

BRIEFLY

Clinton to visit Haiti on Mar 31:

President Bill Clinton will visit Haiti on March 31, when United Nations peacekeepers take over from a United States-led multinational force, the White House announced on Wednesday. Reuter reports from Washington.

Spokesman Mike McCurry said Clinton will attend a ceremony marking the hand over and meet with US military personnel who helped restore President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. Clinton will also meet with Aristide, McCurry told a news briefing.

Imam shot dead in Egypt:

Gunmen thought to be Muslim militants shot dead the imam (preacher) of a mosque in southern Egypt on Wednesday, apparently because of a dispute over control of the mosque, security sources said. Reuter reports from Assiut.

The imam, 43-year-old Ahmed Mustafa Abdur Rahman, was gunned down as he came out of his mosque at about noon, they added.

Mass grave found in Vietnam:

The remains of 48 North Vietnamese soldiers killed during the 1968 Tet offensive have been found in a mass grave where they were buried by US and South Vietnamese troops, officials said on Thursday. AP reports from Hanoi.

The 48 were killed on March 4, 1968, while attacking a southern military post at Eaktua, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) southeast of the Dak Lac provincial capital of Buon Me Thuot, said Phung Nien Son. Son is director of the province's Department of Labour, War Invalids and Social Welfare.

Guatemalan team head to UN:

Guatemalan government and army negotiators will meet with United Nations mediators as part of the ongoing efforts to end the nation's 34-year civil war, AP reports from Guatemala City.

The joint government-army delegation will give their opinion on a draft UN proposal to sign a final peace accord by July 31, said chief negotiator Hector Rosada.

Meningitis kills 500 in Niger:

A meningitis epidemic in Niger has killed nearly 500 people since December, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday, more than doubling an estimate released a week ago. AFP reports from Niamey.

Around 5,000 cases of the disease have been recorded in the impoverished West African country, it said. A ministry toll released on February 28 placed the number of dead at 233 out of 2,000 known cases of the disease.

Armenian minister sacked:

Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan on Wednesday dismissed his minister in charge of energy issues — an American citizen — Itar-Tass news agency reported. Reuter says from Moscow.

Ter-Petrosyan issued a decree relieving Steve Tashjian of his duties, saying he had been transferred to another job.

Reuters-NBC sign deal:

Reuters has reached a global agreement to provide news and financial data that NBC can use in its programming worldwide, the companies announced on Wednesday. Terms of the pact weren't disclosed. AP reports from New York.

Under the 10-year agreement, NBC will be able to use information from Reuters around the world on all of its existing and future programme services.

5 chopped to death in Trinidad:

A 20-year-old mother and her four children were chopped to death in Trinidad as the family slept, police said on Tuesday. Reuter reports from Port of Spain.

Police Superintendent Regionid Taylor said detectives were searching for the woman's lover for questioning and police suspected the murders occurred after an argument over the woman's fidelity.

Measles claims 21 in Vietnam:

A measles outbreak along Vietnam's border with China has killed 21 people, including a dozen children, a news report said on Thursday. AP says from Hanoi.

The deaths in late February and early March occurred in two districts in northern Ha Giang province, 185 kilometres (115 miles) north of Hanoi, the trade union newspaper Lao Dong (labour) reported.

HR monitor appeals aid for Rwanda:

The UN human rights monitor on Wednesday appealed for urgent contributions to help rebuild Rwanda's devastated court and prison system. AP reports from United Nations.

Rwanda's judicial system was left in ruins after a campaign of ethnic slaughter by soldiers and allied militiamen of the Hutu government last year left some 500,000 people dead — most of them members of the minority Tutsi ethnic group.

DPRK, Japan to continue talks:

Officials from Japan and North Korea informally agreed in Singapore in mid-February to continue working-level talks aimed at resuming normalisation negotiations, it was reported on Thursday. AFP says from Tokyo.

An unidentified senior Japanese foreign ministry official met in Singapore an aide to Kim Yong Sun, Secretary of the Workers Party of Korea. Kyodo News Agency said, citing a source close to the proceedings. Informal meetings had been held before in Geneva and Beijing.

Mexicans stage pro-abortion rally:

Pro-choice demonstrators smashed windows and spray painted the headquarters of an anti-abortion group on Wednesday to commemorate International Women's Day. AP reports from Mexico City.

Shouting "we are not incubators!" some 40 women attacked the offices of Pro-vida, a Mexico City organization opposing birth control and abortion.

Ireland to amend abortion law:

The Dail (Irish parliament) on late Wednesday voted by 18 votes in favour of controversial plans to amend the country's law banning abortion. AFP reports from Dublin.

The bill which will make information about foreign abortion facilities more freely available in the Irish Republic secured crucial second stage approval by 85 votes to 67.

NASA in search of launch system:

NASA selected four companies on Wednesday to enter a competition to develop the first new American launch system in three decades. AP reports from Washington.

Three California aerospace firms will enter into negotiations for the X-33 programme, which seeks to create a new generation of reusable rockets. They are Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas and Rockwell International Corporation. NASA expects to spend 24 million dollars in 15 months of the concept phase.

'Jordan Valley must remain under Israeli control'

JORDAN VALLEY. West Bank, Mar 9: The Jordan Valley must remain under Israeli control even after a permanent settlement with the Palestinians, an Israeli Cabinet minister said on Wednesday. reports AP.

Control of the 250,000-acre valley, a strip of fertile land snaking through about 100 kilometres (60 miles) of desert along the West Bank-Jordan border, is seen by many Israelis as a key to repelling any Arab attack from the east.

Body's metabolism compensates for eating less, burning fewer calories

BOSTON, Mar 9: Confirming what frustrated dieters have long feared, researchers at Rockefeller University have discovered that the body's metabolism compensates for eating less by burning fewer calories, reports Reuter.

The finding, published in today's New England journal of Medicine, explains why most people find it so difficult to lose weight and keep the weight off unless they permanently increase their level of exercise.

It also confirms earlier research into the long-standing theory that the body's

metabolism has a "set point" that fine-tunes the way that body burns calories.

The researchers found that when a person's weight drops by 10 per cent, the body's metabolic rate falls 15 per cent to compensate, thereby burning fewer calories.

Conversely when most people go on an eating binge and their weight increases by 10 per cent, the body compensates by ratcheting up the amount of energy burned by 16 per cent.

These findings offer an explanation for the fact that obese people tend to regain lost weight unless they increase their physical activity on a permanent basis," said Dr. Rudolph Leibel, leader of the team. "It clearly shows that decreasing food intake or increasing energy output for a short period is not going to control weight."

"Good nutrition and increased physical activity — over the long term — are necessary to lose weight and keep it off," Leibel said.

On average, about 60 per cent of the calories a person

consumes are used to maintain the body while resting. Another 10 per cent used up digesting food and the remaining 30 per cent are burned through physical activity.

The findings showing that little difference was seen between obese and non-obese patients "provide additional evidence that obesity is a biological disorder, which must be considered in an overall approach to weight control," the researcher said.

Losing weight and keeping it off for a long period of time may not be enough to reset the body's set point at a higher

rate, burning more calories, the researchers suggested.

"A reduced level of energy expenditure has been reported to persist in subjects who have maintained a reduced body weight for periods ranging from six months to more than four years," they said.

In an editorial in the New England Journal, Dr William Bennett of Cambridge hospital in Cambridge, Massachusetts, said the typical 155-pound man gains about 22 pounds over a 20-year period simply by retaining the amount of energy in one carrot stick per day.

Off the Record



Ahmed Abdou Zahid El Kacimi (L) and Ali Saleh Abdou El Kadi, both Yemeni, ride their camels across the Arab world, going through Rabat on Wednesday, where they were greeted by Moroccan Minister of Youth and Sports Ahmed Meziane. According to the Moroccan press agency MAP, the two adventurers wish to "reinforce Arab solidarity." — AFP/UNB photo

Napoleon's hair on auction

LONDON: A lock of Napoleon Bonaparte's hair will be auctioned on March 16 along with books and manuscripts. London Auction House Philipps said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

The lock of hair, mounted in a case, was cut during Napoleon's imprisonment on St Helena island and given to a British marine by Napoleon's surgeon. Napoleon died in exile on the island in 1821.

The hair, sold together with other items belonging to British Major Robert Pearson boys, is expected to fetch up to 1,500 dollars (2,440 dollars).

The auction will also include a lock of the Duke of Wellington's hair, expected to fetch up to 200 pounds (325 dollars).

The Duke won the battle of Waterloo in 1815, defeating Napoleon's French army.

Killer whale too a very caring mom

VANCOUVER, British Columbia: School children and other aquarium visitors choked back tears as a newborn killer whale struggled briefly for life before dying while its mother nudged it around a pool, reports AP.

"She was trying hard to get the baby to the surface, but there was never a time when the baby looked vigorous," David Huff, veterinarian at the Vancouver Aquarium, said Wednesday.

Huff said the baby orca likely survived for only a few minutes. He described the mother, Bjossa, as a "very caring mom."

"There were a lot of red eyes," said John Nightingale, the aquarium's executive director.

The calf's body was left temporarily with its mother so she could mourn.

Bjossa's first calf died in 1989 at three weeks of age. Her second, in 1991, survived for three months.

"We've been waiting for 17 months," aquarium gift shop worker Birgit Eckert said of Bjossa's pregnancy as she dried her eyes. "You get a personal attachment."

Brazilian dock workers vote against N-shipment

RIO DE JANEIRO, Mar 9: The National Federation of Dock Workers voted Wednesday in Brasilia, the nation's capital, to boycott a British freighter carrying nuclear waste navigating near the Brazilian coast, reports AP.

The Pacific Pintail left France on February 23 on a secret route to Japan with 14 tons of highly radioactive residue of reprocessed nuclear fuel.

Dock workers leader Jader de Queiroz justified the boycott "because this ship is potentially more deadly than Chernobyl," site of the world's worst nuclear accident in April 1986 in Ukraine.

A Brazilian air force plane located the ship Wednesday 500 kilometres (320 miles) from the coast of the north-eastern capital Recife, out of territorial waters.

The Greenpeace ship 'Solo' has been tracking the the

British freighter for 14 days and took the credit that the ship skirted the Caribbean.

Greenpeace issued a statement Wednesday confirming it had alerted the Brazilian government that if the Pacific Pintail follows its current route, it would pass only 175 kilometres (110 miles) from the island Abrolhos, an ecological park.

Greenpeace also confirmed that the Brazilian government had expressed dismay to the embassies of Japan and France, expressing concern over the ship's route.

The Brazilian government issued a statement on February 24 banning the shipment from passing through its 320-kilometres (200 mile) zone.

The freighter is carrying a 112-ton steel cask containing 28 cylinders made of glass mixed with highly radioactive waste processed out of spent nuclear fuel from Japanese utilities.



General Owezarek Krzysstof (C), the leader of Poland's six-man North Korean armistice-monitoring contingent, steps off the train from Pyongyang on Thursday in Beijing, after the Polish team was forcibly expelled by the North Korean government. The Poles had been stationed in the northern side of Panmunjon truce village under the Korean armistice, an arrangement dating back to the end of the Korean War in 1953.

— AFP/UNB photo

Brunei backs Japan's bid for UNSC seat

TOKYO, Mar 9: Brunei's Foreign Minister Prince Mohammed Bolkiah said on Wednesday his country would back Japan's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said today, reports AP.

Prince Bolkiah, younger brother of Brunei's Sultan Hassan al Bolkiah, told his Japanese counterpart, Yohei Kono, that he supported a permanent seat for Japan in as part of a reform of the world body, the Foreign Ministry official said.

It was the first time Brunei publicly announced support for Japan's quest to permanently join the Security Council, the official said.

The foreign minister of Brunei is scheduled to return home today.

Mexicans march for president's resignation

MEXICO CITY, Mar 9: Tens of thousands of protesters marched on Mexico's capital on Wednesday to demand the resignation of President Ernesto Zedillo and show their support for Zapatista Rebel Leader Subcommander Marcos, reports Reuter.

Leftist demonstrators from 10 states converged on Mexico City's Colopial Central Square to chant, clap and stamp their feet in praise of Marcos and his rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army in the southern state of Chiapas.

Although the popular belief that obesity is caused by overeating persists, Bennett said a "theory of gluttony" does not stand up to the evidence available.