

Aden, Sanaa will abide by truce, hopes Fahd

DUBAI, June 4: King Fahd of Saudi Arabia said he hoped Yemen's warring North and South would abide by a United Nations ceasefire call to avoid further bloodshed in their month-old civil war, reports Reuter.

Japan to release plutonium stockpile data

TOKYO, June 4: Japan will reverse its strict policy of secrecy and regularly release data on its plutonium stockpile, the daily Yomiuri Shimbun reported today, says Reuter.

"We will release information regarding the amount of plutonium held in Japanese nuclear facilities," Yomiuri quoted Science and Technology Minister Mikio Omi as telling a parliamentary committee on Friday.

"We intend to continue this in the future," the daily quoted Omi as saying.

Data to be released could also include information on location and transportation of plutonium, Yomiuri said.

Strike paralyses Kashmir

SRINAGAR, June 4: Shops remained closed and traffic stayed off the streets in Kashmir Saturday in response to a general strike called by a top pro-independence militant leader to condemn attacks by a rival militant group, reports AP.

The attacks against Yasin Malik, who was freed on bail from an Indian prison two weeks ago, came after he proposed that the dozens of militant groups fighting for independence merge into three groups and stop killing civilians.

Malik's statements had been directed against the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen, a group he later accused of organising the attacks against him this week.

6 Palestinians shot in WB

HEBRON, West Bank, June 4: Israeli troops shot and wounded six Palestinians in clashes that erupted in the occupied West Bank town of Hebron today after three Palestinians were wounded in a blast, witnesses said, reports Reuter.

An international observer force in the town said the blast may have been caused by a hand grenade and the Israeli army said the grenade was thrown by a Palestinian at an army roadblock.

"A possible hand granad was thrown from an unidentified vehicle," a statement from the temporary, international presence in Hebron (TIPH) said.

Hospital sources said two Palestinian men and a woman were "moderately" wounded. The army said no troops were hurt. Following the incident, Israeli troops fired rubber bullets and teargas at Palestinians who were throwing stones, witnesses said. The army said it was checking the report.

Clinton arrives in England

US President Bill Clinton arrived today at Mildenhall, eastern England, for an official three-day visit to Britain on his European tour marking the 50th anniversary of the allied landings in northern France, AFP reports from London.

Accompanied by his wife Hillary, Clinton landed at 10:00am (0900 GMT) at the Mildenhall airbase and was greeted by Prime Minister John Major and his wife Norma.

Filipino troops kill 25 rebels

Philippine troops killed 20 members of a Muslim rebel group and captured a major camp as they pressed an assault on the fundamentalists stronghold in the south of the country, a senior military commander said yesterday, AFP reports from Zamboanga.

Japan prepares package of sanctions against DPRK

TOKYO, June 4: Japan has prepared a 10-point package of economic sanctions against North Korea including bans on trade and cash transfer but fears reprisal by Pyongyang and a major political crisis at home, reports Reuter.



Hans Blix, Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, briefs reporters on the latest developments regarding North Korea's nuclear programme on June 3 at the United Nations.

Israeli attacks on Lebanon a 'deadly blow' to ME peace: Syria

DAMASCUS, June 4: Syria's official media on Saturday bitterly denounced Israeli attacks on Lebanon, branding them "a deadly blow to the Middle East peace process and a stab to US peace efforts," reports AP.

Israeli warplanes blasted a training base Thursday that was used by Iranian-backed Shi'ite Muslim militants near Baalbek in the Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley of east Lebanon. As many as 50 people were killed, according to Lebanese police.

The region remained tense Saturday after Islamic guerrillas fired Katyusha rockets into northern Israel and the Israeli-occupied border strip in south Lebanon.

Iranian minister in Kabul

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Alaeddin Broujerdi arrived in Kabul Friday and held talks with Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, Radio Kabul reported, AFP says from Islamabad.

Rabbani thanked Iran for its support to the Afghan people during the 14-year war against the Communist government in Kabul which fell in April, 1992 to the Mujahideen.

The President also called on Iran to help in the reconstruction of the country, the broadcast monitored here said. The radio, controlled by Rabbani loyalists gave no further details about the meeting which took place amid ongoing factional fighting around Kabul.

Quake jolts Pakistan

An earthquake jolted central Pakistan in the early hours of Saturday throwing people out of their beds but causing no damage, local officials said, Reuter reports from Islamabad.

The quake, measuring 5.4 on the Richter scale, shook southern parts of central Punjab Province at 3:40am (2240 GMT) but there were no reports of damage, Mohammad Irshad, an official of the Rahimiyar Khan Deputy Commissioner's office said by telephone.

flights and officials travelling between the two countries. Government officials refused comment on the reports. It was not clear when Japan's reported package would be announced or whether it was drafted to prepare for a United Nations Security Council resolution.

In New York, the UN Nuclear Watchdog Agency said North Korea breached a nuclear safeguards treaty by refusing to allow unfettered inspection of spent fuel rods at a key atomic plant.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said a full picture of North Korea's past nuclear programme was virtually lost and referred the case to the Security Council.

Foreign Minister Koji Kakizawa has said Japan favours a two-step approach — an initial Security Council resolution to serve as a direct warning against North Korea to be followed by a second one to impose sanctions.

Japan, however, expects China, North Korea's major ally, to veto a resolution calling for sanctions and is now holding talks in Washington with US and South Korean authorities to prepare for an economic embargo outside the UN framework.

North Korea said any sanctions would be seen as an act of war and North Korean diplomats made clear that any missile attack would be aimed at Japan.

Japanese security sources have said the government feared terrorism more than missiles. "It is true that there are numerous (North Korean) agents in Japan, and it is extremely difficult to keep track of them," one source said. "That is more disturbing than missiles."

Japan's package, as reported in the dailies, includes: A ban on trade, including commerce through third countries. A ban on government officials travelling to North Korea.

A ban on allowing North Korean officials coming to Japan. A strict control of immigration procedures.

Restrictions on cultural, sports and scientific exchanges. A ban on flights between two countries.

An export ban on weapons and weapons-related goods. An export ban on nuclear-related goods and materials.

A ban on investment and loans, including bank transfers. Restrictions on cash carried to North Korea by Koreans in Japan.

On the last point, South Korea and the US Congress have specifically demanded that Tokyo put a halt to the estimated annual total of 600 million USD that pro-Pyongyang Koreans bring into North Korea from Japan.

Off the Record

Rattle snake soup makes your skin crawl!

NEW YORK: It was enough to make your skin crawl, reports AP.

Police investigating a burglary report at a store-front early Friday found a one-stop rattle snake shopping outlet. Officers arrested three men and recovered 62 venomous Western Diamond back rattlers.

That's not all they found. There were 30 frozen rattlers, several rattlers cooking in a pot consomme and a dozen baby rattlers floating in pint bottles of vodka.

The snaked-up booze is used by Koreans in the New York neighbourhood as medicine and sells for 100 dollars a pint, authorities said. The other snakes were apparently sold as food — for the meat or as soup stock.

"It was an interesting morning," said John Behler, supervisor of reptiles at the Bronx Zoo. He helped pack the surviving snakes into three sealed drums and took them away.

Each of the three men was charged with reckless endangerment and violating environmental conservation laws, said police spokesman Lt. Raymond O'Donnell. All three worked at the store, which doubled as a rattlesnake shopping outlet for local Koreans, O'Donnell said.

Mother gives birth twice in less than 2 months

MANILA: A Filipino woman gave birth to two children in a span of less than two months in a rare medical occurrence, local press reported Saturday, says Xinhua.

Jessica Sabacajan, 24, gave birth to a boy on April 19 in the central island of Cebu and on May 30 gave birth to a girl in the southern city of Zamboanga. The "Philippine Star" quoted her husband, Stegfried Sabacajan, as saying.

Sabacajan, a 30-year-old air force avionics, said that when his wife visited him at the base in Zamboanga where he works a month after the first birth, he thought her stomach was still rather large, but the couple did not think this unusual until she started suffering stomach pains.

Ronnie Bucoy, director of the Zamboanga Medical Center, said the two children, both in good health, were not twins but were the result of a rare occurrence called a "double uterus."

That is a pregnancy where both of a woman's ovary separately hold fertilised eggs. Apparently, the doctor said, one egg was fertilised a month after the other.

Coffin catches fire at funeral

BATON ROUGE: Mourners smelled smoke at a funeral and when a mortician investigated, he found a fire inside the coffin, reports AP.

Investigators said embalming fluid leaking from the body of 25-year-old Wycliff Robertson, who was shot to death earlier this week, may have caused a chemical reaction inside the coffin, touching off the fire.

After the Thursday night funeral at Mt. Gillion Baptist Church, officials from Winnfield Funeral Home said they would remove the body from the damaged coffin and prepare it for burial in a new one.

Woman to start family using dead husband's sperm

TITUSVILLE: A young widow said Friday she hopes to start a family using sperm surgically removed from her late husband's corpse, and then frozen, reports Reuter.

Manny Maresca was killed in a car crash May 19, just 16 days after he and Pam Maresca married. Within hours of his death, sperm was harvested from his body and frozen for future use.

Pam Maresca, 22, said she hopes to bear a child using a procedure in which one of her eggs will be fertilised with the sperm in the laboratory, and then implanted in her uterus.

French actress and animal right campaigner Brigitte Bardot (c) tries to push her way through a cordon of police on June 4 after demonstrating against a meeting of the French Hunter Association at Saint Tropez' town hall. The actress has left the town after living there since the 60s.



French actress and animal right campaigner Brigitte Bardot (c) tries to push her way through a cordon of police on June 4 after demonstrating against a meeting of the French Hunter Association at Saint Tropez' town hall. The actress has left the town after living there since the 60s.

All-African force for peace in trouble spots

HARARE, Zimbabwe, June 4: Leaders of the "Frontline states" that formed to fight apartheid have backed a UN proposal for a 5,500-member all-African force to keep peace in African trouble spots such as Rwanda, reports AP.

But the statement issued late Friday from a summit here left it to individual nations to decide if they commit troops to the force and made it clear the United Nations would have to pay.

South African President Nelson Mandela, on his first foreign trip since taking the oath of office, said his government would consider sending humanitarian aid, including a field hospital and armoured vehicles. But Mandela and other officials have repeatedly rejected sending South African troops for such a force, at least in the near future.

The statement — issued by presidents Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola, Quett Masire of Botswana, Sam Nujoma of

Namibia and Ali Hassan Mwinyi of Tanzania — said mobilisation of the force would depend on how the United Nations worked the logistics.

That means the Frontline group wants the world body to foot the bill for peacekeeping in Rwanda, Liberia, Somalia, Angola, Mozambique and Lesotho, flash points reviewed by the leaders at Friday's summit.

Other members of the Frontline grouping, Mozambique and Zambia, were represented by their foreign ministers. Mandela spent seven hours with his fellow leaders before flying back home.

His visit celebrated the triumph of his African National Congress in April's all-race election, the nation's first. The Frontline group formed to collectively fight white rule in South Africa, even though its members traded secretly with the apartheid state in violation of sanctions they endorsed.

Veerappan offers to surrender

BANGALORE, India, June 4: India's most wanted outlaw, described as a menace to "humans, wildlife and the environment," has offered to surrender on condition that he would not be harmed after arrest, police said here Friday, reports AP.

Veerappan, a 44-year-old fugitive wanted for 94 murders, poaching 2,000-odd elephant tusks and cutting down hundreds of sandalwood trees in the jungles of South India, made the offer through intermediaries, they said.

Karnataka state police chief S C Burman told AFP that the outlaw would not be "harassed or killed" but would have to face trial for his long criminal career.

"The media is the only way to reach him with our assurance that we do not harbour hatred," Burman said, adding that "He is not a threat any more, only a fugitive."

Veerappan's gang has dwindled over the years with 49 members dying in gun battles with Indian troops and 156 arrested in raids.

Burman said a special force, which has been trying to track down Veerappan and his men in the lush forest, lining the border of the southern states of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, would not be led into a trap in attempts to capture him.

The mustachioed bandit, who carries a 132,000,000-dollar reward on his head, headed a senior forest official three years ago after promising to surrender near a stream in the dense Male Mahadeghar jungle.

Hezbollah guerillas attack SLA

SIDON, Lebanon, June 4: Hezbollah guerillas attacked Israeli militia allies in south Lebanon today, security sources said, reports Reuter.

They said the guerillas set off a bomb near a patrol of the Israeli-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) in Kfar Falous in a finger of territory jutting north from Israel's occupation zone in South Lebanon. No one was hurt.

The pro-Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God) said many militiamen in the patrol were killed or wounded by the bomb.

In a second attack a guerrilla bomb exploded as a civilian car passed on a road leading to the SLA post at Kfar Falous. Two civilians were wounded, the sources said.

The guerillas also fired anti-tank rockets and machineguns at an SLA post at Qantara, just inside the zone. No casualties were reported.

Another Russian killed in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE, Tajikistan, June 4: Assassins claimed their fourth Russian servicemen of the week on Saturday when they shot a lieutenant colonel in the border guards near his home in Dushanbe, reports AP.

News agencies said Lt. Col. Sergei Leontikov, 42, died of head wounds.