

India's 9th N-plant starts operation

NEW DELHI, May 11: The first unit of India's 220-megawatt Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP) started operation on May 6, according to a local press report today, reports Xinhua.

KAPP, which is situated 86 kilometres from Surat in India's western state of Gujarat, is the ninth operating Nuclear power plant in the country.

The plant envisages two 220-MW units of pressurized heavy water reactors at the site. The second unit is likely to reach critically by the end of 1993, the report said.

Pressurized heavy water reactors use naturally available uranium as fuel. As India has five times more deposits of thorium, Indian scientists for the first time tried out a new fuel of uranium-plutonium mixed oxide with thorium in KAPP Unit-1.

The trials were successful and the desired efficiency in power planting was achieved last year, the report said.

The project was approved by the Indian government in July, 1981 and it took off only two years later when the 8,900 hectares of land was acquired finally from farmers.

Kashmir militants rocket main govt building : 2 die

NEW DELHI, May 11: Guerrillas fired rockets at the main state government building in Jammu-Kashmir on Tuesday, killing two employees and seriously injuring two others, reports AP.

It was the fourth rebel rocket attack in three years on the Secretariat building in Srinagar, the state's summer capital, United News of India reported.

The 4,000 people who work in the building immediately walked off the job and said they would stay on strike

for four days to demand better protection from militant attacks.

Two rockets slammed into the Planning Department on the fifth floor, state police chief Balwinder Singh Bedi said.

The attack killed two of its workers: Roshan Lal, a Hindu, and Mohammad Ashraf, a Muslim, according to Bedi.

Shortly after the assault, a spokesman for the outlawed Jammu-Kashmir Liberation Front guerrilla group called the Press Trust of India office in Srinagar to claim responsibility.

Since 1990, several rebel groups have been fighting for the independence of Jammu-Kashmir, India's only state with a Muslim majority. India claims its Muslim neighbour, Pakistan, helps train and arm guerrilla groups that want Pakistan to annex the state.

More than 6,000 people have been killed in the war between security forces and militants in a northern state that once attracted many tourists to its beautiful lakes and mountains.

Clinton, Yeltsin hold tele-talks

MOSCOW, May 11: Russian President Boris Yeltsin discussed bilateral and international matters with U.S. President Bill Clinton on Monday, Itar-Tass news agency said, reports Reuter.

It quoted the Russian Foreign Ministry as saying the telephone conversation came at the initiative of the U.S. side, but gave no further details.

No Russians presidential or Foreign Ministry spokesman was available for comment on Monday, a national holiday.

Yeltsin and Clinton held a summit meeting in Canada last month and have spoken by telephone previously. The two governments have pledged to remain in close contact on the conflict in former Yugoslavia and other world issues.

Off the Record

'The fight is on'

HAVANA: A mysterious nerve disease that has affected nearly 26,000 Cubans is still spreading, Cuban President Fidel Castro was quoted as saying on Monday, reports Reuter.

In remarks widely cited by Cuban state radio Castro said the island's health authorities were dedicating 'all of their force and energy' to curbing the epidemic, which can cause progressive loss of sight.

'The fight is on' the Cuban President told reporters while visiting patients affected by the disease in the eastern city of Santiago De Cuba over the weekend.

Asked whether the illness was under control Castro replied, 'It depends what you mean by control. There is a measure of control of the situation but the epidemic is in the full phase of development.'

Cuban health authorities have identified the epidemic as a 'neuropathy' M A disorder which affects the nervous systems. Of the nearly 26,000 cases recorded up until April 30, more than 19,000 were suffering from disruption to their eyesight. More than 5,000 people were affected in other parts of their body.



WHO war on tobacco

GENEVA: The World Health Organization is recruiting its parent body the United Nations to join the war on tobacco and ban smoking in all its offices, reports AFP.

A majority of WHO's 185 members presented a resolution to Director General Hiroshi Nakajima over the weekend, urging him to convince UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to ban the consumption and sale of tobacco at all UN facilities worldwide within two years.

The WHO, which has 1,500 employees at its headquarters in Geneva has been smoke-free since 1988.

The WHO has scheduled this year's non-smoking day, when smokers are urged to kick the habit for a day for May 31.

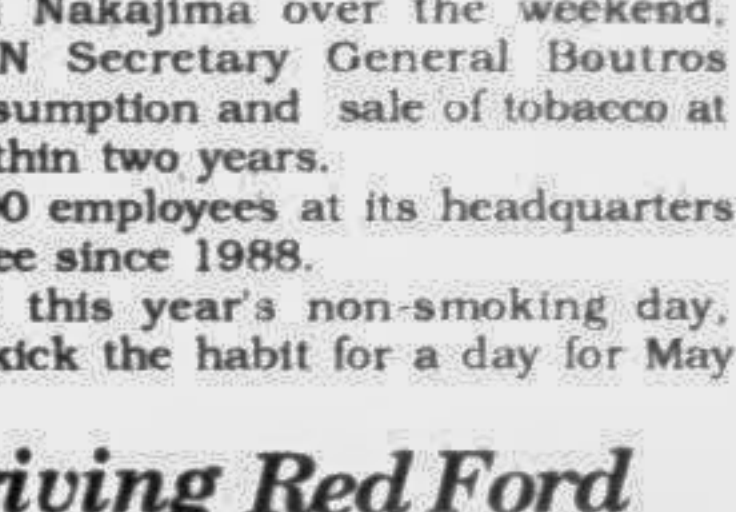
Now she is driving Red Ford

LONDON: Princess Diana who gave up driving a Mercedes Benz sports car after criticism she was neglecting local industry is now driving a Red Ford Saloon — partly British, reports Reuter.

The estranged wife of royal heir Prince Charles caused public uproar with her choice of the German two-seater a break with a 50-year tradition that senior members of the Royal family drive British cars.

Diana acquired the convertible Mercedes 500SL 15 months ago but returned it to the dealers last September in what Buckingham Palace said was a belt-tightening exercise.

The Mondeo is designed in Britain and has a British engine but is assembled in Belgium.



Soldier declares himself gay

SAN FRANCISCO: The Army on Monday approved discharging a highly decorated soldier who declared his homosexuality two weeks ago at the gay rights march in Washington DC, reports AP.

All that remains for Sgt. Joe Zuniga to become a civilian is to clean out his locker, clear up his finances and close out his personnel records, said San Francisco Presidio spokesman Lt. Steven Fredericks.

The 24-year-old military journalist and Gulf War veteran who won the 6th Army's 1992 Soldier of the Year award violated the military's prohibition against homosexuals in announcing his sexual orientation. That ban is under review by the Clinton administration.

Presidio Battalion Commander Wayne Agness recommended an Honourable Discharge because of Zuniga's nearly spotless record, Fredericks said.

'From the very beginning (Zuniga) said he would not contest it', Fredericks said. Army regulations are quite clear. If you say you are a homosexual, you will be discharged.'

Zuniga said he was saddened by the finality of the moment.



An unidentified Danish UNPROFOR soldier offers a cigarette to a young Bosnian woman in Sarajevo Monday as only the occasional artillery round and the snipers in the hills disturbed the recent Bosnian-Serb ceasefire. — AFP/UNB photo

BRIEFLY

Prisoner shot dead in Somalia: A prisoner was shot dead on Friday when warders and soldiers tried to disperse inmates of Mogadishu central prison during a riot over poor living conditions and delayed justice, it was reported Monday, AFP says from Nairobi.

The voice of the UN forces in Somalia Radio Manta, said in a broadcast monitored by the BBC the warders had radioed for assistance from United Arab Emirates soldiers of UNOSOM-II after the prisoners refused to return to their cells, but one prisoner died after soldiers and warders fired into the air.

There were 134 inmates awaiting trial for various offences in the prison, the radio added.

Mugabe ends China Visit: Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe ended a five-day official visit to China yesterday which he described as satisfactory, Xinhua news agency said, AFP reports from Beijing.

Mugabe, who left for the North Korean capital Pyongyang, said he was happy with his visit which was aimed at exploring new ways of continual cooperation between the two countries, the agency quoted him as saying.

Mugabe, who was on his sixth visit to China said Zimbabwe was ready to boost cooperation with China, particularly in agricultural and mining sectors.

Mubarak arrives in Kuwait: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak arrived in Kuwait City Monday on the second leg of a tour of Gulf Monarchies, AFP reports from Kuwait City.

Mubarak, accompanied by Foreign Minister A M R Mussa, arrived from Oman where his talks with Sultan Qaboos focused on the rise of religious extremism in Muslim countries and ways of resolving inter-Arab divisions dating from Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

An Egyptian spokesman said the President's tour was aimed at discussing ways of countering what he sees as a growing threat from Iran.

Nigerian held in Pakistan: Pakistani Customs officials on Monday arrested a Nigerian teacher at Karachi Airport and seized 114 kilos (251 LBS) of heroin in his baggage, a customs statement said, Reuter reports from Karachi.

A Pakistan Narcotics Control Board official put the street value of the seized drug in Pakistan at about 213,000 dollar but said it could fetch up to 250 million dollar in the United States.

The statement said the Nigerian was arrested before he could take an Egypt air flight to Lagos via Cairo.

The heroin was found hidden in leather bags stuffed in 13 large cartons, it said.

8 die in Canada road mishap: Eight youths died in a head-on collision between two cars on a small Ontario road, police said, AFP reports from Caledon.

Two cars ramed into each other and exploded after one car tried to overtake on a twisting road Sunday.

All five passengers in one car and two of the five passengers in the other died instantly. The eighth victim died in hospital. All were about 20 year-old.

A case of beer was found in the wreckage, witnesses said.

Writer Gilliat dead: British writer Penelope Gilliat has died, her family said on Monday, Reuter reports from London.

Gilliat, a long-time contributor to The New Yorker, The Observer and an author of novels, biography and screenplays died in London on Sunday after a long illness.

Her screenplay for the 1971 film, Sunday, Bloody Sunday was nominated for an Oscar.

Born in London in 1932 she was educated in Britain and the United States and was twice married, lastly to British playwright John Osborne. They divorced.

Accident claims 10 in Peru: At least 10 people died and 25 were injured when a packed bus slammed into a tanker lorry 975 kilometers (600 miles) south of Lima, police said Monday, AFP reports from Lima.

The bus was carrying 55 passengers, most of them mine workers, Sunday when it hit the lorry stopped in the road without its warning lights on, police said.

3 Benazir men acquitted of murder charge

KARACHI, Pakistan, May 11: A Pakistani court on Monday acquitted three followers of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of conspiring to murder 29 people, a court official said, reports Reuter.

He said former Sindh Province Chief Minister Qaim Ali Shah, provincial Deputy Minister Wassan and Bhutto's Security Officer Munawwar Suhrawardy were all acquitted of the charge for lack of evidence.

Bhutto's husband Asif Ali Zardari, now Water and Power Minister in the cabinet of caretaker Prime Minister Balakh Sher Mazari, was acquitted last October by the same court on the same grounds.

The charges, which were denied by all four, related to the 1990 shooting of activists of the Mohajir National Movement, opposed to Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party.



General view of a fire at a Bangkok toy factory Monday. According to the Thai News Agency at least 21 workers were killed and more than 100 injured in the blaze but rescue workers said the death toll could be higher. — AFP/UNB photo

Plot to kill Bush Kuwait to try 17 suspects

KUWAIT CITY, May 11: Seventeen men will be indicted in the next few days on charges of plotting to assassinate former US President George Bush and planning other attacks in Kuwait, prosecutor Mohammad Banal said Monday, reports AFP.

The State Security Court will be asked to formally charge the 17, including one still at large, with an attempt to kill Bush during his private visit here on April 14-16, Banal told the official Kuna news agency.

It will also be asked to charge them with having had contacts with Iraqi authorities in a bid to harm Kuwaiti security and smuggle in explosives and weapons, he said.

His office also wound up questioning of the 16 who have been arrested — Iraqis, Kuwaitis and Bidoons who have no nationality — and details of the investigation will be released soon, Banal said.

Defence Minister Ali Sabah Al-Salem said meanwhile that the suspects would be tried in Kuwait.

'The accused will not be handed over to the United States. They planned their criminal act in Kuwait and will, therefore, be judged here, he said, without specifying when the trial would start.

He confirmed that US investigators were in Kuwait to gather information about the hit-team.

A Kuwaiti judicial source

has said Raad Abdel Amir, a colonel in the Iraqi intelligence service, was the prime suspect in the alleged plot.

He admitted having planned a suicide attack in which he was to set off explosives attached to his belt when he got close to George Bush, the source said.

Bush, who organized the international coalition which drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait in February 1991, travelled to the Emirate on a private visit.

The Washington Post newspaper reported on Saturday that the US administration had hard evidence Iraq was behind an assassination attempt against Bush.

Baghdad has denied it was behind any such plot.

Filipino Muslim rebels free kidnapped boy

ZAMBOANGA, Philippines, May 11: A group that had kidnapped a Spanish priest handed over its last remaining hostage, a 5-year-old boy, to military authorities Tuesday, the military announced, reports AP.

The kidnapers requested a cease-fire with troops who had been pursuing them and, 90 minutes after it began, they freed Anthony Biel, who had been seized more than three months ago, said armed forces spokesman Lt Col Benjamin Enrile.

Son Sann threatens to withdraw from polls

PHNOM PENH, May 11: Just 12 days before Cambodia's scheduled election, the leader of one of the three main political parties indicated Tuesday that his party may withdraw if widespread violence continues, reports agencies.

'How can we participate in the election if there is no neutral political environment?' Son Sann asked the Associated Press.

Son Sann, 81, leads the Buddhist Liberal Democratic

Party, one of the country's four main political factions. It was formed from an anti-communist resistance group that battled the Vietnamese-installed Phnom Penh government from 1979 until a 1991 peace accord.

Meanwhile, The United Nations said today it took away the right to vote from two Phnom Penh government officials because they were intimidating opposition parties, and promised to do it again if necessary.

Deportees reject Israel's offer

MAJL EZ-ZOUHOUR, Lebanon, May 11: Some 400 Palestinian deportees stranded for almost five months in South Lebanon today rejected an Israeli offer for 25 more of them to return, their spokesmen said, reports AFP.

The Israeli proposal contains no new element and does not even deserve to be considered, said Abdel Aziz Ranitissi, a leading member of the Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas.

He said the deportees in-

sisted on returning in a single group, as laid down by United Nations Resolution 799.

The latest offer was part of an agreement to end the crisis reached between the United States and Israel on February 1, said Mahmud Zahar, another Hamas leader at the deportees' camp of Marj ez-Zouhour.

The deportees had already rejected that deal under which 101 of the remaining 396 men from the Israeli-occupied territories would re-

turn immediately and the rest by the end of the year.

Israel originally expelled 415 on December 17 for up to two years for their alleged links to the radical groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

The decision to allow back another 25 was announced on Monday in Washington by the spokesman for the Israeli delegation to the ME talks.

Sheikh Abdallah Shami, an Islamic Jihad official at the camp between Israeli and Lebanese army lines, said the

offer was a 'slap in the face' for the PLO and Palestinian negotiators who had returned to the talks with high hopes.

But several were glued to their radios, hoping to hear the names of the 25 allowed to return.

Basam Jarar, another Muslim fundamentalist, said the expelled Palestinians were always ready to consider new Israeli proposals but 'the decision to repatriate only 25 more deportees is far from acceptable.'

Indira award for Aruna Asaf Ali

NEW DELHI, May 11: Veteran freedom fighter and social worker Aruna Asaf Ali was presented the prestigious Indira Gandhi Gold Plaque for 1992 by the Asiatic Society at a function here today, reports PTL.

Regarded as a rare honour in the intellectual community, the award was presented by the General Secretary of the society, Chandan Roy Chaudhury, in the presence of a galaxy of distinguished personalities, including the former President, Zail Singh and Finance Minister, Dr Man Singh.

Cannes Film Festival may be more feminine than usual

CANNES, France, May 11: With an official selection of 61 features and shorts from 25 countries, the Cannes Film Festival opening Thursday appears more than ever as the leading showcase for indigenous film industries, reports AFP.

In addition to the main competition, the special screenings and the certain regard section similar diversity of vision is provided in the parallel directors fortnight and critics week sections.

As the Hollywood juggernaut continues to squeeze film industries around the

world, the festival ensures an international audience for creative cinema output representing the languages and cultures of all the world's continents.

Films from Europe and the Pacific rim provide the largest portion in the high-profile main competition.

France and Britain present four films each, and Italy three. Australia also provides three, while two Chinese-language films — one each from China and Taiwan — will remind festival-goers of the unique double achieved at last February's Berlin Festival where films from China and

Taiwan jointly carried off the top award.

An exotic presence is assured with a film from Haiti presented for the first time in competition and a Russo-Mauritanian co-production appearing in the certain regard section, along with rare presentations from Ireland and Vietnam.

Diversification by geographical origin is matched by a trend to genre films with, for example, the first horror movie, Abel Ferrara's 'Body Snatchers,' to appear at Cannes since the 1950s, and a clutch of comedies and costume dramas. A Period pieces, apart from the

Shakespeare, include settings in Tuscany during the Napoleonic wars in the Taviani Brothers' 'Florie,' colonial New Zealand in the 19th century in Jane Campion's 'The Piano' and Rural France as Peter Greenaway, in his 'Baby of Macon,' returns to the 17th century.

The festival is likely to be a more feminine event than usual, with a record number of women directors featuring in the official selection — four in the main competition and eight elsewhere.

The jury too includes a trio of outstanding screen ac-

tresses Claudia Cardinale, Judy Davis and Inna Churikova.

The directorial line-up ranges widely in age, with 17 directors attending the festival for the first time, including four presenting their first films, and the evergreen Akira Kurosawa, winner of the 1980 Golden Palm with 'Kagemusha,' returning at 83 per cent his latest film, Maddadyo, out of competition.

Another Golden Palm-winner returning to competition is Steven Soderbergh whose debut sex, lies and videotape, launched him from obscurity to celebrity in

Disabled Afghans demonstrate for stability

PESHAWAR, Pakistan, May 11: Hundreds of disabled Afghans demonstrated in the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad on Monday, calling on Mujahideen leaders to bring stability to their war-torn homeland, sources there said, reports AFP.

The sources described the rally as a show of disgust with the failure of the Afghan political leaders gathered in Jalalabad to reach an agreement on a representative government.

The demonstrators shouted slogans exhorting the Afghan leaders to form a consensus government.

Disabled Afghans demonstrate for stability

1989, while the jury president Louis Malle, took the award as long ago as 1956 with a documentary, 'Le Monde Du Silence.'

With only three American films in the main programme, the 46th Cannes Festival may fall short by recent standards in the area for which such events are often most prized: That of glitz and media malarkey.

With the Madonna circus in 1991 as the benchmark the festival may disappoint. Robert de Niro, Michael Douglas and Emma Thompson are, after all, serious actors. But there will be Arnold Schwarzenegger.