

International

BRIEFLY

Pranab arrives in Male: Indian Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee who arrived in Male on a three-day visit on Friday will back more aid for the Indian Ocean archipelago of the Maldives...

3 die in Toronto subway mishap: A subway train slammed into the rear of a stopped train during the Friday evening rush hour, killing three people and injuring more than three dozen...

20 drown in Jhelum river: At least 20 people were drowned Friday when an overloaded boat capsized in the river Jhelum some 100 kilometres (some 60 miles) from Jhelum city in the Punjab province...

Floods leave 15,000 dead in China: Summer flooding in seven Chinese provinces has left at least 1,500 people dead and affected some 125 million others...

4 die in Austrian train mishap: At least four people died and around 100 were injured late Friday when a landslide swept away a bridge only seconds before an inter-city train hurtled onto it in Western Austria...

China executes 9 criminals: Nine people convicted of committing murder and robbery were executed in southern China's Guangzhou city...

Troops kill 14 Kurdish militants: The army has killed 14 Kurdish militants during raids in the southeast along the borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria...

JKLF rejoins Hurriyat confce: The outlawed Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has rejoined the all-party Hurriyat Conference (APHC)...

Cambodia seizes 71-kg heroin: Cambodian authorities have seized 71 kilograms of heroin (156 lbs) with an estimated street value in the United States of 15.6 million dollars...

Saddam blames son-in-law for grabbing money: In a statement read on Iraqi Television, President Saddam Hussein on Friday accused a son-in-law who defected to Jordan of having stolen millions of dollars...

Kashmiri rebels urged to release 5 hostages: Relatives of five western hostages have appealed to Kashmiri militants "in the name of Allah" for the release of the tourists...

8 more beheaded in S Arabia: RYADH, Aug 12: Eight people were beheaded in Saudi Arabia this weekend, including five people convicted of conspiracy to murder and three drug smugglers...

Smoking-related cancer deaths up by 33 pc in last 10 yrs: LONDON, Aug 12: In a world where tobacco is blamed for a death every 10 seconds, US President Bill Clinton's bid to cut teenage smoking was hailed on Friday by campaigners battling the scourge of lung cancer...

14 killed in South Africa: DURBAN, Aug 12: At least 14 more people were killed on Friday night in South Africa's volatile KwaZulu-Natal province...

Senate urges France to call off N-tests Clinton endorses total ban on nuclear testing

WASHINGTON, Aug 12: President Clinton says his decision to support an end to even small-scale nuclear testing should make it easier to negotiate a worldwide test ban...

Departments would keep the Nevada Test Site in condition to allow a quick resumption of testing.

He tried to ease such concerns by promising to exercise "supreme national interest rights" to withdraw from the treaty and conduct tests if the United States ever loses confidence in the safety of a critical nuclear weapon.

Clinton said it was unlikely that would be necessary, since he was establishing new annual reporting and certification requirements to ensure US nuclear weapons remain safe and reliable.

Ashton Carter, the assistant secretary of defence for international security policy, said the Energy and Defence

Departments would keep the Nevada Test Site in condition to allow a quick resumption of testing.

AFP adds, the US Senate adopted a resolution Friday calling on France to call off a series of nuclear tests in the South Pacific that is supposed to resume in September.

Introduced by Democratic Senator Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, the non-binding "Sense of the Senate" resolution was attacked as an amendment to the 1996 defence spending bill.

It says France should abide by the current international moratorium on nuclear test explosions, refrain from

proceeding with its announced intention of conducting a series of nuclear tests in advance of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and initiate preparations to close its underground test sites at the Mururoa and Fangataufa atolls.

In a statement, the senator said that because of the urgency of the situation, he insisted that the resolution be adopted before the Senate began its summer break Friday.

He cited reports that France has readied four of the eight planned nuclear tests and said it was likely the first of them could be detonated later this month.

Kurd factions reach accord to end dispute

DROGHEDA, Ireland, Aug 12: Two warring Kurdish factions Friday reached an agreement aimed at ending a bloody 15-month territorial dispute that has claimed more than 2,000 lives in northern Iraq...

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) said they had pledged to maintain and make permanent a ceasefire, to demilitarise the city of Erbil, the PUK-controlled Kurdistan capital, and to agree on collection and distribution of border tariffs.

"They also agree to cease media attacks, to respect the rights of one another's followers and to release all detainees held during hostilities," the two factions said in a joint statement.

West is more corrupt than Asia: Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 12: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has strongly criticised an American news report listing Malaysia, China, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines among the most corrupt Asian nations...

"They (in the West) only see other people as corrupted. But if they were to look in the mirror they will see they are more dirty," the Star daily quoted Mahathir as saying.

Mahathir, who has been a strong critic of the West since he became prime minister in 1981, was quoted as saying Westerners are racial supremacists who can only perceive non-Western governments as corrupt.



Croatian soldiers, armed with brooms, walk downtown central Gmina Friday. Croatian troops that earlier were engaged in offensive which swept the whole territory formerly known as Krajina region, now take part in the cleaning of the city. — AFP/UNB photo

US, Russia to coordinate latest bid to solve Y'slav crisis

MOSCOW, Aug 12: Top US and Russian officials have agreed to get together to try to coordinate their latest diplomatic efforts to solve the Yugoslav crisis...

Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev will meet US national security adviser Anthony Lake on Sunday in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in the hope they can find common ground on the way to establish peace.

Washington and Moscow have hurriedly come up with separate peace initiatives since a Croatian offensive that retook the Serb-held enclave of Krajina last weekend appeared to radically alter the balance in the four-year conflict in former Yugoslavia.

Lake, on a tour of Western European capitals to brief

leaders on the US plan, will now include Russia on his agenda following a telephone conversation on Thursday between Kozyrev and US Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

"We expect a serious discussion in Sochi on how to coordinate the latest initiatives by Moscow and Washington on settling the Yugoslav crisis," a Foreign Ministry official told Interfax news agency.

Russia's traditional close links with its fellow Slav Serbs and pressure from the US Congress for an end to the arms embargo against the Bosnian Muslims have caused tensions between Washington and Moscow — both keen to lead the search for peace.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin, fresh from a month's

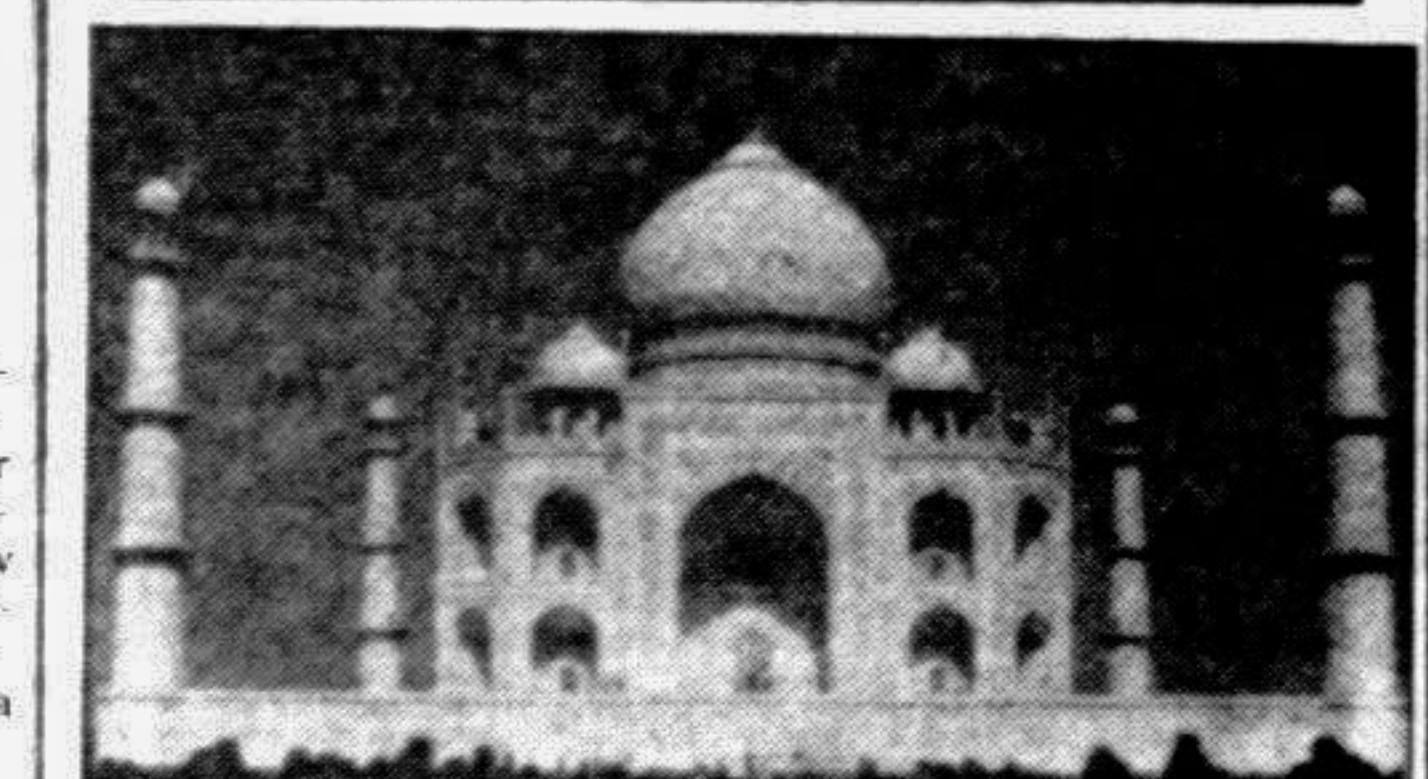
treatment for a heart problem and anxious to demonstrate a robust policy on the conflict, called on Thursday for a summit of the heads of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia.

He said the meeting should pave the way for an international peace conference to be hosted by Moscow and outlined five issues to be resolved.

Yeltsin also called on the international community to lift sanctions against Belgrade and later ordered substantial humanitarian aid to be sent to Serbia to help Krajina refugees.

Initial Western reaction to Moscow's peace plan — outlined on Friday to the United States, Britain, France and Germany — has been muted.

Off the Record



Taj to remain hundreds of years more

AGRA: The Tajmahal is structurally sound and can remain so for hundreds of years to come, according to a study which examined different aspects like pollution around the monument and the quality of its preservation...

The brick and the lime mortar used in construction of the monument were still in good condition and largely unaffected by the ravage of time, according to the report on atmospheric and environmental quality and preservation of the Taj prepared by a panel of experts headed by Dr S. Varadrajani, former Secretary for Science and Technology.

Cracks on the surface were mostly superficial and at places extending up to the masonry, but those were not caused by atmospheric pollution, the study revealed.

The surface of the Taj was found to be quite resilient, and there is no yellowing, though soot from oil lamps used down the years, as well as suspended particles have left their marks, the report states.

The experts suggested that the monument be kept closed at least once every week or fortnight to allow for its cleaning and maintenance. The use of a mobile crane or platform to facilitate cleaning of the upper part of the dome was also recommended.

She was 'miserable as sin' on his arm

NEW YORK: Hugh Grant's arrest with a prostitute left girlfriend Elizabeth Hurley feeling "like I'd been shot," reports AP.

In her first interview since Grant's arrest June 27, Hurley told Barbara Walters she got the news from her agent just seconds before she spoke to Grant on the phone.

"I felt like I'd been shot. I ran put. I think I was in shock," Hurley said in the "20-20" interview that will be broadcast Friday.

The Estee Lauder model and actress said she was "miserable as sin" on Grant's arm for the July 11 premiere of his movie "Nine Months." She went because "I don't think you should hit someone when they're down."

Painfree injections!

WASHINGTON: The injection of tomorrow may have more in common with a futuristic toothbrush than an old-fashioned needle, reports Reuter.

Hoping to develop a painfree injection, scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology said they have managed to "inject" three types of medicine with ultrasound through a skin patch in laboratory experiments on cadavers. Their findings appear in yesterday's edition of the journal Science.

The next step is tests on live human volunteers, probably starting with insulin in the next six months, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) chemical and biomedical engineer Robert Langer said in a telephone interview.

Traditional ultrasound machines might be used for needle-free inoculations at the doctor's office such as pain medication, vaccines and allergy shots. But Langer also has adapted tiny miniaturised ultrasound machines now found in high-tech toothbrushes that sell for around 130 dollars.

"You can take the miniature ultrasound part of the toothbrush and fit it into a skin patch the size of a nicotine patch or maybe a little thicker," he said.

Patches might even be better than needles or pills because they may be able to deliver medicine at a slow, steady state, or in doses in response to signals in the body.

Hutu rebels warn Burundi forces of more assaults

NAIROBI, Aug 12: Hutu rebels said on Friday they killed 60 Burundian government soldiers in an attack in northwest Burundi last month and warned of more assaults to force the military to negotiate, reports Reuter.

Jerome Ndiho, spokesman for the National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD), denied the rebels were involved in the slaughter of at least 30 displaced Tutsi civilians last weekend.

Ndiho told a Nairobi news conference 60 soldiers from the Tutsi-dominated army were killed and large amounts of arms were captured in a day-long battle on July 28 near Muzinda in Bubanza province.

The army said at the time two soldiers were killed in the attack by rebels using 60 mm mortars and other medium weaponry. Ndiho did not say whether there were any rebel casualties.

Ndiho said the army's efforts to regain control of Bubanza province since July 28 had failed and recent gains by the Front for the Defence of Democracy, the CNDD's army, were a warning of more to come.

He said the Bubanza assault was part of an offensive since July 28 and aimed at forcing the army to the negotiating table.

The army has said it will never negotiate with the rebels. Ndiho denied rebels were fighting alongside soldiers from Rwanda's former government army involved in last year's genocide of up to an estimated one million Tutsis and made rate Hutus.

Both the army and rebels have been accused by human rights groups of killing large number of civilians. But Ndiho said the rebels were well-disciplined and had ordered never to attack civilians.



New Zealand Navy ship Tui prepares to sail from Auckland on Saturday for Mururoa, where it will support the "protest flotilla" of private boats opposing the resumption of French nuclear tests on the atoll. New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger (foreground right) waves to the two members of Parliament on board the boat. — AFP/UNB photo