

BRIEFLY

Kim Il Sung's son ill: The son of North Korea's Communist leader has not been seen in public for more than two months and is believed to be ill, said South Korea's national Yonhap news agency on Tuesday, reports AP from Seoul.

In a dispatch from Moscow, the news agency quoted an unidentified source well-versed in North Korean affairs as saying that Kim Jong Il, Kim Il Sung's 51-year-old son, appears to be suffering from heart problems.

Rumours of the health of North Korea's reclusive leaders are not uncommon, but they usually focus on the 81-year-old leader, not his son.

Qiao Shi starts visit to ASEAN states:

Chairman of the Chinese National People Congress standing committee Qiao Shi left here yesterday for Jakarta at the start of a goodwill visit of five ASEAN nations, Xinhua reported, says AFP from Beijing.

Qiao — also a member of the powerful seven-man Politburo Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist party — is to visit Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines, all members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The three-week trip is the first visit by a chairman of the Chinese parliament to member countries of the non-communist grouping.

Macedonia enters UNESCO:

Macedonia became the 175th member of UNESCO on Monday, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation said, reports AFP from Paris.

Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in a sop to Greek objections, pending a final resolution of the dispute over its official name.

Athens opposes Skopje's use of the name Macedonia which it says should refer exclusively to the Northern Greek province of the same name.

Skopje signed UNESCO's charter during a ceremony in London last month.

Sharks kill two in China:

Two swimmers were killed by sharks in Chinese waters near Hong Kong at weekend where two others were also killed in early June, a report said yesterday, AFP from Hong Kong says.

The two swimmers, aged 23 and 30, were attacked Sunday while swimming in a beach resort in Xitung in South-eastern coast of Shenzhen, across the shark-infested Mira Bay from Hong Kong, the semi-official China News Service was quoted as saying.

Last month, a 61-year-old furniture dealer and 42-year-old hair salon owner were killed by sharks in separate attacks in Hong Kong waters.

Violence takes 27 lives in Congo:

At least 27 people have died in six weeks of political strife in Congo, including two civilians shot dead on the street at the weekend, concurring sources said here Monday, reports AFP from Congo.

Many more people have been injured in the violence which erupted when the opposition refused to accept the outcome of election on June 6 won by supporters of President Pascal Lissouba.

A state of emergency was proclaimed on Friday.

DPRK to allow IAEA inspections of N-sites

GENEVA, July 20: The United States and North Korea announced Monday that they had reached an agreement for inspection of two controversial North Korean nuclear installations by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), reports AFP.

In a joint statement, issued after a third meeting between the two sides in Geneva since last Wednesday, said that they agreed that full and impartial application of IAEA safeguards is essential to accomplish a strong and international non-proliferation regime.

"On this basis, the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) is to prepare consultations on outstanding safeguards and other issues as soon as possible," it said.

The joint statement was issued just before scheduled joint press conference by the heads of the US and North Korean delegations to the talks, Robert Gallucci and Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok-Ju respectively.

Kang Sok-Ju said the issue of joint US-South Korean naval exercises which Pyongyang regards as a threat has also been discussed.

The joint statement said North Korea was ready to resume talks with Seoul on denuclearising the Korean peninsula and on other north-south issues.

US and North Korean officials agreed to meet again in two months' time.

"Both sides recognize the desirability of the DPRK's intention to replace its graphite-moderated reactors and associated nuclear facilities with light water-moderated reactors," the statement said.

45 held for defying election law in Japan

TOKYO, July 20: Police said Tuesday 45 people have been arrested across the nation on suspicion of election law violations before and during Sunday's general election for the lower house, reports AP.

The National Police Agency said the allegations included vote-buying, door-to-door canvassing, which is banned in Japan, and other illegal practices.

10 Shining Path rebels killed

LIMA, July 20: An anti-terrorist police patrol killed at least 10 members of the Shining Path guerrilla organization in a clash in Northern Peru, officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

In the incident Friday near the community of San Marcos, the so-called "Sinchis" patrol also captured eight members of the rebel group and wounded 10, said Colonel Eduardo Mendoza.

In a separate incident Saturday, police said three members of a family were slain in an attack by a Shining Path death squad in the southeastern Peruvian community of Carmen Alto, near Ayacucho.

Cong-I wooing Janata Dal to survive no-confidence

NEW DELHI, July 20: India's ruling Congress(I) party is trying to win over a small opposition group that holds the key to the survival of the two-year-old government, political sources said today, reports AFP.

Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's emissaries have been talking this week with leaders of the Janata Dal-people's party of Ajit Singh which has 20 members of parliament and has been blowing hot and cold over the government's fate.

The Congress(I) lacks a majority in the Lower House and believes that Ajit Singh's group will play a crucial role when two no-confidence motions sponsored by the opposition come up for a vote in parliament next week.

"Ajit Singh holds the balance. No wonder the government is frantically after him," communist leader A B Bardhan said today.

"If Ajit Singh supports us, the government will not survive," added Sushma Swaraj of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the main opposition party which has 119 members of parliament in the 545-member Lok Sabha, the Lower House of parliament.

"Ajit Singh is the material factor, very important," she added.

The Congress(I) and the opposition are nearly evenly matched in parliament numbers, but minor opposition groups have tilted the balance previously by voting for the government.

Both the BJP and an alliance of the Centrist National Front and Left Front are to move separate no-confidence motions, mainly focusing on charges that Rao took a huge payoff from Bombay stockbroker Harshad Mehta in 1991.

Ajit Singh, whose Janata Dal broke away from a larger centrist opposition party of the same name in 1991, has kept the Congress(I) in suspense on the likely stand of his group.

Rasheed Masood, Ajit Singh's lieutenant, said the Janata Dal would decide on the no-confidence motion when parliament reopens on July 26.

"If we find there is a case in Harshad Mehta's allegation, we will certainly vote against the government," said Masood, a member of parliament.

"It is not that we think Rao has taken the money (from Mehta). Unfortunately people at large seem to believe the charge."

The Prime Minister has lost credibility," Masood said. "The government's fate is hanging in balance."

On Monday, the Congress(I) scotched rumours that there was a possibility of the Ajit Singh group being inducted into the government.

"There is no question of a coalition government," party spokesman Vithal Gadgil said, adding that the Congress(I) also had no plans to replace Rao, 72, as its leader.

Rao has been under attack from the opposition since Mehta, the prime suspect in a 1.3 billion dollar bank and securities scam, claimed in June that he gave 10 million rupees (333,000 dollars) to the Prime Minister in November 1991.

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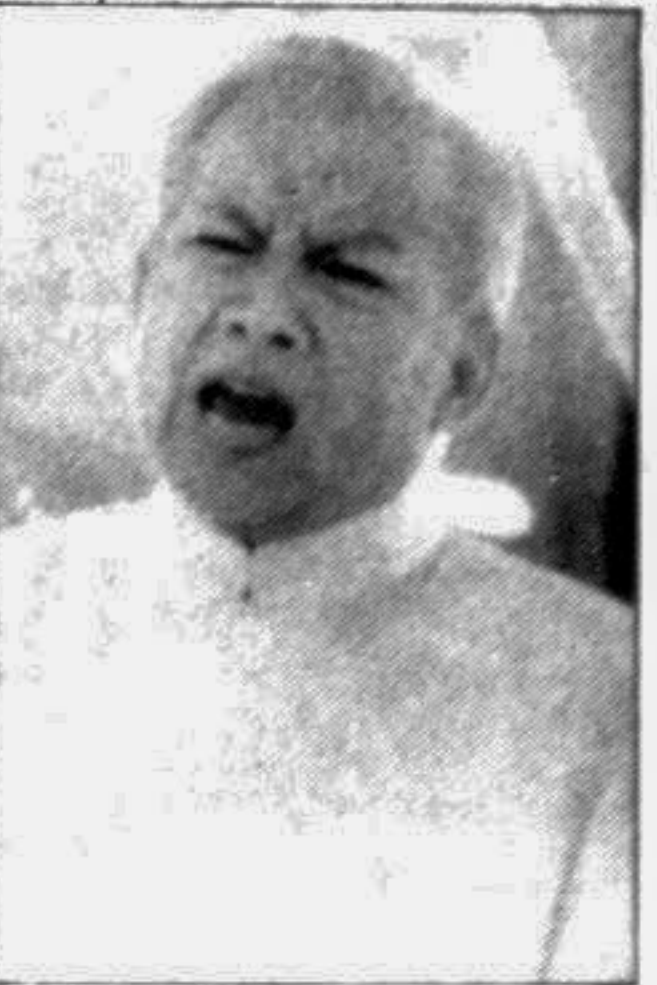
Sihanouk won't hold talks with Khmer Rouge leaders

BEIJING, July 20: Prince Norodom Sihanouk announced here today he had abandoned plans to hold talks with Khmer Rouge leaders, blaming US pressure that was pushing him towards a "mental asylum," reports AFP.

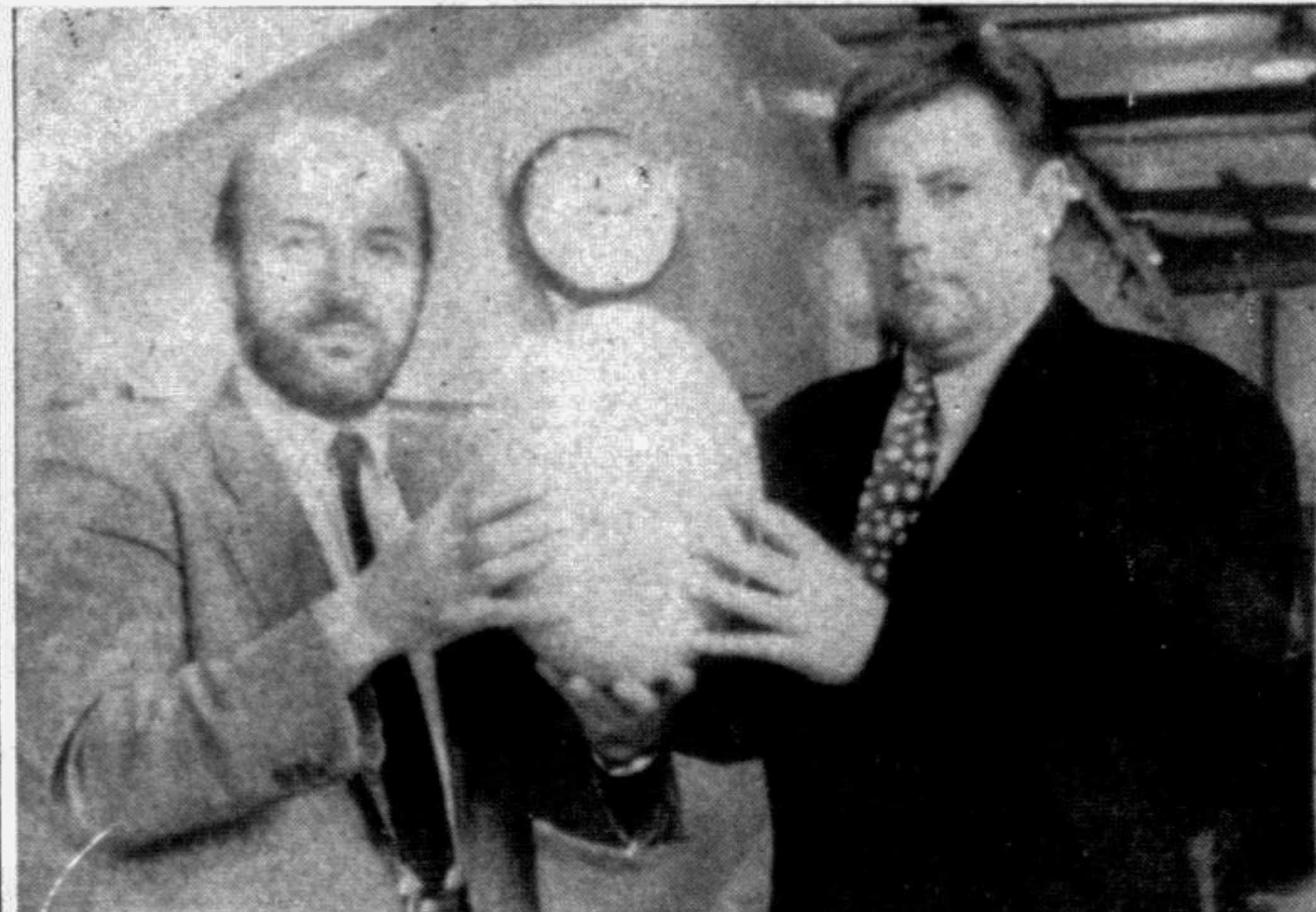
In a statement issued by the Prince's secretariat here, he slammed the United States for its threats of hostile measures should he or the Cambodian government form any alliance with the radical faction.

"In spite of my repeated statements, the USA continues to threaten Cambodia (unofficially) with all sorts of hostile measures should the Khmer Rouge be accepted by me or the Cambodian government as government members or advisers or members of the Cambodia National Army," the statement said.

The Prince said he had always fought against foreign interference in Cambodia's affairs.



Prince Norodom Sihanouk



SYDNEY Scientists from the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) Dr Claudio Tuniz (L) and John Bell (R) hold a 2,000 year old egg from the ancient elephant bird of Madagascar in Sydney on Monday. The giant egg, which was discovered by three children in Western Australia, measures 80cm (32 inches) in circumference and has a capacity of 7.3 litres—equivalent to 150 chicken eggs.

UN to withdraw personnel from Cambodia by Nov 15

UNITED NATIONS, July 20: UN civilian and military personnel in Cambodia will be withdrawn by November 15, UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali said Monday, reports AFP.

The UN team in Cambodia "has performed its function credibly and has now begun the process of withdrawing," he said in a report to the Security Council.

The United Nations' tenure in Cambodia has been stormy. Two Japanese participants were killed, one in April and the second in May.

As recently as last week, three UN helicopters were fired at and Khmer Rouge guerrillas killed two children, injured several people and blew up two bridges in a series of attacks in Northern Cambodia, according to UN spokesman Eric Falt in Cambodia.

The 16,000 peacekeepers in Cambodia are scheduled to withdraw in phases between August 1 and November 15. The Indonesian and French contingents will be the last to pull out.

The civilian UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) "will continue to discharge its tasks fully and faithfully until the end of its mandate (in August) and to do everything possible to assist the Cambodian parties to consolidate the positive results of the election and complete the process of adopting a constitution and establishing a new government," Boutros-Ghali said.

The United Nations supervised the peace process and elections in May that created a provisional government headed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk and elected a constituent assembly.

During the transitional period before a new government can be installed, the constituent assembly elected in May must adopt a new charter and transform itself into a legislative assembly.

Boutros-Ghali asked that measures be taken to assure the rest of the transition goes smoothly.

He has said that he hopes the international community responds generously to provide the 20 million dollars in aid Cambodia needs to restructure its government bureaucracy and rebuild after its prolonged civil war.

The security council was scheduled to consider the Secretary General's report today and was expected to approve his recommendation.

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Strike paralyses Kashmir

NEW DELHI, July 20: A general strike called by Muslim militants to demand independence from India paralysed the Kashmir valley today, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said, reports AFP.

Shops and businesses, government offices, banks, post offices and educational institutions were shut and all transport went off the roads in the Muslim-majority region, the news agency said.

There were no reports of violence.

PTI said the rebels announced a curfew in Kashmir "to demonstrate and make it clear that the people of Kashmir are fighting for their basic rights and their struggle would continue till their demand is accepted."

Australia calls for Suu Kyi's release

CANBERRA, July 20: Australia called for the release of Myanmar opposition leader Aun San Suu Kyi today as the Nobel laureate began her fifth year under house arrest in Yangon, reports Reuters.

Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans said all Myanmar political prisoners should be set free and dialogue was needed between all leading political figures to encourage democracy and reconciliation.

"While the Myanmar State Law and Order Restoration Council has taken some limited steps towards political reform since April 1992, there are no clear indications that it is any closer to transferring power to a civil administration," Evans said in a statement.

Myanmar's military seized power in 1988 after brutally crushing a pro-democracy movement and refused to step down after Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a general election in May 1990.

It was vital that Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest in Yangon since July 1989 and won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991, take part in such talks, Evans said.

Guerillas rocket SLA militia posts

MARJAYOUN, Lebanon, July 20: Guerillas fired rockets and mortars at an Israeli allied militia outpost in southern Lebanon Tuesday, said a UN officer. Other sources reported retaliatory shelling of nearby villages, reports AP.

None of the South Lebanon Army militiamen was hurt in the early morning barrage of their hilltop position at Shoumarieh, inside Israel's self-styled security zone along the border.

Security sources who requested anonymity said the SLA gunners struck back with 120mm mortar rounds on a string of predominantly Shiite Muslim villages facing Shoumarieh.

There was no immediate word on casualties from the reported SLA shelling and no claim of responsibility for the attack on the militia post.

Pro-Iranian Shiite fundamentalists of Hezbollah, or Party of God, have been fighting to dislodge Israeli troops from the occupied border strip.

Both Hezbollah and Palestinian guerrillas possess Katyusha rockets. An officer with the UN peacekeeping force, speaking on condition of anonymity, reported six of the

US gambling hits record \$ 330b in '92

WASHINGTON: The total betting of gambling in the United States hit a record 330 billion US dollars in 1992, a report reaching here said Tuesday, reports Xinhua.

The money, 76 per cent of which came from table games and slot machines, represented an increase of 8.4 per cent over 1991, the report of Gaming and Wagering Business Magazine said in its latest issue.

The nation's centers of casinos in Las Vegas of Nevada state and Atlantic City of New Jersey garnered 50 per cent and 22 per cent respectively of last year's total betting.

Other forms of gambling include lotteries, parimutuel wagering, Indian reservations clubs, the bet in card rooms, bingo parlors and charitable games.

Germany will send troops to Somalia

BONN, July 20: Germany said Monday it would go ahead with sending troops to join UN forces in Somalia, despite warnings from within the ruling coalition that the government should reconsider the move after recent events there, reports AFP.

A government spokesman told reporters, "the position of the Foreign Ministry ... is relatively clear: in view of the current preparations and the situation on the ground, our participation in UNOSOM-II will continue as planned."

But Christian Democrat foreign affairs spokesman, Karl Lammer called for Germany to "ask for the UN mandate in Mogadishu to be spelt out as quickly as possible" in the wake of the recent US-led attack.

Otherwise, he said, "there will be a new situation, which could make a withdrawal of German troops necessary."

Members of the Free

Democrats, a member of the ruling coalition led by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats, have called for the departure to be delayed or even cancelled because of recent events.

"The situation has changed dramatically," said FDP defense expert Olaf Feldmann. Another FDP member, Juergen Kopelman, said the departure should be delayed for two weeks.

Some 250 German troops are to leave Wednesday for Somalia, the first of a 1,700-man contingent to be deployed by mid-August in the Belet Huen region 300 kilometers (200 miles) northwest of Mogadishu.

The deployment will be the first armed mission by German forces outside the framework of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization since the end of World War II.

Off the Record

Father shakes 3-month old son to death

SALT LAKE CITY: A man who insisted for seven years that his infant son had been kidnapped admitted he shook the boy to death and tossed the weighted body into a river, reports AP on Tuesday.

Steven Ray James, 41, confessed during a preliminary hearing Monday after striking a plea bargain. He is charged with murder but will plead guilty in August to manslaughter and perjury, which carry one-to-15-year sentences.

He said he lost his temper when his 3-month-old son would not stop crying one morning in 1986. "I got frustrated and shook my son," he said. "Lahook him kind of hard. Hard enough that it scared me."

When he realized his son was dead, he weighted the child's blanket with rocks and threw the body in the river, he said. He then reported the child had been kidnapped from a parking lot. Hunters found the body three months later.

Birds have descended from fish?

URUMQI: A book newly published here claims that birds are the direct descendants of fishes, reports Xinhua.

The author, retired teacher of Geography, Hai Tao, based his theory on studies of bird fossil he had found dating back 270 million years ago in northwest China's Xinjing Uygur autonomous region.

Hai said that the fossils were 120 million years earlier than Archaeopteryx fossils discovered in Germany in the last century. The Archaeopteryx is believed to have been the ancestor of modern birds.

According to Hai, the new species, described as having both fins and wings, symbolized a "critical state" of evolution from fishes to birds.

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British army announces phased withdrawal from HK

HONG KONG, July 20: After 150 years of protecting Hong Kong, largely from Chinese illegal immigrants flooding across the border, the British army announced details today of its final withdrawal, to let the Chinese in, reports AFP.

The Ministry of Defence announced plans for the phased withdrawal of all British troops, to leave just a symbolic rump in the run up to July 1, 1997, when the Chinese flag goes up in Hong Kong.

The British pullout, outlined by armed forces Minister Jeremy Hanley in London Monday, has long been accepted, but fears remain over the stationing here of the China's People's Liberation Army (PLA).

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Magsaysay Award for Indian doctor

MANILA, July 20: The Ramon Magsaysay Award for public service will be given to Banoo Coyaji, an Indian woman doctor who trained rural people in public health, first aid and livelihood projects, the awards body announced Monday, reports AP.

Coyaji is the director of the King Edward Memorial Hospital in Pune, India. She earned her doctor's degree in obstetrics and gynecology.

In 1977, Coyaji launched a rural health programme in the impoverished state of Maharashtra, training villagers in sanitation, hygiene, nutrition and family planning.