

BRIEFLY

Army start relief work in Assam: Indian army troops stepped up relief and rescue efforts Friday in the flood-hit far eastern state of Assam, where rain-swollen rivers inundated new areas. The Press Trust of India (PTI) said. AFP reports from New Delhi.

Soldiers using speed boats were rescuing marooned residents from several hamlets submerged by river waters in the district of Dhemaji, which was cut off from the rest of India after the national highway was breached. PTI said.

More than 55,000 people have been marooned by monsoon floods in the district, and 11,000 so far have been rescued, the news agency said adding that several new areas were inundated. Three people have drowned.

US ballet theatre founder dies: Nina Stroganova, a Danish-born ballerina who was a founding member of American Ballet Theatre and later a demanding but much-loved dance teacher, has died. She was 78. AP reports from New York.

Stroganova, who lived in New York City, died Tuesday at Roosevelt Hospital of leukemia.

Stroganova, whose name was originally Rigmor Storm, received her early training in her native Copenhagen. In 1937, she joined the Mordkin Ballet, a New York company that served as the nucleus of Ballet Theater, as American Ballet Theater was originally known.

Tamil killed in Lankan blast: A bomb exploded in a passenger train bound for northern Sri Lanka, killing one Tamil civilian and injuring 11 others, military officials said Saturday. AP reports from Colombo.

The bombing came amid fears of a terrorist campaign by Tamil rebels in advance of parliamentary elections scheduled for August 16.

The train, which left Colombo Friday night, had stopped at the railway station in the central town of Anuradhapura when the explosion occurred at 4 am, officials said.

Drugs seized in Myanmar: Myanmar authorities seized more than 30 kilograms (66 pounds) of heroin and arrested 10 suspects in two raids earlier this week in eastern Shan state, state run Radio Yangon reported on Friday. AFP says from Bangkok.

Myanmar anti-narcotics agents arrested eight men early Monday in Larshio with 9.6 kilograms (21.12 pounds) of heroin.

Another two suspects were arrested the same evening after police found 21.62 kilograms (47.5 pounds) of heroin in their possession near the same town, the report said.

US ex-SEC chairman Shad dead: John S R Shad, a former US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) chairman who initiated an investigation of Drexel Burnham Lambert, then went on to try to clean up the brokerage as its head, has died. He was 71. AP reports from New York.

Shad died Thursday evening after heart surgery.

As head of the SEC, the federal agency that regulates the nation's securities markets, Shad ordered a probe of Drexel in 1986 that eventually led to a securities-fraud plea agreement with the Justice Department. Drexel hired Shad in April 1989 as part of its settlement with federal regulators.

US-DPRK talks postponed

GENEVA, July 9: Talks between US and North Korean delegates aimed at persuading the North to open its nuclear programme to outside inspection were suspended Saturday after the death of North Korea's longtime ruler, reports AP.

A statement from the US mission said the talks were postponed at the request of North Korea because of the death of President Kim Il Sung, who had ruled the country for more than four decades.

"We will remain in Geneva and will discuss together when the talks can be resumed," the statement said.

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South Korea's government said Saturday that Kim 82, died early Friday of a heart attack. His death threw the future of the nuclear standoff into doubt and raised questions about the communist country's stability.

ing recalled to Pyongyang. KBS quoted the chief US delegate Robert Gallucci as saying "Further talks are meaningless."

Joe Bermudez, a close observer of the Kim Il Sung regime and an author of books on the North Korean military said in an interview in Washington that he thinks Kim's death may briefly interrupt — but not kill — the Geneva talks.

Both delegations met for seven hours Friday and rounded off the day with a reception at North Korea's leafy diplomatic mission by the shores of Lake Geneva.

Gallucci and North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju both described their first seven hour session as "very useful and productive."

The negotiations were due to focus on North Korean guarantees to open up nuclear facilities for inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency in return for US technical assistance and diplomatic

links for the impoverished nation.

The talks had been delayed repeatedly because of the North's refusal to allow access to a key nuclear plant near the capital Pyongyang. This heightened fears the secretive communist country was developing weapons capability despite its insistence that its atomic power programme was peaceful.

"There is a great possibility that we can narrow down our difference on the nuclear issue. Both sides identified that there is much in common," said Kang. "Both sides wanted to resolve the nuclear issue through dialogue and by peaceful means."

"At the same time, there are many points on which the two sides differ very much," Kang said without elaborating. He spoke to reporters through an interpreter.

The United States has indicated it would consider exchanging liaison offices of forming consular relations with North Korea if the talks

were successful.

State Department officials have also said the United States will help North Korea change its atomic reactors from old-fashioned graphite ones to light-water based ones which are less suited to producing plutonium, an ingredient in nuclear weapons.

Although there have been no promises of US financial aid for the costly changeover, other countries like Russia and South Korea seem willing to step in. A Western-style light-water reactor costs between 800 million to 1 billion dollars, a bill the North says it simply can't afford.

President Clinton pushed for UN sanctions against Pyongyang at the height of a spring crisis over North Korea's blocking of inspectors from the United Nations' nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency. The administration has put that threat on hold pending the outcome of the Geneva talks.

Trial of '91 coup Gorbachev blamed for collapse of Soviet Union

MOSCOW, July 9: Former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and the army commander charged with taking part in the August 1991 failed Moscow coup traded insults on Friday during the trial of the coup plotters, reports AFP.

Valentin Varennikov, who was also the Deputy Defence Minister at the time, held the pro-reform president responsible for the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev responded with a swearword according to the news agency Interfax.

Varennikov then called Gorbachev "renegade", and traitor to the fatherland", and refused to heed calls from the court chairman to calm down.

Gorbachev, who was taking the stand for the second day on Friday, was jeered and whistled by angry demonstrators on Thursday as he arrived at Moscow's Supreme Court to testify on the coup attempt by communist hardliners.

Varennikov was the only one of the 12 plotters in the abortive coup to reject an amnesty approved by the Russian parliament in February.

He said he wanted to stand trial to speak out on what he terms "the Soviet tragedy."

Clinton's national AIDS coordinator resigns

WASHINGTON, July 9: President Clinton's national AIDS coordinator has resigned, saying her successor "must have the tools necessary" to win the confidence of people suffering from the deadly disease, reports AP.

Many AIDS activists said they were delighted at the development Friday because they did not believe Kristine Gebbie had the competence or the needed White House backing to make inroads against an increasingly lethal disease.

In her resignation letter Gebbie said she decided to step down on August 2 "by mutual agreement" with Clinton. She said she faced "conflicting expectations of what an 'AIDS czar' could do, and continued national divisiveness on issues central to ending this great epidemic."

She said she decided to leave after one year on the job because of "the issues being raised about how the office could be more effective, and the changes which are necessary to keep your agenda moving."

Clinton accepted the resignation, saying Gebbie had served "ably and with dedication."



With folded arms, French President Francois Mitterrand listens to (from L) EC President Jacques Delors, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi on the terrace of the Castel Del Ovo in Naples on Friday to attend a dinner for the G-7 Summit. Background (C) US President Bill Clinton. Others are unidentified. —AFP photo

Fall of Aden a defeat for Saudi Arabia

TEHRAN, July 9: The fall of the southern Yemeni cities of Aden and Mukalla to northern forces was a "landmark defeat for Saudi Arabia", Tehran radio said today, reports AFP.

In the first official Iranian reaction to the fall of Aden, the radio said "this big defeat should teach the Saudi leaders that they cannot always depend on foreign powers" to settle regional conflicts.

Iranian leaders alleged that the United States often influences Saudi policies in the region.

The radio also criticised Riyadh for welcoming several southern Yemeni separatist leaders on its soil, including "vice-president" of the breakaway state Abderrahman Al-Jifri.

"By accepting the southern Yemeni leaders, the Saudis risk endangering the security of the region and provoking foreign intervention", it said.

Since the beginning of the civil war in Yemen two months ago, Iran has repeatedly urged northern and southern Yemenis to remain united.

Forces loyal to Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh announced the capture of Aden Thursday, ending weeks of bombardment. Mukalla, where

Thai DPM resigns

BANGKOK, July 9: The resignation of a Deputy Prime Minister and no-confidence motion by the opposition are likely to further destabilise the coalition government of Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, newspapers reported Saturday, says AP.

Annuaire Virawan resigned Friday from both his Deputy Prime Minister post and as deputy leader of the New Aspiration Party, one of five in Chuan's coalition.

At almost the same time, 89 opposition parliamentarians filed a no-confidence motion against four key Cabinet ministers, which is expected to be debated at the end of July.

Vietnam allows foreigners to buy housing

HANOI, July 9: For the first time, foreigners can buy housing in Vietnam for personal use, an official report said Saturday, reports AP.

The Vietnam News said the government issued a decree July 5 allowing Vietnamese state-run real estate agencies to sell state-owned housing to foreigners.

The government will set minimum prices for new housing. They were not immediately disclosed.

Pak explosives used in '93 Bombay blast

NEW DELHI, July 9: An Indian state counsel alleged Friday that Pakistani explosives were used in last year's chain bombings in the western port city of Bombay which killed more than 300 people, news reports said, according to AFP.

Prosecutor Ujwal Nikam told a special court set up to try suspects in the blasts that the sophisticated RDX explosives used in the bombings were made in a commercial Pakistani ordnance factory, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

Nikam told the court in Bombay that police seized boxes in which the explosives had been shipped and found the markings of the factory, located outside the Pakistani capital Islamabad, the news agency said.

Indian investigators have alleged the involvement of Pakistani military intelligence in the chain blasts, which they have charged Bombay gangsters with carrying out. Islamabad denies any involvement.

Investigators have named Dawood Ibrahim who allegedly controls a vast criminal empire in Bombay from a safe haven abroad, as the prime suspect. They have named 188 other suspects.

Prosecutor Nikam told the Bombay court that confessions from captured suspects revealed that 27 people were flown to Pakistan on the national carrier Pakistan International Airlines for training in handling explosives.

They were received by three Pakistani officials and their passports were not stamped on arrival, he said.

Ibrahim allegedly staged the bombings to avenge attacks on fellow Muslims by Hindu militants in December 1992 and January 1993 in the aftermath of the destruction of the 16th century Babri Mosque.

The March 12, 1993 bomb blasts in Bombay, India's financial capital, left 317 people dead and 1,000 injured and caused extensive damage.



Japanese astronaut Chiaki Mukai (L) is assisted by a NASA technician on Friday at Kennedy Space Centre as she dons her ascent suit prior to boarding the Space Shuttle Columbia. Mukai is part of a seven-person international crew that is scheduled to spend thirteen days in orbit in the International Microgravity Laboratory. —AFP photo

1410 Chinese die in floods

BEIJING, July 9: The death toll from floods that have swept south China since May has risen to 1,410 after a tropical storm killed at least four people this week, an official newspaper said Saturday, reports AP.

The latest storm affected 3.56 million people in the southern province of Guangdong, which was still cleaning up and repairing damage from previous floods since early May, the China Daily said.

The newspaper said two people were missing in the latest flood, which destroyed 6,700 houses, damaged 50,000 and forced 365 mines and factories to close. Total losses were estimated at 980 million yuan (US\$144 million) it said.

It said the death toll from flooding this year in South China stood at 1,406 before the latest storm.

Storms regularly batter south China from May to September. In mountainous areas, deaths are often caused by flash floods or landslides.

Kim's personality cult far exceeding that of Stalin or Mao

TOKYO, July 9: Kim Il-Sung, the leader of communist North Korea since 1948, defied the collapse of communism in Europe to keep an iron grip on his secretive nation as its political isolation deepened, reports Reuters.

Kim, who died on Friday at the age of 82, was the world's longest serving absolute ruler and established a personality cult far exceeding that of Josef Stalin or Mao Tse-tung.

When news of his death was broadcast on North Korean radio on Saturday, stunned residents of his capital, Pyongyang, stopped and wept in the streets.

Kim's hold on power was so strong he survived the collapse of communism in Europe, in Mongolia and finally in the Soviet Union, the cradle of Bolshevism, which installed him in power in 1948 and was his principal supporter for 40 years.

But his final years were marked by economic and

diplomatic defeat at the hands of bitter rival South Korea, and a growing crisis over his suspected nuclear weapons development plans.

Building on its remarkable economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s, Seoul embarked on a policy of wooing Kim's communist allies with loans and technology, leading to diplomatic relations with most of them. In 1988, nearly all of them ignored his boycott call and took part in the Seoul Olympics.

Seoul's greatest triumph came with the establishment of ties with Moscow in 1990. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev met South Korean President Roh Tae-Woo in 1991, the first visit by a Soviet leader to the peninsula. None ever went to Pyongyang.

East European nations hurried to send ambassadors to Seoul, and Moscow's trade with the booming South grew rapidly.

To offset the diplomatic losses, Kim opened talks in

late 1990 on normalising relations with Japan, previously one of the capitalist demons in his ideology.

But the talks were stymied by Tokyo's demand that North Korea allow international inspection of its nuclear facilities, and by its refusal to meet a North Korean demand to pay compensation for the damage Pyongyang says it suffered from being ostracised by Japan since 1945.

The nuclear issue was also taken up by South Korea, the United States and other Western countries, alarmed that such an unstable regime, implicated in international terrorism in the 1980s, should possess nuclear weapons.

After Pyongyang threatened in March, 1993, to pull out of the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty rather than allow inspections, the confrontation worsened.

By June, 1994, the United States and Seoul were leading a drive to slap North Korea with economic sanctions in an

effort to force Kim to come clean on his nuclear ambitions.

Then suddenly, after months of bellicose bluster, Kim deftly defused the immediate crisis by telling visiting former US President Jimmy Carter he was ready to compromise.

He won agreement for high-level diplomatic talks with the United States, and offered an unprecedented summit meeting with the leader of the hated anti-communist South Korean state, President Kim Young Sam. They were to have met on July 25.

Despite the collapse of Soviet communism, and the ominous absorption of socialist East German into the capitalist West, Kim Il-Sung hung on determinedly to power further enforcing North Korea's isolation from outside ideologies and influences; he fought to preserve communism from contagion.

Despite Pyongyang's growing political isolation in recent years, a flagging economy and a

continuing loss of political, military and economic ground to Seoul, Kim's own prestige in his "hermit kingdom" apparently remained intact to the end.

The extraordinary Kim Il-Sung cult, which has completely dominated the lives of his 22 million subjects for decades, showed no signs of flagging.

North Korea's media and officials routinely ascribed superhuman powers to Kim, referring to him in such terms as "the sun of mankind who illuminates the world".

From the 1970s, Kim groomed his son Kim Jong-il to succeed him in an attempt to create the first communist dynasty. Little is known about Kim Jong-il, who is not known to have visited any country in the world except China.

His writings, collected in 27 thick volumes, dominate the education of students from kindergarten to university and his birthplace has become a shrine.

Off the Record

Goldfish happy in Space

SPACE CENTER, Houston: Some of the aquatic passengers aboard shuttle Columbia were like fish out of water while adjusting to spaceflight Saturday, reports AP.

Astronaut Leroy Chiao checked on six Japanese goldfish in the shuttle's bus-sized laboratory and reported that they looked "nice and happy" if not exactly at ease 12 hours into their trip.

"The fish all appear healthy," Chiao reported, but "they're all a little bit restless."

Columbia is crawling with all sorts of aquatic and amphibious life, including fish, newts, jellyfish, frog eggs and sea urchins. There also are some 500 fruit flies, as well as worms, slime mold, roots and mouse bones.

Seven astronauts will spend the next two weeks working with the specimens to help biologists understand how they develop in weightlessness and how cells divide and grow without gravity.

Policewoman in trouble for posing nude

NEW YORK: The policewoman who brought the New York Police Department to the pages of Playboy magazine will face departmental charges, officials said Friday, reports AP.

"She's in trouble, there's no doubt about it," says Police Commissioner William Bratton.

Officer Carol Shaya appeared nude inside the magazine and semi-nude on the cover in a uniform blouse.

Shaya, 24, assigned to a precinct in the Bronx, might be charged with failing to file a proper off-duty work form, wearing her uniform in several photos and using the department name for personal gain, police spokesman John Miller said.

Shaya submitted an off-duty work form but said the job was a sports-wear modelling assignment, Miller said. The Playboy layout earned her a reported \$75,000.

An unidentified police source told the Daily News the charges could bring dismissal but the department probably would not seek to fire Shaya.

Wife divorces 'Yorkshire Ripper'

YORK, England: The wife of a serial killer known as the "Yorkshire Ripper" divorced him, it was reported Saturday, says AP.

Sonia Sutcliffe was divorced from mass murderer Peter Sutcliffe in April, but details have just emerged in Saturday's Yorkshire Post newspaper.

Peter Sutcliffe, a truck driver, was jailed for life in 1981 after being convicted in the murders of 13 women and seven attempted murders in a five-year terror spree.

The Sutcliffes were married August 10, 1974, just months before the killings began in Yorkshire, England's largest county located about 180 miles (300 km) north of London.

Sutcliffe's ex-wife has now reverted to her maiden name, Szurma, according to the Press Association news agency. Press Association said that the pair had been separated for five years.

Om Prakash threads his way through the Guinness Book

ALLAHABAD: After being twice featured in the Limca Book of Records, Om Prakash Singh, a cashier-cum-general clerk at the United Bank of India has achieved his life-long ambition to get his name into the Guinness Book of World Records, says PTI.

On July 25, 1993, in a live demonstration, Singh threaded a strand of cotton through a number 13 needle 20,675 times in two hours breaking the previous record of 11,796 times in two hours to enter his name in the Guinness Book.

Earlier, his name appeared in the Limca Book of Records in 1991 for writing 6562 words in microwriting on one side of a post card, recording on it couplets of "Madhusahi", of renowned poet Harivansh Rai Bachchan.

He repeated the feat next year, writing 61,800 characters in microwriting on three-fourth space on one side of a post card. He wrote happy birthday to Amitabh a staggering 2,808 times on the star's 51st birthday, without using a lens or magnifying glass without which the naked eye cannot even read the 61,800 characters.

UN renews Int'l Mission in Haiti

UNITED NATIONS, July 9: The UN General Assembly renewed for one year Friday the mandate of the International Civilian Mission in Haiti, which is responsible for monitoring the human rights situation in the Caribbean country, reports AFP.

In a resolution adopted by consensus, the Assembly reaffirmed the need for the return to Port-au-Prince of President Jean Bertrand Aristide, who was ousted by the military in a September 1991 coup, "to resume his constitutional functions... without further delay."

The Assembly also asked Secretary General Boutros Ghali to "take the steps necessary to expedite and strengthen the presence of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti which currently includes some 120 officials."

The UN spokesman in Haiti Eric Falt told AFP on Thursday that the mission would announce the resumption of operations after the General Assembly had renewed its mandate.