

BRIEFLY

Arafat arrives in Pyongyang:

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived in Pyongyang Monday for a goodwill visit to North Korea, the Korean central news agency reported, Reuter says from Tokyo.

6 kids die in Philadelphia fire:

Six of eight children left unsupervised died in a fire that engulfed their rowhouse early Sunday, officials said, AP reports from Philadelphia.

Police found an 11-year-old boy and his 8-year-old sister outside the two-story house, said Battalion Chief Charles Lindsey. They were treated at a hospital for minor smoke inhalation and released.

Black box of Chinese plane found:

Chinese investigators have found one of two black boxes from a domestic passenger plane that crashed while taking off, killing 59 people, officials news reports said Monday, AP reports from Beijing.

The box was fished out of a lake where the plane landed and broke apart, the Xinhua News Agency said, and presumably will be studied to help determine the cause of the crash last Friday.

No officials comment has been made on the cause, but that is not unusual. China rarely discloses the specific reasons for plane crashes. After five crashes last year killed a total of 310 people, official news reports vaguely blamed slack safety controls and violations of operating regulations, but gave no details.

15 killed as train hits bus in Java:

A passenger train slammed into a bus at a crossing in East Java, killed at least 15 people and severely injuring 20, a newspaper reported Sunday, AP reports from Jakarta.

The mass circulation Kompas quoted Col Edi Sukarno, Chief of the local police, as saying the crossing gate had been left open by the guard, who apparently was sleeping. It said the guard had been detained for interrogation.

The inter-city bus was carrying 38 people when the Jakarta-Surabaya train hit it at dawn Saturday in the district of Jombang, about 825 kilometers (516 miles) east of Jakarta, the paper added.

Peres cancels Paris trip:

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres cancelled a two-day trip to Paris Monday to deal with clashes between Israeli and Arab guerrillas in Lebanon, the Foreign Ministry said, Reuter reports from Jerusalem.

Israeli Prime Ministers Yitzhak Rabin requested that all cabinet ministers remain in Jerusalem as fierce clashes entered a second day.

Peres was due to make a two-day private visit that included meetings with European Commission President Jacques Delors, French President Francois Mitterrand and several French ministers.

10 whites killed as black gunmen attack church

CAPE TOWN, July 26: Black gunmen fired automatic rifles and lobbed hand grenades at a stunned church congregation Sunday night killing 10 white worshippers and wounding more than 50, reports AP.

The massacre at the St James Church of England in a quiet, middle-class suburb of Cape Town was one of the deadliest attacks ever against white civilians.

"It was an absolute horror," Trevor Adams, one of the worshippers, told The Associated Press. "People were screaming and crying." Blood streaked several aisles in the church and some of the worshippers wailed hysterically in the street outside.

The attack came the night before black and white political

parties planned to unveil a preliminary draft of a new, post-apartheid constitution.

There was no claim of responsibility or proof that the attack was linked to the negotiations. However, a number of recent massacres against both blacks and whites have come on the eve of important political breakthroughs.

The attacks against whites have not disrupted negotiations, but have outraged whites and heightened racial tensions as the country prepares for its first multi-racial election next April.

Police said five black assailants barged in a side door of the packed church as the Rev Ross Anderson was preparing to address more than 1,000 worshippers in Cape Town's Kenilworth suburb.

3,000 ethnic Rwandans killed in Zaire

NAIROBI, July 26: About 3,000 ethnic Rwandans have been killed in fighting in areas of eastern Zaire bordering Rwanda, the rebel Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

The RPF's radio Muhabura monitored in Nairobi quoted reports from Goma, main town of Zaire's Kivu province, for the figure but did not say over what period it referred.

Ethnic clashes have intensified in the area in the past month, prompting Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko to send units of his personal guard there to protect local officials.

Reports from the remote region earlier this month spoke of 3,000 dead in the past three months in fighting between indigenous Nyanga and Bahunde tribes and Rwandan immigrants.

Sunday's radio report said 150,000 people had fled across the border into Rwanda to escape the fighting.

According to the broadcast, many Rwandans had sought refuge in mission centres. It quoted the Roman Catholic bishop of Goma as saying many of the refugees were dying of hunger, malnutrition and other ailments.

Liberia's warring factions sign peace accord

COTONOU, July 26: Liberia's warring factions signed a peace accord in Benin on Sunday paving the way for multi-party elections early next year, reports Reuter.

The signing at the presidency building in Cotonou, on the eve of Liberia independence day, came after three days of tough negotiations over details of an agreement reached between the three factions last weekend in Geneva.

Enoch Dogolea, Vice-President of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front for Liberia (NPPFL), said his faction would observe an immediate ceasefire. "On behalf of my government and because our independence day is tomorrow, we cease fire immediately as of this minute," he said at the ceremony which ended with delegates singing the Liberian national anthem.

Mississippi breaks through levee, floods 44,000 acres

ST LOUIS, Missouri, July 26: The swollen Mississippi river broke through a major levee on Sunday, flooding thousands of acres, as volunteers worked feverishly to contain the devastating floods that have killed 41 people in the last six weeks, reports Reuter.

"We have more than a disaster, we have a calamity," Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy said after touring the region.

Flood damage was so extensive that the administration will ask Congress for 5 billion dollars in aid — double the previous request — but that still would not be enough, he said.

Flood waters from the Mississippi broke through a northern section of the 54-kilometer (33-mile) Sny Island levee, flooding 44,000 acres (18,000 hectares) of farmland. The levee begins about 12 miles (19 km) south of Quincy, Illinois. Four

Serb attack on UN troops shatters peace move

SARAJEVO, July 26: Nearly 70 tank and mortar rounds slammed into a base for UN peacekeepers in Sarajevo on Sunday, shattering the latest attempt to bring peace to Bosnia, reports AP.

The base commander said it was a direct Serb attack, and UN officials were trying to contact the Bosnian Serb commander to protest and demand an explanation.

"It is a miracle no one was killed or wounded," said a UN spokesman, Cmdr Barry Frewer.

Frewer said the attack consisted of at least 68 rounds, which destroyed four UN vehicles and damaged eight at the base, the operations center for 150 French peacekeepers brought in to help set up the Sarajevo "safe area."

"This was direct fire. It was not an accident," said the base commander, Col Roger Duburg of France.

Frewer said the United Nations believed it was a Serb attack because "it's coming from their direction. We know there are tanks in the area."

UN soldiers did not return fire, and Frewer said there would be no retaliation for the incident.

But "if this would ever happen again, we are prepared to react in the strongest way," he said.

Earlier, an obviously angry Duburg had suggested retaliatory air strikes could be ordered under the latest Security Council resolution on Bosnia. That resolution created Bosnia's six "safe areas," including Sarajevo, and authorized UN air

strikes if peacekeepers were attacked.

Before the attack, shelling subsided around Sarajevo as an accord to halt military offensives by Bosnia's warring factions took effect a day after heavy Serb attacks on forces of the Muslim-led government.

All three sides quickly claimed their foes broke the accord, which seeks to halt shelling of civilian areas and attacks aimed at gaining territory. UN officials have said isolated small arms fire would not be treated as violations. A UN spokesman in Zagreb, Croatia said military observers in northern Bosnia reported heavy artillery shelling of the Brcko area along Bosnia's northern war front. Some 500-600 artillery rounds and 100 tank shells were recorded south of

Brcko by Sunday afternoon, they said. Serbs have been seeking to secure the area to link their territory in the east and the west.

Bosnian radio said the civilian death toll was 40. The radio accused Serbs of violating the new accord, which took effect at 10 am (0800 GMT) Sunday, by shelling government positions on Zuc mountain outside Sarajevo. Low-level, sporadic shelling could be heard in the city coming from the hills ringing it.

Serb commanders in the eastern town of Bratunac accused government forces of breaking the agreement by trying to infiltrate small groups of soldiers into the Muslim enclave of Zepa, the Yugoslav news agency Tanjug said.



LONDON: One of a huge archive of Beatles photographs taken by Terry Spencer, a photographer for Life magazine, which is expected to fetch up to 74,000 US dollars in a Sotheby's sale of Beatles memorabilia in London on July 29. From left to right are Paul McCartney, George Harrison, John Lennon and Ringo Starr. —Photo: AFP/UNB

Russian troops continue shelling Afghan villages

TAKHAR, Afghanistan, July 26: The heavy artillery bombardment of Afghan villages by Russian military forces stationed on the Amu Darya river continued for the 11th successive day Sunday, eyewitnesses reported, reports AFP.

In the northeastern Afghan province of Takhar, the approximately 100 kilometers (62 miles) stretch along the Amu Darya river border with neighboring Tajikistan, has been paralysed due to the shelling. Local traffic cannot use border roads and a conservatively estimated 140 civilians have been killed or seriously wounded in the 100 kilometers stretch here.

The only way to travel is

through mountain bypasses.

"The worst affected area is Chah-I-Ab, especially Sampti, where six villages have been completely evacuated," Takhar Governor Sayed Ahmad Rumin told AFP.

Chah-I-Ab, a district headquarters, is a small rural town some seven hours' grueling jeep-ride north of the Takhar's provincial capital Taloqan, whose jurisdiction covers the ward of Sampti on the Amu Darya river. "Every night the Russians fire rockets into Afghanistan, sweeping the area along the border," said Qazi Fazuddin, the Afghan Deputy Military Commander in Chah-I-Ab responsible for border security.

He said the weapons used included rockets, heavy mortars, as well as heavy machine guns and even anti-aircraft weapons where the river was narrow.

An AFP reporter saw three Afghan women severely wounded by rocket shrapnel who had been restricted to Sampti for six days with only minor first-aid treatment, was closed for fear of Russian shells.

"Staying alive is one problem, but equally important is trying to rescue the wheat harvest. Some people have gone out of their minds with worry about saving this year's crop," said a farmer who is hiding out in the hills which hug the Amu Darya.

China warns army not to be seduced by capitalism

BEIJING, July 26: China warned its military today that it must not be seduced by capitalism and the love of money into giving up its only true mission — keeping the Communist Party in power, reports Reuter.

China's two top-ranked military officers said the military must not be defeated by the easy living and money-making opportunities brought about by economic reforms.

The article by the Vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission, generals Liu Huangqing and Zhang Zhe, dominated the front page of the army's newspaper and was

prominent in the Communist Party newspaper, the People's Daily.

"As we open wider to the outside world and study and borrow the advanced science and technology management methods of capitalism, the corrupt thoughts and lifestyles of capitalism will seize the opportunity to enter as well," the officers wrote.

China's rulers have turned to experiments in capitalist-style markets in order to raise living standards and avoid the fate of communist parties in the former Soviet Union and eastern Europe.

But while the elderly men who still make the key decisions in China have vowed never to give up political control. The very market-oriented reforms they are using have weakened their ability to command absolute loyalty and obedience from China's 1.2 billion people.

The two generals warned that China's military, which has always been under the absolute command of the Communist Party, was now itself under threat.

Political analysts believe the military will be a key player in the transition period

Gorbachev calls for early polls in Russia

BONN, July 26: Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev called on Sunday for early elections in Russia to end a standoff between President Boris Yeltsin and his conservative foes in parliament, reports Reuter.

Gorbachev, visiting the Bavarian city of Bayreuth, said the confrontation between Yeltsin and anti-reform forces was fuelling the growth of radical and reactionary groups.

"There has been a stalemate situation for too long," Gorbachev said in a televised news conference.

"The way out of this stalemate is through calling early election."

Yeltsin cut short his summer holiday and returned to Moscow on Sunday after parliament passed a flurry of challenges to the president.

US troops kill 3 Somali gunmen

MOGADISHU, July 26: US forces killed three Somali gunmen in two incidents south of the Somali capital Mogadishu overnight, a UN spokesman said today, reports Reuter.

The spokesman told reporters that in one incident Somali gunmen attacked US forces on patrol with grenades. The US troops, part of the UN peacekeepers in Somalia, returned fire killing one. None of the US servicemen were hit.

In another incident, a cobra attack helicopter from the US quick reaction force attacked and destroyed a Technical battle truck which had fired at it. Two Somalis inside the truck were killed.

UN officials say up to 10 US servicemen with the multinational force in Somalia have been wounded in attacks by Somali gunmen in the past week.

Aideed offers \$1m for killing Jonathan Howe

WASHINGTON, July 26: Somali warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed is offering one million dollars for the assassination of retired US admiral Jonathan Howe, the United Nations' special envoy to Somalia, according to Time magazine, reports AFP.

In its August 2 issue to be released Monday, Time cited the US intelligence as the source for information about the plot against Howe, an outspoken critic of Aideed.

The United Nations has offered a 25,000-dollar reward for information leading to the capture of the Somali general, who has been held responsible for the killing of 24 Pakistani peacekeepers on June 5.

Sihanouk asks Hun Sen, Ranariddh to open talks with Khmer Rouge

PHNOM PENH, July 26: Head of state Prince Norodom Sihanouk has called on Cambodia's two co-presidents to begin talks with the radical Khmer Rouge to help end what he called the "partitioning" of the country, the palace said today, reports Reuter.

A statement by Sihanouk authorised his son, Royalist Party leader Prince Norodom Ranariddh, and Hun Sen, former Phnom Penh Prime Minister, to open talks if they felt this was "likely to bring peace and resolve the problem of the partitioning of Cambodia."

Sihanouk, now in Beijing, last week cancelled a proposed September meeting with nominal Khmer Rouge leader Khieu Samphan, citing US threats to withhold aid from any government that contained Khmer Rouge ministers or advisers.

The "round table" was expected to debate plans for the inclusion of members of the Khmer Rouge as advisers in the new government.

Khieu Samphan, had promised, in return, to open up the guerrilla-held zones and join his forces with Cambodia's new unified army.

At least one million people were killed by starvation, disease and executions during the Khmer Rouge's experiment with total communism when it ruled in the 1970s.

The Khmer Rouge boycotted UN-supervised elections in May, held as part of a tortuous peace process under a peace accord signed in Paris in 1991.

In a separate development, an Australian member of the UN peacekeeping force shot and killed a Cambodian policeman early today.

Off the Record

Manila bans nudity on beaches

MANILA: A small Philippine town has banned foreign tourists from walking nude on its beaches after residents complained they were scandalised by the behaviour, reports Reuter.

The state-run Philippines News Agency said on Sunday Santa Fe town on Bantayan island had passed a resolution banning nudity on beaches. The island in Cebu province, 500 km (300 miles) south of Manila, is popular for its white beaches.

A tourism official said the ban might pose a problem because while the government and the private sector are trying to sell Cebu's resort towns, some residents are acting "prudishly".

"We can't afford to be prudish and sell tourism at the same time," the agency quoted the unnamed official as saying.

Most married man to marry most married woman

INDIANAPOLIS: It's a match made in the Guinness Book of Records, reports AP.

The world's most married man celebrated his 85th birthday Sunday by preparing for his next wedding — to the world's most married woman.

Glynn "Scotty" Wolfe plans to unite in wedlock with Linda Lou Essex, 53, of Anderson, as soon as she can fly to his home in Blythe, Calif. Wolfe has been married 27 times, and Essex is a veteran of 22 marriages.

Both are listed in the record book as having the most monogamous marriages. However, Wolfe also is listed as having died in 1991.

"That was a surprise that I'm supposed to have passed away," Wolfe said Sunday. But he added, "I've been in heaven all the time."

Wolfe met Essex four years ago on a television talk show featuring Joan Rivers. Another TV show, "A Current Affair," took the couple to Las Vegas 1 1/2 years ago, hoping to get them paired up there.

But at that time, Wolfe's divorce from wife No 27 wasn't final. So Wolfe said he gave Essex a diamond engagement ring to add to her recollection, and made plans to marry her soon after she moves to California next month.

Essex said she doesn't "give a hoot about the umpteen thousands of dollars" the couple might get from public appearances as the world's most married couple.

Flood death toll rises to 1,612 in Nepal

KATHMANDU, July 26: The death toll in Nepal's worst floods in six decades rose to 1,612 Sunday, a Home Ministry official said, adding that the number of victims could rise as high as 3,000, reports AFP.

"The death toll may still rise to more than 3,000, if we collect all the reports from all the flood affected districts of the Kingdom," the official said.

"This kind of natural calamity has never taken place in Nepal in 100 years," the official said of the five days of incessant rains that has caused severe flooding and landslides across the Himalayan kingdom.

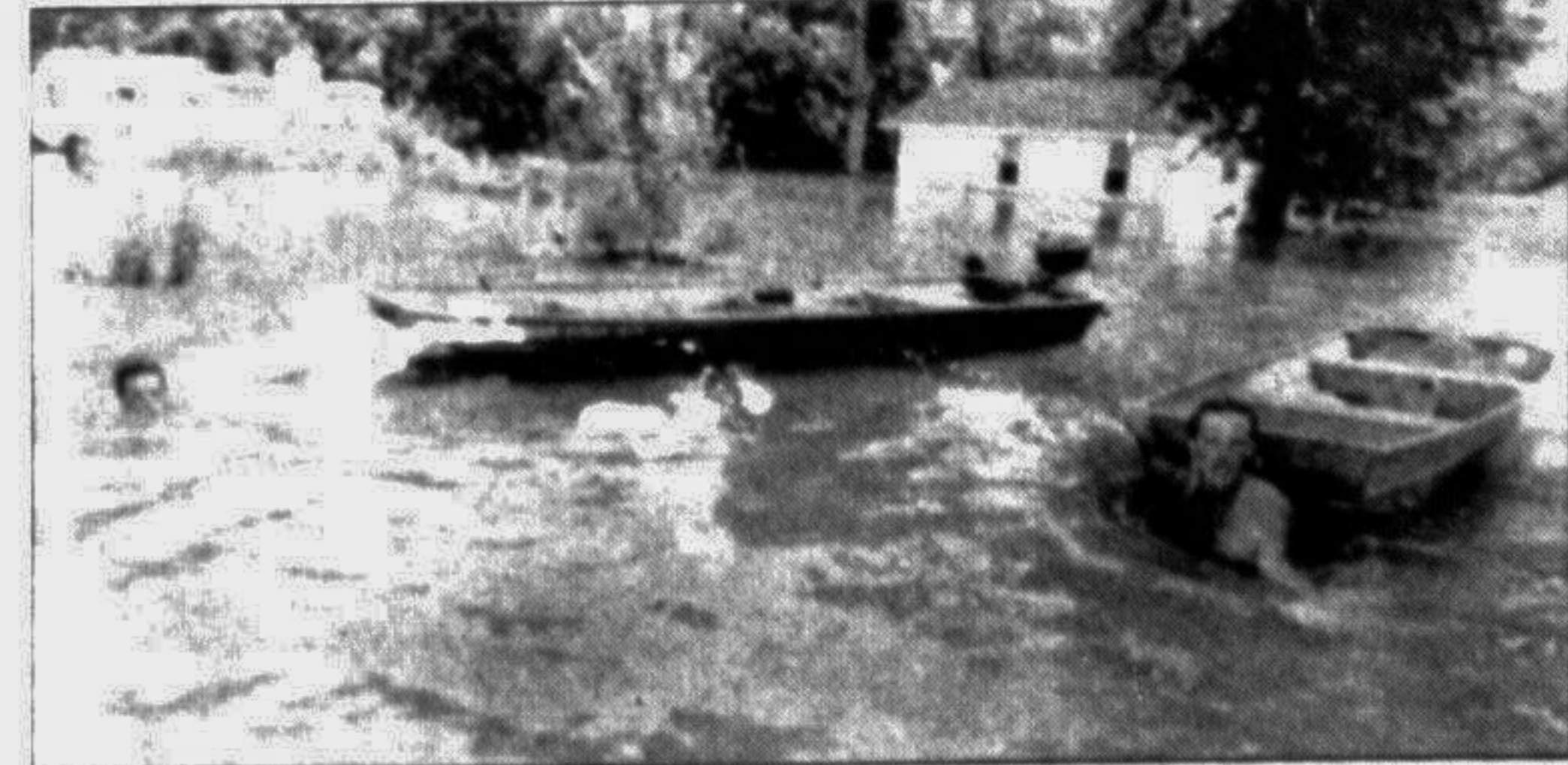
More than half a million

hectares farmland with standing paddy crops were washed away, which will gravely threaten food supplies for the coming winter.

Home Ministry Secretary, Bhoj Raj Pokharel told newsmen on Sunday that 744 bodies had been recovered and 868 were missing, all presumed dead.

Asked if there was any possibility of the missing being found alive, Pokharel said: "There is no single evidence so far of their being alive."

He said that some 10,000 villagers and 33 foreigners of unknown nationalities, marooned in different parts of the country had been rescued.



MISSOURI: Larry Meyer (R) and Kurt Westmoreland pull their boats through the flooded streets of Portage des Sioux on July 24. After more rain in Missouri, Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska this weekend, officials are predicting another crest in the Mississippi river next week. —Photo: AFP/UNB

Indonesian troops kill 2 rebels

JAKARTA, July 26: Indonesian troops killed two separatist rebels and injured eight others in the first such reported clash in the troubled province of Aceh in up to two years, the Suara Pembaruan newspaper said today, reports Reuter.

It quoted Colonel Sridono, the local district commander in Indonesia's northernmost province, as saying that a unit of soldiers ambushed the guerrillas in a small village in Matangkuli district last Thursday.

The injured guerrillas escaped.

The afternoon report did not give further details. Diplomats have estimated that hundreds of people were killed at the height of a separatist rebellion in the province between 1980 and 1992.