

BRIEFLY



A Lebanese boy caught in the rubbles of a house in Nabatiyah on Thursday that sheltered a family of eleven and was bombed by an Israeli warplane, cries for help. A mother, seven of her children and a young cousin were killed in the attack. Israel's Operation Grapes of Wrath, launched April 11 in an attempt to halt Hezbollah attacks, has killed 94 and wounded 192 in Lebanon, mostly civilians.

— AFP/UNB photo

17 pilgrims die in Pak bus mishap:

A bus carrying pilgrims to a Muslim shrine fell into a deep ravine in Northwestern Pakistan on Thursday, killing 17 people and injuring 38, police said. Reuter reports from Peshawar.

They said the bus went into the 100 feet (30 metre) deep ravine in the Buner area of the North West Frontier Province when it came off a sharp curve on the road to the Pir Baba shrine.

Greenpeace activists held: Police arrested members of the environmental group Greenpeace when they tried but failed to stop the loading of spent nuclear fuel rods onto a ship before dawn on Friday. AP reports from Sydney.

Police said three demonstrators were charged with trespass after they breached security and got into a restricted area at docks at Sydney's Port Botany.

Six others were arrested but were released without charges filed.

Briton hanged in Singapore: Briton John Martin was hanged in Singapore just before dawn on Friday for the grisly murder of a South African tourist, a prisons department officials said. Reuter reports from Singapore.

Martin also known as John Martin Scripps, was executed after changing his mind about appealing against his conviction for killing Gerard Gorge Lowe with a hammer, then dismembering the body and dumping the parts in the Singapore river.

Russia, Canada sign N-memo: Russia and Canada signed a memorandum Thursday on cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy. AP reports from Moscow.

The signing took place in Moscow on the eve of a nuclear security summit, in which the leaders of G-7 nations, Russia and Ukraine will take part.

The memo urges greater exchanges of information and closer contact between scientists of the two countries, the ITAR-Tass news agency said. It was signed by Russian Nuclear Energy Minister Viktor Mikhailov and Canada's Ambassador to Russia Jeremy Kinsman.

8 miners killed in Peru: Landslides killed eight miners in two separate mining accidents in the Peruvian highlands, according to a news report Thursday. AP says from Lima.

The worst of the two accidents Wednesday happened at the San Cristobal mine in La Oroya, belonging to the state-owned Centromin, the Lima daily El Comercio reported. La Oroya is 140 kilometers (85 miles) east of Lima.

Six workers extracting zinc at the open-pit mine were killed there when a bank 100 meters (330 feet) long and 40 meters (130 feet) wide crashed down on top of them, the newspaper said.

Meet on ME terrorism postponed:

An international meeting in Luxembourg on fighting Middle East terrorism has been postponed indefinitely to allow US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to make an emergency shuttle mission to the Middle East, the State Department spokesman said on Thursday. Reuter reports from Moscow.

Nicholas Burns said Christopher made the decision to go to the Middle East after Israeli forces, countering a wave of Katyusha rockets from guerrillas in Southern Lebanon landed tanks on a United Nations outpost crammed with refugees killing more than 100 people.

German minister heads for Syria:

Germany is sending a deputy foreign minister to Syria on Friday for talks on ending the violence between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon. AP reports from Bonn.

Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel said he spoke with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak by phone Thursday night to express Germany's concern over the latest attack. At least 75 Lebanese refugees were killed after a barrage of Israeli artillery shells slammed into a UN base in southern Lebanon.

In a statement, Kinkel said Germany was in close touch with US and French officials working to end the violence, and urged Barak to do his utmost to help reach a ceasefire.

Fighting rages in Chechnya defying Yeltsin's order

MOSCOW, Apr 19: Russian troops are openly flouting President Boris Yeltsin's order to cease combat operations in Chechnya and systematically waging war against civilians, and international aid organisation said Thursday, reports AP.

The group, Doctors Without Borders, said Yeltsin's plan to end the war in the breakaway republic is not working and the situation is seriously deteriorating.

"Villages and civilian installations, including hospitals, schools and mosques, continue to be targeted, in blatant violation of the Geneva Convention and other international agreements to which Russia is a signatory," Dr Eric Goemaere, the director general, told a news conference.

Yeltsin, who is under pressure to end the unpopular war as he seeks re-election, and his military commanders have said major combat operations have been halted and Russian forces are only responding to rebel attacks.

Goemaere sent a letter to US President Bill Clinton and called on the leaders of all G-7 countries, arriving in Moscow for a nuclear safety summit, to

put pressure on Russia to halt the targeting of civilians in Chechnya.

The group has 11 international staff and more than 40 Chechens and Russians working in Chechnya. They are "quite worried" that the strong condemnation of the Russian military may put them in more danger, said group spokeswoman Samantha Bolton on Monday.

In Chechnya, civilians have reported being targeted by Russian forces, who have bombed and shelled villages in southern Chechnya in recent weeks.

The Interfax news agency said separatist forces on Thursday were shelling Russian positions in the southern settlements of Stary Achkhoi, Orenkovo, Gotskoe and Ven-

The death toll from Tuesday's rebel attack on a Russian military convoy has risen to 93, independent NTV television said Thursday. It said 54 Russian troops in the convoy were wounded and only 13 escaped unharmed.

The death toll could not be independently confirmed.

International

Lankan security forces on red alert

Fresh offensive against LTTE in Jaffna under cover of curfew

COLOMBO, Apr 19: Thousands of heavily armed troops launched a major offensive against Tamil Tiger guerrillas in northern Sri Lanka today under the cover of an indefinite curfew, defence sources here said. reports AFP.

Infantry troops were fanning out of their forward defence lines in the Jaffna Peninsula and moving against positions of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the sources said.

The widely expected offensive came on the first anniversary of the LTTE's resumption of the fresh hostilities against security forces in what is now regarded as Eelam War III. Tigers are battling for an inde-

pendent homeland called Eelam.

The defence ministry in a brief statement said the operation code-named "Riviresa II," or Sunshine II, was launched at dawn with an indefinite curfew, defence sources here said. reports AFP.

Civilians have been advised to remain calm and to gather at safe places designated by the security forces, the ministry statement said, adding that maximum possible precautions will be taken to ensure the safety of civilians.

In October last year, security forces launched operation Riviresa, which lasted nearly 50 days and ended up with the military taking control over

the LTTE's former citadel of Jaffna.

The offensive cost the lives of some 500 soldiers and an estimated 2,500 rebels. Tens of thousands of civilians fled the area and are still living in refugee camps located in the southern sectors of the peninsula controlled by Tigers.

The latest fighting came amid a security alert across the country to pre-empt attacks by the LTTE to mark the first anniversary of Eelam War III.

The LTTE pulled out of a 100-day truce with the government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and marked the beginning of what is now known as Eelam War III by blasting two navy gunboats a year ago Friday.

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Earlier report says, Sri Lankan security forces were placed on red alert Friday, the first anniversary of the latest round of fighting with Tamil Tiger guerrillas, officials said.

They said military units across the embattled northern and eastern regions have been ordered to take defensive action to pre-empt attacks by the LTTE to mark the first anniversary of Eelam War III.

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US Congress passes anti-terrorism bill

WASHINGTON, Apr 19: Acting on the eve of the anniversary of the Oklahoma City bombing, the US Congress passed on Thursday legislation giving federal law enforcement authorities more tools to combat domestic terrorism, reports AP.

The House of Representatives voted 293-133 to send the bill to President Clinton.

The measure, which the Senate passed overwhelmingly Wednesday evening, lacks many law enforcement provisions the White House had sought. Nevertheless, Clinton, who has pressed Congress to pass anti-terrorism legislation, was considered likely to sign it next week, after he returns from his overseas trip.

The original House bill, passed last month, had eliminated many of the Senate's anti-terrorism provisions because of lawmakers' concerns.

about expanding federal law enforcement powers. Some of those provisions were restored in the compromise bill.

The balance between public safety and order and individual rights is always a difficult dilemma in a free society," said Rep. Gerald Solomon.

The legislation provides new limits on federal appeals by death row inmates and other prisoners. It also would provide additional federal death penalties in certain international terrorism cases and for killing a federal employee or former employee because of that person's work.

The bill "has some very effective tools that we can use in our efforts to combat terrorism," Attorney General Janet Reno said Thursday.

"I would draft it differently, but I think that there are safeguards in the bill," she told her weekly news conference.

US seeks China's approval for Korean peace plan

THE HAGUE, Apr 19: Secretary of State Warren Christopher will be seeking China's approval of a new US proposal for Korean peace talks in a meeting Friday with Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, reports AP.

Christopher also hopes to find a solution to a long-simmering dispute over China's nuclear technology sales to Pakistan, amid indications the Clinton administration will not impose strong sanctions against Beijing.

Christopher was still weighing his options before the meeting at the Chinese ambassador's residence, to be followed by a working dinner hosted by US Ambassador Kerry Dornbush.

Trying to overcome strains on several fronts, including China's repression of dissidents and apparent infringement of US copyrights, Christopher intends to reaffirm US commitment to one-China policy, a senior US official said.

But the US official speaking on condition of anonymity, said Christopher would like to get a firm endorsement from Qian, the foreign minister, as well as a positive reply from North Korea, which he said "may take some time."

Off the Record

Di feeding stories to newspapers!

LONDON: There is some evidence that Princess Diana and some other members of the royal family are feeding stories to newspapers, the head of the Press Complaints Commission said Thursday.

Lord Wakeham said many press people have told him that members of the royal family spend "a considerable amount of energy" to try to get their side of the story in the newspapers.

There is "some evidence" this is true, he said, citing a front-page story last week in the Daily Mirror which the paper said came from the princess herself. She reportedly denied a newspaper report that she has cellulite — fatty deposits — in her legs.

"I don't like what I see in some of the newspapers, but I'm not entirely going to blame the newspapers for that state of affairs," Wakeham said.

"Now, I have a very simple view ... If you don't want to get yourself in the newspapers, shut up," he told a media conference organized by The Institute of United States Studies, which is part of the University of London.

Diana has a love-hate relationship with the news media, sometimes lashing out at tabloid photographers, other times cultivating certain reporters and feeding them exclusive quotes and information. Diana agreed to a television interview last November, and talked about her failed marriage, her lover and her views on the monarchy.

Prince Charles' friends and allies have also leaked stories giving his side of the dispute.

As chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, Wakeham supervises the self-regulation system and code of conduct agreed to by newspapers. He is a former leader of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Wakeham said the papers have generally abided by his request to allow Charles and Diana's eldest son, Prince William, to attend school at Eton without press harassment.

How do ants think?

TEHRAN: An Iranian teenager has written a book about the way ants think after he was inspired by the Muslim holy book, the Quran. The Daily Jomhuri Eslami newspaper said on Thursday, reports Reuter.

Inspired by the Quran ... the author has managed to discover and express parts of the hidden thoughts of the ants," Sadeq Omidi, an official at a state-run publishing house which is bringing out "ants' thoughts" in 2,000 copies, was quoted as saying. He did not elaborate.

Nader Geytani, 18, a high school student in the southwestern Ilam province, wrote the book after observing the behaviour and activities of the insects for four years. Omidi said.

The young author is currently investigating patterns of fighting among animals, he said without giving further details.

UNSC accuses Libya of violating air embargo

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 19: The UN Security Council late Thursday accused Libya of violating a UN air embargo by flying Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia, and warned Tripoli against attempting further violations, reports AFP.

The Security Council formal statement was issued after Libya said Thursday it would fly more Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia after defying a four-year UN ban on Libyan flights on Tuesdays.

The Security Council statement said that Tuesday's flight by a Libyan Arab Airlines plane to Jeddah constituted "a clear violation" of the 1992 air embargo against Libya.

The plane flight landed in Jeddah late Tuesday with 115 people heading for the annual Hajj pilgrimage to the Islamic shrine of Makkah, after overflying Egyptian territory.

The plane returned to Tripoli on Wednesday.

The early Amazonians were probably not primarily big game hunters but foragers in the forest and river basin, subsisting on fruit, nuts and animals. Over time, they became more sophisticated and moved out from the caves, setting up fishing villages, learning to make pottery and develop agriculture.

Evidence of 11,000-yr-old human society discovered in Amazonian rainforest

WASHINGTON, Apr 19: A Warren of ancient painted caves has yielded dramatic new evidence of a thriving primitive human society deep in the Amazonian rainforest 11,000 years ago, reports AP.

The research appeared today in the journal Science and shows that such a society, like the recent US sanctions against non-American investors in Cuba, would be an exercise in extraterritoriality — the enforcement of US law outside US borders against people who

are not US citizens. Iran is seeking foreign investors for its oil industry, which lost much of its up to date equipment in a long war with Iraq.

If the act as passed by the House International Relations Committee becomes law, the European Commission will be obliged to protect European commercial interests through all available multilateral fora, Brittan wrote.

He said such action would violate international law.

"US business representatives," he added, "have also told us of the difficulties they may encounter in their business relations with Europe, if trade, as well as financial relations, become part of the sanctions legislation."

His letter to US Rep

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