

BRIEFLY



French Legionnaires from the 2nd Infantry Regiment ride ashore in a landing craft to the Croatian city of Split on Tuesday. A total of 153 elite Legionnaires, 17 armoured personnel carriers, five light tanks and a heavy truck landed to insure the security of the Blue Helmets in Bosnia. — AFP/UNB photo

Tamil rebels kill 2 cops: Tamil rebels attacked a police post in eastern Sri Lanka early Wednesday, killing two policemen, a military spokesman said, AP reports from Colombo.

Another two policemen were wounded when the guerrillas fired gunshots and grenades at their post in Batticaloa district, 220 kilometres (135 miles) east of Colombo, the spokesman said.

22 die in Indonesian blast: At least 22 people died and some 53 others were injured in an explosion at a firecracker factory in the Central Java town of Brebes, press reports said Tuesday, AFP says from Jakarta.

The initial explosion on Monday afternoon was believed to have come from a pile of firecrackers outside the factory building but it triggered explosions inside, destroying the building, the Kompas Daily said.

3 Palestinians killed in Gaza: Israeli troops early yesterday killed three Palestinians, including two members of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's presidential guard, during an exchange of fire on the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt, Palestinian police sources reported, AFP says from Rafah.

They said the troops had first killed a wanted Palestinian, Darwish Abu Hatla, who was trying to enter the territory near Rafah from Egypt.

HK deports 100 Vietnamese: Hong Kong deported 100 Vietnamese asylum seekers on Wednesday and distributed US government notices in their camps telling them to forget about going directly to America, AP reports from Hong Kong.

The US move was meant to dispel "false hope" engendered by proposed legislation before Congress to accept 20,000 Vietnamese.

Kissinger to get Knighthood: Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger will be awarded an honorary knighthood, the British foreign office said Tuesday, Xinhua reports from London.

The award, given in recognition of his contribution to Anglo-US relations, will be presented to Kissinger by Queen Elizabeth II in London on June 20, the foreign office said in a statement.

Quake jolts Mediterranean coast: A mild earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 4.3 shook the southern Mediterranean coast of Turkey Tuesday night, the Anatolia news agency reported, AP says from Istanbul.

There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties in the quake, which hit at 11:34 pm (2034 GMT). Anatolia quoted observatory officials in Istanbul as saying the epicenter of the quake was near the coastal resort town of Silifke, some 900 kilometers (560 miles) southeast of Istanbul.

Chandrika's mother-in-law dies: Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga's mother-in-law, Clara Kumaratunga, 88, died of a heart attack yesterday, a family member said, AFP reports from Colombo.

Last week, she said she was too ill to give evidence before a committee investigating the 1988 assassination of her son Vijaya. President Kumaratunga ordered the probe after accusing the former government of involvement in the murder.

Benazir launches relief fund: Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto Tuesday launched a relief fund to help refugees from strife-torn Kashmir, AFP reports from Islamabad.

She announced an initial contribution of 10 million rupees (about 330,000 dollars) on behalf of the federal government while the four provincial governments would also make similar contributions.

Indo-US defence talks postponed: NEW DELHI, June 14: India and the United States have postponed high-level defence talks after New Delhi told Washington its representative was not available this month, US diplomats said today, reports Reuters.

The talks had been scheduled for Washington from June 20 to 22, with the focus on military strategy and cooperation in research and defence production.

The groundbreaking discussions would stem from an agreement signed by the two sides during a visit to India by US Defence Secretary William Perry last January.

The agreement established three groups comprising high-level civilian defence officials,

Call to boycott French goods
French decision to resume N-tests sparks global anger

SYDNEY, June 14: France's decision to resume nuclear tests sparked worldwide anger today, drawing condemnation from the United States, Russia, Japan and the South Pacific, and calls for a boycott of French goods, reports AFP.

Many on the Pacific rim were stunned at French President Jacques Chirac's timing. His announcement came just a month after France pledged to exercise "utmost restraint" as a declared nuclear power, in agreeing to an indefinite renewal of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

A storm of protest erupted as Chirac, citing what he said was the need to maintain the credibility of France's nuclear arsenal, declared eight tests would be conducted from September, ending a moratorium started by Francois Mitterrand in April 1992.

The White House said it "regrets" the French action and urged all nuclear powers to join in a global moratorium "as we work to complete a comprehensive test ban treaty at the earliest possible time."

Russia said the resumption would "deal a severe blow" to the disarmament process.

"Following the Soviet Union, Russia has respected the moratorium for four years," the Foreign Ministry said.

Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono accused France of having "betrayed the trust of non-nuclear nations." The issue would be raised during a Franco-Japanese summit in Paris next week, he warned.

But the loudest protests came from South Pacific nations.

Australia and New Zealand suspended military ties with France but demands for much

tougher action echoed throughout both countries.

Bolger told the New Zealand parliament: what we are seeing is the arrogant action of a European colonial power. They have yet to understand that as members of the Pacific community we expect something different, we expect them to comply with the norms wanted in this area."

New Zealand Foreign Minister Don McKinnon said he ordered French Ambassador Jacques Eblanc out of his office, saying the ambassador had offered only " lame excuses" for the French decision.

New Zealand would immediately cancel planned naval visits to New Caledonia and planned military exchanges, Bolger said. French naval ships and aircraft would be banned from visiting.

Announcing Canberra's defence links freeze, Keating said Australia deplored the new tests, ordered despite strong representations from Australia. Fiji threatened to boycott the South Pacific games scheduled for French Polynesia in August and the Suva-based Pacific Concerns Resource Centre called for a boycott.

Australian trade unions demanded concerted action against France. They threatened a ban on embassy mail deliveries, union-organised disruption of French airline operations and a consumer boycott of French products.

A consumer boycott could hurt France. Its exports to Australia totalled 1.64 billion (1.2 billion US dollars) last year, including 66 million dol-

Immediate arrest ruled out
Sharif's trial begins next month

LAHORE, Pakistan, June 14: The trial of opposition leader Nawaz Sharif, charged with sedition will open next month, an official spokesman said Tuesday, ruling out the immediate arrest of the former premier, reports AFP.

"Court proceedings against Sharif and 16 colleagues in the alleged treason case is likely to start in one month," he said.

However, the spokesman said "there is no immediate move to arrest" the former prime minister, who along with the 16 other opposition leaders has been accused of including in "illegal, unconstitutional and subversive activities" during his rule.

Police on Monday submitted an indictment against Sharif and his political associates including former Interior Minister Shujaat Hussain and Punjab Province's ex-Governor, Mohammed Azhar, to a Sessions Court here. A date for their trial was not fixed.

Sharif, who became prime minister in November 1990 resigned along with former President Ghulam Ishaq Khan on July 18, 1993: under an army-brokered settlement of a bitter political tussle between the country's two top men.

Asked why the case had been filed after a lapse of nearly two years, the official preferring anonymity, said the federal government had been examining its legality. It has now authorised the Punjab provincial government to go ahead, he added.

Maqbool Elahi Malik, counsel for Nawaz Sharif termed the charges false, "to me it appears another attempt to politically harass Nawaz Sharif," Elahi said.



File photo taken in October 1985 of the French nuclear testing site on the South Pacific island of Mururoa. French President Jacques Chirac announced on Tuesday that the country would begin a series of eight tests on the site, beginning next September. — AFP/UNB photo

Maharashtra bans cow slaughtering

NEW DELHI, June 14: A Hindu coalition government which came to power in March in the state of Maharashtra has decided to ban the slaughter of cows, state officials were quoted as saying today, reports AFP.

Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi told reporters in the state capital of Bombay that the ban "would cover the entire bovine family, irrespective of gender, age and utility."

Joshi, head of a coalition led by a right-wing Hindu group, the Shiv Sena (Shivaji's Army) Party, said the decision followed various demands by cow protection groups, eminent people and court judgments.

The cow is sacrosanct to devout Hindus, who adore beef, the cheapest meat in India, and worship the animal as their "mother" because of the milk it provides.

Clinton admn delays UNSC vote to approve RRF for Bosnia

UNITED NATIONS, June 14: The Clinton administration is delaying a Security Council vote to approve a European Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) while it haggles with Congress over financing of the more than 10,000 new troops in Bosnia, reports Reuters.

The delay could prove embarrassing when French President Jacques Chirac visits the White House today and is almost certain to bring up the need for quick UN action.

France and Britain, the backbone of the new heavily-armed force that also includes Dutch soldiers, have produced texts on a resolution since last Thursday that would raise the numbers of the 22,500 UN Protection Force in Bosnia.

But on Tuesday diplomats revealed the US officials wanted a delay — perhaps as long as a week — while consultations continued with Congress over funding.

The cost for the new troops alone are estimated to cost at least 270 million dollars for six months, without charges for their equipment, which must still be calculated. Since the new force will be a part of the UNPROFOR, all UN members must bear the cost which means Washington has to pay about 30 per cent.

A US official said Washington supported the new force but "we have asked that process be slowed down as our form of government requires more consultations" on finances.

In Washington three key members of the House of Representatives said in a letter to US Secretary of State Warren Christopher they were "dumb founded" to learn the administration intended to vote for the resolution. They said no action should be taken until they had received satisfactory answers to questions on the cost.

The letter was written by representative Benjamin Gilman, Chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Bob Livingston, Appropriations Committee Chairman, and Harold Rogers, Chairman of a key Appropriations Subcommittee. All are Republicans.

France originally was in favour of a Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) that would be separate from a UN command. Britain, however, lobbied strongly for integration into the UN structure and by last Wednesday it was clear France had gone along.

Dudayev vows to continue fighting

MOSCOW, June 14: Chechen rebel leader Dzhokhar Dudayev was quoted by Itar-Tass news agency as saying on Wednesday that his forces would continue fighting Russian troops despite the loss of his last two major bases, reports Reuters.

"The fight is not over. It is just taking on new forms," Tass quoted Dudayev as saying by telephone. Interfax news agency said a special detachment of Russian troops was hunting Dudayev in the southern mountains.

Russian troops seized the last two major rebel bases in south-east Chechnya on Tuesday — the villages of Shatol and Nozhay-Yurt — during an offensive aimed at finally crushing organised resistance from Dudayev's separatists.

A Chechen military commander told Tass the rebels had left the villages to save the lives of their inhabitants.



A Yugoslav soldier of a special unit stops people, even the press, from coming close to the bus holding 28 released UN soldiers on the Bosnian-Yugoslav border at Mali Zvornik on Tuesday. The release of more than 100 remaining hostages "has been delayed for technical reasons", the SRNA agency announced. — AFP/UNB photo

Off the Record

The reason is buffalo

MANILA: Two water buffaloes strayed into the path of a private plane in the southern Philippines, causing a crash that resulted in the death of one of the animals. The Today reported here Wednesday, reports AFP.

The three-engine plane, carrying five executives of the local subsidiary of the fruit company Dole Food, was landing at the airport in the southern city of General Santos when the two buffaloes wandered into its path.

The plane skidded to a stop after hitting the buffaloes but none of the five executives aboard was hurt, the newspaper said.

Fine for refusal

WASHINGTON: A dentist who refused to treat two HIV-positive patients will pay 120,000 dollars in damages under a settlement worked out by the Justice Department, reports AP.

Dr. Drew Morvant of New Orleans will pay 60,000 dollars Russell Hodgkinson and 60,000 dollars to the family of Ismael Pena, who died from AIDS in 1993, the department announced Tuesday.

On March 23, the US District Court in New Orleans found Morvant had violated the Americans with Disabilities Act by discriminating against people with the HIV virus or with AIDS, which the virus causes, by refusing to treat them or referring them to other dentists.

Double delights for Charles, Di

LONDON: Prince William, second in line to the throne after his father Charles, has passed his exams for the upper-crust private English school Eton and will start there in September, The Sun newspaper said on Wednesday, reports Reuters.

"Prince Charles and Princess Di are delighted their son proved bright enough," the tabloid said. "A staff source revealed Willis found the 12 exams hard but topped the necessary 65 per cent in all papers."

William, who becomes a teenager next week, was said to be jumping for joy at clinching his place at the college, just a brisk walk away from his grandmother Queen Elizabeth's favourite castle, Windsor, west of London.

Prince Charles was sent far away from home for his education to Gordonstoun Boarding School in Scotland, a lonely experience which he confessed last year he had not enjoyed.

Apart from brains, there is another key criterion for acceptance at Eton — money.

But William's estranged parents should have little trouble finding the 12,000 pounds (19,000 dollars) a year in fees or buying the school's distinctive uniform of dark tailcoat, pinstripe trousers and shirts with starched collars.

US-DPRK likely to open respective missions

SEOUL, June 14: The United States and North Korea could open diplomatic offices in their respective capitals as early as next month following their latest nuclear accord, the chief US nuclear negotiator with Pyongyang said today, reports Reuters.

"I expect we will move ahead pretty well and that the offices, barring any other negative developments, will open sometime in the coming month or months," Robert Gallucci told a news conference in Seoul.

Gallucci spoke a day after US and North Korean delegations agreed in Malaysia on a deal to free their stalled framework nuclear agreement reached in Geneva last October.

The agreed framework provides that the DPRK (North Korea) and the US will open liaison offices in each other's capitals, one consular and other technical issues are resolved," Gallucci said.

"It's hard for me to predict that it will be next month or exactly when the technical consular issues will be completely resolved so that the offices can open. But I don't think it will be very long in the future," he said.

He said North Korea had interrupted the process pending resolution of a dispute over the supply to it of new light water nuclear reactors.

In Malaysia, the two sides reached a broad agreement on the supply terms and this meant it should be possible to move ahead with the liaison offices, Gallucci said.

Since the signing of the Geneva accord, the two sides have sent teams to each other's capitals to pursue the liaison office issue, but because of the reactor dispute North Korea declined to accept a subsequent US team.

Indo-US defence talks postponed

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ASEAN wants US Eagle to restrain Chinese Tiger, Samurai

MANILA, June 14: During the 40 years of the Cold War, stability and security for pro-Western governments in the region rested on the unilateral exercise of military power by the United States, reports IPS.

This was legitimised by bilateral "mutual defence" treaties. Washington entered into such pacts with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand.

The recent decision by Washington to reverse its decision to phase out its troops from the Asia-Pacific was not driven by Pentagon politics alone but a dismaying combination of a lack of political will and an absence of vision among governments in the region.

In October 1990, Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans cautiously proposed moving away from the Cold War system of bilateral alliances forged by the United States. He advocated instead "an all embracing conference on security and cooperation in Asia."

The Bush administration reacted negatively to the Evans initiative it was also lukewarm to a proposal from an equally solid US ally, Canada, to convene a North Pacific security conference.

But widespread popular sentiment in both the United States and the Asia-Pacific lured the Pentagon to reduce its forces in the region by 10 per cent.

When the Philippine Senate terminated the 44-year-old lease to Subic Naval Base in 1991, many interpreted this move as a manifestation of a spirit of increased independence and innovation in security issues among governments in the region. It turned out to be more the exception than the rule.

Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei joined Singapore in offering or exploring possibilities for "access facilities" for US forces to make up for the loss of Subic.

In fact, ASEAN governments began to step up their talk about the importance of US military power as a force for stability in the region. It soon became evident that their strategy was to create a balance of power. They wanted to use the American Eagle to restrain the Chinese Tiger and the Japanese Samurai.

But ASEAN countries also began weapons buying spree. East Asia became the scene of the world's hottest regional arms race — contradicting the conventional wisdom that peace would flow out of prosperity.

The missing ingredient in the recipe for regional stability and peace was a multilateral mechanism based on denuclearisation and significant demilitarisation.

The urgent need for a new multilateral security was underscored in the first half of the decade. Myriad points of latent or actual tension emerged and remained a constant source of concern. These were largely non-ideological. They could not be addressed by the old paradigm of a US led alliance against communism.

Among these were Indonesia's continuing occupation of East Timor and the six-nation dispute over the Spratly Island. There were border quarrels

OIC team in Kabul

KABUL, June 14: An delegation of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) arrived in Kabul on Tuesday for talks aimed at ending factional fighting in Afghanistan, reports Reuters.

The three-man team has come on a fact-finding mission that may lead to a more intensive OIC effort to mediate a resolution to the three-year old conflict. President Burhanuddin Rabbani's spokesman Aziz Morad told reporters.

He said the peacemakers led by the OIC assistant secretary general Ibrahim Bager, were expected to meet Rabbani and his two key military supporters, former defence minister Ahmad Shah Masood and Ittehad-i-Islami Party leader Abdurrah Rasul Sayyaf.