

Pakistan bans JKLF conference

ISLAMABAD, June 29 : Pakistan authorities on Sunday banned a conference called by Kashmiri separatists this week, making unusual common cause with arch-foe India in denouncing the meeting, reports Reuter.

The militant Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has invited political figures from both parts of Kashmir ruled by India and Pakistan to a meeting to discuss the future of the disputed Himalayan region.

Pakistan-ruled Azad (free) Kashmir's Prime Minister Sardar Abdul Qayyum, quoted by the official APP news agency, called the JKLF a terrorist organisation and said he would not allow the conference at the state town of Rawalakot.

"We will not allow them to make Kashmir a land of terrorism," he told a news conference in the state capital, Muzaffarabad.

APP quoted Qayyum as saying that the Rawalakot meeting would damage Pakistan's defence of Kashmir's interests by diverting world attention from a Muslim uprising in the two-thirds of Kashmir under Indian rule.

Pakistan controls the remaining third of the state over which the two countries have fought two of their three wars since their independence from Britain in 1947.

Pakistan issued the ban came a day after India condemned the Rawalakot meeting as illegal and said it would discourage Indians from participating in it.

The JKLF, which has led the armed rebellion against India, says it has called the meeting to discuss a peaceful solution to the dispute over

the territory.

Another reports from Srinagar says: A strike to protest against the alleged shooting of civilians by Indian security troops in the town of Baramulla last week paralysed life in the Kashmir valley on Sunday, police said.

Shops were closed and people stayed home in most towns of the valley in response to a strike call by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), a militant group fighting Indian rule.

In Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state, streets were deserted, except for patrolling paramilitary troops.

Witnesses in Baramulla said at least five people, including four women, were killed when security men fired on street protesters on Thursday.



SARAJEVO: French President Francois Mitterrand (C) arrives at Sarajevo airport Sunday accompanied by French Humanitarian Minister Bernard Kouchner (C) is greeted by Canadian Major Lewis Mackenzie, who commands the UN troops in Sarajevo. — AFP/UNB photo

Queen Elizabeth visits Canada

OTTAWA, June 29 : Britain's Queen Elizabeth arrives here Tuesday in her role as Queen of Canada for a two-day visit to help the nation celebrate its 125th birthday, reports AP.

Despite raised eyebrows over a more than 400,000-dollar price tag for the Canadian government to fly the monarch here abroad a chartered British Airways Concorde jet for Wednesday's ceremonies, she is likely to receive a warm welcome from Canadians.

Recent public opinion polls show that the majority of Canadians favour retaining the British Monarch as their own head of state, and that support is strongest in the eastern half of the country.

Even in the predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec, the leader of the movement for Quebec independence — Parti Quebecois Chief Jacques Parizeau — admitted in a recent interview that he would favour an independent Quebec remaining in the commonwealth of former British colonies, which the Queen also heads.

Serbs handover Sarajevo airport to UN forces

BELGRADE, June 29 : Serbian forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina Sunday night said they had turned control of the Sarajevo airport over to UN peacekeeping forces, Tanjug news agency announced here, reports AP.

The Serbs said the UN forces must guarantee that the airport for, the besieged Bosnia-Herzegovina capital would be used only for bringing in humanitarian aid.

It was rejected by General Lewis Mackenzie, commander of UN forces (UNPROFOR) in the besieged capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The statement said Serb leaders "handed over control on security of Sarajevo (airport) to UNPROFOR with the stipulation it will use the airport solely for humanitarian purposes".

But Mackenzie said that his troops could not yet claim full responsibility for the airport because the Serbs were still there.

"What the Serbs are saying is basically not correct," he said.

"We cannot claim full responsibility for the airport at this point since the Serbs have not been able to leave it after the attack while French President Francois Mitterrand was there," he told Reuters.

Mitterrand who flew in to Sarajevo on a sudden six-hour mission of Sunday, came under fire while waiting at the airport to leave the Bosnian capital, blockaded in three months of fighting.

Serb tanks and heavy machineguns on the runway opened up on targets in the fiercely disputed residential district of Dobrinja which provides access to the runways.

"Furthermore, they (Serbs) had to reinforce their positions after the attack, but we expect to claim control on Monday," he said.

UNPROFOR spokesman Adnan Abdel Razeq said there were 31 UN technicians and experts in the airport terminal building.

"You can't take full control of the airport with only 31 men," he said.

Mackenzie also could not confirm the Serbs' claim they have redeployed their artillery around Sarajevo.

"We will send out our people on Monday to designated locations and see whether the Serbs have redeployed their artillery," he said, adding: "I hope they have, they have certainly been moving it around".

The Serbs' leadership said their artillery in Sarajevo and its vicinity has been placed under a "corresponding regime" implying that they have now complied with UN Security Council demands.

UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali gave an ultimatum to the Serbs on Saturday to stop their offensive on Dobrinja.

He also demanded that Serb artillery, which has shelled the city for almost three months, be redeployed to positions under UNPROFOR control within 48 hours.

The deadline was to discuss further steps to open the airport and fly in emergency relief to the 300,000 besieged Sarajevo citizens.

US President George Bush, arriving from a weekend at Camp David, during which he talked with leaders of Italy, Germany, Portugal, the Netherlands, Russia, Canada and Britain about the situation in Yugoslavia, said the United States "will do its part" to see that humanitarian aid is delivered to Bosnia.

The next step will be a meeting of the UN Security Council, he said.

BRIEFLY

Blast kills 6 Afghan children: Six Afghan refugee children were killed and three others seriously hurt Sunday when an explosive device, likely to be a mine, went off in a refugee camp near northwestern Peshawar, police said June 29, reports AFP from Peshawar.

They said the children found an oval-shaped device in a house vacated by a refugee at Akora Khattak camp, some 60 kilometers (40 miles) east of there, and started throwing stones at it. The device suddenly exploded, causing the casualties.

An estimated 10 million mines litter Afghanistan, claiming dozens of victims every day.

Pakistan house more than three million Afghan refugees who often keep arms and ammunition with them.

NCP wins 77pc of council seats: The ruling Nepali Congress Party (NCP) has won 77 per cent of District Development Council (DDC) seats in elections held in 56 of the country's 75 council districts, an election official in Kathmandu told AFP Sunday.

The elections have left the NCP in control of the executive positions of President and Vice President in 39 districts.

The elections are considered to be extremely important in Nepal because the district councils control 73 per cent of funds allocated by the government to rural developments.

While the NCP won the President's seat in the Kathmandu DDC, the position of Vice President was won by a candidate from the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist opposition party.

Pak road mishap leaves 17 dead: At least 17 people were killed and 20 injured when a minibus and a lorry collided on Sunday at Sakrand in Pakistan's southern province of Sind, police said, reports Reuter from Karachi.

23 killed in Turkey: Kurdish rebel attacks and fighting between Kurds and Turkish government forces in southeastern Anatolia have left 23 dead and about 10 others wounded since Thursday, local sources said Sunday, reports AFP from Ankara.

Local authorities said some of the dead were victims of clashes between the separatist Kurdistan workers party PPK and the Iran-back Hezbollah Muslim fundamentalists.

Ten civilians were machine-gunned by a group of unidentified Kurdish separatists Thursday night in a village near the provincial capital Diyarbakir as they prayed.

Turkey's parliament extended a state of emergency in the region until mid-November, in the 13 mostly-Kurdish provinces of east and southeast Anatolia.

Typhoon hits Japan: Typhoon Bobbie hit Okinawa, southern Japan Monday with winds of up to 144 kph (90 mph), shutting down all civilian flights, authorities said, reports Reuter from Tokyo.

All schools were closed. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

As of 11 a.m. (0200 GMT) Monday, Bobbie's eye was located about 50 km (32 miles) east of Okinawa, and was moving north at a speed of 20 kph (12 mph), the Meteorological Agency said.

All flights through Naha Airport had been cancelled since first light, an airport spokesman said.

Israeli gunners kill four: Guerillas ambushed an Israeli patrol in southern Lebanon on Sunday, drawing retaliatory artillery fire that killed four farmers in a Shiite Muslim village, police said, reports AP from Lebanon.

A police spokesman, who cannot be named under standing regulations, said the Israeli troops clashed at 6:50 pm (1550 GMT) with the unidentified guerillas who infiltrated into Israel's self-styled security zone.

It was not clear whether there were any casualties on either side, but Israeli helicopters were seen hovering over the scene of the ambush on a road near the village of Jarmuq, he said.

Ten minutes after the clash, Israeli gunners opened up against the village of Kfar Rumman, killing the farmers who were tending their fields.

It was the first reported guerilla ambush in the security zone since the Labour Party ousted the right-wing Likud coalition from power in Israel's June 23 elections.

Congress-I denounces Russian newspaper report

NEW DELHI, June 29 : The Congress-I yesterday denounced a Russian newspaper report alleging that the late Rajiv Gandhi had received money from the Soviet Union through commercial deals and described the charge as "preposterous" and as being part of the "grand design" to denigrate leaders of the developing world, reports PTI.

An AICC-1 press release issued here said that in normal circumstances it would not have considered that it merited a denial but Rajiv Gandhi was dead and the Congress party cannot allow his name to be sullied.

The report from Moscow had said that Rajiv Gandhi, former Sri Lankan Premier Srimavo Bandaranaike and leaders of the Communist Party of US had received money from the Soviet Union to support their political parties.

The report in the newspaper 'Izvestia' that Rajiv Gandhi 'expressed deep gratitude' for the help received by his family through commercial deals was so preposterous that, in normal circumstances, we would not have considered that it merited a denial.

The people of this country knew that neither Rajiv Gandhi nor any members of his immediate family controlled any firm or had any interest in commercial transactions, the AICC-1 said.

Ramos takes office today

MANILA, June 29: Fidel Ramos, who helped restore and defend the democracy he once helped destroy, becomes president of the Philippines on Tuesday in the country's first peaceful transfer of power in 26 years, reports AP.

Ramos, a 64-year-old West Point graduate, will take his oath at noon (0400 GMT). He succeeds Corason Aquino, who supported the former Defence Secretary in the seven-year presidential race he won on May 11.

The ceremony will be a personal triumph for Aquino, who completed her term despite seven coup attempts as well as Marxist and Muslim insurgencies. Aquino declined a second term and promised to hand over power to an elected successor.

The Philippines, which calls itself "Asia's first democracy," has not experienced a peaceful change in power since the late President Ferdinand Marcos was first elected in November 1965.

Ramos has said his first priority will be to revive the nation's economy and improve the livelihood of the nearly 65 million Filipinos, half of whom live in poverty.

But he enters office with the smallest mandate in Philippine history. Ramos won 23.5 per cent of the vote in the election and his opponents control Congress and most governorships.

His vice president will be Sen. Joseph Estrada, who ran with defeated presidential aspirant Eduardo Cojuangco. Vice presidents are chosen separately.

Ramos was chief of the national police when Marcos, his second cousin, imposed eight years of martial rule in 1972. Ramos turned against Marcos and led the February 1986 military mutiny that triggered the "people power revolution" that swept Mrs Aquino to power.

As military chief of staff and later defence secretary, Ramos defended Aquino through seven coup attempts.

Ramos has promised to promote trade and exports, especially with other Asian countries, and improve relations with the United States that have soured since this year's decision to close the last US military base in the Philippines.

As a sign of the change in relations, the United States will be represented at the inauguration by Peace Corps Director Elaine Chao. Then Vice President George Bush represented the United States at Marcos' inauguration in 1981.

Honasan urges Ramos to grant amnesty

MANILA, June 29 : Fugitive rebel leader Gregorio Honasan in an interview published today urged incoming Philippine President Fidel Ramos to grant and unconditional amnesty for his mutinous followers, reports Reuter.

"Ramos must project a lot of confidence, take a lot of risks and exhibit a lot of magnanimity," the cashiered army colonel said in an interview published in the Philippine Star newspaper on the eve of Ramos' inauguration as president.

Situation in Russia serious: Gorbachev

MOSCOW, June 29: Former Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev said in an interview broadcast on Sunday that Russia's government had made serious mistakes in its handling of economic reform, reports Reuter.

"I consider the present situation in Russia serious, extremely serious and even dangerous," Gorbachev said on commonwealth television.

No talks without concession: Mandela

DAKAR (Senegal), June 29: ANC President Nelson Mandela said Sunday it is up to the Pretoria government to make concessions if it wants to resume political talks that have broken down amid a new wave of violence in South Africa, reports AP.

Mandela arrived Sunday for a 51-nation Organization of African Unity summit that starts Monday.

The OAU is backing African National Congress and Pan Africanist Congress demands for the UN Security Council to intervene to stem bloodshed in black townships blamed on the Pretoria government.

Mandela denied a statement from South African President FW de Klerk that negotiations would continue in private.

He also appeared cool about a meeting Saturday between UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha to discuss the broken down negotiations.

"Boutros-Ghali is perfectly entitled to go to any place in the world and to seek to resolve problems with all parties interested," Mandela told reporters.

Mandela said the ANC has presented a memorandum to the South African government with specific demands.

"Whether we are going to continue with negotiations or not is going to depend on how de Klerk responds to those demands. If he responds effectively, then negotiations will continue, but if he does not there is no prospect whatsoever for the continuation of negotiations."

In the meeting with Botha, Boutros-Ghali said he had "quite constructive discussions considering" the negotiations between de Klerk's government and black groups.

Boutros-Ghali said he also met with representatives of the ANC and PNC in Nigeria.

Chile holds first municipal elections in 21 years

SANTIAGO, June 29 : Chile held its first municipal elections in 21 years Sunday, and the government saw the vote as a referendum on its goal to strip former dictator Augusto Pinochet of military power, reports AP.

Official returns were delayed because of problems in opening some voting stations, but the two main opposition parties indicated candidates backed by the government coalition gained a solid victory.

Voter turnout appeared to be high despite cold weather.

Fifteen per cent of the country's 1,534 polling stations had not opened by 10:30 am (1430 GMT), or 2 1/2 hours after the balloting was scheduled to start, said Belisario Velasco, deputy interior minister.

He blamed the problem on temperatures that dipped to as low as 32 degrees F (1.7 C) in some parts of the country.

Opposition camp out in front of parliament

Demonstration to continue until Milosevic steps down

BELGRADE, June 29 : Thousands of anti-communist demonstrators camped out in central Belgrade overnight Sunday in a drive to get Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic out of office, reports AP.

Serbian opposition leader Vuk Draskovic earlier Sunday called on tens of thousands of demonstrators here to stay "as long as it takes" to force Milosevic to resign and form a transition government.

This early morning thousands of protesters continued to rally outside the federal parliament and many others were sleeping in sleeping-bags or tents in a park between the parliament building and the presidency.

Organizers called on Belgrade residents to support demonstrators by providing blankets, hot beverages and food.

Draskovic told the demonstrators an interim government should consist of representatives of both the opposition and ruling parties.

Police said there were 100,000 demonstrators at Sunday's rally on parliament square, while organizers put the number of 150,000. The demonstration was organized by the anti-communist opposition group in the Serbian Democratic Movement, which has pledged to stay out on the streets until Milosevic steps down.

Meanwhile Reuter adds: President George Bush again spoke with world leaders about the situation in Yugoslavia on Sunday and said the United States "will do its part" to see that humanitarian aid is delivered to the country.

"The United States will do its part. We always have," Bush said on arrival at the White House from a weekend stay at the presidential retreat in Camp David.

European Community leaders have agreed to support moves by the United Nations if necessary to deliver humanitarian aid to the besieged city of Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Bush said he spoke by telephone on Sunday to the leaders of Italy, Germany, Portugal and the Netherlands. On Saturday, Bush spoke with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and British Prime Minister John Major.

"I think we're pretty much in accord with the EC," Bush said. "The next step will be a meeting of the UN Security Council."

Off the Record

A baboon liver into a human being

PITTSBURGH: Surgeons at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Centre on Sunday attempted to perform the first transplant of a baboon liver into a human being. 35-year-old man dying of the virus hepatitis B, reports AP.

The operation began shortly before 11:30 am (1530 GMT) and was expected to take about 12 hours, said medical center spokeswoman Lisa Rossi.

She declined to identify the recipient, but said he was dying of hepatitis B. The viral condition can destroy a person's liver.

In the patient's case, Rossi said, he had suffered recurrent attacks of hepatitis B, and because that he wasn't deemed a suitable candidate for a human transplant.

'It was beautiful in every way'

WASHINGTON: The father of the bride said the wedding "was just beautiful, beautiful in every way," and admitted Sunday he nearly cried as he walked his daughter down the aisle, reports AP.

President Bush also defended the cloak of secrecy that he and his wife, Barbara, threw over Saturday's ceremony at Camp David, Md., for their only daughter, Dorothy, and her groom, Robert Koch.

"I think every once in a while, even a president's family is entitled to something private," Bush told reporters after he arrived back at the White House from Camp David. "Certainly, when it comes to the marriages of a daughter, a that's the way we look at it."

Koch until recently was a top lieutenant to House Majority Leader Richard Gephardt one of Bush's fiercest opponents on Capitol Hill.

The couple exchanged vows Saturday in Camp David's new chapel before 130 family and friends.

"It was a private, family wedding. It was just beautiful, beautiful in every way," said the president. "It was just wonderful. Couldn't have had it better."

Bush walked the bride down the aisle. His daughter's children by her first marriage to William Leblond— Sam, 7, and Ellie, 5 — served as her attendants for the ceremony performed by a Navy chaplain.



Everything from Mozart to Heavy Metal

LONDON: "Everything from Mozart to heavy metal", resounded across Britain on Sunday, the first National Music Day, Reports AP.

"Hopefully by the end of the day, with the 1,500 events up and down the country, musical people will have discovered something new and different," said Arts Minister David Mellor at a Jazz concert in London.

"It's good for me as a classical music buff to be joining in this jazz session," he said. "It will be everything from Mozart to heavy metal".

National Music Day, the brainchild of Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger, included 2,000 musicians trying to form the world's largest band on south London's Clapham Common.

The musicians, including former Wimbledon tennis champion Pat Cash, played everything from Jazz to rock, martial music, folk music, gospel and even a barbershop quartet. It was recorded for a future charity album.

Jagger said he hoped the National Music Day would become an annual event.

"It needn't necessarily take the same form. Some things are going to be great and some things not so great. We'll learn what people enjoy", Jagger told British Broadcasting Corp. radio.

Later Sunday, Jagger was expected to join other musicians at a west London blues festival.

He came, he saw, and he did a little moonwalk

ZURICH, Germany: He came, he saw, he did a little moonwalk. Then Michael Jackson put a rocket pack on his back and flew off stage after kicking off his worldwide "Dangerous" tour with a concert in Munich, Report AP.

About 70,000 fans packing Olympia Stadium cheered every trademark tune, Jacksonian gesture and lunar two-step during the splashy show.

The 33-year-old entertainer tore through "Bad", "Beat it", "Billie Jean" and "Black or White" accompanied by balloons, giant video screens, light displays and numerous wardrobe changes that ranged from an 18-karat gold bodysuit to a black vampire cape.

At one point, an "angel" flew down to the stage and gave him wings.

Making his exit, Jackson wore a helmet and an ersatz rocket pack on his back and appeared to fly away off stage.

"Michael Jackson has left the stadium", an announcer said in case anyone was in doubt.



Estonians vote in favour of new constitution

MOSCOW, June 29 : Estonians have voted overwhelmingly in favour of a new constitution that will completely change the system of government established during 50 years of Soviet rule, reports AP.

Unofficial results Monday showed 93 per cent of the voters in Sunday's referendum cast yes' ballots. At the same time, they voted against extending voting rights to Russian speakers living in Estonia.

The affirmative vote on the constitution makes Estonia the first former Soviet republic to adopt a constitution since the disintegration of the Soviet Union last year.

Drafted in the months after the attempted Kremlin coup in August, the new constitution will establish a parliamentary system with a strong presidency. Elections for the 101-member parliament, to be called the Riigikogu, are to be held before September 27.

The first president will be directly elected by voters. Thereafter, according to the new constitution, the parliament will choose the president.

Juri Luik, political director of the Estonian Foreign Ministry, said the new constitution finally takes Estonia out of old Soviet system. "Until now, our legal framework was pretty much the same as the old Soviet republics," he said. "Now Estonia has its own constitution which is tailored to its own needs and is a European constitution."