

Havel fails to win re-election in Parliament

PRAGUE, July 3: President Vaclav Havel, the dissident playwright who led Czechoslovakia's revolt against Communism, failed Friday to win re-election in Parliament, reports AP.

Havel was driven from office as expected by Slovak deputies in the federal legislature. Slovakia has been hit hardest by the country's tough economic reforms.

Havel won only 148 votes in the 300-seat legislature, far short of the 60 per cent majority required in the first round. In a later second round, Havel failed to achieve the necessary majority.

There were no other candidates on the ballot and delegates either voted for Havel, handed in blank ballots or abstained. Failure to elect a president means Havel could stay in office until the October 5 end of his term.

Havel lost his seat largely because of opposition from Slovak deputies, whose leader, Vladimir Meciar, was ousted from the Slovak premiership last year by Havel's allies.

Meciar has accused Havel of not respecting Slovakia as a sovereign political entity during his two years as president, and of trying to impose Prague's political will on Slovakia.

Havel became the country's first post-Communist democratically elected president on December 29, 1989. He was re-elected June 5, 1990.

Regional parliaments were entrusted with working out the details by September 30.

Malaysia widens dragnet on illegal immigrants

KUALA LUMPUR, July 3: Malaysia is widening its dragnet on illegal immigrants to include foreign beggars and petty traders, government officials said today, reports AFP.

Megat Junid Megat Ayub, Deputy Home Minister, said the crackdown on foreign workers who missed Tuesday's deadline to register and make legal their stay in Malaysia had been extended to cover all illegal immigrants.

"It's a massive clean up exercise on all illegal immigrants, not just unregistered foreign workers," Megat Junid was quoted by the Bernama news agency as saying.

"We want to clean the streets of beggars and those doing petty trading illegally," Megat said.

Foreign petty traders and beggars have stubbornly remained a part of Kuala Lumpur's city life despite constant attempts to shoo them away.

The crackdown on illegal aliens covers all, including women, children and beggars, immigration officials said.

Megat Junid's remarks came as police entered their third day of Malaysia's largest ever operation to purge unauthorised foreigners.

About 320,000 illegals had registered themselves as of Tuesday, immigration officials said.

The crackdown has raised concern among Malaysian employers, who express fear that their operations would be derailed by an exodus of workers.

Housing developers say that on building sites, unregistered immigrant workers have stayed away by the thousands for fear of being caught.

Megat Junid estimated that at least 100,000 illegal immigrant workers had missed the chance to legalise their stay after being given a seven-month grace period to register for temporary employment.

The government last December ordered employers who had hired illegals to meet an acute labour shortage in the domestic construction, plantation, manufacturing and service sectors to register them with the immigration authorities.

Kuala Lumpur's booming economy has drawn a flood of job seekers from as far away as Botswana and Zambia. Most come from Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar, India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

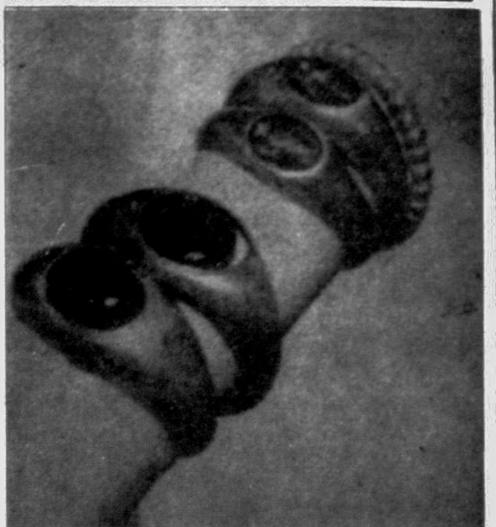
Unregistered illegals are being detained and held in seven temporary detention centres throughout Malaysia pending deportation, officials said.

Officials had yet to collate the total number detained, but reliable sources have estimated the number at more than 300.

Muhyiddin Yassin, Chief Minister of Southern Johore state, which has unwittingly played host to more landings of illegal immigrants than anywhere else in Malaysia, has said that employers of unregistered illegals had only themselves to blame as the seven-month grace was adequate.

Yassin Kamari, Deputy Land and Regional Development Minister, said he believed many illegals were hiding in bushes, rubber and oil palm plantations in fear of the dragnet.

Off the Record



ITALY: Picture showing some of the rings with precious stones found during recent archaeological excavations at Herulolaneum near Naples which was covered by lava from Vesuvius about 2,000 years ago and has a wealth of archaeological finds which have been preserved inside the lava. — AFP/UNB photo

Charles, Diana join Harry at school

LONDON: The Prince and Princess of Wales joined their 7-year-old son Harry on his last day at school Thursday, reports AP.

While the curious wondered about the state of the royal marriage, Charles took Prince Harry to Wetherby School in the morning, then drove back to the family apartment in nearby Kensington Palace where he picked up Diana and returned to the school.

The three attended the end-of-term service at nearby St. Matthew's Church and then lunched at Kensington Palace.

Following allegations in a new book that Diana and Charles are unhappily married, the couple have been watched intensely, their every outing the object of scrutiny and speculation.

AIDS leads her to suicide

SEOUL: A 57-year-old woman hanged herself because she was infected with the AIDS virus after she and her husband slashed their wrists in a previous suicide attempt, police said Thursday, reports AP.

The 61-year-old husband had become infected in a blood transfusion, and the couple tried suicide last year by cutting their wrist arteries with their hands in a basin of water to speed the loss of blood, police said.

They survived, but the wife, identified only by her family name of Lee, was infected by the blood in the water, they added.

The couple attempted joint suicide again last month, with the husband helping the wife hang herself in a hotel in Onyang in central South Korea, officers said.

But they said the husband told them he gave up the idea of killing himself after seeing the death of his wife.

The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs says 202 people in South Korea are known to have become infected with the AIDS virus — six of them through blood transfusion.

Major blasts opponents of Euro-federalism

LONDON, July 3: British Prime Minister John Major strongly criticised those in his party opposed to European federalism Thursday, warning that he did not want the country to be a "little England", reports AP.

The statement came within hours of a speech by Major's predecessor, Margaret (now Baroness) Thatcher, attacking the European Community's Maastricht Treaty on European Union.

Major, speaking at a private meeting of Conservative backbench members of parliament, reiterated his view that Britain should be at the centre of Europe.

"If we had been negotiating from the centre throughout the last 20 years, we might have had more influence on the development of the community than has in fact been the case", the Prime Minister said, in a thinly veiled attack of Thatcher's long-standing antagonism towards the EC.

Major, whose administration took over the rotating EC presidency on Wednesday, warned that unless Britain played a central role in the community, it risked becoming "a little England — impoverished, devoid of influence, sour in isolation, bereft of hope, languishing on the sidelines."

Signalling the difference between his and his predecessor's approach towards the EC, Major told MPs: "In Europe we have a vital role to play. I do not want a Europe led by France and Germany with us trailing away in the rear."

Referring to his goals over the next six months of the British presidency, Major said: "We have to shape Europe."



CROATIA: Children play with shrapnel in a hole made by Serbian artillery near the hotel "Libertas" June 30. Heavy attacks by Serbian forces continue on the old city of Dubrovnik, reportedly leaving four people killed and 12 others wounded. — AFP/UNB photo

Lankan Tigers blow up 8 air force men

COLOMBO, July 3: Tamil guerillas blew up eight air force men in northeastern Sri Lanka today as heavily armed soldiers elsewhere resumed a fresh advance into rebel-held territory, officials said, reports AP.

The airmen were returning to base after an operation against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the northeastern coastal district of Trincomalee when a surface mine exploded, local officials said.

They said eight died instantly while two were seriously wounded. Two more airmen were reported missing after the surprise attack. Air force men have been deployed for ground operations in several areas of the island's northeast.

The attack came as thousands of troops fanned out of newly established bunker positions and moved into territory held by the LTTE around Vettalaikerni in the northern Jaffna peninsula.

"We began our advance this morning after a lull yesterday. We are slowly expanding the area under our control," a military spokesman said, adding that they were still awaiting details of fighting from the battle front.

Security forces began the drive against LTTE positions at the neck of the Jaffna peninsula Sunday in a bid to seal off land routes to the mainland.

Some 33 soldiers and an estimated 310 guerillas have died in fighting punctuated by brief periods of an action which allowed troops to set up bunkers and clear mines in newly captured areas.

Communists stage rally near Ramos' office

MANILA, July 3: About 100 Communist youths staged a brief rally Friday near President Fidel Ramos' office to urge the new government to implement land reform to end the 23-year-old insurgency, reports AP.

Felipe Marcial, chairman of the underground Nationalist Youth, made the proposal in a statement distributed during the rally about 500 metres (yards) from the Malacanang presidential palace, Ramos' office.

National Youth is one of 14 organizations under the umbrella National Democratic Front, which also includes the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

BRIEFLY

Violence claims 7 in India: Seven people died Thursday, four of them when police shot into rampaging crowds, as Hindu-Muslim violence marred an annual Hindu festival in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad, News Reports said, reports AFP from New Delhi.

Three other people, including a policeman, were also stabbed to death in the violence which broke out as a festive Hindu procession wound its way through sensitive Muslim areas of the textile-producing city, the reports said.

Some 70 people were injured in the violence, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, and an indefinite curfew was imposed in the Darapur and Shahpur areas of the city.

The areas are known as a communal tinderbox with a history of Hindu-Muslim tensions.

Bush congratulates Ramos: US President George Bush congratulated Philippine President Fidel Ramos on his election win and vowed to do all he can to help the country's battered economy, a Ramos spokeswoman said Friday, reports Reuter from Manila.

Bush telephoned Ramos on Thursday evening and pledged that "he will do everything that his government can do in order to help the Philippines," government spokeswoman Annabelle Tocsan-Abaya said in a statement.

"President Bush very warmly congratulated President Ramos on his victory in the recent (May 11) polls," she said.

Ties between Manila and Washington have been strained by the Philippine Senate's decision last September to reject a new bases treaty, which would have allowed American forces to use Subic naval station for another 10 years.

US launches Atlas rocket: The US air force launched an unmanned Atlas rocket Thursday carrying a satellite designed to relay secret conversations among US military personnel, says AFP from Florida.

After nearly two weeks of delays, the 15-story-tall rocket blasted off from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station at 5:54 p.m. (2154 gmt) with the 164-million-dollar communications satellite aboard.

Earlier attempts were thwarted by thunderstorms, a bad rocket navigation unit and a power outage at the launch pad.

The 1,134 kilogram (2,500 pound) DSCS-3 satellite is jam-proof and shielded with special materials to withstand nuclear attack. DSCS satellites provided 80 per cent of the military communications in and out of the middle east during the Gulf War.

Rabin given 3-week to form cabinet: President Chaim Herzog on Thursday gave Labour Party leader Yitzhak Rabin three weeks to form Israel's new government after winning general elections, reports AFP from Jerusalem.

Labour Garnered 44 seats in the 120-member parliament, but can count on the support of the left-wing Meretz group, with 12 seats, the Arab Democratic Party, with two and the Communist Hadash, which has three seats.

Rabin has announced he wants to form a broad centre-left coalition by July 13, when parliament resumes.

He is also negotiating to bring at least one of the three religious parties into his coalition which won seats in the June 23 ballot.

Accord to limit troops in Europe likely

WASHINGTON, July 3: Leaders of the United States, Canada and 27 European governments are expected to sign a new agreement next week to limit their ground troops in Europe, reports AP.

The levels may already be too high to suit the end of the Cold War. The US ceiling, for instance, is set at 250,000 and the Pentagon is planning to bring that down to 150,000. Because of Congressional pressure, the actual US level may sink even further.

Russia will be permitted 1,450,000 troops under the accord, Germany, 345,000, and France, 325,000. The ceilings for the others scale all the way down to Iceland and Kazakhstan with no soldiers each. Iceland does not have an army. Greece, with remarkable precision, has its ceiling set at 158,621.

The signing of the declaration at the summit meeting in Helsinki, Finland, of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe is another measure to ease tensions in Europe and remove the spectre of mass invasion.

The agreement does not restrict navies, nor internal security units.

The 29 governments will have 40 months to reduce their troops to the ceilings.

The agreement follows the 1990 Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, which set limits on tanks, armored combat vehicles, artillery, aircraft and helicopters.

There is a slight chance the signing will be delayed for a technical reason. Belarus, a former Soviet republic, has not yet completed ratification of the CFE treaty. The reason has nothing to do with the weapons limitation pact which Belarus accepts, but with parliamentary politics.

Legally, the agreement limiting troops cannot be implemented until CFE is ratified by all 29 countries. Bush administration officials are confident of finding a solution in time for the signing scheduled for July 9.

Jack Mendelsohn, deputy director of the private Arms Control Association, said the

Kurds kill 11 Turkish villagers

ANKARA, July 3: Separatist Kurds killed 11 people in dawn raids on two Turkish villages close to the Iranian border, the Anatolian News Agency said Thursday, reports Reuter.

Turkish troops fought members of the banned Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) following the killings at Asagi Yaniktas and Yukari Yaniktas villages, 10 km (six miles) from the Iranian border, it said.

Reporters in the eastern town of Caldiran, contacted by telephone, said the PKK guerillas mounted the raids from bases in the Tendurek mountains.

Two agreements, "not only remove the risk of general war in Europe, they also help restrain the bloodshed that might come from ethnically provoked conflicts between new states in the future."

The troop levels establish a predictable framework for the future and could be base line for further reductions, he said.

For instance, he said Azerbaijan now has almost 1,300 armoured combat vehicles, and Georgia has 1,000. Under the CFE treaty they each will have no more than 220.

If any of the 29 countries want to have more troops than the agreement permits, the approval of all 29 would be needed.



MONGOLIA: Six and four year old girls practice their contortions during a training session for the Mongolian circus company. The circus, which is popular in China, has been introduced to US audience recently. — AFP/UNB photo

territories by the Soviet Union and its successor, Russia."

But, he added, "Let me be clear... that neither Japan nor Russia can hope to press ahead without solving" the territorial issue.

Bush repeated US support for Japan's position on the return of the four small northern islands off Japan's main island of Hokkaido that Soviet troops seized.

In other areas, Miyazawa — said Japan would not pull out of the International Whaling Commission despite threats by fellow pro-whaling nations

Vindictive woman poisons 788 people

BEIJING: A student caught in a love triangle was behind the biggest poisoning case in communist China that left 788 people ill, an official newspaper today quoted police as saying, reports AP.

A 20-year-old woman, identified only as "L", was arrested on June 25 for planting one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of arsenic in flour at a cafeteria in her college, the liberation daily reported.

Noodles and steamed bread made with the flour made 788 people ill after lunch on June 18 at the finance and tax vocational institute in Zhengzhou, capital of central China's Henan province.

The victims, none of whom died, became unconscious and nauseated and were rushed to hospitals.

The student staged the poisoning to get revenge, the newspaper said, after her classmates shunned her for taking part in a love triangle with an older man and the school decided to expel her for stealing 50 yuan (nine dollars).

"L" broke into the cafeteria through a window in the dark of night and mixed the poison into the flour, the newspaper said in a lengthy article.

US to start destroying tactical N-arms soon

WASHINGTON, July 3: President George Bush on Thursday said the United States has completed its promised withdrawal of all 2,400 tactical nuclear weapons based outside the United States and will begin destroying most of them soon, reports Reuter.

"Today I can tell you that all of the planned withdrawals are complete," Bush said in a White House statement.

"All ground-launched tactical nuclear weapons have been returned to US territory as have all naval tactical nuclear weapons," Bush said.

The announcement was a reminder to the disgruntled American electorate of one of Bush's foreign policy successes.

Although the United States never officially acknowledged the location of the weapons, most of them were based in Europe and South Korea to counter any Soviet-led attacks.

The withdrawal involved 1,000 artillery warheads, 700 lance missile warheads, 200 B-57 depth bombs and 500 tactical nuclear weapons which were removed from ships.

With the end of the cold war and the Soviet Union collapsing, Bush last September announced that the United States would "bring home" its arsenal and challenged then-Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to make similar moves.

The move came one month after the failed coup by Soviet hardliners to overthrow Gorbachev and reflected the American belief that reforms sweeping its former enemy could not be reversed.

Bush said "those weapons designated to be destroyed are being retired and scheduled for destruction."

He said the withdrawal were completed only after the leaders of Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus agreed to honour the commitments made by Gorbachev.

AIDS cases on rise in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, July 3: The government estimates there will be 2,000 AIDS patients in Malaysia by 1995, up from the 52 cases detected so far, Health Minister Lee Kim Sai said in an interview published Friday, reports AP.

The number of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) carriers will likely rise to 32,000 by 1995 compared to the present 3,371, Lee said in an interview in The Star newspaper.

World needs American leadership, says Miyazawa

WASHINGTON, July 3: Japan's Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa ended a controversial summit visit by urging the United States to keep its military presence in Asia and avoid the perils of isolationism, reports AP.

Miyazawa, following two days of talks with President Bush and other senior officials, arrived in London Friday en route to next week's G-7 summit of industrialised democracies in Munich, which begins Monday.

"The world needs American leadership," Miyazawa said Thursday in Washington. "An isolationist America would be everyone's nightmare."

Miyazawa, speaking at the National Press Club, said US forces are a stabilizing factor both in military and political terms.

"It is earnestly desired that the United States will maintain its forward deployment in the region," he said.

Asked about statements by unannounced presidential candidate Ross Perot that Japan and Germany should pay more for their own security, Miyazawa said Japan will spend

about \$4 billion this year for the upkeep of about 50,000 US troops in Japan.

"Japan is willing to carry out as much (of the financial burden) as we can," the prime minister said.

Bush, at a separate news conference, said Japan has been "very supportive" of US troops. He added that "we salute Japan" for the recent decision of its parliament to lift the ban on Japanese military personnel participating in overseas peacekeeping missions.

The exchanges of praise typified a low-key summit contrasting with Bush's trip to Tokyo in January, where trade talks left both sides unsatisfied and Bush was criticized for bringing a contentious group of business executives.

Miyazawa also spoke at length about a territorial dispute with Russia that has stood in the way of Japanese bilateral aid for Russian economic and political reforms.

He said Japan has joined other Western countries in aid programmes for Russia "in spite of the unlawful occupation of Japan's Northern

territories by the Soviet Union and its successor, Russia."

But, he added, "Let me be clear... that neither Japan nor Russia can hope to press ahead without solving" the territorial issue.

Bush repeated US support for Japan's position on the return of the four small northern islands off Japan's main island of Hokkaido that Soviet troops seized.

In other areas, Miyazawa — said Japan would not pull out of the International Whaling Commission despite threats by fellow pro-whaling nations

Norway and Iceland to ignore international bans.

He applauded Bush's decision to extend trade benefits to China for another year. "We must continue to encourage and support China's vigorous efforts for openness and reform in the economic sphere" while showing concern about political reform and human rights, he said.

He said there will be no normalization of Japan's relations with communist North Korea while concerns persist about that country's possible nuclear weapons development.