

BRIEFLY

Delhi plans to ban tobacco ads:

The government of the Indian capital has announced plans to ban cigarette advertisements and said it is considering legislation prohibiting smoking in public places, AFP reports from New Delhi.

"We are committed to save Delhiites from the ill effects of smoking," Madan Lal Khurana, the Chief Minister of New Delhi, said Tuesday on the eve of World No Tobacco Day.

Cambodia to hold confce on mines:

Cambodia plans to hold an international conference on land mines, which kill and maim hundreds of people every year in the country, a government official said Wednesday, AP reports from Phnom Penh.

Information Ministry's spokesman Sieng Lapresse called land mines "a threat to Cambodian people," at a press briefing Wednesday.

Cannabis seized in Malaysia:

In the biggest Malaysian drug haul this year, police seized 106 kilograms (234 pounds) of cannabis left abandoned on a resort island in northern Malaysia, a newspaper reported Wednesday, AP says from Kuala Lumpur.

The cannabis was neatly wrapped in a bag and was believed left on Pulau Langkawi by a drug syndicate from a neighbouring country. The Star newspaper reported quoting Langkawi marine police chief Zakaria Embi.

Mudslide kills 15 in Brazil:

A raging wall of mud buried a shantytown in northeastern Brazil, killing at least 15 people. Rescuers pulled 12 survivors from the muck and said another 40 people were missing, AP reports from Rio De Janeiro.

A 50-metre-high (150-foot-high) shelf of earth gave way at midday Tuesday after weeks of heavy rains, covering the slum in the outlying Bom Jua de Retiro district of Salvador, capital of the state of Bahia 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) northeast of Rio.

Neo-Nazi leader to be tried again:

One of Germany's most notorious neo-Nazis, Guenter Deckert, has been ordered to stand trial once again on charges of inciting racial hatred, a newspaper reported on Wednesday, AP reports from Mannheim, Germany.

This time it's for an open letter Deckert wrote last year suggesting a leading German Jew "pack your bag and go where you belong: To Israel," the Mannheim Morgen said.

3 die in Philippines clash:

At least three people died and scores were wounded during a clash early Wednesday between two political clans fighting over the governorship of an island in the southern Philippines, the military and witnesses said, reports from Zamboanga.

Results in the election of the governorship of Sulu province is still being contested 23 days after the May 8 polls. Election officials said in the official count former Rep. Abdu Sakur Tan is leading incumbent Gov. Habib Tupay Loong by 13,000 votes.

AI asks Yangon to free 9 inmates:

The London-based human rights group Amnesty International has called for the release of nine young people jailed for seven years after they delivered a eulogy at the funeral of a former prime minister, Reuter reports from Bangkok.

Amnesty, in a statement received in Bangkok yesterday said the nine were present at the funeral of former Premier U Nu in Yangon on February 20 but were not attempting to demonstrate or make an overt political statement.

Mine blast kills 6 in Kashmir:

An Indian army colonel and four soldiers were killed when their vehicle was blown up by a land mine in Kashmir overnight, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported yesterday, AFP reports from New Delhi.

All five died instantly along with a civilian in the explosion on a highway linking Srinagar and Jammu, the state's Summer and Winter capitals, the News agency said.

2 extremists to die in Egypt:

A military court Wednesday sentenced two Muslim extremists to death and hoped out prison terms of up to life to 28 others, AP reports from Cairo.

Twelve other Muslim fundamentalists on trial were acquitted. All 42 defendants were charged with being members of the outlawed Jihad group, which assassinated President Anwar Sadat in 1981. There of them already were serving life terms for Sadat's killing. They were accused of leading the group and teaching supporters through letters sent from prison on how to use explosives and weapons.

Nun beaten to death in Tibet:

A 15-year-old Tibetan Buddhist nun who had been imprisoned since she was 12 has died as a result of a beating, reports said on Wednesday, AP reports from Beijing.

Sherab Ngawang, who was believed to have been the youngest political prisoner in Tibet, had been released from prison in February after serving a three-year sentence and died on May 15 as a result of injuries she suffered in prison, the Tibet Information Network reported.

ROK appeals to free captives:

South Korea, communicating through a Red Cross organisation, appealed Wednesday to rival North Korea to return a southern fishing boat and eight crewmen that violated the North's territorial waters, AP reports from Seoul.

South Korea, which lacks any official channel of dialogue with its northern communist neighbour, made the appeal in a telephone message to the North's Red Cross Society. Hours after the message was sent through the border village of Panmunjom, there was no response from the North, said officials at the South Korean Red Cross Society.

Arafat meets King Fahd:

Yasser Arafat met Tuesday with King Fahd to review the Middle East peace process, Palestinian officials said, AFP reports from Jeddah.

They discussed the Palestinians' autonomy negotiations with Israel, the situation in the self-rule areas and the question of Jerusalem, said a member of Arafat's delegation.

Colombian rebels kill 2 cops:

Around 30 Marxist guerillas attacked a police post on Tuesday night in a poor suburb of Bogota with grenades and submachine guns, killing two police and wounding a third, police said, Reuter reports from Bogota.

A police spokesman said the rebels, apparently belonging to urban units of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), attacked the police station in the suburb of Ciudad Kennedy at 9:20 pm local time (8:20 p.m. edt) (0220 GMT).

Russia finally joins NATO partnership for peace

NOORDWIJK, Netherlands, May 31: Russia started a new era of military and political cooperation with NATO today when it finally joined the alliance's partnership for peace programme, reports Reuter.

NATO officials said Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev announced Moscow's full participation in the scheme at a meeting with alliance foreign minister in this Dutch seaside resort.

"Kozyrev accepted the two documents," said one NATO source.

The first document provides for military cooperation within the partnership for peace, the second for broader political ties.

Russia had delayed developing cooperation with NATO because of Moscow's opposition to alliance plans to take in new members from Eastern Europe.

AP adds: At a one-hour meeting with his 16 NATO counterparts, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev exchanged documents to conclude the agreement, and gave a list of military and political cooperation activities for the Partnership for Peace programme.

Kozyrev also endorsed a document laying out the special relationship that Russia is to have with NATO — which includes the United States, France, Britain, and Germany — on issues ranging from peacekeeping to arms control.

The most visible expression of that will be regular consultations between NATO and Russian foreign ministers.

NATO's special relationship with Russia reflects the fact the country is a nuclear power entitled to be consulted on major issues. But Russia gets no veto right over NATO

decisions. This is important in view of NATO's plans to take in East European members in the years ahead.

Russia opposes such an expansion eastward. Kozyrev told the NATO ministers they should stop their enlargement drive.

"Instead of considering ways of NATO expansion, we need to focus on methods of building jointly a single Europe," he told the meeting.

"In other words," we suggest (NATO should) halt and think, rather than act hastily and blindly."

NATO Secretary General Willy Claes told the meeting that NATO's expansion plan is not "directed against Russia nor does it diminish the national security interests of Russia."

He said NATO and Russia "have it in their power to become valued friends, leaving

behind for good the remnants of past mistrust and suspicion."

But Kozyrev warned that hasty moves toward expansion "may threaten the establishment of truly mutually advantageous and constructive relations between Russia and NATO."

Also, Kozyrev urged the transformation of NATO from a military organization into a political one.

"If not, he said, "we have to clarify whom NATO is going to defend itself against. If one has in mind Russia, it is obvious that this would mean creating new dividing lines in Europe."

In a joint statement, he and the NATO allies said "constructive cooperative relations of mutual respect, benefit and friendship between the alliance and Russia are ... a key element for security and stability in Europe."



Two female members of 30th Signal Regiment, Tracy Farr (C) and Susan Taylor (R), march with their colleagues to board one of five Hercules transport planes to Bosnia Tuesday from RAF Lyneham, United Kingdom. They form part of the increased UNPROFOR deployment in the wake of the hostage crisis. — AFP/UNB photo

US may use ground troops to aid UN forces in Bosnia

WASHINGTON, May 31: In a move that could put American troops in the line of fire, the United States said on Tuesday it would consider dispatching ground troops to Bosnia to help redeploy or rescue outgunned and demoralised UN peacekeepers, reports AP.

"We've said that we will be there. We will be there to respond," White House press secretary Mike McCurry said. "We understand what our obligations are as the leader of the alliance, and the president would be prepared to act on that type of request."

It was unclear how much military muscle the United States was prepared to use now, although the White House underscored the policy of both the Bush and Clinton administrations not to deploy US combat forces for the peacekeep-

ing operation in Bosnia.

Defence Secretary William Perry said the only "contingency" that would involve sending US ground forces into Bosnia would be "as part of a NATO operation in order to extract UN forces that are in danger from the place that they are in danger."

That was the commitment that the president made," Perry said on PBS' "McNeill-Lehrer NewsHour." "Even in that commitment, it has to be part of a NATO operation under NATO command control, and we would go to the Congress for support on that before we did it."

Bob Dole, leader of the Republican majority in the US Senate who was campaigning in New Hampshire for his party's nomination to run for president against Clinton next

year, agreed that US troops could be used under limited circumstances.

"Under certain conditions, yes, to help rescue personnel, but not to rescue equipment," Dole said. "Personnel is one thing, equipment is another."

About 2,000 Marines, especially trained for amphibious operations, were headed for the Adriatic Sea. The aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt, with 50 warplanes, already is on station in the Adriatic.

The administration's willingness to dispatch troops was triggered by the Bosnian Serbs' seizure of about 370 UN peacekeepers in retaliation for NATO air strikes last Friday.

The United States, Britain, France, Russia and Germany resolve to reinforce the 22,000-member UN force in Bosnia.



Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (R) meets with North Korean Foreign Minister Kim Yong-Nam (L) in Tehran on Tuesday. The two leaders agreed on Wednesday to strengthen relations to stand firm against the US. — AFP/UNB photo

Japan confirms China's ICBM test fire

TOKYO, May 31: China test fired an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) in late May, Japan's top government spokesman Kozo Igarashi confirmed today, reports AFP.

"We assume that China conducted a ballistic missile related test in late May," Igarashi told a news conference, when asked about China's reported test launch of an ICBM, Igarashi declined to comment further.

The Sankei newspaper, in a front-page article, and Jiji, in a recent dispatch from Beijing, said that China test launched a new type of ICBM on Monday.

The ICBM, believed to be a Dong Feng (East Wind) 31, used solid fuel as propellant and a mobile launcher, the first such Chinese ICBM, the reports said.

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Intruder threatens to cut Madonna's throat

NEW YORK, May 31: An obsessed fan who was shot this week on Madonna's Hollywood Hills estate said last month that he'd slit her throat after being refused entry, the Daily News reported Wednesday, says AP.



Citing a Los Angeles police report, the News said Robert Dewey Hoskins made the threat against the singer in April, when he showed up at her gate.

On Monday, the intruder was shot by a private security guard after he scaled the fence of the compound while Madonna was away.

Hoskins also allegedly broke into the estate on April 7, then returned to the gate the next day and demanded to see the pop star.

When the guard refused him entry, according to the police report, he threatened to kill Madonna, saying: "I'll slice her throat from ear to ear."

Counting of seats was on in 15 others.

The results stunned the CPI (M) country's most influential communist party, mainly because the West Bengal Congress Party was a divided house in the run-up to the elections and was expected to be routed.

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Dissidents, held for Tiananmen egg-throwing, appeal for freedom

BEIJING, May 31: Seventeen Chinese imprisoned for political acts during the 1989 Tiananmen democracy protests have appealed to parliament for their freedom — or at least better conditions while still in prison, reports Reuter.

The handwritten appeal to the national People's Congress and its Chairman, Qiao Guohua, was issued by Yu Zhijian, imprisoned for life in 1989 for throwing eggs at the huge portrait of Chairman Mao Tse-tung that stands in central Tiananmen square in Beijing.

Yu said his appeal — Reuters was provided with a copy today — represented 54 activists imprisoned for their part in the

1989 pro-democracy demonstrations, which were crushed by the army on June 4 with heavy casualties.

"In these six years, we have never regretted the road we have taken or the things we have done," Yu wrote.

"Every day, in our hearts, we think of only one thing — reverse the verdict on June 4," Beijing still regards the six weeks of massive, peaceful protests as a seditious "counterrevolutionary rebellion" and has imprisoned thousands of organisers and participants for what was seen as a brazen challenge to Communist Party rule.

Risking police harassment

and arrest, activists, have issued several petitions in the run-up to this year's sixth anniversary of the June 4 crackdown, urging prisoner releases, tolerance of political dissent, a parliamentary reappraisal of June 4 and a public accounting of who died in the crackdown.

It was not immediately known how Yu's bold appeal, dated May 23, emerged from number one prison in Yuanjiang in central Hunan province, where the 54 dissidents are imprisoned.

Seventeen inmates put their names on the appeal, including two colleagues sentenced to 20 and 16 years for

the Tiananmen egg-throwing and 14 activists given terms of 10 or more years.

Thirty-seven dissidents serving shorter terms told Yu they supported the appeal but declined to give their names for fear of jeopardising their release, he wrote.

"Few of us even had lawyers. I had a lawyer but rather than defend me, he only urged me to admit my guilt. How does this kind of lawyer differ from the prosecutor himself?"

Finally, "various means" such as early parole and release for medical treatment "could be used to restore our freedom," Yu wrote, adding more than 10 activists had chronic illnesses.

As a second step, Congress should set up a panel to review the 54 prisoners' cases which Yu said were investigated and tried in a climate deeply tainted by the June 4 crackdown.

"Saving me accepted that action would be time-consuming and difficult. Yu suggested that Qiao Shi and parliament take a gradual approach — starting by assuring that a prison law promulgated in December be aggressively enforced.

The law forbids prison beatings and other humiliation, which Yu said warders at Yuanjiang employed with im-

prisoners.

Yu noted wryly such administrative releases should be "just as easy" for authorities to arrange as convictions that occurred, he said, with little recourse to legal procedure.