

ROK won't allow citizens to attend Kim's funeral

SEOUL, July 14: The South Korean government said today it would not allow citizens to visit the North for Sunday's state funeral of Kim Il-Sung, despite the Stalinist state's offer to receive mourners, reports Reuters.

"It is the government's position that we will not allow South Koreans to go to North Korea to mourn," a Unification Ministry spokesman said.

North Korea said it would guarantee the safety of South Korean mourners who would be welcomed in the communist nation.

A statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said: "We will receive with warm patriotic feelings mourning groups or mourners from South Korea who come to Pyongyang to express condolences before the

bier of respected President Kim Il-Sung and attend the national memorial service."

The statement, issued in the name of the Pyongyang's committee for the peaceful reunification of the fatherland, added that mourners could enter the North through the border post at Panmunjom or through a third country.

North Korea has often encouraged South Korean citizens to visit what Kim Il-Sung's propaganda machine called an "earthly paradise." Seoul authorities have always blocked such individual trip, insisting the government alone must handle contacts with its Stalinist neighbour.

Pyeongyang made clear on Saturday when announcing Kim's death that it would not admit any foreign mourning groups for the funeral.

AP adds: Students hurled firebombs at police stations Thursday, protesting arrests of 55 colleagues who were allegedly mourning the death of North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung.

About 200 students were involved in the Thursday attacks, police said. Two have been arrested.

Witnesses quoted students as shouting: "Stop oppressing student movements" and "Release the arrested students" during their hit-and-run attacks.

The attacks were protesting the arrest of 55 students Wednesday.

The students were allegedly preparing to send a delegation to North Korea to offer their condolences for the death of Kim Il-Sung.



Murtaza Bhutto, estranged brother of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, walks under Holy Quran on his departure for a tour of the southern province of Sindh on Wednesday. — AFP photo

Air strike on LTTE base: 19 killed

COLOMBO, July 14: Helicopter assault troops destroyed a Tamil Sea Tiger guerrilla naval base in northwestern Sri Lanka early today, killing up to 19 rebels, military sources said, reports Reuters.

A Defence Ministry spokesman said it was the first assault by the army's newly-formed rapid reaction air mobile strike force, set up to give troops greater battlefield mobility.

"It was an airborne raid," a senior air force officer told Reuters. "We dropped them at first light using Mi-17 and Bell-212 transport helicopters, taking the enemy by surprise."

The spokesman said troops killed four rebels of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, fighting for independence in the island's north and east, and captured one, during the three-hour battle at the

Silavatural base, in the north-western Mannar district. Fifteen more rebels were believed to have been killed, he said.

Aircraft patrolling overhead destroyed a tractor-trailer bringing about 15 rebel reinforcements, the spokesman said.

Navy gunboats patrolled offshore to cut off the rebels' sea escape routes, he added.

There were no army casualties, he said.

Military sources said the base was set up by the naval arm of the Tamil Tigers, known as the Sea Tigers, when their northern sea routes used for arms smuggling were cut off by the military.

In March this year, Sea Tiger rebels from Silavatural massacred 22 fishermen off Kudremalay point.

BRIEFLY

Pope's book on Catholicism soon: Pope John Paul II's writings about Catholicism will be published worldwide in the fall. The New York Times reported Thursday. AP says from New York.

"Crossing the Threshold of Hope" is a collection of the Pope's answers to questions about the church's global role, the newspaper said.

The estimated millions of dollars the Pope will receive for publishing rights were to be donated to charity. Alfred A Knopf will publish the book in the United States. Knopf obtained rights Tuesday in a deal with Morton L Janklow, a literary agent who represents the Pope's Italian publisher, Mondadori, in the United States.

Quake shakes E Indonesia: A strong earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 6.5 struck eastern Indonesia Wednesday night, causing panic among local residents but no casualties or damage, AP reports from Jakarta.

The earthquake was centred about 200 kilometers (125 miles) beneath the bottom of the Banda Sea in the Indonesian archipelago, a meteorological agency spokesman said.

Residents in Dili, the capital of the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, and other nearby areas burst out of their homes after the quake hit at 6:45 PM (1145 GMT), but there were no immediate reports of damage. Dili is about 2,000 kilometers (1,250 miles) east of Jakarta.

Boy rescued from ravine: A 16-year-old boy, whose leg was broken in several places when his car plunged down a 75-foot (23-metre) ravine three days ago, was rescued on Wednesday after passers by heard his cries for help, officials said, Reuters reports from San Francisco.

The teenager apparently left the highway near Montara, 20 miles (32-kms) south of San Francisco, early Sunday morning, drove his car across a field and then plunged to the bottom of the ravine, a California Highway Patrol (CHP) spokeswoman said.

The boy, identified by a hospital spokeswoman as P J Bondoc of San Jose, was trapped in the ravine for more than three days, unable to get out because he had a broken leg.

7 policemen die in Assam blast: Seven policemen were killed when their vehicle drove over a landmine in the northeastern Indian frontier state of Assam, the Press Trust of India reported yesterday. AFP says from New Delhi.

The blast occurred in the district of Barpeta late Wednesday, the news agency said in a brief dispatch from Guwahati, Assam's main city. It blamed unidentified known militants for the attack.

Oil and timber-rich Assam, which borders Bangladesh and Bhutan, is the site of a guerilla campaign by the left-wing United Liberation Front of Assam for the state's secession from India.

Step to protect China's wildlife: China has intensified efforts to protect wildlife, issuing rules detailing punishments for offences involving the hunting and marketing of endangered animals, the China Daily reported Thursday. AFP says from Beijing.

The new rules set out, for the first time, clear punishments for violating China's 1988 law for the protection of wild animals, warning that anyone caught poaching a giant panda will receive life imprisonment or the death penalty, the report said.

Rains claim 36 in India

NEW DELHI, July 14: Torrential monsoon rains spread havoc across India today after killing at least 36 people, causing rivers to burst their banks, toppling houses and submerging crops, reports AFP.

A five-storey building collapsed in Bombay on Thursday after three days of heavy rain, killing 12 people including two infants and injuring 16, the police there said.

Two women were killed in a downpour in the nearby city of Nasik.

Ten rain-related fatalities were reported overnight Wednesday from the southern

state of Kerala, including seven members of a family who died when their hut was buried by a rockslide, the Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

The Kerala legislature was adjourned to allow members to visit their constituencies to supervise relief measures.

Heavy rain also lashed the neighbouring state of Karnataka. Twelve people were killed and hundreds of houses and many bridges collapsed, triggering landslides, closing roads and cutting off several areas, PTI said.

Some 10,000 people took shelter in relief camps in the Gujarat city of Ahmedabad.

Santer new EU president likely

BRUSSELS, July 14: The European Union agreed to avoid a debilitating row over its future, appeared likely to give its top job to the controversial premier of its smallest country on Friday, reports Reuters.

Luxembourg Prime Minister Jacques Santer emerged earlier in the week as the frontrunner to replace outgoing European Commission President Jacques Delors following a search in which better-known and more dynamic candidates slipped out of the running.

Santer is viewed as able, if uninspiring.

"He will not be in the Delors mould I suspect," said one EU diplomat referring to the outgoing president's reputation as a European visionary.

NEW DELHI, July 14: Forty-six years after his assassination, Mahatma Gandhi has been dubbed a Hindu fundamentalist by the elder statesman of India's communist movement, to the consternation of many of his compatriots, reports AFP.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, the apostle of non-violence and one of the most venerated figures of the century, is revered as the "father of the nation" by Indians for leading the country to independence from the British.

Communist leader EMS Namboodiripad recently sparked howls of protest by describing Gandhi as a Hindu fundamentalist and comparing him with two local Muslim politicians in Namboodiripad's home state of Kerala.

"I think it shows his complete ignorance of Gandhi,

Serbs refuse to accept peace plan for Bosnia

SARAJEVO, July 14: Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, ignoring threats of tighter sanctions and diplomatic isolation, refused to endorse the latest international peace plan for Bosnia despite appeals from Britain and France, reports Reuters.

British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said Karadzic would not give a positive response to the plan on Wednesday when he and French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe went to Serb headquarters in Pale, outside Sarajevo, for talks.

Karadzic told them during the heated discussions that only the self-declared Bosnian Serb parliament could decide whether to accept the deal aimed at ending the 27-month war in Bosnia.

"We received no answers from Pale, we received some criticism, some suggestions about the plan, but no definite answer," Hurd told reporters later in Belgrade.

Both the Bosnian Serb assembly in Pale and the Muslim Croat parliament in Sarajevo are scheduled to meet on Monday, a day before the deadline set by the international community for a "yes" or

"no" to the plan.

Hurd warned a rejection of the peace deal would bring disastrous results, prolonging the war and possible widening it.

In another blow to the peace plan, the main Bosnian Serb political party said the plan was "incomplete" and called for the suspension of further negotiations until it was amended, the Belgrade-based Tanjug news agency reported early today.

The Serbian Democratic Party issued the statement after its leadership which includes Karadzic met late on Wednesday night in Pale.

The party's stance is considered a key to Monday's debate in the Bosnian Serb parliament.

Leaders of the Muslim Croat Bosnian Federation met Hurd and Juppe in Sarajevo earlier on Wednesday and said they would support the plan despite its shortcomings.

Bosnia's Muslim President Alija Izetbegovic said he would recommend the deal to the Bosnian parliament on condition the country's international borders were preserved.

AFP adds: Bosnian government and Serbs forces are

fighting running battles in the western Bihać enclave in violation of a month-long truce renewed only Tuesday, reports indicated here today.

UN protection force spokesman Commander Eric Chaperon said "offensive actions are underway" in the region, with 210 heavy detonations reported Wednesday evening and overnight on the Grabez Plateau, to the east of Bihać town.

Small arms and machine-gun fire were also heard, he said, adding that this indicated that "infantry was engaged."

It was generally assumed that Serb artillery was responding to Bosnian infantry assaults.

UN special envoy to the former Yugoslavia Yasushi Akashi on Tuesday announced an extension to a much-violated truce between government and Serb forces in the country.

The latest truce — verbally agreed to by the Serbs — pledges that neither side is to engage in offensive action. It is due to run until August 10.

Thai 'condom king' gets Magsaysay Award

MANILA, July 14: Mechai Viravaidya, known as the "condom king of Thailand" for his efforts to promote population and AIDS control, has won the 1994 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service, reports AP.

The Ramon Magsaysay Foundation said Viravaidya, who is chairman of Thailand's Population and Community Development Association, had promoted "creative public campaigns to promote family planning, rural development and a rigorous, honest and compassionate response to the plague of AIDS."

Mechai was among the first prominent Thais to become alert to the spread of the deadly disease. He founded the population control centre in 1974, before AIDS appeared, in order to reduce the country's birth rate.

When the AIDS epidemic spread to Thailand in the 1980s, the association also began promoting the use of condoms to protect against the virus.

He became a senior minister in 1991 and developed programmes to increase AIDS awareness throughout the country.

The Magsaysay awards are given annually to successful Asians. He is the eighth Thai to win the award, which carries a \$50,000 dollars grant.

US urges Algeria to open talks with dissidents

WASHINGTON, July 14: The United States on Wednesday deplored the recent killing of foreigners in Algeria and urged the government to open a dialogue with dissident groups, reports AP.

"There's no justification for such senseless acts of terror against innocent people," State Department spokeswoman Christine Shelly told reporters.

Seven Italian sailors were slain in an Algerian port last week, and seven East Europeans were gunned down in two attacks Monday. No one has claimed responsibility, but authorities blame Islamic fundamentalist extremists.

Winnie visits ailing Mandela

JOHANNESBURG, July 14: South African President Nelson Mandela's estranged wife Winnie Mandela visited her husband after his eye operation at Morningside Clinic here on Wednesday, reports Xinhua.

Winnie, Deputy Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, said afterwards that she was grateful that the operation had been a success but added that the effects of the operation had not completely worn off.

Earlier, the president's younger daughter Zinzi came to the clinic, where Mandela had his cataract surgery from 8:30 to 11:00 this morning.



President Bill Clinton talks to Wanda Cheeks (R) at an Albany, Georgia, school which is serving as a disaster relief center on Wednesday. Cheeks lost her home in flooding after rain caused by tropical storm Alberto severely flooded portions of southwest Georgia. — AFP photo

Gandhi was a Hindu fundamentalist?

Gandhian life and Gandhian thought," said B R Nanda, a biographer of the Mahatma, or "Great Soul," who was gunned down by a Hindu extremist here on January 30, 1948.

"It is a most absurd statement," Nanda said.

"It is a perverse opinion," added Kishan Lal Sharma of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, the bete noire of India's communists.

The 85-year-old Namboodiripad, popularly known as EMS, headed the world's first elected communist regime in Kerala in 1957. He is a former leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the dominant left-wing group.

In an attempt to justify the CPI (M)'s newfound affection

for two Muslim politicians in Kerala widely seen as fundamentalists, EMS argued that many Indian leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, preached religious fundamentalism.

"Leaders of all religions can be called fundamentalists. If fundamentalists are to be treated as untouchables, all ties with all religious communities have to be snapped."

EMS wrote in a party daily. "This is not the Marxist view."

The unrepentant communist elder statesman quoted Lenin to back up his controversial remarks.

Newspapers, intellectuals and politicians from right, left and center poured scorn on EMS for his assessment of

Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi frequently quoted from Hindu holy books to prod Indians to fight for the country's freedom. But he professed respect for all religious beliefs and was a staunch believer in Hindu-Muslim unity.

"Is the communist leader so blind that he cannot distinguish between light and darkness?" asked the Hindustan Times, the capital's best-selling newspaper. "Either his memory has faded or he has lost his sense of history."

An angry Indian Express compared EMS with Andres Escobar, the Colombian football player who scored a goal against his own team in a World Cup match against the United States and was shot to

death on his return home.

A Muslim cleric, Abdul Gaffar Mouli, was harsh: "It is high time Namboodiripad stops writing or speaking in public," he said.

Even a communist leader, Maqmuuddin Farooqi, flayed EMS.

"Gandhi had his roots in religion, but he was not an obscurantist," said Farooqi, deputy leader of the smaller Communist Party of India. "He was certainly not a religious fundamentalist."

Stunned by the outcry, the CPI (M) quietly disowned EMS' comments.

"We revere Mahatma Gandhi as a national leader who had religious beliefs," said a CPI (M) leader, Sitaram Yechury.

3 students die in E Timor violence

DILI, July 14: Club-wielding troops and police broke up a protest against the Indonesian military Thursday, killing at least three students and injuring dozens of others, a human rights activist said, reports AP.

The violence erupted in the East Timor capital of Dili, where Indonesian troops killed dozens of pro-independence protesters in November 1991, in an attack that drew sharp protests from the West. Indonesia annexed the Portuguese colony in 1976 after intervening in a civil war there.

Three students were killed on the spot and at least 30 were injured when riot police dispersed the protest by about 500 students, Da Costa Bello, an activist of the private, local Etadeti Foundation, told The Associated Press. He said more than 60 were arrested.

Armando Mayo, vice president of the University of Timor, who led the protest, said the protesters had planned to meet with a leader of the local Parliament to demand firm action against two soldiers who allegedly abused the sacraments during Mass at a Roman Catholic Church near Dili.

The protesters also were demanding that Indonesian military authorities ensure freedom of religion in East Timor, he said.

Three priests calmed the students and asked them to return to campus, he said.

Da Costa said police attacked as the protesters, carrying anti-Indonesian banners and posters, were returning to the university compound.

Afterward, he said, "soldiers with automatic weapons were stationed at every important place," such as the local Parliament building, the governor's office, shopping centres and other public buildings.

Reuters from Jakarta reports: Residents said some 59 demonstrators were being held in a military barracks after fleeing police and military forces during a march from the local university.

Australia considers refugee claims by Vietnamese

DARWIN, July 14: Australia ignored UN advice Thursday, announcing it would consider refugee claims by 17 Vietnamese boat people, reports AP.

The 15 men and two women arrived Friday from the Galang island refugee-processing camp in Indonesia, where they had been refused refugee status by UN officials.

The Canberra office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees has urged the Australian government to reject the Vietnamese efforts to renew refugee applications.

Vietnam to free top political prisoner

HANOI, July 14: Vietnam is releasing one of its most highly-profiled political prisoners for health reasons in an apparent gesture of goodwill two weeks after the visit of a high-level US delegation that took up the issue of human rights, US sources said Thursday, reports AP.

The family of Doan Thanh Lien was notified he would be sent back to his home in Ho Chi Minh City for his wife and children to care for him, family members said. Lien, who will turn 60 on September 11, suffers from a lung disease.

He had been serving a 12-year sentence in the Han Tan camp north of Ho Chi Minh City.