

BRIEFLY

US pledges \$ 12m to UN: The United States pledged more than 12 million dollars during talks this week to support UN mine-clearing efforts worldwide.

Kovacs wins Piano Competition: Kriszta Kovacs, a 24-year-old pianist from Szobieski, Hungary, won the World Piano Competition on Friday.

Plane crashes in Alaska, 6 killed: An airplane taking cruise-ship passengers on a sightseeing tour crashed Friday into the side of a mountain, killing the pilot and all five tourists.

Mob torch 21 houses in Allahabad: Altogether 21 houses of a particular community were burnt Friday in village Dilerganj in Pratapgarh district.

Kim Il Sung's body on public display: In a carefully orchestrated show of continuity, North Korea put the body of its "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung on public display Saturday.

Albanian court frees Ramiz Alia: Ramiz Alia, the last communist president of Albania, was unexpectedly freed from prison Friday after serving less than two years of what had originally been a nine-year sentence.

Saudi fund for US mosque: Saudi Arabia's King Fahd has donated four million US dollars to build a mosque in Los Angeles, the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) said yesterday.

Dalai Lama's birthday observed: Thousands of Tibetans marked the birthday of their god-king, the Dalai Lama, in defiance of the Chinese government.

Mandela ends East Asia tour: South African President Nelson Mandela ended a week-long visit to East Asia yesterday with an appeal to the South Korean parliament for closer economic ties.

Jyoti Basu turns 82: The West Bengal Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu, turned 82 yesterday, PTI reports from Calcutta.

Japan departs 3662 foreigners: Japan's immigration bureau deported 3,662 foreign nationals from mid-May to early June, officials said yesterday.

Tamil Tigers kill one seaman: Tamil Tiger separatist guerrillas opened fire on a navy boat off Sri Lanka's northeastern coast yesterday.

Chechen talks resume in Grozny: Peace talks in the breakaway republic of Chechnya resumed Saturday with a minute of silence for eight people slain in a raid on a farmhouse near the capital of Grozny.

Clashes leave 61 dead in Somalia: At least 61 people have been killed in central Somalia and the capital Mogadishu in fighting between rival clan militias in the past week.

Storm kills 300 egrets in China: Gale-force winds and a rainstorm killed more than 300 egrets and damaged 40 to 100 ancient cypresses in China's most famous Confucian temple.

ROK PM apologises for shopping mall collapse: SEUL, July 8: South Korean Premier Lee Hong-Koo today personally apologised for the shopping centre collapse which killed or injured more than 1,000 people.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: WASHINGTON, July 8: Turning old enemies into new friends plays well on the world stage, but the Clinton administration's latest softening towards Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea and even politically isolated Myanmar poses risks at home, reports AP.

Strike protesting death of MQM leader cripples Karachi: KARACHI, July 8: A strike called by the ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM) paralysed Pakistan's southern city of Karachi for a second day today.

Cambodian troops kill 21 Khmer guerillas: PHNOM PENH, July 8: Cambodian troops have killed 21 Khmer Rouge guerillas, including a high-ranking rebel officer, in continuing fighting near the Thai border.

Kashmiri factions call for release of tourists: SRINAGAR, July 8: Most guerilla groups in the northern state of a Jammu-Kashmir Saturday distanced themselves from the kidnapping of American and British tourists.

Iraq refuses to destroy missile machines: UNITED NATIONS, July 8: Iraq said Friday it will not destroy five machines that could be used to make ballistic missile parts until UN monitors finish their investigation of Baghdad's biological weapons programme.

More bomb attacks threatened in Colombo: COLOMBO, July 8: A Tamil extremist group Saturday threatened more bomb attacks in Colombo in retaliation for alleged military atrocities against the ethnic Tamil minority in the east, reports AP.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: Clinton administration and regimes the United States has long condemned is cheering US businesses seeking new investment opportunities abroad, governments seeking free trade among all nations and groups working for a more harmonious world.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: But any overtures to Vietnam raise concerns among groups seeking a full accounting of missing US soldiers. Friendliness towards Cuba angers Cuban exiles in Miami and across the southeastern United States.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: Greater doubts abound over the prospects for productive relations with regimes still hanging onto communism after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: Clinton's record as a Vietnam War protester also has increased his vulnerability in dealing with Vietnam today.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: His steps towards improved relations have the backing of Vietnam war veterans in the Senate, including former war prisoner Republican John McCain, but they will be looking for progress in Vietnam's accounting of 1,619 missing Americans.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: The fact that the 1996 presidential campaign has already begun adds to the delicacy of Clinton's decisions in opening doors to formerly unfriendly nations.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: At every turn of policy, he faces Sens. Bob Dole and Phil Gramm, major combatants for the Republican nomination.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: Dole has introduced a resolution urging the administration to move slowly. He joined seven other Republican senators in introducing a bill that would block funding for diplomatic relations unless Vietnam proves that it will be fully cooperative on the issue of missing Americans.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: Other Congressional critics tackled a provision on a foreign aid bill that would prohibit any funding of cooperative efforts with Myanmar.

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks: But the \$1.4 billion in foreign investments Myanmar expects this fiscal year could overshadow such concerns.

Egypt, UK, US, blamed for trying to destabilise Sudanese govt

KHARTOUM, July 8: Sudan on Friday accused Egypt, Britain and the United States of engaging in joint military manoeuvres in the Red Sea to try to destabilise the government in Khartoum, reports AFP.

Information Minister Abdul Basit Sabdarat said the manoeuvres disturb the state of security in the region and were a "plot against Sudan which had always called for maintaining the Red Sea as a peaceful region."

Sabdarat, quoted by the newspapers Akhbar Al Youm and Al Rai Al Akhtar, said "Egypt does what is dictated to her, it is being used to implement US policies and is a base for foreign fleets whose influence threatens the Middle East region."

"This is not new for the Egyptian government he said adding that Sudan had been monitoring these conspiracy manoeuvres for a long time."

There was no immediate confirmation in Cairo Friday that the manoeuvres were taking place.

However, a bi-weekly Egyptian Islamist paper Al Shaab reported Friday that these week long manoeuvres started on Wednesday in the Red Sea north of the Halaib border area which is disputed by Khartoum and Cairo.

Egyptian destroyers and warships British and American frigates as well as a US marine unit of 465 soldiers are taking part in the manoeuvres it said.

Relations between Egypt and Sudan have deteriorated since Cairo accused Khartoum of being implicated in a failed attempt to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa on June 26, a charge which Sudan has denied.

AFP from Cairo adds: Britain, Egypt and the United States were holding the most important naval manoeuvres ever in the Red Sea, Egyptian newspapers reported today.

The week-long military exercise, which began on Wednesday, involves warships from all three countries and Egyptian fighter jets in mock fighting north of the Halaib border zone which Egypt and Sudan dispute, the newspapers said.

Sudan on Friday said the military exercise, which began at the Red Sea port of Safaya, was a threat to its security and accused Britain and the United States of plotting with Egypt to destabilise its Islamist military government.

Khartoum has been involved in a war of words with Cairo since Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak implicated Sudan in a failed attempt to kill him in Addis Ababa on June 26, a charge which Khartoum denied.



French UN soldiers watch Friday the site where they have installed a tank with its gun turret pointing towards Bosnian Serb positions around Sarajevo. — AFP/UNB photo

Strike protesting death of MQM leader cripples Karachi

KARACHI, July 8: A strike called by the ethnic Mohajir National Movement (MQM) paralysed Pakistan's southern city of Karachi for a second day today, reports Reuter.

An MQM spokesman said the death of a former MQM municipal councillor in police custody had dealt a blow to peace talks expected to start with the government in Islamabad on Sunday.

"We are 101 per cent prepared for talks with the government. But how can we justify negotiations when our people are being killed?" said the spokesman, Shoab Bukhari.

A five-member MQM team had been planning to travel to Islamabad on Sunday, but the government has said only that a date for the talks would be announced on that day.

One newspaper, the English-language daily The Nation, reported that Education Minister Khurshid Ahmad Shah would go to London on Sunday for talks with the MQM's self-exiled leader Altaf Hussain. There was no

Cambodian troops kill 21 Khmer guerillas

PHNOM PENH, July 8: Cambodian troops have killed 21 Khmer Rouge guerillas, including a high-ranking rebel officer, in continuing fighting near the Thai border in the northwest, a senior military official said today, reports AFP.

Guerrillas and government troops have been engaged in fierce fighting in the vicinity of the key Khmer Rouge base at Klar Ngap (dead tiger village) just 100 to 200 metres (yards) from Thailand in Banteay Meanchey province for several days.

Klar Ngap is a strategically important position on the approach to the Khmer Rouge military stronghold of Phnom Malai.

"The fighting is still going on", a senior military intelligence officer told AFP. "Our aim is to keep moving forward to Klar Ngap and then may be to Phnom Malai, but we will wait to think about Malai until after we take Klar Ngap."

Bukhari said the MQM was not trying to evade peace talks with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's government and was sincerely seeking an end to the violence blighting the city.

"This does not mean that Mohajirs can be cowed by force."



A Russian APC patrols along the street with destroyed buildings and barbed wire in Grozny on Thursday. The third round of Russian-Chechen peace negotiations began Thursday in Grozny. Russian authorities have denied reports of Russian advances against Chechen separatists as negotiators from both sides in the conflict prepare to meet with Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. — AFP/UNB photo

US policy of turning old enemies into friends poses risks

WASHINGTON, July 8: Turning old enemies into new friends plays well on the world stage, but the Clinton administration's latest softening towards Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea and even politically isolated Myanmar poses risks at home, reports AP.

Announcement is expected any day of a resumption of normal relations with Vietnam, formally ending a bitter era. The war that killed 58,000 Americans and 3.4 million Vietnamese has tainted US politics for decades.

Naw Secretary of State Warren Christopher is planning a visit to Hanoi.

Havana will not be on any Christopher travel schedule for the foreseeable future, but officials, for the first time, are talking about allowing US news media to open bureaus in Communist Cuba.

Clinton administration and regimes the United States has long condemned is cheering US businesses seeking new investment opportunities abroad, governments seeking free trade among all nations and groups working for a more harmonious world.

But any overtures to Vietnam raise concerns among groups seeking a full accounting of missing US soldiers. Friendliness towards Cuba angers Cuban exiles in Miami and across the southeastern United States.

And both the latest accord with North Korea and the dealings with Myanmar military authorities have prompted protests in Congress and elsewhere.

It all comes at a time when Congress is completing work on a sharply reduced foreign aid bill and debating whether to make deep cuts

Off the Record

To leave or not to leave ...

LONDON: Actress and Estee Lauder model Liz Hurley flew back Thursday from three days in France for a face-to-face with errant boyfriend Hugh Grant at their London apartment, reports AP.

A friend said afterwards she's still undecided whether or not to leave him over his fling with a Hollywood hooker.

"She's not yet made up her mind," Henry Dent-Brocklehurst told reporters.

Wearing dark glasses, skin-tight white pants and a skimpy white top that left her midriff bare, Miss Hurley, 29, emerged from the apartment after two hours inside with Grant but said nothing to reporters before being driven away in a cab.

Newspaper reports said she looked emotionally drained and might have been crying.

Grant, 34, also refused to speak when he left the apartment later and drove off in his car.

The raffish star of the movie "Four Weddings and a Funeral," was arrested June 27 in Los Angeles with a prostitute, Stella Marie Thompson. Both were charged with engaging in a lewd act in a public place, and are due in court July 18.

... Because he has cloth allergy

COLOMBO: An 18-year-old Sri Lankan coconut plucker has refused to wear a stitch of clothing since the day he was born, the Island newspaper said yesterday, reports Reuter.

RM Prematilaka, from the village of Madagama, 90 miles east of Colombo, no sooner tries to cover up and his whole body starts to itch, the newspaper said, but his allergy has not stopped him plucking nuts.

Prematilaka, who continues to live in the raw, is an expert in plucking coconuts and areca nuts (betel nuts).

His mother refused to allow photographs to be taken of her son.

Desire to redo Princess Di

LONDON: Vivienne Westwood, an often outrageous British designer with a penchant for bare bottoms and platform shoes, wants to redo Princess Di. From the feet up, reports AP.

"I hate her shoes - those horrible little pumps that are neither one thing nor the other," said Westwood, whose ultra-high platform shoes once sent model Naomi Campbell toppling off the catwalk.

Known as a pioneer of the punk street style, Westwood told Woman and Home magazine that Diana is "ruled by the trends."

"It's as though her clothes are supposed to tell you she's both a feminist and sexy at the same time," she says in the July issues.

No permission even for one cigar

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, England: The Royal Shakespeare Company is fuming because one of its actors can't, reports AP.

Local officials refused to permit actor Mark Lockyer to smoke a cigar in Anton Chekhov's play, "The Cherry Orchard." So Lockyer, who plays the servant Vasha, has to suck a cold stogie and mime the smoke.

"We feel that we observe the highest safety procedures, and we are just absolutely confident that the smoking of one single cigar in a play which absolutely demands it would not endanger anyone," theatre spokeswoman Helen Cross said Friday.

Kashmiri factions call for release of tourists

SRINAGAR, July 8: Most guerilla groups in the northern state of a Jammu-Kashmir Saturday distanced themselves from the kidnapping of American and British tourists and called for their immediate release, reports AP.

The call for freeing the two Americans and two Britons taken hostage by Muslim separatists on Wednesday was issued by Sayeed Salauddin, the chief of the Hizbul Mujahadeen, the biggest separatist militia fighting for secession of Kashmir from India.

Many separatist groups had joined the call, Salauddin's statement said. But the Harkat ul-Ansar, a pro-Pakistan militant group believed to be involved in the kidnapping did not join.

Officials continued efforts to contact the rebels of Al-Faran, a little-known group, which has claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. Indian officials suspect that Al-Faran is a front group of the Harkat-ul-Ansar, which has been involved in kidnappings.

Some 2,250 Indian soldiers and commands on Friday searched the remote area where the kidnapping took place.

The rebels say that the hostages were unharmed and safe.

John Childs, of Simsbury, Connecticut, and Donald Fred Hutchings, of Spokane, Washington along with Britons Paul Wells, 23, of London, and Keith Mangan, 33, of Middlesbrough were abducted during a trek near the tourist town of Pahalgam. The ages of the two American were not available.

Also captured were in American woman, two British women, a Canadian man and two Kashmiri guides, but the rebels freed them Wednesday with a note demanding the release of 21 jailed guerillas.

On Friday, New Delhi-based American and British embassy officials met with pro-separatist leaders in an attempt to open channels of communications with the rebels.

The abductions were the third of Western tourists in the last year. All previous hostages have been freed unharmed.

Iraq refuses to destroy missile machines

UNITED NATIONS, July 8: Iraq said Friday it will not destroy five machines that could be used to make ballistic missile parts until UN monitors finish their investigation of Baghdad's biological weapons programme, reports AP.

Also Friday, UN diplomats said they expected the Security Council on Tuesday to extend its crushing economic embargo against Iraq for another 60 days.

"I don't expect any change in the sanctions regime," said British Ambassador David Hannay.

Iraq must fully cooperate with the weapons inspectors before a easing of the 5-year-old embargo could be considered.

Rolf Ekus, the chief UN weapons inspector, said earlier this week that Iraq had refused to destroy five pieces of equipment related to its missile programme.

He also said Iraq had promised to submit by late July a complete report on its past biological weapons programme.

Iraq has admitted that it produced large amounts of botulism and anthrax as part of a biological warfare programme.

Iraqi Ambassador Nizar Hamdoun, in a Friday letter to the council, said Baghdad would postpone destruction of the equipment "until the biology file is disposed of positively."

Security Council members have said they see no prospects for easing the sanctions until Iraq abides by UN resolutions demanding the dismantling and monitoring of its programmes for weapons of mass destruction.

But the council is divided as to what to do if the monitors produce a positive report later this year.