

BRIEFLY

Singapore's PM arrives in Hanoi:

Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chock Tong arrived in Hanoi on Wednesday for a five-day visit in a bid to strengthen trade and economic relations between the two countries, Xinhua reports from Hanoi.

Shortly after his arrival, Goh and Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet signed an accord on exemption of dual taxation. Goh's delegation, which includes ministers in charge of economic affairs and business leaders, then held talks with Vietnamese officials.

Before their meeting, Vo Van Kiet stressed that Goh's visit to Vietnam signalled a new development in friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries.

Kozyrev to meet Christopher:

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev will meet with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Vladivostok on March 14, the Foreign Ministry said Thursday, AP reports from Moscow.

The meeting in Russia's Far East comes amid rising tension between Russia and the United States over the CIA spy scandal and differences in the former Yugoslavia.

Russia, a traditional ally of the orthodox Serbs, strongly condemned NATO's threat to bomb Serb positions around Sarajevo and has intensified its diplomatic efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the war in Bosnia.

Russian plane crashes, 1 killed:

A Russian MiG-23 fighter plane crashed Wednesday on two houses in southeastern Russia, killing one inhabitant, the ITAR-Tass news agency reported. AFP reports from Moscow.

The aircraft crashed near Kursk while trying to land, the agency said, citing the ministry for civil defence and emergencies, which said the pilot ejected shortly before the crash.

Thailand frees 14 Cambodians:

The Thai navy released on Tuesday 14 Cambodian sailors held after a skirmish in the Gulf of Thailand on February, according to local newspaper The Nation Thursday. Xinhua reports from Bangkok.

The 14 Cambodians including their commander were handed over to Cambodian Vice Admiral Tea Win, a military source said.

The Cambodians were captured after a clash on February 19 when three Thai navy gunboats went to help Thai fishermen who said they were robbed by Cambodian pirates.

CIS summit in Moscow Mar 31:

The next summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States will be held in Moscow on March 31, Uzbek President Islam Krimov said on Wednesday. Reuter reports from Moscow.

Karimov was speaking after a meeting with Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

The CIS, a loose grouping of 12 former Soviet Republics, held its last summit in the central Asian republic of Turkmenistan in December.

29 hurt as plane skids off runway at NY airport

NEW YORK, Mar 3: A continental Airlines plane with 116 people aboard skidded off a runway at New York's LaGuardia Airport during a snowstorm Wednesday evening, police officials said, reports Reuter.

Twenty-nine people were injured in the aborted takeoff that left two-thirds of the McDonnell Douglas MD-80's cracked fuselage dangling over the frigid waters of the East River. The airport remained closed on Thursday said a police spokesman for the port authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates all three of the city's airports.

"We expect it to open around 4 am or 5 am (0900 to 1000 GMT)," said the spokesman.

Investigators from the national transportation safety board were at the airport probing the accident involving continental flight 795 to Denver, Colorado. It was the third in less than five years involving an airliner taking off and the second in two years that happened during blizzards.

The city's ambulance service rushed seven of the injured to area hospitals.

German firms help Libya build N-Plant

BONN, Mar 3: German television said on Wednesday that German firms delivered equipment to Libya to build a big underground plant to produce weapons of mass destruction, reports Reuter.

ZDF television said the alleged biological and chemical weapons plant was under construction or had been completed in an underground tunnel system 65 KM (40 miles) southeast of Tripoli.

"It is probably the biggest underground weapons arsenal of the third world," ZDF said in a press release.

The report said German prosecutors were investigating whether the unidentified firms in Frankfurt, Darmstadt and Stuttgart violated federal export laws in providing Libya with construction equipment and blueprints.

Germany plugged loopholes in its laws on the export of dual-use goods after German companies helped Libya to build a chemical plant at Rabat in 1988 and enabled Iraq to extend the range of Scud missiles in the 1991 Gulf War.

The television report, which could not be confirmed,

360 children die everyday in Uganda

KAMPALA, Mar 3: An estimated 360 children die everyday in Uganda, the director of the country's medical services, Dr. Kihumuroapuuli has said, reports Xinhua.

Speaking at a quality assurance workshop for the ministry of health here recently, he said 40 per cent of Uganda's children are malnourished while 23 per cent stunted in growth.

Earlier, Dr. Frank Omaswa from the ministry of health, had disclosed over 100 out of every 1,000 children born in Uganda die below the age of five years while 85 or every 1,000 mothers die soon after delivery.

Muslim-Croat pact creates a chance for peace in Bosnia

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia, Mar 3: Building a federation between Croats and Muslims creates a chance for peace in Bosnia but doesn't solve the central problem in the former Yugoslavia: Serb-Croat relations, reports AP.

It actually may encourage a de facto division of Bosnia by Croats and Serbs. And it could send those two groups, combatants in a 1991 war, back to the battlefield — this time with even more at stake.

Under a US brokered plan signed Tuesday, Muslims and Croats, former allies who have fought bitterly for months are to establish a federation in Bosnia with close ties to neighbouring Croatia.

Any such arrangement would see the Bosnian Croats and Muslims gravitate toward Croatia because of economic ties, the bonds with Bosnia's Croatian minority, and each group's history of troubled relations, reports AP.

Croatia, economically stronger before the war and relatively less devastated than Bosnia, would dominate.

Although the United States hopes to entice Serbs into the deal as well, the plan actually provides them an opportunity to reach their war's final goal: creation of a Balkan land uniting all Serbs.

That would include the 70 per cent of Bosnia and 30 per cent of Croatia that the Serbs now hold.

Serb politicians insist they have nothing against the Muslim-Croat union as long as Serbs keep their war-won territories. For Muslims and Croats, losers on the battlefield, the return of Serb-held lands or Serb participation in the agreement is key.

"With numerous unresolved territorial and political disputes, the Serbs and Croats are bound to square off on the battlefield again," said Radivoj Cvetkovic, an analyst for the independent Belgrade daily Borba.

Serbs and Croats were the biggest groups in the former Yugoslavia, and their relations have always been pivotal in the region's turbulent history. The

bloody breakup of Yugoslavia started when Serbia and Croatia failed to resolve their disputes.

Serbia's nationalist President Slobodan Milosevic, however, has worked closely with his Croatian counterpart Franjo Tudjman, on the division of Bosnia, hoping to build on it to settle their disputes over Croatian territory.

But under the threat of sanctions against Croatia for meddling in the Bosnian war, Tudjman reluctantly agreed to the Muslim-Croat union. This left Milosevic with an unexpected and much desired present: Greater Serbia.

The Muslim-Croat agreement could cement the cur-

rent situation in Bosnia by creating a treacherous peace without a final political solution.

Cvetkovic cautioned that a new conflict could be especially dangerous now that the United States and Russia are actively engaged.

"The stakes, with Americans possibly supporting Muslims and Croats, and Russians the Serbs, could be much, much higher," he said.

Russia, a traditional Orthodox Serb ally, and the United States recently became involved in efforts to end the two-year Bosnian war that has killed more than 2,000,000 people.

Actions by the two powers

appear at times to lack coordination, but they have converged enough to bring some quiet to Bosnia.

The Western allies threatened the Serbs with air raids if they kept their guns around Sarajevo. Then NATO shot down planes violating the UN no-fly zone. Meanwhile, the Russians found a formula under which Bosnian Serbs could remove most of the guns and followed up by persuading them to drop objections to the opening of Tuzla's airport.

But the two powers soon could find themselves at loggerheads over zones of interest in the former Yugoslavia, creating a constant source of tension.

In an earlier speech to the UN Human Rights Commission, Aristede demanded the departure of Haiti's army and police chiefs, blaming them for 5,000 civilian deaths since his ouster.

Aristide rejects UN-brokered deal

GENEVA, Mar 3: Exiled President Jean Bertrand Aristide on Wednesday called for restoration of democracy in Haiti and ruled out any UN-brokered deal that failed to set a date for his return, reports Reuter.

He also urged the UN Security Council to reject a new US draft resolution aimed at breaking a deadlock with the military rulers who overthrew him in a bloody coup in September 1991.

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Off the Record

Miss Universe, 18-year-old Dayana Torres from Puerto Rico poses for the cameras during her three-day visit to London Mar 2 to promote the Miss British Isles 1994 contest, the official preliminary to the Miss Universe Pageant, held here Mar 24.

— AFP photo

Boonville: An armed, drunken ex-convict walked into a military school's cafeteria in search of his estranged wife, said he was "going to kill everyone" and fatally shot two people, police and witnesses said, reports AP.

Then he held two teenagers hostage in a nearby apartment before surrendering peacefully to police Tuesday evening.

Dante D Hayes, 33, was held without bond, charged with first-degree murder in the deaths of his wife's boss and a co-worker, and armed criminal action against the hostages.

Hayes and his wife, Anna, had a fight the night before, according to Sgt. Ron Hedrick of the Missouri State Highway Patrol.

"I think he was going to look for her and they just got in the way," Hedrick said.

Early form of humans lived in China 2 lakh years ago'

NEW YORK: An early form of humans was living in China 200,000 years ago or longer, perhaps co-existing with another forerunner of modern humans, a new study suggests, reports AP.

Scientists estimated the age of a homo sapiens skull found in Liaoning Province by analysing animal teeth found with it.

The so-called Jinnushan skull is among the oldest homo sapiens material found in China, almost as old as some Chinese finds representing Homo erectus, scientists at Peking University in Beijing said.

That raises the possibility that the two species co-existed in China, the scientists said in Thursday's issue of the journal Nature.

While modern humans are called Homo sapiens, the Chinese skull was from an archaic form. Such primitive forms are believed to have lived even longer ago in Europe and Africa.

Mother kills son to save him from 'hell of drugs'

AIX-EN-PROVENCE, France: A prosecutor asked for a five-year suspended sentence at the trial Wednesday of a woman who said she shot her son to death to deliver him from "the hell of drugs," reports AP.

If Anne-Marie Siano were acquitted, "She could never assume the weight of her own guilt, of her responsibility," prosecutor Yves Le Baut told the court.

Le Baut said he asked for the symbolic sentence so as "not to negate a gesture ... of love."

Mrs. Siano, 52, shot her 27-year-old only son Dominique June 17, 1990. She recounted to the court during the opening day of the trial Tuesday how for years she tried to help her son break his heroin addiction, but unwittingly became an accomplice.

She said she borrowed 300,000 francs (drls 52,000) over four years to meet her son's demands for money to buy drugs.

She hid bruises from his beatings when she refused money, telling her invalid husband Nicolas that she had fallen.

"I didn't want my little one to suffer, be unhappy, end up in the streets," she testified, adding that she begged him on bended knees to get treatment.

"When I saw Dominique completely crazy, his eyes popping out, drooling, hunched up on his bed, insulting me horribly, screaming, 'I won't be hospitalised just to piss you off, I understand that I could not root out the evil of the drug.'

"I took a gun of my husband's hidden under his bed and I fired three times without looking," Mrs. Siano said.

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