderson's partners in the leading quartet are also renowned: Italian tenor Giuseppe Sabbatini, Siberian baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky from Russia and Britain's Robert Lloyd, whom admirers call the best British bass these days.

Rains toll rises to 28 in Gujarat

GANDHINAGAR, June 23: The toll in heavy rains which lashed the western Indian coastal state of Gujarat continuously for three days had risen to 28. Chief Minister Charmanbhai Patel said Monday, reports PTI.

Talking to newsmen, Patel said the highest number of deaths reported were: 15 from Surat, three each from Broach and Panchmahal districts, two each from Surat, three each from Broach and one each from Banaskantha and Mehsana.

Meanwhile, a report from Surat said joint rescue operations continued.

Disarmed Cambodian troops fear Khmer Rouge attack

KOMPONG CHAM, Cambodia, June 23: Private Keo Sophal turned in his AK assault rifle and reported to UN-supervised barracks to comply with a peace accord, but he doesn't feel secure with Khmer Rouge guerrillas still roaming outside, reports AP.

"Everyone wants to come here to lay down their weapons. They don't want to fight," the 23-year-old soldier said. "But all the soldiers are worried because not far from here the Khmer Rouge are gathering and they are afraid they will come here... perhaps you know how the Khmer Rouge kill people."

"I worry about the Khmer Rouge because now I have no weapon in my arms," said

Private Som Saven, 30, another government soldier who reported to barracks.

The UN peacekeeping authority in Cambodia began on June 13 sending troops of the government and the guerrilla groups into supervised cantonment sites. The idea was to create a neutral, secure environment in the country after 13 years of civil war and prepare for democratic elections by the middle of next year.

The government and two guerrilla groups have cooperated with the operation, but remain nervous because the hardline Marxist Khmer Rouge has boycotted it.

So far, only about 7,580 of the country's total 200,000 combatants have entered can-

tonment sites. Many others are reluctant to do so until the Khmer Rouge follows suit, UN military officers say.

The Khmer Rouge, which claims to have 25,000 regulars supported by artillery, mortars, rockets and tanks, is widely feared for having killed hundreds of thousands of people in a rule of terror and famine in the 1970s.

But at least some of the guerrillas don't agree with their commanders.

UN officers say some Khmer Rouge military representatives have taken the risky step of expressing their readiness to enter cantonments, although they added they first needed orders from superiors. A group of about eight un-

armed Khmer Rouge deserters last week fled to a cantonment site for government soldiers in Kompong Cham city, about 70 kilometers (45 miles) north-kilometers (45 miles) north of Phnom Penh, said UN officers and government soldiers interviewed here.

They were tired being forced to fight, said Lt Gamal Haryo Putro of the Indonesian force that supervises and patrols the cantonment site.

The lieutenant said that according to the deserters, a Khmer Rouge general killed a company commander who disobeyed an order to stop trying to lead his men into a cantonment site north of Kompong Cham city. The men in the company dispersed and a small group fled to the Kompong

Cham cantonment.

"We fed them and gave them clothes," Gamal said. "They didn't have anything. They were all 19 or 20, all very young, led by a force lieutenant."

Government soldiers in the cantonment said the deserters were nervous when Western journalists photographed them because they feared Khmer Rouge assassins would hunt them down.

During a visit Sunday to the tree-shaded Kompong Cham cantonment, the atmosphere was relaxed. Gamal and other Indonesian soldiers shared cigarettes with government soldiers.

But the government soldiers live in squalid condi-

UN may send observers to Nagorny-Karabakh

UNITED NATIONS, June 23: The United Nations on Monday announced it was considering sending military observers to the disputed enclave of Nagorny-Karabakh and would open offices in Armenia and Azerbaijan immediately, reports Reuter.

"It is not excluded that in a couple of weeks the Security Council will decide to send observers," said Security Council President Paul Norderdaeme, the Belgian ambassador to the United Nations.

Norderdaeme said the sending of observers would depend on progress made at the conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).