

BRIEFLY

Mine blast kills 2 in Lebanon: Two guerrillas were killed today by a mine they were planting inside Israel's self-declared security zone in South Lebanon, security sources said, reports Reuters from Lebanon.

It was not immediately clear to which group the gunmen belonged. The security sources said they were killed when one of two mines they were planting between the villages of Ain Ibi and Aita as Shaab blew up.

Fire at Ukrainian N-plant: Fire broke out on Friday at a nuclear power station in the former Soviet republic of Ukraine, killing one man and seriously injuring another, local officials said, reports Reuters from Kiev.

A local official contacted by telephone in the central Ukrainian city of Zaporizha said sparks from a welder's torch ignited hydrogen from a pipe in one of the station's six reactors.

"One welder was burned to death immediately, a second received serious burns over 60 per cent of his body," the official said.

The station, Europe's largest with six reactors, is located 50 km (30 miles) from the city of Zaporizha, which has 900,000 residents.

23 killed in Egyptian bus plunge: A public bus plunged into a canal in northern Egypt Friday, drowning 23 people, said a police official, reports Xinhua from Cairo.

The incident reportedly occurred at Al-Tawfikia village in the Behira Province. Seven others were rescued, including the driver.

The driver lost control of the steering while other causes were not known, the official said.

Hashish seized in Peshawar: Local customs authorities seized 7,000 kilograms of hashish near Peshawar, capital of Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province, on Friday, Xinhua reports from Islamabad.

According to local press reports today, the truck carrying the hashish was stopped while on its way from Peshawar to Karachi, capital of Sindh Province, after an exchange of fire in the small hours of Friday.

Monaco, Eritrea seek UN membership: The tiny principality of Monaco and the newly independent state of Eritrea requested full UN membership Friday, reports AP from United Nations.

Monaco currently holds "permanent observer" status at the United Nations, along with the Vatican and Switzerland.

With an area of 0.58 square mile (1.49 square kilometers) and a population of 27,000, Monaco is one of the world's smallest countries. In some places, the country stretches only 180 meters (200 yards) inland from the Mediterranean.

Eritrea also sent a letter Friday to UN headquarters seeking admission. UN spokesman Alex Taukatch said.

Eritreans voted overwhelmingly last month for independence in a UN-monitored referendum, after fighting for secession from Ethiopia for three decades.

Silent film actress Philbin dead: Mary Philbin, a leading lady of silent films who co-starred in the classic Lon Chaney version of "The Phantom of the Opera," is dead at age 89, reports AP from Los Angeles.

Miss Philbin died May 7 in Huntington Beach, Calif., said Martha Hernandez, spokeswoman for Calvary Cemetery in Whittier, where Miss Philbin is entombed. Miss Philbin played the singer Christine in the 1925 version of "The Phantom of the Opera," the first feature film of the famous tale.

Chaney played the embittered, deformed composer who falls in love with her. Famous to film fans of the '20s as "the man of a thousand faces," he fashioned an eerie, skull-like face for the Phantom.

A Los Angeles Times critic in 1990 said that as Christine, Miss Philbin "Throws up a gloriously goofy silent movie performance almost delirious in its excess: One moment she's the Love Zombie of the Opera; the next, she's the Hysteric of the Opera."

10 killed, 40 hurt as Afghan jet bombs Kabul by mistake

KABUL, May 22: An Afghan defence ministry jet accidentally dropped three cluster bombs on a neighbourhood in the old city of Kabul today, killing 10 civilians and injuring 40, an official said, reports AFP.

"The accident occurred because the jet missed the target," Defence Ministry spokesman General Yunus Qanooni admitted.

A survivor of the botched attack said that at 8:30 a.m. (0400 GMT) a jet "at moderate altitude" dropped three cluster bombs on the old city quarter of Kabul.

The jet was believed to be attempting a bombing run on a mountain top position held by

forces of the fundamentalist leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar despite a ceasefire agreement signed four days ago by Mujahideen factions.

The case is under investigation and we hope to give you a full report after it is completed," Qanooni said.

The bombs destroyed about 10 houses in the warren of alleys where most of the buildings are built of wood and mud bricks.

Fighting between government forces and rival Mujahideen factions has devastated the city, with around 1,000 people killed in the latest round of rocket and artillery exchanges.

Some of those injured by the cluster bombs, which break open and scatter smaller anti-personnel devices, had fled other areas to escape from the fighting, which has injured more than 4,500 in the past 10 days according to the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC).

Crowding around the debris of the buildings, a group of hysterical men and women cried out anti-Mujahideen chants while slapping themselves and beating their chests in mourning.

"Where can we go? Will someone give us tents?" sobbed a shaking woman.

"Even the Russians were better than these Mujahideen bastards? They are no different from the infidels except that they have long beards," moaned a dust-caked man clutching his wounded son.

The two-year-old boy was swathed in blood-soaked bandages covering wounds to both feet, one hand and his head.



KABUL: Afghan children play near a destroyed building of a shopping centre at Jadayi Maiwand. The shopping centre was destroyed due to fighting between Dostam troops and troops loyal to Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood. —AFP/UNB photo

Angolan peace talks fail

ABIDJAN, May 22: The Angolan civil war will probably intensify following the failure Friday of peace talks here after 40 days of negotiations, UN envoy Margaret Anstee said, reports AFP.

The collapse of the United Nations' bid to broker peace between the Luanda government and the UNITA rebels was "a tragic result" for the Angolan people, said Anstee, the special representative of UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

She told a news conference that the war would probably continue and intensify.

Earlier Anstee had called the government delegation and that of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola to an 11th-hour plenary session in the hope of meeting a Friday deadline set by Boutros-Ghali.

But the session foundered on a "single point"—UNITA's refusal to withdraw its forces from the towns it controls, said Anstee.

The withdrawal was spec-

ified in a protocol draw up by the troika of foreign powers involved in the negotiations: Russia, the United States and Portugal. It has also been demanded by the UN Security Council.

The government delegation has accepted the protocol.

The peace talks, which began here April 12, sought to bring an end to the fighting that resumed in October after UNITA refused to accept it had lost the previous month's UN supervised general election.

The elections were held under a May 1991 peace agreement that was supposed to end 16 years of civil war in the former Portuguese colony.

UNITA, which now controls about 70 per cent of Angola, argued that it would not withdraw unless government forces simultaneously returned to barracks and UN troops were deployed in Angola.

Anstee said intensive diplomacy behind the scenes over the past 24 hours had given her hope "until the last

moment" that an agreement would be struck.

Anstee, who is retiring from the Angolan position, said she had a clear conscience and that the United Nations had done all it could to reach an agreement. But at the end of the day, it was for the Angolans themselves to make peace, she said.

General Higinio Carneiro of the government delegation said: "We could have reached a solution. We tried everything. I think the international community must now take steps, bearing in mind who is responsible for the talks failure."

UNITA spokesman Jorge Valentim said his movement believed that "the next round of negotiations will enable us to reach the final target."

These talks were the third to have foundered since October. In November the two sides agreed on a ceasefire in Namibia, but the truce quickly broke down. And in January the negotiators failed to cut a deal in Addis Ababa.

14 more killed in Kashmir violence

NEW DELHI, May 22: Four Muslim rebels, a border guard and a soldier were among 14 people killed overnight in Kashmir as militants enforced a strike to protest the arrest of a rebel leader, the Press Trust of India said today, reports AFP.

State officials said Srinagar, the summer capital, and the Kashmir valley was crippled as activists of the Al Jihd (Holy Warriors) forced shopkeepers to down their shutters to condemn the arrest of Sheikh Abdul Aziz on Thursday.

Aziz was arrested by Indian army troops following a tip-off in what the authorities described as a major setback to the secessionist movement in Kashmir, India's only Muslim majority state.

They said government offices, banks and post offices remained closed in response to the strike call.

A government spokesman said three rebels belonging to the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen were shot dead during a clash with soldiers in Kupwara district on Friday.

'Prithvi' inducted into Indian army

NEW DELHI, May 22: India has inducted its local made long-range surface-to-surface missile 'Prithvi' into 11 selected corps of its army, a report here said today, reports Xinhua.

The missile can carry a payload of nearly one tonne and has a range of 250 kms.

The missile has an onboard computer to perform inertial navigation. It can correct its flight even if the engines have burned out.

The system can store a number of alternative commands to change the flight path so as to evade the 'Patriot' type system missiles and take on a different target.

This system excels over other comparable missile systems and it will not miss the targets by more than a deflection of 100 metres.

The missile uses a liquid propellant consisting of 50 per cent xylidine and the balance of triethylamine and nitric acid as used as an oxidiser.

Indian defence experts first conceived the idea of developing a ballistic missile system in the early eighties.

The first experimental flight named PE-01 took place on February.

Venezuelan president suspended, sent to trial

CARACAS, May 22: Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez was suspended from his post, sent to trial for corruption and replaced with an acting head of state on Friday in an unprecedented impeachment process, reports Reuters.

Senators voted unanimously to ratify a supreme court ruling on Thursday that there was enough evidence to try the unpopular Perez, a 70-year-old survivor of coup attempt and political bids to oust him, on charges of embezzlement and misuse of public funds.

"This is a significant blow against corruption," Congress vice president Felipe Montilla told senators.

Octavio Lepage, the president of congress who has devoted half a century to politics with the ruling democratic action party, was sworn in as Acting President of this oil-exporting nation while lawmakers applauded.

Lepage, a former leadership rival of Perez before 1988 elections, said he would honour all of Venezuela's foreign

commitments and had not yet considered whether to change the cabinet.

The presidential sash, bearing the blue, red and yellow colours of the nation's flag, was placed around Lepage as a military band broke into the national anthem. The sash had to be altered to fit Lepage's diminutive frame.



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China wants to sink differences with US

BELJING, May 22: Chinese leader Jiang Zemin has appealed to US President Bill Clinton to avert a clash over nagging differences, and declared that his country's reforms were "irreversible", reports AFP.

In a wider-ranging interview with Cable News Network (CNN), Jiang also stressed that China was not seeking to become a regional military power and rejected as "groundless" reports of continued missile sales abroad.

Meanwhile, Jiang, who is both Communist Party General Secretary and Head of State, held out the possibility that activists jailed after the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown would be freed if they behaved

well.

With Clinton set to link renewal of Beijing's trade privileges to progress in human rights, trade and arms non-proliferation in just two weeks, Jiang called for the two countries to seek common ground and enhance cooperation.

"The Chinese government attaches great importance to its relation with the United States," he said. "As for the differences, between us, I think they can be settled through dialogue. When that proves impossible, we can put them aside for the time being while seeking common ground."

"I would like to reiterate that we want to see more mutual confidence, less trouble,

closer cooperation and no confrontation between us. We hope China and the United States can work together to improve and develop our relations," he said.

Despite the strain in Sino-US ties, Jiang said China's reforms were irreversible.

"We are engaged in an undertaking which has never been tried before," he said. "The policy of reform and opening up has gained the support of all the Chinese people. It is irreversible."

It was the first time a senior leader has so unequivocally ruled out tampering with China's reforms, launched by Deng Xiaoping in 1978. Fears of a hardline backlash have persisted over the last decade.

On Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade status, Jiang urged Clinton not to make it a political issue.

MFN "should not become an issue. We hope that it will be settled properly. If MFN is revoked, both sides will suffer," the leader said.

Clinton must decide by June 3 whether to withdraw, extend or attach conditions to China's MFN status, which grants the lowest possible tariffs to Chinese imports and must be reviewed annually under US law.

Clinton has stressed the need for human rights progress and Beijing has responded by releasing several dissidents this year.

ROK students stage anti-American rally, clash with police

SEOUL, May 22: Some 2,000 South Korean dissident students, proclaiming today 'anti-American day', violently clashed with thousands of riot police near a US army headquarters here, witnesses said, reports AFP.

Students from the Korean All Student Councils Association (KASCA) chanting "drive out yankees" battled their way from a university campus to a nearby US army headquarters as riot police fired volleys of tear gas shell at them, following an anti-American day rally held on campus.

Meanwhile, hundreds of students burned a US flag, witnesses said, adding that some 20 students were injured as they tried to break through a line of riot police wielding batons and shields.

The students also shouted: "We want an apology," referring to a demand for an official apology from the United States for its alleged involvement in a decision to deploy South Korean troops against student demonstrators in the 1980 Kwangju massacre, which lasted eight days and left some 200 people dead.

A KASCA spokesman said students had also decided to hold five day sit-in at

Myongdong cathedral in downtown Seoul from Saturday to demand punishment for military generals who allegedly ordered the massacre at Kwangju.

Last Tuesday, thousands of students demonstrating for the arrests of former Presidents Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo, who were also army generals, violently clashed with riot police near their private residences in western Seoul.

President Kim Young-Sam meanwhile recognized the Kwangju rebellion as a pro-democracy movement, but asked South Koreans to forgive those responsible for suppressing it and work towards national reconciliation.

US stalls F-5 jets sale to Philippines

MANILA, May 22: The United States has stalled a scheduled sale of surplus South Korean F-5 jets to the Philippines, local newspapers reported here today, says AFP.

The deal of the transfer of the jets was due to be signed when President Fidel Ramos visits South Korea next week.

Off the Record



MEXICO CITY: Dayanara Torres of Puerto Rico wipes away tear Friday after being crowned Miss Universe 1993 out of a field of 79 beauty queens from around the world. —AFP/UNB photo

Singers to attend gay choral festival

ZURICH: Some 500 male and female singers will gather here this weekend to take part in European Festival of gay choral groups, Swiss press reports said, according to AFP.

Twenty groups are taking part in the festival, which began Thursday and is due to end Sunday with a musical celebration in Zurich cathedral dedicated to AIDS victims.

Concerts and street performances are planned for Friday and Saturday in the Swiss economic capital.

The festival was organised by the Zurich male choir Schmaz and the lesbian choir Lechz.

Casting flowers in river to protest Yugoslav war

BUDAPEST: Members of the International Human Rights Organisation Amnesty International cast wreaths of flowers in the Tisza river Friday in a protest against the war in Yugoslavia, MTI news agency reported, says AFP.

The demonstration was held in the southeastern Hungarian city Szeged by participants in the organisation's "caravan of conscience," trip, whose buses have travelled through Ireland, Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and Austria.

The trip was initiated by some 80 members of the Irish section of Amnesty International mid-May, and Szeged was the last site in a chain of amnesty demonstrations staged in Dublin, Munich, Strasbourg, Brussels and Vienna against torture and rape in Yugoslavia.

Secretary-General of Amnesty International Pierre Sanz said human rights knew no borders and that those responsible for the fighting in Yugoslavia should be brought to justice.

She escapes after being run over by train

WILLINGTON: An 8-year-old girl lay frozen in terror on railroad tracks as a freight train passed over her, missing her by no more than a foot, reports AP.

"Don't tell Mom," were Nicole Bernier's first words to her brother when she got up screaming and crying.

Her only injuries were the bruises she suffered when she fell trying to get out of the way of the 12-car train Sunday afternoon, state police said.

Nicole, who lives near the tracks, said she tripped twice trying to get out of the way of the train. She remembers little of the moments when the train passed over her and thinks she passed out.

Guatemalans protest austerity measures

GUATEMALA CITY, May 22: More than 10,000 Guatemalans demonstrated peacefully in the capital Friday against economic austerity measures and for higher wages and improved working conditions, reports AP.

Military armoured vehicles and riot police stood by as workers, teachers and students rallied in a plaza outside city hall and marched about a mile (kilometer) to Guatemala City's main plaza.

Many demonstrators carried placards with pictures of President Jose Serrano Elias, "Resign Resign!"

The government intensified security measures after protest turned violent this week. The demonstrators were protesting steep increases in electricity rates, police repression of student demonstrations and other issues.

Real purchasing power has fallen precipitously under Serrano, who adopted tough economic reforms suggested by the International Monetary Fund in a bid to rein in inflation.

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