

**BRIEFLY**



Picture dated 13th August 1944 of co-founder of the Algerian fundamentalist group the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) Imam Abdelbaki Sahraoui, 85, who was shot and killed in a gun attack Tuesday at a Paris mosque. Sahraoui was shot in the head by two men in front of the mosque in northern Paris. — AFP/UNB photo

**Oldest Japanese woman dies:** The oldest woman in Japan died of kidney trouble Wednesday at a hospital in Nagoya, central Japan, at the age of 116, her family said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

With the death of Tane Ika, the oldest Japanese now is a 111-year-old woman, Sue Utogawa, living in Yamaguchi, western Japan. Average life expectancy stood at 82.98 years for Japanese women and 76.57 years for men in 1994, the highest in the world, the Health and Welfare Ministry said.

**Red Cross closes Bombay blood bank:** The Indian Red Cross Society has voluntarily closed down its blood bank in Bombay temporarily pending the report of panel of experts set up by it, society sources said last night. PTI reports from Bombay.

The step has been taken following reports in a section of the press alleging that samples of blood infected with HIV had been supplied by the society to some hospitals between February 1992 and July 1994, and subsequent raids by food and drug administration and drug controller of India.

**18 die in Papua New Guinea jet crash:** A plane crashed Wednesday on the far southeast tip of Papua New Guinea's mainland, killing all 18 people aboard, most of them children. AP reports from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The local Atotau Public Hospital said there were 18 people on board and none survived. All the bodies had been recovered, the hospital spokesman said.

**NY murder rate at lowest level:** The number of murders in New York City so far this year are at the lowest level in a quarter of a century, AP reports from New York. Police department statistics obtained by The Associated Press show an overall 18 per cent decrease in crime during the first six months of 1995 compared to the same period in 1994.

**US urged to lift embargo on Cuba:** Moderate Cuban opposition leader Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo urged the United States Tuesday to end its embargo on Cuba and detailed his recent landmark meeting in Havana with Cuban President Fidel Castro, AFP reports from Washington.

But the Republican-run House of Representatives, International Relations Committee meanwhile approved a bill that would tighten the US embargo with steps including denying US visas to non-US nationals employed by firms that buy Cuban government assets nationalised with or without compensating US owners.

**Gunmen kill 48 in Burundi:** Forty eight people were killed in an attack on a market in the northeastern Burundi province of Muyinga, Burundi radio said Tuesday in a report monitored by the BBC, AFP reports from London.

The report said an armed group in a car opened fire and hurled grenades at shoppers in the Cagizo market in the Buthininda area of Muyinga. The dead number 48 and they hail from all the tribes, the radio said. It did not say when the attack took place.

**38 Khmers defect to govt side:** Thirty-eight Khmer Rouge guerrillas belonging to a division led by the rebel's most feared commander have defected to the government side, a senior military official confirmed today, AFP reports from Phnom Penh.

The guerrillas, from rebel division 980 under the command of Khmer Rouge military Chief of Staff Ta Mok, brought with them 38 guns when they defected in northern Siem Reap province, General Ke Kim Yan, chief of Staff of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, told AFP.

**8 die in Tamil Nadu blast:** Eight people were killed and nine injured when a bomb exploded alongside a tea stall in a southern Indian village late on Tuesday, news agencies reported Wednesday. Reuter says from New Delhi.

The Press Trust of India (PTI) said the bomb was thrown at a police station in the village of Vazhapadi in Tamil Nadu state but fell short of the compound and landed beside the tea stall.

**Norwegian kidnapped in Kashmir:** A Norwegian has been kidnapped by Muslim separatist militants in Kashmir, the sixth Western tourist seized in the troubled northern Indian state in the past week, police said Tuesday, AFP reports from Srinagar.

The Norwegian tourist, whose name was not immediately available, was abducted Saturday in the same area where two Americans, two Britons and a German have been abducted by Muslim guerrillas since July 4, police said.

**Tory's popularity up by 1 pc:** Prime Minister John Major's victory in Conservative Party leadership challenge this month apparently did little to boost his party's dismal standing in opinion polls, a new poll showed yesterday, AFP reports from London.

The Guardian-ICM poll showed the Tories up one percentage point, and the opposition Labour Party down one point, since the last poll taken before Major resigned as party chairman and called the leadership election.

**38 Israelis held in West Bank:** Police arrested 38 Israelis as several hundred gathered yesterday to back the expansion of a West Bank settlement in a campaign against an army redeployment, the authorities said, AFP reports from West Bank.

A caravan was sited on a hill-top overlooking Efratah as the first of 17 intended for a new quarter. But Police blocked the arrival of the 16 other mobile homes, south of Bethlehem.

**Quake in Sino-Myanmar border, 2 die:** Two Chinese were killed and 29 injured, including two seriously, when an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter scale struck a thinly-populated area along the Myanmar-China border yesterday, officials said, Reuter reports from Beijing.

The two people were apparently killed when their homes collapsed in Menglian country near the border with China in southwestern Yunnan province at around dawn, an official of the Yunnan Seismological Bureau said by telephone.

**Vietnam hails US decision to open full diplomatic ties**

HANOI, July 12: Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet today welcomed the US decision to open diplomatic relations with Vietnam, calling for a new era of cooperation in a speech broadcast on national television and radio, reports AFP.

"The government and the people of Vietnam welcome the decision by President Bill Clinton and are ready to discuss with the United States a new base for relations," Kiet said, before promising that full cooperation in the hunt for American soldiers missing from the Vietnam war would continue.

"It's an important step that follows the general trend in the world," Kiet said in the rare broadcast from the White House — the name of the premier's office in Hanoi.

He added that Vietnam looked forward to a new era of cooperation with the United States government but said it must be based on "respect for independence, equality and focused on mutual interests."

Announcing the move in Washington, Clinton said he believed the move "would advance the cause of freedom in Vietnam just as it did in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union."

That statement is unlikely to please the officials in one of the world's last communist governments and one this is still anxious about some US intentions in Vietnam, particularly on issues like human rights and democracy.

Kiet, an economic reformer from southern Vietnam, has led efforts by the government to cajole the United States into establishing diplomatic ties with Vietnam 20 years after the end of the war here.

He has met frequently with US officials and lawmakers, appealing to them to put the past behind them and pledging continued help in recovering the remains of servicemen listed as missing in actions (MIAs) from the Vietnam war which ended 20 years ago.

"I hope the government and the people of the two countries will cooperate effectively to resolve humanitarian issues that the war has bequeathed to the two sides," Kiet said.

The people and government of Vietnam will continue their efforts to cooperate with the United States to reach the fullest possible accounting to American soldiers who disappeared during the war," he said.

Meanwhile, Vietnamese leaders promised today that they would do their utmost to help account for missing US servicemen following the normalisation of relations announced by President Bill Clinton.

"The people and government of Vietnam will continue their efforts to cooperate with the United States to reach the fullest possible accounting of American soldiers who disappeared during the war," Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet said in a televised address.

Clinton said when announcing the establishment of diplomatic ties that he would hold Hanoi to a pledge to recover the remains of servicemen still missing in action (MIA) and to uncover what happened to 55 men whose fate remains unclear 20 years after the end of the Vietnam war.

Vice Foreign Minister Le Mai later told a news conference that Vietnam "will continue to do its utmost to achieve the fullest possible accounting."

More than anyone else in the world, we understand the suffering and sorrow of these American families," said Mai, who handles relations with the United States and has been touted as a possible ambassador to

Washington. "Our statements that cooperation will continue are the most serious assurances because this is not just a political problem but a humanitarian issue that Vietnamese understand because of their sufferings in the past. Mai said that documents relating to MIAs would be handed over through the mechanism that has already been set up by the two countries. Teams were at work at all levels of government to look for anything that could help in the search, he added.

"Never in the history of warfare has such efficient cooperation taken place between former enemies after a war to account for missing soldiers," Mai said.

The United States counts some 1,600 servicemen as missing from the war with 55 cases marked for priority investigation because of the fate of the individuals is still uncertain. Mostly the work centres around recovering remains from air crashes.

Vietnam says 300,000 of its people are still listed as missing. Among those unaccounted for is the family of Prime Minister Kiet who are believed to have been killed in an American bombing raid in south Vietnam.

**Karadzic rejects int'l call for withdrawal from Srebrenica**

PALE, Bosnia, July 12: Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic today rejected international calls for his forces to withdraw from the eastern Muslim enclave of Srebrenica, reports Reuter.

"What withdrawal? From our country? Srebrenica is our country..." Karadzic told reporters at separatist Serb headquarters in Pale, outside Sarajevo.

Western countries have condemned the Bosnian Serbs for overrunning the pocket and ignoring its status as a UN-designated "safe area". The UN Security Council was expected to adopt a resolution today demanding the Serbs pull their troops out of the enclave.

Karadzic said the Serbs had to capture the enclave because Muslim government troops were staging what he called "terrorist" attacks out of the area. It is simply a terrorist stronghold and we couldn't tolerate it any longer," Karadzic said.

He also indicated Serb forces still had not subdued elements of the government army in the enclave but said UN troops and Muslim civilians were not in danger.

"Mainly, it (Srebrenica) is under control of Serb troops. Terrorist elements may cause further trouble. The people, the civilians and UN personnel are completely safe and secured."

Another report from Sarajevo adds: Bosnian Serb army general Ratko Mladic threatened to shell Muslim refugees if the United Nations called in more NATO airstrikes against his forces invading the east-

ern Srebrenica enclave, UN officials said today.

Mladic issued the warning to the Dutch UN commander in the enclave, UN officials said. Dutch peacekeepers are sheltering thousands of Muslim civilians who fled a Serb onslaught on Srebrenica town on Tuesday.

NATO warplanes struck twice at Serb tanks on Tuesday but the air raids failed to halt the Bosnian Serb army from capturing Srebrenica

pocket, a supposed UN "safe area". Mladic had also demanded that Bosnian government troops in the enclave hand over their weapons and "retreat," said a UN official who asked not to be named.

As many as 25,000 Muslims fled the Serb advance on Srebrenica town, creating a humanitarian crisis for aid agencies. Most refugees headed for a UN post at Potocari just north of the town, relief workers said.

**Greenpeace heads to join Bastille Day protests**

WELLINGTON, July 12: Greenpeace said today its flagship Rainbow Warrior was sailing away from France's nuclear test site in the South Pacific and heading to join Bastille Day anti-nuclear protests in Tahiti, reports Reuter.

Jean-Luc Thierry of Greenpeace France said the ship would "show solidarity with the Tahitian people in their strong opposition to nuclear tests." The ship would be in the Tahitian capital, Papeete, after being stormed by French commandos earlier this week when it breached the 12-mile (20-km) exclusion zone around the nuclear test site at Mururoa Atoll in French Polynesia.

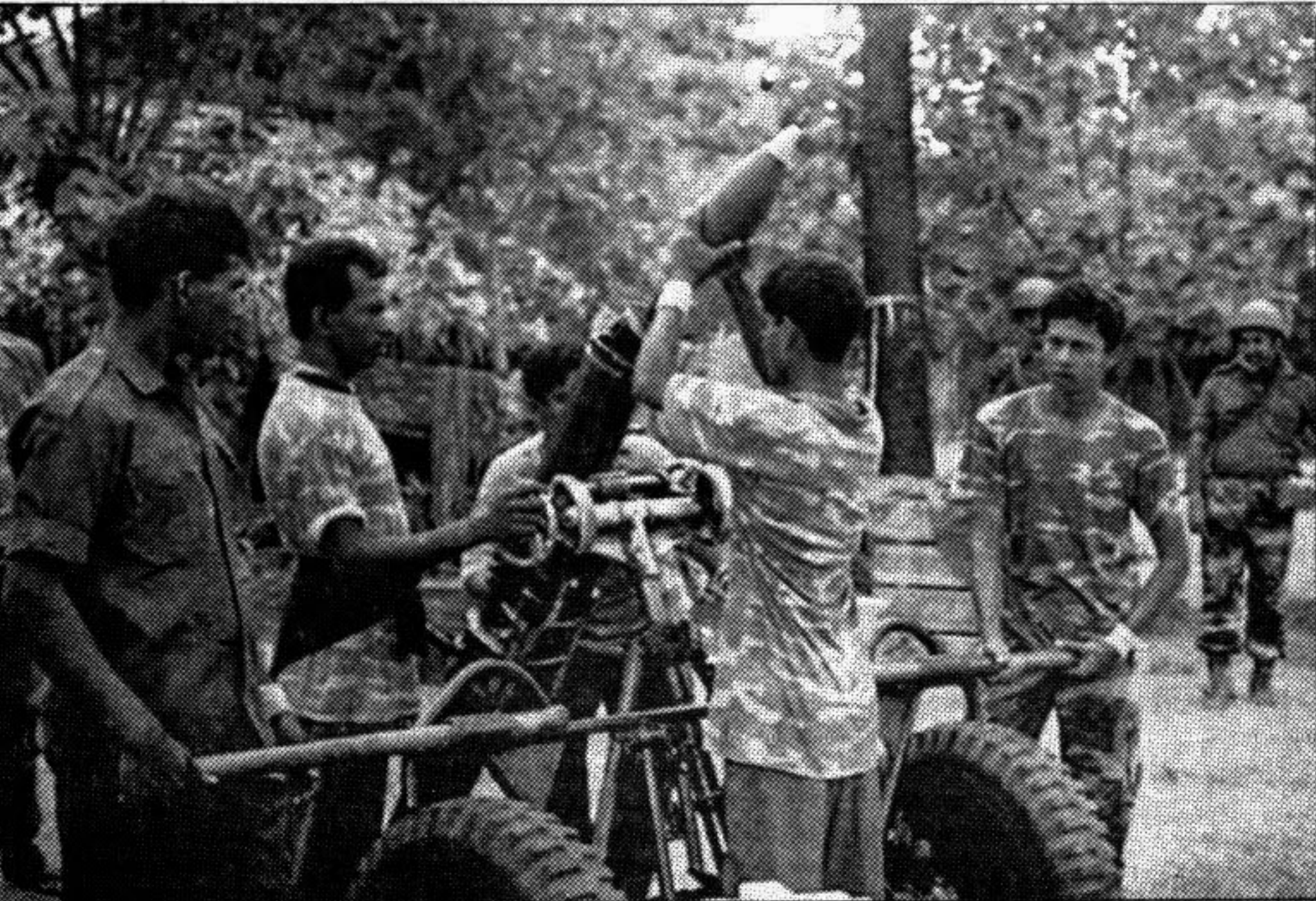
The vessel was towed back to international waters after French police questioned the crew and on Monday the French military strung cables

across the Main Wea Channel leading to the site.

The real revolutionary spirit of Bastille Day will be more present in the streets of Papeete with those who protest the resumption of testing than amongst the military preparing their deadly task at Mururoa," Thierry said.

Thousands of people demonstrated in Tahiti two weeks ago against President Jacques Chirac's decision to end a three-year testing moratorium and conduct eight underground blasts at Mururoa between September and May.

French Polynesia is an overseas territory of France. Greenpeace said two other protest vessels, the Vega and the Bifrost, would remain in the vicinity of Mururoa.



Sri Lankan soldiers prepare a mortar launcher Tuesday somewhere in the northern Jaffna peninsula where they are leading a major offensive against separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas. The operation "Leap Forward" has resulted in heavy civilian casualties. — AFP/UNB photo

**Bishop urges Chandrika to stop bombing of civilian areas**

COLOMBO, July 12: The bishop of rebel-held Jaffna Peninsula has sent a letter to Sri Lanka's president urging her to stop the military from bombing and shelling civilian areas, reports AP.

Relief workers say at least 120 Tamils, mostly civilians, have been killed since the military launched a major offensive against separatist Tamil rebels in northern Sri Lanka at dawn on Sunday.

The fatalities include 52 adults and 13 babies who died when a military warplane bombed St Peter and Paul Church and an adjoining school near Jaffna town Sunday, relief workers say.

"We earnestly appeal to your excellency to kindly instruct your forces to desist from bombing, strafing and firing artillery at civilian targets like temples, churches, schools and hospitals," Bishop Thomas Savan-dranayagam said in the letter.

Sent President Chandrika Kumaratunga on Tuesday and obtained by The Associated Press on Wednesday, the letter said many of these

buildings are being used as shelters by Tamil civilians.

The parish priest of the bombed church, and its parishioners, also sent a letter to Chandrika Kumaratunga.

"The fact that the very centres of refuge demarcated by the authorities are themselves targeted, forces us to conclude that this was done by design, and not by accident, it said.

"The pilot could not have mistaken the church, there being nothing to obstruct his view."

The International Committee of the Red Cross, which inspected the heavily damaged church and school on Monday, said at least one bomb had reduced the buildings to rubble.

On Tuesday, Kumaratunga ordered the military to investigate the bombing of the two buildings and expressed her concern to the Archbishop of Colombo, Nicholas Marcus Fernando.

On Wednesday, Tamil rebels claimed that a total of 210 civilians have been killed by military air strikes and shelling, but failed to say how many guerrillas have died in the offen-

sive.

The statement, issued from the insurgents, London office, also said 350 civilians have been wounded and 300,000 of the 800,000 people who live in Jaffna Peninsula have fled their homes. Relief agencies also say that many Tamil people have gone to shelters.

"The Jaffna hospital, presenting a blood-spattered scene, is unable to cope with the increasing number of injured persons," the rebels' statement said.

Military spokesmen have described the rebels' civilian death toll as highly exaggerated but their death tolls haven't listed any civilians. The spokesman say only 18 soldiers and 11 rebels have died and 101 soldiers have been injured.

Thousands of government troops overcoming rebel resistance continue their advance Wednesday into guerrilla-held territory in northern Sri Lanka, military officials said.

The offensive in Jaffna Peninsula, 3000 kilometres (185 miles) north of Colombo is the largest in the past

**Govt forces kill 150 rebels in Sierra Leone**

FREETOWN, July 12: Government forces in Sierra Leone backed by helicopter gunships killed 150 rebels in two separate raids in the south, state radio said on Tuesday, reports Reuter.

It said the attacks on Monday were on two rebel-held villages — Jomboum and Mendewa — in the Tikonko chiefdom of Bo district.

This was the second time within a week that the army had inflicted heavy casualties on Revolutionary United Front (RUF), rebels who took up arms in 1991, the radio said.

"A large number of rebels" were killed.

Government troops helped by private South African trainers have gone on the counter-offensive against RUF. The rebels initially carried out poorly coordinated attacks but then brought pressure on the government by forcing the closure of mainstay foreign-owned bauxite and diamond mines and setting their sights on the capital Freetown.

**UN extends ban on Iraq**

UNITED NATIONS, July 12: The Security Council extended trade sanctions against Iraq for another 60 days Tuesday as ambassadors condemned the biological weapons programme Iraq recently admitted having, reports AP.

Iraq must fully cooperate with UN weapons inspectors before the council will consider easing its 5-year-old trade embargo and letting Iraq resume oil exports.

Earlier this month, Iraq for the first time admitted having germ stockpiles, including anthrax and botulism cultures. The belated information came after UN inspectors found half a million liters of biological agents.

**Move to impeach Yeltsin fails to win enough votes**

MOSCOW, July 12: A move to try to impeach President Boris Yeltsin flopped in its early stages today when a proposal to launch the impeachment procedure failed to win enough votes in Parliament, reports Reuter.

Some 168 deputies in the State Duma (lower house) voted in favour of a communist-initiated motion for a commission to be set up to consider starting impeachment procedures against the 64-year-old Kremlin leader. This was well short of the 226 votes required.

The final vote was influenced by ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR) which withdrew its support for the move to set up a commission. The LDPR accounts for about 50 seats in the Duma.

**Off the Record**



British actor Hugh Grant (C) and model Elizabeth Hurley (L) talk with actor Tom Arnold after arriving for premiere of the movie, "Nine Months" Tuesday in Century City, California. Grant and Arnold co-star in the comedy about a man's preparation for becoming a parent. — AFP/UNB photo

**Because, students let him down**

BOMBAY: A village school headmaster committed suicide after his students turned in poor results in State School Board Examinations, a local newspaper reported yesterday, reports AFP.

Rajendra Hajre, 29, headmaster at a high school in Nigdi, 200 kilometres (125 miles) south of Bombay, drowned himself in a river near the village, the mass-circulation Marathi-language daily newspaper Saamna said.

The Nigdi High School had turned in very poor results in the State Secondary Board Examinations, whose results were announced early this month, it said.

Hajre was depressed and frustrated that most of his students had failed, despite putting in a lot of effort, the newspaper said.

**Birds of 'The Birds' had food-poisoning**

SAN FRANCISCO: A scientist may have solved an Alfred Hitchcock mystery — why did the birds from his celebrated film of the same name descend on a small fishing village, terrorising its inhabitants, reports AFP.

David Garrison, a biologist at the University of California, suggested the birds, whose frenzied attack in the movie was inspired by a real incident in Monterey Bay, California, in 1961, might have been suffering from food-poisoning.

Hitchcock, who lived a few miles away at the time, gathered newspaper stories about the incident before making his 1963 film "The Birds."

Garrison said the birds were probably suffering from plankton-spawned food poisoning, induced by an acid identified only in 1991. The acid is believed to have been responsible on a number of occasions for the death or disabling of seabirds feeding on plankton-eating anchovies in the area.

In the 1961 incident, eight people in Capitola were reported nipped by seabirds who also flew into police cars, dangled from lamp posts and staggered around.

**Love knows no law**

KAMPALA: A 100-year-old Ugandan man married a 12-year-old girl after an affair that lasted for months, a Ugandan newspaper reported yesterday, reports Reuter.

The monitor said that Samuel Bukoro was married to the girl, named only as Nyamihanda, in a traditional ceremony in the western Rubazi village on July 1.

Ugandan laws do not permit marriage or even sexual affairs with girls under 18 years and the offence is normally punishable by life imprisonment. But Bukoro, who is a witch doctor, insisted he would keep his bride despite opposition from the child's parents and villagers, the monitor said.

**He's enjoying every single drop of life**

KUALA LUMPUR: A self-styled Muslim preacher with 10 wives and a pornographic video collection was jailed by a religious court Wednesday for preaching Islamic laws which allow only four wives at a time, a report said, says AFP.

Singaporean Abdul Talib Harun, 35, was sentenced to 25 months in jail and fines totalling 14,000 Ringgit (5,600 dollars) in Johore State, on charges that also included preaching Islam without the sanction of state religious authorities, Bernama News Agency reported.

Abu Talib had said he was "ready to answer to God." His 10 wives were all Singaporeans aged 22 to 28. The six "extra" wives were sentenced to three months' jail and a 2,500-ringgit fine each.

Authorities raided Abu Talib's house in April 1994, suspecting him of using it as a centre to spread deviant Islamic teachings. They arrested Abu Talib and his wives and confiscated several pornographic video tapes.

**Transfer of civil powers PLO, Israel close to accord**

CAIRO, July 12: Israel and the PLO late Tuesday agreed a deal in principle on transferring eight civil powers to Palestinians on the West Bank, the head of the Palestinian team Jamil Tarif said here, reports AFP.

"We have reached a deal and a joint formula on transferring powers in eight spheres," Tarif told journalists. "I feel happy we have reached an accord."

His Israeli counterpart Oren Shalor said, "We almost finished all points, but we are very close to an agreement about the eight spheres."

"We have to see some small technical details." Tarif said the deal still had "to be ratified by the political leadership of both parties." "If it is ratified as it is it will be signed in the next two days in Cairo by the heads of the two delegations."

The transfer talks focused on the handover of eight civil spheres to the Palestinian authority statistics gas/petrol industry trade, postal services, agriculture, insurance, municipal affairs and labour.

Negotiators from the two sides are set to meet in Italy to hammer out

the rest of a deal for the second phase of Palestinian self-rule.

Hasan Abu Libdeh, head of the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics told AFP the two sides would meet Friday in a military camp outside Florence, although PLO leader Yasser Arafat said no decision on such a meeting had yet been taken.

The deal due to be concluded by July 25, is also to include an Israeli redeployment on the West Bank ahead of Palestinian elections.

Another reports from Jerusalem adds: Several hundred Israelis turned out before dawn to back the expansion of the West Bank settlement of Efratah as part of a campaign against an army redeployment, police said.

A caravan was sited on a hill-top as the first of 17 intended for a new quarter of the settlement, south of Bethlehem on the occupied West Bank, police said.

But police blocked the arrival of the 16 other mobile homes. As a further protest at the police operation, settlers blocked the main Jerusalem to Hebron highway by sitting on the road.

Police dragged away 21 settlers after scuffles.