

BRIEFLY



Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole (L) shakes hands with Mother Teresa Saturday at the Gift of Peace convent in Washington, DC. — AFP/UNB photo

Bob Dole meets Mother Teresa:

Mother Teresa as business cards, Sen. Bob Dole has disclosed. But not normal business cards, AP reports from Washington. They read: "The fruit of SILENCE is Prayer, the fruit of PRAYER is Faith, the fruit of FAITH is Love, the fruit of LOVE is Service, the fruit of SERVICE is Peace. She gave him one during a half-hour private meeting Saturday, their first, during which they discussed her Nobel Prize winning work for the poor, the power of prayer and the value of adoption as an alternative to abortion.

Deuba greets Gowda:

Nepali Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba has congratulated H D Deve Gowda on his assumption of office as Prime Minister of India, the state-run RSS news agency said yesterday. AFP reports from Kathmandu.

In a message of congratulations Deuba wished for the continued progress and prosperity of the people of India under Gowda's able leadership. The Nepalese premier also expressed confidence that the traditionally close relations between Nepal and India would be further enhanced and strengthened during Gowda's tenure.

Lebanon, Syria discuss ME peace:

The leaders of Lebanon and Syria were to meet in the Syrian capital Damascus on Sunday to discuss the future of the Middle East peace process following the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Israel's next prime minister. AP reports from Beirut.

Official sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Lebanese President Elias Hrawi left for Syria at midmorning for talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

33 Mexican die as train, bus collide:

A bus and a passenger train collided at a railroad crossing in this Pacific Coast port, killing 33 people and injuring 13, officials said Saturday. AP reports from Mazatlan.

Sinaloa state attorney Luis Zuniga Vizcarra, who is investigating the crash, said it occurred around 10 pm Friday. He said all the victims were Mexicans. Zuniga said 20 bodies were picked up at the site, and another 13 died at neighbouring hospitals soon after. He said the only person who was not hurt was a four-year-old boy named Juan Carlos Garcia Cruz.

Siberian train crash death toll 18:

The death toll of a train crash in western Siberia reached 18 on Saturday when one person died in a hospital, a report said, AP reports from Moscow.

More than 40 people were injured Friday night when a passenger train crashed into four freight cars carrying cement near the village of Litvinovo in the Kemerovo region of Siberia, some 2,000 kilometres (1,200 miles) east of Moscow. Investigators said the freight cars rolled onto the track because they were improperly parked, the Interfax news agency said.

Quake hits northwest China:

A strong earthquake shook houses and sent residents scurrying onto the streets in northwest China, an official report said Sunday. AP reports from Beijing.

The magnitude-5.4 quake struck Gansu province, 1,200-kilometres (740 miles) west of Beijing, Saturday night. There were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage, the Xinhua News Agency said. The tremors in Gansu and neighbouring Qinghai province drove people out of their homes. Walls cracked in buildings near the quake's epicenter in Tianshu county, Xinhua said.

Kidnapped US observer freed:

Former Nicaraguan rebels released a kidnapped American election observer and her Nicaraguan driver Saturday in jungle-covered northeastern Nicaragua, a government official said. AP reports from Managua.

Cynthia Gersony, 41, of New York City "has been freed by the reformed Contra group that kidnapped her Saturday near the Honduran border," said government spokesman Emigadio Quintero. Officials said her driver, Roberto Moncada, also was freed. Some former members of the Contra group, which waged an insurgency against the leftist Sandinista government in the 1980s, have resurfaced in armed gangs in northern Nicaragua. Police recently began a sweep in the region to end the banditry.

Italian newsmen observe strike:

Rome's largest newspaper wasn't published Saturday after journalists struck to protest its sale to a construction mogul who owns the rival daily in the capital. AP reports from Rome.

The sale of Il Messaggero Friday also put back the spotlight on an old dilemma — the concentration of Italy's media in a few, powerful hands. Journalists at the paper, founded in 1878, first said they would strike for a total of seven days. After a meeting Saturday with the new owner, the journalists decided that Sunday's edition would come out, but without their bylines.

Boat collision kills 2 in Japan:

A 96-tonne Japanese fishing boat collided with another boat in waters off Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido yesterday, killing two men and leaving three missing, the Maritime Safety Agency said. AFP reports from Tokyo.

The accident occurred in the sea of Japan some 40 kilometres (24 miles) off Takashima promontory after the Hokko Maru collided into the 124-tonne Heikyo Maru which was at anchor, an agency official said.

The Heikyo Maru sank soon after the collision. Thirteen of its 16 crew members were rescued by the Hokko Maru, but two of them died in hospital.

2-yr old ceasefire in Azeri-Armenian war under threat

NAKHICHEVAN, Azerbaijan, June 2: A two-year-old ceasefire in the Azeri-Armenian war is under threat in Azerbaijan's Nakhichevan enclave after more than a week of sporadic clashes, local officials said Saturday, reports AFP.

Shamsadin Khambabayev, head of the Nakhichevan administration, said an Azeri soldier was seriously wounded by shelling with artillery and mortars early Friday.

Three Azeri soldiers have been killed and five wounded in sporadic clashes that began May 20, he said.

Shells hit the town of Orudubad Thursday, destroying a house, though nobody was hurt in that incident.

Aqaba summit June 5

AMMAN, June 2: King Hussein of Jordan said Saturday the summit between Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinian authority would take place on June 5 in the Port of Aqaba without Israeli Prime Minister-Elect Benjamin Netanyahu, reports AFP.

The king said the changes taking place in Israel would not allow Netanyahu to take up an invitation to attend the meeting, but that he hoped "a later summit will bring us together after he (Netanyahu) had formed his government."

Earlier Saturday a senior Jordanian official said the date of the Aqaba Summit would not be set until Netanyahu had formed his government.

Jordanian Education Minister Abdullah Nusur, acting as interim prime minister, told AFP on Friday that right-wing leader Netanyahu was welcome to attend after he was declared the winner in Wednesday's Israeli election over incumbent Shimon Peres.

Netanyahu has promised to take a tougher stand in the peace talks with Israel's Arab neighbours, including opposition to the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Russia agrees to freeze number of forces in Europe

VIENNA, June 2: Russia has agreed to freeze the number of forces currently deployed on its European borders and to meet its obligations under a landmark arms reduction treaty by May 1999, officials said on Saturday, reports Reuters.

The commitment by Russia, which has been in branch of the 1990 Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) treaty, was made after two weeks of talks in Vienna aimed at settling compliance problems that had arisen after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Lynn Davis, US under-secretary of state for disarmament and security issues, said the deal was a solution to the changes inside Europe over the past few years and proved that the CFE pact was flexible enough for modifications to be made.

Yeltsin hails withdrawal of N-weapons from Ukraine

LONDON, June 2: Russian President Boris Yeltsin has thanked everyone involved in the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Ukraine, ITAR-Tass news agency said today, reports AFP.

The agency, monitored by the BBC, quoted a statement issued by Yeltsin's press service as saying the withdrawal had been possible because of close cooperation between Russia and the Ukraine.

In spite of the fact that at times difficult political, economic and technical problems had to be tackled, common sense and the sides' adherence to international obligations have always taken the upper hand, Yeltsin said.

"I would like to express by sincere gratitude to diplomats, Russian servicemen, experts and employees of various ministries and departments taking part in carrying out this unprecedented operation."

Top US official for multilateral sanctions on Nigeria

LAGOS, June 2: A top US policy-maker on human rights said on Saturday at the end of a visit to Nigeria that he would seek international support for the imposition of multilateral sanctions against the military government there, reports Reuters.

"I will recommend to Washington to intensify the search for support on imposing multilateral sanctions against Nigerian rulers in order that democracy is restored," John Shattuck, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy and Labour, told a news conference in Lagos.

"Nigeria is at the crossroads and it is time the government respect human rights and candidly move towards democracy. The United States believes that Nigeria's people can succeed in building a better future if stable, democratic government is allowed to thrive and their human rights respected," he said.

Shattuck said the US would continue to work with the Nigerian government to improve the conditions of inmates in prison and to ensure that they pose a threat to prisoners' health.

The government detained 262 people two weeks ago in a failed bid to stop Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy from holding a party congress.

In Washington Friday, the State Department said it is consulting with Congress on the possibility of imposing sanctions on the military regime, which seized power in 1988 after violently suppressing pro-democracy demonstrations.

"We retain the option to consider further sanctions, should the situation there warrant it, and we decide that is the proper way for us to try to influence the Myanmar authorities," spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

Myanmar State radio announced Friday that those detained as "guests of the government" were being freed, but it was unclear if all would be released. The detainees comprised 238 conference delegates, plus 24 ordinary party members.

"We want the rest of our people released, we want all of our people released," said Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her nonviolent promotion of democracy.

Palestinians urge Israeli govt to pursue peace

GAZA CITY, June 2: Palestinian leaders said Saturday they expected Israel's new prime minister to autonomy agreements reached under the outgoing honour government, reports AP.

US President Clinton, meanwhile, sent a letter to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, assuring him the United States will continue to "stand behind the Palestinian people" in pressing for a "just, permanent and comprehensive peace in the Middle East," the Palestinian Wafa news agency said.

Opposition Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu emerged victorious Friday in a breathing-stopping race for prime minister, defeating incumbent Shimon Peres by less than one percent of the vote.

Netanyahu, riding a wave of support in the wake of Islamic militant bombings that killed 63 people, apparently won by embracing the peace process while at the same time promising tougher security efforts in Israel.

But Netanyahu also took a harder line on several issues promised by Peres' more left-wing government.

Netanyahu has said he will delay a promised redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank city of Hebron, will not negotiate the Palestinian claim to East Jerusalem which Israel captured from Jordan in the 1967 Mideast war, and will not consider the Palestinian demand for statehood.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, clearly worried by such tough talk, convened his Cabinet late Friday for a special session.

In a statement issued early Saturday, the Cabinet and the PLO Executive Committee said they respected the Israeli electorate's decision and appealed to the international community to "increase efforts to push the peace process forward."

The Palestinians urged Netanyahu to continue efforts toward peace and to adhere to "everything that has been agreed upon, including the

beginning of talks on the final status of Jerusalem."

The president Arafat is surprised, but I think he is determined to go ahead and co-operate with any person who has been elected by the Israelis to occupy the office of prime minister," said Arafat spokesman Marwan Kanafani.

Mahmoud Zahar, a leader of the Islamic militant Hamas movement, warned that if Netanyahu halts the peace process, there will be "a new wave of violence not only by Hamas, but by every Palestinian, including the people who support the peace process."

Netanyahu's advisors, meanwhile, sought Friday, to reassure the Palestinians directly that the peace talks would continue.

Netanyahu's chief adviser on foreign policy, Dore Gold, called Mohammed Abbas, the No. 2 in Arafat's Palestinian Authority, and told him Netanyahu was committed to the peace process.



H R Deve Gowda (R) takes the oath as India's 11th prime minister at the Presidential Palace in New Delhi Saturday. Gowda heads a 21-member United Front coalition, which assumed power just four days after the country's first Hindu nationalist government resigned. At left is President Shankar Lal Sharma. — AFP/UNB photo

Key concession to IRA guerillas Britain comes under attack

BELFAST, June 2: Britain came under attack from both sides of Northern Ireland's political divide after making a key concession to IRA guerillas to try to induce them to restore a broken ceasefire, reports Reuters.

Protestant unionists, who want the province to stay British, and their foes in Sinn Fein, the IRA's political wing, united in rejecting the surprise move by Britain only eight days before the scheduled start of peace talks.

In a major turnaround from previous British policy, Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew said the Irish Republican Army (IRA) would not have to start surrendering,

or decommissioning, its weapons as soon as the talks began, "although, of course, it (decommissioning) ought to happen straight away, but I don't think we can expect it to happen instantly." Mayhew told the BBC, adding that he expected it to take place "soon" thereafter.

He stood firmly behind Britain's insistence that the IRA, which scrapped a 17-month ceasefire in February, must declare a new truce to win Sinn Fein a seat at the peace talks.

"I think that he (Mayhew) is being pressured from Dublin. I think the Americans have heaped coals upon his head so that he has surrendered."

Sanjiva Reddy dead

NEW DELHI, June 2: Nee-lam Sanjiva Reddy, India's former president, died Friday of aspiration pneumonia. He was 83, reports AP.

Reddy died in hospital in the southern Indian city of Bangalore, said M Chandrasekhar, his personal physician. He was hospitalised two weeks ago after he complained of breathlessness during his birthday celebrations.

A farmer's son, Reddy rose to become India's constitutional figurehead in 1977. Prior to that, he had served as the top elected official of southern state of Andhra Pradesh and speaker of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament.

Reddy was in the forefront of India's freedom struggle against the British rule as a Congress Party leader.



Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi (C) is protected from the rain by one of her aides Saturday after a storm broke at the end of her weekly weekend speech from the gate of her house. Some 4,000 people gathered to hear the democracy leader outline the political and economic aims of her National League for Democracy (NLD) following a key pro-democracy meeting last week. — AFP/UNB photo

Karachi likely to become 7th populous city by 2015

ISLAMABAD, June 2: Karachi, Pakistan's largest city with a population of 10 million, half of whom live in slums, is facing a growing prospect of being overwhelmed by sheer numbers and socio-economic pressures, reports AFP.

The sprawling city on the Arabian sea coast was 21st on a 1990 list of the world's most populous urban centres, but is expected to move up to seventh by 2015, the United Nations says.

In 20 years with its population touching 20 million, Karachi will become more crowded than Beijing or New York, says the 1995 UN Report on the State of the World Population, released last week.

Employment and economic opportunities in the hub of Pakistani industry and commerce have continued to attract people from rural areas despite years of unrest in the city.

Relative claims have returned to Karachi in recent months after more than 2,000 killings since early 1995, amid a tough crackdown against ethnic militants by police and paramilitary troops frequently accused of committing excesses.

But the underlying cause of the unrest — distrust between the government and the ethnic opposition Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) representing Karachi's large Urdu-speaking settler community — remains.

Although Urdu is also the national language, Sindhi is the main language in Sindh province of which Karachi is the largest city.

Meanwhile, the city's woes are multiplying amid mounting pressure on its alarmingly inadequate civic services and health care, housing and transport, officials and residents say.

Only 46 per cent of house get piped water and about 66 per cent have electricity, while the city's sewerage system is in disrepair.

A national census is long overdue — the last one was conducted in 1981 — and no exact estimate of Karachi's population is available. Private social welfare bodies say the number is far more than 10 million.

Sketches of India's new cabinet

UNDATED, June 2: H D Deve Gowda, prime minister, quit farming for politics, was chief minister of Karnataka state; pro-modernisation, reports AP.

Inder Kumar Gujral, external affairs minister, minister in many previous governments, former ambassador to the then Soviet Union.

M. Arunachalam, urban affairs and employment minister, former industries minister who led economic reforms in Congress government; broke away to start a new party.

F. Chidambaram, finance minister, former commerce minister and architect of India's economic reforms. Attorney, studied at Harvard Business School.

Murashli Maran, industry minister, former urban affairs minister from a regional party.

T G Venkataraman, surface transport minister, criminal lawyer and former lawmaker.

Ram Vilas Paswan, railways minister, former minister and a champion of low-caste people.

Mulayam Singh Yadav, defence minister, former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh state and one of India's powerful politicians championing rights of low-caste people.

Beni Prasad Verma, communications minister, a farmer leader, former state minister.

C M Ibrahim, civil aviation and tourism minister, an influential Muslim lawmaker of southern state of Karnataka.

S R Bommai, human resource development minister, former chief minister of Karnataka state and former president of Janata Dal Party.

Balwant Singh Ramoovalia, labour and welfare minister, member of the minority Sikh community.

Chandradev Prasad Verma, rural areas and development minister.

Jainarain Prasad Nishad, environment minister.

Devendra Prasad Yadav, food and civil supplies minister, a socialist lawmaker from Bihar.

M D Tasleemuddin, minister of state for home, a Muslim lawmaker.

Off the Record

Just call him Dr Wonder

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama: Just call him Dr Wonder. Stevie Wonder is getting an honorary doctorate from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, home to the new Stevie Wonder Centre for Computing in the Arts, reports AP.

After a Saturday night concert with the Birmingham Metropolitan Orchestra, he was to receive the honorary degree at graduation ceremonies Sunday.

Sporting his trademark beaded braids, Wonder spoke to reporters about his friendship with the university's music department chairman, Henry Panion, and the centre, a music technology section of the university's soon-to-be-completed Alys Stephens Performing Arts Centre.

"I'm very proud of this state. I sound like a politician but I'm very proud of this state because I look here and obviously we know the history of this state," said Wonder, 46. "And we know that we have grown from and away from that."

Wonder helped pioneer the use of synthesizers and other technology to make music. The Wonder Centre for Computing in the Arts is designed to teach music students how to use the technology and to honour its origin.

Princely way of sketching

LONDON: The future King of England has a princely way with a pencil and paper, an art critic says, reports AP.

Thirteen-year-old Prince William's pencil sketch of a tall English house has been chosen from more than 250 entries to go on display in an exhibit of students' art at Eton College, where he started as a pupil last year.

"There is no doubt that Prince William has a flair for drawing — and if his interest in art continues, his talent, will go from strength to strength," said The Times' art critic, Dalya Alberge.

Writing in Saturday's edition, Alberge said the picture seemed to have been sketched by someone much older, showing "both sensitivity and confidence."

The Times quoted an unidentified member of Eton's staff as saying it was no mean feat to be included in the exhibit.

"There are 250 boys in William's year but very few had work on show. William has considerable talent," the staff member was quoted as saying.

Birthplace in auction!

DUBLIN, Ireland: The birthplace of playwright Samuel Beckett has been sold at auction to an anonymous buyer for more than 1.3 million dollars, reports AP.

The author of "Waiting for Godot" and "Endgame" was born in 1906 in the large turn-of-the-century house. The four-bedroom house called Coolrindagh, with a tennis court and swimming pool, is in Foxrock, an affluent Dublin suburb.

The anonymous buyer paid 1.3 million for the house at Thursday's auction.

"We are not in a position to reveal the identity of the buyer," said a spokeswoman for the auctioneer, Lisney.

Beckett, who spent most of his life in France, won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1969. He died in 1989.

Suu Kyi fears long prison terms for detained NLD activists

YANGON, June 2: The leader of Myanmar pro-democracy party said Saturday that despite the release of about 100 of her supporters, more than 20 others had been sent to the capital's notorious Insein prison and were expected to face long prison terms, reports AP.

"It will be a sign that there is no justice and no rule of law in this country," said Aung San Suu Kyi, giving her customary weekend speech at the gate of her Yongon home. "We look upon the international community to stand by us in asking for justice and democracy in Myanmar."

According to the few visitors allowed access and information smuggled out by prisoners, conditions at Insein prison are so harsh and overcrowded that they pose a threat to prisoners' health.

The government detained 262 people two weeks ago in a failed bid to stop Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy from holding a party congress.

In Washington Friday, the State Department said it is consulting with Congress on the possibility of imposing sanctions on the military regime, which seized power in 1988 after violently suppressing pro-democracy demonstrations.

"We retain the option to consider further sanctions, should the situation there warrant it, and we decide that is the proper way for us to try to influence the Myanmar authorities," spokesman Nicholas Burns said.

Myanmar State radio announced Friday that those detained as "guests of the government" were being freed, but it was unclear if all would be released. The detainees comprised 238 conference delegates, plus 24 ordinary party members.

"We want the rest of our people released, we want all of our people released," said Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize for her nonviolent promotion of democracy.

Despite the mass arrests, the conference has posed the biggest challenge to the regime since Suu Kyi was freed from six years of house arrest last July.

Speaking to a cheering crowd of about 6,000 people, Suu Kyi also said Saturday that some detainees had been forced to sign documents that they would no longer work for her party.

"Any undertakings signed under duress will not be considered valid by us," she said. "We continue to look upon them as our members and we shall continue to work together with them."

The crowd was slightly smaller than the one that attended her street-side speech last week, held during the conference itself. But it was still attracted more than twice as many people as had

previously been attending the events, which have been held since Suu Kyi was released from house arrest.

The government has responded to the congress by denouncing "Suu Kyi in the state-owned press and staging mass rallies around the country opposing the pro-democracy movement."

Myanmar state-controlled press said Saturday that the rallies staged by a government front group show the people are against the pro-democracy movement.

Croats dig up 87 bodies in former Serb held areas

ZAGREB, Croatia, June 2: Officials have dug up the corpses of 87 elderly Croats killed after they refused to flee from their villages in southern Croatia fell to Serb rebels, the state-run news agency HINA said Saturday, reports AP.

Autopsies showed that most of the victims had been shot in the head from close range, HINA said.

The bodies were discovered at 21 sites in and around several villages between the Dalmatian coastal city of Zadar and Knin, the capital of Serb rebellion in the 1991 Serb-Croat war.