

BRIEFLY

Strong quake rocks Ecuador: A powerful earthquake rocked a remote region near the borders of Ecuador and Peru on Monday night, shaking buildings and cutting phone service as far away as Bogota, 600 miles to the north. AP reports from Ecuador.

The magnitude-6.9 quake struck at 8:51 pm (0153 GMT) and was centred 80 miles east of Cuenca, Ecuador, said Bruce Presgrave, a geophysicist with the US Geological Survey in Golden, Colorado.

The quake was followed by a magnitude 5.6 aftershock six minutes later.

El-Khabar editor killed in Algiers: The editor-in-chief of El-Khabar, one of Algeria's top Arabic language dailies, was shot dead yesterday in an attack in the capital, Algerian security officials said. AFP reports from Algiers.

Omar Quartlan, 36, was killed in the working-class neighbourhood of Belcourt, near the city centre, the sources said.

Thai flood death toll now 168: The death toll from monsoon floods which have engulfed large parts of Thailand has risen to 168, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. Reuter reports from Bangkok.

The flooding, which began in July and has now hit 67 of the country's 76 provinces, claimed 168 lives in various accidents up to Monday, the ministry said in a statement.

Nobel Literary Award on Oct 5: The winner of the 1995 Nobel Literature Prize, the world's most prestigious literary award, will be announced on Thursday, the Swedish Academy of Letters said yesterday. Reuter reports from Stockholm.

A spokeswoman told Reuters the winner would be announced at 1200 GMT on Thursday in the Gilded Foyer of the Nobel Academy's Stockholm headquarters.

12 GIA members jailed in Belgium: Twelve alleged Islamic fundamentalists were jailed for up to five years by Belgian court yesterday. Reuter reports from Brussels.

But their presumed leader, Ahmed Zaoui was acquitted. The men, alleged to be members of Algeria's fundamentalist Armed Islamic Group (GIA), were charged with forming a gang, possession of arms and explosives, forgery and receiving stolen goods. They all denied being GIA members.

Li Peng off to Morocco: Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng left Beijing Tuesday for a 15-day five-country tour that will start in Morocco, the official Xinhua news agency said. AFP reports from Beijing.

He will also go to Mexico, Peru, Canada and Malta, accompanied by his wife Zhu Lin and a large number of government officials and businessmen.

First Miss America dies: Margaret Gorman Cahill, who was crowned the first Miss America in 1921 and later shunned her notoriety has died of cardiac arrest and pneumonia. She was 90 years old, AP reports from Washington.

Cahill died Sunday at a nursing home in Bowie, Maryland, outside Washington. "Life has been extremely, I say extremely, kind," she said in a 1980 interview.

Opposition MP held in Azerbaijan: Azerbaijani police arrested an opposition lawmaker Monday after finding dozens of assault rifles and grenades at his residence and the house of his relative. AP reports from Azerbaijan.

The Interior Ministry said 82 Kalashnikov rifles were found hidden in a cache at the home of Agaseid Akhundov. An unidentified relative was found to possess four grenade launchers, 130 grenades and 45,000 rounds of ammunition, it said.

Bomb hits Tahitian courthouse: Tahiti's courthouse was firebombed after France's second nuclear test, a sign that protests may take the form of terrorism instead of street riots, AP reports from Papeete.

A youth speeding by on a motorbike threw a Molotov cocktail at the door of the courthouse at about 11:30 p.m. Sunday, hours after France detonated a nuclear blast measured at about 100 kilotons at Fangataufa Atoll.

Mollie Harris dies: Mollie Harris, who played village shopkeeper Martha Woodford on "The Archers," the long-running BBC radio drama, died Tuesday, the corporation said. She was 82, AP reports from London.

Personal contacts still a problem in Germany: Kohl

BONN, Oct 3: Chancellor Helmut Kohl said today that German unification was solving the material problems faced in the east but getting Germans from east and west to know each other was still a challenge, reports Reuter.

In a televised address on German Unity Day, Kohl said eastern Germany had made considerable economic progress since it merged with the west on October 3, 1990.

The chancellor also noted Germany had been at peace with its neighbours for 50 years and pledged it would do everything to make sure its relations stayed that way.

"Nowhere else in Europe is economic growth as strong as in eastern Germany", he said. Annual growth there, buoyed by massive transfer

payments from the west, is about nine per cent.

"Other countries in Eastern Europe have to struggle with far larger problems," he said, according to an advance text of the address.

"With hard work and confidence, we will master the economic and social problems in the foreseeable future," he said.

"In the long run, improving personal contacts among Germans are the bigger task for all of us. Here we need patience, good will and the readiness to listen to each other."

Kohl said he took seriously the concerns of people who were disappointed with the way united Germany had turned out.

Typhoon hits HK after killing 170 in Philippines

HONG KONG, Oct 3: Typhoon Sybil pounded Hong Kong with heavy rain and howling winds today after leaving more than 170 dead and missing and 20,000 homeless in the Philippines, where rescue officials appealed for help, reports AP.

Gale force winds of up to 120 kilometres (75 miles) and hour hit the territory, felling trees and ripping off a billboards and scaffolding on Hong Kong's high-rise buildings. Twelve people were injured before the typhoon veered away late in the morning, two seriously enough to admitted to hospital.

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Clinton, Jiang meet on Oct 24

WASHINGTON, Oct 3: President Clinton and President Jiang Zemin of China will hold what could be a difficult meeting October 24 in New York. The two sides sparred Monday evening while announcing the non-summit summit, reports AP.

The terms were in dispute.

So was whether to call it a summit, which the Chinese would have preferred. But the Clinton administration would agree neither to a state visit in Washington by Jiang nor to describing the meeting as a summit.

The sparring was unusual, and public, but US-Chinese relations are just beginning to climb out of a deep slump. The scars are still raw.

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France vows to go ahead with more nuclear tests

European foreign minister in Luxembourg.

With seemingly nothing to lose, Premier Alain Juppe said Monday that France would press ahead with more underground blasts, reports AP.

The environmental group Greenpeace called Sunday's test beneath Fangataufa Atoll in French Polynesia "an enormous affront." Australia and New Zealand lodged formal protests with the French government, and New Zealand again called in the French ambassador there.

But the United States and other key allies merely expressed "regret" at the test half a world away, and Britain and Germany reacted with indifference.

"I haven't heard any demand — I've only heard regrets," French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette said Monday at a meeting of

the testing, which breaks a three-year moratorium. The world's other nuclear powers, except China, have not tested nuclear arms since 1992.

"It is a wrong call for France politically and it is irresponsible environmentally," said New Zealand's Prime Minister, Jim Bolger.

Riot police patrolled the streets of Papeete, the capital of French Polynesia. But the streets were calm, devoid of the fierce rioting that followed France's first test September 5 beneath Mururoa Atoll. Both atolls are about 1,200 kilometres (750 miles) southeast of Tahiti.

A spokesman for the pro-independence Tavini movement told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that no rallies or protests were planned since they could end in violence. Instead, he said

the movement would focus on the upcoming March election.

After the first nuclear test, anti-nuclear and pro-independence demonstrations escalated into a day and night of riots on September 6-7, leaving part of the airport razed and dozens of shops and buildings in downtown Papeete looted and burned.

The latest test was more than five times stronger than the first one, the French Defence Ministry announced in Paris on Monday. The ministry, in a terse statement, said only that the blast was "less than 110 kilotons."

New Zealand seismologists estimated the blast was about 100 kilotons and produced a shock wave equal to a 5.9 magnitude earthquake, similar to previous tests before the moratorium.

The September 5 test on

nearby Mururoa Atoll measured less than 20 kilotons, slightly larger than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. The tests are conducted about 800 metres (a half-mile) below ground.

The latest blast was widely believed to be a test of the TN-75 warhead for France's new submarine-launched nuclear missile.

The blast provoked swift condemnation from the prime ministers of Australia and New Zealand, and from the 16-nation South Pacific Forum of island states.

"The latest test will strengthen the region's resolve and damage further France's relations with Forum countries," Forum secretary-general Ieremia Tabai said in Suva, Fiji.

Greenpeace called the second test "an enormous affront" to the people of the

South Pacific, and said it was one of the biggest ever in the region, according to Greenpeace spokeswoman in Papeete, Lynette Thorstensen.

But Chile, Japan, Russia, Sweden, the United States and the European Commission merely expressed "regret." Britain — Europe's other nuclear power — and Germany carefully avoided criticising the blast.

The White House defended its reaction. "The use of the word 'regret' in respect to one of our close European allies is strong indeed," said presidential spokesman Mike McCurry.

"If the French decide there is a need for tests before a comprehensive test ban treaty, that is a matter for them," the British Foreign Office said in a statement.

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The newspaper quoted US officials as saying that issuing a visa did not represent any change in US policy toward the Cuban government.

As the United Nations' host country, the United States is required to permit entry to virtually any representative of a member government.

Anti-Castro members of Congress, including senate majority leader Bob Dole, R-Kansas, have urged the administration to deny Castro a visa, fearing he will use the occasion to lobby for an end to the US economic embargo

King Fahd for Israel-Syria accord to broaden ME peace

JEDDAH, Saudi Arabia, Oct 3: King Fahd called for an accord between Israel and Syria to spread peace throughout the Middle East, the official Saudi press agency said today, reports AP.

The King, chairing a cabinet meeting in Jeddah late Monday, said an Israeli-PLO autonomy deal signed on Thursday in Washington was "a positive step towards a just and comprehensive peace" in the region.

But he stressed that "peace must not be in bits and pieces," and called for accords between Israel and both Syria and Lebanon.

His comments came as PLO chairman Yasser Arafat arrived at the Red Sea port of Jeddah where the two leaders are to meet late today. Arafat has also said he

hoped for progress in Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations to follow on from his West Bank self-rule deal with the Jewish state.

US Secretary of State Warren Christopher is to meet in Washington Thursday with Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shara to explore ways of getting Syria-Israeli peace talks moving again.

The talks ground to a halt in June after both sides failed to agree on security arrangements to accompany an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, which the Jewish state seized in 1967.

Arafat is also expected to thank King Fahd for the 100 million dollars that Saudi Arabia has granted to the Palestinian authority to help establish autonomy and fund development projects

Attempt on Macedonian president

Bosnian soldiers launch major attack to cut Serb supply route

SARAJEVO, Oct 3: Bosnian government troops launched a major attack south of Sarajevo today in an apparent attempt to cut a key Serb supply route, sources close to the UN mission in Sarajevo said, reports AP.

The same sources said hundreds of explosions were heard in the area. An apparent affirmation of a Bosnian Serb radio report that the Bosnian army launched an artillery and infantry attack in the Treskavica Mountain region with the aim of taking control of the Sarajevo-Trnovo road.

Reuter adds from Skopje:

Macedonian President Kiro Gligorov survived an apparent assassination attempt with light injuries when a car bomb exploded beside his passing Limousine today, police said.

Gligorov's driver was killed and three passers by were seriously injured by the blast outside the Bristol Hotel.

The president was taken to the intensive care unit of the main Skopje Hospital. Doctors said his life was not in danger.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the explosion.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes called Monday for a "robust" US and NATO military force to supervise any peace settlement in Bosnia, but refused to say exactly how many troops Washington should send.

"One thing is clear: What we need is a robust presence from the beginning," he told journalists before a lunch with US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. Asked if he meant a robust US or overall NATO presence, he said with a laugh: "Both if possible."

President Bill Clinton has pledged to contribute up to 25,000 US troops to an allied mission to implement a Bosnia settlement but officials say it is impossible to tell how many will be needed until the shape of a deal is known.

Claes took a similar line. "We do not have any peace agreement text. We do not have any maps. So how do you want to give a figure?" he told a questioner.

Clinton's promise of troops has run into problems with the US Congress, which is worried about the cost and potential US casualties.

Coup bid foiled in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, Oct 3: Troops loyal to Sierra Leone's military government foiled a coup attempt today and six officers have been arrested, military sources said.

A Western diplomat told Reuters there had been an exchange of gunfire in the West African capital.

"The government in the early hours with loyal forces foiled a coup plot in which six officers have been arrested and detained at the central prison," one officer told Reuters.

The diplomats put the number of those held at 10, including the six officers he said were intercepted by loyal troops.

Spokesmen of the military government led by Captain Valentine Strasser said an official statement was expected on the alleged plot.

Karachi needs 60,000 to 70,000 cops to maintain law & order: Leghari

KARACHI, Oct 3: Pakistan President Farooq Leghari said on Monday the police force killed one armed man in the Mahmoodabad district of the city.

On Sunday, five people were shot and killed as an anti-government strike, arson and violence paralysed the city, authorities said.

The strike was called by the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) to protest against alleged killing in custody of three of its members by police and paramilitary rangers.

Talks between the MQM and the government have dragged on since July 11 without any apparent breakthrough in the effort to halt the bloodletting the Pakistan's biggest city.

The government blames most of the violence on the MQM, which claims to represent Urdu-speaking Mohajirs who migrated from India when the subcontinent was partitioned in 1947 and their descendants. The MQM blames the violence on government security agencies.

South Pacific Forum suspends ties with France

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Forum Chairman and Papua New Guinea Prime Minister Sir Julius Chan said he had decided to suspend the annual post forum dialogue with France, the forum's only official link with France.

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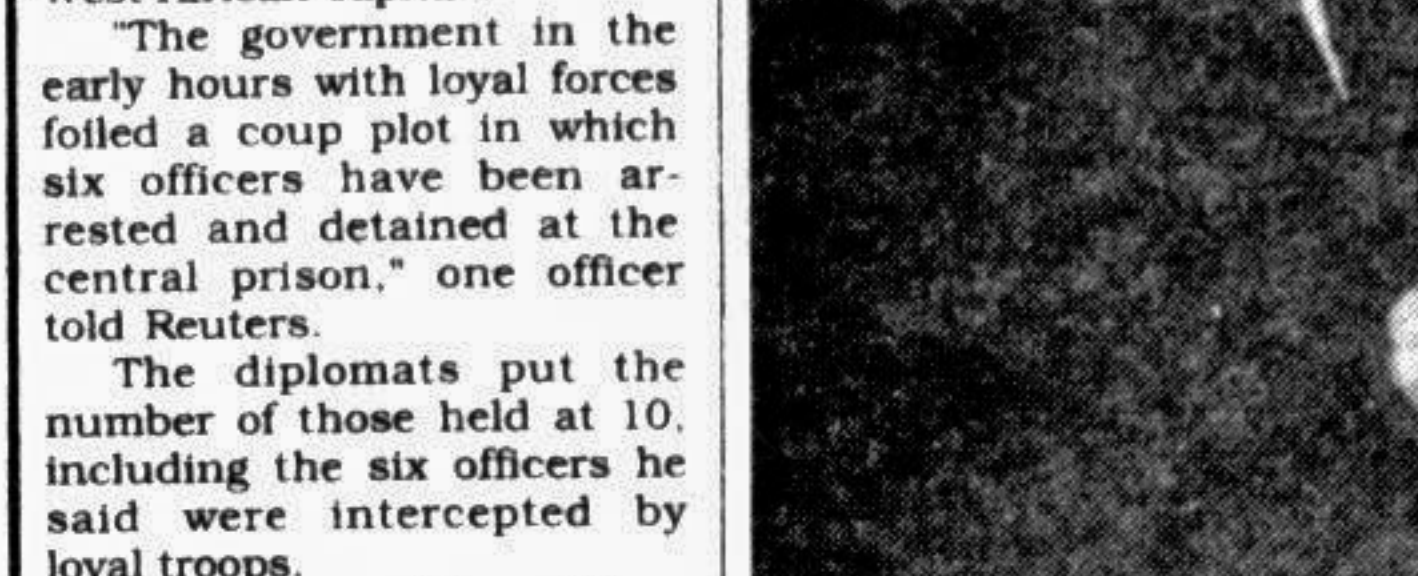
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Yvonne (L), Audette (C) and Cecil (R) Dionne hold up a copy of their autobiography, "Secrets de Famille" during a book party in Montreal, Monday. They are the three surviving sisters of the world famous Dionne quintuplets. — AFP/UNB photo

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A token of peace for Zahwa

JERUSALEM: Leah Rabin, wife of the Israeli prime minister, has sent a dove-shaped silver ornament as a peace gift for PLO leader Yasser Arafat's baby girl, Zahwa, reports AP.

The Jerusalem Post newspaper reported Tuesday that Yitzhak Rabin's wife handed the present to mother Suha Arafat at the White House when they met at the signing of the West Bank accord last week.

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Jakarta for more 3rd World role in int'l decision-making

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 3: Indonesia on Monday called for a strengthened role of the developing countries in the international decision-making, reports Xinhua.

Speaking at the general debate of the 50th United Nations General Assembly, Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ali Alatas noted that in observing the UN 50th anniversary, we will strengthen the role of the developing countries in decision-making and enhance the democratic character of the United Nations.

He pointed out that at present, policy decision affecting the developing countries are increasingly being made by international agencies or groups such as the World Trade Organisation, WTO and the Group of Seven where participation of the poor nations is less equitable.

Given the expanding role of the developing countries in the world economy and the growing interdependence among states, the participation of developing countries should be enhanced rather than curtailed," he argued.

He went on to emphasise that key world economic issues should be settled through dialogue and cooperation among the developed and developing countries.

Off the Record

Thrill of ancient love thru' laser beams

AGRA. Tourists will have a feel of romance of Jahangir and Nur Jahan and pangs of love of Shahjahan and Mumtaz in the backdrop of the famous Red Fort of the erstwhile Mughal capital of India when the sound and light spectacle begins there in November, reports PTI.

Story of the Mughul history of Agra will come alive at the Agra Fort, according to R S Yadav, Commissioner of Agra Division.

Yadav said a five-day autumn festival, Sharadotsava, will be held at Agra from October six to give a taste of Mughal culture to tourists.

Among the performers at the festival to be held at Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri, would be Gulam Ali the ghazal king, Hariprasad Chaurasia the flutist, Shive Kumar Sharma the santoor maestro and Shobha Kausar and Shobha Gurtu classical singers.

He said the script for the show had been finalised and the recording of voices was being done.

The script written by RC Kaushal of the National School of Drama, will feature the coming of the Mughals of Agra, the laying of their paradise gardens, the romance of Jahangir and Nur Jahan as well as their justice, the love story of Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal leading to the building of the Taj.

An image of Shah Jahan would be shown in the skies during the spectacle by laser beam effect. Arun Dang of the Agra tourism guide added.

Time travel may be possible, says Hawking

LONDON: Physicist Stephen Hawking, who once doubted man could ever travel through time, now concedes time travel is a possibility. The Sunday Times reported, says AP.

The newspaper said Hawking's forward to a new book, "The Physics of Star Trek" by Lawrence Krauss, indicates he has reconsidered.

"One of the consequences of rapid interstellar travel would be that one could also travel backward in time," Hawking is quoted as saying.

"If you combine Einstein's general theory of relativity with quantum theory, it does begin to seem a possibility," he was quoted as saying Saturday.

Hawking had dismissed the idea of time travel, the newspaper said, because it would allow people to alter their own pasts and, "the best evidence that time travel will never be possible is that we have not been invaded by hordes of tourists from the future."

Hawking, Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University, is the author of the international bestseller "A Short History of Time."

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