

Czech parliament yet to elect president

PRAGUE, July 31: The Czechoslovak federal parliament's third attempt at choosing a new president failed Thursday amid criticism that the ongoing electoral process was a "farce," reports AFP.



ADRIATIC SEA: The frigate "Avenger-F 185" of the British Royal Navy is seen from the deck of Croatian battleship "Sibenik" July 29, prior to a meeting of the representatives of the Croatian army, UNPROFOR, EC and Serbian army, which took place aboard the Avenger.

Security Council approves UNIFIL renewal

UNITED NATIONS, July 31: The Security Council unanimously approved on Thursday a six-month renewal of the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) until January 31, 1993, reports Reuter.

Off the Record

'New York is very far'

ATHENS: Former Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev called for the creation of a European institution similar to the UN Security Council in an interview broadcast here Thursday by a private television station, reports AFP.



Arab attacks may escalate, fears Rabin

JERUSALEM, July 31: Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, praising the killing of a Palestinian who stabbed two Israeli policemen, one fatally, said the feared Arab attacks might escalate as Middle East peace talks gathered momentum, reports Reuter.

\$25m US aid to destroy Russian N-arms

WASHINGTON, July 31: The United States and Russia on Thursday signed an agreement under which Washington will provide up to 25 million dollars to Moscow to help destroy Russian chemical weapons, reports Reuter.

Monkey AIDS

LONDON: Two laboratory researchers were infected with monkey form of the AIDS virus but did not develop symptoms of an immune disorder the US National Institutes of Health said Thursday, reports AP.

BRIEFLY

Cigarettes banned for youths:

Singapore is to pass a law banning the sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products to those aged under 18.

He also said Singapore was studying a new Canadian law banning young people from smoking in public places.

It is already an offence to smoke in air-conditioned restaurants, department stores, snooker parlours, bowling alleys, cinemas and theatres, public lifts, taxis and buses, hospitals and fast-food restaurants.

Quake shakes Tibet:

An earthquake measuring 6.5 on the open-ended Richter scale hit China's western region of Tibet on Thursday afternoon, the New China news agency said on Friday, Reuter reports from Beijing.

While an earthquake of that magnitude can cause widespread damage, the agency said on reports of casualties or damage had been received.

The quake struck northwest of Lhasa, the region's capital. Lhasa residents felt the sharp tremor, the agency said.

Thai road mishap claims 16:

A bus and a long-haul truck collided Thursday north of Bangkok, killing 16, people and injuring 39, police and hospital officials said, reports AFP from Bangkok.

The crash occurred in the afternoon on a highway near Ayutthaya, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of the capital, highway police said.

An official at Wang Noi hospital in Ayutthaya district told AFP the hospital had received 16 dead and 39 injured in the crash. All were Thai nationals.

The bus was en route to Bangkok from Buri Ram in Thailand's northeast.

2 killed in Israeli explosion:

A blast at an underground explosives depot killed two people, injured 40 others and shattered windows for miles (kilometer) near this town in the crowded central coast of Israel, reports AP from Israel.

The early morning blast in the factory's underground explosives depot startled many sleepy Israelis with memories of the Gulf War when Iraq aimed 39 missiles at the Jewish state. It also brought demands to move the plant to a less populous area.

Homes shook and windows shattered dozens of miles (kilometers) away from the factory, in Harziya's Nof Yam neighborhood about nine miles (15 kilometers) north of Tel Aviv and across from the communal farm settlement of Rishpon.

Alex Jupiter, a neighborhood resident, said when he heard the explosion he started to yell: "A missile strike, (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein launched missiles."

Blast at mosque in Serbia:

A violent explosion overnight Wednesday destroyed the central Mosque in the small northern town of Kijuc, in a Serb-controlled region of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Tanjug news agency reported, says AFP from Belgrade.

The explosion also caused major damage to buildings close to the Mosque, Tanjug said without giving casualty details.

Kijuc is 200 kilometres (120 miles) northwest of Sarajevo, the Bosnian capital which has been under siege by Serb forces for almost four months.

In the neighbouring republic of Montenegro, several Muslim Slav shops have been blown up since Monday in Pljevlja, Tanjug reported, quoting a statement by the Democratic Action Party, which groups together the Muslim Slavs of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia.

Manjit's detention extended:

An Indian judge held court in jail to extend the detention of Manjit Singh, a suspect in the 1985 bombing of an Indian airliner in which 329 people were killed, reports AP from Bombay.

Police said Friday that Singh's remain in custody was extended until August 14. The session by a Bombay magistrate was held Thursday under tight security at the jail where Singh was being held.

Senior police officers, refusing to disclose where Singh was being detained, said he was being questioned by several national and local law enforcement agencies. Charges have not yet been filed.

Singh, 30, was arrested outside a Bombay railway station July 16. He was wanted by US British, Canadian and Indian authorities.

Serbia's parliament okays law to curb press freedom

BELGRADE, July 31: Serbian parliament, which is dominated by former communists, endorsed controversial legislation late on Thursday enabling the State to take over the republic's leading newspaper and curb press freedom, reports Reuter.

Rabbani visits Iran Aug 8

NECOSIA, July 31: Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani will visit Iran on August 8 on his first foreign visit since taking office last month, the Tehran Times said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Bush admn defends arms sale to Pakistan

WASHINGTON, July 31: The Bush administration on Thursday defended its policy of allowing commercial sales of military equipment to Pakistan as US Senate critics charged that the 1985 law barring commercial and government sales to the country was being broken, reports Reuter.

Pak opposition demands interim govt

Islamabad, July 31: Pakistan's opposition alliance held rallies and marches across much of the country on Thursday to demand fresh elections, opposition sources and witnesses said, reports Reuter.

Encourage breastfeeding

MANILA: President Fidel Ramos yesterday ordered all hospitals in the Philippines to enforce a UN sponsored programme to encourage breastfeeding and banned them from giving formula to newborn babies, reports Reuter.

Guide to stop abuse of women in military

WASHINGTON: Three female members of the House Armed Services Committee are drawing up a list of standards for the military they hope will begin to change the attitudes that led to last year's Tailhook sexual harassment episode, reports AP.



LONDON: US pop star Michael Jackson kicked off his first Unites Kingdom date at London's Wembley Stadium on Thursday in front of some 80,000 fans. — AFP/UNB photo

Ravi Shankar gets Magsaysay award

MANILA, July 31: Famed Indian sitar player Pandit Ravi Shankar has won the Ramon Magsaysay Award for journalism, literature and communication arts, the award foundation said today, reports Reuter.

Vaccine treatment extends lifespan of skin cancer patients

LOS ANGELES, July 31: An experimental treatment that works like a vaccine has dramatically lengthened the lives of people suffering advanced malignant melanoma, the most lethal form of skin cancer, a study found, reports AP.

1 Lakh Russian soldiers live without homes

MOSCOW, July 31: More than 100,000 Russian soldiers are without homes, a figure which could double as others return from former Soviet republics, according to the Russian defence Ministry quoted Thursday by the news agency Itar-Tass, reports AFP.