

BRIEFLY

Walesa for European integration: Polish President Lech Walesa called Friday for the establishment of a programme for European integration, which would lead to a formation of a United States of Europe, AFP reports from Litomyse.

Speaking in Litomyse, in the Czech Republic, during an informal meeting of seven Central European presidents, Walesa spoke of the great differences between European countries, caused mainly by 40 years of communism.

Bush arrives in Seoul: Former US president George Bush and his wife Barbara arrived in Seoul yesterday for a three-day visit, officials of the Pacific-Asia Travel Association (PATA) said, AFP reports from Seoul.

Bush was met by Vice Foreign Minister Hong Soon-Young and US embassy officials at the airport.

He was scheduled to meet with President Kim Young-Sam over lunch on Saturday and attend a dinner hosted by former president Roh Tae-Woo.

Thai PM to visit Malaysia: Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai will leave for Malaysia next Thursday on a one-day visit, it was learnt yesterday, Xinhua reports from Bangkok.

The visit will focus on the development of overlapping waters claimed by both Thailand and Malaysia in the Gulf of Thailand.

Chuan will witness the signing of contracts between the Thai-Malaysian joint authority and developers for the development of petroleum resources.

Y'slavia expels more journalists: Journalists from four foreign news organisations were barred Friday from reporting in Yugoslavia, AP reports from Belgrade.

Jonathan Landay, a correspondent for the Boston-based Christian Science Monitor; British SKY TV's Aernout Van Lynden and Eli Jurkova, a reporter for Munich-based Radio Free Europe, were told by Yugoslavia's Information Ministry that their accreditations were being revoked.

Onassis hospitalised in NY: Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, the widow of assassinated president John F. Kennedy, is being treated in a New York hospital, CBS news reported Friday, Reuter says from New York.

Onassis, 64, revealed two months ago that she was receiving chemotherapy for cancer of the lymph system, but CBS had no information on whether her hospitalisation was related to that ailment.

Allahabad HC declares instant divorce illegal

NEW DELHI, Apr 16: A law that allows Muslim men in India to divorce their wives in three seconds by repeating the word *talaq* is illegal, unconstitutional and denigrates women, a court has said, reports AP.

The order of the Allahabad High Court in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh for the first time challenges a centuries-old tradition in which Muslim men throw out their wives by saying *talaq, talaq, talaq*, the Arabic word for divorce.

On Saturday, influential Muslim men in the state capital, Lucknow, gathered to explain what they called misunderstanding of Islamic laws.

A Muslim lawyer said Friday's court ruling violates the rights to religious practice and he would challenge the judgement in India's supreme court in New Delhi.

A growing Muslim feminist movement in the country is expected to press on with its demand for changes in Muslim laws on divorce, which do not have the sanction of the Quran, the Muslim holy book.

Most Islamic nations, including Pakistan, Turkey, Syria and Indonesia have abandoned this practice, popularly known in India as triple divorce.

On Friday, Judge Hari Nath Tilhari said instant divorce is "the most hated of all things permitted to man." The Pioneer newspaper reported.

Instant divorce is a demonstration of male chauvinism and is rude to women and children, Tilhari told a packed court room. He said laws that commit indignity on women should not exist.

The divorce law is often misused by men to throw out their wives on the flimsiest reasons. Nationwide figures on such divorces are not maintained, but clerics say 100 divorces among India's 100 million Muslims occur this way.

Inkatha to hold rally in Johannesburg city

JOHANNESBURG, Apr 16: The Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party raised fears of fresh bloodshed in South Africa's commercial capital by planning demonstrations ahead of historic all-race elections which it is boycotting, reports Reuter.

The Johannesburg youth branch of Inkatha, led nationally by chief Mangosuthu Buthe, said on Friday up to 50,000 supporters would march through the city on Monday and Tuesday.

The first march would protest at the terms under which the April 26-28 elections are being held and the second would commemorate those killed during an Inkatha anti-election march in Johannesburg three weeks ago.

Eight of the 53 victims were shot dead by security guards of the rival African National Congress, which said the Inkatha supporters tried to storm its headquarters.

Inkatha said it would defy a police ban on the planned marches and every effort would be made to ensure they were peaceful. But it also said a wreath would be laid outside the ANC headquarters in honour of the dead.

The ANC, which is widely expected to win the elections which will formally end centuries of white supremacy, said the proposed Inkatha protests threaten "a further outbreak of violence and bloodshed in the centre of Johannesburg."

"The people of Johannesburg and surrounding areas deserve the right to lead their lives without fear of violence," an ANC statement said.

"That right is threatened by every Inkatha march, whatever the pretext... a march to ANC headquarters is provocative and intended to whip up hostile emotions."

Peres to hold talks with Arafat in Bucharest Friday

CAIRO, Apr 16: Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres announced that he would hold talks with PLO chairman Yasser Arafat in Bucharest in an interview published by the Egyptian daily Al-Ahram today, reports AP.

"I shall meet PLO leader Yasser Arafat in Bucharest Friday," said Peres. If they made "tangible progress" toward launching Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho, Peres said, they would both go to Cairo immediately after the talks.

Arafat is due to begin a two-day visit to the Romanian capital Thursday at the invitation of President Ion Iliescu.

PLO and Israeli negotiators resume talks in Cairo Sunday aimed at setting a date for launching self-rule.

Armed youths roam bloody streets of Rwandan capital

NAIROBI, Apr 16: Gangs of youths armed with machetes roamed the bloody streets of the Rwandan capital again, adding new bodies to the piles of decaying corpses already fouling the air, reports AP.

UN spokesman Moctar Gueye said Rwanda's Hutu-dominated government and predominantly Tutsi rebels agreed to direct talks Friday that UN officials hoped would lead to a cease-fire. But the two sides continued to duel for control of Kigali with mortars and rockets.

New reports of massacres emerged from the Rwandan bloodbath, including an account of more than 1,000 men, women and children shot and hacked to death in a church where they sought refuge.

Thousands of people were still trying to flee Kigali, forming an 8-mile-long (13-kilometer-long) column of refugees, and thousands more remained huddled in hiding with little or no food.

There are hundreds of thousands of people cut off from anything decent or human. People are starving to death in their own houses. Babies have starved to death in their own homes. People are in hiding and cannot find food. Hospitals are not functioning," Gueye said by telephone from Kigali.

Tens of thousands of people are estimated to have died in a week of fighting rooted in the decades-old feud between Rwanda's majority Hutu and minority Tutsi ethnic groups. Many have been hacked to death by gangs with machetes, knives and spears.

UN may consider air strikes to protect 'safe area'

Bosnian Serbs poised to overrun Gorazde

SARAJEVO, Apr 16: Bosnian Serbs were poised to overrun the Muslim enclave of Gorazde on Saturday, and UN officials indicated they might consider air strikes to protect the UN-declared safe area, reports AP.

UN officials also said they hoped to negotiate a military exclusion zone around the embattled town, 55 kilometres (35 miles) southeast of Sarajevo.

The Serbs seized key positions around Gorazde in a day-long attack Friday.

Bosnian radio said Serbs continued to shell the town and were "on the very doorsteps of the city from the south." But UN reports suggested the Serbs were not moving in.

"It seems that the Serbs are consolidating on the high ground around the city, not showing intention to go into the city itself," said a UN spokesman, Maj Dacre Holloway.

Another spokesman, Maj Rob Annink, said the Serbs are "on high ground and control the whole town from positions they hold now."



A British injured UN soldier is being carried out of a helicopter at Sarajevo's PTT building late April 15 after being evacuated by helicopter out of Gorazde. At least two UN soldiers were injured while intense fighting started again in the Bosnian enclave of Gorazde. — AFP photo

The UN civilian chief in former Yugoslavia, Yasushi Akashi, said Friday that new NATO air strikes were deemed unnecessary because a local truce had been arranged to allow two wounded British liaison officers to be evacuated.

UN officials in New York said the UN commander in Bosnia, Lt Gen Sir Michael Rose, had requested NATO air support. His request was rejected, but Akashi threatened the Serbs with strikes unless they agreed to the ceasefire.

Reading from what he said were notes from a Saturday morning UN military briefing, Annink quoted Akashi as saying that any "solution to this fight by means of air strike" had to be addressed by NATO and the United Nations in New York. "The outcome can change our task dramatically."

Asked whether that could mean another NATO ultimatum like the one in February that forced Serbs to pull their heavy weapons back from Sarajevo, Annink said: "I cannot discuss this at my level."

Russia gets 85pc ownership of Black Sea Fleet

MOSCOW, Apr 16: Presidents Boris Yeltsin of Russia and Leonid Kravchuk of Ukraine steered their countries away from confrontation Friday, signing an accord giving Russia the bulk of the prized Black Sea Fleet, reports AP.

The two most powerful ex-Soviet republics had squabbled over fleet ownership since the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and both sides had accused the other of making war preparations this week after the latest flare-up. Both have nuclear weapons.

But Yeltsin and Kravchuk settled the differences in a private meeting after Friday's Commonwealth of Independent States summit, giving Russia 80 per cent to 85 per cent ownership in exchange for undisclosed compensation for Ukraine.

"We proceeded on the assumption that friendship and cooperation between Russia and Ukraine is the main principle determining our relations," Kravchuk told reporters after the negotiations at the President Hotel. "We have settled all problems we face today."

"The fleet of 440 ships — many of them small and in poor condition — has been jointly owned pending a final settlement. The latest agreement still must be approved by both nations' parliaments, and nationalist-minded Ukrainian lawmakers have scuttled several earlier accords.

Under the agreement, cash-strapped Ukraine said it was selling most of its half of the fleet to Russia, presumably to pay off its multi-billion-dollar debt to its neighbour in back fuel payments and other trade debts.

In addition to 15 per cent to 20 per cent of the fleet, Kravchuk said Ukraine would keep all the fleet infrastructure, such as radar and hospitals.

Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev, who also spoke to the press after the agreement was signed, did not address details of the accord.

Kravchuk's chief military adviser, Maj. Gen. Volodymyr Petenko, told The Associated Press earlier this week that Ukraine's then-50 per cent share of the Black Sea Fleet was worth about 17 billion dollars.

The Prestigious fleet, established in the 1700s, was the Soviet Union's counterbalance to the U.S. Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean. Most of its officers and sailors are Russians.

The latest agreement calls for the Russian Black Sea Fleet and the Ukrainian Navy to have separate bases. Details on the exact breakdown are to be worked out in the next 10 days.

South Korea fires 6 Gens

SEOUL, Apr 16: South Korea today sacked six generals during a major reshuffle of top officers designed to end the influence of the military in politics, military sources said, reports Reuter.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said General Kim Jae-Chang, deputy commander of US-South Korean combined forces command, was replaced by general Chang Sung in the reshuffle, which affected 33 generals.

Kim was the highest-ranking officer among those who at one time belonged to Hanahoe (the one mind society), a powerful cabal within the army whose members monopolised key military positions and were deeply involved in politics during the rule of presidents Chun Doo-Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo.

Five other Hanahoe members were sacked as top commanders, military sources said.

Last year, Kim fired several other military commanders from their involvement in the coup and retired many Hanahoe members.

US, Pakistan plan joint infantry exercise

ISLAMABAD, Apr 16: Pakistan and the United States have planned a joint exercise by their infantry troops later this year, military sources here said today, reports AP.

The manoeuvres, the first involving infantry forces from the two countries, are tentatively set for October on the plains of Punjab, Pakistan's leading province.

The exercise is aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two armed forces, who have previously organised annual joint drills with their commanders in Pakistan's northwestern mountainous region.

Details of the infantry exercise could not be officially ascertained, but reports here said the troops would conduct the manoeuvres for two weeks, using each other's weapons and exchanging tactical know-how.

The reports also said a joint exercise between the air forces of Pakistan and the United States was also likely by the end of the year, but no official confirmation was available.

Pakistani army chief General Abdul Waheed returned from an official visit to the United States earlier this month after talks with American military officials of strengthening relations between the two armed forces.

Observers said the infantry exercise could neighbour India, given the long history of mutual mistrust and rivalry between the two leading South Asian states, which have fought three wars since their 1947 independence.

Despite the suspension since 1990 of American economic and military aid to Pakistan because of US concerns over Islamabad's nuclear programme, contacts and exchanges have continued between their armed forces.



A member of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) Margaret Tshoane teach potential voters how to cast their ballot papers in Johannesburg April 15 in view of the first non-racial democratic elections in South Africa. — AFP photo

US sending 200 more troops to Macedonia

WASHINGTON, Apr 16: About 200 more American soldiers equipped with armoured vehicles are arriving next week in the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia to reinforce a UN peacekeeping force, the Defence Department announced Friday, reports AP.

The soldiers from the 3rd Infantry Division at Grafenwoehr, Germany, will join the 315 US soldiers already serving in "Task Force Able Sentry" in Macedonia.

The Macedonia peacekeeping operation is intended to prevent the Bosnia war from spreading.

Gen. John Shalikashvili, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, announced on March 31 while visiting Macedonia that additional US forces would be sent. The announcement Friday said they will arrive in Macedonia starting Monday.

China accuses UK of making trouble in HK

HONG KONG, Apr 16: Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen has accused Britain of making trouble in Hong Kong because some officials were unwilling to return the colony to China in 1997, reports Reuter.

"History shows British colonialists always try their best to extend their influence of colonial rule before they withdraw," a Beijing-controlled Hong Kong newspaper today quoted Qian as saying.

"Since Hong Kong entered the final stage before the handover, some British officials have indicated that they are unwilling to withdraw from Hong Kong," Ta Kung Pao quoted him as saying. "They always try to make trouble."

Qian did not name but governor Chris Patten has angered China since he announced democratic reform plans for Hong Kong in October 1992.

Negotiations on Patten's plans broke down last November and Beijing vowed to disband after 1997 any elected councils set up under the proposals.

Qian said China would accelerate the work of the Preliminary Working Committee (PWC) in Hong Kong.

The China-selected body, made up of prominent Hong Kong and Chinese citizens under the chairmanship of Qian's widely regarded as a potential shadow government that could try to make the colonial government a lame duck in its final three years.

"Work of the PWC has to be further improved," Qian said. "Some special discussions will be held in Hong Kong with more participants from the public. It will also launch campaigns to directly collect opinions of Hong Kong people."

Zhirinovskiy to attend Saddam's birthday

MOSCOW, Apr 16: Extreme Russian nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy will travel to Iraq for the birthday of President Saddam Hussein on April 28, Interfax news agency said on Friday, reports Reuter.

Grigory Serebrennikov, an official from Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), told the agency Zhirinovskiy wanted to make the day a real holiday for the Iraqi people and would take along soccer team and a folk group.

In January 1993 Zhirinovskiy sent a small group of men to Baghdad to help defend Iraq, which he described as a victim of reckless aggression by America and Israel.