

BRIEFLY

6 Chinese engineers kidnapped: Gunmen kidnapped six Chinese engineers and their Pakistani bodyguard in the rugged and mostly lawless southwestern Baluchistan province, news reports said Tuesday. AP reports from Quetta.

The engineers, who have not been identified, were kidnapped late Monday about 65 miles (98 kilometers) south of the provincial capital Quetta, the English-language Muslim newspaper said.

The Chinese Embassy could not be reached for comment. But newspaper reports say no one has claimed responsibility for the kidnappings and no ransom demands have been made.

The missing Chinese were involved in a mineral exploration project jointly financed by the Pakistan and Chinese governments.

American woman held for smuggling: Customs officials Tuesday arrested an American woman who they said was trying to smuggle 1.25 kilos (2.75 pounds) of cocaine onto a flight to the United States, says AP from Manila.

Customs examiner Frank Reyes said he found the contraband early Tuesday while doing a routine examination of one of the baggage of the American woman, identified as Deborah Woolcock, 32. Woolcock's hometown was not immediately available.

Reyes said the drugs, worth 4.3 million pesos (dhs 172,000) were hidden inside a plastic container taped at the bottom of a travelling bag.

Woolcock and her three-year-old daughter were about to board a United Airlines plane bound for Seoul and San Francisco, Reyes said.

Cambodia explosion claims 14: A land-mine explosion killed 14 people in northwestern Cambodia, according to a Thai police report Tuesday from the Thai-Cambodian border, says AFP from Bangkok.

The toll was thought to be the highest from a mine explosion in Cambodia since the Phnom Penh government and three guerilla factions signed a peace settlement a year ago in Paris.

During the 13-year-civil war hundreds of thousands of mines were strewn all over Cambodia.

8 hurt in Moscow blast: At least eight people, including a small girl, were injured by a bomb that exploded in a popular square near the McDonald's Restaurant in central Moscow, news reports said Tuesday, reports AP from Moscow.

Most of the victims were treated at a local hospital and released, the ITAR-Tass news agency said. An unknown number were hospitalized. Among the injured was a 5-year-old girl, it said.

Two suspects were detained, ITAR-Tass reported. The blast occurred about 7 pm on Pushin Square, directly in front of the Western restaurant that has become a tourist attraction.

Honecker to settle in Chile if freed: Former East German leader Erich Honecker will go to Chile to live with his daughter if he is ordered freed at a trial of manslaughter due to start in Berlin next month, his lawyer Friedrich Wolff said Monday, reports AFP from Berlin.

Honecker, aged 80 and suffering from liver cancer, would have no other choice as he has no adequate accommodation in Germany, Wolff said. Wolff last week said a medical report gave Honecker only six to 18 months to live.

US submarine launches missile: A submarine successfully launched a trident II missile in the ninth sub-sea test of the weapons system, the air force said Monday, reports AFP from Cape Canaveral.

Officials said the test took place off Florida's East but declined to provide an exact location. The submerged USS Maryland fired the missile in a demonstration of the crew's ability to conduct such a launch. Thirty-seven trident II missiles have been launched from ground and sea since 1987.



East Lansing: Democratic candidate Bill Clinton (C) is hugged by his wife Hillary (L) daughter Chelsea after the presidential debate on Monday. Two weeks remain in the presidential campaign with Clinton leading in the polls. —AFP/UNB photo

Hundreds of troops despatched to Kashmir frontier

India ready to foil cross border march

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: Indian security forces will foil a planned mass cross border march Saturday into the Indian state of Kashmir from neighbouring Pakistan, newspapers here reported today, says AFP.

The Indian army and border guards have been placed on maximum alert along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) dividing Indian and Pakistani-controlled Kashmir, the Hindustan Times said in a report from Srinagar.

The daily quoted official sources as saying Indian authorities had identified four or six sensitive border points where the marchers, whose number is expected to run into thousands, may create tension.

"The (Indian) government is letting it (know) that if things proceed as Pakistan has planned, then the possibility of a confrontation on the (Kashmir) border increases," The Pioneer added.

An alliance of four Kashmiri political parties based in Pakistan, has called for the march to express solidarity with a bloody Muslim separatist campaign in Indian Kashmir. The demonstration will coincide with United Nations day.

Pakistan press reports have said Islamabad will not allow the Kashmiris to breach the LAC, but the Indian newspaper alleged that the Pakistan government was secretly backing the show of strength.

Indian officials here said Monday that New Delhi had despatched hundreds of troops to the Kashmir frontier in a bid to reinforce security, and newspapers said security forces had intensified their campaign within the Kashmir valley.

Thousands have died in the past two years in the Muslim campaign for independence in the southern two-thirds of Kashmir governed by India.

Islamabad controls the northern third from where the marchers will take off. Two previous attempted crossings were halted by Pakistani security forces, who gunned down at least 16 Kashmiris in the first attempt in February.

Those attempts were organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), one of the dominant militant groups which has backed the Saturday march and asked its supporters to join.

The Times said Indian security forces battling the rebels in Kashmir had also been asked to ensure that the marchers were not joined by guerrillas from the troubled Indian state.

India and Pakistan dispute Kashmir's ownership, and have fought two of their three wars over the picturesque province.

Reuter from Islamabad says, an opposition alliance in Pakistan-ruled Kashmir refused to talk with authorities in Pakistan on plans to cross an India-defended ceasefire line.

The Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Alliance (JKDA) has declined Islamabad's offer of talks and will go ahead with its plan to cross into the Indian-ruled part of Kashmir today, an alliance spokesman said.

The JKDA plans to cross the UN monitored line from three points to demonstrate support for a Muslim uprising in the two-thirds of Kashmir under Indian rule.

But Pakistan, which controls the remaining one-third of the disputed Himalayan region, opposes the plan, saying it could provoke another conflict with India.

JKDA spokesman Sultan Mahmud Chaudhury told reporters the alliance had rejected the offer for talks because it came too late as its plans were announced six months ago.

"We do not want to put the government of Pakistan in an embarrassing position and our programme is against the oppressive Indian policies," Chaudhury said.

The congress to be held in New Delhi has been organised "to maximize and coordinate efforts to stop the spread of the virus and plan for the care of those already infected", he said.

Some 16 health ministers of different countries in the region and director Michael Merson of the global programme on AIDS under the World Health Organisation will participate in the congress, according to Dwyer.

The AIDS virus has already infected at least 12 million people in the world and is spreading faster in Asia than anywhere else, Dwyer said.

It is estimated that there are between one to 1.5 million people in the region infected with AIDS, while another 2,000 new infections occur every 24 hours.

The congress is sponsored by the government of India, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme AIDS Society of Asia and the Pacific, said Dwyer, who is currently a Professor of the Prince of Wales Hospital in Sydney.

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Member of Fatah faction shot dead

TRIPOLI, Lebanon, Oct 20: A gunman using a silencer shot dead a member of PLO Leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction in a vegetable market here, police said today, reports AFP.

The killing of Hussein Udaimi in broad daylight on Monday was the latest in a feud between Fatah and Abu Nidal's extremist Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) which has left at least 21 dead in the last three months, Palestinian sources said.

Udaimi was a senior Fatah official in northern Lebanon in the 1980s before being arrested by the Syrian army in 1985. He was jailed in Syria and released in 1990, the sources said.

On Sunday, two FRC members died instantly when attackers riddled their car with machine-gun fire on the sea front of the southern port of Sidon.

A Fatah member who defected from the FRC was shot dead outside his home near Tyre on Saturday.

The feud between the two groups has deepened because of bitter disagreement over the Middle East peace talks. Fatah, the main group of the Palestine Liberation Organisation, approves of the talks, while the FRC is bitterly opposed to them.

40 countries to discuss ways to combat AIDS in New Delhi

CANBERRA, Oct 20: Over one thousand delegates from more than 40 countries will gather in New Delhi early next month to discuss ways of combating AIDS in Asia and Pacific.

The second international congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, scheduled from November 8 to 12, will deal with the rapid spreading of AIDS in the region, John Dwyer, president of the AIDS society of Asia and Pacific, told Xinhua today.

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Off the Record

It was a beautiful shock

REDWOOD CITY: Sister Josephine Contris took a vow of poverty 54 years ago, but that wasn't why she turned down 40,000 dollar, reports AP.

She was after higher stakes — and won. A cool 1 million dollar California lottery jackpot that she called "a first-class miracle".

"It was a shock, but a beautiful shock," she said Monday. Sister Josephine, cheered on by other nuns from the Mount Alverno Convent in Redwood City, a San Francisco suburb, won the big prize Saturday night.

She hit the jackpot after deciding to take a chance in the Big Spin game rather than accepting the lesser, though certain amount.

"And I'm ending up a millionaire — I mean the community is," she said. "It's not my money, it's the community's".

Sister Josephine's winnings will go to her order, the Sisters of St. Francis. She is asking that the money go to help support retired Franciscan nuns and sisters working for the poor.

"We weren't getting much of a salary years ago — nothing to put aside for retirement. The sisters need to be taken care of now they're in advanced years," said Sister Josephine, who at 71 hopes to retire in a few years.

Among the nuns who could benefit are those who live at the order's Marian Residence in San Maria. Sister Monica, a nun at Mount Alverno, said: "It's an answer to a prayer".

"It couldn't have come at a better time," she said. Sister Josephine, originally from Aberdeen, Wash, has been a nun for 54 years. Most of that time she was a grammar school teacher and principal in Montana, Washington, Oregon and California. In 1979 she became the Sister of St. Francis' provincial treasurer, handling the order's finances for the West Coast.

Parents know about daughter's abortion

NEW YORK: Forty-five per cent of girls who have abortions in states without parental-notification laws tell a parent, a survey published Monday found, reports AP.

Minors who have abortions are most often white, live only with their mothers and attend church services at least occasionally, said The Alan Guttmacher Institute, a nonprofit research centre specializing in reproductive issues.

Its survey indicated that the younger girl, the more likely a parent knew about her abortion. At least one parent of about 90 per cent of girls 14 years old or younger knew about the abortion, compared with 74 per cent for those 15 years old, the survey said.

Overall, at least one parent of 61 per cent of girls under age 18 knew about their daughter's decision to have an abortion. Forty-five per cent of the girls told one or both parents. In 15 per cent of the cases, one or both parents were told by someone else, such as a relative, doctor or clinic staff member, or the parents found out on their own.

The report published in Family Planning Perspectives, the institute's bimonthly journal, was based on questionnaires completed by 1,519 unmarried girls who had abortions between December 1990 and June 1991 in states without laws requiring involvement by a parent or adult relative.

Twenty-eight states have no notification requirement, while 11 require parental consent for a minor to have an abortion, nine require parental notification and two states demand counselling before the procedure.

The issue has become increasingly controversial as some states try to limit federal abortion laws.

She was the subject of a campaign of silence

LANSING: Jo McLachlan could have hidden anonymously in the pews after deciding to reject the Catholic Church's position on abortion, reports AP.

She didn't. Instead, she wore an abortion rights button to Sacred Heart Catholic Church, even when she read Bible passages from the altar during Mass.

"They're not going to tell me how to think, not going to preach to me from the pulpit on a political issue," she said. "I took a lot of heat, but that was all right".

For 18 long months, she said, she was the subject of a campaign of silence by her fellow parishioners in Evart.

"No one in church would speak to me except the parish priest and my husband," she said. "That's OK. You certainly learn who your friends are. I was a church secretary, lay reader, taught religion classes. I was very, very active in my church. That was all pulled out from under me. It was important enough to me to pay the price for my convictions."

McLachlan is co-coordinator of Michigan Catholics for a Free Choice, a small group willing to publicly challenge the church's stance that abortion should be condemned except in cases in which the mother's life is in danger.

Though the Michigan chapter is only in the early stages, Catholics for a Free Choice has 60 chapters in 35 states, said Jane Reilly of Cleveland, the grass-roots organizer for the Ohio chapter who helped spur the formation of the group here.

NEW DELHI, Oct 20: Two Bodo organisations today threatened to launch a "vigorous mass movement" to press for a separate state of "Bodoland" and said they would not participate in any talks unless the centre came out with concrete proposals to resolve the vexed issue, reports PTI.

"We will leave no stone unturned and Assam will be once again burning." The entire responsibility of the consequences of our struggle will be of the centre and the state government," S K Biswamitray, the ABSU president, told reporters here.

Stating that their agitation was suspended in August 1989 and resumed in June this year after the state chief minister, Hiteswar Saikari, "retracted from his assurances", Biswamitray expressed concern over what he called "negative stand of the centre" as made clear by recent statement of the Prime Minister, P V Narasimha Rao, who had opposed the idea of creating smaller states.

Charging the centre and the Assam government with "intentionally delaying" resolution of the Bodoland issue for political gains, the ABSU chief said "anything short of a separate state or a political arrangement within Assam will not be accepted by us".

WASHINGTON, Oct 20: Eight people were killed in a three-day period in Washington despite an appeal by the city's mayor and civic groups for a "moratorium" on street violence, reports AFP.

City officials maintain that despite the killing spree, the homicide rate in the nation's murder capital is declining. So far this year 360 people have become homicide victims, compared with 385 in the same period last year. That translated into a rate of 1.23 victims per day this year, down from 1.34 a year ago.

On Friday, the first day of a 48-hour moratorium, five people were killed.

UN experts go out of Baghdad to search for scud missiles

BAGHDAD, Oct 20: UN weapons experts searching for Scud missiles in Iraq have found information on the sites being inspected, team leader Nikita Smidovich said here Monday at the end of a third day of operations, reports AFP.

But Smidovich declined to say if any concrete findings were made establishing that Iraq was still hiding surface-to-surface Scud missile. He also refused to identify the sites inspected by his team.

On Monday he said the team would be looking for Scuds.

Iraq is believed to be hiding up to 200 Scuds missiles, which were fired at Israel and Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War and must be eliminated under UN ceasefire Resolutions which ended the fighting in February 1991.

"We are finding information on the sites we are visiting," the Russian expert told reporters here before going to talks with Iraqi officials.

"We are in the process of collecting information and we will continue," he said, adding that the data is sometimes contained in documents but that some information is passed in discussions with the Iraqi authorities.

He reiterated that the team of 46 experts, which arrived here Friday and started its mission Saturday, had inspected declared and undeclared sites.

The inspectors were today to travel by helicopter for the first time to locations far from Baghdad, he said, he did not elaborate.

The team includes experts in ballistic missiles, nuclear arms and chemical and biological weapons, some of whom are American. New equipment is being used in the searches, according to Smidovich.

Asked if any negotiations were underway between his team and the Baghdad authorities, Smidovich said: "We are not negotiating anything. Our task is to collect information."

Meanwhile, a UN official predicted Monday that the Baghdad government would sign an agreement "in a week or less" renewing the protocol governing the presence of UN personnel in Iraq.

Jan Elisasson, a UN official in charge of humanitarian activities, said, "If the Secretary General authorizes (the signature of) this agreement it could be done very soon."

Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali received details on the new agreement Monday, said Joe Sills spokesman for the Secretary General.

The accord would cover some 300 UN personnel, including 292 in the Kurdish region of northern Iraq and eight in Baghdad, and would be valid through March 31, diplomatic sources said.

BEIJING, Oct 20: New Hong Kong Gov Chris Patten, making his first visit to Beijing, said Thursday he was eager for Chinese suggestions to resolve acrimonious disputes over democratic change in the territory and a new airport, reports AP.

"I'll be very interested in hearing any of the proposals which my Chinese colleagues have to make," Patten said on arrival at the Beijing International Airport.

Bosnia's Muslim leader to accept regional autonomy

SARAJEVO, Oct 20: Bosnia's Muslim leader agreed Monday to accept a degree of regional autonomy in his embattled republic and issued a joint pledge with the leader of Serb-dominated Yugoslavia to end the war, reports AP.

Croatia's HINA news agency, meanwhile, reported the arrest of a Bosnian military commander it identified only as "Juka," saying he tried to seize control of the army defending Sarajevo.

HINA was apparently referring to Juka Prazina, hailed by many as a Bosnian Robin Hood who steals from the rich and gives to the poor. Others accuse him of criminal activities, including involvement in Bosnian Serb car-theft rings.

Bosnia's Muslim President, Alija Izetbegovic, Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and President Dobrica Cosic of Serb-dominated Yugoslavia have been meeting in Geneva to seek an end to the war in Bosnia.

It was unclear what effect the accord would have without the support of Serbia's powerful President Slobodan Milosevic or that of the Bosnian Serb fighters, who have tended to disregard pronouncements from Belgrade or abroad.

The war in Bosnia began after the republic's Muslims and Croats voted in February to secede from Yugoslavia. The Serbs — about one-third of the population — took up arms and with Serbian aid have captured two-thirds of the republic.

Lord Owen, Europe's chief peace negotiator, said in Geneva that negotiators had agreed Bosnia-Herzegovina would be divided into regions with "considerable" autonomy.

The government's agreement, however, was seen by some as a face-saving measure

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HK governor on crucial China visit

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