

30 Lankan soldiers killed, claims LTTE

COLOMBO, July 30: Tamil Tiger guerrillas said today they killed 30 soldiers and lost one of their own men while capturing a large cache of weapons in eastern Sri Lanka, reports AFP.

The separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said they attacked troops on a search and destroy mission in eastern Batticaloa district Wednesday and escaped with 30 automatic weapons and a 60 millimeter mortar gun.

An LTTE statement issued from London said a commando unit of the guerrilla organisation carried out the attack and also destroyed a south African-made armoured personal carrier.

The military admitted losing 18 soldiers and nine policemen during the LTTE attack but said at least 10

Israel raids South Lebanon: Israeli gunner on Wednesday lobbed five mortar shells into the stronghold of a pro-Iranian militia in Southern Lebanon, seriously wounding an eight-year old boy, police reported, AFP says from Sidon.

The shelling targeted the Shi'ite Muslim village of Arab-salim in Hezbollah's stronghold of Iqim Al-Tuffah, north of the Israeli-controlled "security zone" police said.

Max Dupain dead: Australia's most famous photographer Max Dupain has died at the age of 81, New South Wales art gallery Director Edmund Capon said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Sydney.

Dupain's death three days ago was kept secret by friends until his burial on Wednesday, Capon said.

Capon described Dupain as the father of modern photography in Australia and a man of great initiative and drive.

Dupain's photos became icons of the Australian way of life, especially his 1937 beach scene The Sunbaker.

King to undergo drug testing: The black motorist whose videotaped beating by white Los Angeles police sparked international outrage has been ordered to undergo weekly drug and alcohol testing following a drunk driving arrest, officials said on Wednesday, Reuter reports from Los Angeles.

Prosecutors said they were still reviewing the case against Rodney King, who was taken into custody in restaurant parking lot on July 16 on suspicion of drunk driving.

King, 27, was held overnight and released, and no charges have yet been filed.

Police said they stopped him because he was driving erratically, but King's lawyer contended it was part of a campaign of harassment against his client.

Turkey-Albania defence pact: Turkey and Albania on Wednesday signed a defence cooperation agreement in Ankara, Wednesday, at the end of Albanian Defence Minister Safet Zhulali's three-day contacts, with Turkish leaders, reports AFP from Ankara.

Turkish Defence Minister Nevzat Ayaz said during the signing ceremony that the accord provided for cooperation in the fields of training science and technology and would be followed by logistics and defence industry.

"We have already started to send some assistance to Albania without waiting for the agreement. There are some new demands from Albania which we still consider," Ayaz said.

Sources close to the talks told AFP, Turkey has been sending military uniforms and similar clothware to Albania since last year.

Turkish ex-navy chief shot dead: Unidentified attackers shot dead a former Commander of the Turkish navy at his Istanbul home on Wednesday, the semi-official Anatolian News Agency said, reports Reuter from Istanbul.

Vice-Admiral Kemal Kayacan, 77, was killed by a gunman and a man to whom he opened the door of his apartment in the residential Gotepepe district on the Aegean side of the city, the agency said.

Gurjant Singh killed: Top Sikh militant Gurjant Singh Budhsinghwa was killed during a shootout with security forces in the Punjab city of Ludhiana, an Indian police said Thursday, reports Reuter from Ludhiana.

Acting on a tip-off, police surrounded a house where Budhsinghwa was holding a meeting late on Wednesday, they said. Militants inside opened fire and a shootout began.

When the firing stopped, police found a body inside the house they identified as Budhsinghwa, wanted in connection with hundreds of killings during the decade-old Sikh militant campaign for an independent homeland.

Capitalism grips China

BEIJING, July 30: Mini-skirts are the rage in Chinese cities this summer, so are horse racing, stock markets, bonds and real estate, reports Reuter.

It's sign of fast-moving times, but is it socialism? Like never before, ordinary Chinese see confused about how to interpret the changes going on around them. Hardly a day passes without state-run newspapers trying to reassure them the country has not sold out to capitalism.

Points for reflection: How to judge whether a thing is 'socialist' or 'capitalist', said a headline in the People's Liberation Army daily, above a story that explained why China was still marching down the "socialist road."

Said one western diplomat: "It's all smoke and mirrors. One day Chinese leaders will wake up and admit to everybody they've turned China capitalist."

After a decade of economic reform, Chinese urban families were getting used to change. They had dined out at a western-style hotel, watched their first Hollywood movie, bought their first Japanese television set, and perhaps packed off a son or daughter to college in the United States.

Then Deng Xiaoping picked up the pace.

During a visit to booming areas of the south in January, China's patriarch endorsed the region's most daring experiments with capitalism, and called on the rest of the country to copy them and go one step further.

Communist party theorists have never been busier.

Theoretically anti-gambling, socialist leaders proudly opened a futures market in Shanghai, then advertised a horse race with a 4,000-dollar sweepstake in the shadow of the Great Wall near Beijing.

Kuwait will never be safe as long as Saddam lives

KUWAIT CITY, July 30: Near the second anniversary of the Iraqi invasion, life in Kuwait is a tale of two cities, reports AP.

One boasts quietly humming oil wells, fresh paint, fast cars and Kuwaitis flanked by servants jetting off for London, the French Riviera or Disney World. The second still feels Saddam Hussein's shadow and reels from drug abuse and crimes nearly unknown before the Aug. 2, 1990, invasion. It is deeply frustrated that postwar enthusiasm for transforming Kuwait was instead channeled into a shopping orgy.

"It's easy to fix the material damage, but attitudes take much longer," said businessman Faisal al-Muttawa.

Many Kuwaitis believe a return to normal will only begin in October with the election of parliament, which was suspended by Emir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah in 1986 for its increasingly harsh criticism of government competence.

The main fear is that Kuwait will never be safe as long as Saddam lives.

Baghdad has refused to recognize a new border drawn by the United Nations, and Iraqi television has been running a documentary to underscore its claim to Kuwait.

About 800 prewar residents, half of them Kuwaiti citizens, remain imprisoned in Iraq.

Iraq "is an outlaw state, and I don't rule out

Indo-US alignment a threat to Pakistan: Gen Beg Pak President, PM will no longer attend diplomatic functions

ISLAMABAD, July 30: The Pakistani government, in a major policy reversal, yesterday announced that the president, prime minister and armed forces chiefs would no longer be allowed to attend diplomatic functions, reports AFP.

A Foreign Office spokesman briefing reporters here said the army, navy and air force chiefs can send their representatives to diplomatic parties.

Press reports here said the move was to prevent senior government functionaries from making off-the-cuff remarks which have in the past caused embarrassment to the Foreign Office when published in national newspapers.

The government has re-

viewed its protocol procedure under which only senior officials would represent Pakistan at such functions, the spokesman said, adding that the change in policy was in line with practices in many other countries.

The spokesman gave no reason for the policy change, but said that "it's rare in the world" that the services chiefs, or heads of government attend diplomatic functions.

Reuter adds: A former Pakistani Army Chief said on Wednesday the country faced a threat from what he called a strategic alignment between the United States and India.

The most important development affecting Pakistan's security is the new strategic alignment between the USA and India," retired General Mirza Aslam Beg, whose anti-US view emerged during the Gulf War, told a seminar in Islamabad.

Beg, who retired last year as Army Chief of Staff, said the US had chosen India as its new "regional surrogate" to stem the tide of so-called Islamic fundamentalism in the region.

Beg's Gulf War views caused embarrassment for Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who sent troops to join the US-led anti-Iraq coalition forces, as the US was Pakistan's traditional ally.

Beg said the United States had warned Pakistan that it would be declared a terrorist state if it continued backing

Honecker thrown in jail

BERLIN, July 30: Sixteen months after he fled to the Soviet Union to avoid trial for multiple homicide, former East German Stalinist supremo Erich Honecker was flown back to Berlin Wednesday and immediately thrown in jail, reports AFP.

It marked a new chapter of humiliation for the 79-year-old architect of the Berlin Wall and one of eastern Europe's most notorious Stalinist leaders. But many details surrounding his departure from Moscow, his last refuge, remained unclear, although officials insisted he had returned voluntarily.

Honecker was whisked to Berlin aboard a Russian Aeroflot jet after he was taken from his bolthole at the

Narayanan Cong(I) candidate for Vice President

NEW DELHI, July 30: K R Narayanan, a former diplomat turned politician, will be the candidate of India's ruling Congress party candidate in next month's vice-presidential elections, a party spokesman said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Narayanan, 72, a graduate of the London School of Economics, served as India's ambassador to the United States, China, Thailand and Turkey before switching to politics in 1984.

He was picked by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to serve on his council of ministers in 1985.

He was in charge of science and technology, an important ministry under Gandhi who believed that India's problems could be solved through technology.

Narayanan's humble background is expected to make him acceptable as vice presidential nominee to many opposition members, cutting across party loyalty.

Narayanan, born in Ozhavoor village in the southern state of Kerala, comes from a humble background and is from India's oppressed scheduled caste, formerly known as untouchables.

A distinguished educationist, he taught at the University of Travancore and later became vice chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi.

Capitalism grips China

Supposedly against speculation, they encouraged stock markets. While preaching "socialist ownership," they have sold off shares in state-owned factories.

Party thinkers call the changes "socialism with Chinese characteristics" a handy catchphrase to explain just about anything. It was coined by Deng himself, and is hailed as his great contribution to Marxist thought.

One by one, the pillars of socialism are crumbling. Nobody seems sure what to call the pieces that remain.

Deng's blueprint for change calls for China to move from a centrally planned to a market economy.

"The old system didn't work, but at least you understood it. Sometimes I wish they'd stop, and we could all get on with our lives."

Many Chinese feel the same way.

Talks on Falklands uncertain

UNITED NATIONS, July 30: The UN special committee on decolonisation adopted a resolution on Wednesday expressing regret that implementation of General Assembly calls for negotiations between Argentina and Britain over the future of the Falkland Islands had not yet started, reports Reuter.

The vote was 20 in favour to none against, the three abstentions (Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, and Sierra Leone).

The resolution sponsored by Chile and Venezuela, reiterated that the way to end the "special and particular colonial situation in the question of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) is the peaceful and negotiated settlement of the dispute over sovereignty" between the two governments.

Britain and Argentina re-established diplomatic relations in 1990, nearly eight years after a British task force recaptured the Falklands from invading Argentine troops.



KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait soldiers, operating Patriot missiles freshly deployed in Kuwait, pose for the press on Wednesday. These US missiles formerly stationed in Germany, arrived earlier this week in participation of joint US-Kuwait military exercises starting August 3. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

"Albatross around president's neck"

LAKELAND, Fla.: The former Florida Republican chairman took out a full-page ad in Thursday's Washington Post pleading with vice president Dan Quayle to step aside as President Bush's running mate, reports AP.

"Dan Quayle is an albatross around the president's neck," Tommy Thomas said Wednesday.

"I'm convinced that Quayle on the ticket could cause President Bush to lose the election. And that's bad for the country and the whole free world because we'd be stuck with Bill Clinton for the next four years."

The ad comes a day after syndicated conservative columnist George Will wrote that Bush himself should give up his re-election campaign.

"We commend you for your years of loyalty to President Bush, the conservative cause, and the Republican Party," the ad says in a letter to Quayle. "Because of that loyalty, you—more than anyone else—know that Americans are demanding greater strength in their political leadership. And you know that you lack that strength."

"Please step aside with grace," the ad said.

Both Bush and Quayle have said the Vice president's spot on the Republican ticket is "certain."

Thomas, now a car dealer, spent 45,000 dollar of his own money for the ad that includes a coupon for contributions to go toward placing the ad in other large papers.



Drug for premature labour is dangerous

BOSTON: Tiotidine, a drug used by thousands of women each year to stop premature labour, is close to worthless and can have deadly side effects, doctors said Thursday, reports AP.

A study in the New England Journal of Medicine found the drug delays delivery for a day or two. But babies are just as likely to be born prematurely, and the medicine "had no significant beneficial effect" on infant mortality, birth weight or prolonging pregnancy to term.

In an accompanying editorial, Drs. Kenneth J. Leveno and F. Gary Cunningham of the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School said 3,000 to 9,000 US women each year will get pulmonary edema or fluid buildup in the lungs, from the treatment, and "undoubtedly, some of them will die."

Ritodrine has been used since 1980 to stop premature labour. It is made by the Dutch firm Philips-Duphar and sold in the United States by Astra Pharmaceuticals.

Controversy about nose

LONDON: Rock superstar Michael Jackson flew into Britain for a sell-out concert tour to be greeted by a libel suit, tejs, toys and controversy about his nose, reports Reuter.

Jackson, in his familiar dark-glasses and black and red regimental-style tunic, stepped from his aircraft with two figures dressed as Disney characters Mickey and Minnie mouse.

He was whisked to a sick children's hospital where he was mobbed by fans, then visited hamleys toy shop with his cousin Brett and young German aristocrat Prince Albert Von Thurn Und taxis.

"I love you all," said the pop phenomenon blowing kisses to his fans and surrounded by bodyguards.

The excitement surrounding the visit has been increased by a libel suit from Jackson against one of Britain's top tabloid newspapers, the Daily Mirror, for reports that described him as "disfigured."

Jackson's lawyer, Bertram Fields, said on Tuesday the singer was willing to stand up in court to prove he was not disfigured by plastic surgery.

The mirror responded with its own libel suit, alleging it was defamatory to accuse it of printing untrue allegations or doctored photographs of the singer.

Jackson's fans, a few of them lookalikes, took revenge on a mirror photographer at the centre of the row, throwing earth at him and squirting him with liquid from washing-up bottles.



Wife dearer than Oscar

NEW YORK: Harold Russell, the handicapped former Army instructor who won an Academy Award as a handless sailor in "The Best Years of Our Lives," loves his Oscar, but he loves his wife more, reports AP.

So he's selling the golden statuette to the highest bidder over the protests of those who awarded it.

"My wife has to have an eye operation and we had a problem with the house and I need some money," the 78-year-old Russell said in a telephone interview Wednesday from his home in Hyannisport, Mass.

The Oscar that Russell won in 1946 as best supporting actor will be sold August 6 in New York by autograph specialist Herman Darvick, who estimated it will bring \$15,000 to \$20,000 to \$40,000.

Actor Karl Malden, President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, has pleaded with Russell to reconsider. In a letter, Malden said that the academy knew of no other instance in which an Oscar was sold by its recipient, and that only rarely have descendants or heirs sold them.

"These Oscars should not become objects of mere commerce," he said.

"I don't know why anybody would be critical," said Russell, who was paid \$10,000 for his role in the movie and received no residuals. "My wife's health is much more important than sentimental reasons."

What she did was very unprofessional

WARWICK, R.I.: Singer Patti LaBelle ended a concert abruptly after complaining on stage about backstage food, according to a theater manager who said Wednesday he never book the Grammy award-winning singer again, reports AP.

"What she did was very unprofessional," said Larry Bonoff, business manager at the Warwick Musical Theater.

He said LaBelle left the stage abruptly about 90 minutes into Tuesday's show after complaining about the food served her and her crew.

About 1,600 people paid as much as \$15 to hear LaBelle, one of two Grammy winners in this year's rhythm and blues performance category. They won't receive refunds because LaBelle fulfilled her contract obligation to perform for at least 70 minutes, Bonoff said.

LaBelle couldn't be reached for comment Wednesday. Her spokesman, Edward Callaghan, said she was travelling to Philadelphia.

Her manager, Armstead Edwards, said LaBelle's crew became upset when they learned they would have half their usual setup time because of another show at the theater.