

Elizabeth grooming Anne as next first lady?

LONDON, June 13: Britain's Queen Elizabeth is grooming her daughter princess Anne for a key role in the monarchy as a surrogate queen consort to king-in-waiting Prince Charles. The tabloid Daily Express newspaper reported today, says Reuter.

The princess, who is only eight in line to the throne after her brothers and their children, is to assume more of the royal workload with the aim of filling the vacuum left by his estranged wife Princess Diana when Charles becomes king, the Daily Express said.

"The Queen wants princess Anne to be elevated to such a rank that when Prince Charles becomes king she can be the first lady of the land," the newspaper quoted an unidentified member of the royal household as saying. "The more decorated and honoured she can make Princess Anne the better."

Despite a sharp tongue and an unglamorous image, the 43-year-old princess remains a

firm favourite with the public for her serious attitude to royal duties and her job as hands-on president of the Save The Children Fund charity.

Opinion polls have showed many of the queen's subjects would prefer Anne to reign in place of her beleaguered brother.



Princess Anne

Fresh US warning to DPRK

WASHINGTON, June 13: As the United States moves towards putting sanctions on the UN agenda, a top State Department official has issued another stern warning to North Korea on obstructing nuclear facility inspections, reports AP.

Assistant US Secretary of State Robert Gallucci said any step by North Korea to exclude international inspectors from a nuclear facility and extract weapons-grade plutonium from spent fuel rods "would be a very dangerous new development."

The United States will ask the UN Security Council this week to impose sanctions on North Korea for repeatedly blocking efforts to monitor its nuclear programme, in violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to which it is a party.

North Korea has denied it is diverting nuclear fuel to build

nuclear weapons and has raised tensions on the Korean Peninsula to one of its highest levels since the 1950-53 Korean war by saying its regards sanctions as an act of war.

Gallucci and US Ambassador to Japan Walter Mondale, appearing on Sunday news programmes, said they were aware of the dangers of dealing with what Mondale called a "very isolated, paranoid, threatened" government, but insisted there will be no backing down on sanctions.

"It is still and will be the administration's policy to find the nuclear weapons programme and nuclear weapons acquisition by North Korea unacceptable. It is not a situation this administration will walk away from," Gallucci said.

Mondale discounted recent statements by North Korean President Kim Il Sung suggesting he might freeze part of his

nuclear programme in exchange for economic assistance. "They know exactly what's needed here — it's compliance with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. They haven't done that," the former vice president said.

Another report adds: Reflecting rising war tensions, South Korea on Monday ordered a call-up of its 6.6 million reservists for what is to be one of its biggest civil-defence drills in years.

Meanwhile, former US President Jimmy Carter arrived in Seoul in an attempt to help ease tensions over North Korea's nuclear programme.

The order to call up the reserves came after an emergency security meeting of senior officials, presided over by Prime Minister Lee Yung-Duk.

The nationwide drill, to be held Wednesday, will involve all civil defence corps mem-

bers, whose job is to organise evacuations and provide first aid for air-raid victims.

Should in the past has staged monthly civil-defence drills, but because of military tensions, this month's is being expanded nationwide and will include more personnel and equipment.

Amid the war preparations, diplomatic efforts to resolve the dispute continued.

Carter is not here as a formal mediator, but he has stepped in to try to resolve other international disputes. Although the former president's visit is private, his agenda includes talks with President Kim Young-Sam and other top officials.

Carter plans to make a four-day visit to the North beginning Wednesday, a move the South has criticized because it fears it will send North Korea the wrong message and offer Pyongyang a propaganda bonus.

BRIEFLY

Blast injures 10 in Turkey: An explosion at an outdoor tea house in this western province injured 10 people on Sunday, the Anatolia news agency said, AP reports from Tekirdag, Turkey.

The bomb went off at 9:15 PM (1815 GMT) at the tea house, which was crowded. No one claimed responsibility. No other details were available.

A Kurdish guerrilla group, which fights for autonomy in southeastern Turkey, staged similar attacks in the nearby city of Istanbul this year. Muslim fundamentalist underground groups have been also active in western Turkey.

60 Indian miners fear drowned: At least 60 Indian miners were feared dead after a boat carrying them to work capsized in the Damodar river in the eastern state of Bihar, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said yesterday, Reuter report from New Delhi.

The agency said the boat tipped over on Sunday at Amalabad, about 250 km (150 miles) northwest of Calcutta, while the river was swollen by heavy rains.

No official final toll was immediately available because of poor communications, PTI added.

Flood claims 42 in China: Flooding in southern China has killed at least 42 people and left more than 100,000 people stranded, a local newspaper reaching Beijing yesterday said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

The worst of the disaster occurred in the Leizhou Peninsula of Guangdong Province, where 24 people were killed, 16 are missing and 100,000 are stranded, said Sunday's Yangcheng Evening News.

Provincial officials, reached by telephone yesterday, declined to give further details. The newspaper said another 18 people were killed and 20,000 stranded by flood waters near Maoming, in the same province.

Chinese factory fire kills 10: Ten people died and 30 others were injured in a fire which broke out at a Taiwan-funded shoe factory in Hesan, Guangdong Province, the Tao Kung Pao Daily reported, yesterday, AFP reports from Hong Kong.

The fire, which broke out suddenly and caused several explosions, trapped many workers resting in a dormitory of the three-story factory, the newspaper said, adding that it took firemen five hours to put out the blaze.

The fire was the latest in a series of factory accidents plaguing Guangdong Province. Last week at least 11 people died and 60 others were injured when a plastic toy factory building, owned by a Hong Kong businessman, collapsed in Longgang in the special economic zone of Shenzhen at the border with Hong Kong.

7 Lankan soldiers, 2 rebels killed: Tamil Tiger rebels sneaked into a naval base, burst mines and fired grenades at vehicles, killing seven soldiers and security personnel and injuring six others, officials said Monday, AP reports from Colombo.

The rebels attacked a jeep and a truck at the camp in Karinarag Island on Sunday, officials said. Details were not available.

Two rebels were killed when soldiers ambushed a group of separatist militants in the northeastern town of Welioya on Sunday, said the officials on condition of anonymity.

Filipino Muslim rebels free 20 hostages

ISABELA, Philippines, June 13: Muslim extremists on Monday released 20 Christian hostages seized last week in apparent reprisal for military attacks on the headquarters of their allies, officials said, reports AP.

But the gunmen still held a Roman Catholic priest, the Rev Cirilo Nacorda.

The gunmen massacred 15 other hostages last week after seizing the victims on Basilan Island.

"I never lost hope," said hostage Estella Abarquez. "I

prayed and prayed from the time we were kidnapped until they told us we were free. I am happy I am home."

The kidnapping was believed to be in response to military raids on the headquarters of the extremist Abu Sayyaf group on Jolo Island, about 100 miles southwest of Isabela.

About 40 members of the group were killed in the attacks, the military says.

The mass kidnapping and massacre were the latest in a series of violent incidents on Basilan.

Russia to deploy troops in Abkhazia

TBILISI, Georgia, June 13: Georgian leader Eduard Shevardnadze on Monday said the deployment of Russian peacekeepers in the breakaway region of Abkhazia in western Georgia would begin June 15-16th, reports AP.

Shevardnadze also told Georgian Radio he had spoken to Russian President Boris Yeltsin on Sunday, and both leaders expressed hope the operation would bring peace to Abkhazia.

Abkhazia and Georgia fought a 14-month war that ended with Georgian troops and thousands of ethnic Georgians being driven from the area last fall. About 3,000 people died in the fighting, and border skirmishes have continued.

Speculations about Sonia's political motives intensify

NEW DELHI, June 13: Sonia Gandhi's surprise appearance at a meeting of India's ruling party has sparked intense speculation that the Italian-born widow of former premier Rajiv Gandhi may be preparing to enter politics, reports AFP.

In her first political foray since her husband's assassination in May 1991, 47-year-old Sonia Gandhi overshadowed Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao at the opening of the Congress (I) Party convention here Friday.

The standing ovation she received from the 1100 delegates was convincing evidence that the allure of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty remains irresistible to the 109-year-old Congress, India's oldest political party.

Congress delegates jostled one another as they tried to get close to the sari-clad Sonia Gandhi, and the sports stadium where the convention was taking place echoed with full-throated slogans hailing her and her late husband.

Amidst the commotion, Rao's arrival went virtually unnoticed until he had climbed the dais. Cries of "long live Sonia Gandhi" went on even after he had begun speaking.

"It proved that the aura of the Nehru-Gandhi family remains intact," The Pioneer newspaper comments. As far as the party workers are concerned, one can match that appeal.

"She came, she conquered," blared another newspaper. The Asian Age asked the

question on every body's lips: "Why did she come?"



Sonia Gandhi question on every body's lips: "Why did she come?"

Opinion in the Congress is divided as to why Sonia Gandhi cast aside her known distaste for the murky world of politics to attend the convention, when she had declined to attend similar meetings in 1992 and 1993.

Murli Deora, a party strongman from Bombay, said: "It is the desire of all Congressmen that she should enter politics."

But Mani Shankar Aiyer, an MP close to the Gandhis, said he believed she does not intend to step into the political arena.

The media-shy Sonia Gandhi, who has kept herself busy overseeing the work of a foundation named after Rajiv Gandhi, was not available for comment.

The Nehru-Gandhi dynasty

has ruled India for 40 of the past 47 years, beginning with Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's first premier, his daughter, Indira Gandhi, and grandson, Rajiv.

Rajiv Gandhi served until 1989 and was on the campaign trail preparing a return to power when he was cut down by a suicide bomber in May 1991.

A rudderless Congress urged Sonia Gandhi to take over the party leadership after her husband's death. She refused, enabling Rao to come out of virtual retirement and become India's ninth prime minister.

The current speculation centres around whether her unexpected appearance at the party convention means she

Off the Record



Actress Melanie Griffith (R) talking with actor Boyd Gaines (L) after Gaines was awarded the Best Leading Actor in a Musical Award at the 1994 Tony Awards in New York Sunday. — AFP photo

British women prefer to be 'plain but brilliant'

LONDON: Most young British women would prefer to be thought of as plain but brilliant, rather than sexy but dumb, according to a survey released yesterday, reports Reuter.

Esquire magazine polled 500 women aged 20 to 35 for the survey, and found women wanted to be seen as competent and intelligent — and were even more ambitious for their daughters.

Seventy-one per cent of those polled said they would rather be thought of as "brilliant but plain" while 27 per cent would rather be seen as "sexy but dumb".

Asked about the next generation, 76 per cent of women said they would rather teach their daughters how to start a successful business as compared to 24 per cent who thought finding and keeping the perfect husband was more important.

Mother-in-law's heavy makeup and fake eyelashes put her off

WASHINGTON: Hillary Rodham Clinton says she was put off at first by her late mother-in-law's taste for heavy makeup, fake eyelashes and gaudy jewellery but learned to respect other aspects of Virginia Kelley's character, reports AP.

"It turned out that many of the things I loved about Bill were things I also loved about his mother," the first lady wrote for Redbook magazine.

The piece, published in the magazine's July issue, recounts the first awkward encounters between Bill Clinton's mother and the woman he later married.

In the first-person account, Mrs Clinton says the differences were evident at first glance: She was a frumpy law student in bell-bottoms and sandals, Mrs Kelley wore gobs of makeup and false eyelashes.

"Like the characters in 'Star Trek', Virginia Kelley and I seemed to be from different planets," Mrs Clinton wrote. "I had never seen somebody in real life who wore false eyelashes every day."

"Here was a woman who got up at four-thirty every morning to put on her makeup, had a broad streak of white hair down the middle of her head, wore rings on every finger and bracelets and bangles on each arm," Mrs Clinton wrote.



Myanmar troops kill 32 Khun Sa men

BANGKOK, June 13: Myanmar government forces killed 32 guerrillas and captured two hilltop positions from rebels loyal to "Golden Triangle" drug lord Khun Sa, Myanmar state television reported, says Reuter.

Piles of weapons — 32 rifles, 304 hand grenades, 199 landmines, 53 mortar bombs, 53 rocket launchers and 4,800 rounds of ammunition — were also seized from the Mong Tai Army (MTA) forces, the television report late on Sunday said.

The TV report, monitored in the Thai border town of Mae Sot, said 17 government sol-

Algerian troops kill 25 militants

TUNIS, June 13: Algerian security forces killed 25 Muslim militants during a five-day sweep in 10 regions, the official Algerian news agency APS said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

One member of the security forces was shot dead on Saturday in a clash with Islamist rebels in the town of Tissemsilt, 180 km southwest of Algiers, APS said quoting an official statement.

Eleven Muslim militants were shot dead on Saturday when they tried to ambush a security forces patrol near the coastal town of Tipaza, 60 km west of the Algerian capital.

Rwandan rebels take control of Gitarama

KIGALI, June 13: After intense fighting, rebel forces have taken control of a key Rwanda city, the guerilla chief said Monday. There was no immediate confirmation of the claim, reports AP.

Gitarama, 50 kilometers (30 miles) southwest of the capital, Kigali, was the seat of Rwanda's interim government until President Theodore Sindikubwabo and his Cabinet fled last week.

Gitarama is considered the second most important city after Kigali and has been heavy fighting in both cities for days. Forces of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) were pursuing government troops fleeing on the road to Ruhengeri in the far northern part of the country, said Maj. Gen. Paul Kagame, chief of staff of the rebel army.

Sihanouk has no plans to take power soon

PHNOM PENH, June 13: Head of state King Norodom Sihanouk has denied having immediate plans to take power in Cambodia, but stopped short of giving a complete "hands off" guarantee, reports Reuter.

"I am at an advanced age and the situation in Cambodia, very poor in certain regards, still is not desperate or anarchical... this situation does not necessitate my intervention," the ailing 71-year-old monarch said in a faxed statement from Beijing today.

But in a second statement he said he would be prepared to intervene if he was asked by the coalition government.

"I would prefer to die while trying to save my country and my people more than dying in my hospital bed in Beijing," he said.

Several Cambodian newspapers have recently expressed support for giving executive powers to Sihanouk, seen by many Cambodians as the only figure who can achieve national reconciliation between the government and its bitter enemy, the radical Maoist Khmer Rouge.

Tshisekedi was elected by Zaire's national conference in 1992 and later fired by President Mobutu Sese Seko.

Opposition leader of Zaire kidnapped

BRUSSELS, June 13: Zaire opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi has been kidnapped in the Zairean capital Kinshasa by members of the presidential guard, Belga news agency said on Sunday, reports Reuter.

Belga quoted the spokeswoman of Tshisekedi's party in Brussels on Sunday afternoon and there was no news of him.

Justine M'oyo Kasa-Vubu said she had been told by several sources that Tshisekedi had been kidnapped and taken to a camp near the airport.

Tshisekedi was elected by Zaire's national conference in 1992 and later fired by President Mobutu Sese Seko.