

BRIEFLY

Gambia bans political assembly:

Gambia's military president has tightened his hold on the tiny West African country by banning political assembly and setting a Ruling Council of army officers above the mainly civilian cabinet. Reuter reports from Banjul.

The edict, signed by Lieutenant Yahyah Jammeh last Friday, was published on Monday as police arrested six public officials suspected of misconduct, among them a nephew and brother in law of ousted President Sir Dawda Jawara.

US to sell 600 missiles to Turkey:

The US Defence Department said on Monday it planned to sell nearly 600 missiles to Turkey at an estimated cost of 137 million dollars, reports Reuter from Washington.

The sale includes 500 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, 80 Amraam air-to-air missile and 16 Harpoon ship-launched guided missiles.

The proposed sale would help improve the military capabilities of Turkey.

UN soldier killed in Somalia:

A peacekeeper from Zimbabwe was killed during an attack by Somali militia in a western border town, the United Nations said Monday. AP reports from Nairobi.

Ten colleagues missing since the Saturday attack in Belet Huen near Ethiopia's border were found unharmed and flown to Mogadishu, said UN spokesman George Bennett.

Bennett, who spoke by telephone from Mogadishu, said the slain soldier was a corporal, but declined to give his name.

British woman killed in Nairobi:

Burglars beat a British woman to death in her suburban Nairobi home over the weekend, the Foreign Office said Monday as it issued a warning to Britons travelling to Kenya. AFP reports from London.

Adam Winter surprised four burglars who had entered his home Sunday. A fight ensued, and his wife Carol aged 30 was beaten to death. Winter was injured but their one-year-old daughter was unhurt.

6 die in Cuban train collision:

Two trains collided near Havana on Monday, killing six people and injuring 156 more, the Cuban news agency Prensa Latina reported. Reuter says from Havana.

The news agency said the accident occurred when two passenger trains collided at a junction at Luyano neighbourhood in the southeast of the Cuban capital.

Japan to improve ties with China:

Japanese Prime Minister Michi Miyazawa in a meeting with Beijing's ambassador to Tokyo promised to improve relations between the two countries, Xinhua reported on Tuesday. AFP says from Hong Kong.

In his meeting on Monday with Ambassador Xu Dunxin, their first since Miyazawa formed his cabinet a month ago, the Japanese Premier said his government would continue to vigorously promote the Sino-Japanese friendly relations and support China's policy of reform and opening up, and its modernisation drive.

Canadian jets collide in Quebec:

Two Canadian Air Force jets collided on Monday night over northern Quebec, but there were no casualties, officials said. AP reports from Montreal.

The crash occurred as the two Tornados were returning from an exercise in Alaska. One of the aircraft made an emergency landing and both occupants escaped uninjured, said Capt. J P Lacasse early Tuesday.

Blasts rock US navy armoury:

Several explosions rocked a US navy weapons stockpile in Indian head, Maryland, on Monday night, local television stations reported. Reuter says from Washington.

The Indian head ordinance station lies about 25 miles (40 km) south of Washington on the Potomac river. Navy spokesman Lieutenant Rod Hill said he had no immediate information on the reported blasts.

Typhoon hits ROK, 36 feared dead:

At least 36 people were dead or missing yesterday after Typhoon Brendan swept through South Korea's southern areas, relief officials said. Reuter reports from Seoul.

At least four people camping in a valley were killed and 32 were missing in torrential rainstorms triggered by Brendan, they said. Rescuers saved two of 24 fishermen from two trawlers which sank in rough seas off the southern island of Cheju.

Fire destroys library in Norwich:

More than 100,000 books were destroyed on Monday when a fire devastated the library in the eastern England town of Norwich, Reuter reports from Norwich.

Police believe the blaze was due to a gas leak which was then ignited by a caretaker switching on a light. No one was injured in the blast. The library's entire stock of books and local country records was wiped out.

Russia to give fire plane to US:

Russia will send a special plane to help fight wildfires in the western United States, despite blazes that have charred hundreds of thousands of acres (hectares) back home in Russia, officials said Tuesday. reports AP.

"The American side asked us to provide a plane on Monday, and we're going to fulfill their request, since the fire situation in Russia isn't alarming," said Marina Ryklna, a spokeswoman for the Ministry for Emergency Situations.

2 ministers fired in Turkmenistan:

Two of the most powerful ministers in Turkmenistan's government have been sacked for corruption and for hastening the republic's slide into economic crisis, an official newspaper said today. Reuter reports from Ashgabat.

Agriculture minister Palgeldi Meredov and Oil and Gas Minister Nazar Sayunov were dismissed by president Saparmurat Niyazov on Saturday.

Cholera breaks out in S Russia:

A cholera epidemic has been spreading rapidly across the republic of Dagestan in southern Russia, with a two-fold increase reported just over the weekend, officials said Monday. AP reports from Moscow.

So far, 175 cases have been confirmed, and an additional 83 people have been infected, said Karl Smolnikov, a spokesman for the Russian Ministry for Emergency Situations. Eighty-seven others have been hospitalized on suspicion they were carrying cholera microbes.

3 African jurists in Rwanda commission

WASHINGTON, Aug 2: United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed three African legal experts to the newly created UN Commission of Experts to analyse evidence of genocide and grave human rights abuses in Rwanda, reports USIS.

A spokesman for the secretary-general announced August 1 that the members of the commission are: Atsu-Noffi Amega, former president of Togo's Supreme Court; Haby Dieng, attorney general of Guinea; and Salifou Fomba, professor of international law in Mali.

The Security Council on July 1 asked the secretary-general to urgently set up the impartial commission.

US, France, Russia reject Serb call to reopen peace talks

PARIS, Aug 2: France, Russia and the United States rejected on Monday a Bosnian Serb call to reopen talks on the latest peace plan, insisting that the blueprint was not negotiable, reports AFP.

The French Foreign Ministry said the call from Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic for an immediate resumption of talks added "nothing new" and that the plan still stood on a take-it-or-leave-it basis as when it was presented last month in Geneva.

In Washington the State Department called Karadzic's call "a non-starter" with spokesman Michael McCurry saying, "It is not envisioned that we'll reopen negotiations."

And in Moscow, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev said Russia still expected an affirmative response from the Serbs to the peace plan, which would partition Bosnia along ethnic lines.

"We have defended the interests of the Serbs, but the plan presents a peace ultimatum, and an ultimatum must be either accepted or rejected," Kozyrev said.

"So I have no intention of starting new talks," Kozyrev told Russian television.

The peace plan would give 51 per cent of Bosnia's territory to the new Croat-Muslim Federation and 49 per cent to the Serbs, who control around 70 per cent after 27 months of war. The two sections would exist in a single entity within Bosnia's current borders.

Following the Bosnian Serb rejection of the plan last month, the contact group agreed over the weekend to press for tougher UN sanctions against Serbia, the Bosnian Serbs patron. The group also said exempting the Muslim-led government in Sarajevo from an arms embargo could be inevitable.

Karadzic said on Monday he wanted to change the plan to "guarantee the sovereignty" of the self-proclaimed Bosnian Serb Republic. His faction objects to sharing the same country with the Croats and Muslims.

At UN headquarters in New York, diplomats said the contact group met informally on Monday to discuss tightening sanctions against Serbia.

The draft resolution under discussion calls for strengthening the existing embargo and a freeze on all foreign exchanges with Serbia and Montenegro which from the rump republic of Yugoslavia, a European diplomat said.

The draft, which could be presented to the Security Council by the end of the week also includes new trade sanctions and travel restrictions according to the diplomat who said a freeze on foreign held assets is also under consideration.

Another report says: The speaker of the Bosnian Serb self-proclaimed parliament raised the possibility on Sunday of a referendum by his people on an international peace plan which the Bosnian Serb leadership has rejected.

The official, Momcilo Krajisnik, was giving the first official reaction to Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's public endorsement of the plan, which calls on the Bosnian Serbs to give up a third of the land they have conquered in 27 months of war.

"We cannot commit national suicide by giving back land vital to the self-declared Bosnian Serb republic," Krajisnik told a Serbian radio station.

Excerpts of his remarks are to appear in Monday's edition of the newspaper Borba.

"That's why we should hold a referendum and let the people decide," he said.

LTTE penetrates military base, blows up chopper

COLOMBO, Aug 2: Tamil rebels penetrated a military base in northern Sri Lanka and blew up an air force helicopter early Tuesday. Six guerrillas and an airman were killed in a gun fight, military officials said, reports AP.

The rebels tried repeatedly on Monday to attack the base at Palali, the military's main foothold in the guerrilla-controlled Jaffna Peninsula, said army spokesman Brigadier Genunu Kulatunga.

One group slipped into the base from the sea before dawn. The rebels reached the airstrip and fired a rocket-propelled grenade at the parked helicopter before they were detected, officials said.

The US-manufacture Bell 212 helicopter caught fire. An airman guarding it was killed and two other airmen were wounded, said Kulatunga. In the ensuing two-hour gun battle, six rebels were killed and two more were captured.

Yasin Malik released from hospital

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: Kashmiri Muslim militant leader Yasin Malik was discharged from a New Delhi hospital today after ending a four-day hunger strike, hospital officials said, reports AFP.

Malik, leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), was flying back home to the Kashmir summer capital of Srinagar, said P K Dave, medical superintendent at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

He said Malik, who was flown here and hospitalised late Sunday after his condition turned serious, voluntarily ate breakfast after being administered intravenous fluid Monday night.



Bosnian soldiers carry a wounded dog to the hospital after he was shot by a Serb sniper August 1. Serb snipers often target children or animals to draw other targets, and have been working with impunity under the observation of French UNPROFOR teams.

— AFP photo

Anti-kidnapping squads set up in Delhi

NEW DELHI, Aug 2: The Delhi police has raised nine anti-kidnapping squads to tackle the growing menace of kidnapping for ransom, reports Xinhua.

The squads were formed under instructions of the Indian Home Ministry.

Indian Minister of State for Home P M Sayeed, who is also in charge of the union territories and the Delhi police, reviewed the situation in a meeting on Monday, which was attended by Delhi Lt Governor PK Dave and Delhi Police Commissioner MB Kaushal.

He said that the nine anti-kidnapping squads, one each district in the capital are in addition to the anti-kidnapping cell in each district.

Invasion of Kuwait was justified, says Iraq

NICOSIA, Aug 2: Iraq said Monday that its invasion of Kuwait four years ago was justified because its neighbour was using oil as a weapon to destroy the Iraqi economy, reports AFP.

The official Iraqi news agency INA, marking the anniversary of the August 2 invasion, charged that the Kuwaitis had been carrying out a US-Israeli plot against the Arab world.

"At the time, Iraq was devoted to economic reconstruction," after the 1980-1988 war with Iran, "but enemies frustrated by its victory found in Kuwait's leaders the means to weaken it," INA said.

Kuwait flooded the oil market, triggering a price fall, and it stole 2.4 billion dollars worth of oil from a border oil field, it charged.

Pakistan will find alternatives to F-16s

ISLAMABAD, Aug 2: President Farooq Leghari said Monday Pakistan was studying various options to buy fighters for its air force if the United States did not lift a ban on supplying already contracted F-16 fighters, reports Reuter.

"Keeping in view its defence needs, Pakistan will find alternatives to the F-16 aircraft if it is not made available," the local PPI news agency quoted him as telling reporters at an aeronautical complex at Kamra, west of Islamabad.

But he did not name the other possible sources of supply.

Pakistan ordered 71 F-16s in the late 1980s at a cost of 1.4 billion dollars. Some of the

planes were built but were prevented from being delivered because of suspicions that Pakistan was working to produce nuclear weapons, which Islamabad denies.

The provision of F-16 aircraft to Pakistan for which it has made a payment of 658 million dollars is the moral and contractual responsibility of the United States," Leghari said.

PPI quoted him as saying US officials told him during his visit to Washington earlier this year that the F-16 issue could not be solved unless Pakistan's nuclear programme was run according to US wishes.

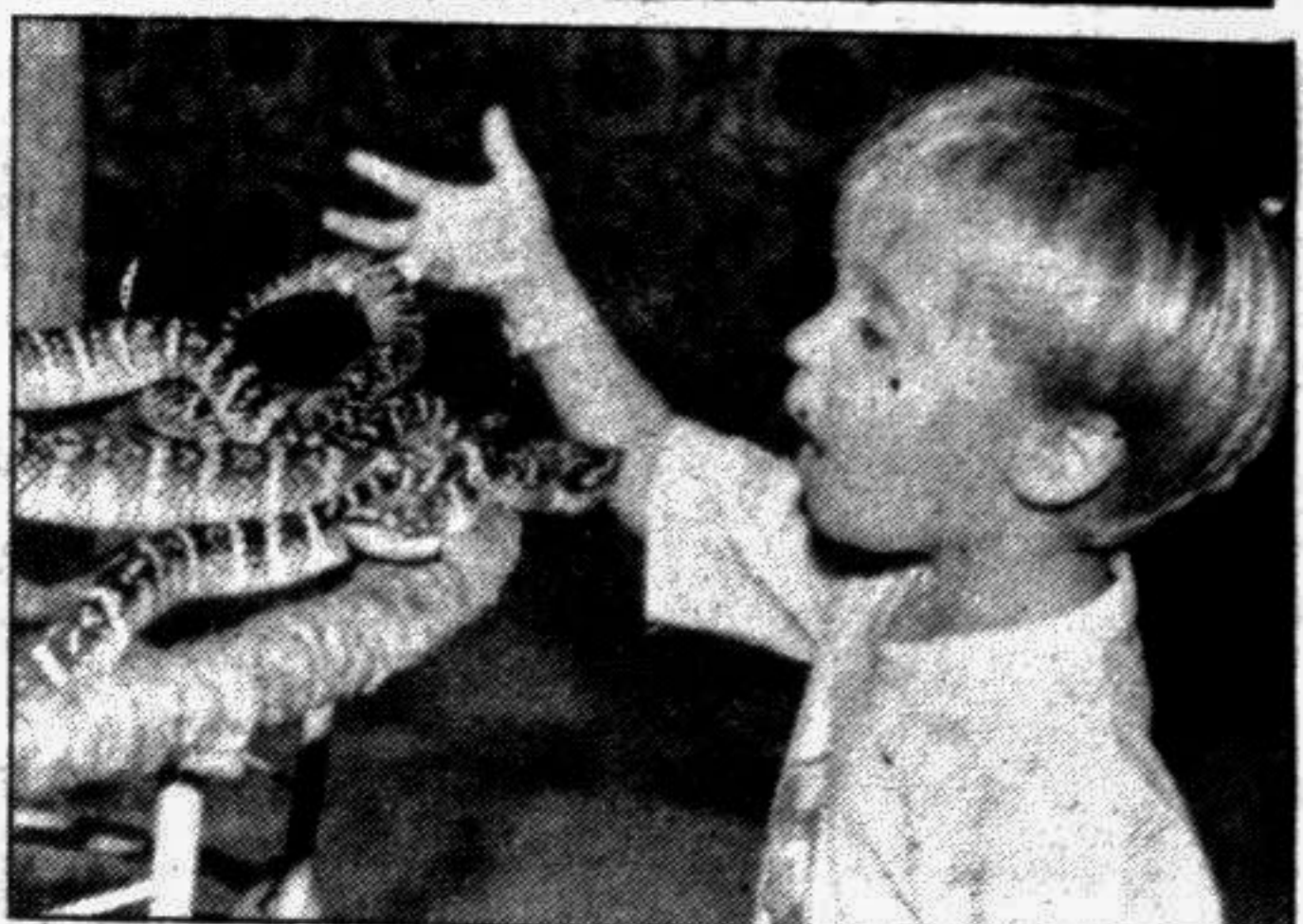
The Pakistani government says its nuclear programme is peaceful but it will not sign NPT.



British Premier John Major, German President Roman Herzog, Polish President Lech Walesa and US Vice-President Al Gore (l. to r.) review a guard of honour prior to the memorial ceremony of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw uprising on Monday.

— AFP photo

Off the Record



Three-year-old Canadian Eric Bebe touches a green pit viper at a snake temple in Malaysia's northern Penang island on Sunday. Dozens of snakes can be found slithering up every nook and cranny in this tourist-famous temple but locals say the reptiles have bitten no one as they are intoxicated by heavy incense from burning joss sticks. The temple was built in 1850 in honour of the Chinese deity Chor Soo Kong.

— AFP photo

Elephants disrupt party meeting

COLOMBO: Elephants barged into a campaign meeting in a remote village near the jungles of northern Sri Lanka apparently attracted by the noise, police said Monday, reports AP.

Panicky supporters of the ruling United National Party fled as five elephants tore down the dais and stamped on chairs at the meeting in Palutaw village in Anuradhapura district on Sunday. No injuries were reported.

The elephant is the UNP's symbol for the Parliamentary elections that are scheduled for August 16.

Clinton's tutor was a Warsaw uprising veteran

WARSAW: Fifty years ago, a fighter in the Warsaw uprising wandered the city's sewage system fleeing death at the hands of the Nazi SS, reports AP.

Zbigniew Pelczynski was lucky: when he failed to reach an insurgent-held district and had to surface, regular German soldiers caught him. That meant jail in Germany — not immediate execution, the standard SS procedure.

By 1969, Pelczynski was a professor at Oxford, initiating Bill Clinton into political philosophy.

Pelczynski recalled that time while in Warsaw for Monday's ceremonies marking the 50th anniversary of the 63-day uprising, which failed to liberate the Polish capital from the Nazis as the Red Army advanced.

"Clinton was one of my brightest students... enthusiastic inquisitive and quick-minded," he said. "However, he had at times problems with writing essays, which he himself admitted."

Clinton sent Vice President Al Gore to the commemoration.

But over the years the student-turned-president has not forgotten the 70-year-old Pelczynski.

Clinton has invited him to the White House several times. And when Clinton visited Warsaw last month, Pelczynski sat next to Hillary Rodham Clinton during an official dinner given by President Lech Walesa.

"Voodoo lounge"

WASHINGTON: The burning music question of the year has been answered: The Rolling Stones still can crank out high-octane rock'n'roll, reports AP.

"Voodoo Lounge," their new album, offers strong evidence that the band has recaptured the spirit and vigor that one made it the world's greatest rock band. And over nearly two and a half hours Monday night, they proved they can still pull off a vigorous, varied stage show as well.

On the first night of the "Voodoo Lounge" world tour, the Stones effortlessly wrapped the old around the new, a job made easier by the fact that the new material draws so heavily on the standards of yesteryear.

"You're always nervous the first night," joked Mick Jagger after four blistering songs into the opening set. "But you can't be a virgin forever."

A sold-out crowd, many in their 30s and 40s wearing faded T-shirts symbolising past tours, packed Robert F Kennedy Stadium for the kickoff performance of a 43-city world tour.

While the Stones have been playing the same material for years, the band somehow made it seem fresh.

Most of the crowd was on its feet all night from the youthful abandon of "All Down the Line" to the grungy cheekiness "Honky Tonk Woman" to the power-chording of "Start Me Up."

6 Nepali left parties plan fresh agitation

KATHMANDU, Aug 2: Six Nepali left parties have planned to launch another round of nationwide protest programmes to press for the dissolution of the caretaker government and formation of an all-party government to look over the fresh mid-term polls, reports Xinhua.

Mass rallies would be organized in various constituencies all over the country, left party sources said here today.

Demonstrations in the capital cities of all the country's 75 districts would be launched jointly by the 6 left parties, the sources said.

Mass meetings would be convened on August 6 in 15 main municipalities, including Kathmandu, he said, adding

that leaders of these parties would address the meetings.

All these programmes are organized to reiterate the demand of the six left parties for the formation of an all-party government as they have a strong suspicion over the claim made by the Nepali Congress caretaker government "to conduct free and fair elections" the sources stressed.

The fresh mid-term polls to be held on November 13 was declared by King Birendra on July 11 after the resignation of Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala on July 10. Koirala was later nominated as the Prime Minister of the caretaker government to look over the fresh polls.

Arafat upholds closure of An-Nahar

JERUSALEM, Aug 2: Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat on Monday made permanent an order closing a pro-Jordanian newspaper, leaving the Palestinian community with a single Arabic daily, reports AP.

Opponents saw the move as an infringement on freedom of the press as well as a deepening of the rift between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Jordan.

"This paper has to respect our laws," Arafat told a news conference in Gaza City. "They have to get a license first of all from the Palestinian National Authority."

The flight over An-Nahar began last Thursday when Palestinian officials blocked the paper from entering Gaza.

North Korea to insist on new reactor during talks with US

SEOUL, Aug 2: North Korea said Tuesday it will insist on a new nuclear reactor during talks with the United States as part of the price for opening its nuclear programme to inspectors, reports AP.

The Communist North said it will present the request for the new light-water reactor when the negotiations resume in Geneva on Friday.

The Geneva talks were suspended one day after they opened July 8 because of the death of North Korean President Kim Il Sung. US Assistant Secretary of State Robert Gallucci will head the US delegation, and the North Korean team will be led by Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok Ju.

"Our proposal of a package deal involves all the basic principles and ways for a solution

to the nuclear issue, including the introduction of a light-water reactor," North Korea's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in a commentary monitored in Tokyo.

It said the US response to the request for the reactor will show "whether they are interested in the fundamental solution to the nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula, or not."

The Geneva talks will test whether North Korea's foreign policy will remain unchanged under its apparent new leader, Kim Jong Il, who is Kim Il Sung's son.

The US Cable News Network reported from Pyongyang Monday night that North Korean officials said Kim Jong Il would carry on his late father's policies, including his desire for im-

proved ties with the United States. Kim Il Sung met with former US President Jimmy Carter in Pyongyang in June and promised to freeze the North's nuclear programme during "good-faith talks" with the United States.

The late North Korean leader told Carter that he would shut down the North's outdated nuclear reactor if the country is given a safer, modern light-water reactor.

The United States, in consultations with South Korea and Japan, has expressed a willingness to help provide a light-water reactor to replace the North's graphite moderated reactor, which produces larger amounts of plutonium, a component of nuclear bombs. The United States says,

however, that a light-water reactor can be provided only as part of an overall solution in which the North opens up its nuclear programme and returns as a full member of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which it threatened to quit in 1993.

The North suspended its decision to leave the treaty three months later but has since refused to allow full international inspections of its nuclear facilities, deepening suspicions that it is developing nuclear weapons.

It is unclear whether there will be a breakthrough in the 17-month nuclear standoff during the Geneva talks.

According to Seoul officials, the United States is interested in getting North Korea to promise not to reprocess 8,000 spent fuel rods removed

from its 5-megawatt reactor in May.

Western experts generally believe the North has enough plutonium to make at least one atomic bomb. Reprocessing the spent fuel rods would give the North enough plutonium to make several more bombs, they said.

The United States, the officials say, will propose in the Geneva talks that the North hand the spent fuel rods over to a third country like China to prove that it has no intention of making weapons.

Quoting unidentified government sources, South Korea's national news agency Yonhap reported Tuesday that North Korea offered in talks with the United States last month to place plutonium reprocessed from the spent fuel rods under UN control.